

WESLEY BIBLICAL SEMINARY

Prospectus



Our Story

FOUNDED IN 1974 by independent Methodists to provide graduate theological education in the Deep South, **WESLEY BIBLICAL SEMINARY** was shaped by an unwavering commitment to both traditional Wesleyan holiness theology and the authority of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God.

The school has experienced numerous highs and lows, almost going under several times, but always finding a way to endure. Tragedy struck in 2019 when beloved president Dr. John Niehof died suddenly. Yet, through the interim service of renowned holiness scholar Dr. John Oswalt, WBS was able to recover and usher in a new era. Dr. Matt Ayars led the school through the pandemic and into a time of unprecedented growth, which continues today under long-time faculty member Dr. Matt Friedeman who is serving as Interim President.

Thus, for almost 50 years, despite cultural changes around us, we have remained true to our founders' vision of a biblical, Wesleyan seminary that develops **trusted leaders for faithful churches**.

Our Opportunity

THE BREAKUP OF THE UMC is indicative of a larger shift in the Church in America. Mainline Protestantism is fracturing, and there has been a significant shift away from the Church among younger generations. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that the Holy Spirit is using this moment to **purify, renew, and revive** those churches willing to remain faithful.

WBS is uniquely positioned to accelerate this renewal movement. To be sure, we are small—in terms of student body, endowment, and brand recognition. However, we are also **nimble, flexible, and adaptive**. Most importantly, we have proven to be trustworthy in our steadfast commitment to the inerrant Word of God.

More and more students, donors, churches, and denominations are **recognizing us as a trusted partner**. Our challenge is to steward this moment well, as it seems clear that we have been raised up for such a time as this.



“JESUS MADE IT CLEAR of that those who are faithful in small things will be given greater influence and responsibility. I am convinced that WBS is experiencing that promise. The new opportunities before us are a direct result of the faithfulness of those who have gone before. Our task is to be faithful in our own generation to walk through the open doors God has placed before us.”

—DR. MATT FRIEDEMANN, INTERIM PRESIDENT

WESLEY BIBLICAL SEMINARY

2024 FACT SHEET



Overview

Programs

- DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
- MASTER OF DIVINITY
- MASTER OF ARTS
- GLOBAL METHODIST COURSE OF STUDY
- BACHELOR OF ARTS IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
- WESLEY INSTITUTE (LAY TRAINING)

Platform

WBS operates almost entirely online through polysynchronous learning (only doctoral students have required on-campus intensives). This structure allows students to be equipped for ministry without leaving their local ministry environment and minimizes overhead costs for facilities and maintenance.

Accreditation

- ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS
- ASSOCIATION OF BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Student Body Profile

WBS students are approximately 30% female and 50% non-white (AMONG THOSE REPORTING, 2022). Although concentrated in the South, they reside across the US and 14 nations.

Funding

- GENERAL FUNDS: Currently 45% of our annual income comes from tuition and fees and 55% comes from donors and other sources.
- ENDOWMENTS: Our endowment currently provides scholarships and one endowed faculty chair.
- OTHER CAPITAL FUNDS: Over the past five years, our endowment has more than doubled and our net assets have grown by \$4 million thanks to donor generosity.
- STEADFAST CAMPAIGN: In 2023 WBS launched this three-year, \$4.17 capital campaign with goals to add two additional endowed faculty chairs, strengthen our endowed scholarships, and support new initiatives. As of Mar. 2024, we have raised \$3.2 million in pledges and donations, or 76% of our goal.

ENROLLMENT

663	Total Students Served (SPRING 2024)
500	Degree Program Students
307	GMC Course of Study Students
126	Other Students (AUDITORS & WESLEY INSTITUTE)

ENROLLMENT TREND: +401% (2023 VS 2018)

TUITION & AFFORDABILITY

\$250	Undergraduate Tuition PER CREDIT HOUR
\$550	Graduate Tuition PER CREDIT HOUR
\$600	D.Min. Tuition PER CREDIT HOUR
71%	Students Receiving Institutional Scholarships
\$605K	Annual Scholarships Awarded (FY2023)
\$8,416	Avg. Student Debt at Graduation (2018-2022)

FACULTY

8	Full Time Faculty
17	Adjunct Faculty

FINANCES

\$2.15M	2023-2024 Operating Budget
\$700K	Net Tuition and Fees (FY2023)
\$1.5M	Total Giving (FY2023)
\$2.38M	Total Income (FY2023)

REVENUE TREND: +23% Total Giving (2023 VS 2018)
+118% Net Tuition Income (2023 VS 2018)

ASSETS

\$3.5M	Endowment (JUN. 2023)
\$6.6M	Total Assets (JUN. 2023)

ASSET TRENDS: +155% Net Assets (2023 VS 2018)
+152% Endowment (2023 VS 2018)

PRIORITIES AND VISION

Current Projects

IN THE AREA OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT, our team is focused on developing our status as the first approved seminary for the newly formed Global Methodist Church. We are cultivating relationships with prospective student and denominational leaders, including the hundreds of Course of Study students who have joined us. At the same time, we are not neglecting our long-term partnerships with the many other branches of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

ACADEMICALLY, WE HAVE AN EXCELLENT TEAM in place including the recent addition of New Testament professor Dr. Murray Vasser. We have been able to accommodate the influx of new students, while also seeking to add to our faculty to position ourselves for the future. We are currently seeking to add a professor of Systematic Theology.

While our Master's level programs are thriving, we also see a need to expand the reach of our Wesley Institute outreach for equipping lay people, and our Doctoral program for ministry veterans seeking to deepen their ministry. Finally, we are excited about what God has been doing through our Global Pastors Initiative, especially our Mexico cohort, and are working to strengthen our international outreach in both English and Spanish-speaking areas.

IN THE AREA OF DEVELOPMENT, we have been focused on our Steadfast Campaign to raise \$4.17 million in additional funds over three years. We are modernizing our donor systems, enhancing our development team, and making new contacts with potential donors who are becoming excited about the prospects of WBS as we have become more well known through the GMC.

New Initiatives

The future of WBS is to be a comprehensive partner in equipping churches to carry forward the mission of the gospel. Here are some of our dreams to bring that calling to fruition.

PUBLISHING HOUSE/IMPRINT

Most institutions of higher education have publishing houses (e.g., Oxford University Press, Baylor Press, etc.). There is currently a gap in the market for conservative, Wesleyan, academic publications that we believe Wesley Biblical Seminary could fill with our own publishing

house. A publishing house initiative would require seed money of approximately \$250,000, the majority of which would be allocated for personnel (e.g., production manager, multi-media marketing coordinator, editor, type-setter, legal, etc.) and marketing. We are looking for one-time gifts and ongoing giving towards this project. A one-time gift of \$250,000 is required to launch the project.

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

Of our students, 71% receive some institutional scholarship aid. Seminary attendees know they are not entering a lucrative field that will enable them to repay heavy student loans. Many are bi-vocational, working hard to support their families while giving themselves for the work of the Kingdom. In our rapidly changing culture, the church cannot afford for the training of our pastors to be dependent on government aid.

Endowed scholarships are a game-changing resource because they not only provide immediate support to deserving students, but also create an ongoing investment income that continues to support new generations of students for years to come. Endowed scholarships can be opened with an investment of \$100,000 or more. Our ultimate goal is free seminary—for every person called by God and affirmed by the Church who seeks to be equipped at WBS to have the cost of their education fully supported by donors and endowments.

ENDOWED FACULTY CHAIRS

Like endowed scholarships, endowed faculty chairs create a sustained source of funding through investment income. Establishing faculty chairs

enables educational institutions to recruit, retain, and support the highest quality scholars. In addition to our existing John M. Case Chair of Evangelical Studies, our vision is to add a chair of Biblical Studies and a chair of Theological Studies. A fully funded chair would require an endowment of \$1,000,000.

NEW FLAGSHIP LOCATION

To ensure a sustainable future, WBS needs a permanent home. With growing enrollment and bold plans for program expansion, our current building is too small. We have only two classrooms to serve our student body of 400+ and a library that is overflowing. We anticipate more full-time faculty and staff hires, requiring more office space. We also need a place to host our weekly chapel services, academic events, and ceremonies. While we love our County Line Road location, it is simply too small. Our plan is to purchase an existing facility in the Jackson metro area that is approximately double the size of our current location. We anticipate that a new location that would accommodate our needs would require an investment of \$5,000,000.



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WE DEVELOP TRUSTED LEADERS *for* FAITHFUL CHURCHES

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CREGG PUCKETT



MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD STATE COMMAND CHAPLAIN, Col. Cregg M. Puckett (M.Div. '98) came to Wesley Biblical Seminary with a strong spiritual foundation, growing up in church and attending Wesley College. WBS made sense to him as a place to continue his studies for ministry because of its strong stance on biblical authority and inerrancy. "That's the camp I belong to," he explains. "The Bible is the foundation for everything."

He enjoyed his studies under professors like Matt Friedeman, Chris Lohrstorfer, Billy Ury, and Ray Easley. "It was a tremendous opportunity to learn from, and build relationships with, such great men of God," he recalls. "I grew a lot over those four years."

Building on that foundation, Cregg answered a call to enter the Chaplaincy. He had already served seven years as an enlisted soldier before receiving his commission as an Army National Guard Chaplain in 1998. "The chaplaincy is a challenging environment," he explains, "with multiple denominations and belief systems represented. But if you are grounded in your own beliefs, it is a wonderful opportunity to meet the needs of people, and it was a great fit with my pastoral calling."

Following that calling took Cregg around the world, with assignments including Mississippi, Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and three tours in Afghanistan. His awards and decorations speak to the courage and faithfulness with which he has served. They include the Bronze Star Medal with OLC, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal with OLC, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with OLC, the Senior Parachutist Badge, the Combat Action Badge, the Special Forces Tab, and various other awards.

As a WBS graduate, serving in these challenging environments was an opportunity for Cregg to see God's grace at work. "I believe in God's saving and sanctifying grace, and the freedom and empowerment the Spirit gives us. It is a privilege to offer that grace to soldiers and their families."

Along the way, Cregg served over 20 years as a pastor in various churches. "They were wonderful churches with wonderful people," he reminisces, "who extended great flexibility and support to me to be able to navigate serving as a pastor and a chaplain at the same time."



He currently serves as a chaplain with the Mississippi State Veterans Affairs, serving nearly 250 residents of veteran homes in Kosciusko and Jackson, MS. Some of his priorities include building resiliency, suicide prevention, and strengthening marriages and families.

Cregg's latest military assignment is as the state command chaplain in the Mississippi Army National Guard. However, he does not see himself as a "commander" so much as a "servant leader," considering it a privilege to have the opportunity to serve and invest in other chaplains as a "minister to ministers."

Cregg's approach to the chaplaincy is guided by the same drive as General George C. Marshall, who prioritized building 555 new chapels on Army installations as he saw World War II approaching. As Marshall said, "The soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul, are everything." While the culture has changed since Marshall's day, Cregg sees the same opportunity to come alongside the military community with spiritual support and encouragement.

"My prayer request would be that more men and women would hear God's call into the chaplaincy," he says. "We need more chaplains, and I would love to see them coming from such a trusted institution as WBS."

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ROBERT LANG'AT



THE WESLEY BIBLICAL SEMINARY 2023 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR is Rev. Dr. Robert Lang'at, Bishop of the Africa Gospel Church (AGC) of Kenya. This award is given annually to a WBS alumnus who has made strategic and substantial contributions in his or her field of ministry or service in the prior year.

Bishop Lang'at is a life-long member of AGC. He attended Tenwek High School and went on to graduate from Kenya Highlands Evangelical University. After serving as pastor at two churches in Kenya, Bishop Lang'at enrolled at WBS. He earned an M.A. in Theology at WBS in 1999 and went on to earn a Ph.D. from Drew University.

He returned to WBS in 2003 to serve as Assistant Academic Dean. He then served at Kabarak University in Nakuru, Kenya, for six years—first as head of the Theology Department and then as University Provost. As a true churchman, he continued to pastor while serving as University Provost.

In 2011, he was elected as Bishop of AGC. AGC has nearly 2000 congregations spread throughout Kenya. Under Bishop Lang'at's leadership, AGC has seen remarkable growth and development in rural and urban areas, as well as in sending its own missionaries to remote areas and unreached tribes in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi.

Bishop Lang'at also provides leadership to many organizations beyond AGC, having served as a board member of World Gospel Mission, Tenwek Hospital, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, Christian Health Association of Kenya, Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS), Kabarak University Council, Bomet University College Council, and Kenya Highlands Evangelical University.

His passions are teaching, preaching, and living the message of holiness. Bishop Lang'at has published extensively on topics of holiness, missions, and



trinitarian theology in several international journals and publishing houses. All these were shaped and inspired by his spiritual and theological formation at WBS.

Bishop Lang'at is married to Dr. Jane Cherotich Lang'at. Together they have four children: Ebenezer, Sharon, Salome, and Enock.

Bishop Lang'at shares, "I am truly humbled by this award and recognition by my fellow WBS alumni. I love my alma mater so dearly. WBS to me remains a beacon of sound ministerial and theological formation within the Wesleyan holiness family.

For me, it has been the words of Luke 17:10—"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Please pray for me to stay pure in Him, focused and always energized to humbly serve for posterity in Africa and the world. My greatest desire is to see a generation of church leaders and pastors who cherish, live and teach the message of holiness."

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LEGACY OF SCHOLARSHIP



DESPITE ITS SMALL SIZE AND RELATIVELY SHORT HISTORY, Wesley Biblical Seminary boasts a number of noteworthy scholars among its current and former faculty and alumni. Here are a few.

Dr. John Oswalt

The premiere scholar on the theology of holiness and distinguished commentator on the book of Isaiah, Dr. Oswalt served on the faculty of WBS from 1999 to 2009 and as interim president in 2019-2020. He is currently the honorary chair of the seminary's Steadfast Capital Campaign. He is the author of 16 books, most notable of which is the two-volume commentary on the book of Isaiah in the New International Commentary of the Old Testament.

Dr. Gareth Cockerill

Dr. Cockerill served on the faculty of WBS for over 35 years, including a term as VP of Academic Affairs, and is now Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Biblical Theology. He also served as a missionary in Sierra Leone for nine years. An active scholar, he is best known for his volume on Hebrews in the NICNT. He received his Th.M. and Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Dr. Friedeman has served as John M. Case Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship since 1987 and is currently interim president. An influential writer on discipleship, his most recent book *The Doctrine of Good Works* was named Christianity Today theological book of the year for 2023. He is also recognized as a journalist, radio talk show host, and TV personality covering political and cultural issues.

Dr. Bill Ury

Dr. Ury is the National Ambassador of Holiness for the Salvation Army. He is a world renowned scholar

on Wesleyan Holiness and Systematic Theology. Bill completed his M. Phil. and Ph.D in Theological and Religious Studies at Drew University (Madison, New Jersey) in 1991. He was Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at WBS from 1989-2012.

Dr. Bill Arnold

Dr. Bill T. Arnold is Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, having served previously as a member of the faculty at WBS. Arnold has editorial roles for the New Cambridge Bible Commentary series, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Wesley Study Bible, and is co-translator of Genesis for the Common English Bible.

Dr. Thomas McCall

Dr. McCall is the Chair of Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary. Previously, he served as Professor of Theology at Asbury University, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Director of the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding. He received his M.A. at WBS in 1996 and went on to receive the Ph.D. from Calvin Theological Seminary.

Other WBS Scholars of Note:

- DR. JEROME VAN KUIKEN (Prof. of Christian Thought, Oklahoma Wesleyan University); WBS alumnus.
- DR. CHRIS BOUNDS (Prof. Religion, Indiana Wesleyan University); WBS faculty.
- DR. CALEB FRIEDEMANN (Chair of Biblical Studies, Ohio Christian University); WBS alumnus.