

CRISWELL NEWS



U.S. Senator
James Lankford of
Oklahoma addresses
attendees at the
Fourth Annual Criswell
Legacy Awards Gala

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE. SENT TO SERVE.

Message from the President

Thankfulness comes easily this time of year. During a season that celebrates the birth of Christ—the greatest gift we have ever received—I think about those who have gone before us to make Criswell College a reality, as well as those who continue to serve, give, and sacrifice to ensure that the mission of the college remains tethered to Scripture and relevant to a world in need.

These gifts all look different. For some, it was the sacrifice of time and talent to serve as trustees and professors in the college's formative years. For others, it was the faithful commitment to pray that the Lord would have favor on our school and bless the work of our hands. For many, it is the collection of seemingly small financial gifts that, over time, have yielded far more than they could have dreamt.

This season as we pause to thank God for what he has done in our lives, let me also take this moment to thank you for being a part of the ongoing Criswell legacy—one that began more than five decades ago but continues today, impacting the hearts of students and changing the course of so many lives for the sake of the gospel. May Christ richly dwell in your hearts this Christmas season, and may you benefit from hearing just a few stories of how God has used Criswell College to change the world.



Barry Creamer
President



In this issue



Criswell Hosts 2021 Homecoming

Inaugural Sophomore Summit
Marks Transition from First-
to Second-Year Experience

Luis Juárez Appointed
Vice President of Student Affairs

Major Declaration Ceremony
First in Criswell History

Alumni Spotlight: Benjamin Paredes



Criswell Legacy Awards Gala Honors
Longtime Supporter Jack Pogue,
Senator James Lankford

Student Spotlight: AunaLisa Harrison

Criswell Hosts 2021 Homecoming

Criswell College held its inaugural homecoming celebration, inviting alumni to celebrate their legacy and to witness firsthand the wonderful improvements happening on campus.

Alumni gathered Saturday morning to attend a special chapel, tour the campus and the new residence hall, and to celebrate newly retired Distinguished Senior Professor Emeritus Dr. H. Leroy Metts.

The morning began with a swag-filled registration and meet-and-greet where alumni could visit over coffee and doughnuts. Afterward, an alumni-led chapel service took place in Horner Hall, featuring music from the current student worship team and a message from Dr. Jared Wellman '07, '10:

"Criswell College taught me the inerrancy and the infallibility of the Word of God," Wellman said. "Isaiah 40:8 says, 'The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.' So, when I open the Bible on Sunday mornings in church and discipleship meetings, when I share it with the lost, I am standing on something that will last forever. And that makes all the difference."

**"Criswell College taught me
the inerrancy and the
infallibility of the Word of God."**

—DR. JARED WELLMAN '07, '10

Criswell College President Barry Creamer '94 reminded guests that the school is focused on teaching the inerrancy of Scripture:

"We are 100 percent committed to the inerrancy of Scripture ... every single word of it," Creamer said. "When we say doctrinal integrity is the first of our core values, we really mean that all of our other doctrines come from Scripture, and our commitment to Scripture is to all of it, from beginning to end, for the actual truths that it gives us, and we stay in those truths all the time."

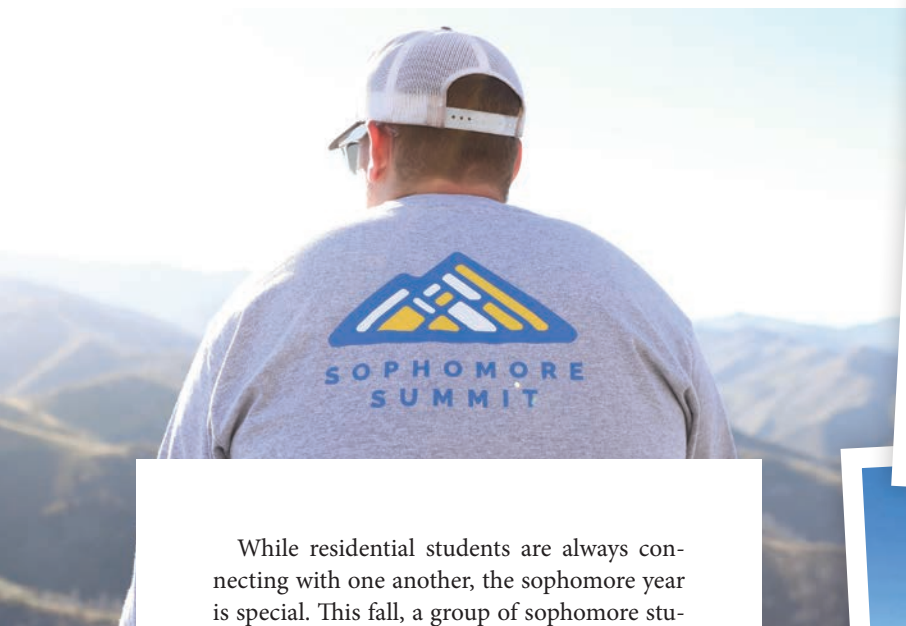
Dr. Creamer also added that he hoped alumni would be encouraged in what the Lord has done and what He continues to do with Criswell College.

Prior to the homecoming celebration, the first alumni board meeting was held, including the election of officers. Rev. Brad Patterson '12 was elected president and will serve as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Criswell Board of Trustees.

After lunch, guests were offered tours of a replica of Dr. W.A. Criswell's home study in Wallace Library and tours of the new Mary L.A. Stanton and Lance Ouellette Hall, commonly referred to as "Lance's Hall." The homecoming celebration concluded with a special celebration honoring Dr. H. Leroy Metts, who retired in July after 45 years of service to the Lord at Criswell College.



Inaugural Sophomore Summit Marks Transition from First- to Second-Year Experience



While residential students are always connecting with one another, the sophomore year is special. This fall, a group of sophomore students packed their bags and rode together to Camp Bonita in New Mexico to participate in “Sophomore Summit,” an off-campus event that gave students a chance to connect with one another and with the Lord.

Director of Student Services Jeremy Bugh said this was the perfect way to wrap up the First-Year student experience and transition to the next:

“This was a time full of excitement, fellowship, and sweet moments in the presence of our Lord. Our goal in the Student Success Office is to see our students integrated and engaged, and this week was an amazing opportunity to build community and receive spiritual rest.”

Mr. Bugh continued, “Sophomore Summit was a week full of incredible adventures. Every morning, we shared a special devotional time led by one of our students, and afterward, we each had a chance to enjoy our individual quiet times in nature. Camp Bonita provided amazing activities for us during the afternoons, such as high ropes, a rockwall, zipline, archery tag, challenge course, and more. Many of these activities were not only fun and thrilling, but they also had spiritual and team-building applications. We also were able to hike and explore some of downtown Ruidoso! We closed each day with a time of worship and hearing from one of our leaders about how God uses



“Sophomore Summit transformed the course of my career and time here at Criswell College for good.”

—CARLOS CAMARILLO, CRISWELL STUDENT

our stories for His glory. From the bus ride to eating s’mores around the campfire, we created lasting friendships and memories with our sophomore students as we wrapped up their First-Year Experience.”

Student Carlos Camarillo said that Sophomore Summit was precisely what he and his classmates needed:

“I went to Summit thinking about just having fun, and although I did enjoy my time, I also came back with amigos, familia, and a deeper understanding of God’s purpose for my life. That was something I desperately needed. Sophomore Summit transformed the course of my career and time here at Criswell College for good.”

Luis Juárez Appointed Vice President of Student Affairs

Criswell College Dean of Students and Director of Student Services Luis Juárez has been promoted to the role of Vice President of Student Affairs. Mr. Juárez has been the college's Director of Student Services since July 2019, and in spring 2021 took on the title of Dean of Students. He will maintain this role while serving as VPSA.

Criswell College President Barry Creamer said he believes Mr. Juárez will bring diversity to the office and a focus on ministry and Christian leadership.

"Luis embodies Criswell's core values in his personal, ministry, and professional life and is committed to leading Christian students in their growth to be Christian leaders. I am confident that he will fill this role capably and that his intentional, missional



leadership will significantly strengthen not only Student Affairs but the entire college," Dr. Creamer said.

Dr. Creamer continued, "Luis brings not only expertise in the world of higher education but also a perspective that will allow us to serve diverse communities better. He brings diversity not only as a Latino but also as a man with a disability. His ability to mentor and disciple students and see their needs, but also hold them accountable, will make the whole campus better."

Juárez said that he is grateful and humbled for the opportunity to serve as VPSA:

"I am excited about the opportunity to tackle the task at hand, and grow enrollment by identifying students who, in Dr. Creamer's words, want to give their life away to Christ by specializing and training, whether in vocational ministry or in another particular discipline to be a light in the world."

Mr. Juárez continued, "I believe the Lord has been preparing me for this role for the last 10 years. Exactly 10 years ago, I began as a young admissions counselor and Baptist Student Ministry Director. I moved into local and global missions work, church relations, alumni affairs, and student services. So, all of that coupled by my 12 plus years in collegiate ministry and youth ministry gives me peace and confidence regarding what the Lord has given me."

Mr. Juárez is also a doctoral student of education administration at the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor and is expected to graduate in May 2022.

Major Declaration Ceremony First in Criswell History

Criswell College held its first Major Declaration Ceremony, a new tradition highlighting sophomore students and their public commitment to a specific major. At Criswell, every undergraduate student receives two majors—a major in Bible and Theology and a second major of their choosing.

The Friday evening event gave sophomore students the opportunity to declare to one another, the student body, family, and friends the major to which they are committing. The students read a prayer with their program director and placed a colored cord around their neck, representing their chosen major.

Vice President of Academic Affairs Christopher Graham and program directors were present to mark the occasion with prayers and encouragement for the students.

"Many of you will find yourselves questioning your decision tonight at some point in the next couple of years. Perhaps when you get to that course in your cur-

riculum that is... eh.' Maybe when you get to that course in your curriculum which is...aaaagghh.' Maybe looking across at the other majors and the students in the other majors and the greener grass in those pastures. We have urged you over the past year to seek counsel about what major God would have you choose here at the college. Remember, regardless of your major, you are a member of a single community that is dedicated to the same values, the same mission, to a communion that is being built upon the same foundation as the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the chief cornerstone," Graham said.

Jonathan Petty, wearing a blue cord representing his choice of Biblical Studies, stated that being a part of the first Major Declaration event gave him a connection with his peers.

"I have been very blessed here at Criswell. Before I got here, I was unsure. Student Services has done a great job in making us feel welcomed, getting us involved, and caring about us. Seeing how much they care about us, seeing traditions being started, and imagining them being carried out 20 years from now... I look forward to what that will look like with new students," Petty said.



Emma Lecompte said the Major Declaration event showed her "how so many people surrounded, supported, and encouraged" them.

Director of Student Services Jeremy Bugh hopes the event will help second-year students understand that the ceremony is about more than just choosing a major. It is seeing and feeling the support and prayers specified for them.

"I told the sophomores when I addressed them that I hope they see it is more than just about putting on a colored cord and reading a prayer, but that they see the care that their program directors have for them. And I hope that they see they are a part of something bigger than themselves. In doing this, the students are signifying what they believe they are called to go out and do for the Kingdom," Bugh said.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BENJAMIN PAREDES



In 2012, I was introduced to Criswell College through Dr. Creamer's radio show. His articulation, humility, and knowledge impacted me, and I immediately knew that I wanted to be trained like that, so in the spring of the next year I enrolled. Not knowing what I would do or how God would use me, I was on a journey to study theology, to know God, to deepen my faith, to reconcile these tensions between faith and reason.

Criswell College exceeded all my expectations. It challenged every mindset, paradigm, and idea I had theologically, politically, societally, and philosophically. Though in many regards I felt out of place, I also felt right at home. I grew up in a Hispanic home, in a Spanish-speaking church. I came from a different culture, context, perspective, denomination, yet every professor made me feel like I belonged and like my questions mattered.

I had broken down all my beliefs wrestling with faith and reason, meta-questions about the meaning of life, matters related to human identity and theology, but Criswell helped me build them back up. It was here that my calling was clarified. It was here that I felt the calling to be a preacher and a pastor. And it was here that I sharpened the skills and received the formation to fulfill that calling effectively. It was here that I learned that I can be intellectual without being arrogant, and a man of faith without being ignorant. Every day I came to class I was so excited and eager to learn, to be challenged.

I learned to debate and argue well. To not assume or generalize. To identify and acknowledge my presuppositions, those

things I take for granted. To study the Word of God with discipline and devotion. These classrooms were my training ground, my intellectual gym, my spiritual and theological school.

It was here that I developed genuine friendships, that I debated Calvinism and Arminianism and every other theological topic. It was here that the iron of others sharpened mine. It was here that Dr. Metts broke out in tears as he expounded Scripture from his Greek New Testament, showing me that even in Greek, the Holy Spirit can speak to you loud and clear.

It was here that Dr. Brooks taught me that, yes, it is possible to smile and laugh in Hebrew despite the difficulty of the subject matter. It was here that Dr. Seitzler taught me the importance of political engagement and how as Christians we can make not only an eternal difference but also a present one because the work in the here and now matters just as much.

It was here that Dr. Spencer taught me how our faith can impact our culture, how to wrestle with postmodernism, and how to value and respect the arts. It was here that Dr. Wooddell taught me that faith and reason are not enemies, they dance together and exist harmoniously, and that as Christians we have a calling to defend our faith, our faith is not blind, it is reasonable.

It was here that Dr. Bridger taught me to understand people of different cultures, to carry the burden of the Great Commission, and to understand the gospel as God's full redemptive story, God's meta-narrative. It was here that Dr. Bryant taught me the importance of spiritual formation, to protect and cultivate my

spiritual life because he taught me that godly men don't fall in a day, they have been crawling for a long time.

It was here that Dr. Berry taught me that theology should lead not only to right belief but also to right practice, that orthopraxy and godliness are the fruit of true orthodoxy (and also to never root for the Dallas Cowboys). It was here that Dr. Graham taught me to appreciate and respect Baptist theology. He taught me the importance of theological words because words are not mere expressions, they ascribe meaning, and that meaning must correspond to reality.

It was here that Dr. Campbell taught me to exposit, explain, illustrate and apply God's Word and to let the text drive the sermon. He taught me that I can be an expository preacher without having to change my personality. It was here that Dr. Warstler, after an entire semester of studying theodicy and human suffering, said "we end this semester with more questions than answers, but we have learned how to ask the right questions and how to comfort those who suffer with the truth of an immanent God who is with us in our suffering." Little did I know how pertinent these words would become when I preached at the funeral of a 19-year-old young mom who had been killed in a car accident, or of a member of our church, a father and volunteer, who was shot outside of his apartment after church on Sunday.

It was here that Dr. Hunter taught me the importance of research, understanding, and empathy in counseling, and that after writing a paper on how to serve the LGBTQ community and researching the different origin theories of homosexuality, I was able to help a young man at our church struggling with same-sex attraction. It was here that Dr. Creamer taught me to love philosophy, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." He taught me to dialogue with Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, and yes, even Nietzsche, because the Bible does not shy away from the world's most difficult questions. And it was here that I solidified my beliefs in the inerrancy of Scripture, in the harmony between faith and reason, and my passion for the work of the church. Thank God for Criswell College.

Criswell Legacy Awards Gala Honors Longtime Supporter Jack Pogue, Senator James Lankford

Over 400 were in attendance for Criswell's 4th Annual Legacy Awards Gala on Friday, October 22 at the Omni Dallas Hotel.

The gala provides an opportunity for alumni and supporters of Criswell College to encourage students, faculty, and staff, to reflect on the school's accomplishments, and honor those answering God's call on their lives to share the Gospel and to serve others.

The event started with the song "If It Had Not Been" by vocal artists Lori and Jeff Fair '06 and Leanna Davis. Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Luis Juárez welcomed guests, followed by an invocation by Director of Annual Giving, Cesia Juárez. Vice President of Advancement Joe Wooddell offered words of gratitude, followed by a presidential welcome from Criswell College President Barry Creamer '94.

"If you look back historically at the influence we have had, it is profound; it is outsized," Creamer said. "We are grateful for the footprint the Lord has given us in this world, but what we anticipate the Lord doing is even greater than that. We challenge students to understand that the One we are praying to about them can do what Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, exceeding, abundantly, above everything they ask or think. And we say to them, this is where you are right now, and this is what you're asking for, something better than that ... maybe a degree, a graduate degree, an influence in the culture. He's able to do more than who you are right now."

U.S. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) offered encouraging words to guests, reminding them to be like Nehemiah and be willing to do their part in the places the Lord calls them:

"If you don't want to just write off your nation, and you want to be involved in Kingdom work, don't stop ... you need to pray first. That's the Nehemiah model. Pray, and then work. And pray a very simple prayer, 'God, what do you want me to do about this? What's my part?'"



Jack Pogue, the 2021 Criswell Legacy Award recipient and U.S. Senator James Lankford, the event's keynote speaker.

If you don't want to just write off your nation, and you want to be involved in Kingdom work, don't stop ... you need to pray first. That's the Nehemiah model. Pray, and then work.

—U.S. SENATOR JAMES LANKFORD

This year's Criswell Legacy Award was presented to Jack Pogue. In February 1971 Mr. Pogue met Dr. W.A. Criswell, who led him to Christ. Soon after meeting Dr. Criswell—and two years after the founding of Criswell College—Mr. Pogue established the W.A. Criswell Foundation in 1972. The foundation has contributed millions of dollars to the college and supports the institution's efforts in training and graduating Ambassadors, Cultivators, Peacemakers, Problem-Solvers, and Professionals.

Toward the end of the evening Joe Wooddell invited attendees to join Criswell College's Daily Prayer Team; to join the Criswell Society—an opportunity to give financially at one of seven different levels over five years; to make a one-time gift to the college; and/or to come by the college for a visit in the days ahead. The night was an opportunity for all gathered to reflect on what the Lord has done in and through Criswell College, and to prayerfully consider what the college can accomplish in the coming years.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

AUNALISA HARRISON

My decision to attend Criswell was not my plan by any means. Before Criswell, I was at a university in Tulsa, Oklahoma pursuing my Bachelor of Science in Psychology. I thought this was where I would walk across the stage at the end of my four years, but the Lord had a different plan. I had been exposed to Criswell by my youth leaders throughout high school, but I had always planned to go to another university. Senior year came around, and I began to rethink where I wanted to go. I found myself looking at smaller schools, and with COVID-19 at its peak, the options to be on campus with in-person classes were slim.

When I did decide on a school, I was very excited. However, my semester did not go the way I anticipated. On top of school, my job was too much to balance and negatively impacted my friendships, my studies, and my relationship with the Lord. I also did not have a church community to build me up, and by the end of the semester, I was exhausted, discouraged, and unsure of where I needed to be. While thinking of places I could transfer to, the first school that came to mind was Criswell, and without hesitation, I made my decision.

“Being in the dorms helped me foster a Christ-centered community filled with people who build me up in my faith and challenge me daily.”

While I was nervous about transferring mid-year, I knew that if I had not left after my first semester, I would end up pursuing a degree at a school where the Gospel was not fueling me. After I transferred, everything else fell into place just the way it was supposed to. I moved into the new dorms, had a roommate I had never met, and was being guided by amazing people who impacted my journey at Criswell.

At first, I was wildly thrown off by the dynamic of the college because I was not used to the number of people and the community that extends from students to the faculty and professors. Being in the dorms helped me foster a Christ-centered community filled with people who build me up in my faith and challenge me daily. I was also encouraged to find a faithful church, and I was not left in the dark to attempt to find one alone. Both have shaped my

experience and have made my first year at Criswell the most fruitful year of my life. While I have had a handful of struggles this year, I have been able to better react in a Christ-like way to these struggles because of what I am learning inside and outside the classroom.

Moreover, being given the Timothy Project Scholarship has shaped my college experience. I can now work less to cultivate memories and friendships with people at the dorms and church. In addition, I have been able to value my education even more, and knowing that people have generously given to me so that I would get to continue pursuing my education has driven me to love it more than I ever have. By God's grace, I can be here, and that is all I ask for, and the scholarship has blessed me immensely. And I pray I use it to God's glory and honor of all the generous donors.

You can make a difference in the lives of students like AunaLisa with a one-time gift or a monthly pledge by going to criswell.edu/give or scanning this QR code

