

LEADERS IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE **CONVOCATION SERVICE**

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Just what is a Leader in Christian Service? At Milligan we talk a lot about serving, about service and servanthood. Regardless of what you are doing, who you are, what your job or career is, or how important the world thinks you are, it is an attitude of serving, a true willingness to be a servant, without visions of grandeur, that makes you great in the eyes of God. You don't long for greatness; your passion is for serving.

The individuals we will be introducing today have a passion for serving, not just leading. They are Christian servants, who have listened and followed God's call in their lives. They understand that your calling is to live a certain way, long before it is to do a certain job. Your calling is to let your passions, gifts, opportunities and longings be shaped and directed toward the service of God in this world.

At Milligan College, our mission is to help students find their place in God's work in the world. Part of this process is providing examples of servant leaders — individuals from all walks of life who have listened to God's call and have seen their calling and career coincide. We honor God by acknowledging his servants so that we may learn from their examples.

Oliver "Buzz" Thomas

"Using the Brain God Gave You to Design an Extraordinary Life and Career"

A former minister, attorney, author, teacher and community leader, Oliver "Buzz" Thomas serves as the executive director of the Niswonger Foundation. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and holds a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Additionally, he holds a doctor of jurisprudence from the University of Tennessee and a master of law from the University of Virginia. His newest book, "10 Things Your Minister Wants to Tell You But Can't Because He Needs the Job," was published in March.

HONOREES

Sandy Babel

Babel has been a special education teacher for over 25 years. Currently, she works at Science Hill High School.

As a teacher, she is kind and patient. She reaches out to her students and their families. She guides her students in their academics, as well as on the job training. Babel knows the importance of students' interpersonal relationships with their peers, their teachers and the public. She knows their positive approach to all they encounter will be the difference between their success or failure.

As a member of Crossroads Christian Church, Babel is active as Sunday school teacher and VBS volunteer. She is part of the Emmaus Community, serves as a counselor at Appalachian Christian Camp, and helps prepare and serve food at the Loaves and Fishes food ministry. She packs lunches for the girls and boy's basketball teams' road trips, sometimes involving her students in the preparation and decorating of the bags.

Her commitment to the "least of these" is evident in the stories shared by friends and co-workers. She brings joy and peace to many people during troubled times in their lives by making sure peoples basic needs are taken care of, from fixing meals to babysitting children, doing laundry and even taking care of the family dog. She is an encourager and shows the face of hospitality to all she meets.

Stephen Baldwin

Baldwin is the director of community development for the City of Johnson City. He is a graduate of East Tennessee State University with a bachelor of science degree in sociology and political science and a minor in history and music.

Baldwin has been a part of many community projects but his utmost satisfaction is helping deserving families' find adequate housing. He is a founding director of the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Greater Johnson City and serves as the city's liaison to the Appalachian Regional Coalition on Homelessness. Very active through his church, Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church, Baldwin serves as an IHN volunteer coordinator for the church, volunteers time for Habitat for Humanity, helps serve meals in the Melting Pot, and serves as chair of the Mission Committee and Community Outreach Teams. He even finds time to sing in the choir.

Brian Rosecrance, executive director of IHN, stated:

"His skills and personality have created partnerships between under-served community residents and the business community. He has provided persons and neighborhoods with community action plans that had to be delicately balanced with the political atmosphere of our city. His work has produced equal rights and social justice for many citizens of Johnson City and consequently is a man respected by many.

"When he is put on a pedestal of accomplishment, Steve always draws that attention to God and to his savior, Jesus."

Linda Calvert

Calvert is the dean of community education for Northeast State Technical Community College. She is a graduate of The University of Tennessee with a master of science degree in mathematics education.

Calvert has and continues to contribute to many spiritual, humanitarian and social causes. Among many of these causes is her participation on many local, regional and national boards which focus on positively changing lives for individuals in our community. She presently serves on the Board of the American Red Cross and Leadership Kingsport. Calvert believes that Christians should serve and be represented in government. She presently serves as a commissioner on the Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority and as chair of the South Central Development District's Weed and Seed Strategy. As chair of the program, she was responsible for securing a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to form a partnership between South Central residents and law enforcement officials to work together to eliminate drug and other crime activity in the community.

Her nomination letters described her as "a voice for people who cannot help themselves" and a "shining example of Christian leadership beyond the walls of her own Shiloh Baptist Church."

Homer G'Fellers

If your lights go out, Homer G'Fellers is the man to call. G'Fellers serves as the general manager of the Johnson City Power Board, where he started as a meter reader over 33 years ago. He has held numerous positions with the Johnson City Power Board and still found time to serve in government as an Alderman and then Mayor of Jonesborough, Tenn.

G'Fellers has a gift of bringing people together for a common cause. Certainly, he stands on his rock-solid principles, but he is willing to listen and work with people from the personal standpoint of caring for people as a servant in a high-profile regional position. He leads by example. He has the ability to listen and learn, to sort out what is often an overload of opinions and different points of view and to act in a wise and counseled manner based on what is the best interest of our community. He is a very able leader that is not afraid to do the right thing.

G'Fellers places a high value on service to his church, First Baptist Church of Jonesborough, where he teaches Sunday school, runs sound for worship services and drives the bus for the youth group.

Joe Knisley

Joe Knisley is a pharmacist and owner of West Town Pharmacy in Johnson City. He is a graduate of The University of Tennessee Center for the Health Sciences at Memphis School of Pharmacy.

In his professional work and through his local business, Knisley demonstrates leadership in ways not often seen. His profession as a pharmacist puts him in a position to meet those in need of comfort, relief and encouragement. In most pharmacies, one would get that in the form of a pill. When Knisley fills a prescription, he supplies what the doctor prescribed, but also a dose of personal and spiritual substance that helps one cope in a greater way. As a businessman, he strives to lead in areas beyond standard business activity, putting himself on the line for what he believes is true.

Knisley is an active member of First Christian Church, where he has served as an elder and many other leadership positions. He has been known to travel quite a distance to personally deliver prescriptions and visit shut-ins. One interesting side note, it has been reported that he once filled a prescription for Elvis Presley while living in Memphis.

Dennis Powell

Dennis Powell lives by the golden rule in his business dealings, "Don't do something to a customer that you wouldn't want done to yourself. I've always felt I didn't want to tell a customer something or do something I'd be ashamed of if I met him on the street. I want to be able to see him eye to eye and for him to have the same confidence in me that he had when I first talked to him." Powell carries this rule through in everything he does. He is a person known for building relationships. In every area of service, he is a visionary and a leader, but he does not hesitate to roll up his sleeves to make sure all the details are complete.

A success in the automotive business, Powell previously owned Dennis Powell Chrysler-Plymouth-Dodge dealership in Johnson City. Held in high esteem by his business peers, Powell has been a leader in many of the automotive industry's professional organizations and has been recognized with the Andrew Jackson Award, the highest honor given by the Tennessee Automotive Association.

A longtime member and former international president of the Lions Club, he exemplifies their motto, "We Serve" by working to help the blind and visually impaired. His contributions to church, community, educational and healthcare leadership are so numerous as one of his peers said, "It is hard to think of a worthwhile local project in which Dennis has not participated and he often takes a leadership role."

"Mr. Powell has provided us with many opportunities to observe his Christ-like ethics, commitment to serving the less fortunate and heartfelt concern for all. Whether it is through fair and amiable board leadership, hands-on care giving to the poorest of the poor or support of his local church, he exemplifies a godly stewardship of himself and all areas of his life."

Denise Sibley

Denise Sibley, a graduate of University of Virginia School of Medicine, is a physician who "puts the CARE back into medical practice." Sibley opened her private practice, Wellspring HealthCare, because she wanted to minister to patients spiritually as well as administer medical care. Her patients benefit from a sweet spirit and the compassion that she shows to everyone. She never rushes and spends as much time as needed with each patient. Not only does she reach out to her patients, a colleague tells the story of how Sibley presented her with a Bible during a difficult time in her life. Through her actions, Sibley led her friend and colleague to Christ.

She is an active member of the community and her church, Central Baptist in Johnson City. She leads Bible studies, sings in the choir and conducts Weigh Down programs. She finds time to coach volleyball teams and serve as a school clinic volunteer. Sibley makes a difference in many lives.

In the words of one of her colleagues, "Dr. Sibley is an extension of Jesus' hands and feet on earth."

Peggy Willocks

Peggy Willocks is a retired elementary school principle and an advocate and volunteer for Parkinson Disease research, treatment and support groups. A graduate of East Tennessee State University, Willocks was named Tennessee Principle of the Year in 1997. In 1998, she realized that Parkinson disease had made it impossible for her to continue in the profession she loved.

Though she suffers from a severe neurological illness that daily impairs her ability to live life fully, Willocks is not afraid to call her affliction with Parkinson's disease a gift. She says "It has given me purpose. For so long, I was depressed, but now, I am overwhelmed with things to do. It's amazing how just a start on the computer has put me in touch with so many people." The "start" Willocks is referring to is the website she helped co-create on Parkinson's disease, www.grassrootsconnections.com. Today, I have a network of friends sharing my same experiences, having met many of them face-to-face.

"I have led a successful Parkinson Disease support group that is like family. I have spoken at schools, churches and community facilities about living with Parkinson's, and I actively do free lance writing and work with several websites providing help to people with the same hopeless attitude I had," said Willocks.

Nationally recognized for her advocacy, Willocks said, "I am still teaching." Although, these days her students are congressmen, senators and officials of the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

Ambers Wilson, Jr.

Ambers Wilson, Jr. is the owner of Masengill's Specialty Shop. He is a graduate of East Tennessee State College, now known as East Tennessee State University.

Wilson is tirelessly devoted to Christian service with Central Baptist Church and to the community. For over 20 years, every Tuesday night Wilson and his wife have lead groups in The Explorer's Bible study. On Wednesday nights, as an accomplished pianist, he accompanies the Chancel Choir and orchestra rehearsals for worship and special programs. On Thursday nights, he drives to Mountain City to lead a Bible study for prisoners. On Sundays, for the past eight years, he has taught a Sunday school class. He daily visits church and community members in the hospital. Wilson was Central's first champion of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. About 12 years ago, after being involved in the Emmaus walk, Wilson helped start Kairos Prison Fellowship, a similar spiritual growth experience for prisoners. He works with the Billy Graham crisis call center and the Johnson City Senior Center. He also has taught adult literacy and worked in hospice care.

Wilson is described as a musician, teacher and prayer warrior. You can add to this list, successful businessman. He has operated Massengills Specialty Shop for over 50 of its 90 years in existence. He discretely uses his business as a vehicle for witnessing to persons who frequent the store. Through his wonderful sense of humor, or sometimes his more serious side, he is never hesitant to share his faith with others. He always seems to know if someone is a believer or is affiliated with a church. If not, he is quick to share with them and invite them to church.

Calvin Wilson, Jr.

Cal Wilson, Jr., a graduate of Milligan College, is a Financial Advisor with UBS.

Wilson is consistently a top performing financial advisor. As a co-worker states, "In our industry this level of achievement is often accompanied by a demanding spirit and an attitude of pride. This is not true of Cal Wilson. He is a humble person, who is always available and willing to help others in the office as they learn a new job, experience personal difficulties or just need advice and counsel."

A behind the scenes worker, Wilson has volunteered numerous hours to help many community organizations, including Mountain States Foundation, Milligan College and Emmanuel School of Religion. He is not afraid of getting his hands dirty, helping with repairs and maintenance at Appalachian Christian Camp. A member of First Christian Church in Johnson City for over 33 years, he has served as an elder, deacon, youth sponsor and has taught in the children's ministry. He never draws attention to himself, never seeking attention from others — just the personal reward of a job well done.