### Raining on their parade



Photo by NOAH DARNELL | The Bison

Students slosh through the sidewalk-turned-river between the Benson Auditorium and the Student Center after chapel Wednesday, Sept. 16. Heavy rains have drenched Harding several times in recent weeks, forcing students to break out their umbrellas and rainboots.

# **Survey studies** church dropouts

### Retention rate high among CoC

by SARAH KYLE news editor

arding University will host its 86th annual lectureship series Monday, September 27 through Wednesday, September 30. Among the multiple speakers for the series will be Dr. Flavil Yeakley, who was recently commissioned by the Christian Higher Education Foundation to conduct a survey regarding the retention rate of members of Churches of Christ nationwide.

The Christian Higher Education Foundation is an annual meeting of the presidents of Christian colleges and universities that serve the same focus group as Churches of Christ across the United States.

Yeakley said the group had discussed for a length of time the need for a current and reliable set of figures on various topics regarding Churches of Christ.

"Dr. Burks asked me to put together a research proposal to accomplish that purpose," Yeakley said. "He took it to the presidents, they approved it and I've been working on the thing

Yeakley and his team selected Churches of Christ throughout the nation in regard to church size, location and racial and ethnic makeup. They then asked leaders of each church to make a list of all the young adults who had graduated from high school while attending the congregations between 1997 and 2006.

"We used this indirect method because previous research has shown that if Yeakley sends out a questionnaire or if Harding sends out a questionnaire to people who have left Churches of Christ, they're not very likely to respond," Yeakley said.

One facet of the survey included how many of the teenagers in the cluster sample attended college, and whether or not it was a Christian

university. Yeakley said the results were positively surprising.

"We had been hearing for years that only 15 percent of the college bound young people in Churches of Christ go to a school like Harding," Yeakley said. "Among the 5,000 young people in the cluster sample churches, 31.4 percent attended a Christian college or university, and among those who have already graduated, 85 percent are still members of the church."

The team then furthered their research by conducting a survey including more than 3,000 students of 11 different colleges.

Yeakley said the survey team discovered that 85 percent of the alumni of Christian colleges and universities were members of the Church of Christ. Among those who attend public, state-supported schools 85 percent drop out as soon as they leave home.

"Some of them come back to church after they graduate, get married, start having kids; but they come back with much less leadership training than ones who went to Christian colleges," Yeakley said. "Half of them never come back."

After receiving the information produced by the survey, Yeakley said the presidents of the Christian Higher Education Foundation wanted to know more about those who decided to leave the Church of Christ.

Yeakley agreed and created a Web site called churchesofchristsurvey.com that contained just one survey: an open essay-format survey entitled "Why I Left Churches of Christ." He spread the word about the survey through the presidents and leaders of the 100 cluster sample churches.

"The idea was that you contact someone you know used to be a member of Churches of Christ and now they're no longer members, and ask them if they'd be willing to go

see SURVEY on page 3a

## Aramark key to SA plans

#### by CARLY KESTER student writer

he Harding University Student Association is looking for ways to improve campus this semester by planning events, taking surveys and providing service projects.

A big project the SA has been working on is attempting to negotiate with Aramark regarding the way they run the cafeteria. The SA is also working on improving relations with Aramark to discover ways the student body and Aramark can best work together.

The changes the SA wants to make involve finding a way to reduce congestion and help the lines move faster somehow, SA President Bryan Clifton said.

One problem they are trying to solve is what to do with all the wasted cafeteria meals students have left at the end of every semester.

"It'd be great if we could donate students' leftover meals to needy families in White County who can't always afford food," Clifton said.

Another project the SA plans to develop is a survey for students to

take in order to find out opinions, complaints and suggestions people have for Aramark. Clifton said he hopes the survey will help the SA better represent the interests of students.

There will also be numerous service projects open for students to participate in.

Some future events the SA is working on include a dodgeball tournament based on the movie "Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story," Rake and Run, a day-long service project when students go around Searcy to rake leaves in people's yards. Also in the works are a Polar Bear Plunge, an event where people jump into a pool cold water on the Front Lawn, and many smaller service projects throughout the semester, Clifton said.

The HUD Cup, a series of sporting events in which dorms compete with one another throughout the semester, is another activity the SA has organized.

The SA's effort to help Christine Clemons is not over. In spite of the large number of Texas vs. the World T-shirts sold, the SA still has shirts coming in next week that students have ordered, according to

see SA on page 3a

# Students show pride, piety in ink

#### by ABBY KELLET student writer

orn in the mid-'80s and later, Generation Y has been accused of having self-focused, impatient and pleasure-oriented lifestyles. Though the generational stereotype of unnaturally colored hair and facial piercings may not be prevalent on Harding's campus, tattoos are.

Daniel Amstutz, a Bible major from Sacramento, Calif., just got the beginning of a sleeve nearly three weeks ago.

"I think I can see where people can get tattoos as like, a right of passage," Amstutz said. "But for me, no. It's to remind me, even when times are down, that God has given me a path to follow, and it's just kind of there to help uplift me."

In spite of the fact that Amstutz hopes to be a minister or preacher one day, his plan to get a sleeve tattoo on his upper arm does not cause him concern when he thinks about entering the Christian workforce.

'From a biblical perspective, it's kind of an evangelistic tool because kids are going to ask you what this tattoo means," Amstutz said. "And I can tell them that through all the mess-ups that I've had, God said 'Here's the path, and even though you've fallen off it, you can come back.' In my own way, it's a way to connect to them."

While some students are using tattoos as tools to reach out and spread their beliefs, others are using the permanent symbols as reminders of certain times in their lives.

Brenna Shettlesworth is a nursing major from Miami, and she has a tattoo of a rare, tropical flower on her foot. She got the tattoo after going through a difficult time.

"I had this need to find peace, you

know?" Shettlesworth said. "And my

grandma had given me something with those kind of flowers on it, and I realized I really found peace in that.'

After getting the Belladonna flower sketched by an artist to, ensure the picture would be exactly what she wanted, she waited two years before finally getting the tattoo.

"You need to research the places you're thinking about going to, and make sure you think about it for a long period of time so you're not getting it on a whim," Shettlesworth said. "Because kids in our generation just do it because their friends are doing it, and it's permanent. You need to be sure it's something you won't regret."

Besides making whimsical decisions, Generation Y has also been described as "family-centric," or prioritizing time with the ones they love most over work and higher salaries. Youth and family ministry major Michael Walker makes a case for this argument with his tattoo.

"About three years ago I got W-A-L-K-E-R down my ribs," Walker said, "because I'm proud of my name, you know? I'm a family kind of guy."

Dustin Birdwell is a junior Youth and Family Ministry major and got a family-oriented tattoo as well.

"It's a book on my back shoulder, and on the page in Greek it says 'on fire for God,' and 'A Life Called to

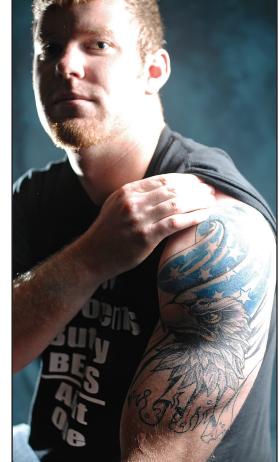


Photo by NOAH DARNELL | The Bison

"I got my tattoo in May to demonstrate my American pride," PR major James Taylor says. For more photos of Harding tattoos, see page 6a. To see why one Harding professor thinks students decide to get inked, see page 5b.

> Serve for God," Birdwell said. "And it has my brother's dog tags hanging from the center."

The previous generations may have some trouble understanding Generation Y's reasons, but whether they like it or not, tattoos on Harding's campus are a bit more than conventional.