

ADMINISTRATOR AT EASTERN UNIVERSITY 1960-1990
William Allen Zulker

A Ministry in Christian Higher Education

On July 1, 1960, I became the Director of Admissions at Eastern Baptist College, St. Davids, PA. Later on the name was changed to Eastern College, and then Eastern University.

For me, this was an opportunity to extend or expand my ministry in an educational setting that was distinctly Christian, founded to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I believed with the founders, trustees of the college, President, and Dean, that we could make a difference in the lives of our students by maintaining a Christ-centered environment both in and out of the classroom.

Academic pursuits with Christian professors highly qualified in their respective fields, combined with social, recreational, and residential policies in harmony with Biblical principles were of vital importance. As college administrators we were charged with that responsibility. At the time I was employed, the President, the Dean, and I were all ordained ministers of the Gospel. There were three other administrators, the Registrar, the Treasurer, and the Business Manager.

July 1960

As indicated elsewhere, Dean George S. Claghorn visited me one day in my office at Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church and invited me to become the Director of Admissions at the college. He had been my professor of Philosophy when I was a student there. As I approached my graduation in 1953, I shared with him the possibilities of my becoming the Assistant to the Minister at the Church. He knew the church because his parents had worshipped there, and he encouraged me to accept the position.

After I had graduated from Temple University School of Theology in 1956, was ordained by the Philadelphia Presbytery, and had become the Minister at Bethany Temple, I invited Dr. Claghorn to be one of our guest ministers. He observed my work and thought that I could assist him as a colleague in the administration at the College. The story of my departure from the pastorate is told in "My Ministry at Bethany Temple" in this web-site.

When I began at the college in July 1960, I was assigned an office in Ott Hall, on the second floor just next to President Guffin's office. Directly across the hall was Dr. Claghorn's office. It seems to me that the carpet between our offices must have worn down quickly because we were in constant communication.

I was the first Director of Admissions of the college and knew nothing at all about it. The admitting of students had been a process handled by the Registrar's Office. Interestingly enough, the Register at that time was Ms. Jean Whittaker, a young Christian woman who had graduated from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, and who had been my professor of music when I attended The King's College in New Castle Delaware in the Fall on 1949.

Because the college was growing, and more growth was desired, it was decided that a separate Admissions Office should be created and a director employed. Moreover,

more time was needed to be devoted to the recruitment of students. Such efforts at the time were sporadic and handled part-time by one of the faculty members. Fortunately for me, Jean Whittaker was gracious enough to give up her former responsibilities for admissions and allow me to set up a completely new office.

Running back and forth to Dr. Claghorn's office and spending every lunch-hour together during the summer before fall classes began, I was able to understand what the Dean expected of me. It was extremely challenging and enjoyable to establish policies and procedures, to set up an entirely new office, procure equipment and employ a new staff – just one full-time person to begin with – an office secretary.

By the time school opened in September, I was rolling along.

This position was also appealing to me in that I would be free to continue, and even increase, my opportunity for a preaching ministry – another story told in the web-site under “My Preaching Ministry.”

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

1. To recruit and enroll new students.
2. To prepare recruitment brochures and advertisement material.
2. To work with the Faculty in determining qualifications for admission.
3. To interview all prospective students.
4. To prepare application files for each applicant for review by the Admissions Committee.
5. To handle all correspondence with applicants, high school Guidance Counselors, references, and Pastors.
6. To conduct an extensive visitation schedule to high school Guidance Offices.
7. To conduct on-campus visitation programs for prospective students, counselors, youth leaders, and pastors.
8. To oversee an Admissions Office staff of full-time employees and part-time student assistants.

All this was very exciting to me.

CREATING RECRUITMENT BROCHURES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

I enjoyed working with an artist and a printer in preparing colorful brochures and leaflets to help prospective students know more about the college, its academic programs, residence halls, campus activities, athletics, music, chapel, scholarships, costs and schedule.

We then developed an advertising and mailing schedule along with special visitation days for young people and their parents.

One of the most significant parts of my work was the very heavy schedule of high school visitation in order to meet with Guidance Directors and share with them the story of Eastern. At first, it was shocking to realize that the college was so little known, and that the impression was that all our students were Baptists, and that it was a pre-theological school. Of course, in the beginning of the college, that was true.

BEGINNING HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

The college began in 1932 as the collegiate division of the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary founded in 1925 in Philadelphia. Having moved to the Overbrook area of West Philadelphia at City Line and Lancaster Avenues into the former Green Hill Hotel complex, it offered three years of graduate theological studies in preparing ministers for Baptist churches. After the first seven years in existence, the Seminary felt that it could best prepare the seminarians by first offering the usual four years of undergraduate liberal arts in the same location with the same professors. It meant that the collegians would also be in a Christian environment and would have the benefit of very highly qualified professors with many years of experience.

When I began as a student in January 1950, new students were expected to attend the Seminary for a total of seven years and graduate with two degrees: the Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree (BA), and the Bachelor of Divinity theological graduate degree – (BD). But in 1952, the collegiate division became a full-fledged college of Liberal Arts and Science with its own name – Eastern Baptist College – and it moved to St. Davids, PA, its present location.

It continued with the same Board of Trustees as the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, but meetings were convened at different times. One President, one Treasurer, and one Vice-President for Development and Fund-raising served both institutions. The Deans, the Registrars, the Faculties and Staffs were different.

I was in my last year in the collegiate division when this change occurred, and I graduated in June 1953 in the first class to receive a degree from Eastern Baptist College in its new location.

THE “NEW” EASTERN BAPTIST COLLEGE AT ST. DAVIDS, PA

The previous section simply indicates the situation that we then faced in 1960 in trying to up-date everyone with the true picture of Eastern Baptist College, a Christian College of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. It was not an easy task.

HIGH SCHOOL VISITATION

By this time, most high schools employed Guidance Counselors who assisted students in their choices of a college and helped them prepare their applications. I soon learned that it was very important to make personal visits with as many counselors as possible, to share with them up-to-date information about the programs we offered. I also wanted to build a bridge between them and the college through friendship.

Obtaining a list of high schools, I then set up appointments and hoped that in addition to meeting with the counselors that I would also meet some students. What a shock to hear so many counselors say that they were not aware of our existence or that they didn't have any Baptist or pre-theological students. The best school to visit were those that already had a student at Eastern, but that didn't open new territory. So off I went – one day East, the next to the South – two, three or four days a week. But then I

had to get back to the college to keep the office running and to interview students visiting the campus. Often I would leave a counselor's office and sit in my car dictating letters on my pocket Dictaphone that my secretary would transcribe when I returned.

So in addition to a secretary, it became necessary to employ an office assistant who could do these things in my absence.

I don't recall the time-line, but the next step was to employ an Admissions Counselor to assist in making high school visits. And as the college grew, and we had to step up our admissions efforts, our office staff and number of counselors also increased.

By this time, the Dean has also informed me that I was to take on added responsibility as the Director of Financial Aid. I was put in charge of the new College Work/Study financial program, the Federal College-Loan program, and the college's own scholarship program. Subsequently, we employed an assistant to handle all financial aid.

CHURCH VISITATION

Churches were one of the best recruiting areas. Most of our students had been active in their home churches and we thought if others still in high school knew about the excellent opportunities at Eastern, more of them would apply. Likewise, if the ministers knew of recent developments and the expansion of academic offerings, they would recommend that their young people consider Eastern.

I began a very extensive program of church or pastoral visitation. Whenever I had a free moment between high school visits, I would drop in to talk with the local ministers. Often it would be a luncheon meeting. Occasionally, I would be invited to preach at the Sunday worship service, tell something about the college, and then meet with interested students or their parents afterward.

THE COLLEGE CHOIR

Right from the start in 1960, the Dean asked me to arrange the annual College Choir Tour for the following Spring. It was to include churches as far away as in Maine. It was felt that nearby churches in New Jersey and Pennsylvania could be scheduled during the school year, but not so with those far away.

Making a preliminary phone contact during the Fall with churches in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine to, I was able to schedule the tour for two-weeks with fifteen engagements. Then, in order to maximize attendance, I personally visited each church in February and gave the ministers printed flyers and other promotional material. We also discussed housing accommodations for the choir, and even gave suggested meal menus so that the choir wouldn't be eating the same type of casserole every night – which was one of the student's complaint of past tours.

Because the Dean also asked me to accompany the choir and assist Professor of Music Joel Anderson, the Director, in non-musical ways, I made motel accommodations for the Director and myself in each town.

This choir-tour effort was productive and I continued it myself for several years before turning it over to someone else.

In 1963, Professor Anderson and I met with a representative of the American Baptist Convention in Valley Forge to arrange a choir tour to Haiti during Spring Break.

After many planning meetings, we flew first to Porto Rico for several concerts in Baptist Churches and then on to Haiti. We stayed at the Theological Seminary near San Juan, and traveled by bus to places like Ponce and Carolina.

Flying on to Port au Prince, the choir sang in the large Baptist Church where Dr. Reuben Marc was the minister and stayed in a down-town hotel where electricity was on only for a few hours each day. It was an eye-opener for all of us and we became aware of the effects of the dictatorship of Dr. Duvalier and his “ton-ton macoute” police force. The poverty was shocking and the dirt and rubble were repulsive.

Our next stop was to Cap Haitian in the North. We were put on make-shift buses to travel the long journey on a dusty broken-down road that was long overdue for repairs.

Arriving at a motel overlooking the waters to the north, we then visited the Baptist Hospital nearby and the theological Seminary. The choir presented a couple of concerts and was well received. Again, the poor living conditions of the Haitians was a shock to all of us. We watched the people line up at a street-side spring, with large buckets in order to get water that was not otherwise available. The spirit of the Christians we met, as well as that of the missionaries, was upbeat and positive. It was quite an unforgettable experience for all of us.

COLLEGE FOR A DAY PROGRAMS

Each year we conducted “College For A Day” in order to attract more students and give them a first-hand opportunity to meet faculty members, attend sample classes, see the labs, different buildings and residence halls. We provided lunch for them and a special chapel service with the choir and musical groups.

THE “TURNING POINT” MUSICAL ENSEMBLE

When the new president Dr. Daniel E. Weiss arrived on campus in 1973, he asked me what we could do to relate more directly with churches. My response was that we needed a musical ensemble of five or six students that would be carefully selected, well trained musically and socially, and then be scheduled for programs in various churches. They would also be paid just like other work/study students. He thought it was a good idea – and shocked me by giving me the responsibility to do it.

Actually, I was very glad he did. My earlier experiences with the Zulker Gospel Trio, as well as my years as a minister helped me formulate ideas for this new ministry. I immediately employed Neil Fichthorn, a former public school music teacher who was then in charge of the music program at the Sandy Cove Bible Conference and Morning Cheer Ministries to assist me. Together we held auditions, selected the members of the team, chose the music we felt was appealing and appropriate, and began our training sessions each week.

My secretary for sixteen years is presently (April 2011) still in the employ at Eastern and has kept detailed records of all the personnel and engagements right from the beginning. Anyone looking for specific information should contact her. She handled all correspondence between our office and the churches or other places where Turning Point sang.

My oversight of the team continued from 1973 to the time of my retirement from the college in 1990. At first, we scheduled the team for twenty engagements each semester for a total of forty for the year. But then we added a summer ten-week tour for an added eighty concerts for a total of one-hundred-twenty for the year. It was a very busy and rigorous schedule for the students and quite a task for us in handling all the details involved. Though I started this while I was Director of Admissions, I continued the full responsibility for it even when I was appointed Campus Minister (with the title of Dean of Christian Life), and later the Assistant to the President. I consider this one of the most significant phases of my life as an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I can only hope that my training of the students as well as the ministry they had in so many churches has been of some significance for them, for the college and for the church.

THE DEAN OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

In 1976, President Daniel E. Weiss asked me to take charge of the Christian life of the college with the title of Dean of Christian Life. I would also become a member of the President's Cabinet – to me, an important position assisting more directly in the major policy decisions of the college.

As further enticement to accept the position, the President suggested that I pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree at Eastern Baptist Seminary without cost and with time off to attend classes and study. I did, obtaining the degree (D. Min.) in May 1978

My responsibilities included the Wednesday chapel services, Bible-study groups, spiritual counseling, "Turning Point", and working with other student groups such as the "Angels of Harmony" a singing ensemble of black students. I enjoyed each day so much.

Despite being a Christian college, there had never been a full-time person overseeing the Christian life of the institution. It must have been thought that because there were so many Christians throughout the administration and faculty that a spiritual life and attitude would be present and grow or develop automatically. Through the years there had been several part-time chaplains or someone called a "spiritual advisor. Dr. Weiss, a graduate of Wheaton College in Illinois, felt that something more needed to be done. He was also concerned about the impression that left with the public.

Creating the new administrative position equal with the Academic Dean and the Dean of Students, he also selected the location of the office on the main floor of Walton Hall, the student center. The former paneled library, with glass-fronted wall book shelves, and a decorative arched or vaulted ceiling, provided a very warm and friendly setting. It was an invitation for students to "drop in" before and after meals in the adjoining Dining Room and when visiting the College Book Store. Though the large stone fireplace was not to be used, sitting on sofas in front of it provided a casual environment when counseling a student or conducting a small Bible Class or Prayer Meeting.

Separate entrances led into my personal office and that of my secretary, with a connecting door between them. Several windows looked out over the mansion patio and lake. Across the hall, beyond the student lounge was a small chapel with several wooden church pews, a piano, organ, pulpit and stain-glass windows. It could seat about a hundred.

Working with students, we prepared fifteen-minute audio meditations that were activated by anyone entering the chapel for a few moments of prayer and worship.

CHAPEL SERVICES

Chapel services were held every Wednesday from 10:00 am to 11:00 am. Attendance was not required, but between one and two-hundred students and members of the faculty and administration attended. It seemed to depend more upon the program or speakers than upon one's personal schedule. That made it imperative me to plan the best possible, though it was not always easy. Music programs attracted the largest attendance, and when I announce a "Kaleidoscope" service, the three-hundred seat auditorium was filled to capacity. All participants in those programs were students using their talents in music, speech or drama in some very unique ways. The "Clowns", with their silent portrayals of Biblical Truths, were very popular. "The Angels of Harmony" as well as "Turning Point" or a very talented instrumentalist or vocalist, were all very well received. One of my favorite endeavors was in creating a video presentation with accompanying music. Today that is called a "power-point" presentation.

Of course, there were some very outstanding speakers – some clergy, some athletes, some politicians, and some missionaries.

On two special occasions we made telephone calls to the speakers who could not be present. At the designated moment I would sit at a table on the platform with a large projection screen behind me. Placing the call, I then asked questions that I had previously sent to the interviewee and as he answered, we projected pictures of his work on the screen. Being amplified in the auditorium, the students heard the entire conversation.

One of these calls we placed to missionary in South America who had graduated from Eastern – Mr. Bob Judy, with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Mexico.

Another call was to Chuck Colson, former advisor to President Richard Nixon during the time of the criminal Watergate episode. Chuck had been indicted and sent to prison. After being released he became a Christian and the founder of Prison Fellowship, a ministry that spread around the world in taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ behind prison bars. Knowing at the time that we would not be able to get Colson as a chapel speaker, we placed the pre-arranged call to him at his office and interviewed him in this manner.

I was also in charge of the annual Christian Life Conference at which a major theme centered on the Bible and Christian Life. Special well-recognized speakers were brought to the campus and held discussion sessions in addition to the chapel service.

BACK TO THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

In the Fall of 1980, Dr. Daniel E. Weiss was unhappy with my successor in the Admissions Office and terminated his employment. Enrollment had stalled and declined. In January, the President asked me to step in and take charge of it with the new title Dean of Admissions while at the same time continuing responsibilities in the Christian Life Office for the remainder of the academic year...

By this time, the Admissions Office had been relocated to the center of the campus in the building between the student center and the main classroom building. The staff was already in position though some major changes had to be made in procedures.

Even here, I was still responsible for the ministry of "Turning Point." With a lot of extra hours and effort I carried both offices until a new chaplain was found.

OFFICE STAFF AND ASSISTANTS

MORE TO FOLLOW
April 28, 2011