



**SIBURT
INSTITUTE**
for Church Ministry

2017-18 YEAR IN REVIEW



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The Siburt Institute for Church Ministry's mission is to offer resources and best practices for leading congregational communities in pursuit of God's mission in the world and to provide avenues for the spiritual formation of Christian leaders. It fulfills its mission through four major practices: *formation, resourcing, networking* and *reflection*. The institute was established in 2012 by Abilene Christian University to continue and build upon the legacy of the late Dr. Charles "Charlie" Siburt, who served as ACU's vice president for church relations and one of the university's leading voices in churches for more than 20 years. It reflects ACU's commitment to engage with leaders of local congregations and to support and resource the vital work of churches across the nation.

Dr. Royce Money, ACU chancellor and founder of the Siburt Institute, served as the first executive director and now Dr. Carson Reed serves in that role. Reed and the Siburt Institute team work tirelessly to expand offerings and to address the ever-changing landscape of congregations in the 21st century. We invite you to join us on this journey as we prepare for an even brighter future.



A word from the executive director

With the closing of the academic year, we use this time to reflect on the how we have seen God at work through the programs and services of the Siburt Institute for Church Ministry. From the excitement of the annual Summit conference to the engagement of thousands of readers with the CHARIS website, we are thrilled to see the many ways in which church leaders are taking advantage of the resources we make available.

My colleagues in ACU's College of Biblical Studies and I have worked directly with some of you by way of consulting, interim preaching, focused workshops or just a quick phone call for a challenge or opportunity facing your congregation. Our team is committed to serving as a connection point for church leaders to gain access to the wide range of expertise and other resources that our faculty and staff have to offer local congregations.

Learning, sharing, healing, networking and finding community happen daily through the various expressions of the institute. As you read the pages of this *Year in Review*, we hope you can share with us the sense of gratitude we feel as we serve alongside you in the work of the Kingdom.

Thank you for your prayers and ongoing support.

Blessings!

Dr. Carson E. Reed
Executive Director
Siburt Institute for Church Ministry

Ministers' Support Network

Ministry couples focus most of their attention on taking care of all the hurting people who surround them on a daily basis. But who ministers to our ministry couples? The Ministers' Support Network (MSN) is a space for ministers and their spouses to be loved and heard while connecting with other ministry couples and to helpful resources. Often they need encouragement to practice self-care.

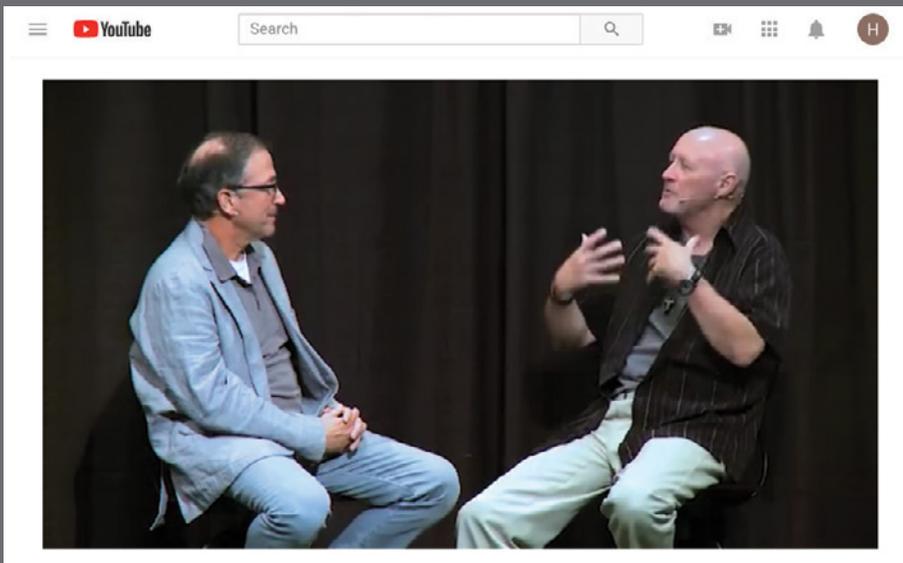
MSN, which began decades ago

and continues as a vital ministry today, conducted two weekend sabbatical retreats this past year. These retreats allow ministry couples to take a refreshing breath in a safe environment. Participants are invited to think back to when God first called them, to consider their journey of ministry and to imagine what God is calling them to in the future. The weekends, offered at no cost to the participants, took place at a conference center in the Texas Hill Country.



“Jenny and I have been blessed to work with ministry couples who are heroes of faith in this generation. We have heard deep confession, seen wounds healed, and watched ministry couples find renewal long after the retreat is over. We consider it one of our highest honors to be involved in this ministry. We look forward to seeing how God uses this ministry to ministers in the future.”

– Robert Oglesby Jr., ACU instructor of Bible, missions and ministry, director of the Center for Youth and Family Ministry, and coordinator for the Minister Support Network



Dr. Mike Cope and Randy Harris

VIDEO HIGHLIGHT: A CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION

The Siburt Institute was honored to have Dr. Mike Cope, director of ministry outreach at Pepperdine University, participate in *A Contemporary Christian Conversation: When the Preacher Struggles With Their Own Faith*. In this video, Randy Harris interviewed Cope, who spoke of finding ways to minister to others from an authentic place even when one's heart is broken. He shared, in a frank and honest way, experiences from his personal journey of faith that have offered both challenge and reassurance. The video and several others in the *Contemporary Christian Conversations* series can be found at youtube.com/siburtinstitute.

ElderLink

Now in its 18th year, ElderLink continues to equip, encourage and link those who serve as leaders in Churches of Christ. Events occur around the nation and are tailored to the specific needs of each region.

The theme for ElderLink 2017-18 was “Anchored Leadership: Living With Hope in Uncertain Times,” and featured a seminar at Bammel Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. Highlights included keynote speakers Chris Seidman and Dr. Jerry Taylor; special guest artists United Voice Worship; and breakout sessions covering topics such as small churches, reconciliation, elder-minister relationships, and church leader spouses. ElderLink will continue to expand its programming and will offer events at two new locations in Fall 2018.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY:

“Being in fellowship with other church leaders ... confirms I’m not alone. Beats ‘fishbowl’ thinking.”

“Thank you for offering the chance to expand our vision and spiritual life.”

“It brings life to me to hear the Lord speak through men and women I don’t get to hear on an everyday basis.”

“It was so helpful to receive encouragement and reminders of who we are and why we do what we do.”



ElderLink Houston



Dr. Jerry Taylor



United Voice Worship



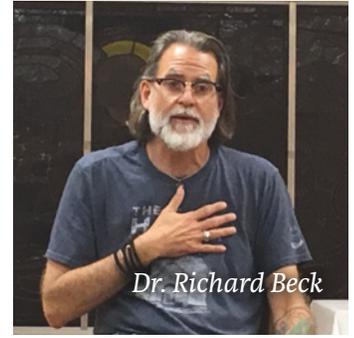
United Voice Worship

Contemplative Ministers' Initiative

The Siburt Institute completed its third year of the Contemplative Ministers' Initiative (CMI). Twenty-four ministers, in two cohorts of 12, participated in the program that teaches intensive spiritual discipline.

Twice each year, these ministers gather for multi-day retreats designed to assist and encourage their spiritual growth on a personal level, equipping them to lead from a deep place of spiritual health and more effectively weather the seemingly unceasing demands of ministry. In the words of program founder and director Randy Harris, "we prepare them for we know not what."

Harris is spiritual director for the Siburt Institute and an instructor of Bible, missions and ministry at ACU. He envisions CMI as a proactive force to infuse a greater degree of spiritual vitality and growth among Churches of Christ.



"At CMI, we use the language of 'spiritual practices' to describe different prayers, activities and postures that help us deepen our awareness of being grounded in the love of God. I came to appreciate the language of 'practice' in a new way when my wife, Laura, and I experienced the stillbirth of our first child. The grief has been heavy and hard, but the practice of grounding my being in God's love through prayer – before and since our daughter's death – has helped me endure suffering with faith.

Like so many others, I spend most of my life trying to protect myself from admitting how I am truly helpless and dependent upon God and others. CMI helped open me up to one of the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith: it's most often in and through our powerlessness and suffering that we encounter the power of the crucified and resurrected Messiah. I'm so grateful for my experiences with CMI and the willingness of my church to encourage my participation in this ministry."

– Ben Fike, senior minister of the Meadowbrook Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi

"Will we be better ministers? I am sure we already are. The evidence won't be immediately apparent to most. It will be subtle at best. More tempered responses to the frustrated parishioner after a sermon. More patience in elder meetings. More calm at the bedside of a dying brother or sister. Maybe a sermon or two will be better. But that's not what matters most. What matters most is that the ones pointing our churches to the spring of living water are drinking deeply from it themselves."

– Eric Gentry, associate preaching minister, Highland Church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee
(Excerpted from an article entitled "Dispatch from the Contemplative Ministers' Initiative," published to CHARIS in February 2018)



Summit

Summit's 2017 theme was "Ancient Scripture, Future Church: The Choices We Make and the God We Serve," based on the book of Deuteronomy. Summit brought together church members, congregational leaders and university students on ACU's campus for important conversations about life, faith and ministry in today's world. Classes were offered on issues related to culture, ministry, missions, worship, spiritual formation and congregational leadership with featured theme presentations by Landon Saunders, Sean Palmer, Dr. James K.A. Smith, Josh Ross, Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Chris Seidman and Dr. Jeanene Reese. Additionally, this year marked the launch of the Summit Film Festival, an evening activity which showed great success in its inaugural year.

Along with featured speakers and other events, Summit included a new small-church track, a series of five classes designed specifically for the unique needs of leaders in small congregations. Track host Shawn Johnson is a minister with more than 25 years of service in small churches, who currently serves as preacher for the Cisco (Texas) Church of Christ. An impressive

roster of ministers and theologians experienced in small-church environments came together to share insights and experiences.

Also new to Summit was the addition of a common, suggested reading for ACU faculty and staff: Dr. James K.A. Smith's *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Smith, a professor of philosophy at Calvin College, was a special guest speaker for faculty and staff, as well as for students in ACU's Honors College during Summit. "This effort was successful in building dialogue on campus, and we hope to continue this annually to set Summit as an ongoing spiritual formation event at ACU," said Summit director Dr. David Wray.

One of the most popular Summit offerings was the Global Refugee Medical Missions Experience, a hands-on exhibit designed as a window into the lives of the world's nearly 65 million refugees. This event provided images and pre-recorded narration mirroring what many refugees encounter on any given day, and gave participants an occasion to reflect on and respond to this worldwide crisis.



Sean Palmer



Dr. Jeanene Reese



Global Refugee Medical Missions Experience

FORMATION



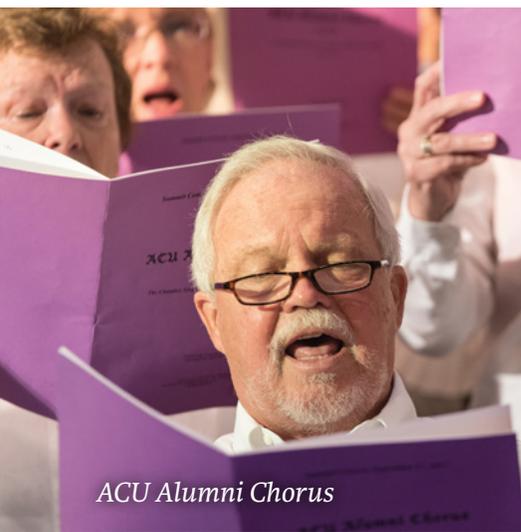
Dr. James K.A. Smith



Landon Saunders



Collin Packer



ACU Alumni Chorus



United Voice Worship



Josh Ross



Worship



Dr. Odies Wright Jr.

Congregational Health Assessment

Utilization of the Church Health Assessment (CHA) continued to grow during 2017-18. Initially launched in 2016, the CHA is an online research tool designed to measure a congregation's health in nine critical areas: vision and goals, activities and ministries, family ministry, discipleship, worship, values and congregational culture, leadership, church relations, and finance and facilities.

Although other similar tools exist for congregational assessment, this is the only tool available today that is tested for reliability and specifically designed for Churches of Christ. It takes the guesswork out of measuring congregational attitudes and perspectives.

The CHA was developed by skilled ACU researchers Dr. Carley Dodd (professor emeritus of communication) and Dr. Suzie Macaluso (assistant professor of sociology), and in conjunction with consultation partners including Missions Resource Network and Hope Network.

Among the nearly two dozen congregations and leadership teams that have employed the CHA since its launch, encouraging trends

have emerged, indicating that leaders are fundamentally aligned with members on most issues, church finances and facilities are reported as satisfactory and adequate, and members like the fellowship and relationships with each other. Challenging trends have included the perceived lack of reaching out into the community or outreach for evangelism, and the feeling that leadership does not deal with conflict or issues adequately. Although there is positive regard for children, parenting, singles, family, and married couples, a majority of respondents reported feeling there is very little action, budgeting, or programing for these family-centered topics.

The Siburt Institute has four authorized CHA consultants who assist churches in interpreting and applying lessons learned from the instrument: Dr. Don Hebbard, Dr. Grady King, Jon Mullican and Dr. Carson Reed.



Hebbard

King

Mullican

Reed

“The Church Health Assessment provides a church with an overall scan of nine key areas. It serves as a basic ‘health check,’ as if the church is going in for an annual physical. How is the leadership doing? How is our spiritual vitality? What’s concerning to the congregation? I strongly recommend each church invest the small sum required to take the assessment and have the results reviewed by a capable helper who is trained to understand the CHA. It may be the best administrative money you spend this year!”

– Jon Mullican,
president,
HOPE Network

MINISTER TRANSITION RESOURCES

The Siburt Institute continues to offer valuable resources for churches and ministers navigating ministerial transitions. Whether you are a church looking for assistance on managing the transition and search processes, a minister looking for tips on interviewing and compensation, or you have already hired and want to prepare for a new minister's arrival, we have resources available for each stage of the transition process.

The institute offers the Minister Transition Packet, Youth Minister Transition Packet, Ministers Looking Packet (free download) and Welcoming Your New Minister document (free download). Visit acu.edu/siburt for more details.



MINISTERS' SALARY SURVEY

The Minister's Salary Survey was formed to offer equitable compensation information for churches and ministers. The 2018 survey was conducted in the early spring, with the results posted on the Siburt Institute website on May 1.

The data presents ministers and other church leaders with close “real-time” compensation information. The survey reflects nationwide research that gathers information about current levels of compensation, including allowances and benefits, for ministers in Churches of Christ. It also covers years of experience and educational background along with regional, demographic and church budget/giving data. The survey process was led again this year by Dr. Carley Dodd, professor emeritus of communication and research director for the Siburt Institute.

Survey participants include ministers of diverse ages, positions, geographic regions and of varying church sizes. The resulting data are sorted in a variety of ways, making the survey an accessible tool providing information for reassessment and re-evaluation of compensation packages.

The 2018 Ministers' Salary Survey results revealed several highlights compared with 2017:

- Educational levels reported were up for persons holding Master of Divinity and/or Doctor of Ministry degrees.
- More ministers reported salary increases from the previous year.
- The most frequently reported ministry roles were preaching, youth, administration and children's. Least reported were family, counseling and campus. This pattern occurred in both 2017 and 2018.

Equipping for Ministry events

Siburt Institute team members, executive director Dr. Carson Reed and associate director Curtis King, journeyed to San Antonio and Austin this year to co-host mealtime programs with ACU university relations managers Kerry Stemens and Tunisia Singleton respectively.

The events brought together church leaders, alumni, parents and other friends of the university for connection, conversation, and timely presentations. At each gathering, Reed spoke on the subject of “Ministering in Turbulent Times,” challenging listeners to recognize the frantic times in which we live but to also keep a few things in mind:

- Christian faith and life have often survived and even flourished in troubled times.
- Hope is the antidote to anxiety.
- Hope does not disappoint us.
- Hope fuels action.



Curtis King, Charles Gaines, Kerry Stemens and Dr. Carson Reed



Austin



San Antonio

CONSULTING SERVICES

The 2017-18 year kept the faculty and staff of ACU’s College of Biblical Studies (CBS) busy and engaged with church leaders and local congregations across the globe! Various individuals provided interim and one-time preaching, workshop and conference leadership, consultations, retreat facilitation, local Bible class lessons, college course instruction abroad, guidance for church shepherds, mentoring, ministry candidates and churches connections, a youth ministry intern fair, and more.

A list of consultants on the Siburt Institute website facilitates connection between congregational leaders and ACU faculty who specialize in church transitions, elder selection, textual studies, curriculum development, formation, leadership, missions, strategic planning, conflict mediation and more. If you have not reviewed the diverse expertise available to you through CBS, we encourage you to visit acu.edu/siburt and check out the list of consultants highlighted there. While not all such consulting services are provided directly by the Siburt Institute, we are happy to connect you to resource persons who can help you address the varying needs in your congregation.

E-Newsletter

The best way to stay informed about the Siburt Institute for Church Ministry is to subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter, a great source for announcements and resource highlights. Visit acu.edu/siburt and click “Subscribe to News.”

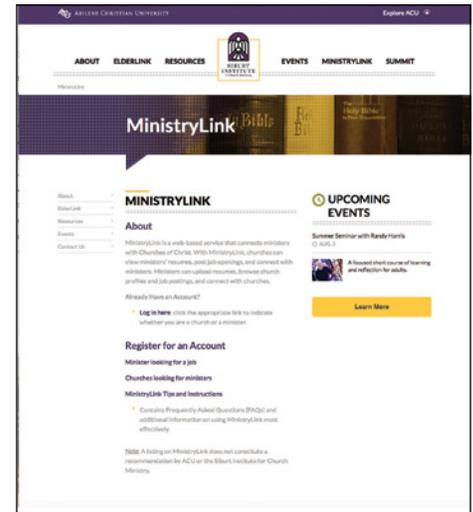
MinistryLink and the Looking Team

MinistryLink is consistently one of the most popular pages on the Siburt Institute's website. MinistryLink is our web-based job-board service, connecting ministers and churches to assist in networking and filling ministry jobs within Churches of Christ across the United States. Church contacts submit job descriptions, allowing potential candidates to review and apply directly; approximately 30 job listings can be found on the site on a consistent basis. Almost daily, ministers add themselves to the site's roster and have the option of posting their resumes so churches may contact them.

The Siburt Institute's Looking Team is an active, relationally driven team

helping churches find candidates for open ministry positions. The team continues to experience a steady flow of new requests for introductions between hiring congregations and ministers. On any given day, the team is working with about 75 churches looking for a minister, along with a similar number of ministers looking for a new church home.

Formed in Fall 2012, the Looking Team includes select ACU faculty and staff who meet regularly to review ministerial requests from churches and a few faith-based nonprofit groups across the nation. All requests for confidentiality are respected and readily accommodated.



Dr. Money extends welcome

Summer Events



Harris

Summer Seminar: "Christian Ethics in a World Gone Mad"

Randy Harris, spiritual director for the Siburt Institute and an instructor of Bible, missions and ministry at ACU, led a thought-provoking adult learning class and conversation on the topic "Christian Ethics in a World Gone Mad: How to Cope and Even Thrive." Harris, along with several colleagues, offered a roadmap to navigate today's choppy ethical landscape. Over the course of a day and a half, participants wrestled through a series of challenging issues warranting deep reflection and a good sense of humor. The Summer Seminar (formerly Summer Weekend Intensive Bible Course) is held annually, typically during the first weekend in August.



Jason Waller and Randy Harris

Lunch and Learn: "Does the Church Matter?"

Randy Harris also tackled an important question facing 21st-century ministers, elders and other church leaders at our Lunch and Learn event, with the theme, "Does the Church Matter?" Harris offered insights and perspectives on the ever-changing attitudes toward the church in a world and at a time when the church and ministers do not hold the highest spots on the go-to list for addressing moral and spiritual decisions. More than 50 persons from throughout West Texas and beyond gathered for this lunchtime presentation and discussion. Jason Waller, minister of the Church of Christ in Baird, Texas, won the door prize to continue the conversation through a one-on-one lunch with Harris.

CHARIS blog



Karissa
Herchenroeder

CHARIS managing
editor for church
content

Now entering its fourth year since its launch, the CHARIS blog continues to host conversations and faith-centered reflection on numerous topics.

Several contributors reflected on current events such as natural disasters, assault, immigration, gender, sexuality, and polarization in conversations surrounding many of today's controversies. In approaching these topics, writers took various approaches: lament, exegetical work, storytelling, and exhortations for the church to lead the way toward healing.

Launched in conjunction with Summit 2017, the small church ministry blog series continues under the leadership of Shawn Johnson. Each month features a new post from a guest contributor engaging with a different aspect of life and leadership within a small church.

Other writers also engaged aspects of congregational leadership: Chris Benjamin and Amy McLaughlin-Sheasby published several articles on the ministry of preaching; new contributors Lauren Rutland Hightower and Tara Petty wrote about discipling children and incorporating them more fully into our churches; and Adam Daniels published a full year of book reviews, in which he applied both secular and faith-based books to the practice of ministerial leadership.

The best way to keep up with new content is to follow CHARIS at facebook.com/chariswebsite.

Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry

Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry continues to flourish as the Siburt Institute's peer-reviewed journal. It publishes work that is scholarly yet accessible to the non-specialist, describing the wise practice of ministry guided by careful theological thought. Church leaders, ministers, consultants, researchers, and college professors are finding useful material in *Discernment*, including approaches to spiritual formation, the leadership of elders and ministers, student ministry, and work with wounded churches, for example.

As a digital journal openly available to the public, *Discernment* has published five issues with more than 2,900 article downloads. Those articles

have a readership extending beyond U.S. borders to the United Kingdom, Philippines, Canada, Nigeria, India, Kenya and Australia. As a mark of recognition and legitimacy, the Library of Congress awarded *Discernment* with an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), significantly increasing the journal's visibility in reputable indexes.

The journal's editor, Dr. Ron Bruner, continues to seek outstanding work for inclusion in upcoming issues. Writers interested in submitting articles for this journal can visit digitalcommons.acu.edu/discernment to learn more about the types of content accepted and the submission process.



"CHARIS provides a unique platform for writers affiliated with the Churches of Christ to explore relevant issues, topics, and challenges as they pertain to our own unique contexts. While the articles often find readership and resonance far beyond our denomination, the writers for CHARIS, myself included, pay careful attention to the pulse of our Church of Christ movement, in particular. I appreciate the wide range of voices, theological perspectives and varied expertise brought together for the edification of our churches and institutions. I have been so deeply honored to add my voice to the choir of those who want to contribute their gifts in writing for the sake of our faith communities, and the broader world around us.

Earlier this year, a woman I had not seen or spoken to since I was a child reached out to me on social media. She told me that she had been reading my CHARIS articles – every single one – and that she anticipates my writing every month. She went on to tell me that she had been feeling estranged from her church community for awhile, and as a result, struggled to feel connected to the Churches of Christ as a whole. She often felt like an outsider in her community for a number of reasons, and had struggled to find people within our faith tradition who share some of her interests and concerns. My articles introduced her to the broader work of the CHARIS conglomerate, where she discovered a wealth of resources that have helped her to reconnect with her faith heritage, and have challenged her to deepen her faith."

– Amy McLaughlin-Sheasby, Ph.D.
student at Boston University,
and adjunct instructor for
ACU's Department of Bible,
Missions and Ministry

Strengthening the Siburt Institute Team



WELCOME BACK, RENEE PAUL!

Having coordinated ElderLink in the past, Renee Paul has returned to the Siburt Institute, accepting the new role of administrative coordinator. She once again coordinates ElderLink events across the nation in addition to supporting the institute more broadly.

She is pursuing a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry degree at ACU.



INTRODUCING LEAH ANDREWS

Leah Andrews joined the Siburt Institute team as an assistant director. She works closely with Summit director Dr. David Wray to plan and facilitate the annual Summit conference and to further other initiatives.

Andrews, who most recently served as executive director and vice president of the Sweetwater (Texas) Chamber of Commerce, has proven to be a great asset to the team in the short time she's been on board. Andrews is a certified public accountant and has just completed her service as the president of the board of the Sweetwater Independent School District.

Siburt Institute for Church Ministry Executive Team



Andrews



Dodd



Harris



Herchenroeder



King



Money



Oglesby



Reed



Wray

(From left) **Leah Andrews**, assistant director of the Siburt Institute; **Dr. Carley Dodd**, professor emeritus of communications and research director for the Siburt Institute; **Randy Harris**, instructor of Bible, missions and ministry, and spiritual director of the College of Biblical Studies and the Siburt Institute; **Karissa Herchenroeder**, assistant director of church relations and the Doctor of Ministry program; **Curtis King**, associate director of

the Siburt Institute; **Dr. Royce Money**, chancellor and founding director of the Siburt Institute; **Robert Oglesby**, instructor of Bible, missions and ministry, director of the Center for Youth and Family Ministry, and coordinator of the Ministers' Support Network; **Dr. Carson Reed**, vice president for church relations and executive director of the Siburt Institute; **Dr. David Wray**, professor emeritus of Bible, missions and ministry, and director of Summit.



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