



# Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies

Report to the  
Eastern Region  
Annual Convention  
OCTOBER 2023



**Greetings from BICS!** It's a privilege to report to you and share the work that God is continuing to do through the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies.

## Celebrating the Class of 2023

On Saturday, May 13 we celebrated the BICS Class of 2023 at our 33rd commencement. We're rejoicing in the accomplishment of these students upon their successful completion of a year of intensive discipleship and study in our program. They are to be commended not only for their diligence and hard work, but also for investing a year of their lives in their spiritual growth and development. There are plenty of other opportunities these students could have chosen to pursue at this point in their lives, but they chose BICS – which we believe is an investment that will pay Kingdom dividends for years to come.

The Class of 2023 certainly made its mark on us in many ways, but it also holds a couple special distinctions. First, this class includes our first cohort of Year 2 students since 2009. Three previous graduates returned to spend an additional year of focused learning and discipleship in our program.

Moreover, this class is the first in the history of the Institute to receive the **Founders Tuition Scholarship**. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, churches, and organizations, each first-year student received a \$10,000 institutional scholarship. By the creation of this award, our Board of Directors is seeking to ensure that our program is accessible to future students who desire to prioritize their spiritual development and build their lives on the foundation of God's Word. We believe this is a worthy investment, and the Class of 2023 has already begun to prove that.



The eleven students of the Class of 2023 are pictured with Dr. Scott Stripling, our commencement speaker. Dr. Stripling is a biblical archaeologist with the Associates for Biblical Research and involved in many important discoveries in Israel.

## Welcoming the Class of 2024

I'm pleased to report that the 2023-24 BICS year is underway! On August 27, we welcomed the Class of 2024 to the Berkshires! This is our thirty-fourth cohort of students consisting of 8 women and 3 men – our largest first-year enrollment in

the last ten years. What a joy it is to get to know these students and embark with them on this journey of discipleship.

We are mindful that God had already started His work in the hearts of these 11 students long before we met them – and for that we give glory to Him and our thanks to the families and church families whom He has used to that end.

But we are grateful that God has given them to us for this season of serious spiritual and life development. Our explicit aim is that these students would be rooted in the Word of God, continually growing in the grace of God, and ultimately, that they would flourish for the Kingdom of God.

The theme we've chosen for the year is "Our Refuge and Strength," based on Psalm 46:1. Our aim is to help the students comprehend more and more of the character and promises of God so that we see Him as worthy of our complete trust and

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The Class of 2024 on the first full day of Orientation: (front row, from left) Reno Caronna, Elena Czaja, Caroline Smith, Emma Shaw, Lucy Tate; (back row, from left) Sinaia Smith, Grace Clark, Faith Sjoberg, Alison Sweetser, Luke Brown, and Wesley Dobson.

## The Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies

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confidence. We're praying the Lord will use this year to that end and that it will be one of the most transformative years of their lives.

### Touring the Lands of the Bible

In March, thirty-eight travelers departed for Israel – the Land of Promise – to experience “the trip of a lifetime.” In addition to our current students and staff, this year’s trip included four students from the Class of 2020 who were unable to travel due to the pandemic.



38 students, staff, and guests joined us for our annual tour of Israel.

Since our inception, the now fifteen-day trip to Israel has been the fulcrum of the BICS experience. We desire not only to ground young adults in the Scriptures through classroom learning, but also through firsthand exploration of the places where God Himself once dwelt among His people in space and time. Our students, as well any guests who join us, are given this opportunity to appreciate God’s activity in history and will be challenged to lay hold of the prophetic significance of these places as we anticipate the return of Christ.

For our students, this experience is fully funded above and beyond their tuition through the **Wesley A. Ross Bible Lands Scholarship**, which is made possible by the generosity of our network of supporters.

### Celebrating Our Alumni

35 years ago this fall we welcomed our first class to Lenox. We now have more than 400 men and women who have experienced the BICS program, many of whom are now serving in our churches as pastors, leaders, youth pastors, and teachers. Several of our graduates are ministering in international missions venues – in medical environments, translation teams, and churches.

More importantly, the vast majority of our graduates – whether serving in vocational ministry or not – are serving Christ and are deeply committed to His Church. They are raising families, teaching Sunday School classes, serving as board members, directing camps, running businesses, and fulfilling the call of Colossians 3:23 – *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord...”* (ESV). We thank the Lord that He has seen fit to use the Institute in their development and that, in this way, He is using us to bless the Advent Christian Church and beyond.

### Moving Forward on Mission

Even as we’re just beginning the journey of discipleship with the Class of 2024, we are already beginning to receive applications for our 35th class next fall. We are convinced of the need, perhaps more than ever before, for a place where young men and women can be grounded in the Word of God and equipped to serve the local church wherever and however God leads them. Though at times our efforts seem meager and the challenges before us are many, we are continuing to engage emerging adults in the adventure of Christian growth in the context of a Christ-centered community.

If you know of upper high school or recently graduated students who you think may be interested in our program, please do not hesitate to put us in touch with them. You can find out more information on our website (<https://www.berkshireinstitute.org>) or get in touch with us via email at [info@berkshireinstitute.org](mailto:info@berkshireinstitute.org).

### Partnering with the Eastern Region

We remain profoundly grateful for our relationship with the people and churches of the Eastern Regional Association. Your consistent prayers and financial support are a great encouragement to us. Wherever we travel in the Eastern Region, we find alumni and family of alumni who testify to the impact of BICS. To God be the glory!

It is a joy and a privilege to serve among you in the Advent Christian network, and we look forward to many years of fruitful ministry together. Please accept our deepest gratitude for your continued encouragement.

In Christ,

  
Andy Rice  
President