

Pursuing a higher calling and returning to BJU's roots: An interview with Dr. McAllister

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PHOTO: Jacquelyn Lilyea

Students placed flags on front campus for each 9/11 victim.

“I would’ve never expected this, but here I am,” Dr. Bruce McAllister, the newest president of Bob Jones University, said in a recent interview with the Collegian. After spending nearly 50 years at BJU in both teaching and administration roles, Dr. McAllister was selected to be the institution’s seventh president on May 20. Dr. Joshua Crockett, the university’s sixth president, has taken the role of executive director to Dr. McAllister and chapel coordinator.

Dr. McAllister first arrived at BJU as an 18-year-old freshman and a first-generation college student. Dr. McAllister was a member of the Basilean Eagles, recruited into the society by the university’s new Provost Dr. David Fisher, who is, in Dr. McAllister’s eyes, “a true veteran” of the university. Dr. McAllister also met his wife, Ellen, here, and they were married in War Memorial Chapel.

Dr. McAllister earned four degrees from BJU, worked at the university and academy for 42 years, and was an administrator at the university for 24 of those years. He then spent four years at Gospel Fellowship Association Missions as the Director of Ministry Relations. He said he thought he would continue at GFA indefinitely, but then, “God worked in my heart and brought me back to BJU. And it’s been great to be back.”

Dr. McAllister says that the original position he returned to Bob Jones for – Vice President for Ministry – helped to prepare him for the role of president. After being named president, he worked through the summer to prepare for the new school year.

When asked about the stability of the school, Dr. McAllister cited both his “confidence in the character of an unchanging God” and his carefully selected team of established professionals as

his reasons for optimism regarding BJU’s status.

“In any ministry there are ebbs and flows,” he said. “There are ups and downs. But I’ve seen God do [great] things over and over again through the years.”

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Dr. McAllister also mentioned that his personal Bible reading plays a large role in his thinking about life’s difficulties. He said that he reads about 10 chapters of the Bible each morning, and he thinks it is important to read portions that “speak directly to his heart” and “reinforce the things we need to hear.”

Dr. McAllister signed a three-year contract for the presidential role and said that he is thrilled to stay as long as God allows.

“I’ve been here since I was 18; I’m pretty stable in my commitment to this place,” McAllister said.

He said that he cares for the student body, both individually and as a whole. He said that his desire for the entire student body is that they would encourage one another further toward Christ through intentional discipleship. He also said that he is very excited for chapel and is looking forward to speaking to the students and faculty.

On an individual level, Dr. McAllister has set a goal to meet “every student and every employee.” He mentioned that the school’s community is one of his favorite aspects about the university, and that he is “looking forward to meeting new people and building relationships.”



Provided by Olivia Adams

Though school has just begun, Dr. McAllister already emphasized to the student body and faculty the importance of having a dynamic, personal relationship with the living God in order for students to effectively point each other to Christ. Both he and the Student Life staff have talked to the students about the need for real discipleship to happen among peers on campus.

“Organization is important, but there’s something about [organic] prayer groups, discipleship, talking about the Word,” he said. “That’s probably the highest aspiration that I have personally.”

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He said that this kind of lifestyle is the key to a profitable experience at Bob Jones University.

“It’s not a big change, but we say from a spiritual standpoint, our goal is to develop a Christlike character. We must make that front and center.”

After the university has faced changes and uncertainty in recent years, the Board of Trustees chose an eager, experienced man with a heart for the Lord to serve as BJU’s new president.

The last 50 years have turned into quite the full-circle moment for Dr. McAllister. President of the 50th graduating class at BJU in 1977, he is now the chairman of the centennial celebration planning committee and president of the university.

“It’s just amazing,” he said. “It’s a humbling privilege and an honor.”



PHOTO: Derek Eckenroth

BJU community mourns death of Charlie Kirk; Students lead prayer meeting

Talitha Wierema | DESIGNER

After a week of devastating national news, including the assassination of conservative activist and campus organizer Charlie Kirk, the Bob Jones University Student Leadership Council held a prayer meeting for the student body on the night of September 11.

The meeting followed other recognitions of the impact Kirk's death had on the student body. Kirk, an outspoken Christian and media personality, built much of his political organization with a focus on young people, many of whom are now of college age. During chapel earlier in the day, the stu-

dent body sang "It Is Well," and then Dr. Josh Crockett, chapel coordinator and executive director to president Dr. Bruce McAllister, spoke about Kirk's death and said the university's leadership wants students to be courageous leaders.

"During this spiritual formation of being at a Christian university like BJU, that you would know what you believe but that you would be willing to stand for what you believe," Dr. Crockett said.

At 8 p.m., more than 100 students, many with heavy hearts, voluntarily gathered on Palmetto Green to join in

prayer for the nation and the local community.

Women's Student Body President Karis Henson led the meeting with an encouragement to pray for the country, the spread of the gospel and opportunity to witness to unbelievers at this time. She reminded students that despite the devastation of Kirk's assassination and other current tragedies, "We do have a hope, and His name is Jesus."

Henson recommended that students pray through Psalm 46, either in groups or individually. The psalmist opens the Psalm with recognition that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Bonds were formed, burdens lifted and tears shed as students prayed for each other and for the nation over the next hour.

As the sun set on campus, singing could be heard from several of the groups. The lyrics of "Lord, I Need You" echoed the sentiment of the nation as the BJU community continued to pray over the recent losses and tragedies the country has faced.



PHOTO: Tessa Bonnema



PHOTO: Tessa Bonnema

For REACH Week, BJU students recount summer ministry service

Emily Fernet
STAFF WRITER

Summer is a time for breezy vacations and picnics, long walks and laughter. This three-month school break is a needed respite, even if that means working long hours for minimum wage at grocery stores and greenhouses. For some students, however, summer is a time to reach beyond themselves, use what is in their hand, and invest their time into causes bigger than themselves. Recently, Bob Jones University's Center for Global Opportunities hosted its annual REACH Week. Dedicated to local and

global ministry opportunities, various organizations like churches, camps, and non-profits set up booths around campus, displaying their particular outreach ministries. Students were encouraged to talk with the organizations about how to use their summers for gospel impact. Along with stands, some ministries led chapel messages and special meetings on Wednesday, a day that featured sessions throughout the day instead of regular classes.

Karis Henson, a senior communication major; Hope Combest, a senior political science major; Laurel Miller, a sophomore studying communication; and Josiah Gearhart, a junior biblical

studies major, shared about their opportunities from this past summer.

What were you involved with this summer?

Josiah: I worked in Salt Lake City, Utah, for Plant

Camp. It's a week-long missions experience in Utah where students learn from preaching and teaching, have opportunities to share their faith and serve local churches. My specific role was orga-

nizing our door-hanging efforts. I printed and organized flyers and directed groups on where to hang them. Throughout the summer, we were able to hand out about 43,000 invites to church.

Hope: I had the opportunity to be a fellow for a Christian organization called Salt and Light Global as a part of their Wilberforce Fellowship. This group is based in Lansing, Michigan, and they focus on protecting individual liberties, protecting religious freedom, and engaging culture through legal and political work. As a fellow, I



PHOTO: Submission

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met weekly with the other fellows and organization leaders to discuss how a Christian should approach different social issues. Through this fellowship, I was also given the unique and incredible opportunity to assist with two amicus briefs for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Karis: I served as a communication intern for Plant Atlanta, a ministry of Lebanon Baptist Church in Roswell, Georgia. I had the opportunity to develop and practice a communication plan for the church, run weeks of Plant Camp and serve in various other ministry capacities. This was a unique opportunity to combine my communication experience with church ministry.

Laurel: I worked as a hospitality coordinator at Student Life Camp, which is a traveling camp ministry of Lifeway Christian Resourc-

es. My job involved administrative computer work, facilitating meetings for student pastors and life group leaders, monitoring our help desk before and after each worship session, and helping when needed in leading games and tearing down our worship room equipment.

Why did you work there this summer?

Josiah: My home church (Hampton Park Baptist Church) has a really neat relationship with Gospel Peace Church out in Logan, Utah. For the past four or so years, we've been supporting a couple of their pastors financially, as well as sending out teams for the week of Plant Camp at Gospel Peace Church. I was one of the campers on the team the very first summer, and I've been back out to Utah every summer since!

Hope: I interned as a fellow this summer because as a current political science student and an aspiring law student, it is important for me to

build my resumé and gain relevant experiences. However, I was only able to intern this summer with the Wilberforce Fellowship because God provided me with this opportunity.

Karis: This was an internship opportunity that was dropped in my lap unexpectedly. I had been praying specifically for ministry opportunities this summer as I would be fulfilling my communication internship requirements, and God provided far above what I could ask or think!

Laurel: I worked at Student Life Camp because it combines both the fun aspects of summer camp with the opportunity to work behind the scenes and let the church leaders take charge with their students instead of us staff members counseling like at a typical camp. I also chose to work there because we get to travel all over the country with a group of fellow college students who I quickly became best friends with.

Highlights from society Rush 2025



PHOTOS: Talitha Wierema



Bob Jones University to host pianist Ilya Yakushev in first Concert, Opera, and Drama series of the academic year

BJU music faculty member Dr. Paul Overly to give free pre-concert talk ahead of concert

Emily Fernet
STAFF WRITER

Bob Jones University hosts the first of the Concert, Opera, and Drama series of the academic year on Thursday, Sept. 18, at 7:30 pm.

Pianist Ilya Yakushev will perform a solo piano repertoire featuring composers from Mozart to Mussorgsky. Dr. Paul Overly, part of the music faculty, said that the program is designed to communicate to a general audience, since it features well-known composers and accessible music.

“You do not have to be a musician to have this music speak to you,” Dr. Overly said.

Prior to the concert, music historian Dr. Overly will present the musical and historical context of Yakushev’s concert repertoire at 6:30 p.m. in Levinson Hall. The pre-concert talk is free and open to the public.

The program begins with a Mozart Partita – a one-movement vignette – a picture. Beethoven bridges the Classical and Romantic music periods. His “Sonata Pathétique” shows up in commercials and other pop-culture stories. Chopin and Rachmaninov follow with a reflective nocturne and set of preludes respectively. Mussorgsky’s “Pictures at Exhibition” closes the evening, feeling like an auditory stroll around an art gallery.

An award-winning pianist, Mr. Yakushev established his name in Russia where he studied at Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music in St. Petersburg. After that, he continued his music education at Mannes College of Music and spent his career performing with orchestras around the world.

This artist series is the opportunity to pause in the middle of our hectic lives and to contemplate life. As Dr. Overly said, music is a metaphor of our lives, because we are here for a moment, and then we pass away. Music is momentary.

But why would someone spend part of their scarce 1,440 minutes of the day for something easily available on a phone?

The community support of music is intensely human, because “these are people writing to people,” Dr. Overly said. “It’s as simple as that.” “Give yourself to the moment,” he said. “This is an opportunity to grab onto the music and

speak to you. Let the composer, let the performer speak to you. We are all at different stages of our lives. We are all going through different things. We have different circumstances, but there will be something there in the music that will come to you powerfully, if you allow yourself to take part in it.”

People long to be known. They long to be understood. Music expresses this longing and explores the heart of man. To know music is to know mankind.

“This story was written as a preview and was included in this edition as a sample of our arts coverage.



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