

Chapel at Harding

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why does Harding have chapel?

A: We at Harding place a high value on chapel. Chapel is intended to reveal God, initiate or strengthen relationships with Jesus Christ, encourage spiritual growth, and foster meaningful worship. Harding Academy's purpose is brought into focus when the faculty and students assemble for chapel. We believe that chapel provides an opportunity for the unbeliever to sense the powerful presence of God, and it is our aim to use chapel to instruct, instill, and inspire.

Chapel at Harding will satisfy these purposes: to worship God as Father, Creator, Sustainer, Counselor, and Companion; to encourage student reverence toward the Godhead; to identify common frailties, needs, fears, dilemmas; to broaden perspectives on contemporary issues; to elicit a response of compassion, forgiveness, kindness, transparency, joy, honesty.

When we talk about "reaching students" through chapel, what we mean is that we make overt efforts to help them recognize and accept Christ as their Savior, Redeemer, and King. Chapel is not simply a big assembly where students sit quietly for twenty minutes three times a week. The power and potential of chapel for students to glorify God in their lives cannot be overemphasized.

Moreover, as adults who have given their lives to Christian education, we desire to stretch ourselves as much as God will grant to meet each student where he is in his spiritual walk. Chapel is not for the adults; chapels are planned and designed for teenage seekers of God. We want our student to see Jesus and then to have a real opportunity to know God.

Q: When is chapel?

A: Normally chapel is every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:55-10:15. That plan changes sometimes when we have a special bell schedule.

Q: Do you give awards or recognize accomplishments in chapel?

A: We do not make announcements, give awards, or recognize accomplishments in chapel. The first Friday of every month is designated First Friday Assembly. During that time, we recognize accomplishments of groups and individuals, advertise special programs, and promote school spirit. Each of these monthly assemblies includes the Pledge of Allegiance and the *alma mater*. Mr. Goddard coordinates the First Friday Assemblies.

instruct, instill, inspire
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Q: Does everyone go to chapel at the same time, or do senior and junior high have separate chapels?

A: Most of the time, everyone in grades 7-12 is in the same chapel. Sometimes we have small group chapels, and sometimes we have split chapels. A split chapel could be a boy/girl split or a junior/senior high split. We have even had a four-way split with junior high boys/junior high girls/senior high boys/senior high girls.

Q: Who plans chapel?

A: Teachers and administrators are given the opportunity to sign up for chapels on the year-long schedule. When a teacher signs up, that means that he or she is responsible for planning or coordinating chapel for that day.

Q: What kinds of things happen in chapel?

A: Chapel is rarely the same on any two days. Mondays are designated as instructional chapels (instruct). On Mondays, everyone in grades 7-12, along with faculty and staff, assembles in the auditorium for chapel. Because the goal is large-group instruction, the program more often than not includes a speaker.

Wednesdays are either small group chapels or split chapels (instill). Small groups follow the Monday instructional chapel. In small groups, students discuss real life applications of what they learned the preceding Monday.

Fridays are singing chapels (inspire). Different worship leaders from both on and off campus plan a time of singing and lead the entire student body in twenty minutes of worship and praise.

Q: Why do you have small groups?

A: Two years ago, we asked ourselves what we could do to make chapel more effective. Speaking to a group of 600+ students in an auditorium is rarely the most effective way. It's very easy to be disengaged in a big auditorium. Although our students were orderly and well behaved in our big chapels, we knew that we simply were not reaching them as we hoped. Experience in the classroom told us that if we really wanted to reach students—if we wanted to be not only efficient but effective—we had to break down that group of 600 into groups small enough to engage every student every time. We had to find a way to allow every student to know and to be known. It's the same reason churches break down the whole-church assembly into Sunday School classes.

Q: Then why not have small groups all the time?

A: We think the corporate assembly has a place, and we believe it is important for our students to have times that they come together and hear the same message at the same time or to worship together. Students need to be able to function in both large and small groups.

Q: How do small groups work?

A: This year, small groups are divided by gender and by grade. There are groups that have all ninth grade girls or all seventh grade boys, for example. Small groups have 9-11 students each. Each group is assigned an adult facilitator. The adult is a Harding employee, either a teacher, administrator, or staff person. The groups meet in classrooms, offices, lobbies—wherever we can find a spot. The teacher who plans a Monday instructional chapel will also provide a discussion guide for the small groups. The guides outline activities and discussion starters that relate to Monday's chapel. Through these discussions, small group facilitators are able to help the students talk about how Monday's chapel relates to their daily lives.

Q: Can visitors come to chapel?

A: Yes. We welcome parents, prospective students, alumni, and friends of the school to join us in chapel any time. All guests to campus are asked to check in at the Dean of Students office and get a visitor's badge. Guests will also probably want to make sure that we are on a normal bell schedule on the day they visit or they may miss chapel altogether.

Q: Can students sit anywhere they want, or are there assigned seats?

A: Homeroom teachers assign each student a separate seat for both chapels and assemblies. Two adults are assigned to oversee each homeroom. For assemblies, each section of the auditorium is designated to a specific grade level; however, for chapel, auditorium sections are diversified to include homerooms of various grade levels.

Q: What if a parent needs to check a student out during chapel time?

A: We think chapel is so important that most of our offices are closed during chapel time so that everyone can attend. If the parent does not arrive by 9:45, it will be difficult to locate the student until chapel is over. We can find a student in an emergency, but chapel will be interrupted. It will be best if the parent can check the student out before 9:45 or after 10:15. On small group days, two groups meet in the office of the Dean of Students, so that office is completely closed during chapel time.

Q: When do students dress up on Wednesdays and when do they not?

A: On Wednesdays when we have small groups, we cancel dress up days. Many of the groups meet in offices or small areas that require some floor sitting, and we do better if we're not wearing dress-up clothes on those days. You can check the chapel schedule (also on this web site) to make sure which days are small group days.

Q: What will I see if I come to, say, a Monday chapel?

A: You will see our students enter the auditorium and find their seats. They will wait to see a song slide on the screen and will automatically get quiet. The song will probably be led by Mr. Chester from his seat on the front row, with help from an eight-student praise team in the balcony. Then, the program for that day will begin—maybe a speaker, maybe a video or skit, maybe a student-led devotional. At the conclusion of the program, the benediction for that quarter will appear on the screen. Students automatically rise to their feet and recite the benediction (one or more Bible verses). At the conclusion, faculty and staff exit, followed by seniors, followed by everyone else. About halfway through the quarter, the students will have the benediction memorized. At that point, we recite it as a group from memory. Visitors find it unique that our chapels begin without anyone's having to settle the group down and end without anyone's having to dismiss the groups.

If you have other questions that are not answered here, email Melanie Semore at this address: <semore.melanie@hardingacademymemphis.org>.