



History

King came into being as a result of the upheavals of the Civil War in Southern Appalachia. Because of the sharp divisions between Union and secessionist ideologies, Presbyterians who had supported the Confederate cause found themselves without a church-related college in their region following the conflict.

Zeal for higher education has long been a hallmark in the Reformed churches. Because they supported that tradition, the post-war leaders of the Holston Presbytery in Northeast Tennessee decided to establish a college. Though conditions were difficult in the post-Civil War South, the Presbytery's statement was clear. On April 9, 1866, the minutes note: "The presbytery is deeply impressed not only with the importance of establishing a classical school, but one of such high order as will greatly elevate the standard of classical and scientific instruction in East Tennessee, and which with such instruction, will combine that strict discipline and the thorough religious training that will fully develop the moral as well as the intellectual man."

The Reverend James King, a prominent landowner, businessman, and Presbyterian minister, gave land for a campus near the town of Bristol. The location, a rounded hill crowned with towering trees, was personally meaningful to King, for it was the site where he had made his own Christian commitment and where he would retire with his Bible for personal meditation. King called the site his "glory grove," and, in appreciation of the gift, Holston Presbytery voted to name the new institution King College in his honor.

A campaign among local citizens provided funds for a large three-story building, with a central Victorian tower. Reverend George A. Caldwell, minister of the Bristol Presbyterian Church, campaigned to develop a permanent endowment, soliciting donations from as far away as New York City.

Reverend James Doak Tadlock, a graduate of Princeton Seminary and a member of Holston Presbytery, was chosen as the founding president of the institution, which matriculated its first male students and began classes in August 1867. A man of faith and dedication, Tadlock believed that a college education should conform to the strict classical model of the liberal arts set forth by Yale. Course offerings were limited to Latin, Greek, mathematics, and science. Tadlock maintained close personal relationships with his students and encouraged the formation of student-led literary societies in which the students honed their skills in public speaking and debate.

During the eighteen years of his presidency, Tadlock produced only sixty-three graduates, but they were an impressive group. From this number there were forty ministers, seven of whom were missionaries. Ten became lawyers; another ten were college professors, five becoming college presidents; three were editors of magazines and newspapers; and others went into business. More than seventy percent of Tadlock's alumni had graduate or professional training, and half were recipients of honorary degrees. Eight had national careers of such prominence that they were chosen for inclusion in *Who's Who in America*.

One graduate wrote later of his beloved president, “We were proud of him. The sacrifices we knew he was making to remain with the little college endeared him to us, and the fact that we had such a president made every man of us feel that King ranked any college in the land.”

Tadlock’s successors in the presidency broadened the curriculum and increased the range of course offerings but continued his emphasis upon developing young men who could provide both intellectual and moral leadership to their communities. By the early twentieth century, however, King was facing both new challenges and opportunities. Bristol’s growth had transformed the rural environment of the campus into an urban setting of city blocks filled with houses and commercial buildings, and the advent of regional accrediting associations mandated uniform standards of quality. King needed to become an accredited institution.

The Reverend Tilden Scherer, who assumed the presidency in 1912, made these concerns the major goals of his administration. Fortunately, he was to have the financial support of a number of business leaders in the city of Bristol, including Edward Washington King, who would be a King College benefactor for half a century.

Throughout the Southern mountains there were other Presbyterian leaders who were convinced that the time had come for the church to assume a greater responsibility for humanitarian concerns. The result was the formation in 1915 of the Synod of Appalachia, made up of Presbyterian congregations throughout Eastern Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina, and neighboring portions of West Virginia and Kentucky. King was given official recognition as the synod’s college and thereby gained a larger constituency.

In 1916 Reverend Isaac S. Anderson, a member of the class of 1875 and a grandson of James King, offered a wooded tract of sixty acres east of Bristol as a new campus site. The institution immediately launched a campaign to raise funds for buildings and, with the completion of Bristol Hall in 1917, moved to its new location in the fall term. Over the course of the next decade, six major buildings were erected on the new campus.

King also achieved national prominence for its prowess in athletics during this period. The football team seemed unbeatable in the early years following World War I, and the highlight of its triumphs came in 1921 when the King team defeated Lenoir Rhyne, a North Carolina rival, by 206 to 0, a record score which still stands in the annals of collegiate football as one of the highest ever. The newspaper reporter covering the event wrote that the King team ran the ball with the ferocity of a “tornado” and thus was born the name that has ever since been applied to all the sports teams of the school: the King Tornado.

King was hit hard by the Great Depression, and simple survival became the first priority. In 1931, Stonewall Jackson College, a Presbyterian institution for women in Abingdon, Virginia, closed its doors, and King took in the female students, becoming coeducational in the process. When Reverend Thomas P. Johnston assumed the presidency in 1935, he made financial stability his foremost goal.

The post-World War II years were a time of remarkable growth and achievement for King. In March, 1943, Reverend Robert Todd Lapsley Liston was named president and began a twenty-five year tenure that would be one of the most significant in King’s history. Liston was determined that King would achieve the academic distinction that had been the goal of its founders. Strong support by the Board of Trustees enabled Liston to make academic quality his first priority. Money was poured into faculty salaries, the library, laboratory equipment, and the college’s endowment, while Liston personally recruited bright high

school graduates to fill the classrooms. By 1948, King had won accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and by 1960, leading graduate and professional schools were admitting King's quality alumni.

Initially, Liston had concentrated his energies upon academic achievements, but he soon recognized the need for physical improvements to the institution. The 1960s witnessed a building program that transformed the appearance of the hilltop campus. A major campus plan completely redesigned the physical appearance of the school, and a grassy central lawn known as the "Oval" was developed, around which the chief academic buildings were placed. New roadways and college entrances were constructed, and during the decade Liston added five major buildings: the E. W. King Library/Administration Building, Parks Hall, Liston Hall, an astronomical observatory, and the F. B. Kline Gymnasium.

James C. White Hall was completed in 1976 and offered state-of-the-art facilities for the natural sciences. In addition, a new president's home was built near the King College Road entrance. President Powell Fraser also upgraded athletic fields and renovated classrooms. The academic curriculum was broadened to meet changing times, with special emphasis given to pre-professional programs such as teacher preparation.

In 1979, King's ownership changed; a new Board of Trustees assumed, and King became an independent school that maintained formal covenantal relationships with various Presbyterian judicatories. The work of Christian higher education continued under Reverend Donald Rutherford Mitchell, who served as president from 1979 to 1989. Enrollment doubled during the early years of Mitchell's administration, and many international students came to study in King's English for Speakers of Other Languages program. The new dining hall-student union, Maclellan Hall, an additional residence hall for women, and remodeling of the chapel to increase its seating capacity took place during the 1980s.

The presidencies of Charles E. Cauthen, Jr., and Richard J. Stanislaw from 1989 to 1997 saw continuing campus renovations, with improvements in heating and air-conditioning of buildings, and a new maintenance building. President Cauthen was instrumental in establishing a campus-wide computer network, known as KingNet, which linked computing facilities throughout the campus to central academic and administrative systems. Also, at this time the Holston Associated Libraries was formed, which provided King with an electronic cataloging system that linked its library with those of other regional colleges, expanding access to reference and research materials.

In 1997, Reverend Gregory D. Jordan began his seventeen-year tenure as president. Dr. Jordan and the Trustees crafted King's first comprehensive strategic plan. Specific developments under Greg Jordan included the redesign of the Core Curriculum and a year-round academic calendar. The nursing program that began in 1998 launched King into a new educational paradigm that fit well with King's mission of "transformation of culture in Christ." The programs for non-traditional working adults followed.

The Peeke School of Christian Mission, named after King alumna Catherine Peeke, who was a Wycliffe Bible translator in South America, was opened in the fall of 2001. The Center for Graduate and Professional Studies, which opened at this time, began offering adult-oriented degree programs delivered face-to-face and online: Master of Business Administration, Master of Education, Master of Science in Nursing, RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Business Administration, as well as B.S. degrees in Information Technology, Psychology, Communication, Criminal Justice, Healthcare Administration, Health

Informatics, and History; additionally, King began offering a B.A. in English for GPS students.

Significant upgrades to campus computing infrastructure have made a difference in enhancing student learning and communication. Major changes have been made in the appearance of the Bristol campus within the last 15 years: the adjoining golf course, originally Bristol's Country Club, has been reclaimed for university use and now boasts tennis courts, a soccer field, a softball field, and a baseball field, in addition to a new campus gate and a beautiful entry drive. The Student Athletic Center was dedicated in December, 2002.

King changed its name from college to university in 2013 to better reflect its growth as a comprehensive Christian University. Dr. Richard A. Ray loyally served as King's interim president for two and a half years, from 2014 to 2016. Under Dr. Ray's tenure, the Bristol campus received further significant renovations, with the complete reconstruction of the Oval and a substantial renovation to the library, with the addition of social space and an expanded computer lab. In 2016, Mr. Alexander Whitaker was named King's 23rd president. Under his leadership, King has affirmed its dedication to the cultivation of future generations grounded in academic excellence, inspirational accomplishment, and transformative service to others.

King is positioned to play a significant role of service, scholarship, and leadership in the 21st century and promises to fulfill and carry forward the vision laid by its founders nearly 150 years before.

Campus

King, located in Bristol, Tennessee, is in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The 130-acre hilltop campus is two miles from the center of Bristol, TN/VA, a city of 43,300 residents. Bristol, Johnson City, and Kingsport, Tennessee, form the Tri-Cities metropolitan area with an aggregate population of approximately 450,000.

Tri-Cities Regional Airport, a 35-minute drive from the campus, offers daily flights connecting Bristol with cities throughout the United States. Bristol is on US 11, US 58, US 421, and Interstate 81.

Several buildings comprise King's Bristol campus, which has maintained a Georgian architectural theme:

Bristol Hall (1917)

Houses faculty offices (the School of Behavioral and Health Sciences, the School of Business and Economics, and the College of Arts & Sciences), the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), and offices for several student support services (Student Success, Kaysean, Career Services, and Disability Services).

Burke Observatory (1962)

Contains a classroom and research space as well as a reflecting telescope with an electronic camera that records digitized images of celestial bodies.

The Counseling Center (1972)

Is used by both campus and community clients and houses administrative support services offices (Business Operations and Information Technology).

E. W. King Library (1962)

Houses a collection of over 160,000 items in open stacks, an instructional computer lab, and office space for the library staff, and provides display space of pieces in the Caldwell Art collection. The building's lower level houses the President's Office as well as administrative support services offices (Academic Affairs, Registration and Records, Business Office, and Financial Aid).

F. B. Kline Hall (1964)

Is equipped for indoor sports such as badminton, basketball, indoor soccer, and volleyball. The soccer, baseball, softball, and wrestling teams have their locker rooms in this building. It also houses the band room, classrooms, faculty offices (the School of Education), and coaches' offices.

The Facilities Services Building (1991)

Houses the Maintenance, Grounds, and Housekeeping departments.

Hyde Hall (2000)

Houses 33 female students and has a laundry room on each floor, formal and informal lobbies, and suites that share large private bathrooms.

Liston Hall (1966)

Is a residence hall for 200 men on three floors, with lounges and laundry facilities; the lower level houses 52 women.

Maclellan Hall (1983)

Houses the Dining Hall, Student Affairs, Widener TV Lounge, Dippers (snack bar), Wager Center for Student Success, the mail room, the Career Center, Student Government Association, the Tornado Alley Shoppe, and a computer lab.

Margaret M. Sells Hall (1927)

Houses the Marketing and Development departments. It also contains the Information Technology Help Desk, the photography studio, Macintosh computer lab, faculty offices (School of Behavioral and Health Sciences, School of Communication, Information, & Design), and classrooms.

Memorial Chapel (1932)

Is the site of chapel services, convocations, and meetings. On the lower level are classrooms, practice rooms, and faculty offices for the Music Department.

Mitchell Hall (1985)

Is a residence hall and office building of five separate units, four that can house either men or women and one unit used by the athletic department.

Nicewonder Hall (2011)

Houses classrooms, The Learning Commons (instructional technology), the One Button Studio, a conference room, and administrative support services offices (Institutional Effectiveness/Academic Affairs).

Parks Field and other athletic facilities (2002)

In addition to the above buildings, the institution has an intercollegiate baseball field, an intercollegiate softball field, an intercollegiate soccer field (Parks Field), and six tennis

courts on the west end of campus. There are two intramural fields, one on the east end of campus and another on the west end.

Parks Hall (1962)

Is a residence hall for 102 women with a game room, study areas, kitchen, laundry facilities, a private guest room, and the Office of Safety and Security.

Pauline Massengill DeFriece Place (1976)

Is the campus welcome center and houses the Admissions Office.

The Snider Honors Center (1949)

Is located in a former campus residence on the east end of campus. It houses the Jack E. Snider Honors Program as well as faculty offices (College of Arts & Sciences).

Student Center Complex (2002)

Provides the main competition arena for intercollegiate basketball, volleyball and wrestling. It houses most of the coaches' offices, a concession stand, Hall of Fame room, Trustee Board Room, athletic training room, weight room, cardiovascular equipment areas, an indoor running track, a racquetball court, lounge areas, and locker rooms for men's and women's basketball, men's and women's volleyball, and visitor's lockers for both men and women. The gym seats 1,200 for sporting events.

Tadlock Wallace (1921)

Is the location of the Peeke School of Christian Mission, the Chaplain's Office, and faculty offices (College of Arts & Sciences). Once used as the home for King presidents, its living spaces are often used for meetings and classroom spaces.

White Hall (1976)

Houses classrooms, science and nursing laboratories, and faculty offices for the sciences, mathematics, and nursing.

The Women's Auxiliary Building (1918)

Served as the institution's dining hall through December 1982. It is occupied by the Performing and Visual Arts Department, and has been converted to a small black-box theatre; it also contains a tech theatre workshop, costume and stage storage, an antique print shop, and faculty offices.

ADDITIONAL CAMPUSES

Kingsport Downtown – 104 East Main Street

Houses classrooms, faculty and staff offices, a library, nursing skills labs, nursing resource center, student lounge areas, and a kitchenette.

Knoxville – 10950 Spring Bluff Way

Houses classrooms, faculty and staff offices, a computer lab, a library, a nursing resource center, conference rooms, meeting spaces, a kitchenette, and student lounge spaces.