Dear RTS Orlando Graduate,

We are thankful for you, your life and ministry! Each summer I have sent you an update so that you can know what has happened this past year at RTS. It has been my joy to serve as president these three years, to preach around the country, to minister on radio representing RTS, and to teach in the classroom. This past year I taught a new class called The Life and Ministry of Prayer, as well as Church History II. I also hosted monthly President’s Forums with special guests and led Pastors in Training (PiT): to discuss all those things they supposedly never teach you at seminary.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2012-13:

Graduates

Last September, we welcomed the largest incoming class that we’ve had in years. I am pictured here with my interns, all of whom graduated in May. Danny Iverson is a church planting intern under Randy Pope at Perimeter Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and wants to devote his life to urban church planting among the poor. Lance Olimb aspires to pastor in one location for life, shepherding a flock and preaching the Word. Alex Kirk will be an assistant pastor at Christ Community Church (Evangelical Free) in Daytona Beach and apply to Ph.D. programs in Old Testament. I’m proud of all our graduates whether they are going into counseling, pastoring, apologetics, para-church ministry or returning to the marketplace.

Special Guests

We look back on the past year with thanksgiving. The highlight was having John Piper give the inaugural Spurgeon Lecture on April 10. He spoke on “The Life and Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon” (you can listen at rts.edu/Orlando/nibs/piper). Other special guests included: Michael Goheen (Kistemaker Lectures), alum Tullian Tchividjian (Welcome Week), Ed Stetzer (Lifeway Research), alum Anthony Carter (On Being Black and Reformed), alum Mike Beates (Disability and the Gospel), Nabeel Jabbour (One School One Book), Sam Logan (WRF), Vonette Bright, John Yates, Sharon Hersh, Cameron Strange (Relevant magazine editor), Bill Armstrong (former U.S. Senator), Burk Parsons (St. Andrews/TableTalk editor), among others. These events brought rich presentations on topics such as race, internet addiction, religious pluralism, reaching Muslims, reformed missiology, the NONES, disability, reaching 20 somethings, and Christian witnesses in the public square.

Events, Upgrades, Initiatives, Staff Additions

• February—We hosted the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) Consultation on Islam with Muslim-background leaders from around the world. Also, Jim Coffield took four of our counseling students (M.A.C.) to London to lead seminars and work with Pioneers missionaries.

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• **March**—I started broadcasting a 5 minute radio program: TAKE 5 minutes a day to develop a mind for truth, a heart for God. It airs twice a day on WTLN 950 here in Orlando (rts.edu/takefive).

• **April**—We were a major sponsor of The Gospel Coalition National Conference in Orlando. RTS faculty from several campuses participated in two presentations: “Having Confidence in the Scriptures” and “Seeing Christ in the Old Testament.”

• **Other**—We welcomed Sharon Hersh as adjunct professor in counseling and alum Leigh Swanson as associate dean of students. We established a Creative Arts Suite for recording and upgraded the counseling clinic with a new digital camera recording system and new client management software, as well as added additional counseling rooms to serve more clients. These are blessings to our students and clients. We kicked off the Nicole Institute of Baptist Studies. The year ended with us hosting a community prayer gathering with pastors and law enforcement officials to pray about the Zimmerman trial and its fallout in Sanford.

**Looking Ahead and Celebrating**

This coming academic year is our 25th anniversary for the Orlando campus! Our theme is “25 Years: Entrusted with the Gospel.” If you are local, be sure to come hear former RTS President Luder Whitlock at Convocation (11am, August 21) and to the President’s Forum, where Luder will be my interviewed guest during lunch immediately following Convocation. **Please send me any thoughts or memories for RTSO’s 25 years.** For this anniversary year, we would like to raise a million dollars for a series of projects (student scholarships, constructing a prayer chapel/preaching lab, making more of our classrooms smart and sharp). **Will you pray with us toward that end?**

This fall we also will launch The RTSO Mentoring Experience for M.Div. students. Scheduled guests on campus include **Kevin Vanhoozer** (Kistemaker Lectures), **Al Mohler** (Spurgeon Lecture), **Phil Ryken** (Commencement), alum **Steve Lawson** (One Passion Conference) and **Ross Douthat**, New York Times columnist and author of **Bad Religion** (The Current Read).

**We Want to Bless You**

It is our desire to be a continued blessing and place of great resources for you.

• Join in some of our campus events (President’s Forums and special lectures/chapels) by attending or listening to these events on our website.

• Enroll for an upcoming class. Look at rts.edu/orlando/academics; you might find some interesting ones worth taking as an auditor, such as Romans taught over fall break in October.

• Check out our D.Min. program. Our Director of Admissions, Marketing and Placement Kevin Collins (kcollins@rts.edu) would be glad to give you a great discount on your first class.

• Let us know how we can pray for you. We begin each week with a prayer meeting right outside my office. Email cmansfield@rts.edu with prayer requests.

• Take a week long study leave at our Orlando campus and use our library.

• Ask our faculty, many of whom have served in pastorates or are counselors, for advice. We are here for you.

Bottom line, we believe in you and, as Paul said, we are thankful for “your partnership in the gospel from the first day (you stepped on campus) until now.” (Phil.1.3,4). May God bless you!

Yours in His Service,

Don Sweeting, Ph.D.
President, James Woodrow Hassel Professor of Church History

Contact me any time at dsweeting@rts.edu or 407.278.4406.