Chancellor’s Message

Dr. Robert C. Cannada Jr.

Throughout my nearly 10 years as president and later as chancellor of RTS, I have closed my correspondence with the words: “For a new Reformation now and with the joyful hope of the New Heavens and the New Earth to come.” This phrase is intended to remind us as God’s covenant people to remember that our citizenship is in heaven even while we temporarily maintain physical residence here on earth.

When we think of our need for a new Reformation now, we should remember the phrase eccelesia semper reformanda (“the church always being reformed”). This Latin phrase is in itself a reminder that the Reformation was not a static event but rather a call to continuous renewal of the mind and heart. An essential but often overlooked aspect of this slogan is that in its original form it also emphasized “according to the Word of God.” We need the additional reminder that Sola Scriptura should guide this new Reformation.

The need to be reformed always by the Word in this life should also inspire us in this upcoming Christmas season to reflect anew on our future, on “the joyful hope of the New Heavens and the New Earth to come.” In an age that appears to be growing increasingly hostile to the gospel, the Christmas message that heaven came to earth and took on flesh offers us hope since this earth will one day pass away and everything will one day be made perfect. News reports seem to repeat a mantra of despair — economic woes, wars, terrorism, crime, lack of clear ethical leadership in government, natural disasters, and on and on. When the story of this age looks so discouraging, however, the Lord’s people can rejoice since we know the conclusion of the story. Christ will reign.

Dr. Mike Milton will succeed me in June as RTS chancellor/CEO. He states so well in “When Heaven Came Down” (see page 4) that Christ came down that we might be lifted up above our temporal challenges. His words echo Paul’s reminder to the Corinthians that “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Several years ago, when I assisted with the funeral service for Jim Wilson in Montgomery, Alabama, my comments addressed Jim being in heaven enjoying the presence of God. I told his children and grandchildren that if there was a single message that Jim would want me to leave with them, it would be two words: “Be there.” He wanted them to be there with him in eternity through faith in Christ alone. The Wilson family took my evangelistic call to “Be There” and turned it into a family slogan.

Heaven came down to earth in the person of Christ, so that through His life, death and resurrection we might be present with Him in the New Heavens and New Earth. So be there! M.


**TRAVELS**

**Dr. Steve Brown** spoke at a pastors’ conference at Kendall Presbyterian Church, Miami, Oct. 28-29 and preached at the morning services on Oct. 30. He will also preach morning services at Willow Creek Church, Winter Springs, Fla., Nov. 27 and Dec. 11.

**Dr. Rod Culbertson** will speak on “Motivated by the Wonder of the Gospel” at a missions conference at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Sebring, Fla., Feb. 12.

**Dr. Don Futato** will lead a Christian Heritage Tour focused on the English Reformation, March 11-17. He will also teach “The Church Since the Reformation” course during the spring 2012 term at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary campus in Charlotte.

**Dr. Mark Futato** will teach a Poets course for Campus Outreach, Dec. 5-9, Lexington, Ky.

**Prof. Mike Glodo** has been teaching an RTS course titled “The Night Visions of Zechariah 1-7” at CNL Financial Group in downtown Orlando, Oct. 19-Dec. 7. Courses are regularly offered to the business community through CNL.

**Dr. Howard Griffith** and his wife, Dr. Jacqueline Griffith, will lead a marriage enrichment seminar at Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, College Park, Md., in February. From March to May he will teach “Systematic Theology I: Ecclesiology and Sacraments” at RTS-Atlanta.

**Dr. Peter Lee** gave a lecture on “Suffering, Saints, and Sovereignty of God” for a group in Baltimore called “Fourth Friday Fundamentals” on Oct. 28.

**Dr. Mike Milton** presented the paper “In Jesus Name I Pray: Exclusivity in Public Prayer and the Restrictive Contours of Civic Pluralism,” at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Francisco, Nov. 17; and preached at Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo, Fla., Nov. 27. He continues to film and produce televised Bible studies for Faith for Living. The 2011-12 theme is “A Biblical Vision for the Church Today.”

**Dr. John Oliver** spoke at a missions conference at Christ Community Presbyterian Church, West Hartford, Conn., Nov. 11-12.

**Dr. Andy Peterson** spoke on “The Christian College and the Academy: Beginning, Middle and End of Higher Education in America and Worldwide” at Providence Christian College, Pasadena, Calif., Sept. 30.

**Dr. Guy Richardson** and his wife, Denise, will lead a family conference at Midway Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, March 16-18. He will also preach at the Sunday morning and evening services on the 18th.

**Dr. Don Sweeting** will be a plenary speaker at Moody Bible Institute for Founder’s Week on Feb. 7.

**Dr. Scott Swain** delivered a paper titled “Response to Doug Blount” at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Francisco, Nov. 17.

**Dr. Guy Waters** spoke at the Reformation Day Conference at Main Street Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Miss., Oct. 29-30. He will teach Greek Exegesis at RTS-Orlando this spring.

**Dr. John Yeo** will address the Stated Clerks Conference at the Presbyterian Church in America headquarters, Atlanta, Dec. 3, on “The Doctrine of Inerrancy in Light of Recent Developments.”

**INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**

**Dr. Jim Coffield,** along with Katherine Schwind (MAC ’08) and a Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) staff member, took students from the RTS-Orlando counseling program to Italy Oct. 5-10 to minister to missionaries there. They spoke at a national conference for about 80 Cru staff members who minister throughout Italy. They also went to Rome to work and meet with the Cru staff there. Another student trip is planned for Asia this winter.

**Dr. Elias Medeiros** will lead the D.Min. dissertation defenses at the Andrew Jumper Post-Graduate Center (CPAJ) at Mackenzie University, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Dec. 6-9. RTS has a partnership with CPAJ and jointly offers D.Min. degrees to pastors.

**Prof. Scott Redd Jr.** taught a class on Old Testament Survey at the International Training Institute in Malta, Nov. 7-11.

**Dr. Dan Timmer** traveled to the Universtät Duisberg-Essen in Germany in October to conduct research funded by an ATS/Lilly grant. He participated in a number of discussions on the Minor Prophets with his host, Dr. Aaron Schart, and several of Dr. Schart’s doctoral students and research associates. Dr. Timmer also gave a public address on “The Nations in the Minor Prophets” for an Old Testament theology course there. He will teach “Intertestamental History and Writings” and “Issues in Old Testament Theology” to Th.M. students at Punith Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich., Dec. 13-16.

**Dr. Howard Griffith** reviewed John McKinley’s “Tempted for Us: Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ’s Impeccability and Temptation” for the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (June).

**Dr. Mike Milton’s** “Original Languages” article to students was published online by Gospel Coalition and the Aquila Report. Gospel Coalition also published “When God Calls” in August and his “Lord of the Storm” sermon (edited) in October. “This Attack on Just War is Not Just” was published on ArmyChaplains.com. He was quoted from his commentary on “Steve Jobs and the Great Commission” in Christianity Today (online) in October. His new book, What is the Doctrine of Adoption? (P&R, Nov.), is part of the Basics of the Faith Series, and his Hit by Friendly Fire booklet will be published in expanded book form by EP Press in January 2012.

**Dr. Guy Waters’s** book How Jesus Runs the Church (P&R) has just been released. He wrote the article “God-Centered Worship” for the April 2012 issue of Tabletalk and reviewed D.G. Hart’s From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism (Eerdmans) for Ligonier Ministries.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The executive committee of the RTS Board of Trustees has appointed **Prof. Scott Redd Jr.** as the first president of RTS-Washington, D.C., effective in June 2012 (see page 13). Prof. Redd is currently an assistant professor of Old Testament and dean of students at RTS-Orlando. RTS-Washington, D.C. is also

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**PUBLICATIONS**

**Dr. Steve Brown** has written Three Free Sins: Recovering a Neglected Perspective on Sin and Grace (due Feb. 2012).

**Dr. Ken Elliott** wrote Anglican Church Policy, Eighteenth Century Conflict, and the American Episcopate (Peter Lang Publishing, Sept.).

**Dr. John Frame** wrote The Escondido Theology (Whitefield Media, due Nov.). He was interviewed by Credo magazine on “The Doctrine of the Word of God” for its first issue in October.

**WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION?**

Michael A. Milton

A new booklet by Dr. Michael Milton explores the doctrine of adoption and its foundational role in the Christian faith. The book discusses how adoption is expressed through Jesus’ relationship to the Father and the Church’s relationship to Jesus, and how this relationship affects our understanding of God, humanity, and salvation. This booklet is available online at GospelCoalition.com.
THE WONDROUS STORY OF THE INCARNATION involves the stories of others who witnessed or waited for the Savior. One of those is about a man named Simeon and his remarkable “canticle,” or song of praise to God.

The canticle of this odd figure in Luke 2 commences with a sentiment suggestive of the jubilant, rhythmic music of a Jewish wedding. But it quickly becomes quiet and contemplative, ending with a dramatic thump. Yet it is, in a word, wondrous. The Holy Spirit has recorded this mysterious song for us to, figuratively, learn the notes to and sing ourselves.

The Setting

Following a time of ritual purification after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary offered a sacrifice to dedicate their child to God, when they encountered Simeon. In their obedience, they received confirmation that their child is the Savior of the world.

And here is the lesson: We rest in the Lord as we obey. We find the true power of Christ as we dedicate ourselves to Him, following His revealed will. We come to know the fullness of the Lord particularly as we obey God in entering His house. We must make Jesus the center of our lives by coming into His presence in worship, both privately and in the congregation of the faithful.

Do you need to rededicate yourself to worshiping God in His house this Christmas? We cannot authentically sing the carols of Christmas in public unless we have come to Him personally. But if we do, we will, like Mary and Joseph, desire to follow Him into His house.

The Servant

When Jesus was born, a religious ruling class, with legalistic Pharisees on one side and worldly Sadducees on the other, corrupted the religion of Israel. The Word of the Lord was silent. Evil and ruthless rulers like Herod governed the land.

Still, even in seemingly evil times, God is in control. We don’t know much about Simeon, but Scripture paints this picture:

He was just and devout. “Just” may also be translated “righteous.” The combination of “just” and “devout” speaks to his relationship with both man and God.

He was waiting on the Messiah. Even though he lived in a period of spiritual drought, he believed God’s promises and waited patiently and prayerfully for the Consolation. We need Simeons today, who can wait on the Lord to send revival, raise up godly men and women, and stir the church to renewed holiness of life and doctrine.

He was under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit and therefore looked to God, not circumstance. Oh, how we need Spirit-led women and men in these days of difficulty! The Holy Spirit is powerfully present with those who seek Him by faith in Word, sacrament and prayer.

He took Jesus in his arms, personally embracing the object of his prayers and his faith.

Simeon’s Song

As with other Christmas “songs,” Simeon’s song (the Nunc Dimittis) is a spontaneous, Spirit-induced song of praise and prophecy delivered with power and poetry of the soul. We see that in Jesus alone we find our eternal rest.

The first movement in this song is a key: Simeon declared, “Now, Sovereign Master, thou art releasing thy servant.” We must prepare for our eternal rest by turning to Jesus. Christ is needed, and then one can die. Simeon’s hope is in the coming of Christ and in His appearance — only then could he die.

It may be a strange question at Christmastime, but are you ready to die? You’re not ready until you’ve embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, transferring your trust to Christ,

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Delighting in the Church?

Jesus calls us to love the divinely created institution over which He rules.

We are at a time of year when many think about the birth of Jesus. But not everybody stops to ask why Jesus was born. Listen to what the angel of the Lord said to Joseph: “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Our Savior — Jesus — was born in order to die. What prompted Jesus to do this? According to the apostle Paul, it was because “Christ loved the church” that He “gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:27). Jesus came into this world and died for the church because he loved the church! And if Jesus so loved the church, then certainly we should delight in the church.

Does it sound a little unusual to you to hear that we should delight in the church? It shouldn’t. Delight in the church flows from a sense of the importance of the church in Scripture. Redemptive history began with God calling a people out of the world to Himself (Genesis 4:26), and will end with “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). From beginning to end, God’s unfolding plan to redeem sinners “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Revelation 7:9) has the church at its very center.

Reformed theology early on captured this biblical priority. A full third of the 1559 edition of John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion is devoted to the doctrine of the church. Subsequent generations of Reformed and Presbyterian theologians, pastors and teachers followed Calvin’s lead. They understood how important the church is in Scripture. As a result, hymns like Timothy Dwight’s “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” could be penned, sung and cherished from generation to generation.

And yet it can be hard to delight in the church. Why is this so? A couple of reasons come to mind.

First, the church’s flaws are so visible and transparent to us. We can all remember times when fellow believers have hurt us. It is all too easy to dwell on those wounds, and to let them crowd out memories of believers encouraging, strengthening and comforting us in the faith.

Also, those of us in the West live in an individualistic culture. Individualism has seeped into the modern church in a number of ways. Many Americans, for instance, place a low premium on church membership. They do not see the need for church membership. They flit like butterflies from congregation to congregation — always in motion, never finding rest. They don’t see the importance, much less the necessity, of committing themselves to the life and fellowship of the local church.

According to Scripture, however, membership in the local church is not merely desirable, but necessary. In the New Testament, we see a recurring pattern: the Word is preached, people profess faith, and they gather locally into congregations ruled by Christ through a government He has appointed (Acts 2:47, 14:23; Titus 1:5). Believers are commanded to give due submission to the elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13), and the elders are charged with the oversight of believers’ souls (Hebrews 13:17). This set of commands assumes that believers and church leaders have an acknowledged relationship with one another. This relationship comes into existence when a believer commits to join the church. Therefore, when the Scripture calls Christians to delight in the church, it calls them to delight not only in the worldwide church, but also in the local church of which they are members.

How, then, can we delight in the church? One of the most important ways we can delight in the church is to try to see the church as God sees it. To see the church in this way, we need to go to the Bible. What does the Bible tell us about the church? How does the Scripture’s teaching help us to take delight in the church?
According to Scripture, membership in the local church is not merely desirable, but necessary.

First, we need to see the close biblical connection between Christ and His church. Christ is the head of His body, the church (Colossians 1:18,24; Ephesians 5:23; Acts 9:5). Christ’s interests are therefore bound up with the church. To study and to prize the church is to show concern for Jesus — the Head, King, and Bridegroom of the church.

One individual who understood this profoundly was Samuel Rutherford, the great 17th-century Scottish pastor and theologian. Rutherford is best known for his Letters, which Christians have prized for centuries because they are suffused with a sense of the love, mercy and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rutherford also wrote several technical treatises on church government. Why did Rutherford care so much about the government of the church? It was because of his love for the Savior, the Head of that church. To love Jesus is to love Jesus’ church.

Second, the church is a body that is both divinely created and divinely ruled. “Divinely created” means the church is not a mere voluntary association of persons with similar interests, backgrounds or goals. She is a people whom God has formed for Himself (1 Peter 2:9-10).

“Divinely ruled” means the church is the body of Christ, who is the only Head of the church. Part of what it means for Jesus to be the Head of the church is that He has an exclusive and unique claim of authority upon the church. The Old Testament taught Israel to expect God Himself to come and to reign over His people (Psalms 2, 110). The New Testament frequently quotes these psalms as finding their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is one of the many ways in which the New Testament shows us that Jesus is King over His people. Jesus, furthermore, is no absentee ruler. He is actively, intimately and presently involved in ruling His church. To see the church in this way — a body divinely created and divinely ruled — reminds us again that the church is precious to Jesus. And what is precious to Jesus should be precious to us.

Third, the church will be the centerpiece of the “new heavens and new earth.” This is the picture we find in the closing chapters of Revelation. In glory, the church will remain precious to God. She is “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9). Her beauty is the beauty of holiness, and she will radiate the glory of God (21:10,11). The church is not yet what she will be, but Christ has pledged on that day “to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). If Christ loves the church and is committed to her this much, then those who profess love to Jesus ought to commit to loving the church.

The apostle Paul tells us that unbelievers hate what God loves, and love what God hates (Romans 8:5-8). The gospel completely reorients us, so that we now hate what God hates, and love what God loves. God loves His church deeply, and calls each of his children to love the church as well. He has given us His Word to help us understand why the church is so important to Him.

Do you believe what God has said about his church? If so, then how are you delighting in the church? M.

Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters is associate professor of New Testament at RTS-Jackson. He is the author or editor of seven books, including How Jesus Runs the Church (P&R, 2011), from which portions of this article were adapted.
People in Louisiana know how to throw a party. The epicenter of the festivities, of course, is New Orleans, which the legendary musician Hank Williams had in mind when he sang about having “big fun on the bayou.” But places like Baton Rouge, the state capital and home of Louisiana State University, also get in on the action. After all, it’s at LSU’s Tiger Stadium where the tailgate parties in the parking lot begin on Thursday for the Saturday-night football games. Such a scene combines two passions firmly ingrained in Louisiana culture: partying and football.

In the heart of downtown Baton Rouge, one finds an entirely different house of worship: First Presbyterian Church, which has served as a gospel witness to the surrounding culture for nearly two centuries. Two RTS alumni belong to the pastoral team. Gerrit Dawson has been the senior pastor since 2004, and Dick Gates came to First Baton Rouge in 1995 to become pastor of missions and pastoral care. A third pastoral team member, Alec Flynt, is working on a Doctor of Ministry degree through RTS-Jackson.

Alec, who came to Baton Rouge in 2007, jokes about being “a missionary in a foreign land” due to his allegiance to the University of Florida, his alma mater. Somewhat more seriously, he acknowledges that “it’s great to live with people who are passionate and serious about college football,” while at the same time noting that football and partying are two idols in the culture that need to be dealt with.

Such joie de vivre can be an asset in ministry in Cajun country as well, though. “Louisianans are a hearty group,” observes Gerrit, who received a D.Min. degree from RTS-Charlotte during his years pastoring in North Carolina. “They love to get together for any reason, whether it’s a hurricane or football. If you have a Bible study in your home,
you’ve got to work to corral the social time to get down to the study. They just love to be together. That makes ministry a lot of fun because there’s a lot of social connection, a lot of conviviality.”

Gerrit and his pastoral team work to balance this sense of fun with a commitment to helping move their congregation “Deeper Into Christ and Further Into the World,” as a church slogan states. Not that the pastors have to push hard, though. “We have an extremely entrepreneurial congregation in terms of how they move outward into the world,” observes Alec, who serves as associate pastor for young adults and discipleship, and who participated in church planting efforts while in seminary.

As an example, Alec explains how a woman in the church who was teaching at a private Christian school started a Christ-centered charter school in town as a means of doing something about the race issue in Baton Rouge. “There’s a very distinct line here between the have and the have-nots,” notes Gerrit. “There are some racial lines that are remarkably geographically drawn, not by law but by decades of habit.”

First Baton Rouge works to break that habit through a partnership with Abounding Love Ministries, a historically African-American church in the city. Among other initiatives, the two churches conduct joint vacation Bible school and community service projects, and the pastors preach for each other. “These are things not only where one does something for the other,” Gerrit points out, “but where we do things together.” He also notes that Abounding Love sent a team of people along with our team from First Baton Rouge to Cairo, Egypt, on a mission trip.

The mission to Cairo is part of the church’s long-standing emphasis on world mission as led by Dick Gates. Once upon a time, though, leading mission trips was the last thing on the RTS-Jackson’s alumnus’ mind. “I’ve been a Presbyterian longer than I’ve been a Christian,” says Dick with a laugh. He grew up in church but did not respond to the gospel until adulthood, while working as a railroad electrician in Roanoke, Va.

Dick’s knack for telling his life story extends to how he ended up in his current ministry position after being seemingly entrenched in a pastorate in Birmingham, Ala. “God changed me over a hot dog,” he declares, describing a visit to a ware-

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house club to buy church supplies punctuated by a stopoff to eat a good, cheap hot dog. “I have a habit of reading when I’m sitting, and I had [a Christian] magazine in my pocket, so I read all the articles. The last thing left was the classifieds, which I never paid attention to. But I noticed an ad about [First Baton Rouge] looking for an associate pastor for mission and pastoral care.”

At this point in the telling, Dick fights to maintain his composure as he recounts God’s direction in his life: “I knew of the church and its great reputation over the years, and the Holy Spirit nudged me. It wasn’t audible, but it was like He said, ‘That’s where you need to be.’ I’d never wanted to be an associate pastor, but God instantly changed my attitude. This is the most fun I’ve had anyplace I’ve been. Gerrit is a great senior pastor — he’s a good visionary and has moved this church miles in the seven years he’s been here.”

Gerrit’s vision for First Baton Rouge is based on Jeremiah 29:7: “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you.” He draws a parallel between the exiled people of Israel in Jeremiah’s day and the people in his own congregation: “[The Israelites] been carted off to Babylon, and whereas within Israel they had always been called to be distinct and separate from the nations, now they were plopped down in the middle of a foreign, pagan nation and were taught to bless that culture around them — not to become it, but to bless it and seek its welfare. As we realize that we are a pilgrim people on our way to the heavenly city, we’re also called to bless the world around us.

At this point Gerrit recalls a meeting he and another associate pastor recently had with the mayor of Baton Rouge. “I think he was surprised that someone made an appointment with him but didn’t want anything from him,” Gerrit observes. “We just wanted to hear his vision for the city, and asked if we could pray with him and bless him. He was visibly moved that someone actually cared about him instead of just wanting something from him. I think that’s a micro-example of what we’re talking about.”

With that at heart, Gerrit, Dick, Alec and the rest of the First Baton Rouge congregation work to prepare the world around them for an even bigger party — one that transcends mere human celebration. 🙏.

For more information about First Baton Rouge, visit www.fpcbr.org.
In the mid-1990s, while pastoring a church in Lenoir, N.C., near Charlotte, Gerrit Dawson felt a yearning for deeper theological study. This yearning coincided with the development of the RTS-Charlotte campus, and Gerrit started taking classes taught by Dr. Douglas Kelly, who was instrumental in the establishment of that campus. From there Gerrit applied for the Doctor of Ministry program specifically for help in researching a book he was writing on the ascension of Jesus.

Gerrit eventually completed both his D.Min. and his book (which was also his doctoral thesis), and has found many applications for his degree. “It pushed me to think deeply about doctrine and practice,” explains Gerrit, who has written nine other books, “and to think even more deeply about how to hold those two together when leading a congregation.” This past January, Gerrit had an opportunity to pass along some of what he has learned, teaching a D.Min. class at RTS-Charlotte called Doctrine Into Life, which covered how theology shapes ministry in the local church.

Alec Flynt is almost halfway through the classwork toward a D.Min. from RTS-Jackson and has also found direct application between his studies and church ministry. For one, a paper he wrote for a preaching class taught by Dr. Derek Thomas led to First Baton Rouge changing its approach to children’s ministry. “I’m sure [Dr. Thomas] was not intending children’s ministry to be the implication of the [preaching] class,” Alec says, chuckling, “but I definitely took it from that.”

According to Alec, Dr. Thomas and his other D.Min. professors help uphold the RTS pastor/scholar model. “The focus on doing theology in the church has been a great encouragement to me,” Alec notes. “In an age when so many pastoral models are CEO, executive manager, good speaker, planner or organizer, my heart was to be a pastor/theologian, but I just didn’t know if that was a viable model. RTS has really encouraged me in that model, because that’s something I didn’t get to see in my [Master of Divinity] days.”

To get started in learning more about the D.Min. programs available through RTS, visit www.rts.edu and scroll under Academics to Degree Programs. Each RTS campus has unique offerings.

From June 20-23, 2012, First Baton Rouge will throw a party for the world. Don’t worry, though — it won’t be quite like Mardi Gras. Instead, this party will celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the church hosts the annual General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

First Baton Rouge joined the EPC denomination in 2007 after being part of the New Wineskins Association of Churches in the Presbyterian Church (USA). “We were in the first wave of New Wineskins churches that began connecting with the EPC,” explains Gerrit Dawson. “The EPC’s [mission emphasis] and our call to take the gospel further into the world and go deeper into Christ mesh perfectly.”

Gerrit looks forward to the impact of the General Assembly on the congregation. “It is always a time of spiritual renewal as well as church business for the people who come,” he notes. “And that’s especially true, as I’ve observed, for the host church, because we’ll have more than 300 volunteers involved, and hopefully many more attending the worship services. We’ll get the benefit of great teaching, and our folks will see how the EPC celebrates its missionaries by bringing them home and praying for them as the first order of business.”

This being Louisiana, though, the EPC General Assembly will be especially festive. “Louisianans love to host a party,” Gerrit declares, “so this is a chance to show people from all over the country that nobody can throw a party like we can. People can expect some crawfish, and they can expect some Cajun music at some point. I think they also can expect a lot of hugs. We’re very huggy here.”

More information about First Baton Rouge hosting the EPC General Assembly may be found by clicking on the appropriate spinner at www.fpcbr.org.
The students file into Leesa Donner’s Sunday school class — or in a couple of cases, they wheel in. That’s when you begin to realize that this is no ordinary group. Leesa greets each member with a little slower cadence than usual, which isn’t too challenging in itself for the former TV news anchorwoman. The challenge for Leesa comes in understanding the responses, as some of the students face profound speech difficulties, especially one with cerebral palsy.

Welcome to the Special Blessings class at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Md., where, humanly speaking, some of the most powerless and voiceless in society receive ministry from a woman well acquainted with the corridors of earthly power and influence. Fittingly, before heading to the classroom on this misty Sunday morning inside the Beltway, Leesa and her husband, Tim, had been greeted by a church member friend who happens to be a nationally syndicated columnist. And the night before she had spoken at a “pig roast” in rural northern Virginia in support of Tim’s campaign for the U.S. Senate.

Political stump speeches one minute, conversing with special-needs students the next — needless to say, Leesa walks in an eclectic world. That world also includes classes at RTS-Washington, D.C., which has helped equip her for the diverse milieus of ministry to which she has been called.

For many years, theology was one of the last things on Leesa’s mind; her career in broadcast journalism took precedence. Leesa broke into the business at a radio station in Worcester, Mass. There she met a fellow newbie professional who did football and basketball play-by-play for the College of the Holy Cross. Today, Tim declares that “marrying Leesa was the smartest thing I ever did.”

Tim and Leesa’s career odyssey eventually took them inside the Beltway, which turns out to be the smartest thing they did together, because that’s where their spiritual conversion occurred. Leesa grew up in what had been a religious home until a falling-out with a minister led to her family’s alienation from the church. After more than a decade in the TV business, though, an unlikely story assignment began prompting a change in her worldview.

“I was working in the newsroom here in Washington,” Leesa recalls, “and nothing fazed me. I took pulses on people who’d been dead for days — were they dead or alive? But I [covered] this story one day about a man on his way to church with his kids in the back, and they got caught in the middle of this police pursuit and were all killed in this tremendous traffic accident. At the time I was into this New Age science of the mind, a typical young girl caught up in that nonsense, and I remember thinking, This man and his kids being killed on the way to church is not really the absence of good; it’s really evil. If there really is evil, I need to confront that.”

Leesa bought a Bible and brought it home, and not knowing where to start reading, began in Matthew, at the beginning of the New Testament. “In typical reportage style I always had a [highlighting pen],” she remembers, “and I can see that the Holy Spirit had completely started working in me, because as I look back at the highlighted portions of that Gospel, about the only words I didn’t highlight were ‘a,’ ‘an’ and ‘the.’ One day I think I was in chapter 6, and I closed it and said, ‘Oh my god, this is all true! This is entirely true! And if it’s entirely true, this has major
years ago we were really taking stock of our lives. Because both of us weren’t saved until our 30s, as we reflected back, we had lived the first third of our [adult] lives for ourselves, as young people are known to do. We had lived the second third of our lives for our children and our family, but what we really wanted to do was live the last third of our lives for our country.”

To that end, the Donners had begun One Generation Away, a nonprofit organization that educates the public on the founding documents of the United States (its latest initiative is a project to re-publish the Federalist Papers in 21st-century language). That’s also the inspiration for Tim’s U.S. Senate candidacy.

For Leesa, it’s all part of a journey of faith in Christ, wherever He leads her and her family, and whomever He leads them to — whether powerful or powerless in the world’s eyes.

Leesa takes a prayer request from one of her Special Blessings students.

Professor Scott Redd has personal, educational and ministry roots in our nation’s capital. So it’s only appropriate that the executive committee of the RTS Board of Trustees has appointed him as the first president of RTS-Washington, D.C., effective June 2012.

Currently an assistant professor of Old Testament and dean of students at RTS-Orlando, Prof. Redd spent many years living, studying and ministering in the D.C. area. During his time there, he taught at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Md. (the home church of Leesa Donner — see main article).

“I am thrilled about the appointment of [Scott] as the new president of RTS-Washington, D.C.,” says Dr. Robert C. (Ric) Cannada, RTS chancellor and chief executive officer. “Scott caught the attention of many of us as a student and later as a faculty and staff member at RTS-Orlando. He will bring enthusiasm and vigor as well as leadership and vision to this campus. Scott is just the right man for such a time as this.”

“(Scott’s) background in business, pastoral ministry, campus leadership, and his passion to preach and cast a biblical vision is a tremendous blessing to RTS as a whole and to our nation’s capital in particular,” adds Dr. Mike Milton, RTS chancellor elect.
An RTS alumnus makes a difference for Christ in his homeland.
by Jolly Rimai with Paul Schwarz

If there were an award for the most obscurely located RTS alumnus, Jolly Rimai would be on the initial watch list of candidates. Jolly, who received his Doctor of Ministry degree from RTS in 2005, is the mission secretary for the Manipur Baptist Convention, affiliated with the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India.

Because of its location in an extreme corner of the country, Manipur and its surrounding states have a particularly high concentration of Muslims. To highlight the sensitive nature of Manipur, until this year foreigners wishing to enter the state were required to carry a special permit. Also due to its location, northeast Indians are related ethnically to East Asians such as Chinese, Japanese and Koreans.

In the following excerpts from e-mail newsletters Jolly has sent, he provides a glimpse to the nature of gospel ministry in a relatively unknown area of the world.
Wanting to make this Christmas meaningful for those children on the street in Guwahati sleeping under abandoned trucks and loitering in the streets collecting rags and trash, we organized a special program for them. We collected 49 children and brought them to campus and shared the love of God with them. Most of them were rag pickers.

Interestingly, on this day they turned up clean and wearing the best dresses they have, given to them by a street children program run by another ministry. They learned some good moral lessons through speech and drama, and they enjoyed it, so they said. We asked them to share what they feel attending this program. Some of them came and said they learned not to tell lies, not to steal, and not to smoke and drink because Jesus does not want that. I was so impressed with how they could understand the little we share with them.

Each of them received a blanket to keep them warm during Christmas. After the program, they received rice with chicken.

Friends, it is one thing to hear about the street children, but it is another thing to really be with them and observe them. I am seriously thinking of having some program that will make lasting impact in their lives. Our main aim is that, by the grace of God, they will remember this as the day they came to know the love of God through Christ.

Please pray for our mission work with these downtrodden people. We want the street children to know Christ and experience the warmth of being His sons and daughters.

Just wanted to update you with the Saturday program that is part of the Muslim mission. God, in His great grace, has added 10 new believers to our neighborhood (Muslim) fellowship. Nine of them are men, out of which six are college students and three are older farmers, and there is one woman. It is very difficult to get women believers among the Muslims, but this time God has added one. We are planning to train her as a missionary, since in their culture, men cannot meet women.

It is such a joy to see many people, especially former Muslims, dedicating to serve the Lord and His kingdom as full-time missionaries. Please pray that the Lord raises up more churches, Sunday school groups, families and individuals to support His mission work.
Ministry & Leadership

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Lalzuala Khiangte had a divine appointment. The RTS-Jackson alumnus was stuck in an airport in Mizoram, a state in northeast India, when he met Dean Vander Mey, director of Set Free Ministries in the United States. The two men discovered that they burned with a common passion to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to drunkards, prostitutes, thieves and prisoners. Three months after that seemingly chance encounter, Lalzuala had become the director of a new SFM work in India. He leads over 550 trained volunteers who offer free biblical counseling and encouragement, with an emphasis on prison ministry, hospital ministry, and street evangelism. Under Lalzuala’s leadership, SFM has recently branched out into conducting underground conferences and teaching sessions in nearby countries where Christianity is banned. In addition, Lalzuala works through SFM to care for over 1,000 orphans and other outcasts through TNT Orphanage.

Since graduating from RTS in 1986, Lalzuala has held several positions with the Presbyterian Church of India. He was field secretary in the southern part of Mizoram, on the border with Bangladesh and Burma, then moderated the Presbyterian Church Synod (the highest position in the church in Mizoram). Later Lalzuala was senior pastor of a church in Aizawl that had nearly 9,000 members, followed by his election as general secretary of the mission board of the Presbyterian Church of India. In that capacity he oversaw the work of more than 1,200 missionaries outside Mizoram. After that he worked in additional roles for the Presbyterian Church of India. Besides his current position as director/secretary of Set Free Ministries India, Lalzuala is the newly elected chairman of All Mizoram Mission and Evangelism Network.

“Concerning my ministries,” Lalzuala reports, “we are receiving God’s hand very often. Many prisoners have turned to God and left prison with high hope in the Lord. Please continue to pray for us.”

— Paul Schwarz

For more information on Set Free Ministries in India, visit www.setfreeministries.com and scroll to India under Global Outreach. Lalzuala can be contacted at zualakhiangte@yahoo.co.in.

Helping Set Indians Free

I attended a conference where I had an unusual experience that I want to share with you. I tell you about it so that you will continue to pray for the people group I met there.

First, let me describe the people — the Adi Tribe in the Arunachal Pradesh state. The predominant religion is Donyi Polo (worship of the sun and the moon). There are 28 small churches among the tribe with a little over 1,000 baptized members and one lady with a seminary degree; the rest of the leaders are lay people. There is a great need for training lay leaders for ministry there, as well as for establishing English schools, providing discipleship training, and encouraging and supporting seminary education. That said, the growth of Christianity in India over the past few years is fastest in this state.

The people’s houses are made of bamboo with their floors lifted about four feet from the ground, and roofed with leaves. Pigs loiter freely under the floor.

I attended the 30th annual gathering/fellowship of the 28 churches. The first night I spoke about unity in the church. The second sermon was on love and forgiveness, which should be based on the forgiveness we each have received from the Lord. And at the last service I spoke about the “mercy of God that endures forever” based on Psalm 136.

Almost all the congregation cried and thanked the Lord for what He has done for us, and of course I joined them too. We all had a time of rededicating our lives to the Lord. I never expected this would happen at this gathering, but the Spirit of the Lord led us, and we had a meaningful time with the Lord. Oh, the wonder of His love!
Jolly Rimai and Lalzuala Khiangte are not the only RTS alumni helping reach their native India with the gospel.

Dr. Mohan Chacko is principal and professor of theology and mission at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehra Dun. The 1978 RTS-Jackson graduate and ordained minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India has been active in the work of the Asia Theological Association, serving as its first chairman. Dr. Chacko has contributed theological articles in journals and books published in India and overseas, including *Interpreting Society: A Study of the Political Theology of M. M. Thomas* and *I Want to Know God: An Asian Catechism*.

Dr. Joelouis Songate, who received a Doctor of Missiology degree from RTS-Jackson in 1999, is the executive secretary of the Independent Church of India. Its churches are located in the northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, New Delhi, Punjab and Orissa, with approximately 45,000 members. Overseas missionaries are stationed in Myanmar, Nepal and at the Indian border with Bhutan.

— Paul Schwarz

For more information about PTS, visit www.ptsindia.com. Dr. Songate can be contacted at jlsongate@operamail.com.

You can contact Jolly at jolly.rimai@cbcnei.com.
His life lived for you and His death on the cross for you.

The second movement announces the key to everlasting life: Jesus. He is “a light to the Gentiles” and “a glory for” the people of Israel. Christ has appeared as not only the promised one of the Old Testament covenant people, but also to every ethnic group, tribe and tongue on earth.

Follow Simeon’s song and take care of the most important thing right now: If you have never held the Lord in your heart, receive Him by faith today. If you have, then rededicate your life to being used of God. If you cannot go, send!

Simeon’s Sermon

This fourth and final lesson is most difficult: there is a cost to following Christ.

Simeon’s song brought amazement to Mary and Joseph. While God had already revealed the truth of His Son to them, they now knew another truth: God was not keeping His promise a secret.

But then comes the dramatic change in mood. Simeon sang his triumphant song and then preached a sermon of response — one that was harsh, poignant and direct. Intended for Jesus’ mother, the sermon foretells the greatness of her Son and the impact of Jesus on her personally. Jesus, Simeon prophesies, will cause some to rise and some to fall.

Make sure you hear that part of Simeon’s song today. To rest in Christ alone for salvation means you will rise with Him unto eternal life, but to reject Him is to fall to your eternal death. Neutrality is impossible.

The second part of the sermon is directed at Mary: he tells her that in the life of her boy, the Savior of the world, she will be pierced with a sword of intense pain, and of frightful and piercing anguish.

What is the lesson here? To follow Jesus and rest in Him alone is not without earthly pain. Following Christ meant piercing pain to Mary. She would watch her son put aside his hammer in Joseph’s shop and walk a pathway that would end at a cross. She would, like others, be despised and rejected by others for confessing Jesus as Lord. Simeon’s song ends, “That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

As I read and pray over this, I experience pain myself: that of realizing that my sins — not just others’, nailed Christ to a cross. He suffered, bled and died for me. Christ came to shed the light of God’s holiness on your life and show that without His blood to wash you clean, you are a condemned sinner.

But the Christmas lessons of Simeon’s song give hope. This is the One we have waited for and all need. This is a wondrous story, ancient and ever new, yet not heard by millions who wait — not in faith in a Savior, but in the fetters of Satan. That is why we have been called by God to learn the wondrous story, and go forth to tell that story to the ends of the earth.

Dr. Milton is RTS chancellor-elect and will become chancellor in June 2012. To download When Heaven Came Down, a song he has recorded (see lyrics above) based on the theme of this article, visit www.rts.edu/MiltonMusic.
leasing new space for classrooms, faculty and staff offices and space for a growing library collection on the third floor at 1651 Old Meadow Road, McLean, Va. (near Tysons Corner), a short distance from the current campus location. A D.C. Metro stop is being constructed nearby and will provide subway access to the campus.

Dr. Benjamin Gladd is the newly appointed assistant professor of New Testament at RTS-Jackson. He received his B.A. in Greek and Hebrew from The Master’s College and his M.A. in biblical exegesis from Wheaton College, then completed his Ph.D. from Wheaton in New Testament. Prior to joining the RTS faculty, he served as an adjunct faculty member at Wheaton, teaching New Testament exegesis and interpretation, Greek, and introductory courses on the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Gladd, who is ordained in the PCA, was also an associate pastor at Apple Valley Baptist Church in California and directed the church’s Cornerstone School of Theology.

In November, RTS was nominated for and received the Patriot Award, a distinction from the Department of Defense for employer support of the U.S. National Guard and U.S. Reserves. The award is given to those employers who demonstrate, through their support of their employees who serve in the Reserve or Guard, loyalty to the nation and its defense, and to the support of our troops. The award is not an automatic award and is a competitive award. The Patriot Award will make RTS eligible for the Freedom Award, given to a distinct number of American organizations and recognized by the Secretary of Defense.

Dr. R. Albert (Al) Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky., will speak at the inauguration of Dr. Michael A. Milton as chancellor of RTS in Charlotte on Friday, Sept. 14, at 2 p.m. For more information, visit www.rts.edu/miltoninauguration.

In November, RTS was nominated for and received the Patriot Award, a distinction from the Department of Defense for employer support of the U.S. National Guard and U.S. Reserves. The award is given to those employers who demonstrate, through their support of their employees who serve in the Reserve or Guard, loyalty to the nation and its defense, and to the support of our troops. The award is not an automatic award and is a competitive award. The Patriot Award will make RTS eligible for the Freedom Award, given to a distinct number of American organizations and recognized by the Secretary of Defense.

Orlando

The Kistemaker Academic Lecture Series will be held March 20-21 in Pamplin Chapel, with Dr. John B. Webster speaking. He is the chair of systematic theology at King’s College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

The public is invited to the President’s Forum Community Lunchees in the fellowship hall from noon to 1 p.m. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP by calling 407-366-9493. The schedule is as follows:

Feb. 22: Q&A during Black History Month with Rev. Rufus Smith, preaching pastor at Hope Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tenn.

March 14: Q&A on “Three Free Sins” with Dr. Steve Brown, discussing his new book.

April 4: Q&A with Steve Douglass, president of Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ).

Washington, D.C.

A Christmas open house event will be held on Dec. 2 at the new campus location in Tysons Corner, Va.

The North Carolina State Approving Agency has approved RTS-Charlotte for the enrollment of veterans, military and other eligible persons under the provision of Title 38, Section 3676, United States Code. This means that students who have served in the military are able to receive GI Bill benefits for attending RTS-Charlotte. Interested parties should contact Holley at the RTS-Charlotte admission office at hgregory@rts.edu or 800-755-2429 for the appropriate paperwork and answers to any questions.

Third-Party Comments for RTS Accreditation

RTS is in the process of the decennial reaffirmation of accreditation with its two accrediting agencies.

We invite third-party comments in writing concerning RTS’ qualifications for reaffirmation. These comments will be made available to the accreditors and a visiting committee that includes external peer evaluators.

The two accreditors are the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which is the regional accreditor; and the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), a national accreditation agency for theological schools in the United States and Canada.

Please submit any comments in writing to:

Reformed Theological Seminary
Attn: Dr. Robert J. Cara, Chief Academic Officer
2101 Carmel Road
Charlotte, NC 28226
Faith for Living with Mike Milton is an outreach ministry of RTS that exists to glorify God through preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through every means possible to as many people as possible.

NATIONAL TELEVISION
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