Crashing Customs and Breaking Boundaries

Acts 10 affirms that God's Word applies to all cultures and nations.

by Blair Smith

Also in This Issue:
Dr. Ligon Duncan on Why Seminaries Still Matter
A New Campus in Dallas
Dr. John Frame Retiring
A MIND FOR TRUTH.
A HEART FOR GOD.
A LIFE FOR MINISTRY.

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Who We Are
Reformed Theological Seminary exists to serve the church by preparing its leaders through a globally accessible program of theological education based on the authority of the inerrant Word of God and committed to the Reformed faith. This program promotes biblical fidelity, confessional integrity and academic excellence, and seeks to prepare students marked by “A mind for truth. A heart for God. A life for ministry.”

As such, Ministry & Leadership seeks to show how God is working through the ministries of RTS graduates, faculty members and students. Our goal is that readers will become partners with RTS through prayer, financial giving, educational experience and student referral, as well as providing placement opportunities.

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Why Do We Still Need Seminaries?

What are seminaries for? Do we still need them? A lot of questions are swirling around theological education today, and since you are reading this, you clearly care about preparing pastors and church leaders who believe God’s Word and embrace sound, biblical Christian theology, so perhaps we should reflect together on these things. Today, many people are looking at other options rather than residential theological education, and for a variety of reasons: the high cost of residential theological education, the desire to stay connected to a ministry in the local church, or even the view that seminary isn’t the best way to prepare for ministry.

I assure you that theological educators are thinking about these kinds of things, and hear them all the time. What is our answer at RTS?

Well, to begin with, at RTS we believe that the best preparation for a lifetime of ministry is the combination of a solid seminary theological education along with membership, mentoring and ministry in a healthy local church. Students who have both the grounding of rigorous and reverent academic preparation in a seminary that fully embraces inerrancy and Reformed theology, in combination with the experience of and service in a healthy local church, simply have irreplaceable advantages over those who don’t.

And this is one of the great advantages of RTS’s multi-campus system. Our students are able to serve in more churches while pursuing their theological education because of our multiple campuses. There are simply more healthy churches for us to partner with and participate in than if we were only in one location.

What about those who question the need for seminary? Well, I would argue that the need for sound theological education at the seminary level is greater than ever before. We live in a culture that considers itself intellectually and morally superior to Christianity. It is cynical and skeptical of the truth claims of the Bible and the message of the gospel. It is dismissive of Christian public discourse. It thinks it has moved on. Sadly, many Christian pastors and leaders are utterly unequipped to speak into such a situation because they have been academically, theologically and spiritually under-prepared to engage in such a context.

This makes what we are doing at RTS more important than ever, because pastors don’t need to know less; they need to know more. We offer mentoring of future pastors and church leaders by experienced...
and committed pastor-theologians; rigorous academic education; and the cultivation of students’ spiritual life and character formation in the context of a loving community committed to Jesus, the gospel, the church, the truth and a life of service to others.

This is a tremendous need in our time. And seminary is also a more efficient way to go about addressing it. Simply put, because of our resources, we are able to provide this kind of comprehensive preparation far more rapidly and effectively than it can be done in other ways.

These are just some of the reasons that your investment and prayers for RTS are so important. We fully appreciate how remarkable your support for this work is. Frankly, most Christians give to things that directly benefit them. But people who invest in the preparation of the church’s future pastors and leaders often only experience an indirect benefit. Yet their investment is often far more important than those who get an instant return.

We are eternally grateful for your partnership, and determined to work for eternal results from your generosity.

Ligon Duncan

Digital Bonus

Read the digital version of this issue at www.rts.edu/MandL for an introduction to the newly redesigned Ministry & Leadership.
In May, Dr. John Frame will teach his final theology class at RTS-Orlando, bringing to conclusion 49 years of service to theological education. He joined the RTS-Orlando faculty in 2001, having served as the John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics. The RTS Board of Trustees and faculty honor Dr. Frame by according him status, upon his retirement, as Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology and Apologetics.

Educated at Yale University and Westminster Theological Seminary, Dr. Frame has garnered widespread attention and critical acclaim for his books. His magnum opus is surely his Systematic Theology, though his many readers were drawn to his “Theology of Lordship” series, which appeared over a quarter century. That series addressed the knowledge of God, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Christian life and the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

Dr. Frame’s major works flowed from the classroom, bringing to a wider audience the lecture material he delivered to RTS students. He also addressed a number of significant debates throughout the years, ranging from the “worship wars” to open theism, from conversations about medical ethics to theological method. While his early work focused specifically on Christian apologetics, especially in the tradition of his teacher Cornelius Van Til, his corpus and his teaching ranged much more widely. The insightfulness of his work and the breadth of his influence was on display in a festschrift titled Speaking the Truth in Love. Indeed, Dr. Frame has regularly spoken of theology as the application of the Bible to all of life.

In addition, when the Evangelical Theological Society sought a systematic theologian to address the doctrine of biblical inerrancy at a recent national meeting, no one was surprised that they turned to Dr. Frame. His fidelity to biblical authority and his concern that we understand the reasons for Scripture’s role in Christian faith and practice have been instilled in many pastors and professors, elders and laypeople.

It is not rare to encounter students from around the globe who have flocked to learn from Dr. Frame at RTS-Orlando. He insistently commends the task of always learning at Jesus’ feet. His books have been studied by laypeople and scholars alike in many countries and cited by many scholars. Day by day, he arrives early to work and responds thoroughly to email inquiries from former students and strangers all over. His written works span a number of disciplines, ranging from epistemology to theology proper to the evangelical doctrine of Scripture. He has proven semester after semester to be a committed man of prayer, whether in staff gatherings or in hosting a weekly prayer meeting for his congregation. In Dr. Frame’s ministry, the Word of God has been applied to every part of his life, evident for colleagues and students to see.

For Dr. Frame’s faithful service, RTS salutes him on his retirement and wishes him well in all his future endeavors.

RTS-Orlando will honor Dr. Frame at a lunch with students, faculty, staff and board members on May 11. To send well-wishes or share a memory, visit rts.edu/orlando/JohnFrameRetires. A scholarship fund in honor of Dr. Frame and his wife, Mary, has also been established — access the donation page through the same link.

ALUMNI AND STUDENTS SAY

“I really appreciated my time of being mentored at RTS. I’m grateful that RTS has played such a significant role in my journey.”

—Jon Kim, RTS-Global
The beginning of 2017 brings a number of new appointments at RTS-Orlando. In addition to the appointment of Dr. Scott Swain as the campus’s fifth president [see page 8], there is also a new academic dean, two new vice presidents, a new faculty member and a new director of admissions. In each instance, God has blessed RTS-Orlando with leaders especially suited for serving the seminary’s mission of preparing leaders for Christ’s church.

Chancellor/CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan and the Board of Trustees have appointed Dr. Michael Allen to serve as academic dean. For the past two years, Dr. Allen has served as associate professor of systematic and historical theology at RTS-Orlando, having previously filled the D. James Kennedy Chair of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary, where he was also dean of faculty. The author and editor of numerous books and articles, including most recently Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies and (with Dr. Swain) Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic, Dr. Allen received his academic training at Wheaton College and is a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. Two vice presidential appointments fill out the RTS-Orlando president’s cabinet by redeploying alumni and proven staff members in new positions of campus leadership. Leigh Swanson (M.A. ’12) has been named vice president of community relations, technology and facilities. He also brings familiarity with RTS to his role, as he is concluding his seminary studies this year. David previously served as admissions coordinator and, for the last year, as director of admissions for RTS-Orlando.

Another recent alumnus to join the RTS-Orlando staff is Winston Miller, the new director of admissions. He was born in Springfield, Mass., but he considers Fort Lauderdale, Fla., his hometown. Winston came to RTS with a wide variety of experience in ministry and business and completed the M.Div. with a counseling emphasis in May 2016.

Left to right: Winston Miller, David Veldkamp, Leigh Swanson, Dr. Scott Swain, Dr. J. Nicholas Reid, Dr. Michael Allen
TS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan and the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Scott Swain as President and James Woodrow Hassell Professor of Systematic Theology at RTS-Orlando, effective January 1. He replaces Dr. Don Sweeting, who accepted a call to the presidency of Colorado Christian University.

A native of Jacksonville, Fla., Dr. Swain has served the Orlando campus for over a decade, first as professor and later as academic dean. During his time as dean, RTS-Orlando added three new faculty members.

In recent years, Dr. Swain has garnered a distinguished reputation as a theologian. The fruit of his doctoral study has been published as *The God of the Gospel*. His other books are (with Andreas Kostenberger) *Father, Son and Spirit; Trinity, Revelation and Reading*; and (with Dr. Michael Allen) *Reformed Catholicity and Christian Dogmatics*. In the last year, he delivered plenary addresses at both the Evangelical Theological Society’s annual meeting and the Los Angeles Theology Conference. With Dr. Allen, he edits two significant series in theology and exegesis: Zondervan Academic’s *New Studies in Dogmatics* and the T&T Clark *International Theological Commentary* series.

Dr. Swain attended the University of North Florida (B.A.), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div. and Th.M.) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Ph.D. — studying under leading theologian Kevin Vanhoozer). He is a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. He and his wife, Leigh, have four children.

According to Dr. Duncan, Dr. Swain “is a superb teacher, a prolific author, a wise leader, a faithful husband and father, and a committed churchman. He is a man of definite convictions and wide associations. At RTS, we espouse a happy confessionalism that speaks from a positive Reformed commitment, but which aims to serve all of the evangelical world. This is one reason why so many different denominations are reflected in the RTS student body. Scott exemplifies this in his own vocation as a theologian, and so is the perfect person to continue and articulate this emphasis at RTS-Orlando. I count Scott as a dear friend and trusted colleague, and can’t wait to serve RTS together with him in his new role.”

Dr. Swain’s inauguration service is scheduled for September 20.
MELISSA KRUGER: EDITOR FOR THE GOSPEL COALITION

The Gospel Coalition has welcomed Melissa Kruger, wife of RTS-Charlotte president Dr. Michael Kruger, to an expanded role at TGC as an editor working to develop writers and speakers for its website, book imprint with Crossway and national conferences. Melissa is already known to TGC readers as an author of two books and a blogger at Wit’s End. Follow her on Twitter and read her widely discussed recent article “Sisters, Jesus Is Not Your Cheerleader.”

Along with being the mother of three children, Melissa serves on the staff of Uptown Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, where her husband is a part-time pastor of teaching. Read more from her on page 15 of the Fall 2016 issue (“Partners in Ministry”).

RTS AT THE TGC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Melissa Kruger will also be a breakout session speaker at The Gospel Coalition’s biennial national conference in Indianapolis in April, one of many examples of RTS presence at the conference.

Chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan (“The Reformed Tradition Beyond Calvin”) and chancellor’s professor Kevin DeYoung (pictured, “On John Calvin”) will both be plenary speakers, as will adjunct and guest faculty members such as Dr. Timothy Keller, Dr. Stephen Nichols and Sandy Willson. In addition, African-American Leadership Initiative director Jemar Tisby and RTS-Global student and noted speaker/author Nancy Guthrie will participate in breakout sessions.

This year’s conference theme is “No Other Gospel,” marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. More information about TGC 2017 can be found at thegospelcoalition.org.

DR. MICHAEL KRUGER AND THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Along with being RTS-Charlotte president, Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at that campus, and part-time pastor of teaching at Uptown Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, Dr. Michael Kruger has been appointed as vice president of the Evangelical Theological Society. ETS is a prestigious professional academic society of biblical scholars, teachers, pastors, students and others involved in evangelical scholarship. With over 4,000 members, ETS is one of the largest groups of evangelical scholars in the world. It is customary for the vice president of ETS to become the president elect the following year, and then eventually president.

Dr. Kruger has been a member of ETS since 2001 and is the co-founder and co-chair of the ETS study group on the New Testament canon, textual criticism and apocryphal literature. Read his blog, Canon Fodder, at www.michaeljkruger.com and follow him on Twitter @michaeljkruger.

ALUMNI AND STUDENTS SAY

“RTS has provided me with tremendous opportunities to grow and mature as a believer and as a minister of the gospel.”

—Josh Mathis, RTS-Atlanta
RTS has launched the Hughes Scholarship as part of the Hughes Initiative for Pastoral Excellence. The seminary has begun the process of awarding more than 30 Hughes Scholarships to incoming residential students in the Master of Divinity programs at the Jackson, Orlando, Charlotte, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. campuses. The full-tuition scholarships also provide a book stipend so recipients can build their libraries while in seminary. The Hughes Scholarship aims to help prepare the most promising of those called to pastoral ministry, equipping the next generation for gospel ministry in the church. It was initiated by Robbie Hughes to honor the legacy of her late husband, Dudley, an oil industry executive who went to be with the Lord in 2015. “The Hughes Scholarship is a result of Robbie’s desire to make an investment to benefit the future of the church,” says Dr. Guy Richardson, RTS-Jackson president, “to provide a steady stream of men called to be educated and prepared for pulpit ministry through RTS. It is, as we have called it, a ‘legacy on legs.’ We truly believe that this will be an instrument in the Lord’s hand that will help build and strengthen Christ’s church.” For more information, visit rts.edu/site/financialaid/hughes.aspx.

RTS will be active at several denominational general assemblies this summer. Here’s a breakdown of each:

**ARP General Synod, Flat Rock, N.C. (Bonclarken)** — luncheon, June 6, noon (email Stephane Jeanrenaud at sjeanrenaud@rts.edu)

**PCA General Assembly, Greensboro, N.C.** — Alumni & Friends Luncheon, June 15, noon (email Kevin Collins at kcollins@rts.edu)

**EPC General Assembly, Sacramento, Calif.** — June 20-23 (email Kevin Collins at kcollins@rts.edu)

**OPC General Assembly, Palos Heights, Ill.** — May 31 (email David Veldkamp at dveldkamp@rts.edu)

**GENERAL ASSEMBLIES PRESENCE**

**HUGHES SCHOLARSHIP LAUNCH**

“Who is called to the Great Commission? I’ve learned from my studies at RTS that the call is a corporate call. We are called to train, raise up and send, pray and be a part of the Great Commission by sending missionaries.”

—Mike Pettengill, RTS-Global
In early 2013, several teaching and ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church in America formed the Gospel Reformation Network to promote a proper emphasis on sanctification in the ministry of local churches. RTS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan serves on the GRN council, and Dr. Brian Cosby (pictured), visiting professor at RTS-Atlanta and senior minister at Wayside Presbyterian Church in Signal Mountain, Tenn., is the editorial director.

In June the GRN will sponsor a luncheon at the PCA General Assembly in Greensboro, N.C. Kevin DeYoung, chancellor’s professor of systematic and historical theology at RTS and senior minister of University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Mich., will be keynote speaker.

Learn more about the GRN at gospelreformation.net.

“Theologically, seminary does a work and wonder that you can’t get outside the classroom. Practical understanding of ministry has been developed and formed through interacting with students before classes. RTS has humbled me and prepared me for a lifetime of ministry in the pulpit.”

—Philip Lee, RTS-Washington, D.C.
Crashing Customs and Breaking Boundaries

Acts 10 affirms that God’s Word applies to all cultures and nations.

by Blair Smith
My family and I recently crossed a major border in American cultural history and imagination: We moved south of the Mason-Dixon line. While such a move does not require passing through an international border where one must field probing questions from customs officers or experience the glare of solemn border police, it does carry with it certain reminders that a kind of border has been crossed. Voices have slower cadences and drawn-out accents. Adults address children with words like “hon’” and “sweetie,” while children address adults with “sir” and “ma’am.” The tea is sweeter and the weather warmer. These — and the overabundance of men wearing pastels — alert new residents that they have crossed a boundary and are immersed in new customs.
A World of Boundaries

Such examples make up no more than cultural window dressing and pale in comparison to the jarring experience of crossing boundaries and exposure to new customs in other parts of the world. Imagine moving from Shanghai to Saskatchewan, or from Siberia to Sudan! If this is a reality today, it certainly was during the earliest days of the church.

The world of the New Testament was a world of boundaries — political boundaries with the Roman Empire and everything else; status boundaries before the law between Roman citizens and non-citizens, and slaves and freemen; religious boundaries too.

But right in the midst of that empire were the Jewish people, many of whom wanted the thickest boundary possible between them and the surrounding culture. They would have their own laws; if Rome would let them, they would have their own culture and customs. And, of course, a number of these boundaries were not arbitrary walls erected by a peculiar people, as many Romans would have believed.

Indeed, they were divinely sanctioned.

God had selected His people, formed them and set them apart from the surrounding nations. This had been His will for them from the beginning. Based on His promise to Abraham, God intended to create a great people and give them land, and to Moses God gave to His people laws they were to follow in that Promised Land that would set them apart, that they might reflect His holy character.

The earliest Christians inherited this sense of living side by side with the Romans yet inhabiting a different world. Many were Jews themselves and did not easily slough off the boundary-creating Law. Yet at the same time, their Messiah, Jesus Christ, had taught them the gospel, and how those who believe must make disciples of all nations. The good news of the Gospel was for Jerusalem and Judea, yes, but it was also for the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

So the question became for this young, growing, predominantly Jewish church, how would it remain faithful to God’s Word, as they had received and practiced it for over a millennium, and also fulfill Jesus’ commission? These faithful Jews, who had also entrusted their lives to the Messiah, could not stand so firmly behind high Jewish boundaries and at the same time bring the gospel freely to people and situations outside those walls. Pressure was being brought to bear on these boundaries through the work of the Holy Spirit, and something had to give.

Three “Characters” in Acts 10

By the time we get to chapter 10 of the early record of the church in the Book of Acts, there are already cracks in the boundary walls. The Holy Spirit has been preparing the church’s leadership inch by inch for what is coming, as the Spirit is poured out on Jews in Jerusalem (2:1-41), as he opens eyes in Samaria (8:4-8), and even converts a Gentile from a far-off place (8:26-40).

In chapter 10 itself the march of the Holy Spirit continues in bringing an awakening to Gentiles, and also to Jewish Christians who had not yet realized how certain cherished boundaries had to come crashing down. This chapter has three main characters we will look at in turn: Cornelius, Peter and God Himself. As we do, we will see how God is working...
out among His church the epoch-changing implications of the Gospel message.

Cornelius

As a centurion from Caesarea, Cornelius would have been a prominent man of abundant means. More than his importance and standing in society, however, was his godliness. He does not represent a rank pagan, but a God-fearer — that is, a Gentile who had been drawn to God through the Jews, yet who had not taken the final steps toward becoming a Jewish proselyte or convert. He feared God, he gave generously to the poor and he was a man of prayer (v. 2), but he had not been circumcised and most likely did not follow many laws having to do with ritual purity. This God-fearing man took seriously his responsibility of spiritual leadership within his household so that its members, too, feared God — he was a man of spiritual influence (v. 2).

But he was a man apart. Here is one so dedicated that he scheduled his times of prayer according to the temple (v. 3), yet he himself was not free to go to the temple. What stands out to us is that this man loved and feared God, even though he was not permitted into the full rites and privileges of the Jewish religion. Because he loved and feared God, he would have been faithfully waiting for the coming Messiah. God recognized this faith and chose to work through it in order to demonstrate to His church the radical implications of the coming of Jesus Christ.

God's work here is monumental and will shake Cornelius to the core. God graciously prepares him by sending an angelic vision so that he will hear His word from Peter (vv. 3-6). First, though, God must prepare the Apostle Peter.

Peter

We find Peter here in our chapter at noon on the rooftop in prayer. Something very natural happens: he becomes hungry. Then something very supernatural happens: he sees an absurdly unique vision (vv. 9-13).

God brings him into his movie theater. A sheet descends from the heavens, in it being all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean. Plenty of those forbidden in the Torah would have been represented there. But instead of being reminded by God of His laws regarding ritual purity, Peter hears something that must have fallen rather harshly on Jewish ears: “Peter! Rise, Kill, and eat!” (v. 13).

Now remember who we are dealing with here. This man who told Jesus he would never wash His dirty feet, this one who cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant who came to take Jesus away, was not one given to an equivocating response! “By no means, Lord,” he says emphatically (v. 14).

God’s simple command so flew in the face of what Peter knew and practiced that He had to go beyond the mere command and add the explanation that He has now made what is unclean clean. And just as Peter thrice denied the Lord before His death before he realized what he was doing, God in His patience and preparation goes through this spectacular display three times so that the lesson to Peter is clear (v. 16).

Now that does not mean Peter immediately gets it. He gets the part about the animals, sure, but something deeper is at work here. God has shaken up Peter’s understanding and he is inwardly perplexed, because while there is an importance to what God has said about the animals, it is to teach a larger lesson (v. 17). It will be in the events that follow where Peter gets it.

Summoned by Cornelius (vv. 17-23), Peter is brought to a very willing audience in Caesarea (vv. 24-27). He addresses them, starting with a rather harsh note by saying what the Gentiles painfully knew: Jewish custom did not allow them to associate with anyone of another nation (v. 28). Notice it says “custom.” Though your translation may read “unlawful” in v. 28, this is better taken in a softer sense as “taboo,” for there is nothing in the Old Testament that says Jews must not associate with others. What had happened throughout time was that Jewish traditions about uncleanness had raised the rightful boundary between Jews and Gentiles to stratospheric heights. These heightened boundaries — raised out of nervousness over ritual purity — were accretions on God’s Word. Rules about table fellowship and not entering a Gentile home were seen as implications of laws on ritual purity, but the strictness seen here in traditional practice went beyond what the Old Testament said and had set a firm, unfriendly barrier between Jews (even Jewish Christians) and Gentiles.

This barrier is about to be — in fact, already has been — removed.

Peter gets it. He enters a Gentile’s home and strikes a harsh note at the beginning, only to set in relief
what God has shown him. By analogy, if God has said the distinction between clean and unclean animals no longer matters, then certainly, too, the attitudes Jewish Christians had toward what they considered unclean people no longer mattered (vv. 34-43).

But it’s more weighty than that. God told Peter adamantly, “Do not call common what I have made clean” (v. 15). This puts the matter on a higher plane, to one of moral compulsion that leads to a fundamental change of attitude — we must not, outside of faith in Christ, consider these people different in any way, Peter might say.

This awakening by God within Peter will fundamentally change the character of the church going forward. God has revealed to him not to let cultural custom inhibit his willingness to bring the gospel into every situation and to every person. What is more, forgiveness of sin is not tethered at all to ritual purity; these laws have been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which brings atonement and forgiveness of sins for the believing Jew and Gentile alike. Peter realizes, How can I bring a division into Christ’s body that He Himself does not recognize? That would be to fall into the sin of partiality and call unclean what God has declared clean.

**God**

God has brought Cornelius and Peter to this momentous point. He has prepared them through angel and vision. He is a merciful Father who cares about His individual children. But He also cares about the success of His fledgling church, and He is not afraid to boldly intervene and kick down a barrier that would inhibit its growth.

God the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, would empower the Apostles to bring the kingdom into the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8), filled with unclean Gentiles who need Jesus (10:45). And God will continue to press this with His apostles because a man such as Cornelius is not as foreign to the Jewish Christians as some rank pagans who will begin filing into the church. Cornelius was already acquainted with the living God. But God is rapidly moving His church to the cusp of the wild, uncomfortable world of pagan Rome, the world that will eventually be turned upside down by the Christian message.

In light of God’s eternal plan, though, this was nothing new. If we were to look carefully at God’s covenantal message in the Old Testament, He always had the ends of the earth and all nations in view (cf. Genesis 17:1-8). He worked among the Israelite nation in preparation, but now, in and through Christ, He has brought His kingdom to the nations. The gospel of the kingdom of Christ has universal implications. This has always been God’s plan, and we see it unfolded in time in Acts 10.

We are seeing every barrier between God the Father and His gift to His Son removed — His gift is the nations (Psalm 2:8).

And God is making increasingly clear that no longer are His people only a light that draws to itself — they are always that — but also are sent to the nations. Any church faithful to God’s Word will be concerned and active in missions and evangelism. God is a missionary God, leading His people to neighborhoods, communities, towns, countries — no area is off-limits to the proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ.
A Conversion Text, But of What Sort?

This is a conversion text, but whom is God converting? He’s certainly bringing Cornelius to Himself through Christ. But he’s also converting Peter in a way, enlightening him as to what has changed of the old now that Christ has come, as well as broadening his understanding of the audience for the preaching of the gospel (10:42-48).

God is teaching him, too, about authority. What authorities will govern his life? Will it be Jewish tradition, or will it be what God has revealed of His purposes according to the Holy Spirit?

We might think this text is a nice historical anecdote that provides for us helpful knowledge about how the church grew out of the narrow confines of Judaism and into the wider Gentile world: by and large, though, we may think it isn’t relevant to a world such as ours that has outgrown prejudice and the authority of empty tradition. We’re “beyond this” in the 21st century church, we proudly think to ourselves.

Are we?
The Word of God is never irrelevant to where we are, and the church must prayerfully consider who might be “the unclean” in our practice of mission. If any custom or boundary is inhibiting us from seeking to reach a certain group of people, then it is an authority other than the Word of God.

Peter’s struggle to see the implications of the authority of Jesus Christ is our struggle. What informs our thoughts and attitudes? Who directs the church how she is to follow Christ? These are questions Peter needed to answer in his own way, given his background. He needed to ultimately ask: Which is the authority in my life: the traditions of my people and the accretions of my religion, or the Word of God?

God spoke to him here in Acts 10 and said, “Do not call unclean what I have called clean.”

God is still calling His church to crash customs and break boundaries to communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is He calling you?

Blair Smith, recently appointed assistant professor of systematic theology at RTS-Charlotte, received his Master of Divinity degree from RTS and is a Ph.D. candidate at Durham University in England. Contact him at bsmith@rts.edu.
Tial Thanga listened to his mother, and his entire country has been blessed because of it. As a young man living in the Myanmar capital of Yangon, working as a schoolteacher and being the first from his family to attend (and graduate from) university, Tial returned to his home village to visit his family for a week. That’s when his mother asked him to attend a local evangelistic meeting led by missionaries from India.

“My mother was wrestling with cancer and she said go to that meeting,” recalls Tial, whose mother was the first in her village to proclaim faith in Christ and whose father (an animist priest) died when Tial was 2 years old. “I said no, because that was not my desire. But my mother knew that I didn’t have a relationship with Christ, and she prayed for me.”

Tial’s heart was changed that week: “My mother insisted I go to that meeting. I sat there with a lot of pride inside, but the Lord kept me there listening, and finally He spoke to me through His Word. My spiritual life began through my mother’s prayer and the Lord’s work. From 2 Corinthians 5:12-16, He showed me how my pride was blocking me from having a relationship with Him. That’s when He made me a new person in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Today, the RTS-Jackson graduate and former schoolteacher leads an effort to plant churches throughout Myanmar (known as Burma until 1989), serving as an agent of spiritual revival in the Southeast Asian nation.

“At the same time as my conversion, I began having a strong desire to

Continued on page 20
The ministry of Tial Thanga in Myanmar is the fruit of faithful prayer for the nation by people like Dr. Paul Long Sr. The professor of missions emeritus at RTS-Jackson, now 93 years young, served in the U.S. Army in Burma (the former name of Myanmar) during World War II.

In 1994 Dr. Long published a book about his war experiences, titled *Citizen Soldiers of World War II: Pacific Theater of Operations*. The book tells the true stories of the American soldiers (including himself) who served with Merrill’s Marauders in occupied Burma during the war. Merrill’s Marauders were a famed jungle warfare unit specializing in missions deep behind enemy lines, with each soldier earning the Bronze Star for heroism in combat.

Dr. Long’s experiences in Burma led him to also engage in spiritual warfare for the souls of the Burmese people. His later service for nearly three decades as a missionary in Africa and Brazil inspired another book, *The Man in the Leather Hat and Other Stories*.

Both books can be purchased through the RTS online bookstore at mindandheart.com by clicking on Faculty Publications and selecting View Publications next to Dr. Paul Long Sr.
serve the Lord all my life,” says Tial, executive director of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Myanmar. “I wanted to go to Bible school so I might correctly share the gospel. Also at the same time, when I went back to Yangon, an interdenominational group appointed me as one of its city leaders. From there I was looking for a Bible school where I could strengthen my faith and not go somewhere wandering, but at the time there was just one, and it didn’t accept born-again people. So I began looking abroad to get equipped to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Enter RTS. “One of our local pastors knew I was eagerly looking for a Bible school,” Tial explains, “and said he knew a good school for me, because a faculty member there had been praying for Myanmar because it had been a closed country for missionaries for many years.” That faculty member happened to be Dr. Paul Long Sr., then a professor of missions at RTS-Jackson (see sidebar on page 19). When Tial met Dr. Long in Jackson, “I was happy, happy, happy to be there. RTS was like heaven to me — people were praying for Myanmar and for my community, and my mother and others were praying for my desire to fulfill the Lord’s call, and by God’s grace that happened.”

Tial arrived on campus in 1987, and though he completely failed his first class, “it made me study harder,” he declares. “In Myanmar we didn’t have much of a chance to speak English, so I was struggling. But people around me were very patient and loving. The Lord put me in the right place.” To demonstrate this, Tial not only received a Master of Divinity degree, but also completed two additional advanced degrees, returning to Myanmar with his family in 1995.

That year marked the gathering of the first general assembly of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Myanmar. Over the past two decades, in order to develop leaders for the Myanmar church, Tial and others launched Myanmar Reformed Theological Seminary and Discipleship Training Center, of which he is the president. The seminary and training center prepares church planters, pastors, missionaries and teachers for their respective ministries, having sent out about 160 alumni throughout Myanmar.

“The Lord is at work more than we thought He would be,” Tial concludes. “He is doing great things in Myanmar. I think people more and more understand who God is and how he is able to transform the lives of people in Christ. Some people say Myanmar is a Buddhist country and that we Christians are in the minority, and it’s hard to work and people don’t change. But I have seen God raise up all these people who know the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ and the authority of His gospel, and I think it’s changed the lives of people. Many come to Christ through the sharing of the eternal life that God gives us as a gift. And even in our small leadership development, through the church and through the training center, many leaders have come out of that.”

For Tial, church leadership development has also become a family passion, as he is one of three RTS alumni in the Thanga clan. His wife, Laiengpui (Annie), received an RTS certificate during their time stateside: “She works alongside me in the training center,” Tial adds. Their daughter, Eden, returned to Jackson three years ago and earned a master’s degree, and has returned to Myanmar to serve in Christian education, orphanage work, English classes and evangelism efforts. Her husband, a Myanmar national, graduated from Bible school in the Philippines, and they have a son together. “When she goes to class, we have a chance to babysit for a while,” says the proud grandfather.

Tial and Annie’s son David serves in a U.S. military leadership training program in Alaska, while their...
son John recently finished a business degree at a Myanmar university.

“I think RTS prepared us well and gave us a great vision, and it has been strengthening,” Tial concludes. “People sometimes say, ‘You’re crazy — why did you come back to Myanmar?’ But people like us can serve in any corner of the country. We don’t have to pay airfare or whatever. So we feel like we represent our friends.”

Through servants like Tial Thanga, the gospel has gone a long way toward penetrating Myanmar. Thus, a mother’s prayers and witness continue to bear eternal fruit.

For more information about church planting efforts in Myanmar, visit southeastasiapartnership.com/#/where-does-seap-serve/myanmar-national-partners.

### About Myanmar

**Bordering Countries:** Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Thailand

**Land Area:** 253,954 square miles (slightly smaller than Texas)

**Population (2014 estimate):** 55.7 million

**Capital and Largest City (2011 estimate):** Yangon (Rangoon), 4.4 million

**Other Large Cities:** Mandalay, 1.06 million; Nay Pyi Taw, 1.06 million

**Monetary Unit:** Kyat

**National Name:** Pyidaungsu Myanmar Naingngandau

**Principal Language:** Burmese

**Ethnicities:** Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Mon 2%, Indian 2%, other 5%

**Religions:** Buddhist 89%, Christian 4%, Islam 4%, Animist 1%, other 2%

**Literacy Rate:** 92.7% (2011 estimate)

Achieved independence in 1948, known as Burma until 1989 (the U.S. State Department does not recognize the name change)

Source: www.factmonster.com/country/myanmar.html
Paul Hahn is living proof that an errant tennis shot can serve (pun partially intended) as a life-changing moment. It happened one day in 1994 in Auburn, Alabama, where Paul was a campus minister with Reformed University Fellowship at Auburn University. By his admission, the RUF ministry was thriving there, with student attendance at weekly meetings increasing tenfold in four years, but Paul felt a gnawing sense that he should be doing something different.

“I was playing tennis with somebody,” he recalls, “and he hit a ball against the screen, and when I went to get the ball, I looked down at a field by an elementary school where kids were playing soccer, with their families watching. In that microsecond the Holy Spirit nudged me hard, as if to say, ‘Paul, do you see that down there? That’s what you need to be doing as a family — being a friend to other families.’

In that moment Paul revisited a calling to church planting that he and his wife, Fran, received when he was a student at RTS-Jackson. “I finished my tennis match and went home,” he continues, “and because my wife was pregnant with our third child, I thought she would kill me if I talked about what happened. But I told her the whole story, and she said she’d been thinking about the same thing too. So we went back to that church planting awakening we’d always had on our hearts since seminary.”

Paul’s subsequent church planting experiences in Texas and Tennessee prepared him for his new role as coordinator of the PCA Mission to North America. In that...
role, Paul lends leadership to the denomination’s church planting and other mission work throughout the continent.

Though he grew up in Lake- land, Fla., in a Christian home and “walked the aisle” at an evangelistic meeting at age 11, the Yale University graduate struggled with assurance of his salvation even into ministry with an interdenominational mission agency and, later, his arrival in Jackson to attend RTS. Paul’s seminary experience helped him resolve those doubts and clarified his calling to do “what I was made to do: to be a pastor, to preach the gospel, to minister people toward Christ.”

While he and Fran served as ministry interns at First Presbyterian Church in Gulfport, Miss., they received their initial sense of calling to church planting. Terry Geiger, one of Paul’s predecessors as PCA MNA coordinator, preached there on a Sunday night on the gospel and church planting. “I can still see my wife and me sitting in the pew,” Paul remembers, “and when he pronounced the benediction, we looked at each other and said, ‘Do you want to do that? That’s what I want to do.’” After much counsel, Paul saw RUF campus ministry as a means of preparation for later church planting — he graduated from RTS in the spring of 1990, and the Hahns moved to Auburn that summer.

During their time in Alabama, Paul had an unexpected influence on the life of a man who later graduated from RTS and became senior pastor of that same church in Gulfport: Guy Richard, a senior at Auburn whose girlfriend was involved in RUF there. “Guy would come to a Bible study I helped lead,” Paul recounts, “and he would sit in the corner and tie his shoes, or look at the ground — anything but listen to anything we talked about. About 10 years later one of my staff members in Texas said he met a guy who said he had been converted through RUF at Auburn. When I found out it was Guy, I called him and asked him how that happened, because he hadn’t listened to anything. He said he had been listening — I had talked about Jesus in the most natural way, as if He was real and at the center of my life, and he wanted that.”

In 1994, responding to the call to church planting, the Hahns left Alabama for Texas to plant Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Austin, a daughter congregation of Park Cities Presbyterian Church in Dallas (see “Deeper in the Heart of Texas” on page 30). Redeemer grew to the point where it planted other churches of its own, with one of those plants starting a plant as well.

After nine years there, sensing it was time for a transition to new leadership, Paul and his family (which now included four children) moved to Knoxville, Tenn., where he pastored what became Redeemer Church of Knoxville. “It was UT (University of Texas) to UT (University of Tennessee), burnt orange to Big Orange, and the churches were both named Redeemer, so everything was covered for me,” Paul observes with a laugh.

In 2015 Paul transitioned into a church planting coordinator role with his presbytery in Tennessee, but just two months after officially starting that position, he was asked to be part of the search for a new MNA coordinator. Lo and behold, after several months and a series of phone interviews and face-to-face interviews, Paul was recommended to the PCA General Assembly, with final approval at the end of June 2016. “I’m very humbled and honored to be called to this,” Paul declares.

“When I think about the previous three coordina-
Continued on page 25
An example of the partnership between RTS and the PCA Mission to North America is MNA’s role in the newly launched Center for Church Planting at RTS-Charlotte. The purpose of the CCP is to become a national and international resource for the planting of Reformed churches committed to the authority of Scripture, the centrality of preaching and the Great Commission. It will specialize in training future pastors for the unique challenges, complexities and opportunities that church planters face.

The CCP is directed by Dr. Tom Hawkes (pictured), senior pastor of Uptown Church in Charlotte, visiting lecturer of practical theology at RTS-Charlotte and former MNA associate coordinator for church planting. Over two decades ago Dr. Hawkes planted Uptown, out of which five additional churches have been planted (RTS-Charlotte president Dr. Michael Kruger and his wife, Melissa, serve on Uptown’s staff).

Dean Faulkner, CCP assistant director, is also a visiting lecturer of practical theology at RTS-Charlotte and a seasoned church planter who has trained many young pastors and church planters in the PCA. He is finishing his Doctor of Ministry degree at RTS-Charlotte.

Dr. Hawkes outlines some links between the CCP and MNA:

- MNA has helped raise money for the CCP through its Antioch Fund.
- The CCP is working with MNA to launch an annual Church Planting Readiness Seminar at RTS-Charlotte, to help students explore their suitability for church planting.
- The two organizations are working together to help place RTS-Charlotte graduates in various church planting opportunities nationwide.
- MNA staff member Jim Hatch serves on the CCP advisory board.
- The idea for the CCP originated in a discussion between Jim and Dr. Kruger, with Jim proposing Dr. Hawkes as the director.
- Dr. Hawkes and Dean Faulkner met with Jim and other MNA staff members to consult on what to include in the training program.

“We are so pleased to see how God has opened the doors for the CCP here in Charlotte,” Dr. Kruger says. “We believe that the Great Commission moves forward most effectively through the planting of new churches. And we want those churches to be planted by pastors who love Reformed theology, believe in the power of preaching and have a heart for the lost.”

Charlotte provides fertile ground for the CCP. With a metropolitan population of 1.8 million, a world-class business and professional community, a vibrant and growing urban center, a rich cultural heritage, and a diverse mix of people groups in need of the gospel, the Queen City provides church planters prepared by the CCP/MNA partnership with endless opportunities for ministry.

For more about the CCP at RTS-Charlotte, visit www.rts.edu/site/rt snearyou/charlotte/churchplanting/overview.aspx.
tors, each of them had a huge impact on me. I’m not nearly the man of faith that they are, but I would like to carry on their lineage by God’s grace.”

Paul sees his vision for MNA as threefold. “We have typically had a two-pronged approach to ministry: church planting and missional or outreach partnership,” he explains. “I want to add a third prong: church renewal. Many of our PCA churches are struggling to answer questions like ‘Who are we? Why are we here now? What is our moment now? Are we here for this generation of believers, and can we have a fresh sense of mission and fruitfulness?’ In answering those questions, we must realize that the gospel is not just the ground of our salvation, but also has to be the pattern of our lives. We all have to ask ourselves, ‘Where does God want me to die afresh? Where does Jesus want me to share the life of the cross with Him afresh?’”

To that end Paul and Fran, now empty nesters who became grandparents for the first time in December, have relocated to Georgia, where MNA is headquartered. From there Paul carries out the latest chapter in his ministry journey. Whether an errant tennis shot will again have anything to do with the Hahns’ future direction is anybody’s guess.

For more information about Paul and the PCA MNA, visit pcamna.org/profiles/paul-hahn.
Hiba, Japan, only about 20 miles southeast of the center of Tokyo, features a distinct blend of modernity and ancient tradition. On the one hand, the city boasts the world’s longest suspended monorail. On the other, Shinto and Buddhist shrines dot the cityscape. In this milieu, Hikari Ishido serves as a professor of economics at Chiba University, while working toward a Master of Arts in Religion degree from the RTS Global campus.

Unlike the vast majority of his fellow Japanese, Hikari is a third-generation Christian — his grandfather was converted through a street evangelism mission in northern Japan (“an unreached area with lots of pagan beliefs,” Hikari notes). His own conversion took place during his university years. “Back then I was kind of skeptical, entangled by relativistic ideas,” he confesses. But when invited to attend a Christian summer camp, and through conversations with pastors, “I got persuaded to abandon my relativistic ideas and came to faith in Christ,” Hikari adds.

His current pastor, Tokuhiro Meiri, introduced him to RTS. “I was looking for a chance to study the Bible [in an academic setting],” Hikari says. “By training I’m an economist, and I was studying economics as an academic subject, so to try to construct a strong Christian background, I thought I needed more study. I had various options, and my pastor suggested I take classes from RTS, because he studied at RTS-Orlando.” Pastor Meiri’s conversion to Christianity took place in Orlando while living with a Christian family there.

From Hikari’s perspective, pursuing a degree from RTS-Global equips him to view economics from a biblical worldview. “I started thinking about the [difference] between a materialistic way of living and a more spiritual way of living,” he explains. “That’s how I made up my mind to study theology.”

Theological education has also prepared Hikari to influence the world around him with the gospel, having been invited onto Japanese talk shows to discuss his profession as an economist, his faith in Christ and the connection between the two: “I always say it’s not about materialistic abundance — true richness is something spiritual,” Hikari testifies.

He also makes the most of opportunities to proclaim the gospel to his university students. “No church- or Bible-related student activities are allowed on campus, so I have to be very cautious,” he explains, noting that “if my students have some trouble mentally or spiritually or emotionally, then I can highlight my own personal beliefs because those stu-

“**It’s not about materialistic abundance — true richness is something spiritual.**”

—Hikari Ishido

**Counting the Cost**

A JAPANESE ECONOMICS PROFESSOR STUDIES WITH THE RTS GLOBAL CAMPUS.

BY PAUL SCHWARZ
Hikari invites them to his church, where he is a ruling elder in a congregation originally planted by PCA Mission to the World missionaries. It’s a very small church — only 10 members — but according to Hikari, “the Lord is working through us in quite an invisible way. When it comes to [evangelizing] nonbelievers in the community around us, we are united.”

No less visible to Hikari is the completion of his M.A.R. degree from RTS. “I started in 2006, so I have been a student for 10 years,” he says with a laugh, noting that he has just two more courses to finish and that he has learned to adjust to a different style of education. “Here in Japan it’s about trying to remember everything, while the RTS courses require a lot more asking questions and interaction among students. That’s what I like about being in the [program], though, because one culture doesn’t know everything.”

Hikari may not know everything there is to know about theology (or economics for that matter), but his work toward an RTS degree appears, in God’s economy, to be a wise investment.

For more information about RTS-Global/Distance Education, see the accompanying “Available, Accessible, Flexible” or visit rts.edu/global.

**RTS Global: Available, Accessible, Flexible**

RTS has always been at the forefront of making theological education as available, accessible and flexible as possible. The most visible expression of this emphasis is the RTS-Global/Distance Education program. Its vision is to bring quality seminary training in the Reformed tradition to students across the globe, such as Hikari Ishido (see main article).

To accomplish this, RTS-Global/DE is adding new, intuitive features to its courses, such as online classrooms and media platforms in both desktop and mobile environments. The aim is to bring a high level of instruction, interactivity and ease of use by leveraging technology while ensuring students have the personal, human support they need to have a positive learning experience.

RTS-Global/DE provides: registration and logistical support, live faculty interaction and teaching assistant support, and a fully staffed student services department.

Ultimately, RTS-Global/DE enables every Christian to go to seminary, in that all believers should seek to be thoroughly equipped to rightly handle God’s Word. With technology, anyone can receive seminary-level teaching, whether through the traditional on-campus format, a hybrid format, a fully online program, or even through downloading lectures for free through mobile apps or webpages.

While some are called to be full-time, residential students, others are prohibited from doing so by their particular life situation. For these others, RTS-Global/DE provides multiple options, including hybrid (residential/online) and fully online. For those who can’t afford seminary, RTS-Global/DE offers financial aid, as well as makes all course content available for free through RTS Mobile.

When theological education is truly available, accessible and flexible, the possibilities are endless. RTS-Global/DE helps turn those possibilities into realities.

— Paul Schwarz

For more information, visit rts.edu/global. RTS-Global/DE executive director David John and director of admissions Edward Murray contributed to this item.
To mark a half-century of God’s faithfulness, this past October the RTS family gathered in Jackson to look back at the seminary’s formative moments, honor God’s work and look ahead to future generations bringing glory to God’s holy, inerrant Word. Highlights included a dinner keynoted by RTS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan, reminiscences by former professors, alumni providing stories of their time at seminary and the application of their education in their ministries, a worship service in Grace Chapel, a picnic lunch and campus tours.

For more information about the celebration, visit 50th.rts.edu. The complete photo album can be viewed on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ReformedJackson/photos by selecting the RTS 50th Anniversary album.
The city of Dallas and its surrounding area has been given a variety of appellations — “Big D,” “Metroplex” and “Gateway to the West” being just a few. Now you can add “RTS Campus Location” to the list of descriptions, as the seminary has already begun offering classes in Dallas during the current spring semester. Course offerings began on January 30 with Dr. Miles Van Pelt and have continued with Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn, Dr. Richard Belcher and Dr. Guy Waters.

Together with RTS-Houston, RTS wants to serve the church throughout Texas and the entire Southwest by preparing its leaders with a mind for truth and a heart for God with a view to a life for ministry. Pending accreditation approval, RTS-Dallas will offer Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Theological Studies) degrees starting this fall.

The Dallas campus is part of a larger vision for the Lone Star State, with RTS-Houston and RTS-Dallas working together through sharing faculty and administrative resources. The two cities also share a strategic growth template — at the end of 2015, Dallas was the second-fastest-growing city in the United States, with the first-fastest-growing being Houston.

Park Cities Presbyterian Church is the local congregation hosting RTS-Dallas, with Providence Presbyterian Church also playing a key role in inviting RTS to the area. “Reformed theology is almost unknown in the Southwest by comparison with, say, the Southeast,” observes David Rea, senior pastor at Providence and RTS-Charlotte alumnus. “In Texas alone there are 28 million people, and in north Texas you have 7 million people. To me, it was obvious that we desperately need a seminary like RTS in the Southwest to help communicate the truths of Scripture, the gospel and the Protestant Reformation.”

That cultural backdrop frames RTS’ acceptance of the invitation to expand into Dallas. “We wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for people like David Rea and Mark Davis (senior pastor at Park Churches) and others in the community who believed that RTS would be a valuable addition to the community.”

RTS responds to an invitation to launch a new campus in Dallas.
“Cities),” says Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO. “RTS goes where the church wants us to be. To have pastors, elders and churches say we need to be here in Dallas means a lot to us.”

According to David, RTS needs to be in Dallas because of the quality of the people who serve with the seminary: “In my experience, RTS has the most wonderful professors an institution could have. My experience is that RTS has the best scholars in their respective fields, but not only that, RTS encourages and emphasizes the fact that they want their professors to be ordained ministers serving in local churches, presbyteries and denominations. So you don’t just have academicians, you have ministers of the Word with a shepherd’s heart and a scholar’s training. The professors really do feel called to invest in the lives of their students.”

Those investments at RTS-Dallas have begun with the appointment of Dr. Mark McDowell (above) as executive director. He comes to RTS via Northern Ireland and most recently (since 2012) from the pastoral staff of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he was hired by RTS adjunct professor Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, and served alongside other current and former RTS faculty including Dr. Derek Thomas and Dr. Ralph Davis.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for opening ministry doors into the Southwest,” says Dr. McDowell, who will serve as assistant professor of systematic theology as well as give leadership to the campus. “It’s a very attractive responsibility, and being part of the RTS faculty is an honor and privilege.

My heart and mind have been to serve a local congregation, and I’m bringing that into the classroom, hoping to impart theological education that touches the heart and not just the head, helping students see that theology grows best in a local church context.”

Dr. Duncan concurs: “Mark is a capable theologian with a pastor’s heart for the church. He is passionately committed to theological education. Mark possesses the academic and pastoral credentials and experience we need to lead this work. He also has the energy for it.”

Adding to Dr. McDowell’s energy is Bogdan Witecki, hired as a librarian/administrator, as well as David Foster, a former RTS adjunct professor, serving as director of church relations. As this issue went to publication, the seminary was in the process of filling two professorial openings related to RTS-Dallas and RTS-Houston, with the professors shared between the two campuses.

With Texas being a frontier for Reformed theology in some ways, and with a desire to influence all kinds of Bible-believing people, RTS embarks on the advancement of its Texas-sized adventure with enthusiasm and excitement.

For more about RTS-Dallas and its degree programs, visit rts.edu/Dallas. The campus is now accepting student applications for this coming academic year at rts.edu/apply.
Dr. Richard Belcher wrote *A Commentary on Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God’s Sovereignty* (Christian Focus, summer).


Dr. Robert Cara wrote *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective on Paul: Covenantal Nomism Versus Reformed Covenantal Theology for the Reformed Exegetical and Doctrinal Series* (Christian Focus / Mentor, April).


**IN MEMORIAM**

**Frank Tindall (1917-2016)**

December 11, 2016, marked the end of an era at RTS, as Frank Tindall, the last of the original six founders of the seminary, went home to be with the Lord. He passed away just two months shy of his 100th birthday. The Indianola, Miss., resident, World War II commissioned officer in the Navy and University of Mississippi alumnus was predeceased by his wife, Joy, with whom he raised their two daughters and their son at their Delta home, Joyland.

Frank retired from farming in 2000 at age 83 and was an active community servant and churchman, serving as an elder at First Presbyterian Church of Indianola. The RTS family knows him best, though, as one of the signers of the charter to start the seminary. “It is hard to calculate the good that Frank Tindall’s generosity has done, not only for RTS, but also for ministries like Reformed University Fellowship,” says Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO. “It is my privilege to have known him. I loved meeting him after the service when he would visit First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, shaking his hand and talking. He was always an encouragement to me. RTS is blessed to have the founders we had. Now that Frank, the last of ours, has finished his race, I am even more determined to see his and their legacy continued and adorned.”

Frank is survived by his children and their families. “Pop” was the proud grandfather of eight and great-grandfather of 15.

In his honor, RTS has established the Joy and Frank Tindall Scholarship Fund. For more information about the scholarship, visit www.rts.edu/seminary/financialaid.aspx.
COMMENCEMENTS

ATLANTA, MAY 20, 10 A.M.
Midway Presbyterian Church, Powder Springs, Ga.
Speaker: Dr. Ric Cannada, chancellor emeritus

CHARLOTTE, MAY 20, 11 A.M.
Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, N.C.
Speaker: Brian Habig, pastor,
Downtown Presbyterian Church, Greenville, S.C.

JACKSON, MAY 20, 10 A.M.
First Presbyterian Church, Jackson
Speaker: Dr. Valdeci Santos, Andrew
Jumper School of Theology, Mackenzie
University, Sao Paulo, Brazil

ORLANDO, MAY 26, 6 P.M.
Saint Andrew’s Chapel, Sanford, Fla.
Speaker: Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 26, 7:30 P.M.
McLean (Va.) Presbyterian Church
Speaker: Glenn Hoburg, senior pastor,
Grace DC Downtown

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Placement of graduates is a high priority at RTS. The student
affairs office, faculty and staff aid students in job placement
both formally and informally. Churches, denominations and
parachurch organizations seeking pastors, assistant pastors,
youth ministers, Christian education directors, counselors
and other ministry workers regularly contact the seminary.
RTS provides a web-based placement tool for ministries to
post open positions.
If you would like to post a position on the RTS website, visit
rts.edu/vocationalservices and click on the Post New
Position link.

EVENTS

CHARLOTTE

The Harold O.J. Brown Lecture Series took
place Feb. 28, with guest
lecturer Dr. Carl Trueman
of Westminster Theological
Seminary.

ORLANDO

The Kistemaker Academic
Lecture Series on March
14-15 featured speaker Dr.
Timothy George of Beeson
Divinity School.

JACKSON

Women in Ministry and
the Student Cabinet
hosted “Biblical Manhood &
Womanhood” with Dr. Ligon
Duncan, Feb. 17.

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 26, 7:30 P.M.
The Biblical Theology
Conference on March
22-23 featured Dr. Dennis
E. Johnson, professor
of practical theology at
Westminster Theological
Seminary, Escondido, Calif.

Summer Institute for Biblical
Languages:
Greek I — June 19–July 14
Greek II — July 17–Aug. 11
Hebrew I — June 19–July 14
Hebrew II — July 17–Aug. 11

The Hughes Preaching
Lecture Series will be
inaugurated Dec. 5-6 with
Kevin DeYoung, chancellor’s
professor of systematic and
historical theology.
TRAVEL AND SPEAKING

Dr. Michael Allen gave the Scripture and Ministry lecture on March 22 and a chapel sermon on March 23 as part of the multi-year creation project at the Henry Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. He will teach a course on Reformation theology at Regent College, Vancouver, July 10-14.

Dr. James Anderson taught apologetics at the Sovereign Grace Pastors College, Louisville, Ky., March 7-10, and will speak at a retreat for Uptown Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, April 28-30.

Dr. Bruce Baugus and Dr. Guy Waters taught on presbyterianism and preaching in East Asia in February. Dr. Baugus also taught systematic theology onsite at RTS-New York City, March 10-11 and 17-18, and taught ethics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich., March 13-17 (and will teach ethics there again May 8-12).

Dr. Ric Cannada is continuing his travels to Indonesia to help with church planting efforts there.


Dr. Charles Hill spoke to the Tampa Bay Fellows, March 18, on the work of Salvador Dali.

Dr. Michael Kruger will be a plenary speaker for the B.B. Warfield Memorial Lecture Series at the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Oklahoma City, May 12-13. He will co-speak with his wife, Melissa Kruger, at the PCA General Assembly Women’s Ministry program, June 14, and will be a plenary speaker at a conference at First Presbyterian Church, Macon, Ga., Sept. 15-17, on “The Reliability of Scripture.”

Dr. James Newheiser will be plenary speaker at the annual FIRE (Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals) international meeting, Sugar Creek, Ohio, May 15-17.

Blair Smith taught systematic theology in Thailand in late January to missionaries from the Far East. This past summer he gave a Thornwell Lecture at First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S.C.

Dr. Scott Swain will preach and lecture on “The Doctrine of the Trinity” for the Central Florida Presbytery, which will meet at RTS-Orlando, April 11.

Dr. Charlie Wingard taught the D.Min. class “Theology of Ministry” at Mackenzie University, Sao Paulo, Brazil, March 13-17.

RTS GLOBAL/ DISTANCE EDUCATION

In the fall 2016 semester, RTS Distance Education published the following courses:

- The Origin and Authority of the New Testament Canon, Dr. Michael Kruger.
- Theology of Worship, Dr. Ligon Duncan (RTS Distance Education’s first all-video course).

Coming this summer:
- C.S. Lewis (Dr. Andrew Hoffecker) and Missions (Dr. Craig Sheppard)

For more information, visit rts.edu/global.
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