The Gospel & the Name of Jesus Christ
In recent months I underwent surgery to repair herniated disks in my neck that had begun pressing on nerves and causing much pain. By God’s grace, the surgery was successful and the pain was lessened, but it was still present. My doctor prescribed a series of exercises intended to help strengthen and increase the mobility in my neck and relieve the pain.

The exercises certainly helped with the mobility, but the pain remained. After a month, it became clear that the exercises themselves could be keeping the nerve aggravated. When I stopped the exercises, I noticed a surprising yet pleasant result: The pain went away, and it has not returned. The very exercises that helped me in some ways ended up perpetuating the primary condition they were intended to correct.

There is a lesson to be learned here concerning our discovery of the balance between two extremes. On the one hand, too little exercise might have left my neck weak and vulnerable to further injury. On the other, too much exercise began to break down the fragile relationship between the intricately woven, “fearfully and wonderfully made” parts of my body.

A similar tension holds true between seemingly disparate elements of “A Mind for Truth, A Heart for God” — the RTS motto. If we lean too far toward academic study and the acquisition of knowledge at the expense of our love for God and our grateful service to Him, then we run the risk of falling into pharisaic legalism. Likewise, a life of service not anchored in meditation on biblical truth and on grace-motivated devotion can lead us down the road to apostasy.

The RTS family has been blessed to be led by those who model the proper balance between a mind for truth and a heart for God. They have learned how to nourish academic excellence and lovingly serve Christ and His church without compromising either.

In September I had the privilege of helping formally install such a leader as the president of RTS-Charlotte (see page 18). Mike Milton, who will also serve as a professor of practical theology, comes to us with both sound academic credentials and a vibrant testimony to the life-changing power of the gospel.

Christ reigns supreme even in the midst of uncertain political, economic and cultural conditions. As this edition of Ministry & Leadership goes to press, our nation is still reeling from the recent free-fall on Wall Street. We are also preparing to install a freshly elected set of political leaders — from city hall all the way to our nation’s capital.

In this issue we have picked up where my “2008 Election Guarantee” article from the Fall issue left off, addressing how the sovereign work of God and His glorious gospel provides hope and peace in all manner of troubling circumstances. Whether it is neck surgery, financial downturns or political uncertainty, our Lord reigns over it all.
FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

- Dr. John Frame’s *The Collected Works of John Frame CD and DVD* set Vol. 2: Apologetics (P&R and Bits and Bytes), will be available this spring. His book *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* is now available in Chinese. He also contributed a foreword to John Barber in *The Road From Eden* (Academia Press, 2008)

- Dr. John Frame, Dr. Reggie Kidd, Dr. Elias Dos Santos Medeiros, John Muether, Dr. Derek Thomas and Dr. Ligon Duncan (adjunct) participated in an online forum on the Denominational Renewal Conference, Sept. 15–Oct. 17 (www.commongroundsonline.typepad.com).

- Dr. Mike Glodo’s 1994 article “A Tale of Two Kingdoms” was republished in the Oct./Nov. issue of *Modern Reformation*.


- Dr. Charles Sherrard MacKenzie published *Blaise Pascal: An Apologist to Skeptics* last spring.

- Dr. Mike Milton will publish the booklet *What Is the Perseverance of the Saints?* (P&R) in January. He also published an article on Preaching.com after the death of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in August titled “Remember My Chains: The Life and Death of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.” He also contributed an article to PreachingOnline.com just prior to Hurricane Gustav hitting Texas, titled “Storms Blow in That Our Prayers May Go Up.”

- Dr. Scott Swain co-authored a book with Andreas Köstenberger titled *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel* (InterVarsity Press, July).


FACULTY TRAVELS

- FLORIDA
  - March 15-20: Dr. John Oliver will preach at the annual Bible conference, SIM Retirement Community, Sebring.

- GEORGIA
  - Fall: Dr. John J. Yeo taught a course at First Presbyterian Church, Macon.

- NEW YORK
  - Jan. 18: Dr. Sam Larsen will preach at Korean churches in New York City.
  - Jan 19-23: Dr. Larsen will teach a modular course on intercultural leadership for the Korean Doctor of Ministry program at Queens Presbyterian Church.

- NORTH CAROLINA
  - Dec. 3: Dr. Andrew J. Peterson spoke at the ASTD-Bank of America Day of Learning Conference, Charlotte, on “The Innovation and Business of E-Learning.”

SOUTH CAROLINA

- March 6-8: Dr. John Oliver will preach at a mission conference at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Clinton.

INTERNATIONAL

ASIA
- Jan. 5-9: Dr. Mark Futato (details withheld for security reasons).

SWITZERLAND

TAIWAN
- Feb. 2-6: Dr. Sam Larsen will teach a modular course on intercultural leadership and hold chair dissertation hearings for the Korean Doctor of Ministry program.

APPOINTMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Dr. James Anderson has been appointed assistant professor of theology and philosophy for RTS-Charlotte. He comes to RTS from Edinburgh, Scotland, and specializes in philosophical theology, religious epistemology and Christian apologetics.

- Dr. Mike Milton was inaugurated as the third president of RTS-Charlotte on Sept. 21 at Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, N.C. (see page 18)

- Mr. John Muether, professor of church history, RTS library director and longest-standing RTS-Atlanta faculty member (19 years), gave the address “The Courage to be Reformed” on Sept. 24, upon his promotion to full professor.

- Dr. Daniel Timmer has been appointed associate professor of Old Testament for RTS-Atlanta. He comes to RTS from Montreal, where he currently serves as academic dean and professor of Biblical Studies at FAREL Reformed Theological Seminary.

- RTS-Atlanta and RTS-Washington, D.C. have been fully approved to offer the Master of Divinity degree by the Association of Theological Schools and from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

- RTS at iTunesU has hit a million downloads. God is truly blessing many around the world interested in hearing the messages given by RTS professors. One
choosing a name for children is a special and meaningful tradition for Christian parents. Recently, a student here at RTS-Washington, D.C. celebrated the birth of he and his wife’s newest child, Christopher. The parents chose this name because of its meaning: “Christ-bearer.”

One of the earliest things a child learns is his or her own name. Christian parents hope its meaning will provide a godly first step on the path of a life dedicated in faithful service to our Savior.

In Matthew 1:18-23, we see that Christ is given the name Jesus. There is no doubt that this name was common among the Jews. Having said that, for the Gospel writer, this name provided a deep insight to understanding the true identity of this child and His divine mission.

Sadly, the celebration and reading of this passage is limited to the Christmas holidays. It is placed on the cover of greeting cards along with superficial and generic statements of good will, such as “Happy Holidays,” that empties it of its Christological and redemptive focus. For the original audience of this text, though, this name is nothing short of the revelation of the message of the Christian gospel.

**The Giving of the Name**

The name given to the child of this passage is “Jesus.” First note the fact that the parents, Joseph and Mary, are not given the freedom to choose the name of this child. One could rightly argue that the child, because He was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, was named by His rightful Father. The name is divinely chosen by God, who reveals it to Joseph and Mary through His angelic messenger.

We see a scriptural pattern where the names of either individuals or locations are given to communicate a divine message. Think of the children of the prophet Hosea (1:2–2:1). In divinely chosen names, God reveals the sanctions for covenant violation upon the Israelites. They are Lo-Ammi (“not my people”) and Lo-Ruhammah (“no mercy”). Interestingly, the apostle Peter alludes to these very names in 1 Peter 2:10 in describing Christians before and after the redeeming work of Christ: “You once were not a people, but now you are the people of God.” In so doing, the apostle suggests that the people of God, in their redemption, received a new name; once called “not My people,” our new name as a new creation is now “My people” and “Mercy.”

In Matthew 1:21, God takes the divine initiative to reveal His message of salvation and hope, doing so in the giving of the name Jesus. He does not wait for the child to communicate the message of salvation; the gospel message is declared by the divine messenger in the provision of the name itself.

**The Meaning of the Name**

Jesus, the name that God has provided, is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua,” which means “Yahweh is salvation.” Yet the name was chosen because this child will save his people from their sins. How can this child be the one who saves, when his name specifically states that “Yahweh is salvation,” or possibly “Yahweh will save,” then this child must be Yahweh!

That is the message Matthew communicates by recording this event. Jesus’ divine identity is revealed even further when Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:22 as fulfilled.
in his birth. In that regard, his name is not only Jesus (“Yahweh is salvation”) but also Immanuel (“God is with us”).

Genesis 3:15 prophesied the birth of a child from a woman who would “crush the head of the serpent,” namely Satan. From that point on, the Old Testament progressively reveals the identity of this child. He would be the son of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3); the great king in the line of David (2 Samuel 7:14); the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:2-12); even the anointed one, Messiah the prince (Daniel 9:26,27).

The Old Testament began with God as the Alpha-Prophet who uttered that inaugural, Nativity prophecy of life, and the New Testament begins with the same exact image. As we read Scripture, we, along with the original ancient audience, could only imagine that this Messiah would come with the pomp and pageantry worthy of His presence.

We are awed, however, by the fact that the climax of redemptive history is one of such humility and meekness. All prior divine acts and messages of redemption culminate in this birth. Matthew tells us that this was no ordinary child. This was the Yahweh-child, the God-man, the fulfillment of a promise made ages ago — coming to save His people by crushing the head of Satan (Romans 16:20).

The Significance of the Name

First being awed that this child is Yahweh, we realize that this child, Yahweh Himself, was born to “save His people from their sins.” We know He has accomplished this by giving His own life on the cross and also in His resurrection.

Before we can even celebrate the Lord’s coming in the birth of the child, we are called to meditate on His eventual sacrifice on the cross, because the message of the gospel is that in His death is our salvation. Looming over this newly born child, then, is the shadow of the cross. One day, this child would come to the “hill of the skulls” and fulfill His promise of life to His people.

One must always, always, always remember that this supernatural birth had a clear, decisive, redemptive goal revealed in His name at His birth. We live because the child would die! This name above all names not only shows the revelation of the divine person of Christ, but also His work of atonement on behalf of His people.

Even as I write this, my heart is filled with thanksgiving and joy for this blessed child and the message of the gospel so embedded in His name. The Christmas message gives hope to those burdened with dread, darkness and death. In this child is life, for Yahweh has come to save His people. The guilt of sins, the burden of circumstances — even the fear of the unknown future — cannot overcome the salvation of Yahweh so graciously revealed in the name of Jesus.

So often in the history of redemption, praise follows great redemptive acts of God. When the Israelites saw the salvation of God in the parting of the Red Sea and His judgment against the soldiers of Pharaoh, the Israelites celebrated with praise. Exodus 15, the Song by the Sea, praises Yahweh as the divine warrior. After the birth of Samuel, Hannah praises the Lord in song (1 Samuel 2).

We see this pattern also in the Gospels. To announce the birth of this child, Luke records the appearance of a myriad of angels. As this divine, heavenly counsel finally witness what they anticipated from eternity, they erupt in boisterous praise: “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:10-14)!

As we recollect this Divine birth, so we also are called to praise our Savior for the blessedness of His coming. In so doing, we join with the angelic choir, “Glory to God in the highest” indeed! God bless all of us as we remember the birth of the Yahweh-child.

Peter Lee is assistant professor of Old Testament at RTS-Washington, D.C. He is also senior pastor of Living Hope Presbyterian Church in Clarksville, Md.
IN GOD WE TRUST?

Our greatest test of faith is when we have no one else to trust.

Is that even a question? The answer is obvious: Of course, we trust God! Not only do we trust God — I trust God too.

That’s when I had the heart attack.

Now before we go any further, let me stop and say that I died. Guess where I’m writing this from? Seriously, I’m fine and don’t want any more cards of sympathy or celebration. My doctor said that there was no heart damage and no restrictions. In fact, the Saturday of that week, I spoke at a convention in Nashville. I’m now faithfully taking my medication, swimming 30 laps three or four times a week, and feeling really good. OK?

However, the heart attack did focus my attention! Winston Churchill said, “There is nothing more exhilarating than to be shot at with no result.” That’s true. But it’s also true that there is nothing that clears one’s mind better or tests one’s truths more than being shot at with no result.

Did you hear about the man in the runaway horse-drawn carriage? He held on for dear life until the horse finally stopped. He was later asked how he felt about the experience. He said he trusted God “until the harness broke.”

Nothing will test your trust in God more than having nothing to trust but God. Heart attacks have a tendency to put one in that place. So let me tell you what I learned from God, from the Bible and from my heart attack.

First, heart attacks are real, and denial will kill you.

I love Psalm 46. It’s about trusting God and opens with these words: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Then the psalmist declares that no matter what happens, “we will not fear.”

Those words would be silly clichés if the psalmist had spoken them without context. Please note, though, that he talks about the earth giving way, mountains trembling and being moved into the sea, waters roaring and foaming, nations raging and kingdoms tottering. Only in that context does the psalmist say, “Be still, and know that I am God … The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

I’ve been a pastor for more years than many of you have been alive. I can’t tell you how often I’ve heard the denial — to wit, the clichés without clarity. Over and over when I’ve visited people in the hospital and asked about fear, I’ve heard them say, “Well, I’m afraid a little, but God is faithful, and I sense his peace and the prayers of those praying for me.”

One time I visited a woman who had just been admitted to the hospital. I asked her if she was afraid. “Are you a fruitcake?” she replied. “Of course, I’m afraid! Have you noticed? This is a hospital, and people die in hospitals!” I loved her for that! And so did God!

Frankly, I never thought I would have a heart attack. Nobody in my family suffered from heart disease and, just two weeks before the heart attack, I went through a complete physical and was pronounced healthy. In fact, I bragged about my health. The heart attack disabused me of my denial of mortality, pain and sickness. Reality does that.

Do you trust God?

Before you answer, you must have, as it were, a heart attack. Remember that we live in a fallen world where God sweeps “them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers” (Psalm 90:5,6). Remember that we live in a scary world that every day rolls over on top of someone who was just sitting on top of it. Think about the shaky economy, the election, the war, and the fragility of life and fortune.

Are you afraid? If you aren’t, you’re crazy. If you don’t wince on occasion, you don’t understand the situation. With-
out some sleepless nights, you must be taking sleeping pills.

Now, do you trust God?

I learned from God, the Bible and my heart attack about more than just the danger of denial. I also learned that God is sovereign over my circumstances. It is one thing to be a Calvinist in your theology, but quite another to be a Calvinist in the midst of a heart attack.

I guess if one must have a heart attack, I had the best kind — no pain, no shortness of breath and no problem with the EKG. I just felt a bit of tingling in my arms, along with perspiration and nausea. I thought it was a kidney stone, but my beloved and wise wife, Anna, called it correctly and took me to the emergency room …

… where a receptionist greeted me with a rather loud, “Steve Brown!” Then she jumped up and said, “I listen to you every day.” (I prayed, “Lord, don’t do this to me! If this is a heart attack, at least put me in a place where I can cuss and spit.”)

That’s when the receptionist hugged me and said something else I will never forget. She whispered in my ear, “Steve, this is from Jesus. It’s going to be OK.”

She was right. She spoke Romans 8:28 to me, and right then this old Calvinist needed to hear that “all things work together for good” for those who love God. When they took me in an ambulance from one hospital to another where there was a cardiac unit, I thought about what she said. I have often been in ambulances, praying for and bringing comfort to someone who was facing a hard time. But this was the first time I had been in an ambulance flat on my back. It was a kind of surreal experience, as in, “This really isn’t happening to me.”

In that ambulance, I remembered what the receptionist had said, and I thought of God’s promise about my circumstance. I’m not a spiritual giant or anything, but it helped.

And then there’s one other thing I learned about trusting God when one is scared. I learned that God is really there and is sufficient. Paul said to the Philippians (4:11-13) that he had learned to be content in whatever circumstance he found himself. He talked about the strengthening Christ had given.

People who misuse Paul’s words drive me nuts. You have just lost your job, your husband has left, your child was killed, you find out you have cancer, your world has come apart, and some dear soul says, “Buck up! You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.”

That is an unconscionable misuse of that text. He wasn’t telling us to pretend that it doesn’t hurt and that we’re not afraid. He was saying that when it really hurts, you’ll discover, almost without noticing, that Christ is there, and you’ll be surprised by the contentment He provides.

Do you know what I was doing when they rolled me into the examination room at the hospital? My wife was worried (for which I’m glad — you don’t want your wife to rejoice over your heart attack). The nurses were preparing me for the doctor’s visit (that’s what nurses do). The doctor was very serious and concerned (you don’t want a doctor who makes jokes when you’ve just had a heart attack).

Listen — what was I doing? I was reading a novel.

It’s true. While all of this was going on, I was reading a novel. And not only that, I was more interested in the novel than in all the things going on in and around me. I remember stopping and thinking, Hey! This is what Paul talked about. I can hardly believe it. I’m content and I really am trusting God.

It was a surprise, and He told me to tell you about it!

Steve Brown is a professor of preaching at RTS-Orlando, an author and the teacher on the nationally syndicated radio program Key Life. He can be visited online at keylife.org and stevebrownetc.com.
We can trust the Lord in times of economic insecurity.
arren Buffett, Berkshire Hathaway’s chairman and chief executive officer, appeared on the September 7 cover of Parade magazine next to the headline, “10 Ways to Get Rich: Warren Buffett’s Secrets That Can Work for You.” Number six on that list was “Limit what you borrow.”

Less than two weeks later, Buffett would invest $5 billion of his own money to help Goldman Sachs, a blue-chip Wall Street investment bank. Not even Goldman Sachs could withstand the turmoil wrought by the massive de-leveraging of the global economy. In “Wall Street, R.I.P.” the New York Times reported on September 28, “No matter how good it was, Goldman Sachs was not impervious to the fortunes of fate.”

Neither were millions of Americans and citizens around the world immune to the credit crisis. This fall, the U.S. economy began to feel its impact. To shore up faltering markets, Congress urgently implemented what may be the biggest government rescue in history, authorizing the Bush administration to spend $700 billion to try to thaw credit markets and prevent a deep recession.

The crisis, of course, has had a profound trickling effect. Home prices in my Orlando community have fallen; retail prices, not to mention unemployment rates, have risen; 401(k) accounts have dwindled; and loans are no longer easy to get. Charitable organizations — particularly those that serve the poor and which have long counted on longtime donors such as Lehman Brothers, American International Group and Bear Stearns — are struggling to raise enough money to continue providing services.

Who is to blame for weakening global economies? What caused the turmoil on Wall Street and world markets? The fortunes of fate? Or acts of God?

These are profoundly difficult questions with profoundly difficult answers. As a seasoned businessman and as a Christian who trusts in the providence of God, I believe that while the current economic crisis is frightening and painful to many, you included, Christians should not be surprised. Neither should they spend too much time assigning blame. “We were promised sufferings,” writes C.S. Lewis in A Grief Observed. “They were part of the program.”

We are also promised something more. As Christians, we are also promised that when we hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23) to us. We are promised, in the words of a great hymn, “blessed assurance.” This is our story. This is our song.

This indeed has been my story and song.

CNL Financial Group, the company I started in Orlando, recently celebrated its 35th anniversary. Some associates wondered whether we should celebrate in light of the current economic crisis. In a brief talk the evening of our celebration, I described how in 1973, the year I began my business, we were in times precisely like the ones we’re in now. The market was down 50 percent, and oil prices and inflation had reached new highs. It clearly was not the best time to start a company.

CNL’s fifth anniversary celebration in 1978 was held during the stagflation era of the late 1970s. Interest rates were above 10 percent on their way to 21 percent by the end of the ’70s and early ’80s. Clearly not a good time to celebrate.

In fact, CNL anniversaries have never been a good time to celebrate. In 1983, the economy was still weak, with no end in sight. During 1988, CNL’s 15th year, investors were still reeling from the market falling approximately 39 percent in October 1987. Five years later, in 1993, we were recovering from the collapse of real estate prices and the creation of the Resolution Trust Corporation to buy assets from bankrupt savings and loans.

CNL’s 25th anniversary was held during the Russian debt crisis and failure of the Long-Term Capital Management, a U.S. hedge fund that led to a massive bailout by other major banks and investment houses. And just five years ago, the United States was emerging from a recession caused by the 9/11 attacks as well as the collapse of the tech bubble at the turn of the century.

Yes, none of CNL’s anniversaries ever came at a good time, but we celebrated anyway out of gratitude that our company had grown and prospered through challenging times.

Two things seem to stand out here: One, history certainly does repeat itself; and two, suffering is part of the fallen human condition. Whether 35 years ago or 3,500 years ago, suffering will always be with us.

So why do so many of us try and assign blame when beset by calamities? In his review of Blindside: How to Anticipate...
**Forcing Events and Wild Cards in Global Politics**, a collection of essays edited by Francis Fukuyama (*The Hedgehog Review*, Spring 2008), Joshua Yates wonders why, following calamities such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, we wonder who failed us?

“Watching the disaster [Katrina] unfold on television, people wanted to know how a society as liberal, wealthy and technologically sophisticated as the U.S. could have let such a catastrophe happen within its borders. Where, they demanded, did the buck stop?”

Particularly unsettling to Yates was that a calamity like Katrina that at one time would have been seen as ill fortune or an “act of God,” was seen as a tragedy that could have, and therefore should have, been avoided. Writes Yates:

> Measured against the standard of history, this is an extraordinary sentiment. To be sure, humans have always been keenly aware of life’s precariousness and have collectively gone to great lengths to hedge against it. What makes our society distinct is the peculiar manner of our hedging. We have reformulated the perennial hazards of human existence as a set of mundane social problems. Whereas hazards can be avoided (and the gods appeased), problems can be solved. We have not only come to judge the performance and legitimacy of our leaders and institutions by their ability to identify and solve a universe of concrete social problems, we have actually come increasingly to define that universe — reality itself — exclusively in terms of such manageable problems.”

In other words, we now believe we should be able to live in a risk-free world. What was once considered a mortal striving, with God’s help, to avoid life’s manifold obstacles to health and happiness has now become an expectation of others (especially leaders) to identify and solve universal problems of dismay, destruction and death with the foresight, wisdom and efficacy of a god.

The modern world has exchanged anthropodicy for theodicy: We task our leaders to be as gods, then we blame them when they cannot deliver.

Tragically, we have lost a theology of suffering as part of the fallen human condition. But beyond that, we have lost a theology of hope, a belief that we are not left mired in our uncertainty, angst and anxiety about what is causing our suffering today. God can and does use our suffering as a blessing to strengthen us and help us in ways often not perceived at that time.

In a *Wall Street Journal* editorial from August 16-17, Peggy Noonan mourned “the end of placeness” in the Presidential campaigns:

> The lack of placeness with both candidates contributes to a sense of their disjointedness, their floatingness. I was talking recently with a journalist who’s a podcaster. I often watch him in conversation on the Internet. I told him I’m always struck that he seems to be speaking from No Place, with some background of beige wall that could exist anywhere. He leans in and out of focus. It gives a sense of weightlessness. He’s like an astronaut floating without a helmet.”

Yes, Christians have lost their “placeness.” We seem to float in No Place. Once upon a time, Christians had beneath them a firm foundation, grounded in the historic acts of God. The servant Job, for example, lived in this place and drank from these wells and talked with these people. Today, we have so disassociated ourselves from our “placeness” that we no longer have an interpretative framework for viewing the catastrophes around us.

We need to be reminded — regardless of the year, regardless of how far away we are from the Holy Land — that in a very real sense, we are all of Mount Zion. We are all from Jerusalem, as it were. And our world needs to be contextualized from that place regardless of where we happen to show up in space and time. And from this place, we have a particular way of looking at suffering, whether it is suffered by us personally, by our immediate neighbors, or from New Orleans to Wall Street. From our place, guided by God’s Word, we see that suffering fits into the divine plan of sanctification and redemption.

Otherwise, is this all really needless and meaningless suffering? The alternative isn’t simply “Find someone to blame.” Nor is it to banish suffering, which is impossible anyway because suffering will always be a part of life. But so will the grace of
God. He did not remove the thorn in Paul's flesh, rather showing him how discovering the sufficiency of grace was better. Winston Churchill once said, "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Yes, there is difficulty in our current economic crisis, but there is also opportunity. Perhaps we have received a wakeup call to live within our means rather than leverage ourselves and our institutions beyond a healthy level. Perhaps we are being invited to recognize that money does not make us rich, nor its temporary absence make us poor. Perhaps we are being reminded that it is more important to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven than on earth (Matthew 6:19).

In the end, it’s not financial security that is our best hope; it’s realizing that God is with us and will bless us, no matter how unlikely that may seem at present. Thus, like Augustine, let us look toward our place in the heavenly city and remember that it is well, it is well, with our souls.

"Business is a liberal art, more so today than at any time in the past," he told the magazine. "Your ability to manage a business, to have an emotional IQ and an intellectual IQ is a result of your ability to read and look at things from different points of view. If you only have a business point of view, you will tend to do the same thing everyone else is doing. We try to take ideas from all of the disciplines — math, physics, science — and bring that to how we think about our business. People are reading less all the time, and I think that’s a mistake.”

To that end, CNL places a high value on education in its charitable work. The RTS board of trustees is one of several education-related boards manned by Jim, who was named Business Leader of the Year in 2006 by the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Educators. — Paul Schwarz

It began with a $5,000 loan from his father. Today, 35 years later, CNL Financial Group, founded by James M. (Jim) Seneff Jr., has grown into one of the nation's largest and most respected private real estate investment and development companies. CNL has formed or acquired more than $23 billion of real estate properties. The company is also a recognized leader in the formation and acquisition of real estate investment trusts.

In an interview for a cover story in the spring 2008 issue of Orlando CEO magazine, Jim (below) offered his perspective on how business managers can prepare themselves for down cycles like the one currently taking place. A key component, he says, is to read, and his comments, though not made in the context of seminary education, draw a parallel between the two disciplines.

“Business is a liberal art, more so today than at any time in the past,” he told the magazine. “Your ability to manage a business, to have an emotional IQ and an intellectual IQ is a result of your ability to read and look at things from different points of view. If you only have a business point of view, you will tend to do the same thing everyone else is doing. We try to take ideas from all of the disciplines — math, physics, science — and bring that to how we think about our business. People are reading less all the time, and I think that’s a mistake.”

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Along with being the founder and chairman of CNL Financial Group, James M. Seneff Jr. is a member of the RTS board of trustees.
As an Alaskan wilderness guide, Rocky McElveen helps men encounter both creation and their Creator.

by Paul Schwarz

People who like to hunt and fish are notorious for their stories. They’re especially stereotyped as exaggerators forever embellishing their exploits and lamenting the “one that got away.”

As storytelling outdoorsmen go, though, Rocky McElveen is on the A-list. Not many Alaskan hunting and fishing guides, if any, can recount taking a former U.S. President on a fishing expedition. And he can tell you all about his four plane crashes — now that he’s survived them, of course.

For the last 25 years, the RTS-Jackson graduate has been leading people into the wilderness of his native Alaska. They go to commune with nature in its most unfiltered form, but for many, the encounters transcend grizzlies, caribou and salmon and lead them to spirit-and-truth worship of the God who created it all.

Rocky’s journey to Alaska has been part of a lifelong, circuitous series of homecomings. His parents were Mississippi natives who became missionaries in Alaska in 1957, shortly before “The Last Frontier” achieved statehood. The first return home came in the late 1970s and early 1980s when he attended RTS in his parents’ home state. A truer sense of homegoing came in 1984, when Rocky and his wife, Sharon, established Alaskan Adventures as a vehicle for him to take men on wilderness adventures.

An ultimate home with the saints above awaits Rocky, and with the aforementioned plane crashes, close encounters with bears and other calamitous situations in the wild, he sometimes seems bent on getting there faster than the average man. “[Sharon] doesn’t really want to know what’s going on while it’s going on,” Rocky said in July during a national radio interview. “And she doesn’t really talk about the blizzards and the boat wrecks, and sometimes I’ll tell her [about them], and she’ll just go, ‘Oh, dear me.’”

Rocky splits his time between the Alaskan tours and the McElveens’ home base north of Sacramento, Calif. Sharon is a “California girl all the way,” by her own description, and it was in the Golden State where they met and where Rocky felt the call of the wild while serving as an associate pastor of a church. He attended a trade show featuring presentations by Alaskan tour guides, and it rekindled his passion for the outdoor life he knew from growing up on remote Alaskan rivers.

“Everything we ate, we got either from our garden, from the fields or from the rivers,” Rocky recalls of his childhood. He replicates that experience through Alaskan Adventures, currently based out of the Holitna River Lodge, some 200 miles west of Anchorage and only accessible by bush plane. The remoteness of the lodge differentiates it from the more well-traveled tourist hotspots that promote an authentic Alaskan outdoors experience while often operating in the shadow of such un-outdoorsy amenities as McDonald’s.

The most distinguishing characteristic of Rocky’s lodge, though, is its sense of mission — focusing on exalting the Creator who formed it all. He and his staff members pray regularly for their guests, and the reality of isolation from one’s normal environment and of direct interaction with nature forges distinct bonds between Rocky and his visitors. “When you spend a week with these men in this way,” he observes, “they tell you things about themselves that even their wives don’t know.”

Rocky makes the most of these forged-under-fire relationships to engage guests with spiritual truth. According to Rocky, the expeditions open the men’s hearts to matters they otherwise wouldn’t consider. “Dads today disconnect from their wives and their families,” he says. “I think there are a lot of very lonely men who have lost their role in their home and maybe in their business, who don’t have a moral platform to be any kind of a leader — it’s like they’ve just quit. I see an isolated group of men who may be extremely wealthy, but that doesn’t mean they’re not alone.

“Some women say, ‘My husband never talks to me.’ I say get them in a fishing boat, and they’ll talk. It’s the isolation from all the symbols of culture — the qui-
etness, the stillness, the beauty, the danger and the thrill of experiencing real, wild, remote Alaska that after a day or two allows men to have that ‘Aha’ moment. We pray for our guests not that they find their significance in catching fish but that the Fisherman from heaven captures their hearts.”

Rocky can relate to these men’s condition from personal experience. Several years ago he went through his own season of isolating himself from Sharon after her father’s death and after Rocky had survived a boating accident. Sharon had returned to California with their four daughters to help tend to her dying father, comfort her grieving mother and deal with her own grief. Meanwhile, “I was pretty selfish,” Rocky recalled for his July radio interview audience. “I thought, Everybody is deserting me when I need them the most.”

“At the time, we owned two really nice lodges [the Holitna River Lodge was just opening]. I thought, Well, I'm just going to go out there [to the new lodge], and she'll never find me, and I was going to run away.” Rocky even went so far as to tell Sharon he might stay up there all winter.

At that point, sensing that Rocky needed her there, Sharon flew to Alaska. Rocky remembers returning on a bush plane from a fishing expedition, seeing her below, not being sure he wasn’t seeing a mirage and even trying to hide in his seat. Regardless, that reunion enabled Rocky to face his grief and self-isolation as he reconciled with Sharon.

Rocky’s book *Wild Men, Wild Alaska*, a collection of stories and spiritual observations based on his Alaskan experiences, devotes an entire chapter to this time of family crisis. Another chapter tells the story of one of his plane crashes. The bush pilot transporting him had hit a tree shortly after takeoff, causing the engines to die 1,000 feet over a canyon. The pilot found a grove of spruce trees into which to bring down the plane; Rocky was dazed and in pain but otherwise OK, while the pilot was battered and unconscious.

When the pilot revived, Rocky said, “I want to tell you something. Right now I thought I was going to die and be in heaven and see Jesus. Did you think that?” The pilot said he didn’t know, and Rocky proceeded to lead the pilot in a prayer of repentance to trust in Christ as his Savior.

Just as many of Rocky’s own crises in the wilderness have forced him to depend more fully on God, the same is true for many of his clients. “Being in such a remote location,” Rocky explains, “says to them, ‘I’m not in control. My life will depend on my guide, my pilots and with me making wise choices.’”

Ultimately, Rocky lives to show his visitors that their Creator is the One in control.

*Wild Men, Wild Alaska* can be ordered at www.mindandheart.com; a portion of each purchase benefits RTS.

On January 24, 2009, Rocky will speak at the Bonita Bay Special Weekend in Bonita Springs, Fla., sponsored by RTS. More information about Rocky may be found at www.rockymcelveen.com; visit www.alaskan-adventures.com to learn more about the Alaskan wilderness tours.
Rocky McElveen is scheduled to lead an RTS-sponsored fishing trip to the Holitna River in Alaska. The trip is slated to take place during the peak week for silver salmon fishing and will include three days on the lower river and two on the upper river.

The daily limits are five silver salmon, two sheefish, two pike, five Arctic char and 10 grayling. Red and pink salmon are also expected to be available.

A $3,995 per-person cost has been set, with the final balance due on February 15, 2009.

For more information, visit www.alaskan-adventures.com and click on FAQ, Hidden Costs and Alaska Fishing.

In the Wilderness With the President

Waiting for the arrival of President George Bush Sr. was the most difficult part of my next adventure. The planes, the guides, the boats, everything was set so our nation’s highest office holder, the most powerful man on earth, could enjoy a day of restoration through recreation with me in the Alaskan wilderness.

All three skilled pilots set their planes down perfectly. Their pontoons sliced through the clear Alaskan river heading directly for our planned rendezvous.

I was sweating bullets. What if I couldn’t get a fish for the President? What if I turned the boat over? What if I accidentally called him George? What if he did not enjoy our adventure? Would he give me a mulligan?

The planes all beached in a slough right off the river. I knew which plane the President was on, and before the prop stopped turning, I was standing in the water to meet and greet him.

The president chose to fish with his grandson, Jeb Bush, from Florida. I was delighted! The son of the then-governor of Florida could really handle his fishing pole. Both of the Bushes were very experienced anglers.

The day was what I call “bluebird” — no clouds, no wind. The river sparkled like Perrier effervescent water. As we began our first float, I prayed for a quick hook-up. On the first cast, President Bush hooked an Arctic char; in the same family as the brook trout or German brown, they are rollers and fighters. I saw the unbelief and then the sheer joy of both Jeb and the President as they caught fish after fish.

Suddenly I saw the President’s pole double over. The line began screaming out. I knew immediately that he had snagged a log or rock “fish” — the pole wasn’t bouncing, and because of our fast drift down the river, he was quickly running out of line and options.

I turned to quickly start the motor and heard a loud snap as the President’s pole broke in half.

So . . . what do you say when the President breaks your pole? Absolutely nothing.

I had six poles prepared for the President so that if a line snapped or a pole broke, we could simply hand him a new one. We didn’t waste any time, and neither did he.

While fishing, the President and I enjoyed pleasant conversation. I asked him some personal questions, because who in the world gets 10 hours in one day with the President right next to him? We also talked about the world and politics, but our great common interest was our love for adventure. The President told me about avoiding sharks, skydiving, parachuting and other exploits in his life.

This was an absolutely perfect Alaskan day: incredible fishing, the President in my boat . . . I felt blessed.

Adapted with permission. Wild Men, Wild Alaska, Rocky McElveen, 2006, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Nashville, Tenn. All rights reserved.
According to the title of the 1940 novel by Thomas Wolfe, “you can’t go home again.” Elbert McGowan has proven that indeed you can.

The RTS-Jackson graduate returned to his home city to attend seminary, and upon graduating this past May, he and his wife, Karen (above, left), have stayed, as Elbert has become campus minister with Reformed University Fellowship at Jackson State University. In so doing, he makes his mission field a campus that is literally down the street from where he went to high school.

Elbert is joined in Jackson-area RUF ministry by RTS classmate Roy Hubbard, who also received his degree in May. Roy is working with students who attend Tougaloo College and is waiting for official status as a campus minister. Both JSU and Tougaloo are described as historically black colleges and universities.

HBCUs are defined by the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 as the 103 schools “established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans.” Certain other colleges and universities are known as “predominantly black,” referring to their founding between the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision and the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Whatever the label, though, what’s happening at JSU and Tougaloo is doubly historic. That’s because the RUF ministries in the process of being established are the first two such works ever to be established at HBCUs. As such, the Presbyterian Church in America, which sponsors RUF, is making inroads into the HBCU community with a Reformed gospel presence.

In their own ways, Elbert and Roy would appear to be unlikely candidates for such a groundbreaking calling. Elbert had actually left Mississippi to attend college at Alabama A&M University (itself an HBCU) and then take an engineering job in Cincinnati, Ohio. While in Ohio, though, he came to faith in Christ as his Savior. In leading Bible studies and getting involved in prison ministry in Kentucky, he began receiving encouragement to consider full-time pastoral ministry.

With the blessing of his new bride (Elbert and Karen married in 2004), the McGowans moved to Jackson so that Elbert could attend RTS. During his ministry internship at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Elbert and Karen met numerous young adults like themselves who had been converted in college through RUF. “We had both attended [HBCUs] and had never heard of RUF,” Elbert recalls.

Later, at a meeting of local presbytery leaders at which Elbert was originally being considered to lead a church-planting effort in southwest Jackson, Bebo Elkin, longtime Mississippi coordinator of Reformed University Ministries, offered an alternative idea. Bebo encouraged Elbert to consider leading RUF’s effort to establish the ministry at HBCUs.

“I was open,” Elbert says. “I came here knowing nothing as to what God wanted me to do after seminary.” God’s calling
of the McGowans to JSU brought them added clarity to a process in which they went through many adjustments to a church culture quite distinct from the one in which they were raised. “It wasn’t hard as much as it was different,” Elbert acknowledges. “But culture is not the most important thing in worship; the Bible trumps everything else.”

This fall marked Elbert’s first semester on campus, as RUF has been officially recognized as a student organization at JSU. Providentially, the McGowans’ way onto campus was smoothed by the fact that one of the key JSU leaders responsible for helping oversee the sanctioning of student organizations is an old high school classmate of Elbert’s.

The work is still in the early stages, as Elbert and Karen have yet to incorporate music into the weekly large-group worship meetings. “We’ll be using the same songs [as on other campuses],” Elbert explains, “but we’ll be contextualizing them with different instrumentation. We’ll also be including rich gospel songs that are theologically accurate.”

Roy’s journey to RUF ministry is no less circuitous than Elbert’s. He marks his conversion to Christ to his days growing up in a single-parent home in New Orleans. Though he did observe many of the pitfalls associated with inner-city life, such as poverty, crime and drugs, Roy credits his mother’s salvation when he was a young boy as being a more profound and powerful influence.

Unlike Elbert, Roy more or less stayed home to attend college, attending Louisiana State University in nearby Baton Rouge. At LSU, Roy became involved with RUF, where he came to a clearer understanding of the gospel as a message of grace and not of moralism. His RUF minister, Keith Berger (an RTS alumnus) encouraged him toward seminary.

Originally, Roy resisted the notion, but an offer he received to pay for his seminary education helped tip the scales of reconsideration. In 2005, the previously aspiring schoolteacher enrolled at RTS. Like Elbert, Roy met Bebo Elkin during an internship at Redeemer Presbyterian and learned about the opportunity to help launch RUF at HBCUs. His first semester of meeting with Tougaloo students coincided with the McGowans’ first at JSU, though Roy’s situation is different in that he has been splitting his time between Tougaloo and the Redeemer internship.

This is in part because Roy and his wife, Emily (previous page, right), have not been free to meet students on campus as the McGowans do at JSU. Due to some administrative issues, RUF has yet to be officially recognized as a student organization at Tougaloo. As such, the Hubbards have been meeting with students off campus this fall and have seen encouraging signs. “One of the girls told us, ‘If you put up fliers announcing a Bible study, people will come,’” Roy says. “There’s a hunger on campus already.”

Both Elbert and Roy acknowledge that there are cultural issues to be addressed in establishing RUF at HBCUs. Roy is especially passionate about seeing the Reformed faith take hold across all ethnic and cultural lines, having been raised in multiethnic New Orleans and being married to a Caucasian woman. “We should always look at the church as a diverse body of people,” Roy says. “The problem is that our culture has divided itself in so many ways.”

The McGowans and the Hubbards aspire to make the gospel of Christ known in a manner that transcends those traditional divisions. That itself is something historic in an eternal sense. •

For more information about RUF at JSU, visit www.jsu.ruf.org.

BLACK AND REFORMED: A GROWING MOVEMENT

The African-American community is not a traditional hotbed of Reformed theology. However, RTS-Jackson alumni like Elbert McGowan and Roy Hubbard are being joined by other current and former students in an effort to change that perception.

Anthony Carter, an RTS-Orlando graduate, has gone so far as to write a book about the subject. The lead pastor at East Point Church, an Atlanta-area plant, Anthony (right) wrote On Being Black and Reformed: A New Perspective on the African-American Christian Experience.

The 2003 book seeks to demonstrate the historical, biblical and theological consistency of Reformed theology; the richness of the African-American Christian experience; and the merit of bringing the two together. In addition to that book, Anthony is an organizing member of the Council of Reforming Churches and has since edited the collaborative book Experiencing the Truth: Bringing the Reformation to the African-American Church.

His blog can be found at epointchurch.org/blog; once there, the East Point site contains links to more information about Anthony and his books. • — Paul Schwarz
On September 21, the “Queen City” of Charlotte, N.C., hosted an event that may not quite have been a coronation but yet gave cause for much rejoicing throughout the RTS family. That evening, Dr. Michael Milton was formally inaugurated as the third president of RTS-Charlotte.

The inauguration service, held at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in the Charlotte suburb of Matthews, drew representatives from many different facets of the seminary. Participants included RTS chancellor Dr. Ric Cannada; Dr. Shelton Sanford, senior pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rock Hill, S.C.; Dr. Harry Reeder, senior pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Ala.; RTS Board of Trustees chairman James Moore; and campus presidents Dr. Frank James, Dr. Andrew Peterson and Dr. Guy Richardson.

Dr. John Guest, rector of Christ Church at Grove Farm in Sewickley, Pa., delivered the inaugural sermon, titled “The Passion, the Mission and the Ministry.” Fittingly, Dr. Guest placed his faith in Christ at age 18 through the ministry of Billy Graham, who is originally from Charlotte and who has a stretch of highway in the city named after him.

The Oxford, England native charged Dr. Milton and the attendees from 2
Timothy 4 in the manner of the apostle Paul charging Timothy. “Michael Milton is not just a teacher of the Word — he is a preacher of the Word,” Dr. Guest declared, affirming the new president’s pastoral experience and his role in helping train pastors for pulpit ministry.

Later in the evening, Dr. Milton did preach, on “Is There Not a Cause? The Glorious Burden of Ministry in Our Seminary Today.” Drawing from selected Scriptures, he reminded his listeners that “it is a holy burden that drives vision,” and that “the burden of a seminary is that there are giants in the land,” referencing the increasingly post-Christian America.

Dr. Milton then emphasized his burden for God’s methods, not man’s, comparing the Word, the sacraments and prayer as “ordinary means of grace” to the five smooth stones in David’s shepherd’s bag. He then presented the goal of training ministers of the gospel as being to “funnel everything we do so that at the narrowest point is a hurting person on Sunday morning.”

The formal installation of Dr. Milton continued the next morning at an “Honor the Past, Build for the Future” service on campus. The event specifically recognized the founders of RTS-Charlotte, the former campus presidents, and the current and late professors. Dr. Milton then gave a “Build for the Future” message, outlining various partnerships being formed between RTS-Charlotte and other ministries.

The committee that organized the events consisted of co-chairs Michael and Ann Tarwater as well as Nan Bracy, Lisa Britton, Teresa Gillis and Helen Holbrook. Several current RTS-Charlotte students participated as ushers and in the student honor guard.

Both events were punctuated by receptions at which well-wishers greeted Dr. Milton and where members of the far-flung RTS family renewed acquaintances. Many of those participating in the festivities wore tartan ties in colors matching the RTS logo. The ties were designed for the occasion at the direction of Dr. Milton and RTS-Charlotte professor Dr. Douglas Kelly, who taught the first classes ever offered by RTS in the city.

The inaugural service closed with the singing of a hymn with words composed by Dr. Milton, an accomplished musician with two recordings to his credit. The congregation sang, “Grounded in His Word, their light, out they go into the night; seeking lambs who’ve gone astray, leading them back to the Way.” May this be the legacy of RTS-Charlotte graduates during Dr. Milton’s leadership of the campus.

To view photo galleries of the inauguration events, visit gallery.me.com/michaelanthonyhilton100212 and gallery.me.com/michaelanthonyhilton100204&bgcolor=black&view=grid.
That was the DJIA at its all time high – reached on October 9, 2007.

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