In terms of the holiday calendar, we have entered one of the busiest times of the year. As you read this issue of *Ministry & Leadership*, I trust that you have recently celebrated Thanksgiving with family members and friends.

During this holiday, the world around us often talks about “being thankful” without directly acknowledging that thankfulness demands an object of thanks. In other words, we should always be thankful to God for everything He has given us from His sovereign hand. Here at RTS we give thanks to our heavenly Father for the many people who give so generously to this seminary and thus serve as His instruments for His provision for us.

As we move from Thanksgiving into the Christmas holiday season, it would help us to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation — the reality that God took on flesh in Jesus Christ, the “second Adam” who reasserted human vice-regency over creation. James Anderson, one of our newest professors, explores this mystery in detail in his lead article (see page 4).

The reality that Jesus is the Lord of eternity past, present and future should give His people an overarching sense of comfort in a world that seems to change more quickly all the time. Just one year ago we elected a new President and were in the midst of a global economic meltdown. While our world could still benefit from significant economic improvement, the situation today is not as grave for most people as it was such a short time ago.

With that in mind, we especially thank everyone who continued to support RTS this year even when it may have meant extra personal sacrifice to do so. We could not have made it through the year without your faithful support. You are among those who are part of the solution to the stewardship problem outlined by sociologist Dr. Christian Smith in our interview with him (see “Why Christians [Don’t] Give” page 14).

Reflecting on your sacrificial giving to RTS reminds me of the sacrifices our armed service personnel constantly make around the world in the defense of the United States. The term “ultimate sacrifice” may often be overused, especially since the Crucifixion truly holds that honor, but that should not negate our appreciation for those who risk their lives on our behalf.

Some of those who serve the Lord by serving our country include RTS alumni and students, especially those who are military chaplains. They proclaim the gospel in word and deed to soldiers worldwide, wherever they may be stationed (see page 8).

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas with family members and friends, let’s remember to pray for wisdom, courage and success in ministry for these chaplains, who in many cases will spend this holiday separated from their closest loved ones. May we also learn from their example and ponder the sacrifices we may be called to make for the sake of the gospel.
RTS at Work ...

PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Bruce Waltke has written Psalms as Christian Worship with James M. Houston (Eerdmans, April 2010).

Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John Frame (November) is a festschrift honoring Dr. John Frame. Contributing authors include Wayne Grudem, Richard Pratt, Paul Helm, Vern Poythress, Bruce Waltke, William Davis, William Edgar, Peter Jones, Reggie Kidd, Andy Peterson and others, as well as former students and colleagues.

Professor Mike Glodo reviewed The Mission of God by Christopher J. H. Wright in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (Summer 2009).


TRAVELS

Dr. John Frame responded to two sessions of the Evangelical Theological Society, discussing a festschrift honoring him, and his book, Doctrine of the Christian Life, Nov. 18-19, New Orleans.

Dr. James Anderson was invited to participate in a panel discussion on Prof. Frame’s theology at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society in New Orleans, Nov. 19. Dr. Richard Pratt also participated, and Dr. Ric Cancado was the moderator.

Dr. Bruce Waltke presented two papers at the ETS in New Orleans, Nov. 17-20, titled “Psalms in Biblical Theology” and “Moneywise in Proverbs”.

Dr. Derek Thomas spoke on “Calvin” at the Westminster Seminary Preaching Conference, Nov. 27-28.

Dr. Howard Griffith will teach “Doctrines of Anthropology and Christology and Christ” at RTS-Atlanta in January. He spoke at the Evangelical Theological Society, in New Orleans, Nov. 18-20. He also lectured on “Bavinck and Frame on the Covenants” at a Ph.D. seminar at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Nov. 13.

Dr. Mike Milton will speak on “A Fresh Encounter with Your Calling” at a retreat for military chaplains from Navy, Army and Air Force and their spouses, at The Cove, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Dec. 2, Asheville, N.C.

Dr. Jim Hurley will speak at a two-day seminar at Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Dec. 11-12, on “Paul Meets Brain Science: Practical Christian Counseling Shaped by Scripture and by General Revelation.”

Dr. Steve Childers is the plenary speaker/trainer for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Outreach North America Conference, Oct. 26-27, Charlotte, N.C., and will speak on “Parenting Church Training Summit: How to Plant a Daughter Church.” Dr. Childers is also the president and key trainer of the GCA Church Planting Conferences. The next conference is Jan. 26-29 in Orlando, Fla.

Dr. Guy Waters will speak at a conference at Centralia Presbyterian Church, Chester, Va., March 5-7.

INTERNATIONAL

Professor Mike Glodo will teach a church leadership training class in Central Asia, Jan 18-22, on “How to Read & Apply the Psalms.”

Dr. Elias Medeiros will speak on “Evangelism and the Local Church (Leadership and Membership)” at a conference in Roraima, Brazil, March 12-14. He will also speak on “The Migrant Church” at the World Reformed Fellowship workshop in Edinburgh, Scotland, April 12-15.

• RTS has launched the new RTS Online Alumni and Friends Community to help alumni and friends of the seminary stay connected with each other and with the institution. Sign up today at alumni.rts.edu and tell all your RTS friends about it.

 RTS at Work ...
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Even today, when I read those words, I can hear the deep, sonorous Scottish voice of my former headmaster echoing around the high sandstone arches of the Glaswegian parish church where I and my fellow pupils would assemble every December for our Christmas carol service. As best I can tell, neither he nor I were believers at that time, but I nevertheless remember that his annual reading of John’s prologue (which he insisted upon) never failed to send tingles up my spine. Even to our unregenerate minds, the inspired text communicated something of the wonder of the Incarnation.

Now that I’ve grown in theological understanding and spiritual maturity, the wonder and mystery of the Incarnation seem greater than ever to me. Yet surely I’m not alone in finding that familiarity breeds, if not contempt, at least neglect. Christmas rolls around again, and the combination of busyness and repetition conspire to dampen our appreciation of the incredible story of God become man. So let me make a modest attempt to revive our wonder at the mystery of Christmas — indeed, not just one but three Christmas mysteries.

THE FIRST MYSTERY: THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE SON

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

(John 1:14)

Those four words — “the Word became flesh” — can be so familiar to us that we fail to appreciate the magnitude of John’s statement (echoed by the other New Testament writers). The divine (v. 1) became human (v. 14). The infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Son of God took upon himself a human nature: finite, limited in power, limited in knowledge, limited in space and time. It is one thing to claim that God would ever do such a thing. It is yet another to suppose that God could ever do such a thing — that he could clothe himself with frail humanity, veiling his divine glory, yet without relinquishing for one moment any aspect of his divine nature. The Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard referred to the Incarnation as “the Absolute Paradox” of the Christian faith. How could the eternal inhabit the temporal? How could the finite accommodate the infinite?

We may not know how this mystery could be a reality, but by the testimony of inspired Scripture, we know with certainty (Luke 1:4) that it was and is a reality. This is surely a mystery of the first order.

Science fiction writers like to speculate about cataclysmic events with the potential to “rupture the space-time continuum.” I confess I’m not sure what that means, but I suspect that if anything might threaten such a rupture, it would be the incarnation of God! And yet, as we will consider next, when that divine-human child was born, it caused barely a ripple on the surface of the world.
THE SECOND MYSTERY: THE HUMILIATION OF GOD THE SON

“Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God . . . made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant . . .”

(Philippians 2:6-7)

The idea that the infinite God became a man, without abandoning His divine attributes, is mystery enough. It is a further mystery that this God-man would live a life of obscurity, poverty and suffering. Who would have predicted that? Surely if the Creator-King of the Universe were to visit us in human form, His coming would be trumpeted from the highest heavens, heralded on every street corner, and accompanied with all pomp and ceremony! Perish the thought that God would begin His human life as a fetus in the womb of an unmarried peasant girl; spend most of that life laboring unrecognized as a woodworker in a two-bit Middle Eastern town; conduct His ministry without home, family and possessions; and be opposed by conservative theologians and dismissed as a fraud, a drunkard, an inscriptionist, a blasphemer, or even a Satanist (Matthew 10:25; 12:24). God forbid that God should suffer such humiliation!

Yet we know from inspired Scripture that this is exactly what happened. This is mystery upon mystery.

THE THIRD MYSTERY: THE CRUCIFIXION OF GOD THE SON

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

(Philippians 2:8)

It is an incomprehensible mystery that the Son of God lived as a man. It is a further mystery that the Son of God lived the kind of human life He did. But surely the crowning mystery is this: the Son of God lived to die. The very reason He was born as a man was to die as a man.

This fact is clear from the four Gospels, which devote a third of their content to the week of Jesus’ death. It is clear from Jesus’ own statements throughout His ministry, not least on His final journey up to Jerusalem. It is clear even from the name He was given at birth (Matthew 1:21). The destiny of the God-man was to die — and not just any death, but a shameful criminal’s death on a Roman cross. Could anything be more incredible?

Perhaps only this: He died for me. And also for you, I trust. The incarnate Son of God died to pay the penalty for our filthy sins and to bring us near to God forevermore.

Charles Wesley’s famous hymn captures something of the wonder: “And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior’s blood? Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?”

Can it be? Yes — He died. Yes — He died for me. Hallelujah! This is mystery upon mystery upon mystery.

PROCLAIMING THE MYSTERIES

Some would argue that such theological mysteries are an embarrassing obstacle for the Christian gospel in our modern, scientific, rationalistic age. What reasonable person could accept doctrines that seem to defy reason? This concern could be addressed in a number of ways — some theological, some philosophical — but I suggest that what may seem to be a vice could well turn out to be a virtue.

Should we be so pessimistic about whether such mysteries can appeal to the inhabitants of our 21st-century secular culture? We live in a scientific age, yes, but also at a time when people are rapidly losing faith in the power of science to solve our problems and satisfy our longings. Although the acids of modernism and postmodernism have corroded any ready acceptance of the supernatural, it seems that many unbelievers in the West are deeply dissatisfied with the assumption that there is nothing beyond the space-time universe. There is a longing for transcendence — and not a distant, detached transcendence, but one that intersects and penetrates our world, our very lives. Yet if there were an invasion of the immanent by the transcendent, all for the salvation of sinners, would we not expect it to be profoundly mysterious, to defy human comprehension? Such mystery would be a mark of reality, not human invention.

So let us wonder again at these Christmas mysteries — but more than that, let us celebrate them and proclaim them to a lost and thirsty world.

Dr. James Anderson is assistant professor of theology and philosophy at RTS-Charlotte. Before moving to Charlotte with his wife and two daughters, he studied and worked in Edinburgh, Scotland.
If you drive through Florida’s Orange County on a Sunday morning, you will pass many public schools, and in many of them, a church is meeting in its auditorium. As fast as schools are built in metropolitan Orlando, they cannot keep up with the number of church plants. These are not likely to be Lutheran, Methodist or Presbyterian. Rather, independent churches are mushrooming here and throughout American suburbs. Welcome to the post-denominational American religious landscape.

Since their heyday in the middle of the previous century, Protestant denominations have fallen on hard times, declining both in numbers and theological coherence. In their place has risen the megachurch phenomenon. Some megachurches remain affiliated with a denomination, but only in a loose sense. Denominational labeling is often downplayed or disguised, and these churches generally operate with a high degree of independence, or in some cases virtual autonomy. The trend is toward waning denominational loyalty, with new networks proving more effective than inherited ties.

Denominations: Worn Out and Obsolete?

Much of today’s skepticism toward the value and benefit of denominations may be warranted. Even among conservative bodies, denominations tend to expand into organizational bureaucracies staffed with administrators who seem detached from the “real ministry” of the local congregation. A denomination may still deliver certain goods and services that render its connection useful, but other ties are more strategic for particular congregations.

So why not jettison denominational identity and abandon this seemingly obsolete structure? Many congregations are taking that route. If not outright leaving denominations, they are loosening their denominational connections and forming their own strategic alliances. Should we lament this change? Or is post-denominationalism another case of new wine in new wineskins? Let’s look first into what is prompting this changing scene.

We can classify the varieties of discontent into several categories. The most radical are the so-called “No Religionists,” whose opposition to denominations is part of a greater alienation from any form of organized religion. Seeking spirituality without the form of religion, these dissenters declare their independence from the church as an institution. This mindset resonates well with American love for freedom of choice. But as the authors of the new book Why We Love the Church put it, this radical expression of religious individualism is putting old wine in no wineskins.

Other dissenters sense betrayal by the theological tyranny too often characterizing denominational control. Denominational giving quotas (or “askings”) can be heavy-handed tests of loyalty or a subtle form of taxation. American church history is replete with examples of denominations forcing churches to support unbelief. (For Presbyterians, the names Pearl Buck and Angela Davis come quickly to mind.) Even in milder forms, denominations appear as expensive hierarchical structures that stifle creativity and innovation. Independent networks, by contrast, offer greater fluidity and nimbleness in ministry. But this is a thin connectionalism that lacks genuine accountability, inevitably leading to functional congregationalism.

Finally, some have voiced theological objections to de-
nominations. Denominations are the scandal of Protestant tribalism, and are held up to scorn as the results of sinful schism. Their bloody history hearkens back to a less enlightened time of religious warfare. Isn’t it more noble, the argument continues, to be loyal to Christ rather than to human institutions?

Putting the question this way is to create a false dilemma. Undoubtedly, writes Herman Bavinck in *Reformed Dogmatics*, “the divisions of the church of Christ are caused by sin; in heaven there will no longer be any room for them. But this is far from being the whole story.” Bavinck goes on to point out that denominations are one way to express a diversity that is good for the church. Denominations express the “pluriformity” of the church.

Yes, it is true that denominations divide. But impatience with denominational differences often owes to larger frustration. “Doctrine divides” is a popular modern slogan among those who instead emphasize religious experience. For these voices, denominational differences are the most unimportant of doctrines — hardly hills to die on! Efforts to disregard denominational identity are often part of a greater agenda of theological minimalism that pursues a low common denominator of connection. However, the strategy of reducing the doctrine of the church to so-called essential or fundamental articles cannot yield a community with cohesive ties and genuine discipline. In other words, the unity of the church will never emerge at the expense either of its purity or its maturity. Doctrinal indifference does not produce healthy churches.

In the language of the classic hymn, we remember that the church is not only beset by “schism rent asunder” but also by “heresies distressed,” and both of these are sinful. The former breaks with the fellowship of the gospel, and the latter with the truth of the gospel. Of course, denominations that defend the truth of Scripture as they understand it are still obliged to pursue the task of organizational unity. Achieving church unity is a deliberate process that too easily taxes the patience of modern American Christians. But the true unity of the church will be promoted only when every denomination seeks to defend the truth as purely as possible.

**Denominations: Inevitable and Necessary**

As marginal as denominations may seem, it may yet be premature, and perhaps even naïve, to imagine that the day of such connectedness has passed. Consider, for example, how many independent churches have evolved into quasi-denominational forms. Megachurches such as Willow Creek, Saddleback and the Vineyard movement, eager to maintain control over their successful “brand identity,” have established networks and associations with churches eager to emulate their formulas of success, often in the form of paid membership. These relationships can become just as insular and tribal as the denominational structures they seek to avoid.

Paul warns in 1 Corinthians that the church is “God’s building,” and that we must avoid the strife of imagining we are of Paul or Apollos. Denominations at their worst may cultivate that mindset, but so can the spirit of independence. When every church is free to establish its own identity, we have the Corinthian dilemma with a vengeance, and the problem of several dozen or even hundred denominations is not solved by the creation of several thousand in their place.

Above all, denominations are important because they are an implicit recognition that churches do not travel alone in their pilgrimage. The principle of the communion of saints extends to church bodies as well as individuals. Denominationalism acknowledges the wisdom of others — a wisdom that brought the ancient church to the apostolic decree of the Jerusalem Council.

If you drive through Orlando on a Sunday morning six months from now, you will still see every school rented by a church. But there is this difference: the names of many of the churches will have changed. Independent churches come and go at astonishing rates in this entrepreneurial, competitive environment.

Historic denominationalism, in contrast, presents a coherent, durable and stable identity that can be passed on to one’s children and grandchildren. It is shortsighted to celebrate the demise of Protestant denominationalism, and it is much wiser to take up the hard work of rebuilding its strength.

---

John Muether is library director for the RTS system as well as a professor of church history at RTS-Orlando. He serves as a ruling elder at Reformation Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Oviedo, Fla.
Military chaplains have always played an integral role in the U.S. military. In fact, the history of American military chaplain ministry dates back to before there even was a United States. In August 1775, six weeks after the first Continental Congress, an Army general named George Washington — you may have heard of him — commissioned what is now known as the Chaplain Corps. The man known as “the father of our country” recognized that a spiritual soldier is a successful soldier.

Today, 234 years later, all U.S. military branches continue to provide an environment for this ideal to be upheld, albeit in the pluralistic context of the First Amendment. “Just because you serve doesn’t mean you hang up your faith at the door,” said Major Gen. Douglas Carver, Army chief of chaplains, at a recent Chaplain Corps anniversary celebration. “Our ministry is one of bringing God to soldiers and soldiers to God. We leave it up to God to determine how that takes place. We have soldiers in 80 nations, and wherever there are boots on the ground, we have chaplains and assistants there to nurture the living, care for the wounded and honor the dead.”

RTS alumni serve as chaplains beyond just the Army and the familiar military hotspots such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Their “ministry of presence” involves openly proclaiming the gospel in the context of the Reformed faith while providing an environment that protects all soldiers’ rights to freely exercise their religion. Sometimes this means joining soldiers on missions, putting themselves in harm’s way right alongside the troops. Other times they may need to counsel a distraught soldier whose wife back home has told him she’s leaving him.

On these pages you’ll briefly meet alumni who have followed their callings as military chaplains. Their testimonies provide a peek into the unique culture of military chaplain ministry and how God uses such chaplains in the lives of those who fulfill a dangerous mission on our behalf. — Paul Schwarz
One of the best things about being an Army chaplain are the amazing men and women I get to work with every day. Currently I work with the pilots and crews of the Apache helicopter. I don’t think I’ve met harder workers in my entire life. These guys constantly shift their schedules around, nights versus days, to keep their bodies used to what they experience during combat. Could you imagine going into your bank job at 8 one morning and then pulling another 12-hour shift beginning at 8 p.m. a couple days later? There are no complaints, though; the job always gets done.

As you can imagine, the constant deployments and this crazy schedule at home causes stress on families and individuals. Fort Campbell currently leads all Army posts in suicide rates, and the number of DUls has skyrocketed in recent months. Chaplains are a unit’s first line of defense in helping soldiers deal with issues that are compounded when dealing with a stressful job. I’m constantly circulating around my battalion and make it a point that most soldiers at least see me in their work areas once a week. While doing this I’m often able to talk with soldiers who are seeking advice or just a good word from their “chapy.”

I’ve never experienced ministry like this anywhere else, where you can just walk around people’s jobs and take 15 to 20 minutes to talk about whatever issue they bring to my attention. Chaplains like to call this “ministry of presence.” This is a model I believe we get from Jesus Himself, who left his home and humbled himself to live among people to be a light in the darkness. Chaplains enter into the world of soldiers — this is why we deploy with them, so we can be with them even in “hell” itself so that we might be a light in their world pointing them to the hope we have found.

This is not a boring job whatsoever. I’ve been able to go to Airborne school and jump out of airplanes, I’ve been to Air Assault where I’ve learned to rappel out of helicopters with soldiers, and my next assignment will be with Special Forces where I’ll get to be a chaplain for some of the world’s best commandos. But I’ve also been in hospitals in Afghanistan where men and women have been literally blown to pieces, shot, burned, crushed — you name it.

Chaplains will always be there during the fun of Airborne and the tragedy of war. That’s my job, and I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

Abe and his wife, Kirsta, have three children — Chase, Bryce and Zoe. Reflecting military life, Zoe was born while Abe was in Afghanistan. Abe’s blog, found at www.dispennette.com, contains many accounts of his time in Afghanistan.
I was called to chaplain ministry shortly after the 9/11 attacks. Here in Sicily I provide ministry for the chapel here at NAS Sigonella. While much of what we do is very similar to a church community in your local city, we also have many differences due to the nature of the military. I currently provide Christian worship services for the traditional or liturgical community. We also have Bible studies, youth groups, prayer meetings, etc., but it all takes place in the military setting.

I wear a dual hat as a chaplain in that I also provide counseling for those stationed here. I provide training on subjects such as ethics, morality, suicide prevention, Myers-Briggs tests and much more. I manage a staff of five religious program specialists, three musicians and two directors of education. Again, much of this is similar to the pastorate outside this context, but much is not.

One of the major differences is the opportunity to see the world. I recently had the chance to provide chaplain support to the Horn of Africa in Djibouti. I filled in for a chaplain for a month providing various worship services and conducting Bible studies. The main thing that makes us different is that we minister to our congregants where they work, even if they are in a foxhole on the front lines.

I just received orders for my next duty. My wife, Linda, and I will be stationed near San Diego at Camp Pendleton, where I will be serving with the Second Marine Division Fleet Marine Force. This usually means a deployment — probably to Iraq or Afghanistan. This is all part of the uniqueness of this call, to which I say, “Here I am, Lord; send me.”

This job brings with it many challenges, but the needs are great. In this time of war, which seems will be here for a while, there are many opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with sailors and marines. Being a U.S. Navy chaplain is a unique and fulfilling ministry; it is a call I am both proud and humble to say I have been chosen to fulfill.

Hank Wilson is stationed on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, but is frequently deployed to more dangerous locations.

Hank can be contacted at chaplainwilson@gmail.com.
Wisdom from General Lee

In his current role, Doug Lee travels all across the country, including to RTS campuses. Wherever he goes, the retired Army brigadier general gets asked one question more than any other: “Are you related to General Robert E. Lee?”

The answer to that question is no, but if you ask him if opportunities abound for military chaplain ministry, that answer is a resounding yes. Doug Lee is the executive director of the Presbyterian & Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains & Military Personnel. Along with his PRJC duties, the retired military chaplain coordinates chaplain ministry for the PCA Mission to North America. In his work he participated in the commissioning of Dr. Mike Milton, RTS-Charlotte president and RTS-Orlando interim president, as a chaplain in the Army Reserves.

The PRJC consists of six different Presbyterian denominations. As PRJC director, Lee helps recruit military chaplains, confirm their ecclesiastical credentials in compliance with government requirements, and provide care and support for existing chaplains on the field however possible. His role covers all government-sponsored chaplaincies (such as in prisons), not just those in the military.

Lee sees several components to a successful military chaplain. “First of all, they need to be well educated,” he says while on one of his frequent trips, which sometimes include RTS campuses — he recently visited Jackson to promote chaplain opportunities. “Beyond that, a good chaplain must be a winsome person, someone who is adaptable, someone who sees the glass as half full, has a positive spirit, is a self-starter, and loves people and wants to get in and mix it up with them. He also has to have a church-planting mentality, because there’s no one day that’s the same.”

He also notes that Reformed chaplains, trained in a high view of the sovereignty of God, have the best capacity to exercise such adaptability to rapidly changing circumstances. One of those circumstances involves the chaplain’s freedom to preach the gospel without restriction while at the same time upholding the free-exercise rights of all soldiers. “We chaplains have liberty,” Lee explains, “but we also respect the constitutional rights of all faith groups, even if we don’t like what they believe or even know it to be false.” Lee calls this principle “provide and protect,” which especially helps those concerned that chaplains don’t have religious freedom.

“If they have an opportunity to proclaim the gospel, our chaplains will make the most of it.”

Brigadier General Doug Lee

More information about the PRJC may be found at www.prjc.net.

A Plan to Equip Chaplains in Charlotte

When Dr. Mike Milton was inaugurated as RTS-Charlotte president last year, one of his stated goals for the campus was to develop an academic emphasis on chaplain ministry. The U.S. Army Reserve chaplain is working to establish The Institute for Chaplain Ministries. ICM is being designed to focus on developing men and women for service as chaplains in both military and institutional settings.

Aspects of the ICM would include a Master of Divinity degree emphasis, professors with chaplain experience, additional library resources, a fellowship program, ministry opportunities, denominational resources, and regular conferences and lectures.

Those helping advise the development of ICM include Doug Lee (see above), director of the Presbyterian & Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains & Military Personnel.

For more information about the development of ICM, contact Dr. Milton at mmilton@rts.edu.
The common denominator that has led these people to such a prominent place in Virginia’s home — and thus her heart — is that they have all been recipients of the Cooper Campbell Memorial Scholarship. When Virginia started the RTS scholarship in the aftermath of her husband’s death in 1995, she set two main criteria concerning those to whom it would be awarded: a calling to either pastoral or campus ministry, as well as limited resources. For more than a decade now, dozens of RTS students have been able to complete their education when otherwise they would not have been able to do so.

“When I came to RTS-Jackson I found myself with only enough money to cover my needs (tuition, books, rent, food) for one semester. I was thoroughly convinced that I was absolutely supposed to be at RTS-Jackson, so I knew that somehow the money would be provided. I said to the Lord, ‘If you want me here, You’re gonna have to pay for it. So I looked for work in order to help pay for my needs. However, each semester I still found myself needing financial help. So I turned to the seminary. Because of [Mrs. Campbell’s] generous help, I was able to complete my coursework on time.”

— Rick Holbert, Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Learned, Miss.

A MISSISSIPPI WIDOW HELPS MAKE SEMINARY EDUCATION POSSIBLE FOR NUMEROUS ALUMNI AND STUDENTS.

by PAUL SCHWARZ
Virginia Campbell was born 84 years ago (“I don’t care [if people know] how old I am!” she says) in Columbia, Miss., 80 miles from Jackson. After attending Belhaven College, she met her future husband when he worked in the same building where Virginia went to business school. Cooper Campbell built a variety of business interests, primarily in the insurance field. Even more significantly, Cooper and Virginia served extensively at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson — Cooper as a deacon and elder, and both of them as Sunday school teachers and as members of a home-based small-group fellowship.

When Cooper died after 47 years of marriage, Virginia found herself in the unexpected position of having to manage Cooper’s business concerns. “I was the good-time girl,” Virginia admits. “My older sister was the businesswoman, and my daddy was a businessman. I had never done any of that. When I married Cooper, he took over and did everything for me.”

With dependence on the Lord and on trusted friends from FPC Jackson, Virginia made the adjustment. Part of the process involved doing something to honor Cooper’s memory. “The Lord put it on my heart [to start the scholarship],” Virginia says. “We had watched the [seminary] grow,” noting that they had enjoyed a close relationship with many RTS founding figures, including Sam Patterson, the first RTS president, who often came out to Columbia to preach. “Cooper was very interested in the seminary, so I thought that’s what I’d do.”

According to Virginia, Cooper wasn’t just interested in truth; he loved and was interested in people. Her participation in the scholarship program reflects the same heart — “Virginia’s boys,” as they are commonly referred to, will call her and give her prayer requests, as do their wives. The scholarship recipients and their families often meet with Virginia for dessert socials, and the relationships forged often last beyond the students’ time at seminary.

“At the end of the first month [at RTS], we had to take money out of savings to make ends meet and could not figure out why. I sat down and looked over the budget I put together, and much to my surprise, I had forgotten to include rent! We were going to be about $500 short every month, and we did not have much savings. I had no idea what to do, so I prayed that God would provide for us. When I got home from class the next day I had a message from the dean of students saying he needed to talk to me about my financial aid. When he explained what the Campbell Scholarship was, I was amazed. It made up the $500 shortfall in our budget. God provided our daily bread through the gracious ministry of Mrs. Campbell. Without her, we could not have afforded to stay in seminary after Summer Greek.”

— Kevin Hale, Christ Church, Conway, Ark.

Virginia’s face lights up when she talks about her “boys,” with her conversation punctuated by infectious laughter. “I want to know the people I am helping,” she explains. “It’s not just a name when I’m writing a check; it’s a person I know. When I close my eyes and pray, I see that young man and his wife and his little children.” Virginia has been part of a prayer group at FPC Jackson called Tuesdays at Two for more than 40 years, noting that with a bad knee making it difficult for her to move around, she can always serve others through prayer.

Her focus on people over possessions prompts her to continue to live modestly (“Neither one of us cared about luxurious living,” she says), and Virginia encourages others to make similar investments in the lives of seminary students. “It would be a wonderful blessing,” she says, “not just to the students but to you personally. It is one of the greatest things I’ve ever done.”

Virginia recognizes that she’s helping equip a new generation of leaders for the body of Christ. “Young people today are facing so many things I didn’t have to face,” she says, “and for these boys to go through seminary and preach the good news of Jesus Christ, this is what moves me so. [God] has blessed me so much — I have had a wonderful life, and if I can pass it on and bless somebody else, I’m ready.”

[My wife, Lauren,] and I were just talking about Mrs. Campbell the other day. We truly appreciate her generosity and her heart to serve Christ’s church by helping young seminarians to prepare to preach the gospel through the world. The scholarship benefited me in many ways. One is that I did not know how I would be able to afford to pay for seminary classes, even less living expenses. The scholarship enabled me to start seminary right away and allow my work to cover my expenses. This also enabled me to not have debt when I graduated from seminary. One of my favorite benefits was that it enabled Lauren and I to get to know Mrs. Campbell. It was a joy to know her and to see someone who loved Jesus for so long. To be one of her scholarship recipients meant that you were in her heart and her prayers. She would always ask us how she could pray for us, and we knew she would do it. We appreciated her love and prayers for us as much as her generosity.”

— Chuck Askew, Reformed University Ministries, Raleigh, N.C.

For more information on how to start a scholarship fund for RTS students in a similar manner as Virginia Campbell, building relationships with students you know and support personally, contact Lyn Perez at lperez@rts.edu or toll free at 866-926-4787. ♦

Dr. Guy Richardson, president of RTS-Jackson, contributed to the reporting on this article.
That was a way for me to realize the gargantuan potential to do positive things in the world if people simply put their money where their mouth is and give at the levels they think they’re supposed to give.

Then I started looking at empirical numbers and was shocked at how for the most part among Christians, it’s pretty pathetic compared to what the traditions they believe in say they ought to be giving and in light of the wealth American Christians have.

As a sociologist, how did you approach your research?

Sociology is not biblical studies or theology; it’s not normative, prescriptive, theological or philosophical. It is oriented toward what is empirically going on in the world and how to explain it. So my task was not to preach about what people should be doing, but to find out about what people give, what kind of people give more or less, what makes people give, and so on.

But numbers only go so far, so we also interviewed pastors and lay people. It wasn’t national and systematic, but we learned a lot from talking to people about obstacles to giving.

How would you summarize your conclusions?

If American Christians gave generously, they could generate unbelievable amounts of resources and make a huge influence in the world. But for the most part they don’t. Most American Christians give very little; a significant minority gives nothing. The vast majority of the entire American Christian enterprise, organizationally speaking, is funded by a small minority of generous people. If the number of generous givers was expanded to include most American Christians, they could virtually change the world.

Why, then, do American Christians give so little?

For one, many people have little perspective on how wealthy they are, and view themselves as just getting by. They objectively have the resources to give generously, but subjectively think they don’t. Part of this is that most Americans are not great with finances generally — most people just spend and get into debt. Giving generously requires
principled decisions up front, rather than saying, “Let’s just live our lives, and if there’s anything left over, maybe we’ll put it in the offering plate.”

The second factor is that a lot of churches are not as forthright and bold about teaching about these matters as they could be. A lot of pastors are incredibly uncomfortable with the topic, partly because their own salaries are being paid by what’s being given, so it’s seen as selfish fundraising. Some pastors have uneasy consciences about how much they give.

Also, a significant minority of American Christians don’t trust where their money’s going to, or if they do, they never hear what it has accomplished. For people to give generously, it helps them to know, see and hear what they are helping contribute toward. There are so many scandals, so the more transparency and accountability, the better.

In our culture, money is sacred; for some people it can replace God. This is exemplified by a cartoon I’ve seen where a person being baptized by full submersion is all the way under the water except he is holding his wallet above the water. The idea is of somebody becoming a Christian in every part of their life except for their money. But if you read Scripture, the sacredness of money and income in our culture is something that Christianity challenges.

Wouldn’t many Christians’ lack of generosity be explained as simple selfishness and greed?

Of course, a certain amount of selfishness and greed is going on, but sociologically, it’s interesting that certain religious traditions give more or less than others. Mormons give quite a lot of money relatively speaking, so are they less selfish individuals? No, it has something to do with their theological teaching and their social system.

Unless we think selfishness and greed are distributed unequally among different religious traditions, there must be something about the nature of the theological teaching and organization of a congregation or denomination that makes the difference. Beyond selfishness and greed, there must be cultural, organizational and relational factors that affect this.

What about your research findings surprised you?

One thing was the relationship between income and generosity. Most of us would guess that the more a person or household earns, the more generous they would become. But the research shows that the more a person earns, the lower the percentage of their income they give.

This to me is counterintuitive and morally shocking, and it’s a real challenge. Why is it that the more money people get, the stingier they become? That question presses hard about what’s going on in our culture — what kind of temptations or priorities are at work that the more people earn, the more they want to keep for themselves?

“If American Christians gave generously, they could generate unbelievable amounts of resources and make a huge influence in the world.”

Dr. Christian Smith

How, then, would you consider your findings instructive for pastors and church leaders?

Although we make clear that we are not church consultants, the book does draw out implications for congregations. For example, pastors need to be absolutely clear that they are being faithful with their money — that they don’t have any trace of bad conscience about giving that would prevent them from speaking boldly. Another recommendation is that if lay people and elders can take more responsibility for the issue and not dump it in the lap of pastors, the more it relieves pastors from “raising their own salary,” which they often feel very uncomfortable about.

What are the implications of your findings on the fulfillment of the church’s gospel mission?

If American Christians gave generously, it would produce more than $100 billion a year to do whatever the givers wanted to do with it. Any number of things could be done that are not being done now because it’s being spent on other things, some of passing value.

Whether they realize it or not, American Christians have been blessed with unbelievable amounts of wealth compared to Christians throughout church history and the world today. It’s clear scripturally that money matters for people’s lives of faith, and God calls people to good stewardship for His kingdom and not just their own pleasure. There’s a lot of falling down on the job and failing to be faithful, which is a matter of people’s hearts and their basic life commitments. This isn’t a peripheral issue for the soul of American Christianity.

Dr. Smith continues to lead studies of financial giving among religious people. For more information about the Science of Generosity project at Notre Dame, visit generosityresearch.nd.edu.
The shroud of trees surrounding McLean Presbyterian Church cannot block out the perpetual whoosh of traffic on the Washington, D.C., Beltway on the other side of that arboreal setting. In the same way, the handful of 20-somethings who meet at MPC on Mondays and Fridays as part of the Capital Fellows program know that the frenetic pace of Beltway life awaits them as they continue nine months of intensive instruction.

In reality, though, the 12 Fellows participating in this year’s program cycle, like those who have gone before them, are learning that no such dichotomy exists. Just as God is sovereign over both greenery and concrete, He also exercises dominion over both church and vocational activity. A ministry of MPC in which RTS alumni participate prominently, the Capital Fellows program trains recent college graduates to internalize a biblical perspective on life, work, relationships, culture, community and the world.

The Fellows Initiative is a national program that includes MPC, which also serves as the home for RTS-Washington, D.C. While each Fellows program has distinct features, Capital Fellows follows a fairly standard format. The students take classes together at the church on the aforementioned Mondays and Fridays, work at professional internships the other three weekdays, participate in various hands-on ministry training opportunities, and live with host families.

The current crop of Fellows, like in the two previous years of the program at MPC, come to D.C. from as far away as California, being attracted by the unique professional opportunities inside the Beltway, not only in government but also the vast non-profit sector proliferating in the capital. Despite their diverse backgrounds, the Fellows are forging the sense of community that characterizes the program.

“We spent a lot of time together,” Kristen Peterson, part of the first group of Fellows at MPC, recalls at a gathering of former Fellows at a McLean restaurant. “We saw each other six days a week minimum, and we talked about thought-provoking issues that people disagree on. When you spend a year with people, their personalities come out.”

“Coming here you start discussing things you never thought about before,” adds Regan Lackey, also a graduate of the first year of the MPC Fellows program. “Weighty theo-
logical, sociological and emotional things, and a lot of it may be contrary to what you previously believed, so there’s a lot of chance for conviction. That opens someone up to thinking that maybe what they’ve believed all along was wrong.”

Helping steer the Fellows through their experience is Bill Fullilove, assistant pastor at MPC and director of its Capital Fellows program. On one particular Friday morning, the RTS-Orlando graduate taught “Creation and the Image of God” to the Fellows as part of an ongoing Kingdom Seminar (Capital Fellows participants can receive RTS credit for their classwork). Bill encouraged group interaction, also employing devices such as showing a clip from the classic movie Vertigo in order to help illustrate the Israelites’ demand for an earthly king in 1 Samuel.

In class sessions, the Fellows also hear from guest speakers with much experience in integrating the gospel into their professional experience. For example, later that same morning, MPC elder John Kyle talked about his life as a marketing consultant, sharing nuggets such as “Marketing works because it appeals to our idol-making tendencies.” The Fellows also meet for Bible study, led earlier that morning by James Forsyth, MPC assistant pastor and RTS-Jackson alumnus.

The current Fellows have arrived at MPC from a variety of locations and backgrounds. For example, Carrie Horton came from California after attending college in Oregon, while Lauren Black is a lifelong MPC attendee. Wherever they’re from, the Fellows share a common goal, summarized by Pierce Babirak, a Maine native who graduated from college in Pennsylvania: “What I’m doing this year is setting a grounding intellectually and spiritually for the rest of my life.”

The program comes at a strategic and yet too-often-overlooked time in the lives of the young adults. “There are two times when Christian young people’s faith is at risk of being marginalized,” explains Hugh Whelchel, RTS-Washington, D.C., executive director, who helped bring the program to MPC. “The first time is when they go to college, and there are millions of programs for that. But the other time is when they come out of college and go into the workplace. They move to another city and don’t know anybody, and they’re really at risk. So how do we minister to kids who are about to do that?

“Then we ask, ‘How do we get people to seriously integrate faith and work? We want them to walk out of here with a
sense of what calling is and how God wants them to use that calling, whether it’s a pastor, a missionary, a Fortune 500 company, homeschooling their kids — whatever that might be — to help transform culture. One of the ways the Lord transforms culture is through our jobs.”

For Hugh and Bill, the Capital Fellows program is essentially a recapturing of a needed biblical perspective. “This is an important part of a church that tends to get buried,” Bill says, “and it’s been exciting to unbury the classic Reformation doctrine of work and vocation.”

In the process, the program helps MPC accomplish its gospel mission. “One of the ways we’re looking to reach D.C. and the world is by equipping the next generation of leaders,” explains John Hutchinson, MPC senior pastor and an RTS-Jackson alumnus. “The Fellows Program is a significant part of that — it recruits dozens of young leaders and equips them for ministry in the local church and the community. The focus is on intentional discipleship and intensive discipleship.

“One of the visions of making a difference in the world is focused on the marketplace. Typically, church discipleship ministries equip Christians to use the means of grace, share their faith and engage in the church. But this ministry is equipping young men and women to be salt and light in the marketplace, to be effective in their respective callings, and that is a critically needed aspect of discipleship that churches have largely ignored.”

Kristen Peterson testifies to the impact of the program in this regard. “It helped me transition out of the Christian bubble,” says the graduate of a Christian college. “It was a good stepping stone into the world, where I work with nonbelievers. The program was a safe place for me to get my feet wet.”

In her current work for a nonprofit child research organization, Kristen is the only Christian, rubbing shoulders daily with Muslims and people from many different religious traditions. “During Ramadan I’ve learned more in my lunchtime conversations than I have in all my religion classes,” she says. “The program helped me learn not to be afraid to talk about my faith.”

Bill describes the program as an effort to right a past wrong. “We asked ourselves,” he says, “What do we wish had been there for us coming out of college at 21 or 22 to help us make this jump? What we did was build a program we wished we’d had. If you can take away 10 to 20 years of false starts in the wrong direction, there’s a tremendous future payoff.”

For more information about the Capital Fellows program at MPC, visit www.capitalfellowsmclean.org. More information about the national initiative, including how to start one’s own Fellows program, may be found at www.thefellowsinitiative.com.

FELLOWS PROGRAMS AND RTS

The Capital Fellows program at McLean Presbyterian Church is part of a national Fellows Initiative (www.thefellowsinitiative.com) preceded inside the Beltway by The Falls Church Fellows, also in Virginia. Both programs carry partnerships with RTS in which students can receive seminary credit for their coursework. The other established Fellows programs are listed below, with those also having RTS partnerships highlighted in brown:

Colorado: The Rockland Fellows (Golden)
Florida: The Gainesville Fellows
Georgia: First Presbyterian Church Fellows (Macon)
Indiana: Covenant Fellows (West Lafayette), The Heartland Fellows (Zionsville)
Louisiana: NOLA (New Orleans Fellows)

Missouri: The Schaeffer Fellows (St. Louis)
New York: The Gotham Fellows — Redeemer Presbyterian Church (Manhattan)
North Carolina: The Kinston Fellows, The Anglican Fellows (Raleigh)
Pennsylvania: The Pittsburgh Fellows

South Carolina: The Florence Fellows
Tennessee: The Knoxville Fellows, The Memphis Fellows
Texas: Houston Fellows, Memorial Drive Fellows (Houston), All Saints PCA Fellows (Austin)
Virginia: Trinity Fellows Program (Charlottesville)

Each April, MPC hosts a national Fellows convocation. RTS co-sponsors the event, as Hugh Whelchel, RTS-Washington, D.C., executive director, helps provide leadership for the national Fellows Initiative. Visit the Fellows Initiative Web site seen above for more information.

18 MINISTRY & LEADERSHIP
The arena was packed with over 5,000 business people attending a one-day motivational conference to listen to some of today’s greatest inspirational speakers, including Gen. Colin Powell, Dick Vitale and Tony Robbins. One of the speakers began by asking the following question: “If you went home tonight and found that a long-lost relative had died and left you $10 million, would you be at work tomorrow?” An audible “No” rang out from the audience.

Their sentiment is shared by many in our country today. A recent Gallup poll found that 77 percent of Americans hate their jobs. Time magazine reported in 2007 that Americans hate their jobs more today than in the past 20 years; fewer than half say they’re satisfied with their current job. With 50-hour-plus workweeks and long commutes, workers are spending more and more of their lives at work, yet so many of them are unfulfilled and frustrated with their jobs.

This is also true for many Christians for whom work often seems only a “means to an end.” Christians today have bought into the pagan notion that leisure is good and work is bad. They have also been misled by the sacred/secular distinction, which teaches that only working in the church is “real” full-time Christian service. This has not always been the case. The Reformers taught that all labor accepted as a calling and performed “as unto the Lord” was noble, yet this truth has slipped dramatically both in today’s Church and our present culture.

As followers of Christ, we must address our failure to live as His followers in the workplace and to think theologically about how we integrate our faith and our work. We must learn not to work just to live, but to live to work for the glory of God.

What are the implications of this “biblical doctrine of work” for Christians today? We must:

- Rediscover that our primary vocation is the call to follow Jesus and realize that this call embraces the whole of our lives, including our everyday work.
- Rediscover the priesthood of all believers, seeing every part of our life — work, civic, family, recreational, church — as a “living sacrifice” to God (Romans 12:1ff; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Realize that our vocation/calling will be different both for different people and at different stages in our lives.
- Maintain a broad definition of work that encompasses not only paid employment but also domestic work and voluntary work.
- Be committed to the idea that we express our Christian discipleship through our employment, which is an important part of life.
- Understand the tension present in the Scriptures regarding work. You will not have a meaningful life without work, but you must not make your work the meaning of your life.
- Realize that through the Christian doctrine of work, God changes the culture.

As believers at the beginning of the 21st century, we stand in the same place as the Reformers. We have the opportunity to teach the truth of Scripture, including the biblical doctrine of work, and radically impact our culture, making a positive difference in our communities, cities, country and world for the glory of God and His Kingdom. If we are serious about making a difference, we need to help the church rediscover the biblical doctrine of work.

Hugh Whelchel is the executive director of RTS-Washington, D.C. This article is an edited version of a longer piece. To read the full-length version, visit www.rts.edu/site/resources/M-L.aspx.
Would you run a marathon without these?

Get Equipped.
Run the distance by having a firm foundation.

A mind for truth. A heart for God.
Go to www.rts.edu/distance to begin your journey.

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Atlanta | Charlotte | Jackson | Orlando | Washington DC | Virtual