STANDING FIRM
But NOT Standing Still

RTS: THE NEXT 40 YEARS
During its first 40 years, Reformed Theological Seminary has demonstrated a commitment to “standing firm but not standing still,” as well as cultivating “a mind for truth and a heart for God.” These mottos have expressed our vision for preparing ministers of the gospel in the timeless truths of God’s inerrant Word, powered by a passion for the Reformed faith.

We in the RTS family seek to live out these principles in a variety of ways. This issue of Reformed Quarterly brings to a close our yearlong celebration of the 40th anniversary of RTS by highlighting some of the new ways in which our Lord has enabled us to make theological education “available, accessible and flexible.” Whereas previous issues in this series focused on the providential events in the foundation and expansion of RTS, this issue draws attention to the seminary’s role in equipping leaders for the church for the 21st century. In this sense you could describe this issue as an anticipatory celebration of our next 40 years (God willing) as much as a reflective celebration of our first 40 years.

Whether through new locations, innovative curriculum advances, or cutting-edge technological tools, we always seek to enhance the theological and spiritual development of our students. By inculcating into the lives of future pastors a heart of grace and compassion for people, we work to help ministers of the gospel develop godly character while gaining a deeper knowledge of God’s Word. On that foundation, we build into students the practical skills of preaching and teaching effectively, as well as the capacity to address the multiple needs of building strong, healthy local churches.

By God’s grace, our foundational vision for RTS will never change. The means of fulfilling that vision, though, will always change as necessary. That’s what we mean when we say we are “standing firm but not standing still,” embodying the principle of Semper Reformanda, or “Always Reforming.”

As you may have noticed already from looking at the cover of this issue, RQ is reflecting this principle in a new way. We have redesigned the magazine to update our visual identity and mark a forward focus as we make our transition from a look back at our first 40 years to a look ahead to the years to come. The “old wineskins” served us well, but we trust that the new look will bring a fresh perspective on timeless principles.

Today and tomorrow, as in 1966 when RTS opened its doors, we need more than ever bright, able, committed and godly young students who can communicate well the Word of God and help their congregations effectively influence their communities — and their world — for Christ. We seek leaders with a mind for truth who always follow the inerrant Word of God as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, demonstrate a heart for God, grow in holy devotion, minister grace, and represent Christ in this world. May this characterize RTS until Christ returns. ♦
PUBLICATIONS

- The First Forty Years, a history of RTS written by John Muether, associate professor of theological bibliography and research, was released in April. The book is available through the RTS online bookstore and at local campuses.

- Dr. S. Donald Fortson III has edited the just-released book Colonial Presbyterianism.


- Dr. Joel Harlow has an article, “Successfully Teaching the Biblical Languages Online at the Seminary Level: Guiding Principles of Course Design and Delivery,” in the current issue of Teaching Theology and Religion.

- Dr. Charles E. Hill has published several articles recently, including “Millenarianism,” in Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation; and “The Fourth Gospel in the Second Century: The Myth of Orthodox Johannephobis,” in Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John.

- Dr. Derek Thomas has published two new books: Under the Apple Tree, on the Song of Solomon, and The Doctrine of the Church in the Twenty-First Century.


- Dr. Mark Futato will give a public lecture in Bellingham, Wash., sponsored by Logos Bible Software, May 5.

- Dr. Simon Kistemaker will teach on Revelation at a Reformed seminary in Monterey, Mexico, in June.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Dr. Miles V. Van Pelt has been appointed associate professor of Old Testament and academic dean at RTS-Jackson.

- Dr. Howard Griffith has been appointed professor of systematic theology at RTS-Washington, D.C., becoming the campus’ first full-time faculty member. He has taught systematic theology for RTS as an adjunct professor since 2001.

- The 2007 Westminster Confession for Today Pre-PCA General Assembly Conference will take place June 11-12 at the Memphis Cook Convention Center. Speakers include J. Ligon Duncan, Sean Lucas, Doug Kelly, and Luder Whitlock (www.westminsterconfessiontoday.org).

- Historical Tours of Christian Character 2007. Dr. Harry Reeder will guide this tour exploring the character of numerous Civil War leaders while visiting historic sites in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. Two tours are planned: Fredericksburg from July 10-13 and Gettysburg from Sept. 25-28. For more information, visit www.rts.edu/cct (704) 688-4234.

- James L. Davis Building. The building that houses the library and classrooms at RTS-Orlando has been named the James L. Davis Building after a longtime friend and supporter of the seminary. On Nov. 15, 2006, a special reception was held in his honor, and a portrait of Mr. Davis, painted by Esther Horvath, was placed in the lobby.

- Dr. Rod Culbertson has been appointed Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Dean of Student Development at RTS-Charlotte and will teach Evangelism, Leadership and Pastoral Ministry, among other courses.

- Mr. Johnny Mastry and Dr. Robert Penny have been appointed vice presidents for development for RTS-Orlando and RTS-Jackson, respectively.

- RTS-Jackson alumnus Stephanie Jeanrenaud has been appointed director of admissions and alumni relations for RTS-Charlotte.

CAMPUS EVENTS

- Preaching Conference at RTS-Charlotte. “Preaching Truth in a Whatever World” is the theme of a one-day conference for pastors and church leaders on May 9 sponsored by Preaching magazine. Speakers will include Dr. Michael Duduit, Dr. R. Leslie Holmes, Dr. John Oliver and Dr. Jerry L. Cannon.

COMMENCEMENTS

- Charlotte Commencement: Saturday, May 26, 11 a.m., Church at Charlotte, 2500 Carmel Road. Commencement speaker: Dr. Mark Ross.

- Jackson Commencement: Friday, May 18, 7:30 p.m., Trinity Presbyterian Church, Jackson. Commencement speaker: Dr. Frank Barker.

- Orlando Commencement: Friday, May 25, 7:30 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, Orlando. Commencement speaker: Rev. Sandy Wilson.

TRAVELS

- Dr. Steve Childers spoke on “How to Start and Strengthen a Regional Church Planting Network” at the Interdenominational National New Church Conference, Orlando, April 23-26. He will be a plenary speaker for national indigenous leaders at the West Africa Church Planting Institute Conference, co-sponsored by Ghana Evangelical Committee, GCA and MTW, in Ghana, June 18-22.

- Dr. Rod Culbertson will teach a leadership training session, “Signs of a Healthy Church,” for Houston Lake Presbyterian Church, Warner Robins, Ga., May 18-21.

- Dr. Howard Griffith spoke to InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Va., March 15, on “Give Glory to God: Clearing the Conscience.”

- Dr. Charles Hill attended the spring meeting of the Covenant College board of trustees on March 15-16. He spoke at Emory University on March 25 at a doctoral seminar on the “History of Interpretation and Canon Development.”

- Dr. Frank A. James III has traveled to a closed country in East Asia to teach Campus Crusade for Christ missionaries.

ONLINE

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STANDING FIRM
But NOT Standing Still

GOD’S PROVISION for the NEXT 40 YEARS
In September 2002, RTS inaugurated Robert C. "Ric" Cannada Jr. as its third president. The son of founding Board member Robert Cannada, as well as an RTS alumnus, the vice president of the Charlotte campus was well suited for this calling. The younger Cannada conducted his RTS doctoral research on nontraditional course scheduling in theological education.

Soon after his inauguration, the seminary determined that further institutional restructuring was beneficial, because one individual could not oversee an institution that had grown to the size that RTS had become. In 2003, in a complete reorganization at the senior management level, the Board announced that Cannada's title would be changed to chancellor and chief executive officer, and that a president would be appointed for each of the three residential campuses.

Having a president oversee each campus would allow for better response to the needs of students and churches in each region. Decentralization would yield stronger ties to local communities. Individual campus presidents appointed included Guy Richardson in Jackson, Frank James in Orlando and Frank Reich in Charlotte, along with Andrew Peterson, who became president of the Virtual Cam-

IN THE 21ST CENTURY, RTS REMAINS TRUE TO ITS BIBLICAL BASIS WHILE SEEKING NEW WAYS TO DELIVER THEOLOGICAL TRAINING.

BY JOHN R. MUETHER

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The first RTS extension campus was established in Washington, D.C., in 1993. An extension in Boca Raton followed in 1998, with RTS-Atlanta being launched in 2000. The roots of the Virtual Campus took hold in 1996 with the hiring of Andrew Peterson, now the president of RTS-Virtual.

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pus. Equally significant was the expansion of the Executive Committee, for the first time including representatives from Florida and North Carolina.

As Cannada stepped into the shoes of his predecessor, Luder Whitlock, he posed the question, “What can RTS do in the next generation?” He focused attention on Atlanta and Washington, D.C., hopeful of converting those two sites into full campuses. Cannada was eager to outfit the capital of the nation and the “capital of the South” with core faculty in theology and biblical studies, with local pastors serving as adjunct professors in practical theology. RTS launched an ambitious $75 million financial campaign to expand these two sites as well as provide greater financial stability by significantly enlarging the endowment fund.

The story of RTS in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. (and Boca Raton, Fla., and additional metropolitan areas) is still unfolding. What is clear is that Cannada’s vision for the school signals that the seminary’s restructuring would involve no retreat from its mission.

“Achievable, Available and Flexible”

A spirit of innovation expanded RTS beyond additional campuses and into cyberspace. In 1988, Richard Watson created a summer Master of Arts program that enabled students to earn a degree by enrolling in a series of one-week courses over the span of four summers. Included in the program were 18 hours of audiotape courses produced by the Institute for Theological Studies in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The opening of the Orlando campus confirmed student interest in flexible education (block scheduling of classes proved popular), and the summer program expanded into a summer-winter program with the addition of January courses. In addition to ITS courses on tape, RTS established a department of distance education. The first taped products were by guest faculty, including J.I. Packer’s course on English Puritan theology. These courses proved very popular for resident students, who could simply listen to the tapes or register for a course for credit.

In 1996, RTS hired Andrew Peterson as vice president for distance education. Under his leadership the distance education program evolved into the “Virtual Campus.” Taped lectures accompanied by syllabi with reading and written assignments eventually gave way to genuine online learning employing state-of-the-art educational technology. Soon the Association of Theological Schools granted RTS permission to test a pilot program for a virtual degree (in which up to 90 percent of the degree could be obtained at a distance). In February 2004 the ATS awarded the school ongoing approval for its Master of Arts in Religion degree through the Virtual Campus (see page 12).

The Virtual Campus accommodates the “lifelong learner”
by allowing students to stay in their present church contexts and receive a seminary education without moving to a campus. On-site mentoring under direct pastoral supervision rendered learning as more than mere information transfer. “A network of millions of computers,” Peterson observed, “provides an exciting educational technology to train leaders for His church, filling the earth ‘with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.’” By 2006 the Virtual Campus had over 500 students, coming from as far away as Afghanistan, Belarus, China and Malawi.

LOOKING AHEAD

At the dedication of the Orlando campus in January 1999, then-president Luder Whitlock reflected on the history of RTS with his characteristic understatement. “Through all these years,” he observed, “the Lord has been faithful and has blessed us far more than we had reason to expect.”

In the wider context of the growth of American evangelicalism and its institutions in the latter half of the 20th century, the RTS story may at first seem unremarkable. After all, other evangelical seminaries have expanded and developed satellite campuses. And no doubt RTS’ location in the Southeast provided it a demographic advantage, as that quadrant of the country has particularly experienced population growth and an economic boom. Still, no school can claim such remarkable growth as RTS from it inauspicious beginnings in 1966.

None of this was possible without the sacrificial gifts of the friends of the seminary. All investments in the work of RTS, large and small, from individuals, churches and foundations, have been gratefully received and have enabled the seminary to grow.

Statistically, the story of the seminary is staggering. After 40 years of fervent prayer and generous giving by countless lay people, farsighted vision and imaginative thinking by the Board, and faithful and diligent service by the faculty, RTS has become one of the 10 largest seminaries in North America. By 2006 the seminary had over 7,000 alumni in 46 states and 43 foreign countries. On its three campuses and exten-

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Serving the Capital of the South

Dan Rogers
Cathy Burwell
Earl Williams

Reformed Quarterly
Students at RTS-Atlanta influence their communities and region for Christ while taking classes.

Atlanta has long been called “The Capital of the South.” Coca-Cola and CNN are famously headquartered there, and the metropolitan area is the largest south of the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi. Remarkably, until 2000, the Atlanta area did not contain a single fully accredited evangelical seminary in the Reformed tradition. The establishment of the RTS-Atlanta extension campus changed that.

Classes are now available in biblical studies, theological studies, church history, apologetics and practical theology as part of a Master of Arts in Religion offering. In an effort to expand RTS-Atlanta’s offerings, the RTS Board of Trustees has approved the fully funded addition of one faculty member and is securing funding for two more faculty members.

A distinctive feature of RTS’ approach to extensions is that while traditional extensions are seen as feeders to the main campus, RTS sees theirs as self-contained units intended to bring an indigenous gospel ministry presence to that region. As such, RTS-Atlanta students are firmly rooted in the area in which they live.

Three of these students illustrate a rough cross-section of the ministries and community connections represented by the RTS-Atlanta constituency. Whether pastors, church planters, disciplers or something else, they share a common bond in gospel service and the greater Atlanta area.

Once upon a time he performed “between the hedges” at the distinctly landscaped Sanford Stadium as a football player at the University of Georgia. Today, Dan Rogers operates in a different kind of planting — that is, a church-planting effort initiated by Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Athens.

The South Carolina native returned to Athens with his family in 2002 after several years in Colorado as a regional director with the sports ministry Athletes in Action. After graduating from UGA in 1993, Dan had stayed in Athens ministering to UGA athletes through AIA, so his return to Georgia was a return to his deepest roots. When he sensed a calling to leave AIA to go to seminary and enter into pastoral ministry, he originally planned to attend RTS-Orlando, having taken some classes there over the years. However, his friend and spiritual mentor Hal Farnsworth, senior pastor at Redeemer, “suckered me into coming here,” Dan says, laughing. “Hal’s the guy who said, ‘You need to become a pastor,’ and for some reason I believed him!”

The two main attractions for Dan were the opportunity to be mentored by Hal as well as to study at RTS-Atlanta. Along with those came the chance to help plant another church, located about 35 miles from Athens in the northern suburbs of Atlanta. “I’m a church planter at heart,” explains Dan, who helped plant St. Patrick’s Presbyterian Church in Greeley, Colo., during his time in the Rockies. “I love unchurched people.” As such, in his current church-planting effort, Dan leads two small groups, of which one is mostly comprised of people who have no prior church background (the other is a core group of Redeemer members).

Logistical issues threaten the future of the current plant, but Dan is no stranger to uncertain futures. In fact, they are a central element of his journey to faith. Twice during his
UGa football career, Dan was forced to miss entire seasons — the first due to injuries to both shoulders, the second due to an injury to the opposite knee from the one he’d blown out the previous year. Not only did Dan persevere and return to the field in both instances, but he also credits the experiences with driving him to God. “I had nowhere else to go,” Dan says. “God did His work.”

Dan’s work at RTS-Atlanta is about a year away from completion. He, his wife, Michelle, and their five children (ages 11 down to 2) are currently wedged into a 1,200-square-foot house as they seek to identify God’s post-RTS plan for them. Wherever that leads them, Dan looks forward to greater opportunities to apply the lessons he’s learned both at RTS and in the circumstances of life.

Continued from Page 9

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It’s an understatement to say that Cathy Burwell has worked with a wide variety of trainees in her years of ministry. She and her husband, Troy, have one, named Cate, who’s just three months old. Besides being a new mom, Cathy has also worked with college students, single adults, young married women and strippers. That last constituency was as part of an outreach to the underside of Atlanta’s nightlife led by a friend of Cathy who was rescued from that lifestyle by Christ about 20 years ago.

Before motherhood, Cathy’s principal day job was as associate director of women’s discipleship at Perimeter Church, the prominent Atlanta-area congregation founded by RTS alumnus Randy Pope. In that role, Cathy trained women who would be first-time leaders of home-based discipleship groups that would meet throughout the following year. Part of the training involved her teaching a 10-week overview of systematic theology. Cathy would then meet with the leaders throughout the year either over lunch, coffee or the phone to give the leaders advice on how to deal with issues in their groups.

“All that I’m not on staff anymore, I guess I’m just a very involved volunteer,” Cathy says. Even while caring for her newborn, she continues to meet with a group of young married women whom she’d discipled already. Many of them are brand-new Christians, as well as one who Cathy suspects is yet to be converted. “They’re so young, they’re so hungry, and they’re fun, so I’m hoping to keep leading them,” she says.

As for the ministry to strippers, Cathy cherishes the experience. “I love to share my faith, so I offered to help with it,” Cathy explains. “I thought it was something everybody would want to do, but it’s not!” Every four to six weeks, Cathy and other women would arrange to go into the clubs and give the dancers gift baskets made by church members and filled with items such as chocolate, lotion and perfume. The women would also receive a brochure containing a hot-line number to call in case they ever wanted help getting out of the lifestyle.

According to Cathy, club managers welcomed them as a means of dealing with the high percentage of dancers with drug problems. “And the women were always so receptive,” she recalls, “because they were working constantly in an environment where they were being used and abused.” Cathy recently looked on as one of the former dancers was baptized at Perimeter along with her two preteen daughters.

Even before being prompted by motherhood to step away from that ministry, Cathy has always taken the slow road toward her RTS-Atlanta degree. She’s been taking one class...
at a time since 2000, lacking only “three or four classes” by her inexact count. Her seminary experience has especially helped her teach theology to the discipleship trainees.

“I would not have had a clue how to teach a lot of that stuff without the training from the seminary,” Cathy says. “And it’s such a treat to have a class where a woman is teaching women. We can talk about theology in light of being women and ministering to women. For example, in one of our classes we talk about helping women who have had abortions.”

Countless are the stories of those who encountered salvation after hearing the preaching of a pastor. Rarer are those of a pastor encountering salvation after realizing that he’d been preaching heresy for nearly 15 years, which is the story of Earl Williams.

The current pastor of Christ Church of Grace in suburban Atlanta has been in pastoral ministry since 1972. For more than 20 of those years he served in a church denomination he publically identifies only as having been outside the realm of orthodoxy. Earl had risen through the ranks of that family of churches to a position of prominence writing magazine articles and speaking at conferences.

Upon Earl’s arrival in the Atlanta area from New York in 1988 to take on a new pastorate, “God brought me to a crisis,” he recalls. “He showed me, This church is your life, not Me.’” After Earl discovered the writings of theologians such as R.C. Sproul and John Piper, “He converted me,” he confesses. “We taught Christ, but it was Christ plus the law, or Christ plus whatever. Through breaking my dependence on the organization, He showed me that it’s Him alone I needed to trust.

Earl began to preach and write in reflection of his new understanding of grace through faith alone, causing friction within the denomination that ignited a firestorm that forced him to leave in 1995. That’s when Earl began planting Christ Church of Grace. The church is located in a racially and ethnically mixed community, with a vision for ministering to people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Its mission, according to Earl, is “to live and teach God’s sovereign love and grace.”

He began studying at RTS-Atlanta in 2004 after searching for a seminary in the area that reflected the understanding of the doctrines of grace that he’d developed through his own reading. Earl’s experience at RTS has included supplementing his Atlanta education with Virtual Campus classes to help speed things along. His wife has sat in on classes with him whenever the opportunity has been available, and has listened in on the Virtual lectures with him.

One practical benefit of the RTS experience has been in teaching catechism classes at the church. “It really helps [my wife to] disseminate these truths to the young people,” Earl says. “The seminary training has helped her not only to learn the confessional teachings but also to deeply understand them and articulate them to the children.”

Earl’s experience has grounded him in the ongoing effort to make the gospel practical in every aspect of life. “God’s grace is not just a theological construct, but it is a structure for your life,” he explains. “It is Christ living in you. God’s sovereign grace makes everything in your life, whether you understand it or not, fit together.”

Atlanta is not alone as an RTS extension site. In fact, RTS-Washington, D.C. and RTS-Boca Raton both predate the Atlanta campus. The D.C. campus was established in 1993, with the Boca Raton extension launched in 1998.

The appointment of Dr. Howard Griffith as professor of systematic theology at RTS-Washington, D.C. (see page 3) is part of an effort to expand the ministry there in a similar manner as is being done in Atlanta. Funding is being secured for two additional full-time faculty members. The campus is currently located at McLean Presbyterian Church inside the Beltway in northern Virginia.

RTS-Boca Raton was established in partnership with Spanish River Church. Dr. Buz McNutt, executive director of the Boca Raton campus, is part of the pastoral staff at Spanish River. Like Atlanta and Washington, D.C., RTS-Boca Raton offers a Master of Arts in Religion program.

Extension sites have been experimented with and are under consideration for additional metropolitan areas. For more information on RTS extensions, visit www.rts.edu and click on the Campuses Near You link.
The RTS Virtual Campus distinguishes itself from other distance education efforts through the extent to which RTS-Virtual students can complete their degree requirements without ever leaving home. Students who are part of the Virtual Campus may complete up to 90 percent of their coursework for a Master of Arts in Religion degree from a distance, with the only on-location requirements being two on-campus seminars, one at the beginning of the program and another at the end. This M.A.R. program is the only such one currently accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, as well as by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

“Technology is not going to replace the traditional training of residential education,” says Lyn Perez, who has served in various leadership roles with RTS and helped establish RTS-Virtual. “The Virtual Campus serves those who wish to be better prepared biblically and theologically for ministry to get the preparation they need where they are when they cannot uproot and move for residential education.”

The RTS-Virtual experience contains many components distinguishing it from that of a residential or extension campus:

Admissions Process
In order to receive credit for distance courses at RTS, students must be officially admitted to the seminary. The RTS-Virtual application process now takes place completely online.

On-Campus Seminars
All M.A.R. students through the Virtual Campus are required to complete two seminars at an RTS residential campus. Students attend a three-day orientation seminar at the beginning of their degree work, followed by an integration seminar at the end of the program. Both seminars involve lectures, academic advising, theological research, and networking with other M.A.R. students.
Recorded Lectures

Many Virtual Campus courses consist of recorded lectures (MP3 files on CD), study helps, and a detailed syllabus specifying reading and written assignments. Students mail or e-mail assignments to the RTS-Virtual office, and examinations are administered by a proctor.

As a reflection of technological changes, as well as an ongoing commitment to stay on the leading edge of that technology, lectures are now available through the iTunesU program (see “RTS on Your iPod” sidebar). At the same time, the cassette tapes the marked the original delivery of RTS-Virtual course lectures are being phased out. Tapes will no longer be sold after May 31, and registration of materials in that format will end on September 1.

The changing face of technology is also affecting how the exams are administered. Starting in June, RTS-Virtual exams will be distributed exclusively by e-mail, with postal delivery being completely phased out.

Online Coursework

In early 1999, Greek I was the first online course offered by RTS-Virtual. Today, Greek II, Hebrew I and Hebrew II are also offered online.

For an additional fee, many RTS-Virtual students use CENTRA Web conferencing software to access the classes. Through CENTRA, students use their Internet browser to experience two-way audio and video. Whether in a session with the Greek or Hebrew instructor, or in participating in a webcast from an RTS residential class, students can “attend” live, streaming lectures during which they can interact with the professor and other students in real time — including asking the professor questions as if they were physically sitting in the classroom.

All CENTRA sessions are archived and can be viewed as many times as the student wishes. Staff members at RTS-Virtual provide technical support for students, not only to troubleshoot problems but also to help even the most technologically disinclined to feel comfortable with the format.

Church-Based Mentoring

Mentoring is a distinct feature of the RTS-Virtual program, designed to help students attain a greater balance of growth during their course of study. In fact, the mentoring component helped encourage accreditors to approve the program.
Did you know that often the apostle Paul was a distance educator? In addition to ministering in person, by God’s grace he wrote epistles, which taught the faith, expressed his love and encouraged hope among the brethren. His preparation of mind and heart for church ministers and lay persons included using the parchment media of the times to communicate the eternal biblical teaching to a particular audience in a specific era and throughout different geographic locations. The church grew daily, increasing from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

In much the same way, the theological seminary in the 21st century faces the awesome challenge of re-presenting the Bible’s teaching to a new, postmodern generation in a rapidly changing cultural and technological world. Computer networking for the Virtual Campus is one innovation for assisting the church in accomplishing the task of equipping its leaders and promoting lifelong learning from biblical study. With this “distance education,” most of the formal instruction occurs with the teacher and the learner in separate locations with support from a local mentor.

As clergy and laypeople employ the new educational technology with CDs and the Internet, a productive synergy of intellectual resources in applied situations results. Professors who turned from typewriters to word processors at their own expense a decade ago are now discovering the Internet as a new worldwide reference and presentation tool for their teaching. Such communication devices can bring them closer to more students in more churches.

What characterizes today’s seminary student? Seminaries have been attracting more older students with families. Rather than just another type of graduate school to follow the undergraduate years, the seminary is a professional training facility for a more mature individual who immediately will assume leadership in the church.

Similar to other turning points in history, a new communications medium is changing the world. When Gutenberg perfected movable type, he provided a tool for the Age of Reformation. In God’s providence, computer-based digitized print and images are here to help us with the teaching/learning enterprise for a much-needed New Reformation in our church and society. Networking 50 million computers in the world has made possible multimedia communication, including computer-based training, anywhere and any time.

The communication revolution brings new ways for faculty to train students to think theologically. Distance education has arrived to service the new faculty and student relationship in the technological world of our time. Rather than replacing personal discipleship for leadership, new electronic tools are now available that enhance older helps such as books, journals and newsletters. In fact, the tools are so “smart” that they allow some new students to stay in their present church and community context and receive their education without moving to a campus. The mentoring, the crucial personal dimension of pastoral training, is done on site at the church supplemented by the great resources of the seminary from a distance.

Our Reformed message, without idolizing human reason, provides the objectivity missing from postmodern thinking as well as the community found in good family and church life. This is taught at a number of fine residential seminaries, and the Virtual Campus will be an additional way to extend the teaching to even more students throughout the world. A network of millions of computers provides exciting technology to train leaders for His church, filling the earth “with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Excerpted from an article by Dr. Andrew Peterson, president of RTS-Virtual, originally published in the Fall 1998 issue of Reformed Quarterly.
All RTS-Virtual students are required to choose a mentor early in their degree work. Students meet with their mentors to review course material and discuss its application to personal growth and ministry. The mentor may be a pastor, elder or other qualified lay person in the church.

Mentors discuss lectures with students, may serve as proctors for exams, read theses and help evaluate the progress of the students throughout the coursework. They are invited to attend the on-campus seminars at RTS to gain a fuller picture of the scope of the program.

RTS-Virtual provides mentors with materials and resources for effective mentoring, including schedules and guides for working through each course with the student. Students meet with their mentor at least four times during the time of study in each course to assess progress, deal with problems, share challenges and prayer requests, and address other pertinent issues.

Certificate Programs

The Virtual Campus also offers several certificate programs. Students may earn a certificate in one of six areas: biblical studies, disability ministry, general studies, historical studies, missions and theological studies. The certificate program provides an opportunity for students to take seminary classes without completing a degree.

Full Campus Status

Dr. Andrew Peterson is the president of RTS-Virtual. Since the three RTS residential campuses (Jackson, Orlando and Charlotte) also have presidents, this means that under the seminary’s current structure, distance education is emphasized similarly to traditional residential education. This, along with recent developments concerning the RTS extension campuses (see “To Our Nation’s Capital and Beyond” on page 11), emphasizes RTS’ commitment to working toward making theological education increasingly available, accessible and flexible.

An increasingly common question in celebrity Q&A features in various publications is “What’s on your iPod?” Even President Bush periodically reveals his latest downloads onto the wildly popular digital audio player. While most people use their iPods to listen to music, covering everything from Mozart to Metallica, a new offering enables students at the Virtual Campus to use the technology to listen to lectures by RTS professors.

Through the iTunesU software, RTS-Virtual students can access course materials and download them onto their computer or onto an MP3 player such as an iPod. When this article went to print, the latest addition to the RTS iTunesU library was an entire set of “History of Missions” lectures by Dr. Sam Larsen, professor of missions at RTS-Jackson. The online library also contains audio archives of RTS chapel services and other non-course resources.

To learn more about how to access Virtual Campus resources and other RTS-related items on iTunesU, visit itunes.rts.edu.
J.I. Packer, the esteemed professor at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, gave a 15-minute message at a dinner this past November at RTS—Orlando celebrating the 40th anniversary of RTS. This article represents an edited transcript of the entire message.

My public identity is of a Bible man, a gospel man, a Reformed man, and a Puritan man. I seek to maintain this identity because I find this to be the finest identity a Christian man can aspire to. It has within itself the resources for maturity and wisdom and enterprise for God in the next 40 years, both for RTS alumni and the institution itself.

By God’s grace I have a heart that has been claimed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and like Paul, I know what it is to live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. That, by the way, is where one learns the reality of particular redemption — one of the great truths for which RTS has always stood. He loved me and gave Himself for me, as for each other single Christian in this world.

I have a burdened heart for the church these days. In the older churches there is so much to cause distress. I speak as an Anglican, and perhaps need to say no more than to declare that fact. But the other side of the matter is that in other parts of the world, God is doing wonderful things — expanding the church in numbers and giving the church a quality of life that has a cutting edge and makes a difference in local communities. So it’s a little like the beginning of Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities: These are the best of times as well as the worst of times.

The next 40 years are going to be like that, I think, for all of us. But by the grace of God, knowing and seeing the works of God as His Word is faithfully proclaimed, we shall find resources for courage, for service and — where necessary — for combat with error and folly that...
It may be that the pressure against us evangelicals will increase over the next generation.

“catechatechistic” books, spelling out the truths that Christians live by. So if God spares me, there are more in the works. This is what I see more clearly my life is meant to be about.

I have ringing in my mental ears Paul’s words to Timothy: “You, then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, New American Standard Bible). We see two things there. First, be strengthened in the grace of our Lord Jesus, that there may always be clarity, courage and compelling power in the ministry you fulfill. Also, transmit God’s truth as Paul has taught it to you — transmit it to faithful folk who themselves will guard it, keep it intact and be able to teach others also.

From that thought I draw my understanding, even my definition, of what a seminary is and what seminary life is all about. The seminary is the place where, with God’s blessing, precisely this happens: Truth as taught by Paul and the other apostles, and as embodied in the infallible and inerrant Scriptures, is taught to those who will be the next generation of faithful teachers and themselves faithful transmitters of the truth to those who will come after them.

This is an age of “smatterings.” I remember a whole series of “smatter books” — 3 inches by 4 inches, I suppose they were — with smatterings of information about this and that. Smatterings, though, are not sufficient, when it’s the truth of God we’re handling. Those who teach need to have learned it properly, and indeed continue to learn it, for one never exhausts the depth of Holy Scripture and its wisdom.

So I would commend Scripture to those who would be at the helm of steering RTS for the next 40 years. We need seminaries, and we need hard work in them, both from the teachers and from those who study. May this never be forgotten at RTS.

Finally, I give you a thought about the products of responsible teaching. These are the faithful men at the receiving end of sober and sound instruction, who will hold fast to what they’re taught, and pass it on, becoming teachers of the next generation after them in the churches where they serve. Part of the task of being a pastor is to be a trainer and equipper of folk in one’s own congregation who will, within their own narrower frame of reference, be doing the things they are doing as a teacher, spiritual leader and counselor, enabling folk to keep a clear conscience in their obedience to God.

We have never yet, I believe, made as much as we need to make of the talents of those God brings into our churches as humble believers. For evangelical congregations everywhere, I think it remains true that there is more to be done. Well-educated folk in our congregations will have gifts of teaching and leadership. One of the pastor’s tasks is to discern those gifts and to see that they are developed.

Some of the gifted folk will be encouraged to come to seminary — to RTS, perhaps. Yet the, now may I call it, “catechatical” training — basic teaching, that is, about the truths that people live by — and the wisdom that must guide our daily actions, must be received from the pastor. The pastor becomes, you see, something of a trainer and equipper, leaving behind him not simply a company of devoted believers, but also a company of folk with gifts who will be able to harness their gifts for the future enrichment of their own congregation. It’s the Paul-to-Timothy pattern on the small scale.

I feel strongly about this, and I ask you to think about it deeply, for it may itself prove to be part of the future ministry to which God is calling RTS. At Regent College we think much about these things, and we seek as teachers to serve churches through lay conferences where the honing of gifts can be pursued in the manner I’m describing. I think it’s God’s call to us all for the next generation. We need such people — as many of them as we can get. May God give them to us, as well as the people who will train them wisely so that their gifts may be put to best use in tomorrow’s church.

I say to you all now, as Paul says to Timothy: Be strong and continue strong. It may be that the pressure against us evangelicals will increase over the next generation. We must be prepared for that. Be strong and continue to support your local seminary in every way you can. RTS is magnificently on the right lines. The motto says it so perfectly: “A mind for truth, a heart for God.” That is what you have had at RTS for 40 years, and long may it continue.

For a $15 donation, receive a DVD of the 40th anniversary celebration at RTS-Orlando. Contact Judy Hagey at (407) 366-9493 or jhagey@rts.edu.
sion sites, it enrolled over 2,700 students. Its full-time residential faculty has grown from five to over 40. Its inaugural year’s operational budget of $110,000 is a mere fraction of its current annual budget, which exceeds $12 million. Formed at first primarily as an effort to renew one denomination (the Southern Presbyterian Church), RTS now has students from over 60 denominations.

But statistics do not tell the whole story, and there are better ways to measure the success of RTS. Mere numbers cannot convey the seminary’s ongoing commitment to combine intellectual integrity with a focus on serving the church. For example, in his classroom lectures Simon Kistemaker visualizes behind every student a congregation that will eventually profit from his teaching. Accordingly, Kistemaker is fond of citing the role RTS has played in the growth of the Reformed faith in Indonesia, where RTS graduates have established churches, seminaries and Bible colleges. It is precisely this investment in the formation of international leaders, notes Elias Medeiros (native Brazilian, RTS alumnus and professor of missions), that has enabled the seminary to serve in the spread of the Reformed faith.

And yet, if RTS was not daunted by its humble origins in 1966, neither should an assessment of its history derive merely from its size and influence today. Perhaps the best image for the school’s first 40 years is from the summer of 2005, when Hurricane Katrina blasted through the Gulf Coast and roared north through Mississippi. The storm tore down a 200-year-old oak tree that collapsed upon the north wing of the RTS White House. Although the stately building was badly bruised, the original home of RTS survived, a symbol of God’s sustaining faithfulness. It was soon refurbished, and continues to serves as a guest house and conference center on the Jackson campus (recently renamed the Belcher Campus, in honor of the many ways in which the late former Board member Elliot Belcher served the seminary).

Today the RTS faculty is still challenged by the question that prompted the school’s founding: “Do we need an infallible Bible?” As it has sought to refute old heresies and new perspectives, the seminary continues to teach the people of God to trust the Word of God. Faithful to the Scriptures and its system of doctrine as summarized in the Westminster Standards, faculty members understand their scholarship as spiritual warfare against modern unbelief and their pastoral calling to place the gospel in the center of peoples’ lives.

By God’s grace, RTS will continue to train ministers of the Word of God for another 40 years and beyond. To do so, it will need diligent faculty members eager to teach the whole counsel of God, wise Board members exercising careful stewardship of God’s abundance, and faithful lay people like the Mississippians who gathered to hear the dream of the founding Board.

Most of all, it must cultivate a community of faith that continues to ask the question that Sam Patterson posed in Erskine Wells’ office in 1963: “How big is your God?”

Adapted from a book written by John R. Muether to be published to celebrate the 40th anniversary of RTS. To order, visit the online bookstore at rts.edu or an RTS campus bookstore.

John R. Muether is director of libraries for RTS and associate professor of church history at RTS-Orlando.
You know you need a will if you:

- have loved ones who depend on you
- have young children
- wish to determine who gets your estate
- have a disabled child or spouse
- have favorite charities that need your support
- want to be the one — instead of the state — to decide what happens to your estate

During our lifetimes we go to great length to manage our lives. We work, save, plan and spend according to the way we believe God would have us. Likewise, at our passing we should do the same. A will or living trust is the best way to accomplish our wishes with what we leave. Only about half of adult Americans have wills or living trusts, and many who do have them should have them reviewed and updated. Christians, more than others, should be good stewards of what God has entrusted.

Spring is a great time to review your plans. A properly drawn will or living trust is essential to be certain your plans are carried out. Do you have a will or living trust? Is it up to date?

A will can be the simplest estate-planning tool. A living trust can be the most effective. One or both are essential for most of us.

To see how, let us send you one of our simple booklets: How to Make a Will That Works, Personal Financial Affairs Record, or Giving Through Living Trusts.

Call Mr. Robert Bridges, Executive Vice President, RTS Foundation at 859.368.0451 or email at bbridges@rts.edu.

There is absolutely no obligation — we are just delighted to help.

And as you make your plans, we hope you will remember to include Reformed Theological Seminary.