A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO PROTEST
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CONNECTING THE CHURCH AND THE CAMPUS
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COVENANT THEOLOGY
and its implications for Christian life
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When last I wrote to you, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had not reached its peak. Now, we are all keenly aware of the challenges and changes that the pandemic brought. All of us at RTS, especially our students, are so deeply grateful for your love, prayers, and support of us – the future ministry of the church – as we have tried to navigate these tricky waters. We have gone from residential theological education, to remote learning, to remote and residential, and back to residential study again (but with some new remote tricks that we’ve learned along the way) in the last six months or so. Our heads are spinning, but our hearts are grateful.

We’ve been praying for you, too. The health and economic trials that so many in the RTS family have endured, have kept us all on our knees. I’ve told our leadership more than once this year that I have never been so keenly aware of our total dependence upon the Lord: to watch over us, to keep us safe, to provide the resources we need to go on, to give us wisdom to know what to do, and the strength and courage to do it.

One of the hardest things to endure, of course, was not being able to gather as the church on the Lord’s Day the way we did before the pandemic. But our graduates have all ministered extraordinarily in these extraordinary times. We’re proud of and thankful for them. I don’t think any of us will take for granted the blessing of public worship and the communion of the saints for a long time to come.

These reflections lead me to the topic of this article: the beautiful covenantal benediction of Hebrews 13:20-21. Not only are we featuring that passage as our benediction in this issue of M&L, but we are focusing on covenant theology in one of our main articles. In God’s providence, it’s the perfect benediction for people affected by a pandemic.

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”
“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Notice that it is a seven-part prayer of blessing: (1) “Now may the God of peace,” (2) “who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” (3) “the great shepherd of the sheep,” (4) “by the blood of the eternal covenant,” (5) “equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight,” (6) “through Jesus Christ,” (7) “to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The address or invocation begins: “Now may the God of peace.” In other words, he is invoking or entreating the God of peace to give you this blessing. A preacher doesn’t have any power in himself to generate and give divine blessing to you, but he can invoke and pronounce God’s blessing on you. Moses and Aaron were instructed to say to the people: “The Lord bless you . . . and give you peace” (Num 6:24-26). The author of Hebrews is following that example here.

Note that he specifically indicates the God of peace. He’s not just thinking of God as the author of comfort of their souls in the midst of trials, or the author of harmony in the congregation, but of God who gave us peace by the gospel. God is the God of peace, because he is the author of the peace established by Christ on the cross and experienced by all those who trust in him. That has been a major theme of Hebrews, and it is central to every other experience of peace in the Christian life. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes puts this clearly and beautifully:

“The peace here of which God is the author is primarily the peace of the gospel (Eph 6:15), the peace which has been established, or re-established, between man and his Creator by the blood of Christ’s cross (Col 1:20), the peace of God in Christ Jesus which passes all understanding (Phil 4:7), peace, in short, in its deepest and fullest sense. It is the God of this peace, which speaks forgiveness and acceptance to man at the very heart of his being and which should permeate the whole of his existence in all its relationships and vicissitudes, whom our author invokes here.”

Now that’s a word for people passing through a pandemic. If you have gospel peace, you have a peace that will guard your heart in every trial of life.

Then, the author tells us that it is the God of peace “who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.” This is a profound acknowledgement and ascription. This is a frequent assertion in the New Testament: “God raised him up” (Acts 2:24; 10:40; 13:30), but this is the only explicit mention of the resurrection in Hebrews (we’ll see why that’s so important in a moment). As Hughes says: “The proof of the acceptance of this sacrifice on our behalf is his resurrection from the grave and his exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3; 12:2), whereby he is declared to be Lord of all (Phil 2:8–10). The resurrection manifested his glory as the prince of life and conqueror of death.”
And what is the position or office of the Lord Jesus? You might have expected Hebrews to say “High Priest” or “Mediator,” but instead he says: “the great shepherd of the sheep.” This phrase has Ezekiel 34 and 37 written all over it. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic and new covenant promises and prophecies:

“I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep... declares the Lord GOD. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken. I will make with them a covenant of peace...My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd...I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (Ezk 34:15, 23-25; 37:24, 26).

I love what C.H. Spurgeon says here: “In the covenant we are the sheep; the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd. You cannot make a covenant with sheep—they have not the ability to covenant. But you can make a covenant with the Shepherd for them, and so, glory be to God, though we had gone astray like lost sheep, we belonged to Jesus. He made a covenant on our behalf, and stood for us before the living God.”

Next, by what was Jesus raised from the dead? We know by whom, but by what right and demand was he raised from the dead? Hebrews says, profoundly, “by the blood of the eternal covenant.” Jesus’ resurrection was a promise and pact of the Father to the Son in the covenant of redemption before time, before the foundation of the world. The basis of the resurrection is the covenant of redemption! It's as if the author of Hebrews says: “Let me tell you what was behind Jesus’ being crowned with glory and honor because of his suffering and death (Heb 2:9) and what was behind his resurrection: an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son.”

Spurgeon explains:

“The work He has done has pleased the Father, and therefore He has brought Him back from among the dead. His acceptance is ours: we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6).... Before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel’s wing had stirred the unnavigated cosmos, before a solitary song had disturbed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, He had entered into solemn counsel with Himself, with His Son, and with His Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, purposed, and predestinated the salvation of His people.”

That’s why Hebrews saves this mention of the resurrection: to tie it back to God’s purposes from eternity. Yes, of course, this covenant of Jesus’s will last for eternity, but it was also founded in eternity, and planned from eternity. As the Scottish Psalter puts it, “He loved us from the first of time, he’ll love us to the last.” Drink it in, brothers and sisters. God’s saving love for you had no beginning. There has never been a time when he didn’t love you.

Now, the prayer of benediction gets to the heart of the petition or request to God. The writer asks that God would “equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.” This is where this blessing prayer is going. This is where he is headed. He is praying that God would equip us to be and do what he originally created us to be and do. We were made to glorify and enjoy God; to do his will; to do good works.
John Owen gets at the meaning of good works, when he explains: “The whole of our obedience toward God and duty toward man consists in good deeds (Eph 2:10).” Spurgeon tells us that this request means “that we may be qualified, adapted, and suited to be used of God for the performance of His will.”

The second phrase of the petition “working in us” elaborates and emphasizes God’s activity in us in sanctifying us, growing us, maturing us, conforming us to Christ, and enabling us to do good works. F.F. Bruce paraphrases: “The prayer, then, is that the people addressed may be spiritually equipped for every form of good work, and thus fulfil God’s will as he operates in them.” B.F. Westcott accentuates that “The work of God makes man’s work possible.” The bottom line, my friends, is that God has not merely forgiven us and then left us to try to do our best on our own. He is actively at work in us growing us in Christlikeness.

This work is done “through Jesus Christ.” That is, union with Christ is the means of our salvation and our sanctification. It is through the work of Jesus that we are pardoned for sin and enabled to grow in grace. Christ’s work for us, in our place, is the basis of our forgiveness. Christ’s work in us is the basis of the Christian life.

This is why Paul will pray for Ephesian Christians that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:17). Why? Why would he pray that? Aren’t they already Christians? Yes, but if they are going to grow, they need Christ-shaped hearts (desires). Elsewhere Paul says, “It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:9-11). You see? All of that transformation is done through Jesus Christ.

The blessing prayer ends with a doxology: “to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” There is a delicious ambiguity here. Is this praise and adoration aimed primarily toward the God of peace or to Jesus Christ? There is a similar doxology (“for ever and ever”) in Philippians 4:20 focused on God the Father (cf. Rom 11:36). In the end, we know our One Triune God is worthy of all praise because “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost” (Westminster Confession of Faith 2.3).

If we understand the blessings that this benediction prays down on us, and the basis of those blessings in the eternal purposes of the God of peace, accomplished through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Covenant Mediator and Sacrifice, our good and great Shepherd, then we will want to live lives of praise to God, even in a pandemic.

Because our Shepherd walks with us even in the valley of the shadow of death, we will not fear (Ps 23:4), because “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39).
Controversies related to politics, protests, and the pandemic fill our social media feeds and dominate the news cycle. Opinions abound — especially among Christians — about how to address these issues biblically. It can be challenging to practice patience, extend grace, and think critically when engaging with opposing views, due to their sensitivity and complexity. But fruitful engagement requires a posture that is eager to listen, slow to speak, and willing to repent.

In Ephesians 4, Paul writes to Christians regarding unity. We’re urged to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all humility, gentleness, patience, love, and eagerness to maintain unity and peace. Therefore, we’re exhorted not to “walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds” but to “put off [our] old self” and “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:17, 22, 24).
Toward the end of Ephesians 4, Paul provides specific commands for how we are to conduct ourselves as believers. In doing so, he also gives leaders a framework that can aid efforts in equipping the saints and instructing them in godliness.

In Ephesians 4:31-32, we find Paul’s command in three parts: prohibition (“let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you”), exhortation (“be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”), and motivation (“as God in Christ forgave you”).

It is important for leaders to model thoughtfulness and clarity when providing instruction or engaging complex topics, rather than shallow and vague responses. Ephesians 4 implies that when we do the latter, we give the devil an opportunity to cause division. When leaders’ words are thoughtful and clear, the body is built up in love.

For this reason, it brings me great pleasure to commend this issue of Ministry & Leadership, which we hope equips you wherever the Lord has called you.

Our featured article, titled “Covenant Theology” provides an accessible overview of this beloved doctrine and shows us how God’s relationship with his people has implications for everyday life. Next, Dr. Carl Ellis, Jr. provides 11 principles of protest, all of which are based on familiar biblical truths in his article, “A Biblical Approach to Protest.”

I had the pleasure of interviewing Will Huss, National Coordinator for Reformed University Fellowship. Huss provides keen insight related to leadership, growth, and sustainability. As an RUF alumnus and former intern myself, I’m excited about the future of this ministry under Huss’ leadership.

Elizabeth Pennock pens a timely article titled “Understanding the Collective Trauma of a Pandemic.” Pennock helps us reflect on how the pandemic has impacted mental and emotional health in the midst of all that has been lost over the last seven months — routines, vacations, jobs, community, and for some, loved ones. Alicia Akins, a student at RTS Washington, details the pandemic’s impact on RTS campuses and students in “Increased Urgency.”

Matthew Bryant and Leigh Swanson interview Craig and Becky Rohde about how God has worked through the faithful saints who have generously invested in the work at RTS. The Rohdes discuss how their faith informs their work, their giving, and the unique calling Bryan, their son-in-law, has as a full-time corporate chaplain and student at RTS.

As always, it is our prayer that Ministry & Leadership will be a blessing and resource for the church. May the articles in this issue equip you for good works, wherever you are, as you seek to love the Lord and his church.

Sincerely,

PHILLIP HOLMES

Editor in Chief, Ministry & Leadership
Vice President for Institutional Communications
Reformed Theological Seminary
Understanding God’s commitment to us has implications for our security, gratitude, and service.

If you’ve gone to a wedding, you have witnessed a covenant being made. If you’ve attended a baptism, you’ve seen a covenant illustrated with the washing of water. Your banker may talk to you about a loan covenant when you agree on a commercial contract. When you buy a new home you may have had to sign a “neighborhood covenant.” So, though “covenant” is not exactly a household term these days, covenants are nevertheless all around us.

In the Christian life, covenants are very significant. Christians make marriage vows because the Bible teaches that marriage is a covenant. We baptize because the Scriptures teach that baptism is the sign of God’s covenant promise to believers and their children. We make membership vows when we join a new church because belonging to the local church is one of the blessings and responsibilities of God’s covenant of grace.

What this means is that all of us should want to know more about what the Scriptures teach about covenants. Indeed, understanding the covenants of Scripture will help us read our Bibles better, realize God’s grace more deeply, and serve God with greater thankfulness and purpose.

What is a covenant in the Bible? Simply put, it is an agreement which secures a relationship of commitment between God and his people. A covenant is the way God defines and confirms a special relationship between himself and his people.
Young couples will sometimes quip about having the “DTR” talk at some point in a budding courtship — the “define the relationship” talk. Well, God defines his relationship to us in the most meaningful and encouraging possible way in the covenants of Scripture. The covenants we enter into as Christians reflect God’s covenant-making with us. So, Paul says that a Christian husband’s love for his wife in the marriage covenant is to be like Christ’s love for his church in the covenant of grace. Our covenant vows of membership in a local church delineate our mutual obligations, and reflect God’s gracious commitment to and loving expectations of us. He graciously puts us in his family and he wants us to live together, by grace, as a covenant family.

These relationships hint at the reality that we are made and redeemed in the image of a covenant-keeping God, who establishes covenants with his people throughout Scripture. The study of those covenants is called covenant theology.

Covenant theology is a way of reading the whole Bible that is derived from the Bible itself. Covenant theology notices the vital role that covenants play in the history of redemption revealed in the Old and New Testaments. It notices how the covenants help us see the unfolding of God’s saving work from the standpoint of both narrative and doctrine, history and theology, progress and unity. These divine covenants, in turn, provide a framework through which we view Scripture.

Dr. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor and CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary, has taught a course on covenant theology more than 40 times for RTS. He starts by asking “What is covenant theology?” and takes his time answering that question in the first lecture. (You can listen to these lectures via the RTS mobile app.)
What he says, in sum, is that covenant theology is the Bible’s way of explaining and deepening our understanding of at least five things: (1) **how to read the Bible** (both Old Testament and New) as the unified, coherent and consistent account of the one plan of the one Triune God to commune with his people by means of covenant, so that they might glorify and enjoy him forever; (2) **communion with God**, how by God’s loving condescension and covenant initiative we have been drawn into a covenant relationship of love with him; (3) **the person and work of Christ**, who is the covenant mediator and only redeemer of his covenant people, whom he saves by bearing the covenant curse they deserve on their behalf; (4) **how we know that truly we belong to God and can be certainly assured of salvation**, because of the unbreakable covenant oath and promise of God to us; and (5) **the covenant signs, sacraments, or ordinances** (in the New Testament: baptism and the Lord’s Supper), what they are, what they are for, and how they work in confirming God’s covenant promises and grace.

This is why the late, great theologian J.I. Packer says that covenant theology is a hermeneutic – a way of reading and interpreting Scripture. For Packer, covenant theology is “a way of reading the whole Bible that is itself part of the overall interpretation of the Bible that it undergirds.” In other words, covenant theology is a way of interpreting Scripture that Scripture itself provides.

“Once you understand covenant theology, it transforms the way you view Scripture,” says Dr. Richard Belcher, Jr., Academic Dean and Professor of Old Testament at RTS Charlotte. Dr. Belcher is also the author of the recently-released *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (which Dr. Duncan says is now the best introduction to the subject). Dr. Belcher says when students of Scripture grasp covenant theology, they’ll begin to see how it provides structure for the whole Bible, like the frame for a building.

In his introductory lecture, Dr. Duncan goes on to describe how covenant theology places the gospel both in the context of God’s eternal plan of communion with his people and the historical outworking of that plan in the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

As Dr. J.V. Fesko, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at RTS Jackson, who has also
written books and lectured on covenant theology, summarizes, “The covenant of works was the covenant that God gave to Adam to fill the earth and subdue it, but he forfeited his place when he and Eve sinned. Blessedly, God made a second covenant with fallen sinners, the covenant of grace, by which he sends Jesus to fulfill the broken covenant of works and to suffer the curse for its fracture.” In Genesis 3:15, we see God beginning to reveal the covenant of grace, which can then be traced through the rest of Scripture to Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and finally to his second coming as prophesied in Revelation.

Under the one covenant of grace, redemptive history unfolds through successive covenants: from Adam, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the new covenant accomplished by Jesus. Each covenant seen in Scripture has several observable characteristics. Parties (or the people involved), promises (or blessings), conditions (or requirements), penalties (or consequences for violating the covenant), and sacraments (or signs of the covenant). Dr. Duncan summarizes: “a divine covenant is a God-initiated, binding, living, relationship with blessings and obligations.”

Once we grasp how covenant theology draws the whole Bible together — pointing us to Jesus and his fulfillment of the covenants and the salvation he provides — it changes how we preach, teach, and read the Bible. shares Chad Smith, an RTS alumnus and former campus minister with Reformed University Fellowship. When Smith is preparing sermons or studying the Word, he says that “Whether you’re in Galatians or Hosea, you ask, 'how does this point you to Christ?’”

When he teaches the Bible this way, Smith has seen the lightbulb go off for freshmen in college who recently came to faith and for Christians who have walked with the Lord for years. “It’s freeing to
The Bible’s teaching on the covenants is central, not peripheral, to the Christian life and the biblical story.
realize that the Bible is not about you, but about Jesus, who did everything for you. When the penny drops that Jesus loves us and does the work for us, transformation happens.” Believers who see the crushing weight of their sin and Christ’s payment for that sin can get off the treadmill of legalism in order to love God and neighbor more fully in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In our commitments to others, we echo God’s covenant with us. God’s faithfulness to us inspires us to be steadfast in our own covenants like marriage and church membership. There are other, day-to-day ways that we can, in effect, embody God’s covenants with us by treating our neighbors with dignity and love.

Dr. Belcher says our commitment to our brothers and sisters within the body of Christ should look different than those we find elsewhere. “There are relationships in the church that are difficult, but we should be committed to each other enough to work through these difficulties,” he says. “To commit yourself to Christ is to be committed to his body... Christ loves the church, so we should love the church.”

The Bible’s teaching on the covenants is central, not peripheral, to the Christian life and the biblical story.

When Jesus wanted to explain the significance of his death to his disciples, he taught them about the covenants (Matt 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Cor 11). When God wanted to assure Abraham of the certainty of his word of promise, he made and confirmed a covenant with him (Gen 12, 15, 17). When God wanted to set apart his people, ingrain his work in their minds, tangibly reveal himself in love and mercy, and ratify their future inheritance, he gave them covenant signs (Gen 17; Ex 12, 17, 31; Matt 28; Luke 22; Acts 2).

When Luke wanted to show early Christians that Jesus’ life and ministry were the fulfillment of God’s ancient purposes for his chosen people, he explained Jesus’ coming and his messianic work were the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:72-73). When the Psalmist and the author of Hebrews wanted to show how God’s redemptive plan is ordered and on what basis it unfolds in history, they use the covenants as their framework (Ps 78, 89; Heb 6-10). When Jesus taught the disciples in Luke 24 how to understand the Old Testament, he explained that Moses and the Prophets were writing about his humiliation and exaltation.

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In the words of Chad Smith, “That’s the story that I want to read.”
My decades as a Christian activist have taught me valuable lessons, many of which I’ve had to learn the hard way. I’ve boiled a handful of lessons down to 11 principles of protest, all of which are based on familiar biblical truths.

They’ve served me well at different levels of cultural engagement, so I offer them as a reminder of our true focus, the gracious God who has shown us what is good. I hope they can help us as we seek to do what the Lord requires of us — namely to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Mic 6:8). If there’s one thing I’ve learned, there will always be something in our immediate surroundings that will fall short of God’s plan for a just society.
Jesus held the moral high ground. We should follow suit. He did not judge by what he saw with his eyes, or decide by what he heard with his ears; he judged “with righteousness” (Isa 11:3b-4a).

I saw most fruit in the field when young Christian activists were committed to raising a God-consciousness — both in those we protest against, as well as in the protestors themselves. These efforts will be successful if, at the end of the protest, people on both sides of the controversy have a greater consciousness of the glory of God.

Protest without discipleship is non-transformative and empty. It may change the status quo, but if the problems of flawed human nature are not diminished through transformation, they will come back to bite us. Perhaps we are where we are today because hearts in my generation were merely legislated, not transformed.

Our transcendent reference point — the glory of God — is the basis of our wisdom (Prov 9:10). When the protest goals are secondary to discipleship, we will make more progress. To use an analogy, my love for my wife is second to my love for God; because my love for God is first, she gets much more love from me than if she were first. Without this unique contribution to the causes for which we protest, our voice merely becomes another addition to the cacophony.

The Christian activist is looking for the transformation of society, its systems, and individual hearts. This transformation will never be complete in this temporary reality. However, it can point to the complete transformation in the coming permanent reality — the kingdom of God. For us, there’s nothing more radical than kingdom transformation.

Everything we do should hasten the day when “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14). Therefore as we go — whether across the seas or across the tracks, whether to teach or to preach, whether to pray or to protest — we should be making disciples, those who are learning to obey all things that Christ commands (Matt 28:18-22).
Let the grievance do the speaking for you. When we embellish the grievance with unnecessary provocation, it clouds the issue and is counterproductive. The cause of justice does not need the help of evils such as hatred and falsehood.

Manipulating the narratives might seem to give the protest a short term advantage but it will ultimately undercut it, causing it to lose its power. As a protest loses moral power, the easier it is for the opponent to explain it away or dismiss it. The power is in the truth, not in deception.

So, speak the truth in love, demonstrate the truth in love, dramatize the truth in love, chant the truth in love, shout the truth in love. In other words, be forceful, but do it in love — a powerful weapon, indeed.

Justice for the oppressed must be pursued and visualized through the lens of righteousness. The more righteous the protest, the more powerful the protest. Righteousness is a relational term. It simply means doing right by the other party in the relationship. Two expressions of righteousness are piety — doing right by God — and justice — doing right by fellow human beings.

For the victims of injustice or oppression, justice has two basic applications: liberation from oppression, and empowerment to do the right thing. For the perpetrators of injustice and oppression, justice involves the swift and compassionate application of the legal consequences of their actions and omissions.

Ad-hominem attacks distract us from the real issues and lay the groundwork for our protest to be interpreted by others with counter intentions. They are aimed at destroying the person who holds views we oppose, rather than dismantling the views themselves.

We all want to be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. In the heat of tense moments, we have to constantly remind ourselves, not only do our opponents bear God’s image, but they are sinners in need of grace — just like us. By failing to act on this truth or by engaging in ad-hominem violence, we forfeit the moral high ground.

Be angry if you must. But focus that anger primarily on the grievance itself, not necessarily on the people behind the grievance.
Justice does not equal revenge.

Many cite an “eye for an eye” and a “tooth for tooth” (Deut 19:21) as a justification for revenge. On the contrary, this is a lex talionis — a law of limitation. In other words, no more than an eye for an eye, no more than a tooth for tooth.

On the other hand, many cite Jesus’ words to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39) as a call to be passive objects of abuse. On the contrary, to turn the other cheek is a statement of non-vengeance. It is also a call to respond to an enemy in a way he least expects. Therefore, if your enemy expects you to be mean, then be kind.

The wise Christian activist helps his or her co-belligerents take a stand of “non-vengeance” — leaving the vengeance to God.

We have yet to tap into the wisdom and power available to us in the Word. The Word of God is the power that created this universe (John 1:1-3). The same Word also sustains the universe (Heb 1:3). That being the case, it should not surprise us that the Word will “accomplish what [God] desires and achieve the purpose for which [God] sent it.” It will not return empty (Isa 55:11).

When the Word is rightly and creatively applied to the art of protest, its effect will be tangible.

Let the Word of God do the heavy lifting. The Word of God can be spoken without giving a chapter and verse, yet it has the same power either way. The Word is still the Word whether it is quoted directly, paraphrased, dramatized, expressed in narratives, articulated in spoken word, rhymed in hip hop, or chanted in slogans.

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When the Word is rightly and creatively applied to the art of protest, its effect will be tangible.
Our involvement in protest must have a redemptive and transformative role. Since the role of the Christian activist is to speak prophetically to all sides in the controversy, we need to ask important questions. How is the controversy framed? Is the protest advocating a solution or is it fomenting unrest for other purposes?

Distinctions must be made when we invoke a rallying cry framed by unbiblical parameters. On the other hand, if a protest organization has a valid rally cry but is inconsistent in applying it, we must lovingly critique this inconsistency. If we fail to do so, we blunt the impact of the protest.

As a young activist, I had to learn the hard way that what counts is the net prophetic message — prophetic credits (resulting from the wise things we do) minus prophetic debits (resulting from the foolish things we do). The key for Christian activists is to be biblical by maximizing our prophetic credits and minimizing prophetic debits so that the net prophetic message is illumination.

Tranquility does not equal peace. I have observed that many confuse these two. However, unjust tranquility is an unstable and volatile sham that needs to be disrupted and demolished. This is why we protest.

True peace is more than tranquility; it is a state of being that leads to God’s original plan for human flourishing.

When we define the points of agreement with our co-belligerents, we must make sure that our shared words have the same meaning. When that is impossible, we must make sure that we understand what they mean and they understand what we mean.

The more our co-belligerents understand how our words and concepts fit into our worldview, the more they will understand our transcendent perspective. This will contribute to our goal of discipleship.

On the other hand, for the protest to have its desired effect, we must learn the language of our opponents. Communication is key to protest. In our slogans, chants, rally cries, etc., it is wise to choose words that our opponents understand that will confront them with the truth — leaving them without the option of ignoring the issue at hand and the truth we communicate.
In summary, implementing these principles will amplify the power of protest to change the unjust status quo and maximize the quality of the resulting change. There is no guarantee that our opponents or our non-Christian co-belligerents will receive our transcendent message; that’s up to God. However, we will have fulfilled our prime directive (the Great Commission), society will be better off, and God will be glorified.

I recognize that just like the great creeds and confessions were not first drafts, we can’t expect to get our theological formulations and practices perfect on first blush. We need to find our way together. This process will take time, sweat, love, and patience. If we continue to pursue this together, the entire church will benefit from a theology of protest we can apply to any and all issues.

Dr. Carl Ellis, Provost’s Professor of Theology and Culture at RTS, recently re-released his book Free at Last? The Gospel in the African American Experience with a new preface.

This article was first published on Dr. Ellis’ blog, Prophets of Culture.

WHAT IS THE EDMISTON CENTER for the STUDY of the BIBLE & ETHNICITY?

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Connecting the Church and the Campus
Will Huss Uses his Private Sector Experience to Impact RUF Students

PHILLIP HOLMES
In 2019, Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) announced that Will W. Huss, Jr. would be the next national coordinator. Huss was first introduced to RUF as a student at Clemson University and has stayed involved through his time as a member of the Permanent Committee for RUF. A ruling elder at Clemson Presbyterian, Huss had just finished his first full year as a staff member when I interviewed him via Zoom. Due to Huss’ professional experience in the private sector and lifelong involvement in RUF, I knew we would be in for a fascinating interview.

When did you come to faith?

I don’t remember a time not knowing Jesus as my Savior; I would consider myself a child of the covenant.

What attracted you to RUF?

At the last minute, I decided to go to Clemson to study architecture. My youth intern at First Pres in Dillon, South Carolina, asked me to promise him that I would go to RUF. I said, “I don’t know what that is.” But in all honesty, I only missed one large group in all four years of college.

Was RUF still fairly new to the scene?

RUF is actually older than the PCA. RUF was started in 1971 and became a ministry of the PCA in 1973.

There were probably only a dozen RUFs, maybe 15 when I started going. When I got to Clemson, I didn’t realize RUF was a part of the PCA; I thought it was a ministry of Clemson Presbyterian Church.

What made RUF stand out?

The thing that stood out to me is that it balanced orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathos: what I believe, how I function, and what I feel.

RUF connected the church and the campus. It gave me the ability to dive deep into the Scriptures, know how they applied to my head, heart, and hand, defend my faith, and think biblically about applying the truths of Scripture to all of life. One of the most important things I learned there and continue to use has been faith-work integration.

Who was your campus minister? How did God use him to influence or shape your faith?

David Sinclair is his name. In fact, he’s actually our senior pastor now at Clemson Presbyterian. David was my campus minister, and he influenced me greatly because he sought to understand my context and then how to apply the gospel to that. He really shepherded me through that process. Here I am 30 years later, and he’s still doing the same thing as my pastor.
He was really good at meeting people where they were. He would ask me, “What are you studying right now? Where are you struggling? How are you doing spiritually?” He also spent a lot of time teaching me how to teach and how to think well. He helped shape my view of the church in so many ways.

How has RUF evolved as you’ve gotten more involved with the ministry?

I’ve been fairly involved for a long time. I was on the permanent committee and chaired it for two years. Even though this has been my first year [as national coordinator], it’s definitely not my first take on RUF. The philosophy of ministry is still the same. The truths of the gospel have stayed the same. The mission was reaching students for Christ and equipping them to serve, and there is no intention of changing that.

But the context changes constantly. As I said, I think there were fewer than 20 campuses when I was involved, and now we’re on 172 campuses with eight of those in foreign countries. What’s really changing since I’ve gotten involved is the organizational structure: continuing to advance a sustainable model as an organization and as an agency of the PCA.

What were you doing before you came to RUF as national coordinator?

I was in the private sector. My background is in construction and development.

Talk a little bit about what your first year has been like and what you’ve learned from being on the inside of a Christian non-profit.

Honestly, it’s been very little of what I anticipated. If you take the dynamics of COVID-19 and the impact that’s had on campuses, it creates a little bit of a challenge. Each campus is different, but it introduced the common element of all of the campuses being shut down. Our campus ministers who have been doing RUF for 20 years will be functioning the same as a first-year campus minister this fall.

I feel like I had a fair amount of relational capital and knew a lot of the folks [before taking the job], but I’ve been so impressed with the people. They know what they’re doing in the day-to-day ministry, and they do it very well. One day leadership may look like just being a cheerleader and encouraging somebody, and the next day, I’m sitting in Atlanta and having to call every campus and say, “You’ve got to cancel your spring break trip because of COVID-19.”

The other thing that I’ve really learned is how much the PCA loves RUF. It has been evident how vital the ministry is to the future of the church by developing its future leaders and future parishioners. One of the more encouraging things has been being able to come alongside the other presidents and coordinators of the agencies. I cherish my time with them.

When it comes to RUF, what are some of your strategic goals for the ministry?

The strategy and the mission are pretty simple, and again, that’s reaching and equipping. In terms of strategic goals, we’re in the midst of developing a lot of that.

The biggest thing for me strategically — and this is something that I did previously in the private sector — is leading
through our core values. You establish those core values, and then that influences your decisions — what you do and how you do it. That allows you to develop a sustainable oversight structure with a sustainable funding model.

Our tendency is to count nickels and noses. We want to count the number of dollars we raise and count the number of students. I think we’ve got to be really careful about doing that, but we do need to think about how we measure what we’re doing today, which influences where the church will be in 10 years.

If you asked any campus minister or campus staff or intern, “How’s your ministry going?” I would hope that they would answer, “I’ll let you know in 10 years.” Because there are conversions and there are people who are growing, but you really only know the influence of connecting the campus and the church after they become parishioners in the local church.

“We do need to think about how we measure what we’re doing today, which influences where the church will be in 10 years.

You really only know the influence of connecting the campus and the church after they become parishioners in the local church.”
I like the way you frame that. When you think about the relationship between the campus and the church, what role do seminaries play when it comes to the success of RUF as a ministry?

I think the seminaries play a huge role in our recruiting. Historically, we’ve mainly looked at recruiting as going into the seminaries and recruiting future campus ministers and campus staff.

I don’t think we’re doing a bad job, but I’d like to be more intentional, to begin recruiting students for seminary with the idea that they would eventually come to work for RUF. Our partnership with seminaries is critical to where we go and to equipping and training those people to do the kingdom work on the campus.

What differences and similarities have you noticed between ministry organizations and corporate business?

A lot of the differences and similarities that I’ve noticed between ministry and corporate business relate to structure and accountability.

RUF is a large organization. You develop the strategy, you focus on the culture and core values. Part of leadership is protecting the philosophy of ministry, and simply doing the mission. You set up an effective structure to move an organization from one level to another. You do that in the private sector and non-profits.

At the same time, nobody has experience with COVID-19. It’s all new. I learned a lot in the Great Recession that I’ve been able to apply at RUF: financial strategy, an organizational focus, and the intense need to communicate and collaborate.

The need for communication, collaboration, and accountability is no different between the non-profit and the private sector. RUF is known for being a relational organization; that is one of our core values. I don’t know how you have a relational ministry without some type of accountability.

Another similarity is a tendency to count, to look at numbers. But whether I’m designing and building commercial buildings or helping lead a campus ministry, they’re both about relationships, and they’re both about being a part of the kingdom of God.

What is one piece of advice that you would give to business leaders and ministry leaders?

Work to remove the silos. A silo is an organizational component that winds up functioning without any connection to the other pieces to accomplish the whole. If I look at RUF, I’ve got ministry, organizational development, finances, operations, and advancement. A lot of times, they’re doing what they do on a daily basis without talking to one another. There is not just wisdom that can be had from talking to one another, but it actually allows things to be unveiled and pursued better.

Focus on continual communication and collaboration around the mission of what you’re trying to accomplish. Those are the biggest things you can do as a leader in any organization.

You nailed that.

I’ve lived it for a year now.
Finding Hope in the Midst of Fear and Uncertainty

the COLLECTIVE TRAUMA of a PANDEMIC

Finding Hope in the Midst of Fear and Uncertainty

ELIZABETH PENNOCK
Our bodies and souls know the difference between a Skype conversation and a face-to-face interaction. We were not made for this kind of isolation.

I will be the first one to agree that the word “trauma” has been trivialized in the ways it is popularly used. “I’m traumatized! My favorite character got killed off in this week’s episode.” “The gym is going to be closed for another month. How am I going to deal with this trauma?”

However, as a counselor and researcher who specializes in the area of psychological trauma, I am confident in saying that every single one of us has lived through a period of collective trauma in 2020. Part of the clinical definition of a traumatic event is that it involves exposure to actual or threatened death. This perceived threat can be to your own life, to someone you know, or through repeated exposure to the details of the traumatic experiences of others.

First the stories came from Italy, then from New York, and eventually from my home state of Florida. Each story uniquely detailed the impact of COVID-19: the stories of healthcare workers fighting to save lives, the stories of choir practices, family gatherings, and work conferences turning into super-spreader events. Scientists continue to publish research articles studying the long-term health effects of the virus.

What has been the impact of this collective, long-term exposure to trauma? The list of clinical symptoms related to acute stress or traumatic stress is long; among them are irritability, disturbances in sleep, avoidance of relationships or tasks, intrusive
thoughts, decreased interest in things that used to be life-giving, difficulty concentrating, and depressed mood. Although few people go on to develop diagnosable post-traumatic stress, most of us will experience an increase in some or many of these symptoms, especially after prolonged exposure to the chronic stress of a long-lasting event like this pandemic.

Another way to think about the impact of trauma is to think about the losses, both specific and general, that are a result of trauma. At various points in this pandemic, many of us have lost routines, vacations, jobs, and the ability to gather with others. Events have been cancelled, our work has changed, and screens have become a nearly universal mediator of relationships.

One of my mentors, Dr. Dan Allender, also talks about the broader losses that come as the result of experiencing trauma. These are losses that change the way we interact with the world and with one another.

**LOSS of a SENSE of SAFETY**

Trauma rips away the assumption that the world is basically a predictable, safe, and understandable place. Without a basic sense of safety, it is difficult to find rest for our bodies or our souls. As the months pass, we will increasingly feel the impact of a long-term state of vigilance, of constantly looking ahead for the next threat.
Loss of Connection

Trauma severs connections. On a neurobiological level, experiences of intense fear result in a disconnection in the ways our nervous system processes and interprets experience, which causes an internal disintegration or fragmentation. This disintegration then plays out in the world around us, as we struggle to be fully present with one another when our internal worlds have been fractured.

In the case of this pandemic, there has also been an enforced disconnection from relationships, especially for those who find themselves most at-risk for infection. While technology has kept us connected on one level, our bodies and souls know the difference between a Skype conversation and a face-to-face interaction. We were not made for this kind of isolation.

Loss of a Sense of Agency

Another characteristic of trauma is that it involves a sense of powerlessness to prevent the worst from happening. We experience trauma as something that happens to us without our consent. As image bearers of God, we live with purpose and have agency to impact the world around us. The majority of us do not have the ability to stop the advance of the novel coronavirus and mitigate its impact on our society. Trauma disorients us when we find we have no ability to effectively act in the face of the threat.

Loss of Hope

When a traumatic experience becomes chronic, it often produces a sense of despair within us. As we wrestle with the impact of losing safety, connection, and agency, we no longer feel able to look ahead with hope. This loss of hope can be expressed in many ways: as passivity, anxiety, depression, or avoidance. As the months have gone by, I have increasingly seen my friends, students, and counseling clients move from fear into various levels of despair or disengagement.
So, in light of our current reality, how do we – the church – respond? What are small ways to fight back against the impact of trauma on our bodies, souls, and communities? In short, it will look different for each of us, but we can use the categories of loss mentioned above to start conversations that will move us toward a different response, a hopeful response, even in the midst of uncertainty.

How can we re-establish safety? For many of us, the first answer to this question will involve how we attend to the impact of long-term stress on our bodies. If we neglect to start here, we will not have the capacity to move into our communities with purpose and hope. So, we must assess the ways we nourish, move, and rest our bodies. You may need more sleep or find that getting outdoors or moving your body is more important than ever.

However, for many, this pandemic has had profound effects on physical and mental health, employment, and housing security. Re-establishing a baseline of safety in these areas may take time, and the church needs to be involved with addressing the needs of our communities.

Without diminishing the complexity of these issues, let us remember that our souls can take shelter in the shadow of the Most High. In Matthew 14, as Peter attempted to walk across the stormy sea toward Jesus, he became overwhelmed by the circumstances he found himself in and cried out for help. Jesus’ response was to immediately reach out for Peter, to be present with him in the midst of the storm. May our souls be reminded that safety is ultimately found in the amazing truth of how God moved toward us, his people, through Jesus.
How can we create connections? Finding ways to connect with our communities again will take wisdom, patience, and humility. In the midst of the culture wars surrounding how and when we “return to normal,” may the church be guided by the principle of considering the “least of these” — the most vulnerable among us.

While many may feel ready to return to schools, workplaces, and churches this fall, keep an eye out for those who cannot do so: the immunocompromised, the elderly, caregivers, or those who otherwise cannot or choose not to participate in group gatherings. Get creative in finding ways to form and maintain community. We need one another, each and every part of the body of Christ. In this time of disconnection, may our churches lead the way in demonstrating that the “weaker” parts of the body are also the most indispensable (1 Cor 12).

How can we help? While we may not personally be able to stop the coronavirus, each of us does have a choice about how we will move toward those around us in these days of uncertainty. While trauma can paralyze us and fill us with a sense of powerlessness, as healing occurs we will be freed to move and act again.

Whatever resources we possess — time, health, family, finances, etc. — it is important to prayerfully ask God how we are being called to move toward our neighbors during this season. Consider, individually and as a church, how you can practically serve those around you. Keep in mind those impacted by job loss, anxiety, health concerns, or isolation. Scripture tells us that joy comes in the act of giving (Acts 20:35), and psychological research reinforces this truth: helping others increases our mental health and wellbeing.

How can we move toward hope in the midst of loss? There is no doubt that we currently live in a world that is not the way it is supposed to be. It is essential to reacquaint ourselves with the language of lament, which we see throughout the Bible, especially in the Psalms. Suffering can be used by God to grow us, but that isn’t reducible to taking a “what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger” approach. It’s by bearing those wounds in grief that God can grow us.

The language of lament does not dismiss or diminish the degree of loss that has been experienced. It tells the truth about the state of the world around us, the dislocation of our hearts in the midst of loss, and the steadfast presence of God.
The language of lament does not dismiss or diminish the degree of loss that has been experienced. It tells the truth about the state of the world around us, the dislocation of our hearts in the midst of loss, and the steadfast presence of God. The path of grief is a God-given means by which we adjust to the new realities of our lives.

The language of lament is meant to be spoken corporately by the church and intimately in our own conversations with God. Scripture is clear that those who grieve will be comforted and strengthened. Grief shatters our illusions and idols and invites us to turn back to the One who is the source of life.

Elizabeth Pennock serves as Assistant Professor of Counseling for RTS Orlando. She is currently completing her Ph.D. in Counselor Education at the University of Central Florida.
Senior Vice President of Development, Matthew Bryant, and RTS Orlando’s Leigh Swanson recently had a chance to “sit down” with Craig and Becky Rohde via Zoom. The Rohdes recently became involved with RTS when their son-in-law, Bryan Fowler, enrolled as an MDiv student at RTS Orlando. Craig serves as President of AGI, which is among the nation’s leading providers of signage, lighting, and maintenance for many large retailers. Craig and Becky attend Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Norfolk, Virginia, where Craig serves as a ruling elder.

AGI’s corporate purpose is “to honor God by excelling in what we do, how we do it, and by treating our employees, customers, vendors, and community as we would treat ourselves.” They discussed how their faith informs their work, their giving, and the unique calling Bryan has as a full-time corporate chaplain and student at RTS.
Matthew Bryant (MB): You all have clearly given great thought to generosity in your marriage. What inspired your thinking in that way?

Craig Rohde (CR): For most of our adulthood, we were struggling — like everybody else — about how to get through life. We’ve always been generous with our time, but financially, we didn’t have the resources to be strategic in any significant way.

Thirteen years ago, God led me to take over the leadership of a small company, AGI, that has since been blessed with much success. One of our key business objectives to be more generous in giving to faith-based and mercy-and-justice ministries. In doing this, I discovered that the needs far outweigh the resources. There are hundreds of wonderful, great needs out there, but we can’t support everything. We realized that it’s important to be prayerful and thoughtful in what we do.

Becky Rohde (BR): As we were maturing in our own faith, we’ve always felt that everything we have is not our own. Everything we have is a gift from God: our children, our home, our church, whatever it is. I feel like we’ve always tried — to the best of our ability — to be stewards for the Lord, because we knew that it was his and not ours.

Leigh Swanson (LS): In your journey, was there ever something you read or maybe a role-model who mentored or inspired you in your philosophy of giving?

BR: When we lived in Knoxville, I can think of specific families who were about four or five years ahead of us. I would see them freely give, never wanting any recognition. They had the right hearts about it—they lived it. I pray that Craig and I would live it. I pray that we wouldn’t be the type of people who would just write a check. I want to be the type of person who really supports RTS, who is excited when we hear that there are RTS graduates coming to our area, going into RUF, or who want to do an internship at AGI. I think for me it mostly comes from mentors and being in those stages in life where I saw it lived out, not just taught.

This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity.
LS: What you’ve aspired to do, you’re doing! You haven’t just been donors, but partners and friends.

MB: Craig, AGI has always had a lot of philanthropic thinking behind it. Can you share about that philosophy?

CR: Early in his career, the founder of our company, Dave Ramsey (not the Dave Ramsey!), dedicated the business to the Lord. One of our key practices in running the Lord’s business is that we tithe our earnings. Each year, as we look at our pre-tax earnings, we give ten percent or more to faith-based and/or mercy-and-justice ministries. On top of that, we also give to local efforts within the community.

MB: You also have a chaplain at AGI. What makes that position unique?

CR: What’s unique is we have a full-time chaplain and a formal ministry. We take seriously the opportunity we have to love our neighbors, and we have about 800 employees in our business along with their families. It’s been an extremely powerful ministry for the employees of AGI, and we feel strongly that this is what God wants us to do. Part of the vision that Bryan, our chaplain (and my son-in-law), and I talk about is sharing with others what we’ve learned. Our hope is that one day other Christian businesses who have the resources would also formalize workplace ministries. We’re trying to figure out if there is a role for AGI for promoting faith-and-work ministries outside of the 800 employees we have.

MB: How would you convince someone that RTS is a worthy organization to be involved with?

CR: I’d focus on the future evangelists and pastors that are going to lead and shepherd God’s kingdom. I think the world is only going to become more difficult in terms of reaching those who are not Christians and leading those who are Christians. It is critical that those future leaders — pastors, chaplains, counselors, and even laypeople — are grounded in the Word of God and receive strong instruction. I think that’s God laying the foundation because he knows what’s ahead. RTS is graduating people who are part of that foundation.

IT IS CRITICAL that those FUTURE LEADERS — PASTORS, CHAPLAINS, COUNSELORS, and even LAYPEOPLE — are GROUNDED in the WORD OF GOD and RECEIVE STRONG INSTRUCTION.

BR: Years ago, I did a Bible study based on Henry Blackaby’s Experiencing God, and what stuck with me is that God is always at work, and he wants us to come alongside him and join him in that work. I know at times I have been disobedient to God and walked away from opportunities that he has provided for me. I think to myself, “Lord, I just want to join you, because I don’t want to miss this blessing!” And that’s how we feel about RTS. We just want to join you because we don’t want to miss all this great kingdom building! ♥
When Bryan Fowler’s father-in-law, Craig Rohde, offered him a job as a chaplain at AGI in Virginia Beach, he initially turned it down. After graduating from Virginia Tech, Fowler felt a call to ministry and believed his clearest path to ministry was in service to his local church in Blacksburg, Virginia. However, after every door for employment at that church was closed to him, Fowler sensed God calling him to work at AGI. He began his career in human resources in 2013, leading Bible studies and supporting the employees.

As AGI grew, the needs did as well. Two years after he started, Fowler moved fully into the role of chaplain, focusing on counseling and engagement with employees, many of whom are nonbelievers. His other responsibilities include overseeing AGI’s financial support program for its employees, organizing volunteer events, and leading Bible studies and lunch discussions throughout the company.

Meanwhile, he has pursued theological education through the Hybrid MDiv program at RTS Orlando. Even from afar, Fowler has felt a significant connection to the campus and faculty, noting, “I’ve received a ton of support from faculty in pursuit of theological education in a non-traditional ministry role.”

Today, Fowler ministers to around 800 employees at AGI and has seen dozens of employees both come to faith and grow in their faith. He hopes more Christian-led businesses will make room for chaplains on their staff and that seminaries, like RTS, will send graduates into corporate chaplaincy.

Fowler states, “Although sometimes Christians fail to see the marketplace as a location to live out our faith, I believe our theology should be and ought to be applied in all areas of our life, even our work life. My educational experience has been invaluable in learning how to apply biblical, theological, and practical foundations to what I’m doing here in the workplace.”

Matthew Bryant, Senior VP of Development at RTS, adds, “I’ve watched firsthand as Bryan interacts with his co-workers at AGI – it’s exciting to see God using and equipping him to demonstrate gospel-centered care in their workplace.”

Fowler lives in Norfolk, Virginia with his wife, Bekah, and their three young children.
For most, pandemics are the material of horror films, not realities we are forced to navigate. When the novel coronavirus arrived in the United States, no one was left untouched — RTS students and faculty included.

Both not long and forever ago, city streets began to resemble scenes of judgment from the prophets. The scene in New York, an epicenter of the virus in its early months, felt “apocalyptic” according to Dr. Jay Harvey, Executive Director of RTS New York City.

As a seminary, RTS has been a pioneer in distance education, one of the first to offer online accredited programs. The New York campus, in particular, has online coursework in its DNA. Classes meet over Zoom on Tuesdays and face-to-face on Thursdays. Professors often travel to the city to teach their courses.

Once Amtrak started canceling trains to New York, classes began to meet entirely online. Thanks to their innovative model, both faculty and students were well-prepared to adjust to fully-online instruction.

The change in course structure had minimal effects on the student body. Students in New York City schools often conceive of the city itself as their

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**INCREASED URGENCY**

*RTS Students Adapt to New Rhythms During a Pandemic*

**ALICIA AKINS**
THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WASN’T NECESSARILY THAT STUDENTS GOT SICK — THOUGH SOME DID — BUT THAT THE GRAVITY OF THE PANDEMIC’S EFFECTS ON THE CITY — THEIR CAMPUS — WEIGHED HEAVILY.

campus. So, for the RTS community, the most significant impact wasn’t necessarily that students got sick — though some did — but that the gravity of the pandemic’s effects on the city — their campus — weighed heavily. Faculty actively reached out to check on the welfare of students in class, individually and through Slack, only to learn that churches were doing a lot to care for them already.

“New York City churches immediately pivoted to caring for people in a way that was impressive to observe,” Dr. Harvey recalled. He hoped the seminary could come alongside churches to help provide care and that it would be a refreshing source of support rather than an additional burden. His prayers shifted as the suffering in students’ lives intensified and the pandemic’s reach went from fellow congregants to families, and in some cases, to the students themselves.
For Michael McGregor, a recent graduate of RTS Washington, the spring semester was a sprint to the finish. In order to complete his Master of Divinity, he’d taken a much heavier course load than usual. A new position as Director of College Ministry at First Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina, awaited him on the other side of his degree.

Pre-pandemic, the heavier academic load meant he was commuting three times a week to campus in Northern Virginia from his home in Maryland. Classes being moved online gave him more time for his studies and for his family.

“My prayer throughout the semester was that I wanted to finish the program well and retain what I was learning while also loving my wife and family well,” McGregor said. “I think the Lord answered all of those prayers. The pandemic gave me more time at home with our family without losing any time working on readings and assignments.”

The lack of commute was only partially to credit for his strong finish. The faculty made it easy to succeed. McGregor praised their commitment to their mission and students, “Even with COVID-19 I don’t feel my seminary experience was diminished. I was so blessed by how earnest the professors were in wanting to give students the same quality education we’ve come to expect from RTS Washington. The faculty’s professionalism, ingenuity, and zeal for students to have an excellent seminary education despite extenuating circumstances were exemplary.”

Katie Larson, a current student at RTS Charlotte, expressed that the semester felt less like a sprint and more like a fight to survive. Larson and her husband relocated to Charlotte from Fargo, North Dakota to pursue seminary full time in fall 2019. After one semester, the coronavirus reached the United States, disrupting plans. When the RTS campuses, Charlotte included, moved their classes online, she and her husband found themselves faced with a choice.

Larson had been working a number of part-time positions and as the country began to shut down, her work came to an end. Her husband’s part-time job with the seminary could be done remotely. With their whole world now virtual, Larson and her husband wrestled for weeks with whether or not to return to North Dakota before the summer.
In early April, they packed up their car and set out on the 21-plus-hour drive back to North Dakota. On their first day on the road, their car broke down after nightfall. They were towed and checked into a hotel for the night. The next morning, they learned that their engine had ruptured and repair costs exceeded the value of the vehicle. Rather than purchase a new car on the spot, they rented a cargo van, repacked their possessions, stopped for a meal, and returned to the road to complete the journey.

Mere days after arriving back in Fargo, they both developed COVID-like symptoms. Widespread testing was not yet available in North Dakota so COVID-19 was never confirmed, but by day five, they suffered a host of respiratory ailments aligned with the disease. Katie’s symptoms lingered until May.

Early on, Larson had wanted to be a source of peace to others amidst the chaos. As she herself fell ill, her focus shifted as distant fears became her reality. In the middle of ongoing and overwhelming distress at an inability to breathe and all the unknowns of the virus’s long-term health effects, Larson experienced significant personal growth in her relationship with the Lord.

“I have really grown in knowing the Lord not only as my King and Savior but as my Shepherd. I also have a better grasp of biblical tools for repenting of and navigating anxieties,” Larson shared. She took comfort in the words of Psalm 119:92: “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.”

To counter anxieties and wandering thoughts, she developed new daily rhythms of prayer, writing out praises, confessions, thanksgiving, and requests. Her scope of prayer broadened as well, she explained, as she interceded “not just for the immediate RTS community of students, professors, and administrators, but for church leaders at large to navigate this new territory with wisdom and insight.”
The crisis navigation skills Larson was praying for were being developed in Josiah Cha’s life at the same time. Cha, a rising third-year MDiv student at RTS Orlando, also serves as the youth pastor of Harvest Korean Presbyterian Church. In February, he launched an exciting and fresh system of small groups for youth at Harvest. After a brief hiatus in March, the groups began gathering again virtually.

Reflecting on the roll-out of these new groups, Cha states, “We realized God’s sovereignty in his timing: the small groups we had created allowed for havens of community for students on a weekly basis. Out of these small groups, discipleship relationships formed between adult teachers and students, or high school students with middle school students.” With virtual ministry, he also was able to reach out to more students than he otherwise would have. Overall, he felt an increasing dependence on God’s Spirit rather than his plans.

Cha juggled the launch of a new ministry and full-time class in the midst of his own illness. He was one of the first few hundred in Florida to contract COVID-19 in March. The two weeks or so he spent incapacitated battling the virus significantly disrupted his studies, but, Cha said, “My professors were extremely gracious in extending deadlines, as I had to catch up on lectures, readings, papers, and assignments.”

The novel coronavirus not only affected current and past students, but also future students. Dr. Harvey noted that some new applicants to RTS New York City credited the pandemic for their applications. They took the step of faith to apply, citing increased urgency to be equipped with the gospel for crisis and a deeper conviction about the importance of ministry. The pandemic has made clear to us all the significance of theological education. ♥

Alicia Akins works in international education by day, is a part-time Masters of Arts (Biblical Studies) student at RTS Washington, and is the author of the forthcoming book, Come Feast, with Harvest House Publishers.
During the spring and summer of 2020, RTS recognized many faculty and staff members—via promotions, new hires, and well-deserved retirements. Our faculty have continued to produce and contribute to many new publications. We also mourned with the families of Dr. Wallace Carr and Polly Stone, both of whom passed away this year.

Throughout 2020, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, we had the opportunity to celebrate our recent graduates and create new opportunities for current and future students. Join us in thanking God for his continued faithfulness.

**Drs. Smith, Lowe, and Richard Promoted**

On June 1, 2020, Dr. D. Blair Smith of RTS Charlotte and Drs. Bruce A. Lowe and Gay M. Richard of RTS Atlanta received promotions. Dr. Smith was promoted to Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Dr. Lowe became dean of students, in addition to his work as Associate Professor of New Testament. Dr. Richard, Executive Director of RTS Atlanta, is now Associate Professor of Systematic Theology.

**Dr. Blair Smith**

**Associate Professor of Systematic Theology /// Charlotte**

Dr. Smith earned his MDiv from RTS Charlotte and his ThM from Harvard Divinity School. In the summer of 2019, he completed his Ph.D. from Durham University in the United Kingdom. He was a student under Lewis Ayres in Historical Theology. The title of his dissertation was “The Fatherhood of God in Fourth-Century Pro-Nicene Trinitarian Theology.” During a portion of his doctoral studies, Dr. Smith served as a research visitor at the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Smith is also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. He served for more than seven years at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland. He also serves part-time...
for Christ Covenant in Matthews, North Carolina, working with the pastoral and ministry staff in coordinating the Sunday School curriculum. He also oversees the identification and training of teachers. Dr. Smith and his wife, Lisa, have four children.

Dr. Michael Kruger, President of the Charlotte campus, commented on Dr. Smith’s promotion. “We couldn’t be more pleased to have Blair Smith as part of the RTS Charlotte faculty. He’s proven himself not only as a top-notch scholar, but also as a professor who cares about the students and is involved in the life of the local church. We look forward to many more years of his ministry here at the Charlotte campus.”

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Dr. Lowe has been serving on the faculty of RTS Atlanta for just over 12 years. He has a Ph.D. in New Testament from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Before moving to the Atlanta area, he served as a pastor and church planter in Australia for many years. Dr. Lowe has written several articles and chapters in academic journals and books and is currently working on finishing the manuscript for his first book. He is active in leadership in his church — teaching Bible studies and sharing in the preaching responsibilities each month.

Dr. Guy M. Richard, Executive Director of RTS Atlanta, commented on Dr. Lowe’s promotion. “It is a joy to see Bruce officially recognized for the work he has been doing unofficially on our campus. Bruce has a real heart to pastor students and see them grow in their love for the Lord and their desire to spend themselves in ministry. He is a wonderful example of gracious, winsome pastoral leadership both in and out of the classroom. He has shepherded many students over the years. I look forward to many more coming under his influence in the years to come.”

After his promotion, Dr. Lowe shared, “The thing that strikes me about theological education is that it is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We are not bringing people in to make them ‘seminarians’ but shaping them so that they can go out and affect the world for Jesus. It is the greatest privilege to be appointed dean of students at RTS Atlanta because it means that I get to be on the front line of shaping students so they can be thinking rightly about seminary and also about life beyond it.”
Dr. Richard has been serving on the faculty of RTS Atlanta for just over three years, where he also serves as executive director. He has a Ph.D. in Historical and Systematic Theology from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Prior to coming to Atlanta, he served as senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Gulfport, Mississippi.

During his 12 years in Gulfport, he led the congregation in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which completely destroyed the church facility and many homes. Dr. Richard has written several books, many articles and chapters in academic journals and books, and an extensive number of devotional articles for popular magazines and journals. Guy and his wife, Jennifer, have three children.

Dr. Robert Cara, Provost and Chief Academic Officer for RTS, commented on Dr. Richard’s promotion. “All RTS professors bring different gifts and emphases to their students. Dr. Richard has a first-class Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh and has written highly academic works. He also brings a significant amount of pastoral experience and many pastoral publications aimed at a broad audience. His promotion to associate professor is well deserved.”
DRS. SUTANTO AND BROOKS

APPOINTED TO FACULTY

RTS Washington hired Dr. Gray Sutanto as Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology. At RTS Charlotte, Dr. Nate Brooks was appointed Assistant Professor of Christian Counseling.

DR. GRAY SUTANTO
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY /// WASHINGTON

Before joining RTS, Dr. Sutanto served as the pastor of Covenant City Church in Jakarta, Indonesia. During his time in Jakarta, he sought to promote greater theological awareness through conferences, public lectures, and popular publications. He consistently proclaimed and applied the Reformed faith in the public square. Dr. Sutanto’s dissertation and subsequent academic publications have furthered appreciation for the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck and the broader Reformed tradition.

“I could not be more thrilled about the appointment of Dr. Sutanto to our faculty,” said Dr. Scott Redd, President of the RTS Washington campus. “Gray’s winsome personality, academic acumen, pastoral experience, and focus on public theology make him a perfect fit for our campus and the community we serve in the Washington, D.C., area, as well as RTS’ global constituency.”

“Dr. Sutanto is not only an excellent theologian, but he is also a dedicated pastor, innovative thinker, and ardent defender of the faith,” said Dr. Thomas Keene, the academic dean of RTS Washington. “His love of Herman Bavinck and his devotion to Christ’s church will continue the tradition that his predecessor, Dr. Howard Griffith, established here. I have no doubt that he will thus prepare our students to be both rigorous in their theology and fruitful in their respective ministries.”

Sutanto’s international education and pastoral experience fit well at RTS, a school that historically appoints pastor-theologians to its faculty. “Gray is young — by my estimate, the second youngest faculty member in the history of RTS,” commented Dr. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor and CEO. “He is already possessed of pastoral experience and instincts beyond his years, as well as being remarkably academically prolific. An Indonesian, educated in Southeast Asia, America, and Britain, he brings a global perspective to his work of cultivating students in sound, biblical, confessional, Reformed theology. I can’t wait to see Gray bless our students.”
**DR. NATE BROOKS**  
**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELING /// CHARLOTTE**

Dr. Brooks received his Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His research interests revolve around the intersection of counseling and systematic theology, with a special focus on anthropology. He completed his doctoral studies under T. Dale Johnson, contrasting the historical Reformed understanding of the heart with that of second-wave cognitive behavioral therapy.

Dr. Michael J. Kruger, RTS Charlotte President, commented on Brooks’ appointment, “We are so pleased to welcome Dr. Nate Brooks to the counseling faculty at RTS Charlotte. He combines academic rigor and theological depth with a love for people that embodies the RTS motto, ‘A mind for truth and a heart for God.’ We know he will bless both our students and the larger church world for many years to come.”

Dr. Brooks joined RTS Charlotte in 2016 as the Coordinator of the Christian Counseling Program, where he has been teaching and counseling. He blogs for The Biblical Counseling Coalition and occasionally contributes articles to The Gospel Coalition. Nate and his wife, Kate, have two boys, Blaise and Gresham.

**PHOEBE PRITCHETT HIRED AT RTS CHARLOTTE**

On June 1, Phoebe Pritchett became the new Community Life Coordinator for RTS Charlotte. Pritchett graduated from Reinhardt University with a Bachelor’s in Music Education in 2014. After graduation, she worked at Eastern Shore Presbyterian Church in Fairhope, Alabama, where she led small groups, taught Bible studies, and planned events. She started as a student at RTS Charlotte in 2018 and will graduate in December 2020 with her MABS. She is also an intern at Ballantyne Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Michael J. Kruger, President of RTS Charlotte, commented, “We are so excited to have Phoebe join the RTS Charlotte team as Community Life Coordinator. We know she will continue to make the Charlotte campus a rich, warm, and inviting community for both men and women. She will be a wonderful host for prospective students who visit the campus.”
Dr. Elias Medeiros, Harriet Barbour Professor of Missions at RTS Jackson, retired from teaching at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 academic year. He received the honorary title of Professor of Missions, Emeritus and will work as director of RTS’ DMin program in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Dr. Medeiros served as a faculty member at RTS Jackson since 1993. For many of his 27 years at RTS, Dr. Medeiros also led the Great Commission Society, a student group dedicated to cultivating a concern for making disciples of all nations, across the street and around the world.

Dr. Miles Van Pelt, Academic Dean of the Jackson and Brazil campuses, said, “Elias has a passion for sharing the gospel like few others in the world! He understands that the next life is the real life and that the most powerful tool for recruiting people into the kingdom of God is the Word of God. Elias is not really retiring. He is just pointing his gospel work in another direction in this next season of life.”

In addition to having earned five degrees from RTS Jackson and a ThB from Seminario Presbiteriano do Norte, Dr. Medeiros has been an ordained minister of the gospel for 45 years. While in Brazil, he worked in pioneer church planting in the Amazon region and in Recife. He is a member of the Lausanne Global Diaspora Network Advisory Board and of the Brazilian Evangelical Diaspora movement.

“Those who are efficaciously and effectively called are also efficaciously and effectively sent,” Dr. Medeiros shared. “The One who predestined and saves is the One who also empowers and sends everywhere, to everyone, all the time. Therefore, followers of Jesus are called to be fishers of men across the street and around the world. If we are not fishing, we are not following.”

Dr. Medeiros is deeply committed to evangelism through every member of the body of Christ. Dr. Medeiros’ ministry has truly blessed RTS Jackson for many years. He has instilled a passion for the gospel and evangelism in generation after generation of RTS students.
Dr. John “Mac” McCarty retired after 24 years at RTS. As the Circulation and Acquisition Specialist at the RTS Jackson library, Dr. McCarty’s faithful and humble service blessed many students, faculty, and staff.

Dr. McCarty joined the RTS Jackson staff in 1996. In addition to his role at the library, he also preached at many chapel services. He spent several years as lead instructor for Continuing Education for Pastors at Mississippi Valley State University.

Prior to his work at RTS, Dr. McCarty served as an officer in the United States military for 21 years. He also spent 32 years as an ordained minister in the Missionary Baptist Church. Since 2019, he has been an associate director of Belhaven University’s Rural Pastor’s Initiative.

Many current and former RTS Jackson students have also expressed their appreciation for Dr. McCarty’s years of service.

David Jackson, who will be filling Dr. McCarty’s role in the library, noted how he “always took time to show love and care for students, faculty, and staff.”

President Emeritus Dr. Guy Richardson remembers being struck by Dr. McCarty’s “military diligence” combined with his “gentle demeanor and consistently positive attitude.” He further said of Dr. McCarty, “While Mac will no longer be greeting us with his broad smile and unfailing helpfulness, his legacy of servant leadership will live on at RTS Jackson. I join a long line of those who have benefited personally from being both his friend and coworker.”

John Crabb has worked closely with Dr. McCarty and expressed his appreciation for their years of service together. “I have had the pleasure of working with John McCarty for almost 20 years. His work ethic, dependability, guidance, and support have been invaluable assets to me and to the multitude of library student workers he has mentored over the years. Mac has a pastoral spirit, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to serve and care for others. He has been a role model, a source of comfort and support, and, most importantly, a dear friend. Mac has glorified God in his ministry here at RTS, and will no doubt continue to do so in whatever lies ahead upon his retirement.”
After serving as RTS Global’s registrar for 22 years, Alice Hathaway retired at the end of August. Hathaway began working for RTS in 1998 when the seminary first launched its online courses as RTS Virtual. She has played a crucial role in the success and impact of the online program in helping students across the entire RTS system. She has always taken the time to know each student, and many students and alumni connect with her after they’ve finished their coursework for RTS Global.

“We simply cannot place a value on how important Alice has been in helping our online students through their seminary journey. It is with sad but grateful hearts that we announce her impending retirement. We could not be more thankful for her love and commitment over the past twenty-plus years. She will be greatly missed,” shared Executive Director David John.

Hathaway reflected on her time at RTS: “I have truly loved my work at RTS. Students, staff, and faculty all have been a source of encouragement and blessing to me. I am more thankful than I can say that God allowed me to do this job for so many years. Serving here has enriched my life in so many ways. I have prayed for so many, and I know many have prayed for me as well. May we all serve joyfully in God’s kingdom and, even if we never meet here, we shall meet there!”

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ALICE HATHAWAY
At the beginning of April, the administration of RTS decided to cancel all spring 2020 commencement ceremonies due to concerns about gathering during the coronavirus pandemic.

In the cancellation announcement, Chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan shared a letter with the RTS community, addressing the class of 2020. “While it is a disappointment to us not to be able to honor our 2020 graduates in the manner in which we are accustomed, we trust the Lord in his good and wise providence, and we want to assure our soon-to-be-alumni of our esteem for you.”

As graduates finished their coursework, took their finals, and turned in their final assignments, campuses created safe celebrations. Many campuses compiled gifts for their graduates. The Atlanta and Orlando campuses hosted “drive-throughs” to present diplomas, while the Washington and Jackson campuses hosted “mini-graduation” ceremonies. At RTS Jackson, students waited in the parking lot until it was their turn to receive a diploma in Grace Chapel.

Regardless of the method, the goal was to host “safe and voluntary” events that would allow graduates to celebrate. Orlando graduate Julianna Jackson found the diploma ceremony especially important after missing the fanfare of finishing classes on campus. “I am so thankful for the drive-through ceremony,” Jackson shared. “It truly felt like a celebration of our time at RTS and the hard work we put in to completing our degrees. Even though we missed ‘Pomp and Circumstance,’ it felt good to receive a diploma, have our pictures taken, and hear friends cheering for us as we drove away.”

The Charlotte, Atlanta, and Dallas campuses sent encouraging messages to their graduates. Professor William Wood recorded a charge for RTS Atlanta’s commencement, and RTS Charlotte emailed a video of Dr. Derek Thomas’ remarks to their graduating class. Campus presidents, executive directors, and academic deans also recorded addresses or wrote letters for the graduates of their respective campuses.

Dressed in full academic regalia, Dr. Duncan recorded a prayer for all graduates from his office in Jackson, Mississippi. Based on Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in John 17:14-26, Dr. Duncan prayed that the RTS class of 2020 would be full of truth and unity as they begin the next season of ministry.
RTS Global released three new courses this summer: Hermeneutics, Hebrew Exegesis, and a new course, Christ, Culture, & Contextualization.

Executive Director David John commented on the process of creating the new courses. “We have spent dozens of hours this summer in the studio to create a new experience for our online students. These courses will feature a variety of enhanced multimedia components.

... EACH COURSE HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO TAKE THE STUDENT THROUGH RICH THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN A STYLE THAT IS INTUITIVE AND MANAGEABLE.”

Hermeneutics is an updated version of Advanced Biblical Exegesis. The course introduces both foundational principles for interpretation and methods of interpretation throughout history. Dr. Robert J. Cara, Provost of RTS and Professor of New Testament, and Dr. Richard Belcher, Academic Dean and Professor of Old Testament, both serve as lecturing professors, and Dr. Belcher also serves as the professor of record.

The new version of Hebrew Exegesis serves as the sequel to Hebrew 1 & 2 from any RTS campus. It has been completely redesigned to take students from the new RTS Global Hebrew 1 & 2 into the world of exegesis. Taught by Dr. Mark D. Futato, Robert L. Maclellan Professor of Old Testament, Hebrew Exegesis seeks to increase knowledge of Hebrew vocabulary and grammar. Dr. Futato teaches a step-by-step method for exegeting the Hebrew text, through interactive slides and instructional videos.

Christ, Culture, & Contextualization provides a biblical theology of culture and principles for contextualizing the Christian faith in today’s world. Dr. James N. Anderson, Professor of Philosophy and Theology, will serve as the lecturing professor and professor of record. This course will help students to sharpen their understanding of current cultural issues and to develop and apply a biblical perspective of cultural analysis and appropriation. This course will impact each student’s individual walk with the Lord and their ministry.

These new courses will serve students well in engaging the culture with the Word of God and ministering in any context.

To learn more, visit rts.edu/online.
Reformed Theological Seminary is pleased to announce seven Core Certificate programs, available in languages, Bible, and theology.

The Core Certificates are non-degree programs that provide students with a foundational understanding of a specific theological discipline. Students can pursue a certificate in Greek, Hebrew, Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, or Applied Theology.

David Veldkamp, Vice President for Enrollment Management, shared, “RTS sees training the next generation of pastors as the center of its mission. As an extension of that mission, we’ve also educated missionaries, Christian school teachers, and others who serve the church in non-ordained roles. Our hope is that these new certificates continue to make sound biblical and theological training available to enrich these ministries.”

The goal for the Core Certificates is to strengthen and enrich students’ walk with God and service to the church. The certificates will benefit teachers, church officers, and others seeking to increase their understanding and application of the Bible and theology.

Brad Tisdale, Chief Financial and Operations Officer, is pleased to see this new program launch after months of preparation. “I hope these new certificate offerings will allow more people to engage in the rich teaching that we offer at RTS. These certificates are for professionals, parents, small group leaders, or anyone who desires a more in-depth study of God’s Word. By breaking the RTS curriculum down into smaller pieces, students can focus on a particular subject in a way that is convenient and affordable.”

Each certificate will include 8-13 credit hours of accredited, graduate-level coursework. In addition, completed certificates could count as progress toward the completion of one of RTS’ master’s programs. Students will be able to complete these specialized certificates in 12-18 months and can take courses in person or online.

For more information, visit rts.edu/certificates.
RTS PROFESSORS CONTRIBUTE TO NEW BOOKS ON THEOLOGY

Many RTS professors are prolific authors — writing for blogs, presenting papers, submitting journal articles, and contributing to books. This fall, two new works about theology will benefit from the expertise of RTS’ faculty: the *Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology* and *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*.

For a full list of recent and forthcoming works by RTS faculty, see “RTS at Work” on pages 59-60.

**OXFORD HANDBOOK of REFORMED THEOLOGY**

Drs. Scott Swain and Mike Allen of RTS Orlando have edited the *Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*. This work is the latest addition to the extensive, multi-disciplinary series of scholarly works published by Oxford University Press.

This comprehensive survey features specially commissioned essays by over forty leading scholars of Reformed theology. Dr. Allen, John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology, said, “Oxford Handbooks serve as reference works. They give a state-of-the-art description of perennial resources and pertinent issues today. Our hope is that scholars and students alike will turn to this volume to encounter the centuries-long, global development of Reformed theology — its abiding questions, classic texts, key conversation partners, and many different streams, all represented by experts.”

Part I of the handbook looks first at the contexts in which Reformed theology was derived. It traces the patristic and medieval heritage of the Reformed church, as well as the modern relationships and conversations that define the contemporary, global Reformed movement. Part II offers an assessment of representative theologians and texts, their history, and their contributions to the Reformed tradition. Finally, Part III presents key themes, topics, and doctrines examined by today’s Reformed theologians, and discussions about current research.

Dr. Swain, who serves as James Woodrow Hassell Professor of Systematic Theology and president of RTS Orlando, added, “Reformed theology continues to be a vibrant resource for Christian faith throughout the world. For this reason, it also continues to be a topic of interest for academic study. Our hope in publishing The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology is to serve teachers and students of Reformed theology. By providing an up-to-date introduction to its historical contexts, classic texts, and major themes, we can provide a foundation for further research and inform the discipline of theology.”
Twenty-six current and former Reformed Theological Seminary professors have contributed to a new book on covenant theology, available from Crossway in October. *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* provides a comprehensive overview of the biblical covenants and their impact on the Christian life. A forward by Chancellor & CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan and an afterword by Dr. Kevin DeYoung bookend 27 chapters in three parts. The first part explores the covenants in the Old and New Testament and the covenant of redemption that unites Scripture. The second part details the history of covenant theology. The book closes with theological studies related to covenant theology. Drs. Douglas Kelly, Howard Griffith, and O. Palmer Robertson, former professors at RTS, each contributed chapters. Campus presidents and executive directors from Jackson, Orlando, Charlotte, Washington, Atlanta, and Dallas also wrote chapters.

Current faculty members Drs. Guy Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether served as editors for the work. Dr. Waters remarked, “It has been a joy to work with my RTS colleagues on this project and to witness their many gifts come to expression in this volume.”

Justin Taylor, Executive Vice President for Book Publishing and Publisher for Books at Crossway, commented on the forthcoming book. “We’ve previously partnered with the faculty of RTS to produce biblical-theological introductions to the Old Testament and the New Testament. We are now thrilled to be publishing a volume together on the heart of Reformed theology—the covenantal relationship of our covenant Lord with his covenant people. It is a true honor for us to publish such an outstanding book with this array of brilliant scholarship for the good of the church.”

Dr. Waters also shared his hopes for the book’s impact. “As I have taught within RTS and at sister institutions around the world, I have long sensed a need for an up-to-date, reliable, and incisive survey of the biblical, theological, historical, and pastoral issues that surface in covenant theology. I believe that *Covenant Theology* will serve the church well in the generation to come, and beyond.”
IN MEMORIAM

DR. WALLACE CARR

Former RTS Jackson professor Dr. Wallace Carr passed away at his home in Raymond, Mississippi, on April 14, 2020. Dr. Carr was 97 years old and was preceded in death by his wife of 25 years, Ruth.

Born on October 9, 1922, in Slidell, LA, Dr. Carr held degrees from Bob Jones College, Columbia Theological Seminary, and University of Southern Mississippi. He pastored multiple churches in Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Mississippi during many years of ministry, before and after his time at RTS.

Dr. Carr taught at RTS as Professor of Practical Theology. He was instrumental in starting the Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling program [now the Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC) Program] at RTS Jackson. Dr. Carr’s involvement in establishing the counseling program at RTS Jackson has left a lasting impact on the seminary, his students, and his colleagues.

Dr. Guy Richardson, Director of the MAC Program, reflected on his time as one of Dr. Carr’s students. “As a student at RTS Jackson in the ’70s, I wanted a strong theological foundation to integrate into my graduate pursuit of counseling. While RTS did not yet have a counseling degree, Dr. Carr was already creating the foundation for such training as a vital part of ministry in the church.”

Dr. Richardson continued, “I benefited greatly from his example of godly counsel. He had a heart to teach those who wanted a deeper understanding of the healing power of God through knowing his Word and his ways. He helped prepare RTS to train men and women to become skilled hands for service to a hurting world in the ministry of professional Christian counseling.”

Steve Lanier remembers his first counseling class at RTS Jackson in the mid-1980s. “Dr. Carr began the class by clapping his hands really loudly and rubbing them together. He then took off his shoes and said, ‘When you approach your client in a counseling setting, you are on holy ground like Moses before the burning bush. Everyone who comes to you for counseling is an image-bearer of the Creator God. That person may be bent and twisted and broken by the weight and ravages of sin, but is still very much an image-bearer of God and due the honor of that position.’”

Dr. Carr’s teaching has stuck with Lanier, who had the opportunity to work with his former teacher in a church-based counseling center.
Throughout their work together, Lanier saw Dr. Carr “practicing what he preached,” opening their meetings in prayer and focusing on helping their clients to find healing. Through his students, Dr. Carr has impacted countless lives.

Dr. Jim Hurley, Professor of Counseling, worked with Dr. Carr to start the counseling program at RTS Jackson. Dr. Hurley remembers meeting Dr. Carr in the early 1980s when he came to interview as a potential professor. “[Dr. Carr] and I spent several hours discussing Scripture, counseling, and our vision for the RTS program. Both of us enjoyed the time together, and I had the pleasure of joining him on the faculty in 1985.”

“Wallace was gracious and welcoming, easy to work with, and always cheerful to make the difficult changes needed for accreditation,” Dr. Hurley continued. “His love for the Lord and our students was strong and infectious. His pastoral concern shaped the counseling program. Anxious students felt loved and supported as they launched into becoming helpers to the hurting.”

Outside of his ministry, Dr. Carr was a husband, brother, dad, granddad, great grandfather, neighbor, and friend. A ballroom and jitterbug dancer, he enjoyed Louisiana cuisine and was known to eat dessert first on outings with his granddaughters. He also played the trumpet and chess, performed as Iago in Shakespeare’s Othello, and spent time working in his yard and garden.

“Our prayers had been for the Lord to give him a peaceful end, which the Lord provided. He knew where he was going and was ready for the Lord’s call,” his son Fredrick shared. Dr. Carr is survived by his two sisters, two children, five grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

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On August 31, Polly McReynolds Stone, Chief Institutional Assessment Officer, was welcomed into the eternal rest of her Heavenly Father, after an almost four-year battle with cancer. Mrs. Stone had worked in various roles for RTS since 1994. Known for her enormous love for her family, her Lord, and all things Mississippi State, Polly will be missed dearly.
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BOOKS

DR. MICHAEL ALLEN
The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Ephesians (Brazos Press, 2020)

The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology with Dr. Scott Swain (Oxford University Press, 2020)

T & T Clark Reader in John Webster (T&T Clark, 2020)

DR. RICHARD BELCHER
The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology (Christian Focus Publications, 2020)

DR. J.V. FESKO

The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age (Baker Academic, 2020)

DR. JOHN CURRID
The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God’s Old Testament People (P&R, 2020)

DR. MARK FUTATO
Basics of Hebrew Accents (Zondervan Academic, 2020)

DR. PAUL JEON
2 Timothy: Fight the Good Fight, Finish the Race, Keep the Faith (Pickwick, 2020)
**BOOKS**

**DR. MICHAEL KRUGER**

*Hebrews for You*  
(The Good Book Company, forthcoming)

**DR. JIM NEWHEISER**

*Financial Crisis*  
(New Growth Press, 2020)

**DR. GREG LANIER**

*Is Jesus Truly God? How the Bible Teaches the Divinity of Jesus*  
(Crossway, 2020)

**DR. GUY WATERS**

*For the Mouth of the Lord Has Spoken: The Doctrine of Scripture*  
(Mentor, 2020)

**DR. MICHAEL KRUGER**

*Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College*  
(Crossway, forthcoming)

**DR. GUY RICHARD**

*Prayer: Reclaiming its Priority in Christian Life and Ministry*  
(P&R, forthcoming 2021)
**TRAVEL AND SPEAKING**

**DR. LIGON DUNCAN**

**OCT 14:** Preaching at Mississippi State RUF, Starkville, MS.

**OCT 18:** Preaching at Christ Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Houston, TX.

**NOV 9-11:** Preaching the John Reed Miller Lectures at RTS Jackson, Jackson, MS.

**NOV 10:** Preaching at First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Jackson, MS.

**NOV 17-19:** Attending Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.

**DEC 1:** Preaching at Gospel Reformation, United Kingdom.

**JAN 11-15, 2021:** Teaching “Introduction to Theology and Pastoral Ministry” at RTS New York City, New York, NY.

**DR. J.V. FESKO**

**OCT 20-21:** Speaking at the Presbyterian Scholars Conference, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

**DR. WILLIAM FULLILOVE**

**NOV 8:** Speaking at the Fall Regional Conference for The Fellows Initiative, Oxford, NC.

**DEC 4:** Speaking at the retreat for the Knoxville Fellows Program, Knoxville, TN.

**JAN 4-8, 2021:** Speaking at the retreat for the Franklin Fellows Program, Franklin, TN.

**JAN 21-23, 2021:** Speaking at the retreat for the Trinity Fellows Program, Deltaville, VA.

**DR. CHARLES HILL**

**NOV 21-24:** Presenting a paper at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

**DR. MICHAEL KRUGER**

**NOV 17-19:** Presenting a paper at the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.

**FEB 19-20, 2021:** Speaking at the annual Spiritual Life Conference, Christ Church ARP, Denver, NC.

**FEB 27-28, 2021:** Speaking at the annual conference, Woodruff Road PCA, Simpsonville, SC.
TRAVEL AND SPEAKING

**DR. GREG LANIER**

**NOV 17-19:** Presenting two papers at the ETS Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.

**DR. BRUCE LOWE**

**OCT 23-24:** Speaking at the Charlotte Fellows Retreat, Charlotte, NC.

**DR. SCOTT REDD**

**MAR 13, 2021:** Speaking at the Faith in the Public Square Conference, First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs, FL.

**DR. JIM NEWHEISER**

**OCT 12-14:** Speaking at the North West Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelical Churches Regional Fellowship, Port Angeles, WA.

**OCT 16-18:** Speaking and preaching at the Family Conference, First Baptist Church, Slidell, LA.

**OCT-NOV:** Teaching via Zoom in South Africa and Germany.

**JAN 23, 2021:** Speaking at Women’s Training on Biblical Peacemaking, Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, NC.

**FEB 19-21, 2021:** Speaking at the Parenting Conference, Midway Presbyterian Church, Powder Springs, GA.

**DR. GUY RICHARD**

**OCT 9-11:** Speaking at Shiloh OPC, Raleigh, NC.

**OCT 18-20:** Speaking at the Preach the Word Conference at Christ Covenant Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA.

**OCT 24-25:** Speaking at the Reformation Conference at Westminster PCA, Johnson City, TN.

**DR. WILLIAM ROSS**

**NOV 17-23:** Presenting two papers at the ETS, IBR, and SBL annual meetings.

**DR. GRAY SUTANTO**

**NOV 18:** Participating in a panel discussion at the ETS Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.
# Travel and Speaking

## Dr. Scott Swain

**Oct 2**: Hosting book release event, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg, VA.

**Nov 17-19**: Speaking at the ETS Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.

**Nov 21-24**: Attending the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA.

**Jan 7-8, 2021**: Speaking at the Paideia Center for Theological Discipleship Winter Conference on the Psalms and the Christian Life, Ovideo, FL.

**Jan 21-23, 2021**: Speaking at the Theology Conference on Worship, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA.

**Feb 16-18, 2021**: Lecturing at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA.

**Mar 4-5, 2021**: Lecturing at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX.

**Mar 15-19, 2021**: Teaching “Systematic Theology: Christology, Soteriology, Eschatology” at RTS Washington, Vienna, VA.

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## Dr. Guy Waters

**Oct 17-18**: Speaking at the Reformation Heritage Conference, Wayside Presbyterian Church, Signal Mountain, TN.

**Oct 23-25**: Speaking at the Fall Theology Conference, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, AL.

**Nov 18**: Presenting a paper at the ETS Annual Meeting, Providence, RI.

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## Dr. Charles Wingard

**Nov 6-8**: Speaking at the Reformation Conference, Providence Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, MD.

**Nov 13-15**: Speaking at the Shepherding Conference, Mississippi Valley Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, location TBD.

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For up-to-date information on travel and speaking engagements, please contact the event organizers.
**PUBLICATIONS**

**DR. MICHAEL ALLEN**

“Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology (Part Two)” for *Journal of Reformed Theology* (2020)


**DR. NATE BROOKS**


**DR. ROBERT CARA**


**DR. ROD CULBERTSON**

“Questions of Life: What is a Christian?” (2020)

**DR. J.V. FESKO**

“Girolamo Zanchi on Union with Christ and the Final Judgment” for *Perichoresis* (2020)

**DR. GREG LANIER**


**DR. NICHOLAS REID**


“A Literary Topos of Abundance: Two Emešal Prayers to Enki” for *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* (2020)

**DR. WILLIAM ROSS**


**DR. N. GRAY SUTANTO**


“Herman Bavinck’s Christian Worldview: Context, Classical Contours, and Significance” for *Reformed Faith And Practice* (2020)

“Christian Baptism: A Reformed Account” with Dr. James Anderson for *The T&T Clark Handbook of Analytical Theology* (forthcoming)

**DR. GUY WATERS**

“Covenant Dynamics” for *Tabletalk* (2020)

Reviewed James P. Ware’s *Paul’s Theology in Context: Creation, Incarnation, Covenant & Kingdom* for *Westminster Theological Journal* (2020)

Reviewed Thomas R. Schreiner’s *Romans* and Douglas J. Moo’s *The Letter to the Romans* for *Westminster Theological Journal* (2020)
JACKSON

**NOV 4:** Virtual Preview Day

**NOV 9-11:** John Reed Miller Preaching Lectures with Dr. Ligon Duncan

*For more information, call 601-923-1600*

The John Reed Miller Preaching Lectures will be released virtually and will include live Q&A sessions with Dr. Duncan on November 10 and 11.

ORLANDO

**JAN 7-8, 2021:** Paideia Center Annual Conference with Drs. Michael Horton, Mark McDowell, and Scott Swain.

*For more information, email paideiacenter@rts.edu*

CHARLOTTE

**DR. WILL ROSS’ DISSERTATION, LEXICOGRAPHY AND LANGUAGE CHANGE IN GREEK JUDGES, WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE SEPTUAGINT AND COGNATE STUDIES (SBLSCS) SERIES.**

WASHINGTON

**DR. SCOTT REDD HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS A SENIOR FELLOW AT THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM INSTITUTE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

RTS Washington released the “RTS Washington Faculty Podcast” in Spring 2020, with weekly episodes featuring different RTS faculty.

NYC

**OCT 15:** Virtual Preview Day

*For more information, call 866-926-4787*
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