



Reformed Theological Seminary

by **God's** grace
standing firm,
by beth roper but not standing still



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The founding of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) is the story of faithful men depending on God to accomplish what seemed impossible from a human perspective. Throughout all the stages of establishing the Seminary, from recruiting professors and students for its first classes to achieving accreditation and transforming a single school into a multi-campus operation, prayer and diligent labor for God's Kingdom have been the mode of operation.

In 1963, a small group of Mississippi pastors gathered before a meeting of the Synod of Mississippi of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) with a burden for renewal in the Southern Presbyterian Church. They prayed for a new seminary which would encourage American Presbyterianism to remain faithful to its Reformed heritage expressed chiefly by the conviction of the inspiration and authority of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God—the only ultimate rule for faith and practice—and also by the historic Calvinism of the Westminster Standards.

One of these ministers, Sam Patterson of French Camp Presbyterian Church, challenged Presbyterian elders in Jackson to begin planning for this new seminary, responding to pragmatic reservations with the straightforward, compelling question, "How big is your God?"

RTS, with its original campus in Jackson, was the answer to these early prayers and to the prayers of the persevering men who established this institution, which seeks to equip its students for ministry in accord with a current motto, "A mind for truth, A heart for God."

In his foreword to a history of the Seminary by John R. Muether, an RTS Library Director, Ligon Duncan, Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, expresses the continuing need for such a seminary, "The ecclesiastical landscape has altered since the days of the school's founding, but the Seminary continues to serve in a time of crisis. The world needs the Word of God and the hope and comfort of the Reformed faith."

God's gracious provision for the Seminary is evident in the forty-one-year history of RTS. RTS has increased in campuses, degree programs, faculty, and students, but its expansion can also be expressed in the fundamental role of this Mississippi-born seminary in the growth of American evangelical thought. RTS's contributions take a variety of shapes, with its professors' biblical and theological scholarship including commentaries on over half of the Biblical canon and much work on the New Geneva Study Bible, currently published as the Reformation Study Bible. More than 8,000 students trained by the Seminary serve as leaders in more than 60 denominations around the world. RTS trains ministers in so many different denominations because the school remains independent, but with the formation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in 1973, RTS has had a particularly strong influence in this denomination.

Jackson was chosen from various cities throughout the United States for the Seminary's location because it was the largest city within the presbytery in tune with its desire for conservative reformation and staunch biblical orthodoxy. The Seminary exceeded its founders' expectations when an early concept, the Reformed Theological Institute for lay education, quickly transformed in accord with the original goal of offering graduate education, and the Seminary opened in September of 1966 with five full-time professors and fourteen students. ▶



PHOTOS COURTESY RTS

OPPOSITE PAGE AND LEFT: RTS Students in prayer; The Seminary holds weekly worship services, as well as weddings and prayer meetings, at Grace Chapel, completed in 1971.



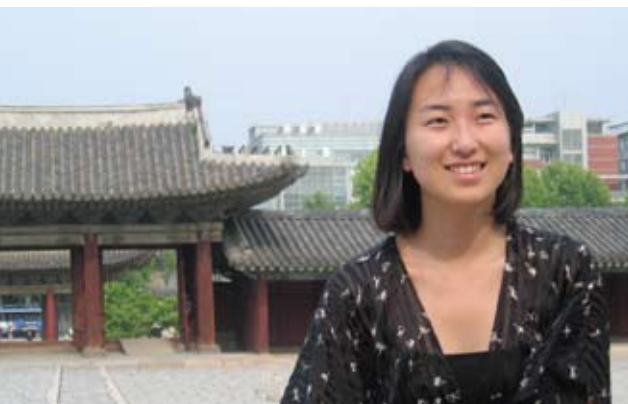
ABOVE: The White House was Reformed Theological Seminary's original building where the first classes met.

COURTESY RTS
TEMPY SEGREST



"I've really enjoyed the Southern culture I've experienced in Jackson, but at the same time, one of my favorite experiences at RTS has been meeting international students. Just this month, I visited African Bible College in Malawi and saw one of my former RTS classmates who is now an instructor there."

Matt Giesman, Dothan, Alabama (M.Div.)



"As a flutist, one of my primary interests in ministry is church music. As Christians, we should know that music in the church is about praising God and not about satisfying our emotional needs. I've learned that it is of utmost importance to become a better servant of God rather than striving merely to become a better person—if you are a good servant of God, you will be a good person to everyone."

Yong Wook Kim, South Korea (M.A.)

COURTESY YONG WOOK KIM



COURTESY RTS

"I have come to appreciate God so much more through learning Hebrew and Greek, and studying the biblical languages truly enhances our understanding of the Bible. I desire to serve God in other countries, and I believe RTS has given me tremendous cultural experiences, through the classes in the missions department and also through conversations with other believers from different parts of the world."

Andy Ew, Malaysia (M.Div.)



COURTESY RTS

"I'm proud that the Center for Marriage and Family Therapy is a place for me as a student therapist to gain experience from a Christian perspective and to serve the community in a practical way. My favorite part of the program is the opportunity to show compassion to hurting individuals, couples, and families and to empower them to communicate love and connection with others."

Tim Allyn, Washington, Missouri (M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy Counseling)


Initial funds to purchase the Jackson property and begin operation came from the substantial gift of an anonymous donor among numerous other individuals, a loan which would be forgiven at another donor's death upon demonstration of the school's fidelity to its founding principles, contributions from 66 churches, and even the willingness of a Jackson construction company to build the library at cost.


The White House, still a prominent landmark on the Jackson campus, originally served as an academic building for the first classes. The Seminary later purchased a nearby building, which was replaced in 1971 by Grace Chapel, where chapel services, weddings, and prayer meetings are held regularly; other classroom buildings still in use followed in the '70s.

The first professors and students came to the Seminary with risks to their careers and with no security that the institution would survive to grant their degrees, but in May of 1968, the first commencement celebrated the graduation of three students. The professors at RTS continue to teach without tenure under a system of annual, renewable contracts which entail conformity to the Seminary's "Statement of Belief and Covenant," a policy which reiterates the Seminary's desire to remain faithful to its founding doctrines.

Early in the Seminary's history, students formed a Society for Missionary Inquiry, which remains active, holding a weekly Bible study and supporting outreach efforts such as a recent Bible distribution to the neighborhoods surrounding the Jackson campus. The Seminary maintains relationships with missions organizations such as Reformed University Fellowship (RUF), Campus Crusade for Christ, Campus Outreach, Young Life, Family Life Ministry, Joni and Friends, and Mission to the World (MTW) in Monterrey, Mexico.

In addition to developing its degree programs at satellite campuses located in Orlando, Florida; Charlotte, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, D.C., the Seminary has partnered internationally with universities in South Korea, Brazil, and Scotland, and has also established relationships with seminaries in Japan, the Ukraine, and Prague. However, in the midst of seeking opportunities to minister throughout the world, the Seminary's graduates continue to serve churches not only across Mississippi, but throughout the entire United States. A recent church plant, Lagniappe Presbyterian Church, began on the Gulf Coast because RTS graduates saw the devastation of Katrina as a call to work for relief through a church that performs outreach efforts, including building projects and counseling services. ▶





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COURTESY TIINA MALKAMÄKI

"RTS equips us for ministry in the best possible way, giving us a deeper understanding of the Word of God, which forces us to understand how dependent we are on the grace of God in our ministry. We learn to express our dependency through prayer. We are also learning to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ in our calling as Christians. I hope to teach in Christian schools in northern Europe in order to teach the children of God the things of God and raise awareness of the importance of Christian Education in the places where God calls me."

Tiina Malkamäki, Finland (M.A. in Christian Education)

RTS's thriving campuses at Charlotte and Orlando have proven the possibility of continuing the effort to train ministers throughout the United States and impact other regions. The mission of RTS's current Engaging the Future financial campaign to plant more seminary campuses in the United States is described by Robert C. (Ric) Cannada, Jr., Chancellor and CEO of RTS: "In a world of alarming compromise and confusion, RTS is *standing firm* on the inerrancy of Scripture and biblical principles. *But we are not standing still.* God has charged RTS with the vital work of helping to prepare his servants to reach the world for Christ."

The Seminary's goal is to offer the Master of Divinity program of its Jackson, Charlotte, and Orlando campuses in both Atlanta, and Washington D.C., as well. Information about this campaign is available online at www.rts.edu/financial campaign or by calling Lyn Perez at 407-366-9493.

Technology now affords RTS the ability to reach more students who can study at RTS through the Virtual Campus without leaving home or job to become full-time students. Through the free downloads from iTunes U, 25 complete courses and nearly 800 additional individual lectures from 16 different professors, including chapel messages and guest lectures, are available to the public. With an average of about 15,000 downloads weekly, this phenomenal resource also makes biblical and theological education available for many who listen for pleasure and edification. To enjoy these quality lectures, visit itunes.rts.edu.

The tremendous ripple effect of RTS education has produced students who have extended solid, biblical training by starting over 28 seminaries and Bible colleges around the world, as well as faithfully preaching the Gospel at home and internationally. President of RTS, Jackson Guy Richardson, describes the growing impact of RTS: "While the founders of RTS had a great vision to educate pastors, missionaries, and other church leaders who would be faithful to God's Word, never in their wildest dreams did they envision the global reach that RTS would have. And the impact that started from its humble beginnings in Jackson forty-one years ago is still expanding." The Seminary has grown from the vision and prayers of its dedicated founders, professors, students, and supporters, from a single campus to a multi-campus institution preparing pastors, missionaries, educators, and counselors in the United States and throughout the world. ■

"RTS unexpectedly became the choice for this Midwest girl when it came to choosing a seminary; I knew I'd receive excellent, in-depth teaching of the Bible, live in an encouraging community right here on campus, and, of course, get to fully experience the joys of Mississippi life!"

Lisa Repair, Omaha, Nebraska (M.A.)



COURTESY TIINA MALKAMÄKI



COURTESY RTS

"From the biblical studies department, I learned how to preach Christ from the Old and New Testaments. From the systematic theology department, I learned how to live 'blessedly forever' according to the promises of the Gospel. From the missions and practical theology departments, I learned how to apply the reality of the belief in the death and resurrection of Christ in all of life—how to preach Christ and him crucified. Now, after graduating from RTS, God willing, I will be heading to Spain to help in a Reformed Church and for further graduate studies. I want to serve Christ and his Church because, as an old English man once said, 'All the fulfillment of man's desires takes place in the person of Christ and in Christ's Church.'"

*Arturo Terrazas, Mexico (M.Div.)
Graduated May, 2008*