

July 3, 2010

Dear Bebo, Roger, members of the Shepherding and Advisory Committee, and fathers and brothers of the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley (PMV):

Thank you so much for the honor and privilege of working for the Lord in PMV with you. By your call and permission, I serve PMV as Chancellor/CEO and John E. Richard's Professor of Systematic & Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary. September 1 of this year will mark the beginning of my 7th year as Chancellor of RTS (which seems really hard to believe), as well as the beginning of my 30th year with RTS, the beginning of my 30th year of PCA ordination, and 35th since licensure. We have been blessed by God at RTS, and I want to share with you briefly about both my labors and God's favor to us at RTS, as a part of my annual report to PMV.

I continue to serve actively in all aspects of the life of PMV and the PCA. I attend numerous PCA (and other NAPARC) presbytery and GA meetings (often as a representative of the PCA), and serve on the PMV nominations committee. I attended five Presbyterian synods/general assemblies in June (OPC, RPCNA, ARP, EPC and PCA).

I have regularly preached in numerous PCA and other reformed churches this past year. I preach on average about three of four Sundays in the month, and regularly speak at special services (conferences and the like). Most of my preaching is in the PCA. When I am not preaching somewhere, I am worshipping with my family at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS under the able ministry of my pastor, David Strain. This past year, I have preached at a number of PCA, OPC & ARP presbytery meetings, as well as serving on ordination commissions for a number of former RTS students. I will be preaching for the PMV mission church in Jakarta, Indonesia in August.

I teach a full load of theology courses at RTS, in addition to my other duties as Chancellor. This is by conviction that my calling is primarily to teach and preach the Word. I have taught at RTS Jackson, Washington, and New York City regularly for the last three years. I am teaching a course at RTS Atlanta and RTS Washington, DC, this month.

RTS is entering our 54th year of ministry this fall. We have more students than ever (we started with 14 and now have about 1750 taking courses for credit, about 2100 including auditors!). We have three national/international campuses (Jackson, Orlando, and Charlotte), two regional/metropolitan campuses (Washington and Atlanta), and three smaller sites (New York City, Houston, and Dallas). So we are teaching in seven States, eight cities, plus through our Global program students from every continent, as well as in Sao Paulo, Brazil in our joint program with Mackenzie Presbyterian University. We have also have signed an agreement to work with UPH, a university in Jakarta, Indonesia, to open the RTS Center for Reformed Theology. Former RTS Jackson student, Dr. Craig Sheppard will be leading that work.

I would remind the presbytery that all RTS board members and faculty are required to affirm unequivocally our commitment to biblical inerrancy and the Westminster Standards annually. By God's

grace, RTS has not wavered in our commitment to biblical and reformed orthodoxy. Each year, I have to sign this subscription formula:

"Believing that there is but one only, the living and true God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one and the same in substance, equal in power and glory, and with solemn awareness of accountability to Him in all that we feel, think, say and do, the undersigned engages in and subscribes to this declaration:

1. All Scripture is self-attesting and, being truth, requires the human mind wholeheartedly to subject itself in all its activities to the authority of Scripture complete as the Word of God, standing written in the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible, all therein being verbally inspired by Almighty God and therefore without error.
2. Reformed theology as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as accepted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America as its standard of doctrine at its first General Assembly in 1789 is the system of doctrine taught in Scripture; and, therefore, it is to be learned, taught and proclaimed for the edification and government of Christian people, for the propagation of the faith and for the evangelization of the world by the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. And I do solemnly promise and engage not to inculcate, sanction, teach or insinuate anything that appears to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or implicitly, any element of that system of doctrine.
4. NOW THEREFORE, the undersigned in the presence of God, states and signifies that he consents, agrees, and binds himself to all of the foregoing without any reservation whatsoever, and that he further obligates himself immediately to notify in writing the trustees should a change of any kind take place in his belief and feeling not in accord with this statement. Amen."

It is a joy and honor to be able to affirm those vows and work for you at RTS. I tell my students: "I'm not even allowed to dream against the Confession in my sleep!"

My wife, Anne, has now retired from her decade-plus of work at Jackson Prep as a Senior High Counselor and teacher. This has both been a ministry on her part and has helped us with tuition costs for our children. She is working now with the RTS Jackson Women in Ministry program. In May, our daughter, Sarah Kennedy, graduated magna cum laude as an honors student in Education and History at the University of Alabama, and will be teaching Middle School in Greenville, SC (my hometown) starting in August. Our son Jennings is a rising sophomore at Mississippi State University (studying English, History, Philosophy and Religion) in the Shackhous Honors College. He is serving on the worship team at Grace PCA, Starkville and is working as a summer intern with the youth ministry at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson.

I would humbly request that the presbytery continue my service laboring out of bounds of presbytery at RTS.

Your friend,

