

RTS – REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY HEIDELBERG
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Bless the Lord, the King of Glory, ...
Psalm 103,1a; 24,7b

Dear brothers and sisters, dear friends of RTS,

At this time of year, the words “bless the Lord, the King of glory” can be heard almost constantly on German radio stations. They are taken from a song by the German theologian Joachim Neander (1650 – 1680) based on Psalms 103:1a and 24:7b. It was published in his hymn book with covenant songs and thanksgiving Psalms after his death in 1680 and has remained a cherished part of the German music tradition to this day.

The song is a much-needed antidote to our Christmas consumer mentality, marked by vague images of a handsome baby somewhere in a pretty manger surrounded by cute donkeys. The Son of God, who came into the world, became incarnate and was made man 2000 years ago, is the Lord we read about in Psalm 103:1a. He is the king of glory (Psalm 24:7b). The first Christians of the New Testament churches knew this, and it was confirmed during the Reformation:

These are the reasons why we confess him to be true God and truly human—true God in order to conquer death by his power, and truly human that he might die for us in the weakness of his flesh (Belgic Confession, article 19).

Christ, the Son of the one true God, is whom Christmas and in fact everything is all about. It is him we are to proclaim:

“For I am decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”
(1 Cor 2:2).

This idea encapsulates the calling of RTS Heidelberg, namely to provide Scripture based training for pastors, missionaries and evangelists to build up the church of Jesus Christ. Through its ministry, RTS Heidelberg wants to contribute to the renewal and the growth of Christ’s church.

Looking back at the past year, we are grateful and looking forward to the future, we are hopeful. Thanks to the Lord’s abundant blessings, progress has been made regarding the teaching as well as the seminary itself. Despite some regulations, the teaching could take place without any problems – it was offered in hybrid form, i.e. a combination of in-person and online lessons.

In the summer term, Dr. Bernhard Kaiser held a seminar on dogmatics, which built on his course *An Introduction to Reformed and Modern Theology* from last winter. The RTS students benefited greatly from Dr. Kaiser’s longstanding experience at various theological seminaries, including ten years as chairholder at the *Institute for Reformed Faculty of Theology* at *János Sebe University* in Komárno, Hungary. Further, a homiletics course, which was offered to advanced students last year, took place at RTS for the first time. This hands-on course, in which Professor Hans Maris and Pastor Sebastian Heck also acted as mentors, was an important step on the path to becoming a preacher. Sadly, a course on the exegesis of the New Testament by Dr Martin Emmrich, an OPC pastor from the US, had to be cancelled as he was hurt in a car accident.

RTS Heidelberg does not stand alone in its endeavours and so we are very grateful for a worthwhile visit to CRTS (*Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary*) in Hamilton, Canada, at the beginning of the year. Also, we are thankful for a joint meeting of the RTS Board and CRTS colleagues as well as for being in contact with students in Canada.

Further, the SERK Germany (Free Evangelical-Reformed Churches in Germany) were invited to take part as official observer in the ICRC (*International Conference of Reformed Churches*) in Windhoek, Namibia,

in October, which not only provided the opportunity to speak about the church landscape in Germany but also to present RTS Heidelberg. This opportunity led to several helpful conversations with representatives from other reformed seminaries around the world. Throughout the year we were in direct contact with other theological seminaries, especially in English-speaking countries as well as in the Netherlands and in Eastern Europe. This exchange proved helpful for the further orientation and development of RTS Heidelberg. Here, the collaboration with ERSU (*Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine*) in Kyiv deserves special mention. In light of the unjustified attack on Ukraine and the war that has been ongoing for almost eleven months, we would like to assure not only ERSU but anyone in Ukraine and other war zones of our prayers.

Grateful to our Lord and in light of *solus Deo gloria*, RTS Heidelberg celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, 2012 – 2022. Here are several highlights:

- The anniversary celebration as part of the official opening of the new academic year on 29th October 2022
- At this special event, Pastor Sebastian Heck gave a devotion on 2 Timothy 3:16 – 4:2. On the basis of this passage, he explained very accurately how Scripture as the living word of God (2 Tim 3:16–17) is connected to the task of faithful preaching (2 Tim 4:1–2) and what that means for the ministry of the Word
- We were very pleased that Professor Hans Maris, the longstanding chairman of the RTS Board, agreed to give the keynote address. In his captivating speech on serving in the body of Christ, Professor Maris awakened new enthusiasm in his listeners for the heart of Christian living, namely serving within the church, which is founded by and focused on Christ alone. For listeners abroad, we provided a livestream of the event and an English translation of the address on the RTS website
- For our anniversary, we received greetings from
 - Professor Jason Van Vliet (CRTS, Canada)
 - Alister Torrens (ERSU, Ukraine)
 - Dr. Bernard Kaiser (IRT, *Institute für Reformed Theology* in the name of our guest lecturers)
 - Pastor René van der Wolf (GKN und AvGT, *Academie vir Gereformeerde Theologie*, Netherlands)
 - Professor Heon Soo Kim (*Independent Reformed Theological Academy*, South Korea)
- The second volume of our journal *RTbZ* (Reformed Theological Journal) with contributions on *Luther as a Protestant Catechist* by Professor Udo Kern and on *Reformed Perspectives on a Multi-Religious World* by Drs. Jos Colijn was presented at the opening of the new academic year.

On behalf of my colleagues and the RTS Board, I wish you the blessing of our Lord for this Advent time and Christmas season and for the New Year. In the spirit of Psalm 103:1, may we praise the Lord in all we do at RTS Heidelberg.

To all the churches, institutions and individuals who faithfully support and continue to sustain us through their prayers and financial gifts, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Victor E. d'Assonville

<p>Account information for supporting from the USA: Checks should be made out to Providence Reformed Church and sent to <i>Providence Reformed Church</i> 245 East Vine Street Lodi, CA 95240 (with a notation that <i>the funds are intended for "Mission2Germany"</i>) jerrylynette@msn.com</p>
