

God is Changing our Students

By Vicki Sairs

Editor's note: This February at Pastors' Conference in Montgomery, Indiana, RBC shared a brief report on the college. We'd like to share highlights of that report with you.

A brief summary: Interim President Jon Showalter opened by explaining that we “generally report with greater detail at the annual conference,” given that both our fiscal and our academic year reset in the summer.

His mid-year summary was short, but sincere: “We’re excited about sharing life with our students this year. We’d be glad for a few more students; we’d be glad for a little more money.” With regard to students, he said that we’re going into spring semester with about the same numbers as last year;

“with regard to money, we’re well ahead of last year, though the ink is still reddish. We’ll keep you posted!”

Jon then introduced faculty and staff members who talked about their areas of activity at the school.



The Jon Showalter Family

Transformed thinking and cleaning the lint trap:

Phil Weber, academic dean, began by praising our students for “their open and thoughtful engagement with their classes during winter term.” He added that we have students from 20 different CMC congregations this year.

Phil then reviewed our three Cross-Cultural programs, which take place in a rotating cycle over winter term. Two years ago, students toured Europe, last year they studied in Spain, and at the time of this conference, twelve students were living and studying at Regions Beyond Ministries near Thika in Kenya.

Phil shared one student’s comments about things she valued about her Kenyan experience:

“Learning worship songs in Swahili with our Kenyan friends. That was pretty awesome!”; “I really enjoyed chapel . . . we would sing in English, Swahili, Kikuyu and other random languages, and I learned how to dance Kenyan style, too!” She also enjoyed late-night conversations with other students. “Those were the times I felt closest to the group.”

Phil closed by sharing an anecdote from his Romans class. They had studied Romans 12.1-2 (“Be not conformed, but transformed . . .”), and a day or two later, he asked how students had been transformed in their thinking. A young man volunteered that while doing his laundry, he was faced with a decision about whether to honor others by cleaning the dryer lint filter, or just letting it go, as so many did. He thought about being conformed vs. transformed and decided he would clean the filter. “We laughed and were caught off guard by such a simple example, but realized quickly that it demonstrated on a small scale precisely the kind of process that changes lives. . . . So God is changing our students in other parts of the world, on our campus, and even in the laundry room of the men’s dorm.”



The Weber Family

Telling others about Rosedale:

Enrollment Services Coordinator Darnell Brenneman graduated from RBC in 2007. “I came back,” he said, “for the opportunity to tell others about Rosedale” so that they could “experience the same change and spiritual growth that I did.”

Darnell reported that Daniel and Danae Beitzel from Grantsville, Maryland were visiting schools and youth groups in seven states to promote RBC to high school students. He finished with an invitation: “If you have young people at your church that you think should come to RBC, please talk to me, send me an email, and encourage them to consider Rosedale.” (You can reach Darnell at dbrenneman@rosedale.edu).



The Brenneman Family



Advancing the conversation: Communications Coordinator Vicki Sairs talked about two aspects of her work with students: leading a student prayer group and teaching.

For Vicki, leading a group has been meaningful. She gets to know the students in ways that wouldn't otherwise be possible. "Praying together is one way we try to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength."

Time in her classroom is different, she said, yet still connected to loving God. To work on Spanish or literature or composition "is a part of loving God with all our heart and all our strength and all our soul and all our mind."

Students find ways to contribute to the conversation that's been going on among human beings since the beginning of time. This conversation involves big questions: who are we, where did we come from, and why are we here? Christians can enter into that discussion, contribute what wisdom they have, and advance the conversation. But they must take care to say things in a way that the people around them can understand.

To help her students do this, she requires that they write for a mixed secular audience, learning how to speak truth in a way that can be heard by someone who totally disagrees with them.

"When my class starts looking sluggish, I ask them: 'What are we trying to do?' And they shout back in unison: 'Advance the conversation!'"

So God is changing our students in other parts of the world, on our campus, and even in the laundry room of the men's dorm.

Great delight in a faith that grows: Reuben Sairs began by saying that we "take great delight in a faith that grows, a faith that can answer the challenges" that we all have to face.

He introduced the preaching class he's teaching this spring, which is online in the form of podcasts that anyone can access at no cost (just go to rosedale.edu and click on the Preaching Class card, or go directly to <http://rosedale.edu/academics/preaching.php>.)

"I have preached many sermons," he said. "Like many of us I had to do that without ever being taught—I imitated those I respected, invented some things of my own, prayed, and hoped it worked. Sometimes it did. I believe the Lord's Word never comes back void, but I'm pretty sure mine can. A class wouldn't have hurt me. I've heard many sermons in which I thought, 'a class wouldn't hurt.'"

He thinks preaching has three elements: the preacher's relation to the congregation; the preacher's relation to the Scripture; and only then, preparing and delivering the message.

"It makes sense to know who you are and what your resources are before you try to put together a sermon. Otherwise it is a little like standing in front of a woodpile with a saw and hammer and no plan at all."

The class includes reading, study, discussions, and practice, he said. "The Olympics are on right now. What if our preachers took the task as seriously and worked on it much as ice skaters and skiers and snow boarders?"

RBC recruitment video: Dean of Students Matt Showalter couldn't be there, but he joined us via a video that showcased our students and also introduced Bridge, a nine-month internship program which combines classroom instruction with ministry training. We're very excited about Bridge; be sure to check out the video at <http://youtu.be/nAIKvs9LNXU>.



Jon's closing remarks: I want to end by reflecting on what RBC is, and the role it's been asked to fill in the Conference. RBC was called into existence by CMC to teach, and that's still our mission. We are a place of: study of the Bible, theology, and history; discernment (what's God calling me to?); and life transformation and discipleship.

From its beginning, RBC has adapted, adjusted, and changed to meet the changing priorities of CMC. We're still working at that. Throughout the past year a strategic planning team, convened by the board, has met regularly to reflect, to brainstorm, to dream, to propose . . . you're likely to hear more about that in the coming months.

I sometimes think of CMC and its institutions in terms of division of labor. The conference office is responsible to organize, to lead, to manage the work of this association we call CMC. If they don't do that, they aren't doing their job. RMM is responsible to inspire, to organize, to mobilize the church to reach the world, both here and abroad. If they don't do that, they aren't doing their job.

RBC is responsible to teach, to disciple, to train with a focus on Scripture, on doctrine, on history, on trends. If we don't do that, we aren't doing our job.

That's a high calling to follow. And it's a privilege to follow it.