

RPTS Featured Alum Rutledge Etheridge, RPTS Class of 2006

By Beverly Simpson (Posted September 9, 2008)

On June 10, 2006, Rut was ordained and installed as Pastor of the Providence RP Church in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. God has blessed the ministry as the church family is growing in grace as well as in numbers. The Lord has also been pleased to increase the Etheridge household!



On June 5 of this year, baby daughter Caroline (Callie) arrived, joining big brother Isaiah (now two and a half years old), to make Rut and wife Evelyn a family of four. Callie was baptized on June 29.

When speaking of his flock, Rut describes the congregation this way: “Providence is blessed to be a multi-generational congregation from a variety of walks of life, including many who, though living in the Pittsburgh area, represent a number of tribes and nations! In addition, during the



academic year, several students from RPTS and Grove City College worship with us and participate in the life of the church. At the same time, somewhat of a baby boom happily continues among us as we witness the blessing of covenant children being multiplied to us. God continues to draw us closer to Christ and to each other as His people.”

On the Lord’s Day, the people of Providence gather for two services, at 10:00am and 1:00pm, with a potluck fellowship dinner following

morning worship. Regular ministries include a Wednesday evening Bible study where Rut is leading a careful, deliberate examination of the Gospel of John; a monthly men’s prayer breakfast; a monthly women’s Bible study, led by ladies of the congregation; and a Bible study at Carnegie Mellon University. There is also a monthly men’s pistol league/dinner outing which provides a great time for men of the church and those they invite to get together. A number of times throughout the year the church family enjoys fellowship events which have included an annual hayride, a church picnic, and an ice cream social.

For Rut, the CMU Bible study has been a particular highlight of the church’s ministry. During the academic year, a number of college and seminary students join him at Carnegie Mellon on Wednesday evenings (following the Bible study at the church) for an evangelistic/apologetic

look into the claims of Scripture. Initially meeting more informally for coffee, this past year the group moved into a designated room on campus. Rut elaborates on this opportunity for ministry the Lord has opened.

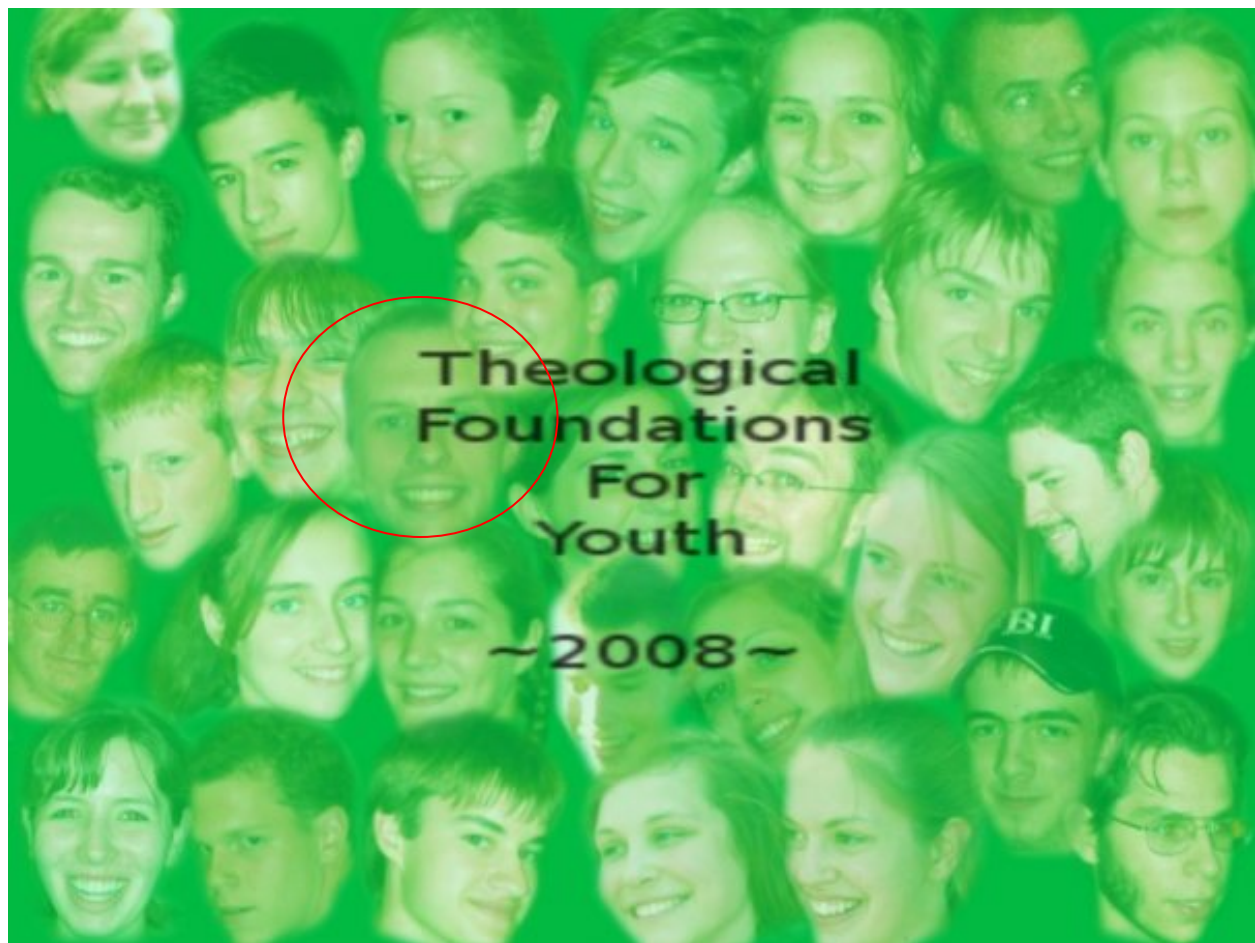
“This ministry is an answer to prayer. We have thousands of college students within miles of the church, and we want to impact that student community for the Gospel to whatever extent the Lord will allow us. It’s a joy to meet students on campus, both believers and unbelievers, and to engage them in a serious study of God’s Word. I’m so thankful for the others in the church family who come along to be part of the study.”



This summer marked Providence’s second Vacation Bible School. Although primarily planned as a fun time of Biblical teaching for children of the congregation, the program is also designed to reach children in the community outside the church. Talking about this year’s program, held on July 16-18, Rut explains, “This year we made the event three nights rather than one. This extended program called for much volunteer work, and the church family responded wonderfully. There is nothing more encouraging as a pastor than seeing the saints delighting in and giving themselves to the work of Gospel ministry. While no children from the church’s immediate neighborhood came, we did have some guests, and several parents and grandparents were heartened at how well their beloved young ones could memorize Scripture. Hearing their plans to make Scripture memory that much more a part of their family lives has been so encouraging to those who put so much time into this summer ministry.”

In conjunction with the timing for VBS, for the third consecutive summer Providence members distributed information about the church to homes in the neighborhood. Dan Drost, the summer ministerial intern, headed up this endeavor on two Saturday mornings—packets were delivered to about 750 homes!

Also, to let people in the area know about the church, last year one of the Providence families set up a booth at the local Brookline Community Day. Rut sees this work as a vital part of the church's calling. "Through these efforts, we are seeking to hold forth the Word of Life to the community in which God has placed us as a worshipping assembly. It is important to let these folks know who we are, that we are here, and that we want to have a Gospel-centered relationship with them." Those interested in learning more about Providence can also visit the new website, www.providencerpchurch.com, which contains a link to the church's sermonaudio.com site.



Over the last three years, Rut and Evelyn have served on staff for TFY (Theological Foundations for Youth) which is held each summer at the Seminary. This year's event offered new challenges with a record number of students (28), and Rut's taking on more teaching and counseling responsibilities. Rut is a strong proponent of this ministry for our youth. "This is one of the most exciting and important ministries going on in the RPCNA. It is such a wonderful privilege to give young people time to wrestle through the most important issues of life, to meet

like-minded peers from all across the nation, and to challenge them to become more firmly (and Lord willing permanently) rooted in the RP church.”



Another teaching opportunity began this September as Rut again serves as an adjunct professor for the Introduction to Reformed Theology course at RPTS. “I thoroughly enjoyed doing it last year and am looking forward to getting back at it,” he says enthusiastically.

As he discusses the scope of responsibilities involved in pastoral ministry, Rut believes the importance of the local church’s governing and administrative bodies cannot be overstated. “A godly session is vital to the life and ministry of

any local congregation, and I’m blessed to work with such men. Providence’s two ruling elders are CJ Williams, the founding pastor of the congregation and now Professor of Old Testament Studies at the Seminary, and Jim McFarland, RPCNA Treasurer. Both men have servant-hearts and are very involved in the oversight of the flock. They are tremendous blessings to the church family and to me in particular as the pastor.”

He also points to the work of the deacons with appreciation. “Our deacons work hard in the areas of finance, mercy ministry, and building maintenance. Their work is behind the scenes, but absolutely indispensable to the life of the church family.”

Reflecting on his first couple of years as Pastor of Providence RPC, Rut expresses gratitude. “Evelyn and I are very thankful to the Lord that He has placed us in this portion of His Kingdom to labor for Him. To Him be the glory in the Church and in Jesus Christ forever!”

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