



# ROCHESTER COLLEGE Church Connections

A Forum for the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region

Vol. 2 No. 3—Spring 2005

## mission: Church Connections

**engage** the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region and offer a link for them to engage one another

**educate** the people of the Church of Christ in the Great Lakes region for lives of study and service

**empower** the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region to complete their redemptive mission

## mission: ROCHESTER COLLEGE

Rochester College exists to engage students in a vigorous liberal arts education within a Christian community for a life of study and service.

**Church Connections** is published in the spring, fall, and winter by the Rochester College public relations office, 300 West Avon Road, Rochester Hills, Mich., 48307. Rochester College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 30 North LaSalle, Suite 2400, Chicago, Ill., 60602. Phone: 312.263.0456. Rochester College does not discriminate on the basis of ethnic or national origin, religion, or skin color. The College does not discriminate on the basis of gender, except for specific necessary religious principles held by the College and its governing body.

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## An Interview with Rubel Shelley

by Amanda M. Wolfe

Dr. Rubel Shelly—preacher for Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, author of numerous books, and teacher within churches of Christ—plans to join Rochester College this fall as an adjunct instructor. In a conversation with Dr. Shelly, Church Connections heard more about his background in ministry and his plans for teaching at Rochester College.

CC: Tell me about your experience in ministry.

**Rubel:** For the last 26 plus years, I have been the preaching minister at Woodmont Church in Nashville, the co-editor of Wineskins magazine, spoken at several lectureships at colleges and universities throughout the country and have been heavily involved in the Nashville community with the focus of integrating the church into the life of the community. Most notably, the church is involved in helping people with substance abuse issues from drugs and alcohol to sexual addictions and gambling. The reason for this involvement is that culturally, addictions are metaphors for the biblical counterpart of being enslaved in sin. Ultimately, addictions are spiritual issues that are best dealt with by people who understand that. The foundation for working in the community is to look like Jesus and to carry out what he started in his ministry on earth.

CC: In what ways has God used ministry to grow you personally?

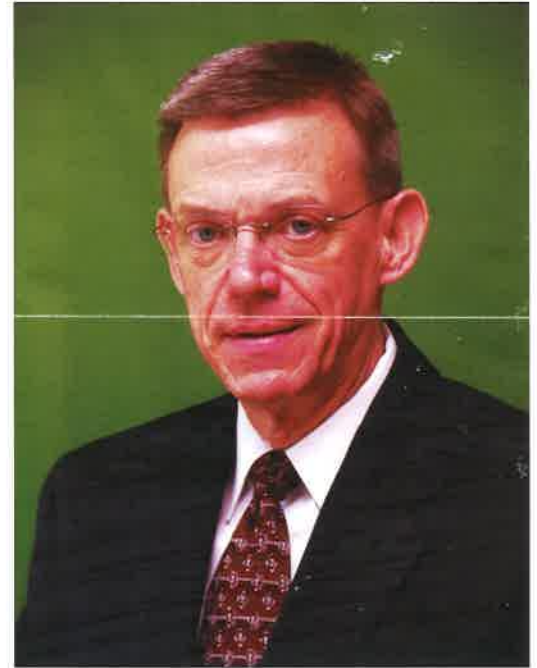
**Rubel:** The Gospel is not a set of doctrinal beliefs to follow, but is meant to be a daily interaction with Jesus. Jesus was very involved in his community and we have to embrace the community as he did. The church has been sluggish and has relied on church services to provide the main part of ministry. Instead, the church needs to be creative and en flesh the ministry of Jesus in each of our different circumstances.

CC: Why do you feel called to teach at RC now?

**Rubel:** I really like what I see happening there academically and practically. The institution's sense of mission parallels my own and I believe it is the best fit for where my own passions lie. At heart, I am an academic. The classroom is my first love.

CC: Where have you taught prior?

**Rubel:** From most recent, Tennessee State University, Vanderbilt Medical Center, and David Lipscomb University.



CC: What do you hope students will learn the most from your time here?

**Rubel:** I have unique experiences as an academic that spent 26 years in local ministry. I believe I bring with me the experience of a long-term practitioner in community ministry. I hope students will be able to learn from and integrate my ministry and passions into their vision of how they want their ministries to look.

CC: At times such as this, with this type of change on your horizon, what do you feel is the key to successfully handling change or life's circumstances?

**Rubel:** I am comfortable with the idea that faith is a journey. I don't let myself get comfortable in one spot for too long because God challenges us through new circumstances. I am eager to write a different chapter in my life. Faith truly is a pilgrimage.

CC: Just for clarification, what will your role be at Woodmont as you transition into an adjunct teaching position at the College?

**Rubel:** I am taking a part-time role with the church focusing on a continuing commitment to community ministries. I will no longer be preaching or doing pastoral type work. It's time to move on to a different type of work and teaching with Rochester College is exactly what I've been looking for.



# events:

## May

- 7 Partnership Dinner XXXIV  
Cobo Convention Center  
Detroit, Mich.  
248.218.2012  
gmitchel@rc.edu
- Concerned Brethren Breakfast  
Annapolis Park, Mich.  
248.218.2144  
dlfeer@rc.edu
- 14 Overcoming Depression and  
Grief Workshop  
Wyoming Ave. Church of Christ  
Detroit, Mich.  
313.345.6106  
wyomingchurchofchrist.org
- 23-25 Rochester College Sermon  
Seminar: "Who Are You?"  
Rochester Hills, Mich.  
248.218.2144  
www.rc.edu/sermonseminar
- 27-29 20th Annual MCYC  
Family Retreat  
Attica, Mich.  
810.664.0840  
www.mcy.org

## June

- 4 Concerned Brethren Breakfast  
Mount Clemens, Mich.  
248.218.2144  
dlfeer@rc.edu

## July

- 22-23 Women of Faith Conference:  
*Extraordinary Faith*  
Auburn Hills, Mich.  
248.393.2723

## fyi:

**37** number of different congregations represented at Elderlink 2005

**6** number of different states attendees came from

# Rochester College Missions

## (Your name here), I presume?

by Amanda M. Wolfe

In 1840 a man began an unfathomable adventure. Dr. David Livingstone, a quiet man from Blantyre, Scotland, accomplished much in his 60 years of life. History credits Livingstone with being the first to cross Africa coast to coast, the first white man to see Victoria Falls, which he named, and expediting the anti-slavery movement.

Yet, his devotion came with a price—he survived a lion attack, lost his wife to African fever and eventually succumbed to the sickness himself. During one of his many bouts with the fever, New York Herald Tribune reporter Henry Stanley found Livingstone and uttered the now-legendary phrase, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Missionaries in the 21st century encounter similar perils. Yet, today, on the campus of Rochester College, students answer Christ's call no matter what the price. Recently, 23 students donated their Spring Break to the streets of inner-city Chicago, reaching out, with the help of the Lakeview Church of Christ, to the homeless, single moms and women exiting prostitution.

"The trip was a life-changing experience for me," said sophomore and team leader David Rotberg. "I saw things that made me sad and some that made me frustrated, but everywhere I looked, I saw God's people hard at work and lives being changed."

Kenneth Asewe, a sophomore music major from Nairobi, Kenya, converted to Christianity at the age of 15 after a missionary visited his village. Because of this life-changing experience, Asewe works with Made in the Streets, an organization that provides street children in Nairobi with basic life skills through schooling and occupational training in trades. Otter Creek Church of Christ in Nashville, TN, sponsors Asewe.

Additionally, alumni work in missions. Starting March 16, 2005, 24-year-old Caroline McMahon ('03) committed two years to the Transitional Living Center in Mariupol, Ukraine, working with orphans. The Rochester Church of Christ sponsors McMahon.

Several more students and alumni of Rochester College have become missionaries. These men and women passionately work to fulfill the call Christ affirms in the Great Commission of the Gospels.

## "Miracle Grow"—one church's amazing success story

by Samantha Waites

They have a current membership of 1,031. Three years ago they had 85 members. Linwood Church of Christ, located on Linwood Avenue in downtown Detroit, must be doing something right to be one of the fastest growing churches of Christ in Michigan.

Brother Mark Thompson, the congregation's minister for the past three years, strongly believes in impacting and supporting the community through outreach. Current programs at Linwood include a food pantry for the homeless; Young Disciples of Christ, a program that mentors to young African-American men from the ages of 9-19; and "Family Sundays," designed for families in the neighborhood.

Linwood's congregation complements outreach through sincere efforts to welcome everyone, while Thompson centers his sermons on emotional healing and practical life skills—pertinent issues for all. The combination of outreach, fundamental biblical topics and engaging worship have each factored into the church's staggering growth. But, without one key element, Thompson believes none of this could have happened.

"The Holy Spirit has worked in all of this," observed Thompson. "I knew in my spirit the church would grow, but I didn't realize it would take off like this."

Because Linwood rapidly approaches capacity in its current building, the church plans to construct a larger home in the near future. Ultimately, Linwood expects to see the congregation surpass the 5,000 mark in memberships.

## New opportunities emerge for College and churches

by Dr. David Fleer, vice president for church relations

We are thrilled that Dr. Rubel Shelly will be joining the Rochester College family fall 2005. Dr. Shelly announced at Nashville's Woodmont congregation that he will be "curtailing and stepping back" to make possible a part-time appointment to the faculty at Rochester College.

Dr. Shelly's work with the graduate program in religious studies is contingent on final approval by the Higher Learning Commission. We believe Dr. Shelly will be a perfect complement to our religion faculty as well as a wonderful resource person, mentor, teacher and preacher. We have long been impressed with his work in biblical texts and philosophy coupled with his ability to connect with a wide range of audiences within the academic arena.

For over a quarter century Dr. Shelly has

influenced an amazing number of ministries that are at the heart of the Woodmont congregation. From work with victims of domestic violence to programs that bridge the racial divide, Dr. Shelly's ministry has lived out the imperative of Micah 6:8, "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." The rich legacy he brings to our students preparing them for similar work is highly anticipated.

Dr. Shelly plans to commute to Rochester College every other week, teaching courses from his expertise, which fits our academic needs. The course schedules will be designed with both Dr. Shelly's interests and student needs in mind. The entire Rochester College community considers this a godsend and are pleased to welcome Dr. Shelly.



# ELEVATE

## Student event creates Christ like atmosphere

by Kelly Galloway

Every summer for over ten years, Rochester College has hosted a camp for middle and high school-aged students. Formerly

known as Summer Jam, Elevate engages people through a week of fun and fellowship that effectively impacts young lives. Youth ministers and the College's students volunteer as counselors during this week to help campers strengthen their relationship with Christ.

"We have approximately 30 Rochester students help with Elevate every year because they see the difference they can make in students' lives," said Todd Greer, admissions advisor.

Under the direction of Enrollment Services with alumnus Justin Remsing ('02) as director, Elevate wants to excite students about what a life lived for Christ means. Because of this, the 2005 theme is "EPIC: We Were Meant to Live For So Much More."

The week of June 19-24 expects between 150-175 students to descend on Rochester College's campus. The campers will live similarly to college students as they sleep in dormitories and take their meals in the cafeteria. Participation in activities such as devotional seminars, praise and worship, basketball and crafts will create community among the campers.

In the past, special guests like Riley Armstrong, the College's FOCUS and One Time Blind performed at Elevate. Riley Armstrong returns this year as the camp's emcee and entertainment with Jay Laffoon as the featured speaker.

For more information, visit the Elevate website at [www.rc.edu/elevate](http://www.rc.edu/elevate), or contact Eva Callahan in the College's admissions office at 248.218.2031 or 800.521.6010.

## In Memory of Robert Utley

by Michael W. Westerfield, President

As I write this article about Robert (Bob) Utley several weeks after his death, I am still in disbelief he is gone. Bob Utley was one of those people that seemed almost bigger than life. When I came to Michigan Christian College ten years ago, Bob and Mary were key supporters of the College and the Associates; that relationship continued through my tenure. Bob was a dedicated board member, a faithful donor and a constant promoter of the College.

One of Bob's last acts was to lead again with a major gift for the planned athletic center. During my tenure as president, Bob was a friend and supporter. He struggled with me about how we could lead the College to embrace its heritage and to expand its services to a greater number of people. Bob knew it was not easy to build a college, but he was right there with all of us—encouraging, raising questions and expressing, in

the end, his love for this place. Bob started "Church Connections," another example of the key role he played. Bob and Mary are valuable to this place we now call Rochester College.

I know Bob has now received his reward, but we will always feel an emptiness as we gather at those times that Bob would have been present. Bob's leadership will live on through the next generation of builders of Rochester College.



*Michael W. Westerfield*

## Souvenirs of West Side Central Church of Christ

by Dr. Vernon Boyd



Claud and Minnie Witty served the West Side Central Church of Christ in Detroit for over 32 years before he died on November 26, 1952. After preaching throughout the Midwest, he moved to Detroit and transformed a storefront congregation into one of the most successful ministries in Detroit at a time when a constant stream of disciples flooded into the city from the South. Claud was best known for creating unity between members of the churches of Christ and members of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

Minnie out-lived her husband several years. She preserved items from the old church building on Grand River and Kirby before it was taken by the city to make the I-94

expressway, which began construction in 1950 and ended in 1953. Austin Gilley, a member at the West Side Church, donated the collection basket, the pitchers used to fill communion cups and the electric wall clock to the Michigan Church History Collection at Rochester College.



## Update on Master of Religious Education approval process

by Dr. Mel Storm, professor of religion and Greek

Over six years ago, Rochester College began the groundwork for a master's degree in religion. Because so few options in graduate religious education existed in Southeast Michigan, the College explored the feasibility of this kind of offering. Faculty then designed a program to benefit ministers and church members seeking higher education in religion.

New religion faculty joined Rochester College, making the already highly credentialed undergraduate program even stronger. Additionally, the institution worked to build a library that would support a graduate program, and has successfully accomplished its goal. At this juncture, Rochester College stands ready to embark on the next leg of the process.

The Master of Religious Education (MRE) received approval from the State of Michigan in November 2004. This success led to the College requesting evaluation by the Higher Learning Commission, which is the final step in the approval process. An evaluation team plans to visit the campus on April 25-26. The College anticipates approval for its first graduate program, which will be offered fall semester 2005.

The MRE is a 36 semester hour degree, which full time students may complete in two years. This degree consists of core requirements for both of the tracks offered—New Testament or Ministry.

Any inquiries about the MRE program may be directed to Dr. Mel Storm at 248.218.2115 or email [mstorm@rc.edu](mailto:mstorm@rc.edu).

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For information, contact Elton Albright at Rochester College  
E-mail: [ealbright@rc.edu](mailto:ealbright@rc.edu) III Phone: 800.521.6010 x.4

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