

Report of the Dean of Reformed Episcopal Seminary

To the One Hundred Thirty-sixth Council  
of the  
Diocese of the Northeast and Mid Atlantic

Dear Brethren:

**Background**

Reformed Episcopal Seminary (RES) continues to understand its ministry and mission to be integrally connected to the mission of the Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic of the Reformed Episcopal Church, the whole REC and the Anglican Church in North America, but also to other orthodox Anglican jurisdictions, the wider Christian church and our communities. The Seminary's mission is *"is to train Christ's people to serve the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ through Biblical, Anglican Worship, Example, and Discipleship as defined in the official standards of the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church in North America. Students are immersed in Scripture, the historical and ancient traditions of the church, worship, and doctrine. Emphasis is placed on classical Anglicanism lived out in the world through worship, evangelism, and discipleship."* In articulating this mission and assessing the effectiveness of its own curriculum, RES has developed six learning outcomes. We recognize that the Master of Divinity is a first professional degree, designed to provide a solid foundation in the various ecclesiastical disciplines in order to prepare candidates for ordained and lay leadership in the church. The Seminary intends that each student will be able to do the following upon completion of the program:

1. Understand, know, and articulate the Bible as canon, the inspired Word of God and the ultimate rule of faith and practice.
2. Have a deep well rounded understanding of church history – especially of the Western church – and be able to consistently apply it to ministry and other fields.
3. Have a thorough understanding of theology and be able to teach and explain it based on Scripture and the development of doctrine in the historic church.
4. Be a well-rounded servant in the church, aptly able to apply Scripture, doctrine and examples of church history to contemporary situations.
5. Articulate publically the truths of God's Word in a clear and detailed fashion through preaching and teaching.
6. Be spiritually and morally formed to take responsibility as a public representative of the church working for the common good of society in various aspects of life.

Another central mission of the Seminary has been to train leaders who are equipped and desire to serve God, the church, and the world at a low cost so that these future leaders of the church and the mission field are not encumbered by debt or feel that their job and /or families are compromised by financial need.

The orthodox biblical education and formation that RESeminary continues to supply is greatly needed. We had nine new students enroll this year and we currently have over 20 students regularly taking Master of Divinity classes. We have about 40 students on the rolls including part-time students, auditors, and those in are Licentiate program. We had to double the eating space in our dining hall through the addition of 2 more tables. Regularly chairs and other furniture need to be moved around the building to accommodate the size of one class or another. Space in the Professional Building, our “new building” purchased nearly three years ago, is used regularly for classroom and study space. Our bookstore is located here as well. Thankfully this building has taken in several thousand dollars more in rental income than cost of the mortgage, utilities, and taxes.

The Seminary still very much needs increased support from churches, parishioners, alumni, friends who benefit from the training and formation it has provided to so many of the men and women who have served our church in so many ways. We need you to stand by us with your prayers, referrals, and financial support as we prepare students at low cost so they are prepared to serve churches and missions that are more and more often not able to provide full-time salaries or even health benefits to their employees.

The Seminary, its faculty, and staff are no stranger to this model. The Seminary has not been able to pay our employees what their services are worth. None of them receive any health benefits from the Seminary. Students are charged tuition that is much less than half of what most other graduate schools charge and receive generous scholarships on top of that. Yet, they make serious sacrifices, such as moving their families across the country and working full-time to support them. Despite the low tuition and high scholarship aid, many students need the benefit of the government Title IV program. The Seminary has participated in this Federal Student Loan program for two years now. This enables students to defer their undergraduate loans while they are in seminary and take out student loans at low interest in order to meet the expenses of being in graduate school. Despite the low cost and high scholarships, we have 5 students who have needed to take advantage of student loans. We have several more who defer old college debt.

RES has entered its fourth year of accreditation with the Association of Theological schools. We continue to improve our program and grow. We have an increasing number of inquiries for our current programs and requests that we start new ones. We strive to do what we can to meet the needs of the church. This year, thanks to a generous donor, we were able to apply to admit international students again. Once approved, we will be better able to equip Anglican students from partner dioceses and missions across the globe. The continuing diversity of our student

body and community is part of the rich heritage we have and a key to equipping leaders that are able to serve God with whomever and wherever they are called.

### **Financial Need**

Providing the through education and formation which RES does requires money and support. Accreditation and Federal Loan approval, while very necessary, dramatically increases those costs. The Seminary also serves as the Diocesan office, providing support and infrastructure for the Diocese. While the Seminary has had a need for more staff and equipment to better accomplish its mission, there has not been the money for it. In fact currently more than half of the money received by the Seminary this year, outside of tuition and fess, has come from the Diocese, a significant portion of the remainder has come from a few donors. Some of our most faithful donors are our own staff. Our Board of Directors has noted that the Seminary is good at being frugal but sometimes the frugality is damaging to our mission. We have looked into starting a development campaign. The estimated cost of this with an established firm is about \$80,000 a year. Because most of our capital, over \$900,000 of about \$1.3 million dollars has been tied up in a mortgage by the Diocese to one of our churches, the Seminary has not had the necessary cash reserves to pay down or restructure its debt. Given the current situation the Seminary is endeavoring to cut its budget by at least \$70,000 over the next three years. This has resulted in a cut back in hours for some staff already and will undoubtedly mean that layoffs will also result. Tuition will increase 10% over the next two years and other fees will see a more modest increase. While we need more staff and funding to adequately meet our current mission and we desire to keep tuition low and scholarships high, these cuts in staff and increases in fees are necessary given the current situation. RES is still committed to maintaining and improving its quality program and improving its service to the diocese and the wider church. In order to accomplish this we need approximately \$150,000 in additional donations a year plus \$80,000 for a development program. While we know God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and will provide what is best for his people, we also know that we must be good stewards of what have and use it to best serve Christ and his church.

### **Vision**

The fact remains that despite the stressors of limited financial and staff resources, both the current situation and the future for RES is bright. The student body continues to improve in both quantity and quality. The Seminary campus serves as a Diocesan center and has had an increased role in the training and formation of youth in our Diocese. We have worked cooperatively with our Committee on Young People's Work both in regards to the current camping program but also in the development of the Spiritual and Educational Formation for Youth Program (SEFY), which provides pre-Seminary programs for high school, college, and career age youth. We will offer our third module this month teaching on the Jewish heritage of our faith. In the spring we will offer a course on the doctrine and infallibility of Scripture. These weekend lock-ins feature learning and class work as well as fun, games and good food. They strengthen and enrich our youth while also teaching them that the Seminary is a good

resource and even a fun place to be. We have had repeated inquiries from multiple sources for programs that would lead to additional degrees such as the Master of Arts, the Doctor of Ministry, and the Master of Sacred Theology. We get many requests for distance education as well. As we have the staff and funding that enable us to meet these necessary requirements we will add additional degrees and programs like these.

RES students are diverse racially and ecclesiastically. Our student body is approximately 40% African American. We have several students from the REC as well as students that have also come from other ACNA dioceses and continuing Anglican churches such as the Anglican Province of America and the Diocese of the Holy Cross. Our diverse environment includes a significant number of students from other traditions including, United Church of Christ, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, non-denominational, Reformed Baptist, and Christian Missionary Alliance. Students of various traditions and backgrounds study and worship together, learning both, to defend the faith and also to relate better to others with different perspectives. This has been cited as an important strength of RES and is one that we continue to nurture by recruiting students from different backgrounds to learn and grow together so they can better serve the church and the world and enrich our own Diocese and community.

The Seminary continues to maintain and improve its campus for the use of the Seminary community and the church. The brick patio inspired by the class of 2010 and supported by the Friends of Reformed Episcopal Seminary and quite a few of you has been completed and makes a nice area outside for conversation, reading, and reflection. It is hoped that long-term, a housing wing will be developed in this building for the use of youth programs as well as Seminary lodging.

The unprecedented growth at the Seminary has “created” some of the challenges that are reflected in this report. We know that God does not give us more than we can handle. We know that as the churches and members of this Diocese work together with others served by the Seminary as the body of Christ called to serve in this place and time, God can help us go forth and complete a grand work. Please pray about how you can better help and serve the Seminary and the future leaders of the church. Please pray fervently for the mission of the church and the Seminary. We continue to need your referrals. We need more men and women from throughout the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church in North America to study at RES and be prepared to better serve the church and the communities where they have been called.

RES provides not only a solid education rooted in the Anglican tradition guided by our bishop, it provides students from our church, the community, and the wider church with day-to-day mentoring and formation needs for pastoral skills and the spiritual formation of others. This is not something that can be taught to the same degree in the on-line courses and modular formats that are becoming increasingly prevalent today. Further, RES provides supervised ministry experiences for students both as part of the Seminary curriculum and through churches in our diocese and community. This experience is extremely important in the formation of clerical and lay leaders for the years to come. Please prayerfully consider how you can support the Seminary in the important goals that have been set before us. Please ask your vestries and church members to do the same. We know that almost every church and household budget is tight. The Seminary has had and will have an important role in the formation of our diocese, church, and community, and has an expanding role that is worthy of your prayer and support.

At the same time the Seminary understands that it is an agency of the Diocese and the Church. We exist for the students that we train, for our churches, and our young people. Please do not hesitate to tell us what you need from us and how we can better serve you and your

church. Many of the ideas that are part of the current vision have come from those currently in the pew and behind the pulpit. We again cherish your ideas and prayers. They are an essential part of our communal life together as the body of Christ.

The Board and administration of the Seminary has many important issues to grapple with as they lead the Seminary into the future. The Seminary's structure and function, development, and direction all need to be properly assessed and continually improved. Additional degree program and training options need to be assessed and considered. Additional supporters and funding must be raised. Please pray for God's leading on these issues and all aspects of the life of the Seminary that we may always better serve him and his people.

If anyone would like to meet with me to discuss the ministry and mission of our Seminary I remain more than happy to set up an appointment with you or to visit your parish and present the work of the Seminary. Please stop by our table.

In all these things and many others, I with the rest of the faculty and staff continue to be "Ambitious to be well-pleasing unto Him."

Your fellow servant in Christ Jesus,

The Rev. Canon Dr. Jonathan S. Riches  
Dean