

Reformed megachurch, seminary to launch NYC campus

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#) in the [October 29, 2014](#) issue

Redeemer Presbyterian Church, led by author and speaker Tim Keller, has partnered with a nondenominational Reformed seminary to form a campus in New York City in 2015.

While many seminaries are still suffering declining revenues since the economic crisis of 2008, Reformed Theological Seminary, based in Jackson, Mississippi, has succeed in building campuses in major cities.

Students at the New York City campus will be trained to start churches by pursuing a two-year master of arts degree in biblical studies at \$430–450 per credit hour. They will receive another year of education in church planting from Redeemer. The campus will likely be housed in Redeemer's offices near Herald Square in Manhattan.

The New York City site could include as few as ten students. "Seminarians are not relocating to go to seminary," said Ligon Duncan, chancellor of RTS. "They tend to stay regionally and study with institutions with which they have little theological sympathy in order to stay" in the same city.

Keller, who wrote the 2008 best seller *The Reason for God* and co-launched the Gospel Coalition network of Reformed leaders, has been one of the most influential leaders in evangelicalism. In 2001, he started Redeemer City to City, an initiative which has helped start more than 300 churches in 45 cities.

RTS currently has seven campuses in cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Orlando, Florida. RTS provides scholarships for about 88 percent of its approximately 2,500 students, of which about 1,000 are full-time. Its leaders hope to do the same in New York.

The dean of RTS in New York will be James Anderson, academic dean for the seminary's global program; its top administrator will be Steve Wallace, currently RTS's chief operations officer.

Many seminaries are attempting to expand through distance learning, a shift RTS has avoided. “We think there’s a loss of mentoring in modern theological seminaries with virtual or distance education, a loss of thickness,” Duncan said. “We’re trying to make it affordable in an environment that’s incredibly expensive.”

Redeemer is part of the Presbyterian Church in America, the second largest Presbyterian denomination in the country, a group that formed in 1973. However, many of its church plants are not affiliated with the denomination.

RTS was founded in 1963 to teach Reformed theology and uphold biblical inerrancy. Currently, about two-thirds of its students affiliate with the Presbyterian or Dutch Reformed traditions, while the remaining third align with Baptist, Anglican, or Methodist traditions.

New York already serves as home to many seminaries, including Union Theological Seminary, New York Theological Seminary, and others. But the city does not have an oversaturation of seminaries per person, said Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, the main accrediting body for more than 270 seminaries and graduate schools.

“If any school can make it work, RTS would be among them,” Aleshire said.

About 30 new seminaries have been founded in the United States in the last five years, due in part to a significant number of new Asian-American enrollments, Aleshire said.

“A seminary doesn’t go to a location; it goes to a constituency,” Aleshire said of RTS’s move. “The question is, what is it about this kind of religious expression that seems to have found expression in the city?” — Religion News Service

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