

Getting to Know RBC's New President

Jared Stutzman interviews Dan Ziegler

Are you any good at Rook? Can you play "The Mennonite Game?"

I can hold my own in both games. There is one difference, however, between my ability as a Rook player and my proficiency in "The Mennonite Game." I can play Rook anywhere, but my "Mennonite Game" acumen gets weaker the further west I go. A note about Rook; the perfect game consists of five people, a called partner, an open kitty and a rook valued at 10½. All else is child's play.

Do you anticipate editing the cafeteria menu to include some Ziegler favorites?

Well...New York bagels from my childhood in the Big Apple (where my father was Pastor of a mission church), or Haitian rice and beans, which my wife Wendy and I learned to love during our years in Haiti, or perhaps that Eastern Pennsylvania delicacy...the Philly Cheese Steak. I'm assuming that the menu already includes an occasional shoo-fly pie?

Which aspect of your job as RBC's president excites you the most?

That's easy. The thing that I am most looking forward to is interacting with young adults. They are willing not only to ask hard questions about faith and life, but also to act upon the answers they find, no matter where it may take them. At RBC, I have the opportunity to be with them at the crossroads of their lives, helping them sort through those questions and

igniting a spiritual passion for the Kingdom of God in these future leaders of the church.

What do you believe to be the strengths of RBC's current program?

Over the past twenty years, Wendy and I have visited the campus numerous times and had many good friends who have either attended or served on the staff. A number of strengths have impressed us:

- A conservative/evangelical/Anabaptist perspective on scriptural exegesis which provides students with a firm Biblical foundation.
- A small, personal campus community.
- A strong, committed faculty who help students to lay a sure Biblical and educational foundation.
- A spiritually focused campus atmosphere with an orientation toward an active faith, devoted Bible study and sincere worship.
- A noteworthy choral program.
- Modest tuition which can save students literally thousands of dollars.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing RBC?

One of the biggest challenges RBC faces at this point relates to vision. George Barna makes the following observation:

"In every one of the growing healthy churches I've studied, a discernable link has been forged between the spiritual and numerical growth of those congregations and the existence, articulation, and widespread ownership of God's vision for the ministry by the leaders and participants of the church. Conversely, visionless congregations fail to experience spiritual and numerical growth. Rarely in my research do I find such overt, black and white relationships." (Barna, George W., *The Power of Vision*.)

By extension, this observation is true of all Christian organizations; without vision the ministry perishes. On the other hand, a ministry with a clear understanding of what God has called it to do is bound to be effective for His Kingdom.

A time of leadership transition such as this provides an excellent juncture to revisit and renew organizational vision. I believe one of my first challenges will be to help lead the process through which the RBC community can formulate and articulate a relevant and compelling vision. Vision begins with



Wendy and Dan Ziegler

an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the organization faces. Securing this understanding will first involve gaining insights from those closest to RBC; the students, parents, alumni, staff, faculty and board. Beyond this core group, I also hope to visit with as many Conservative Mennonite Conference congregational leaders as possible, both those who actively support the college and those who have chosen not to. Finally, but most importantly, we need to take time to prayerfully listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout this process. Ultimately, this vision must represent God's call upon the organization.

RBC was founded as a Bible school with six-week terms for young men and women who wanted to learn God's Word. How does that history inform your understanding of its future?

I strongly believe that the initial vision for Rosedale as primarily a Bible school is and should always be woven into the fabric of the organization's core. Rosedale has historically been a place where God's Word has been upheld and taught as the final authority for faith and practice for the Christian. There is no doubt that this Scripture-centric perspective will continue to drive curriculum development and organizational vision.

Also, a unique strength of the Rosedale educational experience comes from its Bible Institute history; that is, its openness to short-term students and one or two-term guest faculty members. This arrangement is still a viable alternative for many students who want Bible training but are not necessarily interested in immediately working toward a degree.

What is your vision for RBC's academic program?

In the 50-some years since RBC's founding, CMC has become much more diverse in its occupation/career goals and, by necessity, much more open to formal higher education. In response, RBC has extended the school year to nine months, secured accreditation from ABHE, made it possible for students to receive state and federal financial aid, obtained degree-granting privileges from the Ohio Board of Regents, expanded facilities, and increased course offerings. While spiritual growth and Bible training are still at the center of RBC's mission, the college is now well equipped to be a part of the broader educational plan for a wide variety of career-minded students. Although there is a continuing niche for short-term students, in the future we will see more and more students choosing to pursue an RBC Associate's Degree and then transferring to a four-year college to complete their education. The reasons for this are many, including:

- Our young people's increasing need for a Biblically grounded Evangelical/Anabaptist foundation that will prepare them to face potentially harmful ideological challenges in secular, or perhaps even Christian, university settings.
- The unique opportunities for leadership, nurture, relationships and involvement that freshmen and sophomores have in a small junior College setting.
- The ever-growing list of colleges and universities accepting RBC credits now that ABHE accreditation has been established.

In response, RBC must continue to broaden its curriculum and also its academic counseling to provide the best trans-

fer potential for students, while at the same time maintaining its core identity as first and foremost a Bible College.

You bring a lot of leadership experience with you to the president's office. What has that experience taught you about the life of an organization like RBC?

One key lesson that I have learned is that organizations need to grow...to change. Organizations need to adapt to the changing world around them, they need to improve, to get better at what they do. Charles Gow says, "The two great laws of life are growth and decay. When things stop growing, they begin to die. This is true of men, businesses, or nations."

To clarify, please understand that I am talking about healthy change; change that builds upon core strengths, change that recognizes organizational history and tradition, measured change, necessary change. I do not believe in change for change's sake, or in change that compromises core mission.

We all have our niche in life, an area where we feel most comfortable and best equipped. Well, I have come to understand that my particular leadership calling is that of change agent. I have been used as a catalyst, a growth inducer. For example, when I became Executive Director at Spruce Lake Retreat, I was handed a healthy and solid camp with a great support base and a strong history, although overall attendance had plateaued. During my tenure, we focused on helping the organization become a more dynamic entity. Staff in all areas were challenged with the vision that we would do whatever it took to improve the guest experience and the ministry impact of our programs. The result was a dramatic increase in guest retention, record guest evaluation scores and an average growth of about 1,000 additional guests per year for seven years straight. Ultimately, this growth resulted in spiritual impact, as thousands of additional guests were refreshed and renewed each year at Spruce Lake.

It is certainly God who gives the increase, but, if we who are in organizations can learn to embrace change, we are much better prepared to follow His leading and to respond to the needs and opportunities He brings our way. It is my hope that I can be used in this way during my time at RBC, and I look forward to seeing where the Lord will lead us together. **BB**

Dan Ziegler is the new president of Rosedale Bible College.

Dan Ziegler—

—holds an M.A. in Organizational Leadership from Thomas Edison State College, a B.S. in Camping/ Recreation/Youth Ministries from Eastern Mennonite University, and an A.A. with a concentration in Bible from Pinebrook Junior College.

—is married to Wendy and is the father of five children, two of whom will be attending RBC in 2005.

—loves singing #606 in the Mennonite Hymnal.

—has over twenty years of leadership experience in a variety of Christian organizations. His titles have included executive director at Spruce Lake Retreat in Canadensis, Pennsylvania (the Mennonite Church's largest camping ministry), director of Spruce Lake Wilderness Camp, administrator of Blue Ridge International for Christ in Haiti, lead elder of Spruce Lake Fellowship Mennonite Church, and assistant director of Pinebrook Bible Conference.

—is an amateur naturalist, astronomer and bird watcher who has hiked/backpacked to the highest point of forty-five states.

—has, over the past twenty-three years, been involved with Mennonite churches from the Virginia Conference, Franconia Conference, and Lancaster Conference, and has related to numerous other Anabaptist groups as well.



Dan and Wendy Ziegler with children Daniel, Elizabeth, Levi, Naomi and Phoebe