

# VISITING SCHOLAR NEWS



NOVEMBER 2017



The Thanksgiving season is a time to reflect on all the amazing opportunities that God has provided throughout the past year. Stepping back to recall all the blessings gives me a chance to remind myself that God is always there and that the good that he provides is sufficient for me, even in times of despair. I thank God for every time a visiting scholar stays with us at RTB. This year, we have had 13 scholars collaborate with us. Each one has blessed us with their talents and contributions, and we are fortunate to have them as part of the ministry. In this issue, we will be highlighting Dr. Darren Williams, a past visiting scholar who specializes in chemistry. You will also read updates from Bernard Palmer and Gavin Ortlund.

—Caitlyn Carr

## VISITING SCHOLAR HIGHLIGHT

## Darren Williams



***What is your area of expertise (education and experience)?***

I am a chemist. I received degrees from the University of Texas at Austin (BSc) and Oregon State University (PhD) in 1992 and

1997, respectively. University-level teaching has always been my goal, and I have had faculty appointments at West Texas A&M University and at Sam Houston State University. Between those academic positions, I worked for a company that manages the nation's nuclear stockpile. My duties were to study the chemical nature and aging characteristics of plastic-bonded explosives. The particular area of expertise that occupies most of my time is solvent blend modeling for precision cleaning of rocket parts, medical implants, and circuit boards. Our university is very supportive of undergraduate research, so we involve many students in this endeavor—producing experienced and valuable alumni. My teaching duties include quantum mechanics, symmetry and spectroscopy, thermodynamics, and forensic chemistry.

***At what age did you come to Christ and under what circumstances?***

In fifth grade—I remember being encouraged to read the Bible on my own, to pray, and to reach out to Christ for forgiveness, comfort, and encouragement. It was quite amazing, actually. I remember certain passages like Matthew 5–7 and Philippians 4 having an instant impact on me. They seemed to jump off the page, and this was different from anything else I had ever read. My conclusion was that Christ was alive, and that the Bible really was active. I was baptized soon after.

***Tell us about a project or accomplishment that you consider to be the most significant in your career.***

The ongoing development of the Cleaning Research Group at Sam Houston State University has been and continues to be my most significant work-related accomplishment. We are a small (for Texas) university at 21,000 students. We do not offer a PhD in chemistry. But my research group is the only academic lab in the country that studies the science and technology of precision cleaning of

*(continued on page 2)*



**Bernard Palmer**  
Physician  
Visiting Scholar Dates:  
February–March 2017

We have had the joy of leading several people to Christ this month [September]. We had a glorious baptism of seven people last Sunday. Their testimonies were great and can be heard on the Christchurch Baldock website in the “Sermons” section, under “Baptisms (Romans 6)” for September 3, 2017. One is a golf coach for British under-18s, and another was a German anarchist. Then, there was an 80-year-old in a wheelchair who has recently come to understand the gospel. I am just preparing to give the Bible reading at the Samaritan’s Purse annual conference, so prayer for that would be appreciated as they are becoming a significant organization and still have a gospel focus. Long may it remain.

**Darren Williams**, *cont’d from page 1*

medical devices, circuit boards, optics, and rocket motors. In recognition of this fact, we have been funded by NASA, DOE, and DoD, as well as many private corporations.

**What do you enjoy most about the Visiting Scholar Program?**

I enjoyed being accepted as part of the RTB family. They welcomed me on the web conference calls and when I came to Covina. Everyone was extremely generous with their time, and we had great conversations about the deepest topics. Those conversations about “how we come to know things” and “how we come to change our minds” are still

percolating in my thoughts two months later. They are the most meaningful interactions for me as we continually sharpen each other. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).



**Gavin Ortlund**  
Theologian  
Local Visiting Scholar Dates:  
February–May 2017

In July, Esther and I moved to the Chicago area, where I am servicing as a research fellow for The Creation Project at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. As

I write this, I am sitting in a hospital room next to my 1-day-old son, Elijah Samuel Ortlund, who is our third child. We are so grateful for God’s goodness and kindness to us!

I was grateful to serve as a visiting scholar at RTB this spring. During that time, I began work on several projects, one of which is a research effort on Augustine’s doctrine of creation. Over this year, I will be continuing this research with a view to writing a book on the same topic, particularly in terms of how it can be retrieved to help contemporary discussion of creation. I’ve been working on some of my initial ideas in a number of articles for *Sapientia*, the online publication of the Henry Center. Topics addressed include how Augustine can expand our categories of creation, what we can learn from his method, and how he approached the interpretation of Genesis 1. Readers may be interested to check them out [here](#).

We have joined a local church and plan to be actively involved there. Two weeks ago, I taught a devotional for the staff at Crossway, a local Christian publisher. In January, I will be teaching a class at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, on the life and theology of St. Anselm. I hope to be active in preaching at churches in the area this year.

We are grateful for all our friends at RTB and pray for God’s continued blessing on your ministry! We will miss you, especially in January as the Chicago winter hits. :)