RBC awards record number of associate degrees

Family and friends of Rosedale Bible College’s 61st graduating class filled the chapel on the morning of May 19th to honor and celebrate with the class of 2012.

The ceremony marked a milestone for the college: 26 students graduated with associate degrees in biblical studies, a record for the school. In addition, eight students earned a one-year certificate in biblical studies, and two graduated from the Institute of Pastoral Studies, a nontraditional education program for people already in ministry.

Three speakers addressed the graduates. Co-valedictorians Kristen Graber and Jacob Huber shared personal reflections on their time at Rosedale, and lifelong Conservative Mennonite Conference leader David I. Miller delivered the commencement address.

Here are brief summaries and excerpts from their speeches:

**Kristen: Rosedale is like a game of Frisbee golf**

Kristen, from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, reflected on the ways being at Rosedale resembled playing Frisbee golf, a popular campus activity.

First, Frisbee golf is “way more fun with people,” she said. “You encourage one another: you ‘ahhhh’ for great drives and cheer for great putts. You help one another (at least I got plenty of help): ‘Flick your wrist more’; ‘Follow through’; ‘Here, you should putt more like this. . . .’

“Rosedale is kind of like a game of Frisbee golf in that respect: It’s about the people you’re here with. They encourage you in your gifting, help you in areas of weakness, and challenge you by helping you see new ways to do things or think about things.”

Another similarity between being at Rosedale and playing Frisbee golf “is how important the tee-off throw is.”

“A good first throw,” said Kristen, “can set you up to birdie the hole, but if you mess up and throw your Frisbee onto the guys’ dorm roof—well, that’s not what you’re going for.

“If your first throw goes directly for the basket, that makes the next throw so much shorter and easier to make. And that’s kind of how Rosedale is—if life were a Frisbee golf course and each ‘hole’ was something that God had for you to accomplish, our time at Rosedale would not be a ‘Frisbee on the roof’ type of throw.”

Kristen thanked faculty, friends, and family “for coaching us and encouraging us along the way. . . .” To her fellow classmates, she said, “Thank you for the cheers, the advice, and all the good times. I’m glad we played this round together.”
Jacob: Speaking for my classmates

Jacob Huber (Jake) of Au Gres, Michigan, shared things his fellow grads would have said, had they been given the opportunity to speak at commencement.

He concurred with Ben Herr’s advice to “remember that the opportunity to learn does not stop here,” adding that “whether continuing with studies or entering the ‘real world,’ we will always continue to learn more about life and more about God.”

Jake also liked Tara Yoder’s analogy “for those of us entering new phases in our lives: ‘Think of life as a ballroom and Rosedale as a beautiful dance. But now it’s time to move on to the next dance. New friends to dance with and a new song to dance to. It’s time to enjoy the next steps in life.’” He wasn’t unaware of the irony of “comparing Rosedale to dancing.”

In closing, Jake thanked the Rosedale community “for helping us to grow and mature in our faith as individuals and as a church body.” He also thanked God. “He has blessed my time at Rosedale in ways I could never have imagined. He has been with us all through this journey, and as we leave here, He goes with us . . . .”

Jake ended by quoting from Dr. Seuss’s Oh, the Places You’ll Go: “It’s opener there in the wide open air / Out there things can happen / and frequently do / to people as brainy and footsy as you. / And when things start to happen, / don’t worry. Don’t stew. / Just go right along. / You’ll start happening too.”

David I. Miller: Staying on a sure foundation

David’s commencement address centered on I Corinthians 3:11: “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Acknowledging that this verse is also RBC’s motto, he encouraged students to stay on that sure foundation.

He opened by sharing some personal memories of his time at Rosedale as a student 59 years ago. He went to the school for three reasons, he said: he wanted to study the Bible; he liked the idea of being away from home for a while; and he knew that his girlfriend (now wife!) Erma “had plans to attend.”

Some things were different back then. “Teaching tools were largely limited to black boards and study outlines of poor-quality, mimeographed print. . . . The ball point pen was just coming into common use as a replacement of the fountain pen and ink blotter, but it tended to leave ink blotches on your shirt pocket.”

With no cell phones and no Facebook, students “communicated back home by letter, or in case of emergency, by expensive long-distance telephone.”

Yet the mission of the school has remained a constant: “to lay a sure foundation for Christian discipleship and service.”

David told graduates that some of them might find themselves “in places where faith in Jesus Christ is not the norm.” This happened to him after leaving “the RBC experience” at Berlin.

“I was in an academic setting where evolution was the assumed stance and creationism was regarded as a product of sub-standard intelligence. The culture of my Mennonite background was sometimes viewed as a curious museum piece. I was shocked to find myself in doubt, and for a brief time wondering about the existence of God.”

By God’s grace, he said, he “came to a renewed realization that the test tube and other scientific observations are not the only source of knowledge, and I found my way to lay a sure foundation for Christian discipleship and service.”

The same God we saw at work here is at work in this whole great big world, and I look forward to getting out there and discovering all the ways He loves us and is at work. ~ Jake Huber

Jacob Huber of Au Gres, Michigan was co-valedictorian of this year’s graduating class.
I wish to encourage you, as graduates of a school dedicated to laying a sure foundation, to be dedicated to staying on the sure foundation. ~ David I. Miller

back to a foundational faith.”

This faith can be examined by asking three questions: What do you think of the person of Jesus Christ? What do you think of the saving work of Jesus Christ? And what do you think of the Word of Jesus Christ?

Citing John 1:1 and 14 and early Christian creeds, David said, “Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the only true Messiah, the Son of God, born of a virgin, fully divine and fully human. . . . These confessions express orthodox and evangelical Christology. . . .”

Regarding the work of Christ, he turned to John 1:29, in which John the Baptist declares that Jesus is “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. . . . The work of Christ on the cross, the shedding of his blood, satisfies both the justice of God and the love of God.”

Discussing the Word of Christ, David said “the sure foundation involves belief and trust in the Scripture of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Word of God, protected from error in the original writings through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

He explained that the New Covenant as expressed in the New Testament “fulfills and succeeds the Old Testament as the final authority of God’s people. This understanding of the Scriptures, with its prioritizing of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, was expressed especially well by the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century and later.”

David closed by encouraging the graduates to “take care of” their view of the person of Christ, the saving work of Christ, and the Word of Christ. “And claim the benediction of the last words of the Bible: ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.’”