

## **Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on January 14, 2021.**

### **Opening and Roll Call.**

The chairman of the Board, Rev. J. Louwerse, led in opening devotions. All governors were present. Dr. Van Vliet was present as Principal and administrative assistant L. Kuizenga was present to take the minutes of the meeting.

### **Memorabilia**

Information was shared about the personal circumstances of emeriti professors, as well as widows and families of professors.

### **Minutes and Agenda**

The minutes of the meeting held on September 10, 2020 were approved. The agenda for the meeting was established.

### **Decisions, Reports, Agenda Items**

1. The Board received a letter from Dr. A.J. de Visser in which he requested that he be allowed to retire when he turns 65. This would mean that he teaches until the end of the 2022-2023 academic year (two and a half years from now). Normally a professor is required to give two years notice. Dr. de Visser is giving notice of his request early due to the fact that Synod is scheduled to meet in 2022 and needs to appoint his successor. The Board decided to grant Dr. de Visser's request. This will result in an upcoming vacancy in the role of professor of Ministry and Mission. According to CRTS protocols, the Academic Committee appointed a search committee, which will consult with the Senate and the churches in Canada and Australia, seeking suggestions for those who might serve as professor of Ministry and Mission. Currently, Dr. de Visser has already served at CRTS for 16 years.
2. The Board received a letter from the staff at CRTS, asking for improved communication between the Board and staff. They ask that staff be given access to Board minutes and non-confidential reports so they are more aware of decisions made which might affect them in their tasks. The Board approved this request.
3. The Distance Education Committee gave a brief update on their work. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, CRTS has made a solid start in offering hybrid education. All students who are able to attend in-person and on campus do so, while online learning is available for foreign students who are not able to come to Hamilton due to difficulties or delays with student visas. The online option is also used when the pandemic makes it impossible to meet in-person. This follows the approach the Board adopted in Sept 2020: *on campus as much as possible, online as much as necessary*. The investment in video/audio hardware and software allows for an interactive integration of online and on-campus students. The new learning management system and student information system allow automatic recording of lectures and access to these both when they are delivered and afterwards. A hybrid education survey was conducted among the students (both those in person and those studying online). The Senate reflected on survey results and made some notes for the Distance Education Committee to consider. There is help available to our faculty for course design and further consultation in offering hybrid education. The Board had a discussion about setting a minimum standard of on-campus study in order to receive a degree at CRTS. The Distance Education Committee will present a full report on hybrid education at the September Board meeting.
4. The Committee appointed to investigate the expansion of the Pastoral Training Program reported that they had met and would report further at the September meeting.

5. An update was given on the proposed strategic planning session, planned for September 2021. Decisions were made on a proposed schedule, agenda, and on the list of attendees at strategic planning. The brothers were to come with a further proposal at our September meeting.
6. The chairman reported on input given to the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, who are finalizing a report for their synod. The Board appreciates the collaborative manner in which CRTS can work with these deputies, and for the continued support of the Australian churches.
7. A report, with input from the Senate, was presented to the Board on the faculty's workload. This is a matter that has had the Board's concern. We would prefer our professors to be busy teaching, researching, and publishing, and not to have too much of their time taken up with administrative matters. This report quantified how much time our professors spend on administrative tasks and proposed some matters that could be done by others. Some improvements were suggested. This matter will receive further consideration by the Senate, at our next strategic planning session.
8. Revs. C.J. VanderVelde and M.H. VanLuik reported on lecture visits to CRTS on November 4-5, 2020, as well as on visits with four of the five professors (Dr. de Visser was on sabbatical). This report was received with thankfulness.
9. The Finance and Property Committee provided minutes of the recent meetings they held. They were received for information. They also presented a proposal to amend the current investment policy. This was adopted and will be passed on to the governance committee for inclusion in the handbook and regulations of the seminary.
10. The Governance Committee made proposals to change the CRTS Handbook to reflect changes with respect to the composition of the Publication Committee, the role of the librarian, and the librarian's freedom of inquiry. These proposals were adopted.
11. Margaret Alkema joined the meeting. Last year CRTS was blessed with receiving accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for the next ten years. CRTS is required to follow this up with reports on various matters. A plan was adopted, assigning these reports to members of the Board, faculty, and staff.
12. The Board received survey results on a Board evaluation of itself and by the Senate. This report was received with thankfulness.
13. Dr. J. Van Vliet presented his principal's report, and this was received with thankfulness.
14. The Board received a sabbatical report from Dr. de Visser, and an evaluation of it from our principal. This was received with thankfulness.
15. The Board received a report from the COVID committee. It was received with thankfulness. An institutional readiness plan with respect to COVID-19 was put together to allow foreign students to receive visas to travel to Canada. Before we received approval, the government amended the process, putting in place a list of requirements that a college or university needed to meet to be approved. To get approval the principal was required to sign an attestation saying CRTS met those requirements. This has been done, and the expectation is that CRTS will soon be put on the approved list.

### **Press release and Closing.**

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the vice-chairman in consultation with the Executive and the Principal. Rev. J. Slaa closed the meeting with prayer.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,  
Rev. J. Poppe (Vice-chairman/Corresponding Clerk)

