

Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on September 7, 2023.

Opening and Roll Call.

The chairman of the Board, Rev. John Louwerse, welcomed all present. A special welcome was given to Rev. Dirk Poppe and brother Peter Witten, representatives from the Australian Deputies Training for the Ministry. He led in opening devotions. All governors were present. This includes Revs. John Louwerse, Joe Poppe, James Slaa, Jeff Temple, Clarence VanderVelde, Julius VanSpronsen, and brothers Adrian Bartels, Alan Datema, Herman Post, Peter Vandersluis, and Kasper VanVeen. Dr. Jason Van Vliet was present as Principal and administrative assistant Leanne 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. It was noted that the Lord has taken home our late professor Dr. Nicolaas H. Gootjes. His wife Dini and family were remembered in our opening prayer.

Minutes and Agenda

The minutes of the meeting held on January 12, 2023 were approved. The agenda for the meeting was established. The action log was reviewed.

Decisions, Reports, Agenda Items

1. Since the last meeting of the Board, the opportunity came up to purchase a home next door to the seminary. Upon the recommendation of the Finance and Property Committee, an email resolution was passed to acquire the residence at 113 West 28th and to make arrangements for a mortgage on this property. In the short term this home will be used for seminary student housing. In the long term the seminary could explore other uses for the property, should the need arise. The house is rented out for the fall semester to three students, and with some renovations could house a total of six single students.
2. A decision was made by email resolution to approve of the 2022 audited financial statements for the seminary, to have them submitted to the Canadian Revenue Agency by June 30.
3. A letter was received from a couple in southern Ontario suggesting that our seminary students get involved in some teaching and mentorship of young people at Guido de Bres Highschool. This proposal was passed on to the Senate for consideration.
4. A letter was received from the Independent Reformed Theological Academy (IRTA) in South Korea, expressing gratitude for the fact that three of their exchange students completed their term of studies at CRTS during the past year. An update was given on their students who have graduated and begun work in the ministry. To show their gratitude, the IRTA donated \$3000 to CRTS. This letter and their donation were received with thankfulness.
5. A letter was received from Dr. Reuben Bredenhof indicating his thankfulness for the generous time of transition provided to him to allow him to prepare for his teaching role at CRTS.
6. The seminary's strategic plan was reviewed. Various committees reported on initiatives. Faculty workload seems to be manageable due to the reorganization of some courses and the service of our teaching assistant, brother Ray Kingma. CRTS needs to give more attention to a faculty succession plan. There is a real need for ministers and graduating students from

CRTS to pursue further studies to get training to potentially serve as future professors. We have three of our five professors reaching the age of retirement in the next 10-15 years. CRTS decided to raise awareness of the issue through an article in Clarion and a letter to the Church Councils.

7. Over a period of years, the Board has discussed governance at CRTS, and the role that the Board should have in this. Boards of various organizations function in different ways, with some being more involved in the hands-on work and others setting a vision for the organization and leaving the implementation of the vision mostly to others. The Board decided that to make a significant governance change would not materially benefit CRTS at this time and would impact the work of the Board negatively.
8. The committee report on an Australian affiliate campus was put into discussion, along with a brief report of the committee's discussion with the Australian Deputies Training for the Ministry. The Australian deputies expressed their deep appreciation for the work at CRTS and the good cooperation between our churches. They explained the reasons for their desire to have an affiliate campus in the Australian churches. The board had a good discussion with the deputies on this and the deputies will write a letter to the Board for further consideration at the January 2024 meeting.
9. The chairman reported on an evaluation of the principal's work. The Board is thankful for the competent leadership Dr. Jason Van Vliet provides at CRTS.
10. The minutes of the Academic Committee meeting held on September 5, 2023 were presented for information. Revs. Joe Poppe and Julius VanSpronsen reported on lecture visits to CRTS from March 15-17, 2023. They also reported on visits with the professors and students. The Board received this report with thankfulness.
11. The Finance and Property Committee presented an annual report on their activities. They presented the CRTS proposed budget for 2024, and it was approved. The Finance and Property Committee presented the financial statements for 2022, and these were formally approved. With thankfulness it was noted that approximately \$1.29 million was raised for the Partnership in the Gospel campaign, to fund the renovation project at CRTS. Due to cost increases and additional expenses the Finance and Property Committee is seeking to raise an additional \$350,000 to cover all expenses for this project as well as for the renovation of the faculty office areas (planned for next summer). It is a great blessing that this fall faculty, staff and students are all able to work and study under the same roof again. Thankfulness was formally expressed to the Maranatha Free Reformed Church of Hamilton for their willingness to host our CRTS community during the construction project. The annual assessment for 2024 was set at \$100 per communicant member, an increase of \$3 per communicant member. Part of the increase is due to increases in inflation; part is also due to the decision to set aside at least \$3 per communicant member to build a budget for future repairs and maintenance.
12. CRTS's health and safety policy was reviewed to ensure that the entire CRTS community fulfils CRTS's occupational health and safety commitments.
13. Margaret Alkema joined the meeting to provide background and answer questions regarding our contact with the Association for Theological Schools (ATS), and in her role as assessment coordinator. As part of CRTS's ongoing self-evaluation a report was prepared to implement more effective evaluation tools for measuring growth in spiritual formation, to measure the sustainability of the assessment plan, and to develop a system for the regular evaluation of the overall Master of Divinity program. A report was provided outlining the

work that has been done on these issues. The way program learning outcomes are assessed has been revised, dealing with one of three program learning outcomes in depth each year. A comprehensive review of the curriculum was completed and has led to the reorganization and streamlining of various courses. Changes were made to how the spiritual formation program will function, with students being required to be more involved in the process of self-evaluation and reflection during their time at CRTS. The Board expressed its thankfulness to faculty and staff for all the work that went into preparing this extensive report. It will be submitted to ATS later this fall.

14. The Board took note of the ATS Institutional Peer Profile and a Strategic Information Report, comparing CRTS to other similarly sized seminaries. The Board discussed the Annual Report of the Assessment Coordinator, minutes from assessment day 2023 and a metrics report we use to gauge how the seminary is doing in specific matters. It is at this assessment day that much of the work detailed in the report to ATS (above) is done. It was noted that enrollment in the freshman class is down significantly from our targets. While we have been grateful for increased enrollment in the previous few years, such enrollment is needed to continue to provide the churches with men who can serve in the ministry. It was noted with gratitude that five men have inquired about the new mature student enrollment policy. These reports were received with thankfulness. Margaret Alkema presented a report on her involvement at a conference hosted by ATS to help participants serve as peer reviewers. She was thanked for all her work, especially as it related to being our assessment coordinator, and left the meeting.
15. The Governance Committee proposed a series of changes to the CRTS handbook due to decisions made by the Board, Senate, and various committees. Noteworthy are changes to help faculty peer reviews function better, and the development of a new Crisis Management Policy. The proposed changes were adopted by the Board.
16. Dr. Jason Van Vliet presented a principal's report. He highlighted the CRTS community's thankfulness for the renovated facilities, new enrollment for the coming year of a total of 29 students, gave an update on faculty and staff, and some issues relating to the coming school year. The Board spent some time considering which faculty would serve best in various administrative roles.
17. Dr. Jason Van Vliet presented a report titled, "Encouraging Men to Study for the Ministry." It was based on input from the Board and Senate, as well as survey results from the recent Considering the Ministry event. CRTS already hosts a triennial prospective student day, and plans to expand the website with a "considering the ministry" section. CRTS would like to see local churches and pastors encourage their men to consider studying for the ministry. The Board decided to send a letter to the church councils throughout the federation, encouraging them to propose that each Classis establish a Committee for Students of Theology. The task of this committee would be to encourage men to study for the ministry and to mentor those who express an interest in doing so.
18. Our faculty provided a report on the courses they taught in the 2022-23 academic year. This 15-page report provides a comprehensive report on the primary function of our professors in teaching and preparing men to serve in the ministry. This report was received with much thankfulness.
19. The Registrar, Dr. Arjan De Visser provided a report on student enrollment. Six senior students are graduating this September, and four new students are enrolled in the freshman

class beginning their studies. The Lord willing, we will have 29 full time students at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year.

20. Our librarian, sister Margaret Alkema provided a Librarian report. A total of a little more than \$57,000 was spent on the library this past year. A significant portion of the funds are used to support digital subscriptions. This report was received with thankfulness.
21. The Website Committee reported on the use of the CRTS website, CRTS's social media presence, and the Heidelberg Catechism website, which continues to be used widely throughout the world. Plans for updates were shared. This report was received with thankfulness.
22. Minutes of the Convocation Committee were provided. Feedback on last year's convocation included that the program was too long, and that the live feed was not great. The plan for this year is aiming to finish the formal program in about 90 minutes, and Redeemer College has been contacted about the live feed issues. An update was given on plans for this year's convocation.
23. An update was provided by the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund Committee. Dr. Arjan De Visser was thanked for his work on this committee and Dr. Ted Van Raalte was appointed in his place. The Publication Committee reported on the publication of a book by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam titled, "In Holy Service: Essays on Office – Personal and Ecclesial." Dr. Jerry Visscher was thanked for his work on this committee and Dr. John Smith was appointed in his place.
24. The Foreign Student Bursary Fund presented their report. With thankfulness they reported that the churches, as well as various individuals, have responded very generously to the special request for financial support for the South African students. They reported that during the second half of 2022 and the first half of 2023 a little more than \$175,000 was raised. Gratefulness was expressed for the positive response to this need among the South African students. Funds will continue to be required as these students attend CRTS in the coming years.
25. Dr. John Smith reported on a tour of the churches in Alberta in June. Our librarian, Margaret Alkema reported on her attendance at an Association of Christian Librarians Conference. Dr. Reuben Bredenhof reported on a trip to Brazil, in which he familiarized himself with the mission work there, and on his attendance at an OPC church planter training conference. Dr. William den Hollander reported on a trip to the churches in South Africa. Dr. Ted Van Raalte reported on his attendance of a two-week intensive course in Christian apologetics at the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, & Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. These reports were received with thankfulness.

Press release and closing.

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the vice-chairman in consultation with the Executive and the Principal. Brother Kasper Van Veen closed the meeting with prayer.

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

