

Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on January 11, 2024.

Opening and Roll Call.

The chairman of the Board, Rev. John Louwse, led in opening devotions. The governors were all present. 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.

Minutes and Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was established. The minutes of the regular meeting held on September 7 were approved. Outstanding matters on the action log were reviewed.

Decisions, Reports, Agenda Items

1. A proposal to standardize how to celebrate milestone events at CRTS was adopted.
2. A sub-committee appointed by the Board proposed a formalized procedure for selecting a new principal for CRTS. The normal term of a principal is nine years, and the Board is responsible for initiating a process well in advance of an upcoming general Synod which is responsible for appointing the principal. Some suggested qualifications for a principal are outlined. The selection process will involve input from governors, faculty, staff, and students. The Board approved a Procedure for Selecting a New Principal, Guidelines for Visits with Faculty and Staff concerning a New Principal, and a Student Survey concerning a new Principal. The sub-committee that proposed this policy is asked to develop a policy for the appointment of a vice-principal.
3. The Deputies Theological Training of the Free Reformed Church in South Africa have communicated with the Foreign Bursary Fund about the support of South African students studying at CRTS. The Board approved an updated memorandum of understanding outlining the way South African students will be financially supported. The expectations for financial support from Canada remain the same, and the Board thanks congregations for their generous support so far. The memorandum of understanding also specifies that one of our professors will visit the South African churches once every three years to strengthen the bond between CRTS and the South African churches.
4. A letter was received from sister Dini Gootjes, expressing her gratitude for the support of the CRTS community in the illness and death of her husband, the late professor Rev. Dr. Nicolaas H. Gootjes.
5. An invitation was received from the In Trust Center for Theological Schools, in collaboration with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), inviting CRTS to participate in a survey on board composition and governance within theological schools. The Board decided to ask our administrative assistant to follow up and make arrangements for our participation in this survey.
6. The Publication Committee requested to have our librarian, Margaret Alkema, appointed to this committee as a full member. She was appointed to the publication committee.

7. A draft letter regarding the need for new professors to serve at CRTS was approved to be sent to the Councils of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The purpose of this letter was to make the churches aware of the need for future professors, and to encourage them to support those pastors deemed qualified for further studies. With the letter the Board sought feedback from the churches about the merits of establishing a bursary fund to support students who pursue an advanced degree, and how such a bursary should be funded.
8. The Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia presented an extensive letter laying out their vision for a seminary in Australia, summarizing the challenges they face, and asking for clarity from the Board in our willingness to assist them in establishing an affiliate of CRTS in Australia. After a thorough discussion, the Board appointed the committee dealing with this to draft a response to the Australian deputies.
9. The Academic Committee passed on the minutes of their past meeting. They were received for information.
10. Rev. John Louwerse and Dr. Jeff Temple reported on lecture visits to CRTS on November 21, 2023, as well as on visits with professors. This report was received with thankfulness.
11. The Finance and Property Committee provided minutes of the recent meetings they held. They were received for information.
12. One of the requirements of ATS upon our last re-accreditation was to provide a report on CRTS's stance on and plan for diversity. According to ATS's own standards, we are required to value, define, and demonstrate diversity within the context of our mission, history, constituency, and theological commitments. The Board is thankful that within ATS room is given for seminaries to define their own understanding of diversity rather than having others define diversity for us. An interim report was provided suggesting the following Stance on Diversity:

The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) rejoices in serving the needs of Christians with diverse historical, socio-economic, geographical, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In line with our purpose and Scriptural basis (*Statement of Institutional Purpose*) CRTS is committed to training students who come from different backgrounds in order that they are equipped to proclaim the promise of the gospel universally and without discrimination to all nations and people to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel (cf. Psalm 87:4-6; Isaiah 40:1-5; Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:16; Galatians 3:25-29; Belgic Confession, Article 27; Canons of Dort I, 3; II, 5; III/IV, 7-8).

CRTS seeks to reflect this commitment to diversity by giving special attention to the diverse perspectives of the people from different backgrounds with whom the supporting Reformed churches interact in their ministry. CRTS also upholds this commitment in planning, education and formation of students, adoption of policies, offering student services and implementation of administration.

The Board adopted this Stance on Diversity.

13. Positive feedback was given by ATS approving our report on Assessment of Programmatic Student Learning Outcomes. This was received with thankfulness.
14. A survey was conducted of students who graduated from CRTS in 2019 and 2020. The feedback was generally positive, for which we are thankful!

15. The Governance Committee requested the Board to participate in the review of CRTS's governance documents as part of a report to ATS due in 2025. The Board agreed. A suggested revision to the role of the Registrar was approved.
16. A Principal's report was received. It outlined the real practical benefits of the renovated facilities, with increased space, light, opportunities for fellowship, and the use of Zoom technology. The Finance and Property Committee is planning to renovate the office wing of the seminary this coming summer. Faculty and staff are blessed with health to be able to do their tasks. Special mention was made of how well Dr. Reuben Bredenhof has adjusted to his new role and how thankful we may be for his service at CRTS. By and large the 29 students enrolled at CRTS are doing well. All the recent graduates have received and accepted calls. We are expecting seven more graduates in this coming year, the Lord willing. It also appears, as much as that can be determined, that we will be receiving a larger incoming class again this September. Dr. C. Van Dam, former professor of Old Testament, had another book published: *In Holy Service: Essays on Office, Personal and Ecclesial*.
17. The Principal submitted a report on how his workload could be reduced. The Board is grateful for this report, as it has been concerned about his workload. The Board asked the principal to work on implementing the suggested proposals by working with the Senate and staff.
18. Dr. Theodore Van Raalte submitted a proposal for a full sabbatical from July 15, 2024, to January 15, 2025. Arrangements were made to teach one of his freshmen courses and for other professors to care for students under his mentorship. Dr. Van Raalte proposes to use most of his time to finish writing an ethics textbook. The proposal was approved by the Board.
19. The Senate proposed an amended Latin Admission Requirement to the Master of Divinity program. The recommended path is for students to take two semesters of Latin at university. Alternatively, they are required to take twelve lessons of Derek Cooper's *Basics of Latin*, an online course. Generally, students enter seminary with either a strong or a weaker knowledge of English grammar, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This affects their ability to exegete Scripture and to write papers and sermons. In addition to the ongoing use of various Latin terms and sayings in various areas of biblical and theological studies, another key rationale for maintaining a Latin pre-requisite is that it provides students with a simple introduction to the structure and grammar of various languages using the same alphabet and significant vocabulary overlap with English. The Board gave the Senate leave to implement this.
20. Dr. Reuben Bredenhof reported on his attendance at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary Centre for Missions and Evangelism "Beyond the Walls" Mission Conference. This report was 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 Peter Vandersluis 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)

