

## Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

Recognizing New Brunswick Theological Seminary's 239-year relationship with the Reformed Church in America, the seminary welcomes the opportunity to update the General Synod on the status of our institution and our partnership with the denomination.

### New Branding and Strategic Planning Process

New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS) began work on a new strategic plan in July 2022. We began by clarifying our positioning and personality as a seminary. That is, we initially focused on the *who*, *how*, and *what* of being NBTS. We surveyed individual members and groups of our stakeholders around our guiding values and principles. We then developed statements of our purpose, identity, values, vision, and mission. Feedback and listening sessions were held with our constituents, and the resulting drafts were shared with faculty, staff, students, and alumni and were approved by the Board of Trustees as a living document at the February 2023 board meeting.

Built upon and arising from this new articulation of our vision, values, and mission, our new strategic plan is in the process of discernment and formation. Now, in this report to the General Synod, NBTS presents the results of our new branding.

#### *NBTS's New Brand System*

NBTS: The First Seminary of the Reformed Church in America

#### Purpose Statement (from the NBTS Bylaws)

Called in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, New Brunswick Theological Seminary participates in God's own laboring to fulfill God's reign on earth.

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and centered in its trust in God's sovereignty and grace, the Seminary is an inter-cultural, ecumenical school of Christian faith, learning, and scholarship committed to its metro-urban and global contexts.

Our purpose is to educate persons and strengthen communities for transformational, public ministries in church and society. We fulfill this mission through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.

#### Identity

We are a multi-ethnic, intergenerational, ecumenical theological institution of higher education that instills creative, contextual, and critical thinking and a passion for justice that reflects God's transforming love in Jesus Christ.

## Values

We value...

Faith and community that welcomes diverse perspectives, where all have a seat at the table and all voices are heard; the breadth and depth of this inclusive conversation contribute to all growth and understanding.

A supportive environment where the person, the journey, and the call to ministry in each unique context are nurtured and affirmed in community.

Academic engagement that instills creative, contextual, and critical thinking and a passion for justice.

## Vision Statement

We envision empowered leaders, ministries, and communities who actively pursue, promote, and engage in the work of justice, reconciliation, and unity, affirming the equality of all God's people.

We envision a community of graduates who bear witness to God's light in the world, where all lives are dignified and all voices are heard, and all are included to share in God's bountiful love.

We envision spiritual communities who embody grace and love, rooted in critical, creative, contextual thinking and leadership that inspires others to live fruitful and faithful lives.

We envision a world where hearts are renewed, justice is established, and faith is restored.

## Mission Statement

Our mission, rooted in God's grace, is to empower people and communities...

to explore their calling and live into their futures by providing a place of connection and spiritual formation;

to bring a curiosity, openness, creativity, and logic to the critical examination of text and context; and

to act with fairness and integrity through analyzing systems of power and privilege.

## Motto

Think Critically, Act Justly, Lead Faithfully

## **Administration**

This year, NBTS restructured its administration and added a new, much-needed position.

- We are pleased that the Rev. Dr. Neal Presa has joined us as vice president of student affairs and vocational outreach. Dr. Presa also serves on the Administrative Council and has joined the faculty as associate professor of preaching and worship.
- Ms. Amanda Bruehl has been promoted to vice president of operations.
- This summer our chief financial officer, Ken Termott, retired after 12 years of service.

## **Advancement**

NBTS hosted its Inaugural Biennial Gala on Thursday, May 18, during commencement week. The event honored our distinguished alumni as well as church and community leaders who are committed to the preservation and continuation of NBTS's mission to train and equip leaders to think critically, act justly, and lead faithfully. The alumni awards, typically presented at the baccalaureate service, took place during the gala to add to the festiveness of the occasion.

## **Finances**

The seminary ended the 2021-2022 fiscal year with a surplus of \$41,000, with expenditures of \$3,763,123 and revenues of \$3,804,132. This year, the seminary is currently behind budget forecasts, primarily due to less-than-expected tuition and fee revenue from our master's degree programs. We have put measures in place that we anticipate will rectify this. To view NBTS's 2022 annual report, see [https://nbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NBTS\\_2022\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://nbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NBTS_2022_Annual_Report.pdf).

## **Admissions and Recruitment (Vocational Outreach)**

Dr. Neal Presa has assumed his new role as vice president of student affairs and vocational outreach and, in collaboration with an admissions and recruitment strategy working group, has developed a comprehensive plan for recruitment and outreach for NBTS for the next two years. A recommendation from the working group was that "vocational outreach" is a more comprehensive and theological term than "admissions." Dr. Presa has set ambitious and thoughtful long- and short-term strategies for recruitment.

## **Academics**

NBTS is extremely excited to announce the promotion to full professor of Dr. Jaeseung Cha, RCA General Synod professor. At the board meeting to discuss and take this action, the board celebrated his groundbreaking scholarship on Christology and atonement and expressed unanimous support for Dr. Cha's promotion. Dr. Cha joins vice president and dean Beth Tanner as the second full professor currently on faculty at NBTS.

NBTS successfully launched two new critical systems: a student information system (Campus Café) and a learning management system (D2L Brightspace). These systems greatly improve both the student experience and efficacy of our pedagogical offerings. We are also innovating in the use of technology to deliver best-in-class online and hybrid learning experiences. This past summer, NBTS launched our new recording studio, and we are currently developing a state-of-the-art hybrid classroom prototype.

## **Denominational Service and Support**

As NBTS moved back to in-person and hybrid events, the seminary was able to host several General Synod commission meetings this year, including the Commission on History, the Commission on Theology, and the Commission for Women. On March 4, 2023, NBTS hosted an RCA restructuring team roundtable discussion in the Sage Library.

After a four-year break (as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic), a group from NBTS was able to return to the Al Amana Centre in Oman, an RCA Global Mission partner. The trip was a wonderful experience where students, faculty, and alumni learned about and participated in interfaith dialogue. We look forward to continuing to develop this opportunity for our students in the coming years.

The Reformed Church Center continues to provide valuable free programming for a wide audience, including scholars, RCA members, and everyone interested in the Reformed tradition. Reformed Church Center events this year included:

- RCA General Synod 2022 Recap
- Black and Reformed Theology
- Confession Then and Now: Thinking with Belhar in North America
- Creation Care as Eschatology
- RCA International Church Planting
- Land Acknowledgment, Truth, and Reconciliation: A Place to Begin
- Slavery and Social Power in the Dutch Reformed Church
- Women's Stories Day 2023
- Redeeming Confession in Reformed Worship

See past videos and find out about upcoming events at [www.nbts.edu/RCC-events](http://www.nbts.edu/RCC-events).

We continue to see an increase in the number of RCA students at NBTS in all of our programs. Since 2017, NBTS has had an increase from six RCA students to 36 RCA students—that is an increase of 600 percent over 6 years. We are excited to see this number continue to grow as we build connections with RCA colleges, classes, and churches.

The seminary's president, Rev. Dr. Micah McCreary, has been especially honored to be involved in several important RCA teams and committees over this last year. He has invested a significant amount of time and energy over the last year as a member

of the RCA restructuring team. It has been a blessing to get to know the other team members and envision where God may be leading the RCA in the future. He also serves as a member of the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board, the Commissioned Pastors Advisory Team, the Commission on Theology, and as a General Synod professor for the RCA. He feels privileged to serve his denomination in these ways.

## **Governance**

### *Proposed NBTS Constitution and Bylaws Changes*

The following proposed changes to NBTS's Constitution and Bylaws were approved by the NBTS Board of Trustees at its February meeting. The changes are now submitted to the General Synod for its approval.

#### **TE 23-1**

**To approve the following amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of New Brunswick Theological Seminary:**

##### ***Article II. Section 1.***

**Rooted in the Reformed tradition and centered in its trust ~~of~~in God's sovereignty and grace, the Seminary is an inter-cultural, ecumenical school of Christian faith, learning, and scholarship committed to its metro-urban and global contexts.**

**Our ~~mission~~purpose is to educate persons and strengthen communities for transformational, public ministries in church and society. We fulfill this ~~mission~~ through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.**

##### ***Article V. Section 5.***

**Each trustee will be asked to read and sign annually a Declaration for Board Members of New Brunswick Theological Seminary ~~at a commissioning service to be held at the fall meeting of the Board~~. This Declaration will include a statement of commitment to faithful participation in the work of the Board.**

##### ***Article VII. Section 1.***

**The Board of Trustees shall meet at least three times a year. The annual meeting shall be in the spring. The date, time, and place of meetings shall be determined by the Officers. Written notice of each stated meeting shall be ~~mailed~~sent at least thirty days prior to the date of the meeting.**

##### ***Article VII. Section 7.***

**The agenda shall be ~~mailed~~sent to the trustees at least ten days prior to the meeting of the Board of Trustees.**

***Article XIII. Section 3.***

**Standing committees shall meet at or before each regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting, and at other times as necessary, to fulfill assigned responsibilities and to prepare and submit reports and recommendations to the Board of Trustees.**

***Article XV Section 4.***

**A quorum of the Administrative Council must include the President and/or the Dean of the Seminary and a majority of its members. The Administrative Council shall fix the time and the place of its meetings, maintaining a record of its proceedings. This record, which shall be distributed open at all times to the Faculty Council and to the Board of Trustees.**

***Article XVIII Section 1.***

**To the full extent authorized and permitted by law, the Corporation shall indemnify any person made, or threatened to be made, a party to any civil or criminal action or proceeding by reason of fact that the person, is or was a Trustee, officer, faculty member, administrator, or employee of the Corporation and was acting within the scope of his/her Corporation responsibilities and duties. The foregoing shall not obligate the Corporation to purchase officers' and directors' liability insurance, but should applicable law permit, the Corporation shall purchase such insurance if when authorized and approved by the Board of Trustees.**

***Article XXII. Section 1.***

**When this Constitution and Bylaws ~~shall have~~ has been approved by a majority vote of the Board of Trustees and a majority vote of the General Synod, it shall supersede all previous documents controlling the affairs of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, excepting the Articles of Incorporation as amended.**

**In Conclusion**

As the day-to-day work of the seminary continues, we are thankful for the governance and support of our Board of Trustees, particularly our board moderator, elder Russell Paarlberg. We are proud of our educational ministry to the church via our Reformed Church Center, and the global mission-focused work of the Underwood Center. We are also deeply grateful for the relationships with our alumni and students, and the commitment to sound theological and biblical eradication of systems of unjust power and unjust privilege. Additionally, we could not be a school of the prophets without the world-class education provided by our faculty and staff. And none of this would be possible without our partnership with the Reformed Church in America.

Finally, we solicit your prayers and support as we continue to remain rooted in the Reformed tradition empowering God's people and God's communities to explore their calling and live into their futures by providing a place of connection and spiritual formation; to bring a curiosity, openness, creativity, and logic to the critical examination of text and context; and to act with fairness and integrity through analyzing systems of power and privilege.