

## Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I write to you this seventh year of my presidency with a sense of gratitude and humility as I reflect on the journey of New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS) as the first seminary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). As president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to offer this report, detailing the progress, challenges, and aspirations of our institution in service to the mission and vision we share with the RCA.

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 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.

In the spirit of this mission, I present this report as a testament to our ongoing commitment to excellent theological education, spiritual formation, and engagement with the broader church community.

### Academics

This year, we introduced our new 36-credit Master of Arts in Ministry Studies Program (MAMS). This program is designed as an entry-level degree for specialized ministries, nonprofit institutions, and personal development. It engages the learners to think critically and creatively about the church and Christian faith, is grounded in Scripture, and is committed to spiritual formation and personal growth. The MAMS program has suggested concentrations, but students can select a customized curriculum to meet their unique ministry needs and vocational interests.

#### *Faculty Promotions*

Dr. Jaeseung Cha was promoted to the Professor of Foundational and Constructive Theology. Dr. Cha helps students establish a solid grounding in the fundamentals of Christian theology and faith. Regular topics include doctrines of the Trinity, creation, human beings, salvation, the church and sacraments, and eschatology. His approach acknowledges that these key elements are not static but are continually reshaped within different socio-linguistic contexts.

Dr. Janice McLean-Farrell was tenured and promoted to the Dirk Romeyn Associate Professor of Metro-Urban Ministry and Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies. Dr. McLean-Farrell feels called to equip “leaders to join God in what God is already doing in urban spaces.” She draws on the experience and knowledge of not only diverse authors but also her own students, most of whom are adult learners. Her goal is to

“have students develop ministry practice that is contextually relevant, historically grounded, culturally competent, pastoral in nature, and prophetic in witness.”

### *Graduation – the Class of 2024*

This May, NBTS will graduate 12 doctor of ministry students, 2 dual master of divinity and master of arts in pastoral care and counseling students, 2 master of arts in theological studies students, 2 master of arts in pastoral care and counseling students, 10 master of divinity students, and 13 certificate in theological studies students, and will award 2 Certificates of Readiness for Examination. This year’s baccalaureate preacher will be the Rev. Dr. Beth Tanner and our commencement speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Peter M. Wherry.

### *Reformed Church Center*

New Brunswick Theological Seminary’s Reformed Church Center had a remarkable year of programming, offering enriching experiences that fostered spiritual growth, community engagement, and theological exploration. From insightful lectures and thought-provoking discussions to impactful service projects and meaningful worship services, the Reformed Church Center provided a vibrant and welcoming space for individuals to deepen their faith and connect with others. Looking ahead to the next year, the Reformed Church Center is excited to build upon this success, with plans to expand its programming, reach out to new communities, and continue its mission of equipping and empowering individuals for ministry and service in the Reformed tradition. For information on the Reformed Church Center, contact Dr. James Brumm at [jbrumm@nbts.edu](mailto:jbrumm@nbts.edu) or 848-237-1760.

## **Administration**

### *Administrative Transitions*

After six years as vice president of academic affairs and dean of the seminary, the Rev. Beth L. Tanner, PhD, has decided to return to full-time faculty and spend more time writing and teaching. We are eternally grateful for her skilled academic guidance, coordination, and collaboration. Under her administration we received our ten-year Association of Theological Schools accreditation and a seven-year Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation.

NBTS academics will now be led by the Rev. Charles Rix, PhD. Dr. Rix, an NBTS alumnus, comes to us as the former dean of the College of Humanities and Bible, professor of Bible, and Baugh Chair of Preaching at Oklahoma Christian University; professor emeritus, Oklahoma Christian University; and director of MA in theological studies and ministry studies programs, New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Dr. Rix earned his PhD in Biblical Studies and Hebrew Bible from Drew Theological School. Dr. Rix also holds a master of fine arts in creative writing from Spalding University, a master of philosophy from Drew Theological School, and a master of arts in theological studies from New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

## *New Strategic Planning Process for 2024-2027*

Building upon the branding work we did last year—articulating new values, vision, and mission statements—we are launching a new strategic plan in 2024. Our new strategic plan focuses on the key priorities that flow from the seminary’s core mission: (1) Review and refine NBTS’s core academic programs in light of changing student and church needs; (2) Increase student enrollment by focusing on and refining our many outreach efforts; and (3) Establish a strong and sustainable infrastructure that not only maximizes financial sustainability but also emphasizes empowerment and maintains a supportive infrastructure to optimize the student experience and ministerial formation.

### *Finances*

This year, we have outsourced our accounting and payroll services to Miller Management. Our expenditures for 2022-2023 were \$4,441,193 and our revenues were \$3,810,403. Thus, we used monies from our reserves to cover the 2022-2023 fiscal year deficit of \$303,790. This year, we budgeted for that deficit and are introducing advancement and financial management strategies to eliminate the deficit. Specifically, we have contracted a consulting chief financial officer from another seminary to assist us in deficit-reduction measures. We are also in the process of reorganizing and training our admissions, advising, and student formation departments to increase enrollment and retention and decrease “stop outs.” We will continue to put in place measures that we anticipate will further rectify our deficit. For further information, see the NBTS 2023 Year in Review at <https://nbts.edu/nbts-2023-year-review>.

### **Advancement**

We remain humbled and grateful for the continued support and generosity of our donors and partners. Your contributions have enabled us to fulfill our mission of educating and empowering people and communities in the Reformed tradition and beyond.

### *Scholarships*

One of the cornerstones of our fundraising efforts has been the establishment and support of scholarships for our students pursuing theological education within the RCA as well as in partner denominations.

Over the past year, we have successfully raised funds to establish several new endowed scholarships as well as increasing already existing scholarships, including:

- Vernon and Margo Kooy Scholarship – named after a former RCA NBTS faculty member and his wife.
- Wilma and Patrick Harris Scholarship – named after a NBTS Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) alumna and her husband.
- Dr. Henry P. Davis Jr. Scholarship – named after the late Dr. Davis, a Baptist NBTS alumnus.

- Hattie M. Walvoord Scholarship – named after Mary Kansfield’s grandmother.
- Neal Busker Memorial Scholarship – named after the late Rev. Busker, an RCA NBTS alumnus.

### *Endowed Scholarship for the Late President Emeritus Gregg Mast*

In recognition of the late president emeritus Gregg Mast’s distinguished service and leadership, we are pleased to announce the establishment of the Gregg Mast Presidential Scholarship. The scholarship will honor President Mast’s legacy and support students who demonstrate exceptional promise and commitment to the ministry.

We invite members of the General Synod to contribute to this scholarship fund as a tangible expression of gratitude for President Mast’s years of dedicated service to the RCA and its mission.

### *Upcoming Events*

We are excited to announce two significant milestones in the history of New Brunswick Theological Seminary: the ten-year anniversary of our current building and the 150th anniversary of the Gardner A. Sage Library. These milestones present us an opportunity to celebrate our past and reflect on our present with initiatives planned to commemorate these milestones.

The mission and ministry of NBTS only happens because of the generosity of people like you. Please consider a gift to NBTS in your regular giving or through your estate planning. For more information, please visit [www.nbts.edu/donors](http://www.nbts.edu/donors) or contact Cathy Proctor at [cproctor@nbts.edu](mailto:cproctor@nbts.edu) or 848-237-1706.

### **Innovative Technology at NBTS**

Over the last several years, the seminary has been developing innovative pedagogy. We are excited that all our programs now have fully online options, and many include hybrid learning experiences, making an NBTS education available and accessible to more students. We are continually refining and expanding our ability to meet students’ needs through adaptive course delivery strategies.

One example is the creation of Studio 35, a recording studio that provides a laboratory space for faculty and staff to prepare high-quality lectures and promotional videos. The use of this studio to produce professional content has enhanced our online education offerings and equipped our faculty to be academic, denominational, and community leaders, positioning them for innovative collaborations.

Another example is our state-of-the-art hybrid classroom, which is currently in final development. Our hybrid classroom harnesses the power of cutting-edge technology to bring a class together. Students can participate in real-time discussions, ask

questions, and engage with their peers and instructors as if they were in the same room, all while comfortably situated in their own environment.

The cornerstone of building hybrid classrooms lies in accessibility. Local students can physically attend classes, while remote learners can join in synchronously from anywhere, whether that is across town or across the world. Lectures, discussions, and activities are curated to cater to both in-person and online students, ensuring an equitable and inclusive educational experience for all. One important benefit of this kind of classroom is that it helps enrich and embed community and collegiality among all our students by fully integrating those in person with those who prefer an online-only classroom experience.

We are grateful to the generous donors who have made these projects possible. Their support has helped NBTS remain innovative, relevant, and sustainable in this competitive environment.

### **In Conclusion**

I am deeply honored to lead New Brunswick Theological Seminary. We recognize the gift we have as the first RCA seminary and with a 240-year relationship with the Reformed Church in America. We remain New Brunswick Theological Seminary—a multiethnic, 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.

We are honored to remain involved with the RCA in very important ways, such as educating RCA ministers, offering RCA-focused educational opportunities, and participating in commissions and denominational restructuring. We continue to see an increase in the number of RCA students at NBTS in all our programs. Since 2017, we have had a six-fold increase in RCA students—approximately 24 percent of our student body. We are excited to see this number continue to grow as we build connections with RCA colleges, classes, and churches. In addition to our beloved RCA students, New Brunswick Theological Seminary boasts a diverse student population, bringing together individuals from various cultural, ethnic, and theological backgrounds. This rich diversity enriches the learning environment, fostering a vibrant community of scholars and ministers who are equipped to serve in an increasingly multicultural world.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the New Brunswick Theological Seminary Board of Trustees for their governance and support. Particularly, I would like to thank our board moderator, Rev. Abby Norton-Levering, and the RCA’s general secretary, Rev. Eddy Alemán, for their partnership in this important ministry.

Finally, I solicit your prayers and support as we continue to live into our purpose as a seminary: 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 of 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 through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.

In Joy and In Justice,

Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary  
President and John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology  
General Synod Professor of the Reformed Church in America