



# PRTS UPDATE

PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY • 2965 Leonard St., NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525



## *Meditation*

REV. DAVID LIPSY

### **“I Thank My God”**

Even though I might be thought by some to be an optimist (or even naïve), I tend, as I suppose many of us do, to focus far too much on the negative—either the negative that is real or that which lives in our imagination. Perhaps it’s for this reason I marvel at and am a bit jealous of the way the Apostle Paul was often able to find reasons for thankfulness to God even in the midst of pretty discouraging circumstances. Who can forget him and Silas, after being beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, praying and singing praises to God at midnight (Acts 16:25)?

We find the same dogged thankfulness in the opening verses of Paul’s first extant letter to the Corinthians. Anyone with even a casual acquaintance with this epistle will recognize that the issues challenging the Corinthian church were varied and formidable. I dare say that if any church we attend was plagued with troubles even half so numerous or serious there would be a lot of fear and a lot of explaining to do. It’s not that Paul sidestepped or soft-pedaled the problems; he simply would not allow the problems to eclipse the good he still saw, good for which he sincerely thanked God. What a lesson we can learn from this!

What is it about us that gravitates to the negative? Is it our fallen nature? Surely that’s part of it.

Could it also be that we are succumbing to the cumulative effects of a culture that thrives on negativity?

Advertisers encouraging discontent? Media sensationalizing the scandalous? Schools emphasizing competition with handfuls of winners and boatloads of losers? Politicians trading in character assassination?

How is the climate in our churches? Do we praise as much as mourn? Pray as much as pout? Emphasize sin more than grace, the Fall rather than the gospel call? Is doubt justified or decried? Are we holy or hollow? Are new converts viewed with suspicion or hope? Newcomers with wariness or welcome?

What is the atmosphere in our family? More criticism than consolation? Demands than willing hands? Gripping than gratitude? Meanness than meekness? Does love reign or does disdain? Tenderness or callousness? Patience or impetuosity? Is authority mingled with humility? Obedience with alacrity? Is the gospel practical or theoretical? Christ central or marginal?

Whether you are a PRTS Board member pondering a budget shortfall, a housewife juggling a diminishing checkbook balance, a child praying through negative peer pressure, or anyone facing any number of challenges, the temptation to focus on the negative while overlooking what God *has* given will always be there. At such times, let us take a lesson from the Apostle Paul—to find that for which we may sincerely give God thanks and then not defer to do so, looking to Him for help.



## Our Mission

Preparing students to serve Christ and His church through biblical, experiential, and practical ministry.

## PRTS FACULTY ITINERARY

### Dr. Joel Beeke

**August 6:** Preaching for Bible Presbyterian Synod, Bristol, Tennessee

**August 9:** Heath Church, Cardiff, Wales

**August 11-14:** EMW's Aberystwyth Conference, Aberystwyth, Wales

**August 16-19:** Reformed Preachers' Conference, Seoul, Korea

**August 27-29:** Calvin for the 21st Century, Grand Rapids, MI

**September 12-16:** Calvin Conference, London, England

**September 17-19:** Sola Scriptura Ministries, Toronto, Canada

**September 28-29:** Ministers' Conference in Mobile, Alabama

**October 30-31:** Reformation Conference, Laurel, Miss.

**November 1:** First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Miss.

**November 3-5:** John Reed Miller Lectures Series,

Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Miss.

**November 6-7:** Princeton Regional Conference on Reformed Theology (Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals), Princeton, N.J.

**November 17:** NAPARC Address, Grand Rapids, MI

### Dr. Gerald Bilkes

**August 27-29:** Calvin for the 21st Century, Grand Rapids, MI

**September 19:** Seminary Day, Dundas, ON

**September 25:** Ordination/Inaugural, Grand Rapids, MI

**October 21-23:** FRC Ministers' Retreat, Crieff, ON

### Dr. David Murray

**August 10-14:** FCC Family Camp, Bergton, VI

**August 18-21:** FRC Family Camp

**August 27-29:** Calvin for the 21st Century, Grand Rapids, MI

**October 9-12:** Shelter Church Conference, Edmonton, Canada

**October 21-23:** FRC Ministers' Retreat, Cambridge, Canada

**October 29:** Peace Haven Special Needs Association Annual Meeting, Ontario

**October 30-31:** Redeemer College, Hamilton, Canada

## PRTS Faculty Writing and/or Video Projects

### Dr. Joel Beeke

• "A Habitual Sight of Him": *The Christ-Centered Piety of Thomas Goodwin* (with Mark Jones)

• Calvin book (with Michael Haykin)

• *Sanctification*

• Editing Jodocus VanLodenstein's sermons

• *Praying Biblically* (with James Beeke)

• *Encouragements for Ministers* (with Sinclair Ferguson and Derek Thomas)

• *Promises of God* (with James La Belle)

### Dr. Gerald Bilkes

• Exposition of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

• Spirituality in the Fabric of the Bible

### Dr. David Murray

• DVD and accompanying booklet on "Beginner's Guide to Covenant Theology"

• Teaching Outlines for Shorter Catechism

• Teaching Outlines for Westminster Confession

## A Word from the Registrar . . .



The Lord blessed our seminary through another semester into this summer. We could finish strong with His enabling grace. Our graduation evening was a true blessing.

I am currently corresponding with about 150 prospective students. Some of these men are into the application process while others are seeking God's will for how and when to proceed. It is a great privilege to be in contact with so many from around the globe. We need much discernment as we communicate with these Christian brothers.

We are expecting to serve twenty-four Master of Divinity students this fall. Our new M.Div. students are Steve Carr, Zachary Hall, Pablo Landazuri, Colin Samul, and Brett Schut. Pablo is from Ecuador; the other new M.Div. students are all North Americans.

We also look forward to serving forty-five Master of Theology students. Our new Th.M. students come from a variety of countries and denominations. They are Benjamin Glaser, Friday Inya, Leonard Katundu, Jaesung Kim, Sambae Kim, Sang Jo Kim, Matalius Likhoozi, Jeremiah Mhlanga, Jess Moore, Timothy Peng, and Renton Rathbun.

In addition, we have four Master of Arts in Religion students and twenty-four distance learning students. Seven of our distance students are taking first year Greek under the guidance of Chris Engelsma, our distance learning director. We have launched our certificate program with six currently enrolled.

We hope to start our fall semester September 1. Our first modular class will be with Pastor David Lipsy teaching "The Christian Ministry and Family" on September 14-18. Dr. Brian DeVries plans to teach a Th.M. course, "Missions in the Old and New Testament," on September 21-25. We have Pastor Neil Pronk scheduled to teach "The Theology of Augustine" September 28-October 2. Dr. Dan Timmer is scheduled to teach "Issues in Old Testament Theology" on December 15-18. There are ten other modular courses in the 2009/2010 schedule.

Our regular semester schedule is as follows:

"Theology Proper" as well as "Sermon Preparation for Special Services" with Dr. Joel Beeke; "Hebrew III" with Dr. John Lawlor; "Greek I" with Dr. David Turner; "Practice Preaching" with Drs. Beeke, Bilkes, Murray, and Pastor Lanning; "Foundation and Process of Biblical Counseling" as well as "The Christian Minister and His Ministry" with Dr. David Murray; "New Testament Exegesis of the Gospels and Acts" as well as "New Testament Introduction" with Dr. Gerald Bilkes

Our search for a fourth professor is ongoing. We are also pursuing a change to permanent residency status for Dr. Murray.

Your seminary is also becoming an increasingly popular source for pulpit supply. Calls come in regularly from URC, Reformed Baptist, OPC, CRC, PCA, FRC, and HRC congregations. Our students and faculty are also called to speak at various retirement and nursing homes as well as inner city missions. One of our students, Van Lal Siana, has become a spiritual leader in a local community of Burmese refugees. Read this remarkable story on the next page.

Please do remember the multi-faceted needs of the seminary as we continue to grow. Pray particularly that the Lord would keep us faithful to His Word and will.



## **GOD'S WAYS ARE ABOVE OUR WAYS**

One of the privileges we share at PRTS is to witness the remarkable providences of our Lord in the lives of our students and their ministries.

Van Lal Siam is a Burmese-speaking student from the military junta controlled Myanmar. The first amazing providence is how we came to know each other and received his application.

Dr. Richard Bacon, a Presbyterian minister from Texas, serves as an instructor in Myanmar at the Reformed Bible Institute where Siam was a student. Dr. Bacon is our resource for information regarding any applicants from Myanmar (a valuable service to PRTS). We had received several applications from Myanmar but were not comfortable pursuing closure with them because the education system is so different from ours. We asked Dr. Bacon to identify a Myanmar applicant whom he thought would be the most likely to succeed. He gave us Siam's name. It was not long before we had received several documents from Siam and were able to process his application and support successfully.

The next hurdle for Siam was obtaining a passport from Myanmar and a student visa from the U.S. embassy. We worked at getting him the correct immigration documents and were amazed to hear that God directed him to sympathetic personnel who whisked him through the process of obtaining his visa.

We work with RAPTIM, a travel agency out of New York City, which arranges many of the journeys for our international applicants. They had planned Siam's itinerary which worked remarkably well. Siam had never travelled outside of his homeland before and it amazed him—and us when he related it to us—how the Lord gave him help with people who served him throughout the journey. He arrived on schedule and without any difficulties.

Siam was with us only for a few weeks when he was linked to a gathering of Burmese refugees in Grand Rapids. One of our staff members, Edna Van Sweden, has a relative who fostered a young Burmese adult. This Burmese immigrant became employed in the health care system where he met other Burmese immigrants and refugees. When Edna shared the information about the immigrants, we informed Siam. Edna shared contact information with him and he arranged to meet these refugees.

Siam has begun to preach for these people on a regular basis and to lead their weekly Bible studies. Most of the 60–100 Burmese people gathering at these meetings are not

Christians and gather primarily for the Burmese social contact. They are all of very low income and need each other's support. It came to our attention that they did not have Bibles and could not afford the \$40 each to purchase them.

We were able to contact people who have a heart for the gospel and they linked us to their church deacons who were very sympathetic to this need. This is how a local URC in Walker, Michigan, financed the purchase of 50 Burmese language Bibles for Siam's ministry. When RHB ordered the Bibles for us, the American Bible League supplied twenty free copies and sold the other fifty at a 40% discount. All of this was a wonderful blessing for these dear people.

Since starting these Burmese Bible studies and services, another Myanmar group has been coming with another language base. Siam is now meeting with two groups, one of which needs their services translated by a Christian who knows both languages.

Suffice it to say that we were delighted to be part of this development and to realize that God had orchestrated this entire process so that Siam could communicate the gospel to these Burmese refugees in our city. The Grand Rapids Chin Christian Fellowship, as they are now known, has organized itself as a congregation and is seeking a denomination with whom to associate.

All of this happened in the space of five months and the ministry is growing significantly. We share this as an inspiration for our readers to praise God for how He works and to pray for these developments; may they receive His indispensable blessings for the building of His kingdom.

Siam is an M.Div. student and has adjusted quite well to our expectations. The Lord willing, he will be with us for four years. He and two other students are living with a retired couple who consider themselves blessed to have these godly men in their home.

This is just one part of one student's journey. God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts, but what a privilege we have to share in His wonderful providential dealings with His servants.



Van Lal Siam preaching to Burmese refugees

## Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

### FINANCIAL REPORT

For period 8/1/08 – 6/30/09

*Announcing the Ordination Service of*

**DR. G.M. BILKES**

as professor of theology

Grand Rapids Free Reformed Church  
950 Ball Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**Friday, September 25, 7:00 PM**

Pastor C.A. Schouls, chairman of the theological education committee, officiating.

Everyone is welcome.

**REV. BRIAN KAMWENDO**

Rev. Kamwendo's induction service in Malawi went well, with 24 ministers and over 2,000 people attending. He preached from Exodus 33:12-33. The following week his presbytery (classis) elected him to be the moderator (chairman) of his presbytery, a responsibility that involves overseeing the welfare of 35,000 church members. He is requesting prayer for this large, added responsibility, as well as for his own congregation of 8,000 souls.

	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance
<b>Income</b>			
HRC Church Collections	\$ 106,609.00	195,175.00	(88,566.00)
Other Donations	778,059.00	811,490.00	(33,431.00)
Tuition	133,810.00	130,000.00	3,810.00
Scholarships	72,969.00	200,000.00	(127,031.00)
Other	<u>37,373.00</u>	<u>33,300.00</u>	<u>4,073.00</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 1,128,820.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,369,965.00</b>	<b>\$ (241,145.00)</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Instruction	\$ 563,786.00	725,386.00	(161,600.00)
Scholarships	198,370.00	200,000.00	(1,630.00)
Administrative	<u>361,853.00</u>	<u>441,879.00</u>	<u>(80,026.00)</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,124,009.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,367,265.00</b>	<b>\$ (243,256.00)</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 4,811.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,700.00</b>	<b>\$ (2,111.00)</b>

We continue to be amazed and thankful for the Lord's provision for the seminary in times of financial hardship. Unknown to our donors, He has opened hearts and provided for our every need with perfect timing. Presently, we have about a two-week balance in our Operating Fund. Please consider a monthly partnership with PRTS. Thank you.

— Chris Hanna

#### YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE!

- I would like to financially support PRTS by giving \$ \_\_\_\_\_, designated for:
- Pressing Operational Needs    Scholarship Fund    PRTS Foundation  
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- I would like to enroll in the monthly giving program and give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month.
- I am enclosing \$20 for a 2010 subscription to *Puritan Reformed Journal*.
- I am enclosing \$65 for registration to the Calvin for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century conference Aug. 27-29.

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