



Drs. Beeke, Neele, and Bilkes (l to r) in new leadership positions (see pages 2–3)

WHO ARE THE INFLUENCERS IN YOUR LIFE?

Did you know that the people who revise *The Oxford English Dictionary* each year added the word “influencer” to the OED in 2022? The general idea is that an influencer is a prominent individual who uses the latest social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.—to promote interest in ideas, products, and services, often in hopes of acquiring our time and money. You and I are the targets of these so-called “social influencers.”

As Christians, however, we should ask ourselves, “Who is it that seeks to influence me to follow after Christ in faith and obedience?” The author of the epistle to the Hebrews instructs us in chapter 13 to remember, consider, imitate, obey, and submit to past and present church leaders for they have poured out their lives to influence us to follow Christ by being Christ-like shepherds over us.

A Christ-like pastor is someone who has shared the Word of God with us, both from the pulpit and personally. He is someone who has earnestly sought to be an example of Christ throughout all his life. Christ charges these same pastors to watch over us, for they are stewards of our souls and will be required to give an account of us on the last day. These are some of the most important “influencers” that you and I can ever have in this life.

John Brown writes in his commentary on Hebrews 13:7, “religious truth makes a deeper impression on us, and a holy example exercises a more powerful influence on us, when the one is stated and the other exhibited by an individual to whom we are closely connected, and whom we personally esteem and love.”

O pray that we would esteem and love the pastors given charge over us! Might we experience the moving of God’s Spirit among us as it was in the days of Robert Murray M’Cheyne, when returning from his mission to Palestine found every pew filled, every aisleway overflowing, and even the stairs leading up to the pulpit occupied with young and old alike. M’Cheyne was used by the Lord to greatly influence his congregation and they loved him all the more for it.

Pray too for Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. With the Lord’s help and your partnership, we seek to train pastors and Bible teachers, so that they might be used in a mighty way to influence the hearts and minds of people the world over to love and follow Christ all the days of their lives.

—CHRIS HANNA

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PURITAN REFORMED'S NEW LEADERSHIP

Ten years ago when I turned sixty years of age, I informed the Board of Trustees that I would, God willing and health permitting, be willing to serve as president of Puritan Reformed until the age of seventy—of course, only if they would have me to do so. They agreed to do so, and indicated that if my health was still good at the age of seventy, they would consider having me continue on as professor and chancellor. Since I reached that landmark age last year, the Board has followed the necessary steps and decided to present to the Heritage Reformed Synod in June of this year the recommendation that, effective August 1, 2023, providing each of the three men accepted their unanimous synodical vote, Dr. Adriaan Neele would serve as president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; Dr. Jerry Bilkes, as vice-president, and I, as chancellor. All three of us have accepted these positions and by the time you receive this we will be fully engaged in these roles.

It is my delight and privilege to introduce the new President and Vice President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and then I will add a few words about my own job description as chancellor.



NEW PRESIDENT

Dr. Adriaan C. Neele is a minister of Word and sacrament in the Heritage Reformed denomination. He holds a PhD in Historical Theology from the University of Utrecht and a PhD in Homiletics from the Theological University Apeldoorn. Prior to joining Puritan Reformed in 2016 to assist our institution to establish a

PhD degree and a year later to serve as director of the PhD program, he taught early modern Reformed theology at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and in various institutions in South Africa, including the University of the Free State, the University of Pretoria, and the African Institute for Missiology. He also served as dean of and professor at Farel Reformed Theological Seminary in Montréal, Quebec. He is a member of several business and academic boards, such as the Dutch Reformed Translation Society where he serves as board-chairman, the Bavinck Institute, and Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale. Dr. Neele has authored numerous books and articles, including *That Which We Have Seen: Phenomenology and Homiletics* (Summum Academic, 2023), *Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706): Text, Context, and Reception* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), *Before Jonathon Edwards: Sources of New England Theology* (Oxford, 2019), and *Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706): Reformed Orthodox—Method and Piety* (Brill, 2009). Additionally, he co-founded a foundation for internet-based and global theological education and maintains an ongoing interest in the intersection of primary sources, digitization, AI, and web-based education. Prior to being called to gospel ministry, he was an international business executive

in the biotechnology and software industry. He and his wife, Kornelia, have six children.

A few years ago, Dr. Neele accepted the position of serving as the vice-president of Puritan Reformed. It has been a joy to work with him for the last seven years and to increasingly impart to him as vice-president in more recent years much of the running of the seminary. Our regular meetings have been fruitful and cordial, and we have shared meaningful prayer times as well. I am so grateful that he possesses a strong conviction to continue to build on the biblical, Reformed, confessional, experiential, and practical training model that this seminary and its Board holds dear. In addition to that, I came to realize that my brother holds many gifts that I lack, such as a remarkable vision for seminary expansion and collaboration with other sound seminaries, a reputable business and financial background, and a real interest in digitization and how that can be used to reach seminary students all around the world. Before Dr. Neele joined us, some thought that I had a fair bit of vision, but after his arrival I soon realized that he out-visions me by far!

In sum, our dear brother Dr. Neele is a man of deep Christian piety, a highly respected theologian (particularly in the theology of Petrus van Mastricht and Jonathan Edwards), and a visionary who has the acumen of a skilled entrepreneur. I look forward to seeing how the Lord will use my dear friend and colleague to lead Puritan Reformed into increasingly becoming a global seminary for a global church without tolerating any mission drift. Join me, please, in praying for him and sending him a note of encouragement as he assumes this new and important role (adriaan.neele@prts.edu).



NEW VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr. Gerald M. Bilkes is an ordained minister of the Word and sacrament in the Free Reformed Churches of North America, and is a professor of New Testament, Biblical Theology, and Homiletics at Puritan Reformed. He completed a PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2002, but was untainted by the liberalism of this

institution. He was a recipient of the United States Information Agency Fellowship at the Albright Institute (ASOR) in Jerusalem during the 1997–1998 year. He has authored several books on the Gospels, James, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and is editor of the Free Reformed denomination's monthly periodical, *The Messenger*. He preaches frequently, and speaks regularly at conferences. His areas of special interest include preaching, hermeneutics, the history of interpretation, and conversion in the Bible. He and his wife, Michelle, have five children: Lauren, Seth, Zachary, Audrey, and Joshua.

Dr. Bilkes was the first professor to join me at Puritan Reformed, now nearly 25 years ago. Over the years, we have prayed together, taught together, consulted with each

other, brainstormed together, and grown in respect for each other. We have been humbled together by the Lord's mysterious providence and overjoyed by His rich abundance with which we and the seminary have been blessed. I count him a true soul-brother of great integrity and wisdom who stands solidly and edifyingly for Reformed experiential truth.

Both of these men are godly leaders that I have been privileged to know, as well as work and worship alongside of over the years. It is my prayer that the Lord will continue to bless their leadership and the work of the seminary.

NEW CHANCELLOR

As I move into the Chancellor's role at Puritan Reformed, I will, the Lord willing,



serve the seminary by working closely with the Office of the President, which is to include monthly meetings. In accord with my job description as Chancellor, I will also be continuing

to serve the seminary in a variety of ways that I have been presently doing: by continuing to teach Homiletics, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology; by continuing to serve as a primary fundraiser for the seminary; by continuing to author books and articles and curriculum material that promote the seminary's emphasis

and the kingdom of God worldwide, serving also to draw more students to the seminary; by continuing to preach and speak at conferences around the world, speaking often individually with potential students wherever I am called to go; by continuing to serve as editor of the Puritan Reformed Journal and of the Puritan Reformed Update, which will now be also titled as "Chancellor's Report" (as you can observe from this issue); and, as my new job description says, by acting "as a mentor, role model, and thought leader for biblical, Reformed, and experiential doctrine in conversation, prayer, and example in and outside of the seminary." In sum, I will continue to be involved in the seminary, also giving advice to the executive team, serving as an advisory member of the Board of Trustees and as a member of the Faculty Acquisition Committee, attending various other meetings as enabled, etc. Pray that God will give me strength and health to carry out this very full set of seminary responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Be assured that Puritan Reformed is in good hands with these changes in leadership. I do ask, however, that you continue to support the seminary generously through your prayers and with your financial contributions. In the last nearly thirty years Puritan Reformed has grown from four students to nearly four hundred students in all—grown from a budget of less than 200k to 4.5 million per year. Hundreds of graduates are faithfully serving numerous countries and denominations all around the world. God has been extraordinarily good and gracious to us. But as we continue to grow, we (faculty, staff, students, Board, and committees) acknowledge that we need the Lord and His gracious continued benediction as much—yes, even more—as when the doors of Puritan Reformed were first opened almost thirty years ago.

—Joel Beeke, *Chancellor*



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FACULTY ITINERARIES AND RECENT PUBLICATIONS

DR. BRUCE BAUGUS | *Itinerary*

September 8–9; Oct. 27–28: Houston, Texas: Teaching History of Philosophy and Christian Thought at Reformed Theological Seminary
September 18–28: South Africa: Teaching ThM courses on Theology of Augustine and Doctrine of God at Mukhanyo Theological College
October 29: Jackson, Mississippi: Preaching the Reformation Day Service for Presbytery of Mississippi Valley at First Presbyterian Church

DR. MICHAEL BARRETT | *Itinerary*

September 24: Covenant Presbyterian Church, Lakeland, Florida

DR. JOEL R. BEEKE | *Itinerary*

September 7–11: Sao Paulo, Brazil: National Presbyterian Conference at Mackenzie University
September 15: Hudsonville, Michigan: preach for Great Lakes Presbytery (PCA)

September 23–24: Listowel, Ontario: conference for Immanuel United Reformed Church

September 24: Bornholm, Ontario: preach for Bornholm FRC

September 29–30: Plymouth, Indiana: Grace Community Christian Church

October 8: Hull, Iowa: HRC

October 25–28: Newcastle, England: conference for Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary

October 29: Edinburgh, Scotland: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) for Pastor James Grace

Recent Publications

Introduction and edit, *The Complete Works of John Owen, Volume 14: Apostasy from the Gospel* (Crossway)

Wilderness: Family Worship in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, vol. 2 of Teach Your Children the Scriptures (with Nick Thompson) (RHB)

The Grace of Salvation, ed. with Paul Smalley (RHB)

FACULTY ITINERARIES (CONTINUED)

Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People (in Chinese) (Taiwan)
Systematische Theologie Der Puritanen (in German: *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*), with Mark Jones (Waldems, Germany: 3L Verlag)
Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 3: Man, and Volume 4: Christ, with Paul Smalley (in Korean) (Seoul: Revival and Reformation Press)
Reformed Confessions Harmonized, with Sinclair Ferguson (in Korean) (Seoul: rMaeng2)
Pastors and Their Critics, with Nick Thompson (in Korean) (Goyang-si, South Korea: Covenant Books)
In Die Spore van Jesus: Van Kruis tot Kroon (in Afrikaans: *Walking as He Walked*) (South Africa: Kopierig)

DR. GERALD M. BILKES | Itinerary

September 8–10: Kinnelon, New Jersey: Reformed Heritage Conference: Heritage Reformed Congregation
 September 16: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Solemn Assembly, Grand Rapids Free Reformed Church
 October 2–6: Amelia Island, Florida: Competency-Based Theological Education Conference

October 18–19: Ingersoll, Ontario: Free Reformed Churches Ministers' Retreat
 October 21–22: Hickory Corners, Michigan: Kalamazoo Reformed Church Fall Retreat

DR. MAARTEN KUIVENHOVEN | Itinerary

September 3: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Redeemer FRC
 September 17: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Redeemer FRC
 October 1: Kalamazoo, Michigan: Kalamazoo Reformed Church
 October 29: Burgessville, Ontario: Burgessville HRC

DR. ADRIAAN NEELE | Itinerary

September 15–22: São Paulo, Brazil: MBS Brazil, Teaching, Preaching
 October 6–16: Santiago, Chile: MBS Chile, Teaching, Preaching
 October 18–19: Ingersoll, Ontario: Free Reformed Ministers' Retreat

DR. DANIEL TIMMER | Itinerary

Sept.–Dec. 2023: Faculté de théologie évangélique in Montreal, teaching "Old Testament Introduction: The Writings."

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As we start a new seminary year, we want to ask if you would consider committing to pray for Puritan Reformed each week—pray for our students, faculty, and staff. Know that your prayers are truly a blessing to our whole seminary community and are like incense to God.

If you are able, sending a monthly gift to support the seminary would be a real encouragement to us. The support we receive monthly helps us to train students and equip them with a biblical, Reformed, experiential, and practical education—and is both an expression of your commitment and a real inspiration for us. You can give online (prts.edu) or use the donation form found below. For Canadian donors, please email: DevelopmentCanada@prts.edu, and a form can be emailed to you.

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—Karla Soule

PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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