

Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary and College
President's Report to the Canadian National Baptist Convention Gathering

October 18, 2025

Rob Blackaby, President

Almost fifteen years ago I posed the question, "What sets a man or woman apart as courageous, or heroic, rather than as a reckless?" That question has only gained gravity. Every culture has legends about people who are remembered for their sacrifice and labour. Canada is no exception, and neither is the Canadian National Baptist Convention. Surely the weight of their cause, along with the demonstration of character, is a distinguishing mark on these people that separates them from imposters. But in the cause of Christ our courage is born out of the deeper compulsion of faith in Christ, pressing us toward the extension of the Kingdom of God in this world. Courage is the natural outgrowth of the heart that is willing to risk all to ensure that every man, woman, and child in Canada has the opportunity to hear about Jesus in the context of a genuine trust relationship.

There are times in every life when we have to answer the question, "Am I going to risk everything or not?" There really is no way to answer this question half-heartedly. We will either leave everything to follow Jesus, or we will remain firmly and resolutely established in a comfort zone of our own design. Graduates of the Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary and College (CBT) join with an expansive network of alumni who have chosen a life of marked faith, a life of remarkable courage.

Jesus promised us, "The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it" (Matthew 11:12 NLT). There is a clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. But there is a further promise, God can and will give us victory in the face of danger; He will give us blessings in the face of threatening circumstances. Paul claimed as his hope, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9-10). We thank God for His provision to us of the next generation of students who have chosen to be courageous spiritual leaders and who will serve in both established churches and church plants within our Canadian National Baptist Convention, who will go as missionaries to foreign lands, who will influence a wide range of Christian ministries, and who will act as catalysts for spiritual transformation in various marketplace of businesses!

Ministry Highlights

There were some important and notable ministry highlights in our school during our 2024/2025 academic year. For each of these we thank God. As well, we already have much to thank God for in the 2025/2026 school year. These highlights would include:

- **Stable Financial Position:** We thank God that the financial position of our school remains stable, despite the challenges we faced last year due to increased interest rates and broad-spread inflation, as well as two significant transitions in senior administration in the Business Office in less than 18 months. We celebrate that God provided for the satisfaction of our 2024/2025 budget, and that He is providing for the satisfaction of our 2025/2026 budget. And in addition to satisfying our budget, we have:
 - Continued to increase substantially our Faculty Endowment Fund (from \$193,168.05 in 2010, to \$372,507.49 in 2018, to \$886,789.37 in 2021, and to around \$8,000,000 now),

- Continued to manage increases to our scholarship funds, which now exceed \$5,000,000 (enabling us as of the winter 2025 semester to substantially increase the scholarship amount each seminary and college student can apply for per credit hour),
- Strategized to complete critical capital projects in our chapel, fireside area, student lounge, smart classrooms, and log cabin.
- **Faculty Succession Plan:** A year ago, we celebrated 3 new faculty hires. They have now completed their first year of teaching and administrative responsibilities and have launched into their second academic year. As a reminder:
 - **Zeta Lee:** Zeta serves as our Assistant Professor of Counseling and Spiritual Formation. Since graduating from our school with a Master of Divinity in 2012, he focused on Christian service and learning, blending the art of clinical counselling with spiritual ministry. His experience includes pastoral leadership (in both CNBC and Canadian Baptist Ministries churches) and clinical counselling, allowing him to bring unique insights into the classroom. He addresses the intertwined nature of spiritual and mental health. It has been obvious to us that his previous ministry roles prepared him well to guide students through their own exploration of faith and personal growth during their time at CBT, emphasizing a compassionate, integrated approach to counselling and spiritual formation. In order to enhance his work with CBT, Zeta is working toward the completion of a DMin degree.
 - **Stef Piva:** Stef serves as Associate Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministry. He was born in Edmonton, earned a DMin degree from Gordon-Conwell Seminary under Haddon Robinson, and has pastored for more than 30 years in various North American Baptist churches in Canada. His experience with adjunct teaching in Canadian institutions as well as in cross-cultural settings has proved valuable this past year. He has demonstrated motivation towards biblical soundness as well as creativity in communication. As of July, 2025 Stef has moved from the Vancouver Lower Mainland to Cochrane and has commenced his full-time responsibilities.
 - **David Fuller:** David serves as Director of Library Services. He holds a PhD in Old Testament from McMaster Divinity College and enjoyed five years of graduate teaching experience at seven different institutions in North America and East Asia before joining the faculty of CBT. He moved to Cochrane from South Korea, where he was an Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Torch Trinity Graduate University. That position enabled David to teach, mentor, and disciple both master's and doctoral students from all over Asia and Africa. Before moving to Torch Trinity, he spent four years as the Managing Editor of McMaster Divinity College Press, and before that he worked for three years as a student library assistant. David served in a variety of leadership positions in Fellowship Baptist Churches in Ontario. In order to enhance his work with CBT, he is working toward the completion of an MLIS degree.
 - **Next?** As has been noted in my reports since 2021, through our Faculty Succession Plan, we are working to address the reality that our current faculty has been aging (and shrinking in size). The addition in 2022 of Scott MacDonald as our Associate Professor of Theology continues to be a tremendous benefit to our learning community. I doubt we have a faculty member more recognized among our CNBC churches than Scott. As detailed above, in 2023/2024 we prioritized the hiring of our next three strategic hires. As our Faculty Endowment Fund, Faculty Restricted Fund, and Rainey Arnold Chair of Christian Ministry Fund surpass \$8M in total investments, continued growth remains an essential element in providing predictable financing for future faculty growth. I have worked with our Academic Dean, Steve Booth to strategize for the next faculty hire. I

believe our next hire needs to be in the area of New Testament and Greek; I have already initiated a dialog with my preferred candidate for this position.

- **Stable Student Enrollment:** We celebrate continued stability in student enrollment in our school since spring 2020. This is made more striking given the difficulties now experienced by international students seeking a student visa. In fact, our Fall 2025 incoming class contained students who enrolled exclusively from within Canada. With the completion of the 2024/2025 academic year, we celebrated five years of offering Hyperflex and HyFlex classes in the seminary. We rejoice in the long-term viability of these hybrid learning models. As well, with the completion of the 2024/2025 academic year, we celebrated the successful conclusion of the first year of providing broader access to a hybrid learning model for our college students.
- **Diversity in Student Body:** Despite the drop-off in international student enrollment for our 2025/2026 academic year, we celebrate that year-over-year there continues to be an increase in appropriate diversity among our students. Again, this is true despite severe limitations placed on international student visas by our federal government. While the majority of our students have arrived to us from within Canada, they also represent a wondrous variety of countries of origin. A sampling of countries represented in our student body are: Canada, the United States, South Korea, China (in particular Hong Kong), Brazil, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, India, England, and Viet Nam.
- **Hill Country Baptist Trust:** After five years of operation, Hill Country Recreational Vehicle Storage continues to collect profits from the business and transfer those profits to Hill Country Baptist Trust. The trust in turn distributes the majority of those funds to our school as its primary beneficiary. In 2024/2025 those distributions amounted to a little more than \$250,000. Since our CBT board meeting in spring 2024, Hill Country board members have made tremendous headway in plans for a more expansive development of CBT property that is unusable to the school.
- **Network of Relationships:** I am heartened by the ever-expanding network of support for our work at CBT. These relationships stretch throughout North America. I am honoured to represent our school by serving on the board of Christian Higher Education Canada (CHEC), as well as on the board of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU). I am encouraged by leaders who are intent on visiting our campus, leaders like Dr. Jamie Dew (president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) who was our recent Spiritual Emphasis Week speaker. We were blessed to have Dr. Daniel Block teach on the “Gospel According to Moses” in March 2025 for our Dr. Garry Owen MD Memorial Academic Lectureship. We look forward to hosting Dr. Bryan Litfin for our next academic lectureship (January 28-30, 2026), with the theme “How to be an Ancient Christian.” I could list many more relationships, and each one would be a reminder that God has surrounded us with extraordinary leaders who want to see the work of CBT and the CNBC thrive.
- **Mission Teams:** Again during summer 2025, we welcomed a large number of volunteers to our campus. We thank God that even though international tensions seemed to intensify between Canada and the US, American churches remained steadfast in their commitment to send mission teams to help us prepare our campus for the fall semester. We receive this as a welcome demonstration of love and friendship, and as evidence of our common Kingdom citizenship. Our Director of Operations, Ed Allen, does a great job coordinating both international mission teams and local volunteers.

Concluding Remarks

As I reflect on my past eighteen years (as of April 1, 2025) of service as the President of the Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary and College, I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given to participate in the worthy goal of **training God-called men and women to be spiritual leaders in tough places**. I have been honored together with all of our faculty and staff to provide theological education for those called to lead in churches, marketplace ministries, and other Christian ministries seeking to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Canada and around the world. In all of our endeavors we strive to be both biblically accurate and relevant to our context. We equip students to go into difficult places and to face courageously the challenges that confront us there. We train them to equip others for spiritual leadership. Students learn in an intimate community, with instructors committed to experiencing the journey of life with them. These faculty members have significant ministry experience as international missionaries and as pastors leading churches in Canada. Their experience is combined with their walk with God and their zeal for His Word, which is a distinguishing mark of their teaching style. They welcome students who will help others understand God's Word and how to apply God's Word in the midst of complex circumstances and issues of both local and global concern. And together we pray for a Kingdom Gospel Movement in Canada through our CNBC.