



### GOD'S CALLING TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

As the Puritan Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) once observed, pastoral ministry is “the best calling in the world” and is enviable, so to speak, even to the angels of heaven. Although the pastorate is indeed a noble calling, it is a fearful thing for any man to enter the ministry unentitled (Jer. 23:21). That is why we must have a clear understanding of what a divine call to the ministry entails. This sacred call can be ascertained by three *As*: a man is truly called to the ministry when he is equipped with holy *aptitude*, holy *aspiration*, and holy *affirmation*.

First, the call to pastoral ministry can be ascertained by *holy aptitude* involving the presence of Spirit-bestowed graces (a holy life) and gifts (holy fitness) that equip the called man to serve in the ministry. In the pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul lists the graces and gifts necessary for service in pastoral ministry (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9). Both the aspiring minister and the church must take each of these qualifications seriously, soberly, and prayerfully. Above all, the called man is consumed by the gospel, grasps something of the full counsel of God, and has the Spirit-worked gift of teaching to instruct others in that counsel. A man experiencing the internal call need not possess these gifts in their ideal or perfected form (for that joy is reserved for heaven), but they should be present in seed form and be cultivated through diligent preparation.

Second, the call to pastoral ministry is a divine call

ascertained by *holy aspiration* involving both holy motivation and holy compulsion. While some enter the ministry for carnal motives—including the desire for professional advancement (Phil. 1:15), prestige (3 John 9), power (1 Peter 5:3), profit (2 Peter 2:3), or people-pleasing (Gal. 1:10)—the divinely called man experiences a burden of love for the people of God and the lost (2 Tim. 2:10) as well as a burden of stewardship (1 Cor. 4:1–2) to use his gifts and graces for the glory of God and the edification of His people. He is not only constrained by the love of Christ—a love which, in turn, ignites his heart with love to Christ (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 John 4:19). His heart also overflows with love for souls that produces a holy compulsion to enter the ministry for their benefit.

Third, the call to pastoral ministry is a divine call ascertained by *holy affirmation*, involving both the recognition of gifts, graces, and calling by the elders and the congregation as well as ordination and consecration to sacred ministry (1 Tim. 4:14).

By calling such men with holy aptitude, aspiration, and affirmation, Christ showers good gifts upon His church (Eph. 4:8); in fact, Richard Sibbes even dared to say that Christ's second greatest gift to the New Testament church is a faithful minister (second only to the gift of the Spirit)! So let us look to the Great Shepherd of the church to raise up many more such ministers in our day (Matt. 9:38).

—Joel R. Beeke, Chancellor

## CELEBRATING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE



Dr. Mark Kelderman, professor of biblical counseling, dean of students, and director of the MABC Program, recently marked his twenty-fifth anniversary in ministry. Here's what he shared about his experiences serving congregations of the Heritage Reformed denomination and Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

*Reflecting on 25 years of ministry, what has been the most fulfilling aspect of serving both in churches and at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary?*

One of the things we have told our children is that, in some respects, being pastor's kids, they get a front-row seat on what God is doing. I would say that being a pastor and professor has allowed me to witness many wonderful things the Lord has done and is doing in His church and in the seminary. Many times we don't even realize them in the moment, but looking back, we can see how God brought together so many moving pieces to accomplish His perfect plan. The work that is being done is not a work of man but truly a work of God. To be a part of what God is doing is extremely humbling, especially when I would consider that He could have used other men more qualified than I am.

*You've had the privilege of serving in both Canada and the U.S. How has your experience in different cultural and national contexts shaped your ministry approach and theological perspective?*

Having served in ministry in Canada and the U.S. basically equal lengths of time, I would say that each country has its unique cultures. As our churches are a part of the larger culture in which they exist, they do tend to take on certain characteristics of their culture, often without realizing it. In Canada, there is a more complacent and non-questioning attitude, and in the U.S., there is more of a sense of entitlement and questioning of authority. I am not saying this to criticize either country or culture but to highlight that in either culture, we are called to be servants to all, especially to those of the household of faith. When we serve in either context, I believe the Lord will honor this approach with His blessing. At the same time, each congregation, whichever country it resides in, is in need of hearing the whole counsel of God proclaimed.

*In your time as a pastor and seminary faculty member, how have you seen the challenges facing the church change, and what are the biggest challenges you see today?*

Because I am invested in biblical counseling I may be biased,

but my answer to the biggest challenge facing the church is ministering to people plagued with many kinds of spiritual issues yet who tend to resort to using physical solutions. As with other eras in the church, when sin begins to be minimized or overlooked, the gospel no longer has the pre-eminence. Another area in which I have a growing conviction that is a challenge is the practice of discipleship in the church. It is my conviction that as churches we need to do better at ministering to one another and to those around us in our communities with the love that we have experienced in our own hearts when the Lord saved us.

*What role has mentoring and discipling future ministers played in your own growth as a servant of the gospel, particularly during your time at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary?*

When my wife and I would do pre-marriage counseling, I would invariably walk away and say to myself, "You need to practice what you are saying." Having the privilege of walking alongside most of our seminary students has been a similar humbling experience. It is a wonderful experience to have students open up to you their innermost struggles and joys. This has challenged me as well. There are also times when a student's spiritual disciplines or insights have caused me to self-reflect and driven me to greater prayer and searching the Scriptures. When I have the privilege of offering critiques to students in practice preaching, I believe that, over the years, the Lord has taught me some things about what it means to bring His Word to a congregation of the Lord, and it is a blessing to help shape and mold men to be able preachers.

*As you look forward to the future, what advice or encouragement would you offer to young ministers just beginning their journey in pastoral ministry?*

Be teachable. If there is one mark I have found to be most helpful in my own ministry as well as in ministering to other men, it is to be teachable. It is also of utmost importance to be sure that you understand others and what the meaning of what they are saying is. So many times, challenges in the church arise because people use different words to mean the same things or use the same words to mean different things and it leads to conflicts and misunderstandings. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Never exalt yourself. Let God give you the place where He would have you serve. It is humbling to recognize that God is raising up a number of young men whom He will use to minister to His people in the church through preaching and counseling that our generation has not been able to do. Seek to be instrumental in the lives of other younger men and women so that you might disciple them to spiritual maturity and discipling others.

## HEARTFELT THANKS, ANNUAL CONFERENCE, RHINE RIVER REFORMATION TOUR

We are deeply humbled by God's goodness in moving the hearts of our generous donors to more than meet our goal for year-end fundraising (2024)! Many thanks to all of you who have responded to this fundraising drive with gifts both large and small—and a special thanks to those who have given significant matching gifts, so that each donor's gifts could be doubled. Your generosity has made it possible for us to raise our Scholarship Fund support to a higher level, thereby enabling us to serve even more students.

Please circle the dates of August 21 to 23, 2025 on your calendar for our annual Puritan Reformed Conference to be held at Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids. By the time you receive this, registration for this year's theme on "Growing in Holiness" should be available at [prts.edu](http://prts.edu). Please register as soon as possible to get the best possible price.

The Rhine River Reformation Tour (May 12–24, 2025) is now full with 97 signed up (the boat can only hold 100 and three places are needed for the crew). We are looking forward immensely to joining those who have signed up for a fascinating, informative, edifying, scenic, and fellowshiping tour! If you wish to be placed on a wait list, please contact [KristinaC@wittetravel.com](mailto:KristinaC@wittetravel.com).

Please thank God for our 500+ students from 40+ countries, our hundreds of alumni serving in dozens of countries on every continent, our faithful faculty and dedicated staff, and pray for His rich blessing in 2025 as we strive to bring the gospel to our needy world.

—JRB

## FACULTY ITINERARIES AND RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### DR. BRUCE BAUGUS | *Itinerary*

March 17–21: Republic of Korea: Guest Lecture Series at Hapdong Theological Seminary in Seoul

March 17–21: Republic of Korea Teaching for Global Alliance for Theological Education (GATE) in Seoul

#### *Publication*

"Fear Not! (But Definitely Fear): A Sermon on Exodus 20:18–26" in *PRJ* 17.1 (January 2025)

### DR. JOEL R. BEEKE | *Itinerary*

January 1: Jordan, Ontario: Jordan HRC (preach NY)

January 5: Los Angeles: Grace Community (preach for John MacArthur)

January 6–9: Los Angeles: The Master's Seminary (teach Reformed Experiential Preaching course to MacArthur's doctoral students)

January 15–21: Dubai: The Puritan Conference

January 23–25: Fort Myers, Florida: Founders Conference on Revival

February 16: Naples, Florida: Christ the King Church

February 28–March 1: Fort Worth, Texas: Ante Su Palabra Conference at Southwestern Theological Seminary

March 2: Dallas, Texas: Countryside Bible Church (a.m.); Denton, Texas: Providence Chapel (eve.)

March 5–7: Los Angeles: Shepherd's Conference

March 13–16: Montgomery, Alabama: Morningview Baptist Church Conference and Lord's Day

March 21–22: Williamstown, Kentucky: Men's Conference at the Ark

April 3–5: Puxico, Missouri: First Baptist Church Conference

April 13: Lakeland, Florida: Covenant Presbyterian Church

April 16–21: Denton, Texas: Providence Chapel Annual Conference and Lord's Day

April 23–27: Ridgecrest, North Carolina: Church and Family Life Annual Conference

April 28–30: Kansas City: Spurgeon Conference at Midwestern Baptist Seminary

#### *Publications*

Editor of Alexander Comrie, *Distinctive Marks of Saving Faith*, translated by Bartel Elshout (RHB).

Coauthor with Brian Hedges, *Zwölf Gewohnheiten der Puritaner, die unser Leben prägen sollten* (German, *Thriving in Grace*) (Waldems, Germany: 3L Verlag).

Editor, *Glaube sucht Gewissheit* (German, *Faith Seeking Assurance*) (Waldems, Germany: 3L Verlag).

*Wilderness: Family Worship in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, in Korean, with Nick Thompson (Seoul: rMaeng2).

Edit with Paul Smalley, *Puritan Reformed Journal*, 17, no. 1.

### DR. GERALD M. BILKES | *Itinerary*

January 26: Hamilton and Vineland, Ontario: Maranatha FRC and Vineland FRC

February 1: Kalamazoo, Michigan: Kalamazoo Reformed Church  
February 16 and 23: Bradenton, Florida: Bradenton Reformed Fellowship

March 9: Dundas, Ontario: Ebenezer FRC

March 24–27: Budapest, Hungary: EARTS Conference

April 6: Hamilton, Ontario: Maranatha FRC

April 25–26: Jordan, Ontario: "Go and Teach" Conference

April 27: Jordan, Ontario: Heritage Reformed Church of Jordan

### DR. MAARTEN KUIVENHOVEN | *Itinerary*

January 1: Burgessville, Ontario: Preaching at the Heritage Reformed Church

January 5–April 30: Wyoming, Michigan: Preaching regularly at Redeemer FRC

April 3–5: Denver, Colorado: ADME Conference for DMin Directors

#### *Publications*

Joel Beeke and Maarten Kuivenhoven, "Experiences of Revival in the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* Tradition: The Legacy of Four Divines in the Netherlands and North America," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*.

Various articles in the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*

### DR. DANIEL TIMMER | *Itinerary*

January – April: Montreal, Canada: Co-teach "Seminar de recherche" at the FTÉ

#### *Publications*

"Constructed Identities and Dueling Ideologies: Reading Ancient Israelite Foreign Oracles as Ideological Critique," *Biblical Interpretation* 32 (2024): 1–22.

"Experiencing a Future Theophany in Light of the Past: The Theophany in Nahum's Opening Hymn and Its Relationship to Other Biblical Theophany Texts," in *Topics of Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, vol. 2, *Texts, Readers, and Their Worlds*, ed. Soo Kim Sweeney, David Frankel and Marvin A. Sweeney, RBS 107 (Atlanta: SBL, 2024), 167–82.

"Prophetic Literature: Book of the Twelve," in *The State of Old Testament Studies*, ed. H. H. Hardy II and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas) (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024), 272–86.

## Announcing an MDiv Scholarship

Puritan Reformed recently received a generous donation toward establishing an Eric Liddell MDiv Scholarship. This scholarship will be given annually to students who are studying full-time on campus for a Master of Divinity degree, have financial need, and demonstrate a firm commitment to the ministry.

Each year, Puritan Reformed will give out the annual rewards to MDiv students who have the calling and zeal to become pastors and will faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. This scholarship is a testament to the donors' desires to steward the money God has entrusted to them to carry out the Great Commission.

One hundred years ago, Eric Liddell was committed to his faith and refused to participate in sporting events on the Lord's Day—including the 100-meter dash for which he had trained. Liddell's parents were missionaries in China, and Eric was torn between running and working on the mission field in China. He eventually ran in the Olympics and later went to China to serve as a missionary teacher.

The funders of this scholarship envision that the men who receive this scholarship will feel strongly committed about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ—that when they run with the gospel message, it may be with Spirit-worked power and a sense of God's commendation (Isa. 52:7; Matt. 25:21).

"It has been a wonderful experience to compete in the Olympic Games and to bring home a gold medal. But since I have been a young lad, I have had my eyes on a different prize. You see, each one of us is in a greater race than any I have run in Paris, and this race ends when God gives out the medals."

—Eric Liddell

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(See *Journal* for international rates.)
- For donations over \$100, please send me a free copy of *A Perfect Redeemer* by William Perkins.

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We are deeply grateful for your support and for being a part of our Puritan Reformed community. By spreading your generosity throughout the year with a monthly gift, you can make a significant impact on the seminary.

Signing up is easy! You can either visit our website or call Karla Soule at the seminary to enroll. Monthly giving not only provides steady support for the ongoing work at the seminary but also serves as a real encouragement to our staff and students.

Skip the hassle of stamps and checks—set up your gift to be charged to your credit card or directly deposited from your bank account. You can choose the day of the month that works best for you, and you can easily edit or cancel your monthly gifts at any time, with no hassle.

To enroll, visit our website, contact Karla Soule at (616) 977-0599, or email her at [karla.soule@prts.edu](mailto:karla.soule@prts.edu).

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