

Report for 2017 Annual Convention

Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary & College • President • Rob Blackaby



Introduction

We celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of our school. As I have noted on numerous occasions, it is extraordinary that Canadian Southern Baptist leaders in the mid-1980s accepted the daunting challenge of establishing not only a new convention of churches in our country, but also of establishing an institute for theological education where Canadian leaders could be trained on Canadian soil for effective ministry in Canada and around the world. This was done with the same missional fervor that was typical of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States.

Today the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary and College is distinguished by a commitment to train God-called men and women for twenty-first century leadership in tough places. As we embark on future decades of ministry, we believe the work of our school has never been more critical. The small group of churches that began the school has grown to over 370 churches today, with a persistent vision to become 1,000 churches in less than four years. Our school is playing a pivotal role in the realization of that vision.

Year over year God dispatches more alumni to regions in Canada from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic Coast, and northward toward our expansive Territories. The church-planting vision of the Canadian National Baptist Convention has thoroughly captured the imagination of many students, and they are daring to venture into Canada's tough places for the sake of Christ and the expansion of His Kingdom. And in addition to our alumni serving in Canada we have other alumni who have spread to regions around the globe, serving as missionaries. The missionary zeal that was infused into our school at our inception has resulted in graduates who have chosen to leave Canada to go to places that are tougher still.

As is often the case with anniversary seasons the months ahead will be filled again with a sweet combination of memories, changes, growth, and new dreams. We thank God for our heritage and we will honour those pioneers who have gone before us to lay a solid foundation for theological education and training in Canada. We continue to work relentlessly toward adaptations and adjustments necessary in the changing social and cultural environment within which theological education is delivered. We ask God to grow our abilities and improve our competencies to be effective in training successive generations of leaders for tough places. And we remain in a posture of expectancy for new dreams that God will give us for more expansive Christian ministry in the years ahead.

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Ministry Highlights

There have been some important and notable ministry highlights in our school during the 2016/2017 academic year. For each of these we thank God.

Faculty and staff are amazed at last year's incoming class of students for our fall and spring semesters. Year over year God has been establishing a vibrant, ethnically diverse and growing student body. This year He has further amplified His activity. Our campus community is a strategic part of each student's training experience. We are excited as we see the friends they make today become their cherished colleagues tomorrow. And our faculty members maintain a passionate commitment to mentor them in and out of the classroom, and will remain their steadfast partners in ministry in the years ahead.

From September 13-16 2016 we enjoyed our annual Spiritual Emphasis Week, with Gary Smith, speaking on "Movement." Not only is Gary the North American Mission Board Canada Church Planting Catalyst for Southern Alberta, but he is also one of our new trustee board members. The week he spent with us was a timely, precise and powerful charge with which to start a new academic year. I encourage you to listen to his series of messages that can be easily found through the link to Online Chapel Services on our website at www.csbs.ca.

It is confirmed that early in our fall 2017 semester we will welcome Mark Dance to be our speaker for Spiritual Emphasis Week (SEW). Mark is an Associate Vice President at LifeWay Christian Resources charged with ministry to pastors. He oversees the LifeWay Christian Leadership Award that is given to one of our students each April. The special SEW chapel services will run from September 12-15. It is our hope that Mark's presence on our campus will not only impact our students, but also have an effect on churches in our surrounding area. I have already been in discussions with Gary Smith (NAMB Church Planting Catalyst for Southern Alberta), Dan Morgan (CNBC Church Start Team Leader), Bob Shelton (Calgary SEND City Coordinator), and Dwight Huffman (CNBC Regional Ministry Leader Southern Alberta) about how to expand the scope of Mark's ministry while he is in the Calgary area.

School community life has been enhanced by two factors this semester. First, we welcomed stellar guest professors to our campus for our fall and spring semesters. Bob and Martha Bergen were with us in the fall from Hannibal-LaGrange University in Hannibal, Missouri. Calvin and Devra Morris were with us all year, following their retirement from the International Mission Board in December 2015. Second, there have been numerous new student activities taking place. Student Services is developing programming in addition to Women in Ministry to provide monthly formal activities.

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Student Council has been empowered and given access to funding to plan activities such as a men's Saturday morning Bible study, sports outings/teams, prayer gatherings, mentorship programs, and so on.

First Baptist Church Nashville sent a \$200,000 USD gift to our school this fall in response to a request submitted last spring. I was privileged to speak in FBC on October 16, 2016, and to share our gratitude and present the pastor (Frank Lewis) with a gift as a token of our appreciation for their 21 years of partnership with us.

God continues to introduce us to a variety of new donors, and our donor base continues to grow, sometimes in surprising ways. One recent donor from Louisville, Kentucky was introduced to us last summer by Duane Garrett. Duane has become an effective ambassador for our school. He was a founding member of the faculty of our school, and is currently a member of the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After Duane taught a May intensive for us in 2016 his resolve was renewed to help us get on a stable financial footing (in particular with funding a faculty chair in theology).

In September I travelled with Barry Nelson to the annual meeting of the East Coast Baptist Association (now CNBC Atlantic). This was in response to an invitation from that association to participate in their meeting at Malagash Bible Camp in Malagash, Nova Scotia, and it was a blessing! We returned with hearts full, and with a deeper sense of cross-regional partnership in the Gospel. We were heartened by the high level of interest in theological education among those who were present at the meeting.

Early in our academic year we experienced a smooth transition in leadership in our Admissions Office. As our Admissions Counselor, Matthew Rowley worked diligently until mid-August to strengthen our ties with schools in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. These include schools such as: Millar School of the Bible (both the main campus in Pambrun, SK and the extension site on the campus of Sunnybrae Bible Camp in BC), Nipawin Bible College (Nipawin, SK), Peace River Bible Institute (Sexsmith, AB), Prairie Bible Institute (Three Hills, AB), and Living Faith Bible College (Caroline, AB). Already last fall we welcomed seminary students who recently graduated from these schools. We will continue to nurture our relationship with schools like these. In August we welcomed David Ong as our new Director of Admissions. David is passionate about the work of furthering God's Kingdom. He has been a part of many ministries in Canada and abroad. He is able to distinguish the importance of being equipped with knowledge of the Word, and how to strengthen people to serve more effectively by understanding God's heart for others while on the frontlines of ministry. This is part of his enthusiasm and belief in the value of post-secondary Christian education. David recently completed a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Saskatchewan, and prior to that he graduated from Millar College of the

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Bible with a Bachelor in Biblical Studies in 2010. Immediately before beginning work with our school he was employed with the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association as a program coordinator, and also as an interim community relations officer at the Saskatoon Christian School.

As of April 14, 2016 the International Mission Board (IMB) agreed to give title to its seven Canadian properties to the CNBC. In July 2016, the CNBC ensured that the deeds of three of those units (the homes currently occupied by our IMB faculty members) were transferred to our school. In the long term our school will benefit from an additional close-to \$1.5M in assets. In the short term, however, we have incurred expenses related to taxes, maintenance, insurance, condo fees, and sometimes utilities.

We have now completed outfitting our third “Smart Classroom.” The popularity of our interactive classrooms is encouraging, and it highlights our need to remain abreast of best-practices in delivering theological education remotely. Money for these renovations was provided by donors.

We are continuing to develop our partnership with Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU). Two initiatives are being worked on right now. First, OBU has offered to help us deliver a part or all of their MBA degree. This was something we worked on with Virtual Learning Center in 2008, but ultimately postponed. Glenn Watson has been working over the past year with the Dean of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies to explore the feasibility of reinvigorating the project. We have made much progress and enjoyed hosting Rick Martinez on our campus in March, 2017. Second, OBU continues to work with us on a joint annual lectureship in the fields of church planting and spiritual leadership. Dan Morgan and Galan Jones are developing this project.

We continue to make progress in the development of a RV storage park. The process with the Town of Cochrane, though slow and laborious, reached the phase of Town Council vote for approval of a Land Use By-Law Amendment. The first reading passed on October 11, 2016. The second and third reading took place during the same meeting, rescheduled for December 12, 2016. God, who is sovereign over the hearts and minds of people, directed town councilors to a positive vote. I am tremendously grateful for Phil Davidson (Timko Developments Inc.), who ably handled our application process.

We are excited to have Danny Akin, the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), in Wake Forest, North Carolina, already scheduled as our commencement speaker for our 2019 graduation ceremony. There are an increasing number of linkages between our schools. Steve Booth and John Ewert (SEBTS Associate Vice President of Project Development) have been exploring avenues for partnership.

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Our Professor of Evangelism (Susan Booth) completed her PhD from SEBTS in December 2013; and last year Susan was recognized by the school for outstanding academic achievement at the Third Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Theological Fellowship. Steve and Susan's son, Robbie, is about to begin work on his PhD at SEBTS under Dr. Chuck Quarles. And in addition, a number of the members of SEBTS faculty have already blessed us by teaching 1-week intensive courses in recent years: Dr. Alvin Reid (2012), Dr. Mark Rooker (2015), and Dr. Ant Greenham (2016).

The student body of our school continues to increase in excellence. From academic achievement to community vitality, the students God has given us to train are of a remarkable character. This is augmented by a Student Services Office (led by Sherri Watson) that has expanded its scope and sharpened its effectiveness in ministering to students. For over a year now God has used Sue Smith to work with Sherri to enhance student campus life experiences. And in addition to this, area churches are taking greater initiative to be on campus and invested in the lives of our students.

Again this year, during the first weekend of March (March 5), a collection of students and faculty members spread out across five of Canada's six time zones for Seminary Day. During that same period I had the joy of being the key note speaker at the Montana Southern Baptist Convention's iMPACT gathering in Helena. In the weeks after Seminary Day it was thrilling to hear compelling stories about what God accomplished in the lives of our students as well as what he did through our students in various ministry settings. I encourage you to listen to student testimonies accessed through the link to chapel messages on our website (www.csbs.ca).

Challenges

There are three challenges that should be noted. Each of these has required and will continue to require significant attention, often impacting multiple departments of our school simultaneously. The challenges are finances, fatigue, and faculty.

While financial strain is not new to our school, it has been steadily increasing in intensity in recent years. I am not implying that our school is in a dire situation, nor that I doubt God will provide. I am implying that every department of our school feels the constraints of financial limitations, even while our budget swells. It is likely that we will need to sell our second condo in the town of Cochrane in order to bolster our financial reserves in 2017/2018. The infusion of resources from an RV storage facility will be welcome in the near future. Likewise, the increased revenue we expect to receive from tuition is important. We pray that our donors (many of whom are in the oil industry) will have

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increased capacities to give to our school as the North American economy recovers. All of this being said, however, our fund-raising burden can still seem relentless and is surely daunting.

There is a general feeling of fatigue noticeable among those who work in our school. Some of it is due to grief over a death(s) in the family, some of it is the result of chronic stress and a lack of redundancy in departments, and some of it is caused by simple physical weariness or tiredness. There has been a cumulative effect in all of these factors on our campus. I am concerned that margins have been eroded to critical levels in the lives of many working for our school.

We have a stellar faculty in our school, but the number of full time faculty members continues to be diminished. Financial limitations restrict our ability to hire immediately a new faculty member, and this reality only adds to fatigue among current faculty members who have had to absorb inevitable increases in their work load year over year. We thank God for the adjunct professors who contribute much to the academic excellence of our school. It is my hope, however, to be able to add at least one more full-time faculty member soon.

Concluding Remarks

As I reflect on a decade of service as the president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary and College, I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity I have been given to participate in the worthy goal of **training God-called men and women for twenty-first century leadership in tough places**. I truly do not believe there is another school in Canada like ours. There are students who are increasingly drawn to our school from other denominational families, and they bear witness to our unique blend of biblical fidelity, missional intensity, and real-world practicality, all nurtured in a community through which students are transformed.

I feel honored to serve with an outstanding faculty and staff to provide theological education for those called to lead in churches, marketplace ministry, and other Christian ministries which are working to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Canada and around the world. Thank you.