

Greetings!

As we bid 2020 a hasty goodbye, the RPTS community finds itself in the middle of the winter quarter. The students appreciated the few extra weeks off as there are several major papers due this quarter. You will find below a lot of interesting information, including the introduction of our new Executive Assistant, a short feature on a high-flying alumnus, the latest Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal, encouraging sermons, and news about the faculty, staff, and students.

INTRODUCING

Welcome, Kaitlin (Katie) Rhodes! January 4, 2021, marks the beginning of Katie's time as Executive Assistant at RPTS, a position that has been vacant for the past month. Katie is a member of Eastvale Reformed Presbyterian Church in Beaver Falls. She graduated with a B.A. in Sociology from Geneva College (she serves on the Alumni Council), and in 2011 she graduated from Duquesne University with a Master of Science in Leadership. Before coming to RPTS, she worked with T.R.A.I.L.S. Ministries, beginning in 2007.

Katie treasures time with family and friends, especially her two nephews. She enjoys crocheting, coloring, and reading. "I am truly excited to be a "helper" to the Seminary community," notes Katie. "I look forward to assisting the students, faculty, and staff, but also demonstrating love and kindness to everyone who walks through the Seminary doors."



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

From the 1881 RPTS Catalog: Course of Study – "Students will study in four, six-month sessions. Applicants should have graduated from the classical department of a college in good standing. Course work includes Pastoral Theology with attention given to various aspects of pastoral duty, study, pulpit, Sabbath-school, prayer meetings, the session, and administration of the sacraments.

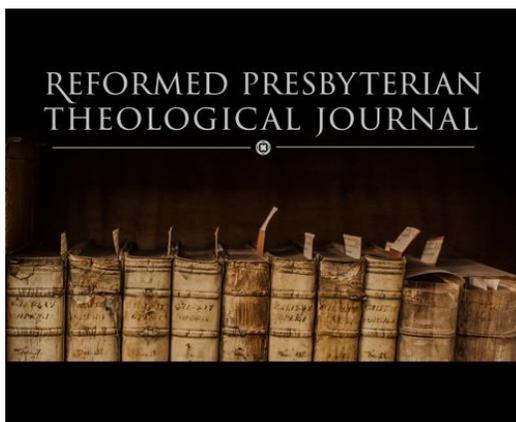
Church History will cover the whole field. In Theology, students will study the work of Charles Hodge, along with lectures from Professor Sloane. In Homiletics, instruction is given to the practical exercise in the preparation and giving of sermons. Special attention will be given, as it

always has been, to expository preaching, a kind of sermonizing which is now more generally receiving the consideration it deserves. Students should arrive with a knowledge of Hebrew grammar. In addition to Hebrew, one session out of four will be given to the study of Chaldee. In Greek studies, one of the entire Epistles will be studied. Lectures are also given on Criticism and Interpretation along with other subjects in the area of Biblical Introduction.”

In many ways (well, not the Chaldee), RPTS students will find much of this familiar!

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Further Sanctified: Really and Personally. The latest volume of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal is now [available here](#). This issue contains the manuscripts of the 2020 Westminster Conference.

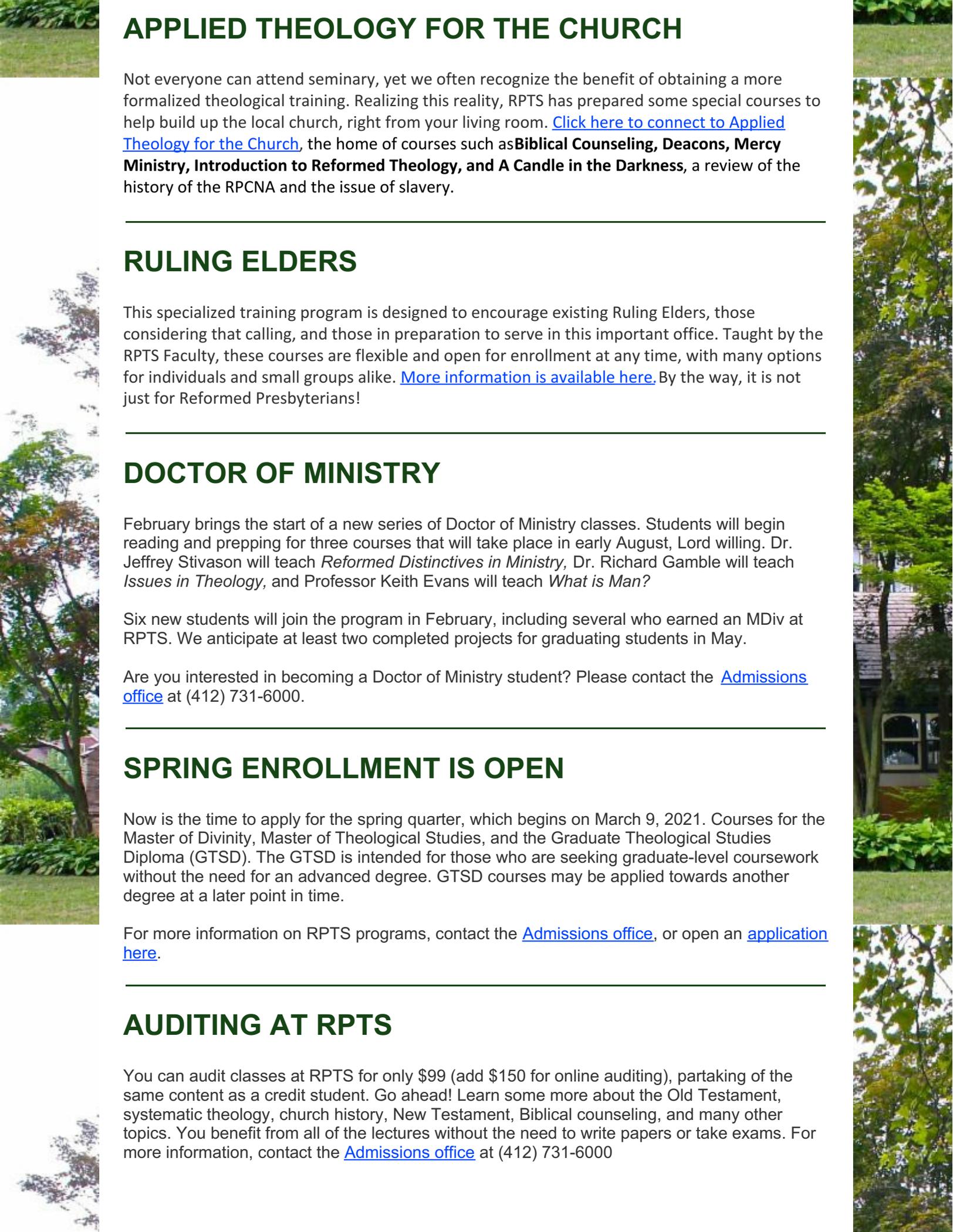


DO YOU HAVE A WILL?

For some reason, people avoid making wills, perhaps not wanting to think about their death or overwhelmed by the amount of work it takes to put one together. Even if you have never worked on a will, you actually have one. If you die without a will, your state will likely decide how your assets should be distributed. And they will probably not do it the way you want. Wills can be very simple to put together and are a great blessing to your family as they will know exactly what you want to be done after you have departed this earth. Simple wills are available online, and most attorneys can help you with more complex ones. Need some ideas or encouragement? Contact [Mark Sampson](#) at (412) 731-6000.

A GIFT

Student debt is a hot topic these days. Students have borrowed over \$1.5 trillion to pay for higher education at an average of over \$30,000 per student. Earlier this year, RPTS exited the Federal loan program, partly to discourage student debt. Seminary graduates often do not earn salaries that justify the assumption of massive debt. We have not left our students in the lurch, though. First, RPTS keeps tuition at a **very affordable rate** thanks to our donors' very generous support. Second, **tuition is frozen** at the 2019 level to help students. Third, most students qualify for scholarships (thanks again, donors!). Finally, the **Support Our Students Tuition Relief Program (SOS)** has become a route for family, friends, and even strangers to help pay student tuition. Individuals can provide tuition assistance through non-tax-deductible gifts. Several alumni and friends of RPTS have given anonymously. For more information on the SOS program, please contact [Mark Sampson](#) at (412)731-6000.

A decorative background featuring a collage of images: a green lawn at the top left, a large tree with green and yellowing leaves on the left side, a house partially visible through trees on the right side, and a close-up of green leaves at the bottom right.

APPLIED THEOLOGY FOR THE CHURCH

Not everyone can attend seminary, yet we often recognize the benefit of obtaining a more formalized theological training. Realizing this reality, RPTS has prepared some special courses to help build up the local church, right from your living room. [Click here to connect to Applied Theology for the Church](#), the home of courses such as **Biblical Counseling, Deacons, Mercy Ministry, Introduction to Reformed Theology, and A Candle in the Darkness**, a review of the history of the RPCNA and the issue of slavery.

RULING ELDERS

This specialized training program is designed to encourage existing Ruling Elders, those considering that calling, and those in preparation to serve in this important office. Taught by the RPTS Faculty, these courses are flexible and open for enrollment at any time, with many options for individuals and small groups alike. [More information is available here](#). By the way, it is not just for Reformed Presbyterians!

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

February brings the start of a new series of Doctor of Ministry classes. Students will begin reading and prepping for three courses that will take place in early August, Lord willing. Dr. Jeffrey Stivason will teach *Reformed Distinctives in Ministry*, Dr. Richard Gamble will teach *Issues in Theology*, and Professor Keith Evans will teach *What is Man?*

Six new students will join the program in February, including several who earned an MDiv at RPTS. We anticipate at least two completed projects for graduating students in May.

Are you interested in becoming a Doctor of Ministry student? Please contact the [Admissions office](#) at (412) 731-6000.

SPRING ENROLLMENT IS OPEN

Now is the time to apply for the spring quarter, which begins on March 9, 2021. Courses for the Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, and the Graduate Theological Studies Diploma (GTSD). The GTSD is intended for those who are seeking graduate-level coursework without the need for an advanced degree. GTSD courses may be applied towards another degree at a later point in time.

For more information on RPTS programs, contact the [Admissions office](#), or open an [application here](#).

AUDITING AT RPTS

You can audit classes at RPTS for only \$99 (add \$150 for online auditing), partaking of the same content as a credit student. Go ahead! Learn some more about the Old Testament, systematic theology, church history, New Testament, Biblical counseling, and many other topics. You benefit from all of the lectures without the need to write papers or take exams. For more information, contact the [Admissions office](#) at (412) 731-6000



ANNUAL SUPPORT DINNER

Lord willing, the Annual Support Dinner will take place on March 12, 2021. If you would like to attend, please contact [Kim Backensto](#). If we are unable to physically meet, we will have a special video presentation of the entire evening's usual events. So, stay tuned for further updates.

FACULTY IN ACTION

Rev. Keith Evans completed his comprehensive Ph.D. exams during the week of December 7th. He is very appreciative of all of your prayers and happily reports passing with flying colors! All that remains is the writing and defense of his dissertation.

Rev. Mark Robinson, Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology, teaches *Introduction to Reformed Theology* every fall. The class is designed to provide an overview of the topic for those who do not come from a reformed background. A student from this past fall noted how beneficial the course was, even though they had a decent knowledge of reformed theology. Rev. Robinson taught this course full of passion. Using Scripture to teach the class, it became a warm pastoral course and was a great encouragement to the class.

Dr. Jeff Stivason recently wrote on the ["cancel culture" and God's holiness](#), a theological and practical call to pursue holiness.

President Barry York will be preaching in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, on January 7th. He will also speak at Snow Camp for the Pittsburgh Presbytery (PCA) on "Bound to the Crown" from Psalm 110. Dr. York is also presenting information on the [Ruling Elders Training Program](#) at the Pittsburgh Presbytery (PCA) meeting in January.

While on sabbatical for the winter and spring quarters, **Dr. C. J. Williams** continues work on the "Shadow of Christ" themes in the book of Lamentations.

Early in the winter quarter, the faculty (and some local pastors) preached in chapel. [These shorter messages](#), usually about twenty minutes in length, will be encouraging to you.

STUDENTS IN ACTION

Senior Sermons!

At RPTS, MDiv students take at least four preaching classes during their studies, including preaching in chapel. Occasionally, we feature a student sermon on SermonAudio. Such was the case with senior **Ian Gillies** in the fall quarter. It was exciting to see that Ian's sermon was the top listen for November, with the UK having the most international clicks. This is not surprising to us, as Ian is from Scotland! We encourage you to [listen](#) to his sermon, *Delighting in Suffering*, from Acts 21:10-15. And as you listen, pray for Ian and his wife, Shelby, as they prepare to return to Scotland, Lord willing, after commencement in May 2021.

ALUMNI IN ACTION

Zach Smith (MDiv 2019) is serving the RPCNA in South Sudan. We are pretty sure that climbing to the top of a 276-foot tall radio tower to check the safety light is not included in the curriculum at RPTS. As Rev. Smith helps to teach elders in this part of South Sudan, you can really say that his students are Studying UNDER Pastors or at least a pastor. Thanks for wearing the safety harness, Zach.



STAFF IN ACTION

Josh Nye, Director of Support Services, was recently ordained and installed as a Deacon at the College Hill RP Church in Beaver Falls, PA.

Jordan Feagley, Librarian, was recently elected as a Ruling Elder at Covenant Fellowship RP Church in Wilkinsburg, PA.

POINTS FOR PRAYER

Please keep in your prayers, Dr. C.J. Williams and the entire Williams Family as Dr. Williams' father, Frank, entered the church triumphant on December 18th.

We give thanks to the Lord that we were able to finish the year meeting physically for classes.

Do you follow RPTS? These are great ways to keep track of professor quotes, conferences, and news at the Seminary:



Visit our
website

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"Advancing Still from Strength to Strength"
Psalm 84:7