

From the Principal's Desk – February 2018

PTS operates from a small three and half acre campus and another quarter acre extension off campus which solely houses faculty, staff, and married students. We make the best use possible of the limited infrastructure available. About four decades ago, when PTS moved into this campus, there were just a few buildings that functioned as the Language School where new missionaries coming to north India would learn Hindustani. When the Language School moved to Mussoorie PTS moved into this campus. The main hub of the campus was Lowriston (over 150 years old) which housed the seminary chapel, library, class rooms, a teacher's residence, the dining hall, kitchen, and some guest rooms. A few domestic helpers lived in a row of outhouses (servants quarters) of Lowriston.

The hostel, the other important building on campus, was quite different to normal hostels: it consisted of about fifteen rooms with attached bathroom and toilets. They were made primarily for missionary families, whose meals would be provided in the main dining hall. The Principal's house was also on campus, built into the beautiful terraced landscape that fills the campus. There were no buildings around the campus at that time and only a barbed-wire fence served to demarcate the seminary land from the rest of the property that belonged to the American Presbyterian mission.

Since PTS moved here several buildings were constructed. The first was the McLellan faculty quarters, followed by the Strom Hostel for women, and the Academic Center, and finally the Young-Strom auditorium, which today functions as the seminary chapel and also is used for worship services every Sunday by various churches including the Covenant RPC. We thank the Lord for faithful sponsors and supporters who have given sacrificially over the years so that we can enjoy their use today.

Visitors to campus are often surprised by the beauty of the campus. One such local visitor described the campus as "the best kept secret in Dehradun." Majestic trees and greenery are seen everywhere. The campus is home to a variety of birds though these are diminishing gradually due to the vast changes that have taken place just outside the campus.

The maintenance of our buildings is a top priority and we are thankful for faithful partners who have come alongside us to help us in this huge task. Some of the older buildings on campus from Language school days were in a bad state and needed renovation. Two of these buildings were the Men's Hostel and the seminary kitchen. The former needed a total renovation because of its deteriorating condition. The latter was badly in need of added safety features and an overall renovation. The work was done satisfactorily and completed during the winter break. The renovated facilities are being utilized with much gratitude and we are thankful to the Lord for De Veere Naasten (DVN) Holland, for the generous funds donated to complete this work. We have another major project about which I will be writing soon.

The seminary classes are going well and other campus activities seem to keep the students active. Perhaps the most popular of these happenings is the annual Sports Day replete with the maximum events including a (small) marathon and a pretty serious march past. Most of the community participate and have a fun time. The seminary dedicated a chapel hour to watch a video on the life and ministry of Dr. Billy Graham and to challenge students to follow in the footsteps of godly men such as Dr. Graham to develop a passion for evangelism.

We said good-bye to Mrs. Shirley Nayak our Office Secretary, on February 28, who will be moving to the outskirts of Delhi where her husband has taken up a ministry that serves the church in North India. We wish them God's blessings.

February 14 marked the beginning of Lent this year. It is a time when we focus on the mission and sacrificial work of Our Lord Jesus Christ that culminated in the Cross. It is interesting to note that traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church called for abstinence from meats during lent. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), one of the early Reformers, stressed that fasts and abstinence should be voluntary and not mandatory for believers. The matter came to a head when, in 1522, Zwingli's printer, Froschauer, and his tired and hungry assistants, after clearing a back-log of printing orders, ate sausages. Though Zwingli himself did not participate in this action he defended these men by preaching a sermon and publishing a tract that argued for the freedom of a Christian to abstain or use foods. He took passages such as I Cor 8:8; 10:25; Col 2:16; I Tim 4:1-5; Rom 14:1-3, 15:1,2, to prove his point. Christian liberty is something we should cherish fervently.

However, should we as Reformed Protestants observe Lent? Perhaps we should voluntarily do such things as will be spiritually beneficial to us without any coercion. Also, we should avoid being judgmental of our fellow Christian believers whether they abstain from, or indulge in, meat or any kind of food during Lent.

The Lord demands loving obedience to Him and not slavish conformity to traditional practices that have no scriptural support. Having said this we should also remember to look for ways that we can understand more fully and appreciate what the Lord did for us. Perhaps we can spend time by communing with the Lord and meditating on His Word, reading some Lenten meditations, and examining our lives and desiring to serve the Lord with renewed love and obedience.