

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friend,

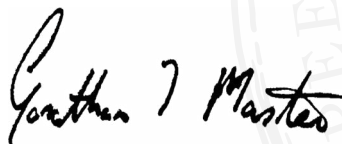
Thank you for your interest and support for Greenville Seminary and for the encouragement it brings. Your prayers and support are already a blessing to us. The Lord is raising up pastors and missionaries here who will soon be serving Christ's people in pulpits and mission fields across the world. As the year ends, would you prayerfully consider giving to help send these men out well-prepared and debt-free for a lifetime of gospel ministry?

Every week, somewhere in America, a faithful pulpit falls silent. Pastoral retirements are accelerating. By 2030, one in four US pastors is expected to retire, and far too few men are stepping forward to take their place. The situation in global missions mirrors this crisis.

This is the hour in which God has placed us. At Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, our mission is simple: *We train pastors*. Not lecturers who speak only in theory. Not men who view service to the church as a stepping stone to something more. Our job is to train shepherds for Christ's people—men called by God, affirmed by the church, and equipped to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and shepherd the souls entrusted to them.

Enclosed is an update on the state of seminary education in general, and also an explanation of our ongoing priorities. Our calling at GPTS is to equip the laborers the Lord is raising up with the best training the church can give. The need is urgent, but it is not hopeless. Jesus Christ reigns. He promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

Yours in Christ,



Dr. Jonathan Master | *President*

We *Train* Pastors.

A *Crisis* in the Pulpit

Across North America, ministerial education is in decline. The Association of Theological Schools has reported ten consecutive years of enrollment decreases; MDiv enrollment declined another 5% last year alone. Meanwhile, vacant pulpits multiply.

As seminaries seek to address the looming crisis of empty pulpits, the popular response has been to lower standards and to move instruction online. Biblical languages get trimmed.

“Greenville Seminary has certainly struck a tremendous balance between academic scholarship and Christian piety. While enjoying my interaction with fellow seminarians from across the globe and a genuinely approachable faculty, this well-knit community exudes the love of Christ in a manner I have not experienced before. I am sincerely grateful for the chapel services twice a week and the Thursday morning prayer groups, which give prominence to the fear of God upon which Greenville Seminary was founded.”

ARPHAXAD WAITHAKA, CURRENT STUDENT
MDiv, '28

Church oversight in admissions fades. Convenience replaces calling. The results are devastating for the church's long-term health.

Pastoral persistence has also collapsed. In the early 2000s, about 45% of MDiv graduates remained in pastoral work five years after graduation. This was a discouraging number. But today, that number has fallen to just 18%. Lowering the threshold for seminary education has also reduced the perseverance of seminary graduates, leaving many of God's people “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

As pastoral perseverance in the United States has declined, so too has the number of long-term missionaries sent out from the US. In the 1950s–

70s, the US sent an estimated 60–70% of the world's Protestant missionaries. Today, the US share is around 30–40%. Short-term trips have surged, often outnumbering long-term placements by four to one, but the pipeline of lifetime workers has thinned.

For a *Lifetime* of Faithful Ministry

This is why we remain laser-focused on training pastors. Our aim is not to raise up ivory-tower intellectuals who retreat from the life of the church, but shepherds who know the Lord, love His people, and see it as their *sacred calling* to feed His sheep. The men who come to Greenville Seminary are not here to collect academic accolades; they are here to prepare for the hard, joyful work of preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, and shepherding souls.



At GPTS, the Master of Divinity is intentionally demanding—120 credit hours with rigorous work in Greek and Hebrew, exegesis, systematic and biblical theology, church history, apologetics, preaching, and pastoral theology. Every class is shaped by the Westminster Standards and taught by seasoned pastors who disciple students in life as well as doctrine.

By God's grace, the results are clear: over 92% of our graduates persist in pastoral ministry—often in the same congregation for decades. Long-term shepherding stabilizes congregations, strengthens families, and deepens the local witness of the gospel.

As we rejoice in the Lord's kindness, we still look to the original inspiration for our seminary charter: *"To furnish our congregations with enlightened, humble, zealous, laborious pastors, who shall truly watch for the good of souls, and consider it their highest honour and happiness to win them to the Savior."*

Residential Formation *Matters*

This kind of faithful, zealous shepherd is not formed in isolation. Residential education places a man under the Word, within the worshiping community, and in daily contact with mentors who know his gifts and character. It forges habits of prayer, disciplined study, and pastoral presence that cannot be downloaded or simulated.

Over-digitized training promises speed but often produces fragility. It is disconnected from the oversight of the church. Lowered standards coupled with distance programs have not solved the crisis; they have accelerated it. The kind of training in which we engage is not a quick fix; it is the proven path for preparing men who remain steadfast through trials. Over time, these men stay longer in their posts. They preach with boldness and clarity because they have labored in the languages and lived in the texts. These are men who shepherd wisely because they have been shepherded in community.

One evidence of a maturing believer is when they no longer ask, "What is the quickest or easiest path?" but instead, "What is the path that best prepares me for faithful service?"

Removing the Barrier of *Debt*

Debt is one of the clearest obstacles keeping called men from ministry and missions. In the US, a typical bachelor's graduate carries with him about \$29,000–\$38,000 in student debt. In many cases, seminary debt can add another \$30,000–\$50,000. Combined burdens of



\$60,000–\$90,000 are not unusual and can delay marriage, housing, and family—or keep men from the field entirely. This is why Greenville Seminary has always been committed to enabling our graduates to train rigorously without incurring debt.

We know that a call to the ministry is a call to turn away from a life of wealth and prosperity. When our students graduate, they do not get offered high-income positions. Our commitment is to keep tuition low and to increase scholarships so that men can graduate free to serve.

To accomplish this, our tuition costs are kept low. Our posted tuition covers roughly 30% of the actual cost to train each student. In addition, 63% of our men receive financial aid beyond this subsidized tuition. We want these men free to serve long-term wherever the Lord sends them. To do this, we need your help. This past year, 7% of our annual revenue came from student tuition and fees. The remaining 93% was provided by generous partners like you.

The Lord's Blessing

While nationwide seminary enrollment has been in steep decline, our enrollment has grown by 62% over the past five years. We rejoice in the fact that when these men graduate, they will join a host of GPTS alumni who are persisting in the work of gospel ministry.

The Lord is also stirring hearts for the nations. Our current student body includes many men planning to serve outside of the United States. Nearly thirty of our current students are training with the goal of engaging in church planting overseas. Nine men are planning to return to their native countries of Brazil, China, India, Nepal, Kenya, and Laos.

Right now, by God's grace, we have more students preparing for overseas work than the number of missionaries we graduated in the prior decade. These men, many of whom have families, depend on scholarships to help with tuition and living expenses.

"The professors at GPTS model an impressive work ethic in their teaching and excellence in scholarship. In addition to this atmosphere of striving for excellence, professors possess a profound love for God, humility, and a pastoral heart. Every class, if I'm listening well, I walk away with practical ministry applications for now and the future. I'm thankful to learn in an environment where professors are active churchmen and therefore understand the practical challenges of ministry and share that wisdom freely with students."

LUKE LUSTFELDT, CURRENT STUDENT

MDiv, '28



Alumni Testimonials

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Greenville Seminary's curriculum is designed to shape the whole man: the mind as well as the heart. Their focus on the practical and intellectual aspects of the pastorate equips men to serve the Lord wherever they are called. It was a great privilege to learn from men who have been through the day-in and day-out work of pastoral ministry. They instilled in me a strong Confessional conviction, but more importantly, a greater love for Christ, His church, and the lost.

RYAN COLVIN, BDIV. '24, PASTOR OF HOPE COMMUNITY, PCA
Egg Harbor Township, NJ

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Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary impressed upon me a liberating paradox: though I am unnecessary to God's sovereign work, by His grace I may still be useful. In every lecture and lesson, I was pointed beyond myself to the glory of the Triune God, whose Word is sufficient and whose Spirit alone gives life. Anchored in this hope, I was equipped to proclaim Christ with clarity and to serve with confidence that He Himself builds His church.

CILAS MENEZES, MDIV. '22, PASTOR AT MIDWAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PCA
Powder Springs, GA

Your Partnership Is Essential

Thank you for being part of our seminary family—we count it a blessing to have your interest in our mission. This year we are praying for the Lord to provide \$1,000,000 by December 31 to meet the cost of training the men He has entrusted to us. Please pray with us. In addition, would you consider making a year-end gift to support the work the Lord has given us for His Church?

Your gift will equip men for a lifetime of faithful ministry. It will be used to send debt-free graduates into a world in need of long-term gospel ministers. Your support will sustain the rigorous, residential model that produces pastors who persevere.

The pulpits of tomorrow will be filled by the pastors we train today. Thank you for standing with us as we labor to see Christ's Church strengthened by men who rightly handle the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

