

Princeton Theological Seminary Invites the Church and the Academy to Read Calvin Together in 2009 in “A Year with the *Institutes*”

Princeton, NJ, December 17, 2008—Princeton Theological Seminary is inviting the church, the academy, and individual Christians around the world to celebrate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin’s birth by participating in “A Year with the *Institutes*,” a daily reading of Calvin’s major work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, during 2009. Calvin, the most important founding theologian of the Reformed theological tradition, was born July 10, 1509. His *Institutes* represent a systematized approach to Reformed theology, written with a pastor’s heart in service to the church of Calvin’s day.

Princeton Seminary, through its Center of Continuing Education, will provide a daily reading schedule and text of a three-to-six-page section of the 1559 version of the *Institutes* for each day of 2009, except Sundays and Christmas Day, online on its web site, <http://www2.ptsem.edu/ConEd/Calvin>. The readings, using the McNeill/Battles translation of the *Institutes*, thanks to permission from Westminster John Knox Press, will also be provided in audio format, as a podcast, with sections read by oral performers from around the country. Michael Brothers, an assistant professor of speech communication in ministry at Princeton Seminary, will direct this part of the project.

Each week an invited scholar or pastor will provide a reflection paper on that week’s readings on the web site, and participants will be able to comment on both the readings and the reflection papers.

The project was the brainchild of Princeton Seminary’s Christian education assistant professor Gordon Mikoski, who decided to read through the *Institutes* as part of his Christian devotional practice to commemorate the anniversary year of Calvin’s birth. As he told friends and colleagues about his idea, they wanted to join him.

“While browsing through the Westminster John Knox book display at the American Academy of Religion meeting in November, I came upon new copies of the *Institutes*,” Mikoski said. “It occurred to me that reading them cover-to-cover from January 1 through December 31, 2009 would be an appropriate way to honor Calvin’s life and work.”

Mikoski believes such disciplined reading of the *Institutes* can remind the church of its rooting in God, not itself. Calvin wrote that “we are not our own; insofar as we can, let us forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely, we are God’s: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions; let all parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal.” (*Institutes* 3.7.1)

Mikoski’s project was enthusiastically received by the Erdman Center of Continuing Education, which is sponsoring a number of events in 2009 to celebrate the Calvin anniversary. The first of these is 2009’s first global Calvin conference, “Calvin and the Church Today,” January 20–23, 2009.

Princeton Seminary hopes pastors, lay people, and scholars will take this opportunity to read and interact with the work of a theological giant in the Reformed tradition, with a community of Christians across the church and the world.

In addition to Mikoski and Brothers, steering committee members for the project include students Jason Santos, Michael Gyura, Katherine Douglass; Raymond Bonwell, director of programs for the Center of Continuing Education; Barbara Chaapel, the Seminary's director of communications; and Joyce MacKichan Walker, a member of the pastoral staff of Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton.

For information about how to participate in "A Year with the *Institutes*," and for answers to questions, visit www.ptsem.edu/calvin2009 or email calvin2009@ptsem.edu.

Princeton Theological Seminary was founded in 1812, the first seminary established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. It is the largest Presbyterian Seminary in the country, with more than 600 students in six graduate degree programs.