

Prairie Bible Institute Annual Meeting

Report to the Board of Directors



PRAIRIE COLLEGE

President's Report October 2025

THE EXPERIMENT

In 2010, we embarked upon what might be called "***The Prairie Experiment***" ... The question being tested: "*Could a college succeed in the current cultural environment if it stayed true to its created purpose: to be a Bible-believing, whole-Bible-teaching, Christian college or university?*"

Would being faithful to our Bible-teaching foundation cause the flourishing or the failure of the school? And, would we lose our accreditation by returning to this foundational tap root, as we had been warned by some members of our team at the time? My sister, Ruth, whom many of you know and who is well loved among friends of Prairie around the world, reminded me that Grandpa Maxwell spoke to the staff and faculty as he was approaching his retirement from Jeremiah 6:16, which reads:

"This is what the LORD says, 'Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'" In some ways, our experiment was putting this verse to the test: Would we find our future by walking the ancient path of the Scriptures or would we fail?

We set the experiment in motion with the help of our outstanding faculty. Following a formula fashioned after one we had seen at Dallas Theological Seminary, we developed seven courses that would provide a full reading of the Canon of Scripture, and then moved those seven courses into every four-year degree.

With these seven courses, every student earning a Bachelor's degree from Prairie would have read/studied the whole Bible under great teachers who have solid Biblical orthodoxy. Those seven courses are:

- Reading the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy)
- Reading the Historical Books (Joshua to Esther)
- Reading the Psalms and Wisdom Literature (Job to Song of Songs)
- Reading the Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi)
- Reading the Gospels and Acts (Matthew to Acts)
- Reading Paul's Letters (Romans to Philemon)
- Reading Hebrews to Revelation

We are tackling the problem of Biblical illiteracy, preparing Biblically-fluent missional professionals who will help meet the greatest needs of the world for the glory of God. We believe our graduates will be better able to contribute to global society in their chosen careers because they are equipped with the whole teaching of Scripture alongside their professional training.

After refining the seven courses over a few school year cycles, we placed them in the protective custody of our Constitution, so that the Board would become the guardians of the strategy, a key voice in any decision that might involve drift in this core value.

One major US donor, hearing about our emphasis on Scripture, gave us a beautiful Hebrew Torah Scroll that was likely from the early 1800's. You should believe: We love this Book and the God of this Book.

Then we refined our *Foundational Documents*:

- Statement of Faith and Historical Adam
- Motto, Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- Community Covenant
- Human Sexuality Statement
- Policies and Procedures for Responding to Reports of Harassment, Abuse, and Assault

so that they work in concert with each other (focusing on major topics and eliminating duplication). We made affirmation by signature a requirement of every person at the time they joined staff or faculty, and annual re-affirmation of these Documents by all members of the Faculty, Executive, and Board.

Finally, we established the practice of *allowing no carve-outs*. It is not unusual for good Christians to differ on many points of theology and doctrine. However, exceptions can be the beginning of foundational drift. If someone wishes to serve at Prairie, they need to agree with our Foundational Documents. All of them. We welcome regular review of our Foundational Documents, and are prepared to revise them when deemed appropriate (following sound, Biblically-grounded study) to have them more fully conform to the whole teaching of Scripture. However, revisions are not quickly or easily made. More likely, a person who does not agree with our statements will find a home elsewhere.

Now, 15 years later, it would appear that the *Experiment* is looking good:

- Sustainability – in 2010/11 our auditors were concerned about the viability of the college, to the point of considering the insertion of a "Going Concern" clause in our Audited Financial Statements. The Board's first question of me as the new President in April 2010 was, "So, should we close the school?" These are no longer the questions on the minds of our auditors or Board, nor are they concerns among our staff and faculty. They have been replaced with questions about our future; our vision for addressing the greatest needs of the world and our ability to impact the nations of the world through our graduates.
- Strong Team Culture – The size of our team is about 60% of the size it was in 2010. But the number of people showing up for our weekly prayer time is about 60, up from about 12. Team harmony is one of our key cultural markers...

this is not to say that we always agree, we disagree comfortably because we share a common vision and are continuously aiming for the best outcome for the college and the students. One measure of this shows up in our Best Christian Workplaces survey results that have moved from Toxic to Flourishing since 2010. Our score in 2024 was among the highest ever seen by the firm; our BCW consultant compared us to a high-performing Olympic team.

- Enrollment – Unduplicated headcount rose 18% this year to 535, up from 455 last year and up from about 250 in 2010 (table in the Appendix).
- Donations – Donations have grown considerably since 2010, largely in step with our return to our created purpose, and in line with the vision that we believe God has given us for the future as a Bible university. We are investing in long-life upgrades to the campus, improvements that should put the school on a solid footing for the next century.

Heritage Hall – The new residence is complete and occupied. Total cost, including the cost of utility services that needed upgrading, came to \$22.8M. Total donations and pledges came to \$22.5M.

Heritage Hall is a symbolic marker along the path into the future, suggesting that we are flourishing, not failing. This building will be a key tool which will help us build healthy community and provide an excellent environment for individual, as well as group learning. In this building, lifelong friendships will be forged, friendships that will provide the strength and support that each of us needs when we are faced with the normal challenges that life brings our way. And it is in this building that many will learn the joy that comes with a daily walk with God.

In August, we gathered for the grand opening of this residence: to celebrate its completion with the symbolic Ribbon-Cutting, to dedicate the building to God, and to commission it into service, his service. At the dedication, we gathered to thank each person who contributed, with excellence in craftsmanship work, with the good work of diligent prayer, with generous and sacrificial donations. Even more, we gathered to thank God Almighty for the rich heritage he has given us in our founding roots, the rich heritage he has given us in the many people who have served on our team, and the rich heritage he has given us in the timeless Scriptures that are as relevant today as they were when they were written.

Not only is God proving Jeremiah 6:16 to be true: we wonder if we would still be open, had we NOT embarked on this Experiment. This Book is our taproot. From its pages flow streams of life-giving truth, streams of wisdom for every challenge, streams of love and fellowship that guide us through valleys and help us scale mountains, and streams of hope for eternal life with the Almighty, the Creator!

As you can tell, we feel overwhelmed with gratitude.

We are grateful for the many staff and faculty members who have brought us through the decades to this day...names that mark the halls throughout the residence, names

that represent hundreds of others that we wish we could have named as well. We are grateful to every person currently on our team, people who look after their corner of the campus with diligence and love.

Our leadership team is high functioning and driven for results. I have found great joy in watching our team work well together, arriving at good, sometimes difficult decisions, figuring out the best implementation strategies, and holding each other to account. God has given us a good team.

We are grateful to the people who have been our advisors and those who have served on our Board. People who have embraced our mission, believed in our larger long-term vision, and have joined us with encouragement, advice, and opportunities for partnership.

We are grateful for external partners who generously provide their expertise and invite us into their circles.

We are grateful for donors who have responded with great generosity, allowing us to renovate the campus without taking on long term debt (we are using some of our line of credit to bridge the timing of pledges that will come in over the next couple of years).

We are witnesses of a grand collective effort, every person contributing what is his or hers to offer, gifts that have been given to the God of the universe. Every person is part of what God is doing here at Prairie, part of our Heritage, and we are grateful for every one of them.

It would be a serious miss to have made these points without ending with thanks to God. In every way, God has been our provider: bringing health and harmony to campus, bringing people onto our team and into our circle, expanding our reach, showing us a bright future, and providing the resources to move ahead.

Father God, we are grateful for the rich Heritage you have given us and the bright future you have for us. Give us, we pray, the joy of healthy community where friendships are formed and you are glorified. Bless us, so that we will be a blessing to all who come our way. May our nation and the nations of the world be blessed through the people who walk our halls.

We come to you with thanksgiving in the name of Jesus, the One you call Son and the One we call LORD.

Mark

Mark L. Maxwell
President & CEO