

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your continued prayers, encouragement and support as I continue seminary studies in Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS). I write to share some updates, reflections and prayer requests.

Updates

Studies

- (1) **Hebrew I & II:** I've completed both of my required Hebrew language courses. It was a steep uphill climb from day one, but the payoff is worth it. As my Hebrew professor often reminds us, the goal is to see how the Hebrew text carries and presents meaning. Mining into the richness of the text has been eye-opening. Please pray that God will continue to speak and to increase my understanding and love for His Word, to build up both myself and others in their faith in the triune God.
- (2) **Exegesis of Revelation:** The Exegesis of Revelation class is one of the most fascinating and enriching classes I've taken thus far. I've come away with a firmer grasp of its theology, literary genre, structure, themes/motifs, and Old Testament, Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds. If there's one line to sum up my takeaway from studying Revelation, it is the importance of maintaining faithful witness to the true triune God in the face of persecution and the seduction to idolatry.
- (3) **The Church to the Reformation:** Covering the church from the Pentecost and up to the sixteenth century (pre-Reformation), this class helped me to understand the major themes, issues, personalities and events in the development of the church and Christian doctrine.
- (4) **Interpreting the New Testament:** This was a comprehensive class that taught methods of bible interpretation (e.g. textual, lexical, grammatical, historical, literary) and useful tools (e.g. textual criticism, sentence diagramming and semantic structure analysis). It has been foundational in equipping me to exegete scripture.
- (5) **Administration for Ministry:** Administration is something we all need to do, whether at work, in church or for our life admin purposes. I consider admin my "burnout" skill (i.e. I can do it, but it has a disproportionately larger drain on my

energy levels than compared to other skills) and it isn't something I'd jump at the opportunity to do. This class, therefore, pleasantly surprised me. Apart from learning the practical tools and skills of administration which are necessary and useful (e.g. effectiveness, management, culture and change models, assessments), it prompted me to reflect on administration with a theological and biblically informed perspective. How can administration be a part of one's spiritual formation? How can one work well within and with a Christian institution to help the institution meet its mission? How can individual and institutional power be used for flourishing, instead of idolatry and injustice? The class was richly beneficial to forming my administrative capacities and posture.

(6) **Counselling in Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence:** One of the classes I audited this year was a counselling class called Counselling in Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence. Intimate partner violence is more prevalent than one might think, and sadly, Christian households are not immune to this. This class equipped me with a variety of tools, both practical and theological, to navigate this growing area of concern. The class examined the issues around abuse and violence from a biblical and theological perspective and introduced evidence-based models for treatment and prevention. Class discussions were particularly insightful and sobering, particularly as quite a few of my classmates were survivors of family or spousal abuse. As they shared their respective journeys, I was struck by the need for adequate and loving responses on the part of church communities who journey with the perpetrators and/or survivors. We must not shy away from addressing issues of abuse and we must realize that God abhors abuse and violence towards others (and He cares about justice and protection for the oppressed). We also need to wisely navigate the biblical truths on forgiveness, suffering, hope, marriage and violence.

(7) **This Summer:** This upcoming Summer, I'll be taking two classes: **Interpreting the Old Testament** and **Augustine's Theography and Heart Therapy: Confessions, Community and Health**. I will also be auditing a counselling class: **Suicide Prevention for Professional Caregivers**.

Church

- (1) **Mentored Ministry:** I did my second unit of Mentored Ministry at the church I have been attending – First Congregational Church of Hamilton (FCCH), under the guidance of Pastor Kevin and Pastor Matt. Over the past year, I have continued serving with the High School Youth Ministry and in various other capacities. In November last year, I was given the opportunity to preach on Sunday at the main services – I thank God for the valuable opportunity to learn, receive encouragement/feedback and to share His Word.
- (2) **High School Ministry:** It has been a joy to see the High Schoolers grow in their faith and to journey alongside them as a friend and mentor. During Tuesday night youth groups this school year, we studied James and Proverbs. Sunday School lessons were on the theme of “Identity”, and for the first half of the year we explored our Christian identities as Saint, Sinner and Sufferer, and in the second half of the year we looked at what it meant in our daily lives (e.g. do we find our identity in relationships, merit and achievements, or things we buy/own). In late January this year, we attended a Winter retreat at a campsite in New Hampshire, and many High Schoolers were challenged to take the next step in their faith.

School Life (non-academic)

- (1) **Work:** Over the past year, I have been working in the GCTS dining hall part-time as a dishwasher and food server to supplement my income. It is hard labor, but I couldn’t have asked for a better team of colleagues. They’re hardworking and dedicated, they bring years of expertise and wisdom, and they’re a delightfully hilarious bunch. Knowing that most seminary students are on tight budgets, they’ve been so kind as to offer some leftover food for student workers to bring back to feed themselves and their families (and in my case, my dormmates).
- (2) **Second-hand Car:** My car still has a suspiciously loud engine (though the mechanic seems to think it’s in working order). A couple of other problems arose and were troubleshooted in the last few months. Please continue praying that the car and I (and the other road users) will be kept safe.
- (3) **Dorm life:** I am continuing as the Resident Life Coordinator (RLC) for the Women’s Dorm. This role has stretched me in my interpersonal skills, problem

solving skills and administrative skills. Sharing communal spaces is not easy and despite the many reminders sent out, we still regularly find unkept dishes and rotting/moldy food in the communal fridges! Please pray that I'd have wisdom, patience and love to lead and serve this dorm community well.

(4) **Running:** A couple of seminary friends and I signed up for a half marathon last November, and we made it! The coolest part about the race was not the cold air, but the good vibes from all those who came out to cheer for the runners along the streets and fields and from the runners who encouraged each other to keep going (even though we're strangers). This winter, we had to take a long pause because of the prolonged snowy and icy conditions, but we'll be back at it now that the weather has warmed up.

Reflection 1 – How is your soul

"How is your soul?" - this is a question that I've been regularly asked throughout the year by a group of friends in seminary. It's easy for me to get caught up in the deluge of day-to-day activities and responsibilities and to neglect to ask – where is God in all this, how is my relationship with God, and am I too busy with my agenda to ponder His? I've responded to this question in various ways during the year, but if you were to ask me now (especially since I've completed the Spring Term's final exams and papers), I'd say that my soul is as David described in Psalm 131:

*"O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me." (ESV)*

The image portrayed in Psalm 131 is striking to me because it captures the posture of humility, dependency and satisfaction that a soul finds in God, akin to a child trusting her mother and not excessively fretting that her needs won't be met. As I look back on my second year in seminary, I see clearly that God has been faithfully providing for my needs. My academic studies have also led me to grow in humility. As the adage goes,

the more I know, the more I realize I don't know; and thus, the more I've been brought to prayer to ask that God give wisdom and understanding.

So, how is your soul? Is it tired, anxious, restless or perhaps avoidant? May your soul find its ultimate satisfaction and rest in God.

Reflection 2

This year for me has been marked by the theme of "community". The GCTS campus has become my home away from home, and like any home, there are moments of joy and solidarity mixed with moments of tension and grief.

Serving as Resident Life Coordinator (RLC) of the Women's Dorm, it's been wonderful to see the women deepen their friendships with each other over the year and learn to serve and love their (literal) neighbors. At the same time, it's been a growth area for me as I learn how to navigate and address interpersonal tensions and inconsiderate behavior. I began this role jokingly telling everyone "I'm your RLC, not your mom!" (i.e. I'm not going to clean up after you or nag at you). Yet ironically over the year I've realized that I've become more like a mom, in that my goal is now to work with each person where they are at and gently nurture them to grow in the ways that they can.

One incident that I will remember fondly is this: in late January, a blizzard was brewing outside and someone from my dorm called me to say that she stepped on a needle and it pierced through her toe and the end broke off so there was no way she could get it out. At this point, heavy snow was blanketing the roads, and she did not want to go to an emergency room. Armed with a mere first aid kit, I disinfected the wound, but I recognized that I was manifestly underequipped. Thankfully, we managed to call a classmate on campus who used to be a surgeon (before he started seminary) and he came over to help. With surgical precision and using the most basic tools we could find, he managed to get the needle out. Anxiety turned to relief! Thank God for members of the community who help each other out.

One of the most profound moments that I've experienced in Christian community here is when a close friend's mom suddenly passed away. He flew back to Indonesia that same night to be with his family. His wife and two children remained on campus. There was such an outpouring of love and practical support from the student and church (FCCH) communities. Together, we raised funds for him to fly back and set up meal trains and babysitting trains to help his family while he was away. On the days of the funeral services, a few of us joined his wife to participate in the livestreamed services from Indonesia via Zoom. Our friend was back in Indonesia grieving, while we were in his apartment with his wife and children, playing together, weeping together and praying together. More importantly, we could share in grief while also reminding each other of our hope that God is the everlasting love who holds us securely in life and death.

I am thankful too for the many ways that the community here has supported and encouraged me – thankful for those who stopped when they walked by to ask how I'm doing and pray for me, for friends who cooked and shared food with me especially while I was sick, for peers who shared helpful resources and tips for classes and assignments, for the running group that keeps me motivated and accountable, for my colleagues in the dining hall team who've become friends, for friends who listen well and share my burdens and joys, and for the faculty who teach with pastoral hearts.

Request for Prayer

I'd be grateful for your prayers in the following areas:

- (1) **Spiritual growth:** that I will not neglect to spend time in scriptures and prayer and to let God attend to the needs of the soul. It is sometimes tempting to think that I'm already studying the Bible or about God through the classes I'm taking and so I don't need to take additional time to meditate and pray. How foolish it would be for me to substitute an activity for a relationship;
- (2) **Spiritual community:** that I would continue to deepen spiritual friendships and have wisdom to navigate interpersonal tensions or conflict (which is a natural part of living in community);
- (3) **Discernment:** that God would lead me to the areas/ministry/path that He desires that I go to. I anticipate that I'll graduate by Spring 2028. May He equip me for the path ahead and provide what I need;

(4) **Teaching:** that as I prepare to take on the role of a Hebrew Teaching Assistant for my Hebrew professor in the upcoming year, God would help me to teach clearly and effectively to guide others in their learning, so that more can be equipped to read and study the scriptures in their original languages.

Thank you for taking the time to read these updates, reflections and prayer requests. If you would like to have a chat or share how I can pray for you too, please feel free to contact me.

May God be glorified in all things.

In Christ,
Jean Chan
May 2026

p.s. Below are some pictures.



Fall Term kick-off grill on campus for students and families



A lunar new year potluck dinner with some fellow ethnic Chinese students



My colleagues in the dining hall team



My car after a snowstorm. There was lots of snow this winter, and it warmed my heart to witness the campus community coming together to help each other with digging out cars, shoveling paths and scraping off snow and ice.



Some friends and I built a snow fort after a blizzard. Because snowmen are overrated.



A seal lounging on a nearby beach in winter, startled by a dog



A High School Youth Group broom hockey competition between FCCH and a church from a neighboring town. We won :p



A typical youth group night at FCCH where we have games, a lesson and then split into groups for bible study



Spring cherry blossoms on campus



Observing and reading a Torah scroll that was recently donated to the GCTS library