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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FORUM



SPRING 2012

A Week at CTS

FORUM

Providing Theological Leadership
for the Church

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3475 MAINWAY, LCD STN 1
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email: forum@calvinseminary.edu

from the president

Julius T. Medenblik



One Week at Calvin Theological Seminary: Called to Serve

The second week of October, 2011 is a week I will always remember. October 15, 2011, is a date I will always remember. On October 15, 2011, I was inaugurated as the seventh President of Calvin Theological Seminary. As the CTS community came together to celebrate God's faithfulness, I had the privilege of noting how CTS was at work in the world.

During my Inaugural Address, I was able to reflect on how Calvin Theological Seminary has been "Called to Serve." Near the end of the service, I took off my presidential robe and washed the feet of a professor, board member, staff member and student. Some have said that the moment of washing feet was the most memorable part of the service.

Service comes in many forms. During the Inaugural week, CTS was highlighting the work of Herman Bavinck as we continue to learn from our Reformational roots as we minister in this culture. A new CTS Institute, the Institute of Global Church Planting and Renewal, was connecting to persons from throughout the world on how we can serve the church in this present generation. Calvin Seminary was also present in Angola Prison in Louisiana and in Classis Red Mesa and this list goes on.

In this issue of the *Forum*, you will read and see about the Inauguration, but CTS was doing more. As you review the snapshot of CTS during Inauguration week, I invite you to join me in giving thanks to how this one week was illustrative of God using CTS as he has for nearly 136 years.

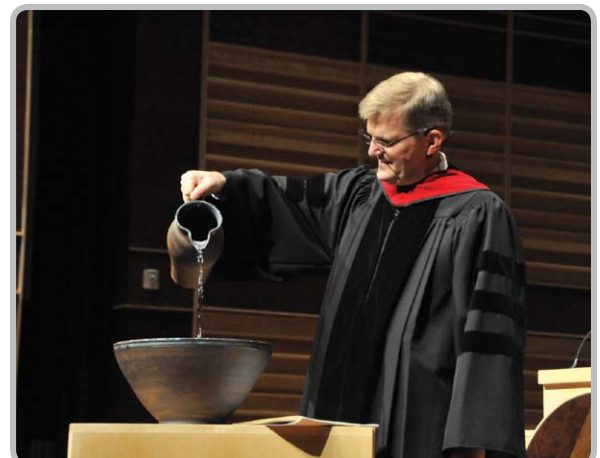
As the CTS community continues to serve our Lord and Savior, we desire to serve the church. As we frame future issues of the *Forum*, we want your help. We invite you to provide suggestions, comments or raise questions by going to CTSForum@calvinseminary.edu. So enjoy pictures and articles that illustrate a particular day and a particular week as one way to understand the ongoing work of Calvin Theological Seminary—Called To Serve.

In His Service With You,

Jul

Jul Medenblik

**Rev. Kevin Adams
speaks about our
baptismal identity at
the Inauguration.**





This is Not Going to Work ... unless ...

Following is President Jul Medenblik's Inaugural Address from the service held Saturday, October 15, 2011 in the Calvin College Fine Arts Center:

Dear Calvin Seminary students, faculty, staff, board members, alumni, special guests, honored guests, family and friends (including our New Life Church family)—I say to you all “Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.”

This is not going to work. This is not going to work—UNLESS. My opening words—“this is not going to work”—is a summary of a conversation that I had with a person I respect and who I am honored is a participant at this occasion—Dr. Richard Mouw, the President of Fuller Seminary and the president of the Association of Theological Schools Board of Trustees.

The occasion of that conversation was that I had just been interviewed by the faculty and the Board of Calvin Seminary and was affirmed as the person to be presented to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church as the person nominated to be 7th President of Calvin Theological Seminary. A few weeks later in May of 2010, I found myself in Pasadena, California and Dr. Richard Mouw consented to a breakfast meeting where I was going to seek his wisdom, his advice, his counsel and dare I say—his encouraging words.

We had barely sat down for breakfast and he said to me in his own, New Jersey direct way of getting down to business—“You know, Jul, the record of pastors as

Seminary Presidents is poor.” With the benefit and enhancement of time, I now hear these words as “You know, Jul, the record of pastors as Seminary Presidents is poor, disastrous, disappointing and deeply distressing - and let us not even begin talking about pastors who were church planters!”

Now you need to know that when I heard these encouraging words I thought—“I have almost every one of Dr. Mouw’s books including his book of civility *“Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World.”* I even bought the second revised, expanded edition.

Dr. Mouw will be given rebuttal time, but I do also remember his follow up to that warning—the reason the record is poor is that a President needs to be trilingual. Being trilingual doesn’t mean Hebrew, Greek and German, it means the President needs to address the church, the academy and the wider world.

These words of Dr. Mouw are wise because they are true. And so I again say—This is not going to work ... UNLESS.

This morning, Connie Kromminga Mulder, daughter of Dr. John Kromminga, Calvin Seminary’s fourth President, read a passage that answers this question—When you are given authority—what are you to do with that authority? What does authority really look like?

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. The person who has been given all authority takes up a serving towel and begins to serve all the disciples who were present. He served Peter who would deny Him. He served Judas who would betray Him. He served all the disciples who would leave Him. Jesus served and at the end of that picture—He turns and says *Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**



Towels and water ready for the foot washing at the inauguration.



► **This is not going to work ... unless**

I don't know about you, but I am challenged this morning by the picture of Jesus who has been given all authority and how He exercised that authority.

And so—I return to say—this is not going to work, UNLESS.

First—unless there is a certain calling—a calling you know deeply and you know comes from God. Today is a day where we picture that call and calling. The Presidency of CTS is not a job to fill, but a calling to fulfill. I feel called to be trilingual. I have been affirmed that God has called me to be a bridge builder and a conversation partner with the church, the academy and the wider world. God has provided me with a family, friends and training as a lawyer and as a pastor to bridge different conversations.

The future of theological education is undergoing and will continue to undergo transition. That future will be framed by how the seminary serves the church and how the church dialogues with the seminary with the world looking on and even wondering and questioning—what is the value of theological education or even knowing Jesus?

Tom Long—Presbyterian pastor and teacher—identified the creative tension this way. Seminary and local churches are two different institutions with two different ways of being and serving, and yet they belong to the same faith culture. If they move too far apart, they become strangers and adversaries, but if they move too close together they can no longer provide for each other the refining and resourcing ministries that each needs and each can offer the other.

From the Reformed tradition, we would say that Tom Long is articulating the principle that Abraham Kuyper identified as sphere sovereignty.

And yet, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the church as the church serves the wider mission of God. We need to judge ourselves by placing ourselves close to the heartbeat of Jesus.

This past week, you would have seen CTS at work. You would have seen the heartbeat of Jesus at CTS in creating tables of conversations.

We live in a world of slogans and sound bites, but the future of theological education will be in helping frame and host tables of

conversations where there is deep discussion on what a new friend said are—“slow” questions. “Slow” questions that need and deserve discussion and discernment—together.

I do believe the Christian Reformed Church and Calvin Theological Seminary is especially gifted in navigating the continued transitions we will face. As a Seminary, we have been doing that navigation for 135 years. Sometimes, we have navigated well and at other times we have not—but we have learned much to share with the church and the wider world.

For example, we are people who affirm the Holy Spirit's work and movement in culture through our understanding of common grace and we also hold up that there is a divide—an antithesis between the Kingdom of God and all other kingdoms.

We continue to live in the tension of being in the world, but not of it—even as we serve in that world.

Just this past week, Calvin Theological Seminary was involved in and hosted these tables of discussion.

Professor Scott Hoozee of the Center for Excellence in Preaching was helping set the table for something called the Ministry Theorem—Engaging Science in the Life of Your Congregation. Do we need discernment in the church about science? CTS is here to serve.

Professor Carl Bosma hosted tables of conversation about a new Institute—an Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal - and at those tables were people from London, Ontario, Port St. Lucie, Florida, San Francisco, and also the Netherlands and Brazil. Do we need wisdom in the church about planting and renewal? CTS is here to serve.

Professor John Bolt hosted tables of conversation at the Bavinck Conference under the framing of After 9/11—Now What? - Reformed Theology and the Church's Global Mission Today. Do we need navigational tools for a post-Christian context where the religion of Islam is growing? CTS is here to serve.

Professor Jeffrey Weima is finishing work in Classis Red Mesa where he brings learning from the culture of the Bible and those times to a different culture and helps others bridge that historical gap through a deeper

understanding of a Reformed hermeneutic of Scripture.

Professors Ron Nydam and John Rottman with CTS students hosted tables of conversation at Angola Prison in Louisiana. Angola Prison was the bloodiest prison in the United States, but because of the work of churches and the spread of the gospel—the blood that is now flowing in that prison is the blood of Jesus Christ that has cleansed, renewed and transformed the lives of people and an institution—a prison—that others had given up hope on and CTS is there—CTS is here to serve. CTS is here to serve the spread of the gospel throughout His Kingdom.

All that occurred in just one week. I look out at all those tables and all those conversations and give thanks that I am now called to serve and help set those tables in a world where the art of conversation, dialogue and study is in need of repair. We don't talk together—we talk about each other.

I want to especially thank Dr. Richard Mouw for his ongoing, Christian witness in conversations and as a mentor for me. Just this past week, Dr. Mouw has been at the center of many blogs and articles related to his dialogue with Mormons and his entrance into the recent debate over if Christians can support a Mormon candidate for President.

Dr. Mouw—you once shared with me how you continue to wrestle with that tension of common grace and the antithesis. You are one of us. You might have left us for California and we may still worry about how California has affected you, but you are one of us. We may even disagree with you from time to time, but we stand beside you in your challenging us to dialogue in difficult times. Thank you, Dr. Mouw.

Second—this is not going to work—UNLESS there is a supportive community. Reflecting again on the witness about Jesus as recorded in the Gospel reading, the Apostle John noted that Jesus served out of knowing that He came from God and was returning to God. His authority was framed by that community.

Authority that is not framed by community is authoritarianism. Authority that is framed by community enhances and builds up that community—a Community

of Service. We are all Called to Serve. Calvin Theological Seminary—CTS actually means Called to Serve. In a few moments as you see a picture of one disciple of Jesus Christ serving other disciples of Jesus Christ, I invite you to also see later pictures from the Calvin Seminary family who also serve and are serving. I will not be able to serve well unless we serve **together** in community.

Today is a day when there are certain charges given and certain vows spoken. In some ways, the closest we get to this type of moment is a wedding ceremony. We are making commitments to one another—before witnesses and before our God—for better, for worse—we are knit together. We need one another. At CTS, we have had an ongoing dialogue in the last few months about how we are a “TEAM.”

As that discussion unfolds, another picture emerges—we have different gifts. We are a different type of body than a church—but our different gifts are to serve one another as we serve the wider body—the church. May that conversation continue—in community.

In this moment, where I highlight the need for community, I acknowledge the legacy of those who have gone before and the legacy that they have left to build upon. This morning I acknowledge and give thanks for 135 years of history and that I am now a steward of the gift of Calvin Theological Seminary. I also want to lift up the legacy of the Presidents who have gone before and thank God for each and every one of them. I also give thanks for the living legacy that the current students, faculty, staff and supportive friends that CTS has gained, for the future God is preparing for us.

This is not going to work—unless there is a certain calling, unless there is a supportive community; but also, this is not going to work unless there is a centered posture.

Today is a “heady” day. Party—invitations, attention, etc.....but I cannot forget that on this date—October 15—my ordination into the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church took place 16 years ago. At an evening service at Orland Park Christian Reformed Church I was ordained and I spoke briefly from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters,

This is not going to work—unless there is a certain calling, unless there is a supportive community; but also, this is not going to work unless there is a centered posture.

I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

Sixteen years ago, I recalled the first time I ever preached to more people than my wife, Jackie, and to more than an empty barn as a son of a hog farmer.

It was at Providence CRC, Holland, Michigan. I remember very well my first preaching assignment. My wife had gotten me a new pair of shoes for that special day. She advised me to scuff the soles so that my steps would be a little more certain. I forgot. (She might say I ignored her advice.)

As I walked around the pulpit, I felt fairly confident. For this memorable day, I had decided to take a picture to mark the moment. I took the picture and, with camera in hand, began ascending the pulpit steps. The soles of my new shoes then acted like skis, and the carpet like snow. I took off in flight and quickly landed at the bottom of the steps—upright but a little surprised. So was the congregation.

I recall that incident like it happened yesterday. God has a way of reminding us that His power is revealed not by our wisdom but by the Spirit, who works through us. God

also uses the wisdom of a spouse. And I now scuff the soles of new shoes before wearing them.

Centered posture for me this morning is to kneel and remind myself that my pastoral identity—and now my presidential identity - comes from acknowledging the one I am to serve day in and day out. Just as I knelt for receiving prayer, I am to kneel to serve others. Today, I mark that to be centered on Jesus Christ is to follow Him. To follow Him is to be marked by His love and express that love to others.

As you leave today, we have a gift to share. We are inviting you to receive a serving towel to remember this day—but to also remember and recommit yourself to the Savior who served us and invites us to a life of service.

A certain calling, a supportive community and a centered posture—this Will Work as God so leads, as God so directs and as God so blesses by His Spirit.

I testify that it is In Christ Alone that my hope is found. He is my light, my strength and my song. Would you join me in standing and singing this testimony of faith in Him?

A Few Words—The Washing of Feet

Today is a day for many words, but as a Preacher for many years—I know the reality that what many people remember are not words—but images.

You may not remember my words, but you may recall this picture that will unfold. I am honored to serve a faculty member, a board member, a staff member and a student in washing their feet.

During this time, you are invited to hear the anthem “So You Must Do” which will be followed by “The Servant Song.” During the Servant Song you will see pictures gained over the last few months of other parts of the Calvin Seminary family and their service to others—following the example of Jesus.

After I wash the feet of those noted, I will also be presenting them with a serving towel of remembrance. We actually desire for you to remember CTS, pray for CTS and also remember that we are all Called to Serve.

Let us begin as we again recall the message and the example of Jesus.

May our attention turn to Jesus and who He wants us to serve as He served us.



The Ministry Theorem: Science for Ministry

Since January of 2009 Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College have partnered in overseeing a grant project funded by the John Templeton Foundation—specifically, its “Science for Ministry” program. In early 2008 Calvin Seminary was one of only thirty seminaries nationwide that were invited to propose a grant project that would aim to educate church leaders on the positive benefits of utilizing the fruits and insights of science in church ministries. Since many churches alternatively fear science—or simply ignore it as probably being of no use for church life, preaching, or teaching—the Templeton Foundation wanted to have seminaries explore ways to help congregations see science as a potential partner in celebrating the physical universe, which is nothing less than the handiwork of our great Creator God.

Calvin Seminary was one of just seven institutions selected to receive a \$200,000 grant to develop a program that eventually was named “The Ministry Theorem: Engaging Science in the Life of Your Congregation.” The project has been directed by myself and Dr. Deborah Haarsma from the Calvin College science division. A primary focus of the project has been the development of a website (<http://ministrytheorem.calvinseminary.edu/>) that now houses a wealth of resources and links to books and articles for churches. In addition to a specially commissioned essay series titled “What I Wish My Pastor Knew,” in which scientists share the joy of their work with the church, the website also contains slide-ware, links to Sunday school curricula, ideas for youth groups, sample sermons that use science to praise God for his handiwork in creation, and much more.

Another facet of this work was the convening of a pastoral focus group. The group consists of a number of Christian Reformed pastors throughout North America who beta-tested the website while it was under development and who have provided other pieces of feedback as well. In the week of President Medenblik’s inaugural, this group traveled to Grand Rapids for two days of meetings at CTS. In addition to times of worship and fellowship, the Ministry Theorem focus group heard presentations by Calvin College faculty members Loren Haarsma, James K.A. Smith, and Paul Moes. The group also viewed a portion of the new “Test of Faith” video curriculum developed by the Faraday Institute in England.

A main purpose of the two-day seminar at Calvin Seminary was to equip each pastor to return home and hold a similar seminar for local pastors in order to allow these church leaders to come together and reflect on the issues that arise when faith and science are brought into interaction with one another. Following the October 2011 seminar at CTS, these pastors have indeed been holding local

events that have been well attended and very well received by church leaders across the United States and Canada.

Of course, as most people know, there can be difficulties when faith and science talk to each other. There are tensions. There are questions. Here and there one can find also points of controversy and contention. But as the Ministry Theorem website and program have demonstrated, there are also vast areas of

convergence, vast areas in which science can help add to the church’s list of reasons to give praise to the Creator God, from whom all blessings—but from whom also all creation splendors—flow. In our twenty-first-century context, it is impossible to live apart from the presence of science. Even in the church, science and what it makes possible are on display every time a DVD is shown, every time a congregation prays for someone undergoing an MRI, every time a congregation celebrates a successful surgery or a successful treatment for cancer. We live immersed in a scientific world. The Ministry Theorem seeks ways to celebrate the goodness of the scientific enterprise—that is, to celebrate that, at its heart,

what science does is take the image of God granted to humanity and allow that image to shine as we explore the works of God throughout the universe in everything from the DNA inside our cells to distant galaxies chock-full of billions of stars.

As the psalmist said about the human body, so we can say about everything in the cosmos: it is all fearfully and wonderfully made. What a privilege to be able to take note of all that fearful wonder!

by Scott Hoezee,
Director of the Center
for Excellence in
Preaching



THE MINISTRY THEOREM
Engaging Science in the Life of your Congregation

ministrytheorem.calvinseminary.edu

The Ministry Theorem is a project of Calvin Theological Seminary and the Science Division of Calvin College, with grant support from the Templeton Foundation.

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
A community of faith. A center of learning. A life of ministry.

Classic Reformed Theology: Still Serving the Church

The Bavinck Conference: October 12-14, 2011

"After 9/11/11 ... What? Reformed Theology and the Church's Global Mission Today"

What did Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck know and say about Islam? Can the Dutch Reformed, neo-Calvinist theological tradition that shaped the Christian Reformed Church and its institutions still speak to us today? How do we use the treasures of our Reformed theological heritage to help the church today in its mission to the world?

These are the sort of questions that just over one hundred presenters and attendees at the second Bavinck Conference wrestled with during the seminary's reading week in October 2011. (The first Bavinck Conference in September 2008 celebrated the centenary of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary in 1908 on *The Philosophy of Revelation*.)

The conference was opened with an illustrated lecture by Dr. Bert De Vries from Calvin College's History Department on Abraham Kuyper's visit to the Holy Land in 1907-08. Kuyper kept a detailed travel journal and published his reflections in a two-volume work, *Around the Ancient World-Sea (Om de Oude Wereldzee)*. As always, Kuyper had clear and distinct views about what he saw, and De Vries helped sort out the useful from the time-bound.

Conference presenters took the theme seriously by exploring the contributions of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Bavinck's nephew, the missiologist J. H. Bavinck, to helping the church understand its mission, learning from mistakes as well as solid insights, and applying old truths in new and creative ways. Topics included: Comparisons between Kuyper's and Bavinck's views on Islam; Dutch colonial policy and missions in Indonesia; the missiology of Samuel

Zwemer; the "Insider/Outsider" debate in Islamic missions; J. H. Bavinck's theological interpretation of religious consciousness; the problem of voluntary and involuntary dhimmitude; and whether the challenge of Islam forces Reformed thinkers to adjust their traditional commitment to pluralism. A highlight on Thursday evening was the testimony of five Calvin Seminary students and a Calvin College professor about what it is like to live as a Christian minority in Muslim majority contexts—namely, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The evening concluded with focused prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ in those places.

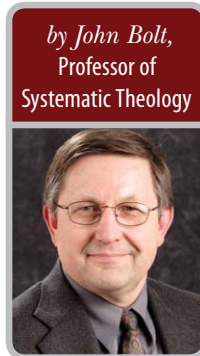
At the close of the conference, conferees were joined by several hundred more guests at a public lecture in the Calvin College Covenant Fine Arts Center given by the Honorable Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands from 2002-2010. Dr. Balkenende is a Reformed Christian who attended Christian schools and graduated from the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, with degrees in



Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende
Prime Minister, Kingdom
of the Netherlands,
2002-2010



Dr. Herman Bavinck
(1854-1921)
Professor at Vrije Universiteit,
Amsterdam



by *John Bolt*,
Professor of
Systematic Theology

history and law. He served the Vrije Universiteit as a Professor of Christian Social Thought on Society and Economics and played a significant role in the strengthening of the Christian Democratic Alliance, the new Christian political party formed from the older Calvinist and Roman Catholic political parties.

In recognition of his service, the Bavinck Institute awarded Dr.

Balkenende the first annual "Bavinck Prize for Outstanding Contribution to the Church, the Academy or Public Life." The evening was topped off by Dr. Balkenende's public lecture, "Reinventing Responsibility in the 21st Century: New Orientations and the Heritage of Neo-Calvinism." Prime Minister Balkenende's presence among us and his forward-looking lecture served as a reminder to us North Americans, who often look across the Atlantic with pessimistic eyes, that a Reformed political witness in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck persists in the Netherlands.

In conjunction with the conference, the Bavinck Institute at Calvin Seminary also sponsored an essay contest for Ph.D. students, offering \$1,000 scholarships and an opportunity to have their papers discussed by a panel of Bavinck scholars. The students with the five best proposals presented the fruit of their research on Wednesday, October 12, prior to the conference start that evening. Their papers will be published in the electronic journal *The Bavinck Review*, available on the seminary's website.

The conference and work of the Bavinck Institute at Calvin Seminary arise from our commitment to be faithful to both our Reformed roots and to the call that God places before us today. Yes, classic Reformed theology is relevant!



CTS: Serving Global Church Planting and Renewal

In February 2011, the Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal (IGCPR) was officially organized at Calvin Theological Seminary.

One of the primary objectives of the IGCPR is education in church planting. To that end, it has offered two elective courses on church planting—one in the spring semester and one in the May term. The first, taught by myself and professor Roger S. Greenway, aims to help students learn to read Scripture missionally, to think in terms of a missional ecclesiology, and to analyze different models of evangelism and church planting. As part of the course students heard first-hand accounts from Rev. Ken Kudo, whose church planting experience in São Paulo, Brazil, has led him to plant churches in other countries as well, such as Uruguay, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, and the Philippines; took a two-day skills course in preaching the bad/good news with Rev. Scott Vander Ploeg, pastor of the Sunlight Community of Port St. Lucie, Florida; and were introduced to the skill of using demographics by Rev. Charles D. Uken, an eighteen-year veteran missionary with Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) in Brazil. (The students practiced this skill in the city of Wyoming, Michigan, one of the four Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZ) selected by CRC and RCA Home Missions for new church plants.) Rev. Kevin Adams, a church planter with Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) and pastor of Granite CRC in Lincoln, California, led the May term course, in which he taught students advanced church planting skills and used the internet to bring a variety of church planting experiences into the classroom.

Inspired by the passion fueled by these courses, during the beginning of the fall

semester IGCPR helped students to reorganize the seminary's Church Planting Club. Their first meeting, hosted by President Medenblik at the Medenbliks' on-campus residence, was attended by forty students and their spouses. President Medenblik and Rev. Ben Bowater, a church planter from Classis Kalamazoo, shared their experiences in church planting. At a second meeting the group heard from Rev. Tim Vink, Coordinator for Church Multiplication at the RCA.

The IGCPR has been busy in many other ways as well—most notably, attending and hosting various events related to church planting.

On May 12, 2011, Arie C. Leder and I attended the official installation of Dr. Stephen Paas as the Professor of the newly founded "J.H. Bavinck Chair of Church Planting and Renewal in a Secular Society" at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. While there, I met with Dr. Paas and Dr. Paul Visser about mutual cooperation between the IGCPR and the Center for Evangelical and Reformed Theology at the Vrije Universiteit in the area of church planting, and also made contacts to set up internship sites in Amsterdam and the Hague.

For the occasion of Rev. Julius T. Medenblik's installation as the seventh president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the IGCPR hosted a meeting with its various contacts from around the globe. Guests of the meeting represented a variety of educational institutions, churches, and other organizations that are deeply involved in and passionate about the work of church planting. We were able to share

by Carl Bosma,
Associate Professor
of Old Testament,
Director of the
Institute for Global
Church Planting and
Renewal



with the group—and with other faculty and students—the story and vision of the IGCPR; and the group shared their stories in church planting and explored ways of mutual cooperation.

In November, a number of faculty and students attended the Newbigin Conference in San Francisco, with featured speaker N.T. Wright; and in January, in conjunction with the Worship Symposium at Calvin College, IGCPR hosted a four-day intensive course at CTS on Revitalizing Churches in Decline.

In addition, IGCPR has been exploring possible connections with churches all around Michigan for creating opportunities for church planting internships. We have met with Classis Kalamazoo, to discuss avenues of mutual cooperation between the institute and classis in areas of church planting, distance education, and sites for student internships. And faculty and students have traveled to Detroit to explore the possibility of making Detroit a KEZ and creating a "laboratory site" for teaching students the art of church planting and renewal.

For those of us involved in the work of IGCPR, this first year has been an exciting time. It has been thrilling to see so many students and faculty become invested in and passionate about the exhilarating, exhausting work of church planting. It has been gratifying and humbling to see how the Spirit has led us to so many relationships and possibilities for further educating our students in this work. We at CTS are continually awed by how God uses this place and these students to spread his kingdom around the world.

Visiting, Learning and Serving in Angola Prison

During the seminary's Canadian Thanksgiving reading break, two professors and eleven students spent the balance of the week at Angola State Penitentiary near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Angola Prison—once known as the bloodiest prison in America—has seen remarkable change as the gospel of Jesus Christ has rolled through the prison. Sixteen years ago in the face of government cutbacks, the prison allowed New Orleans Baptist Seminary to conduct a Bible class for inmates. God allowed that first little class to develop into a full seminary program complete with Greek and Hebrew. Since its inception, the seminary had trained numerous pastors to serve the 5,300 inmates at Angola, and the prison's inmate churches

are now sending out missionaries to other state prisons.

Professors Nydam and Rottman had opportunity to teach in the prison's seminary, as students sat in on classes and participated in group sessions. Spending class time with former murderers, rapists, and armed robbers gave us vivid snapshots of lives changed completely by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Each evening we joined inmates for worship in one of the five prison chapels, one of which seats eight hundred people. Angola has thirty-two worshipping congregations, and about four hundred worship services each month led by inmate pastors trained at the seminary. Calvin Seminary students preached and shared testimonies in

by *John Rottman*,
Professor of Preaching



some of these evening services as we worshipped God together.

We also toured the prison museum, and enjoyed some wonderful Cajun cooking. Our visit also included a look at Angola's execution chamber and an opportunity to visit with prisoners on death row.

While most people would not think that spending time at a maximum security prison in

Louisiana would be great way to spend a week's vacation, all of us who visited there marveled at what God is doing in what was once one of the most hopelessly violent prisons in the world. Seeing the Spirit at work in the world once again opened our eyes to the power of God.

Prison church at Angola State Penitentiary





Preaching God's Word in Classis Red Mesa

“I saw 1 Corinthians in a totally new way!” That was the excited reaction of one elder from a Navajo church in Classis Red Mesa to a two-day preaching seminar held in Rehoboth, New Mexico, on October 14-15, 2011. The seminar, entitled “Preaching 1 Corinthians: From Text to Sermon,” was sponsored by the seminary’s Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) and was led by Dr. Jeffrey Weima, Professor of New Testament at CTS. Almost thirty pastors and preaching elders attended the gathering, which focused on helping preachers move in a faithful way from the “then and there” of the biblical text to the “here and now” of the church today.

Classis Red Mesa has a severe shortage of trained ministers to preach the word among the Navajo congregations. Thus, many of the elders in these churches have had to step into the pulpit. Since these preaching elders have not had the luxury of attending seminary and receiving the kind of extensive training that pastors enjoy, there is a strong need for such lay preachers to participate in ongoing education. The preaching seminar on 1 Corinthians focused on the exegetical steps involved in not only understanding what God was saying through Paul to the believers gathered in ancient Corinth but also how to apply that divine message in practical ways to the church today.

Many of the passages studied in the seminar are of particular relevance for the contemporary church—topics like reframing the identity of the church (1:4-9), divisions over preachers

(1:10-4:21), the need to practice church discipline (5:1-13), lawsuits among believers (6:1-11), the danger of idolatry (8:1-11:1), the correct way to celebrate the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34), and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (12:1-14:40). Participants in the seminar received extensive study notes on the material covered and returned to their respective churches well-prepared to preach a sermon series on this New Testament letter. One Red Mesa pastor and his elder found that Paul’s warning about the danger of idolatry had a special relevance to situations they face in applying the gospel in their Native setting. They left the seminar grateful for their deeper understanding of the apostle’s message. Another pastor was excited about Paul’s treatment of the Lord’s Supper: “Like the church at Corinth, my congregation is struggling with the correct way to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Now I am eager to preach on this passage. It is so relevant to our own situation.”

by Dr. Jeff Weima,
Professor of New
Testament



This was the second preaching seminar that Weima has led in Classis Red Mesa. In 2009 he led a similar gathering, entitled “Sex, Second Coming and Sanctification: Preaching 1 Thessalonians.” Weima also frequently offers two other preaching seminars to CRC pastors in classes all over the United States and Canada: “From Patmos to Paradise: Preaching the Seven Sermons to the Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3” and “Preaching the Neglected Letters of the New Testament.”

Rev. Rob Byker, pastor at Rehoboth CRC and host of the seminar for Classis Red Mesa, wrote afterwards: “We thank Calvin Theological Seminary and the Center for Excellence in Preaching for providing the funding which made this seminar such a success. Seminars like this help the members of our classis appreciate the valuable gifts which Calvin Seminary offers the church at large. We hope that the seminary and CEP can continue such a worthwhile ministry to the churches.”



Dr. Jeff Weima with pastors and lay preachers from Classis Red Mesa at the 2009 seminar.

International Conversation on the Gospel in Latin America

On October 6, 2011, 92 professors and researchers (mainly historians) from universities all around the Americas and Europe gathered for the International Colloquium on History, Protestantism, and Identity in the Americas. The event was organized by four major Mexican universities, the Latin American Theological Fellowship, and the Conference on Faith and History, and was also sponsored by the faculty of History and Philosophy of Medicine of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity. The event was held, ironically, in the former Palace for the Inquisition, in downtown Mexico City.

The colloquium began with a keynote lecture by Dra. Alicia Mayer, Director of the *Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas* (UNAM), on “The Discourse and Images of Luther in Mexico.” Panels on a wide variety of topics followed during the three-day event: “Inquisition in the Americas”; “Relations and Tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism: Histories of Protestantism in Latin America”; “Missions: Achievements and Limitations”; “Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism”; “Protestant History in the U.S.”; and “Protestantism and Political Participation in Latin America.” It was my great honor to give the closing keynote lecture on “The Political Participation of

Evangelical Leaders in America Latina: A Comparative Study of Chile, Peru, Brazil, and Mexico.”

The high quality of the lectures and panels and the level of expertise on the different topics was stimulating and challenging. There was a great intergenerational exchange and learning. There was also very good attendance from the general public. On a personal level, it was an extraordinary opportunity to connect with scholars with whom I share common research interests.

This colloquium was also a great chance to promote Calvin Seminary in a context where many attendants were not religious people. I was able to talk with a good number of people about the opportunities to do graduate studies at CTS. Some specific

by Mariano Avila,
Professor of New
Testament, Director of
ThM Program



opportunities emerged with the *Comunidad Teológica de México*, a consortium of different seminaries (Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, Baptist, and Pentecostal). I had a long interview with the president and academic dean; they are interested in developing a program with CTS and the Worship Institute at Calvin College to train their professors in worship and liturgy by means of our Th.M. program in worship.

My experiences at the colloquium highlight how important and wonderful it is for CTS faculty to attend events such as this—not only for us personally and professionally, but also for the seminary as a whole. Connecting with other believers around the world strengthens us, and strengthens God’s church.

Listening and speaking about the global church in Mexico





Admissions Department Update

“**T**he work of admissions is everyone’s responsibility.” These are words I have heard President Jul Medenblik say on more than one occasion to the Calvin Seminary community, and as the Director of Admissions I am grateful not only for the support of the President but also for the value this sort of statement expresses. The work of enrollment doesn’t only fall on the shoulders of those with “admissions” in their job title, but rather is shared among all those invested in this seminary. With this in mind, consider these next few paragraphs—a glimpse into the process of CTS Admissions—an invitation to join us in our admissions work.

First Point of Contact

Typically, the admissions office is one of the first contacts a prospective student will make when considering Calvin Theological Seminary. The staff in our office not only field questions regarding application materials and enrollment protocol, but also help serve as a connection to the greater seminary community, walking with prospective students as they consider whether CTS is where God is calling them. The mission of the admissions office at Calvin Seminary is to work with prospective students as they discern God’s calling on their life, to explore with them the benefits of a CTS education, and then to assist in their transition from prospect to student.

Sara Hogan, the seminary’s Admissions Project Coordinator, and I connect with students as they navigate the various stages of this process. The admissions staff does everything from answering questions via phone and email, to updating the seminary Facebook or Twitter accounts (www.facebook.com/calvinseminary and www.twitter.com/calvinseminary), to hosting visiting prospective students, to planning new student orientation.

A Community Effort

However, the work of our office would not be possible without our many student workers whose knowledge of the seminary serves as a valuable resource to our interested prospects. In fact, the work of the admissions office is done by the entire CTS community, and the support from faculty, staff, students, and other CTS supporters is valuable and beneficial.

Due to the nature of our mission and the ways we serve our prospective students, you will often find various people from the CTS community in the admissions office. Our office often feels like a “hub” of activity, not just due to our central location, but because the work of introducing potential students to CTS is fluid and dynamic. Prospective students have many questions, and we look to utilize the resources of our community to help inform them and connect them with the CTS family. They expect a level of institutional knowledge from our office, and we can best provide that by arranging for prospective students to meet those who are engaged in the life of this place.

Discern, Discover, Decide

One of the blessings of working in admissions is that we are able to clearly see the fruits of our labor. Numbers alone don’t describe the full extent of our work. It is rewarding to walk with someone through the inquiry and discernment process, through the work of applying, through their decision to enroll as a student. It is exciting and humbling to work with future church leaders. The incoming students at Calvin Seminary are a wonderful blend of different ages and backgrounds, and it is a blessing to see the way God is calling them all to work in his church.

by Matthew Cooke,
Director of Admissions



Sarah Hogan,
Admissions Counselor



This year we had about one hundred incoming students representing a variety of programs—similar to years past. We were very pleased to see an increase in international students in our most recent class, as well as an uptick in the number of Master of

Theology (Th.M.) students. As we collect application materials and work with students interested in starting at CTS in 2012 and beyond, we are reminded of God’s blessings at many seminaries such as ours.

Join the Admissions Team

Our hope is that all of you who are connected to this place will be admissions representatives, telling those in your community what Calvin Seminary has to offer. If you are an alumnus or can speak to the experience of our students, tell your stories! Encourage those interested in ministry to consider CTS. Suggest visiting our campus. (We have two scheduled “Preview Days” this spring—February 10 and April 13—and are happy to host visits any other time as well.) Next time you are on campus, stop in to see what we are up to, and to share your experience of CTS with us and with future students.

We have exciting things happening at Calvin Seminary, headlined by the inauguration of our new President and the creation of our new Distance Learning program. We have a long history and deep theological roots that provide a rich and unique foundation. We have wonderful people connected to CTS who care deeply about this place and about the church as a whole. It is our job in the admissions office to tell these stories, our story, as we serve the future leaders of our church at an important step in their journey.

A CTS Classroom In Your Own Context

For the past 135 years, getting a Calvin Seminary education meant moving to Grand Rapids, Michigan. That is about to change. Listening to voices from across the church and seeking to engage a culture steeped in technology, Calvin Seminary is developing a distance learning option for its M.Div. degree. The new program, scheduled to begin in Fall 2012 pending accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools, will offer a five-year curriculum with the same emphases as the on-campus program: Reformed theology, personal formation for ministry, and preparation for lifelong mission and ministry.

The key difference of the distance learning program will be the use of a hybrid format, which combines the best of online pedagogical tools with intensive face-to-face sessions that build community. One advantage of this format is the possibility for students to stay rooted in their local

community while receiving a Calvin Seminary education. A youth pastor in New York City will be able to continue ministering in his neighborhood and learn alongside a farmer in California, a schoolteacher in Iowa, and a mother in Alberta. Twice a year they will come together with students from all over North America for a week of learning and bonding in Grand Rapids. Along the way, they will enrich each other and deepen the seminary's connection to the kaleidoscopic diversity of ministry contexts.

As word about distance learning has trickled out, the seminary has been receiving a steady stream of inquiries from all over the U.S. and Canada. And work is well under way for the Fall 2012 launch. A generous anonymous gift of \$1.5 million, the addition of three distance learning staff members to the CTS community, and a

by Peter Choi,
Director of Distance
Learning



great deal of thoughtful engagement with technological innovation have come together in the past year to heighten seminary preparedness for this exciting new venture. Thanks to visionary leadership by the administration and enthusiastic support by the faculty, Calvin Seminary is strengthening its presence in the ever-changing world of social media and online technology.

Because smart technology does not always translate into wise stewardship, Reformed theological participation and leadership in these emerging trends will provide critical help to the work of ministry in a digital age. For more information, please like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and/or subscribe to our RSS feed. If you prefer a more "traditional" route, our email address is distance@calvinseminary.edu.



A CTS classroom
in your own context

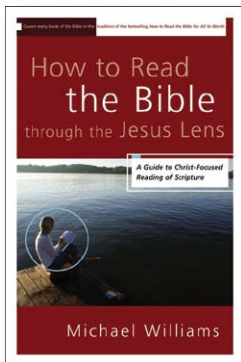
Faculty Book Updates



Michael Williams is currently Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary and is a member of the NIV Committee on Bible Translation. His book, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture*, was recently published by Zondervan and is now available for purchase. An evening event led

by Zondervan was held in early March at the Seminary Chapel whereby interested readers had an opportunity to ask questions directly of Michael either in person or via a live webcast.

Michael first felt the call to intense study of the Bible while he served in the United States Navy. It was during his time on a submarine that he experienced the grace of God in a deep and intense way. This produced a desire to study the Bible in great depth in order to know God better.



Michael's book is intended to assist readers young and old to piece together bible teachings by leading them through a tour of each book of the Bible, showing how all the pieces connect in Christ to form a coherent picture. Most readers will find the book to be an excellent tool for Bible teachers, ministry leaders, bible study groups, students and the like to grow their comprehension of biblical history.

Rev. Richard Sytsma— Last Lecture Scheduled



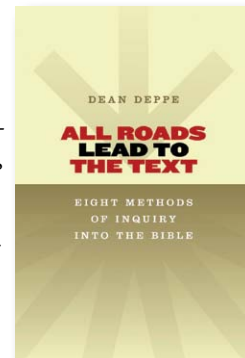
Soon to be retiring Dean of Students/International Student Advisor, Rev. Richard Sytsma, will be presenting a "Last Lecture" as he highlights what he has learned while at CTS. This open to the community lecture is scheduled for Tuesday, May 1 at 4:00 PM in the DeVos Auditorium at CTS. We do give thanks that Rev. Richard Sytsma will continue to serve International Students by leading the International Student Orientation at CTS.

Dean B. Deppe is currently Professor of New Testament at Calvin Seminary. His book, *All Roads Lead to The Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry Into the Bible*, was recently published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and is now available for purchase.



Dean Deppe's life is marked by service in a variety of Christian Reformed churches—inner city, suburban and rural charges. Not only that, but Dean has taught in a variety of settings, including Asian Theological Seminary in the Philippines, Classis Red Mesa, in New Mexico, and now Calvin Theological Seminary.

Dean's new book is intended to be used as a user-friendly guide to biblical exegesis and interpretation. Dean focuses on eight different methods that biblical scholars use, from analyzing literary, grammatical, and structural elements to investigating historical and cultural backgrounds to exploring the history of interpretation. He explains each approach using several concrete examples from both Old and New Testament texts, and every chapter concludes with practical, text-based questions for study and discussion.



Staff Updates

In 2011, CTS saw many new faces within its community as well as some changes.

From the newly inaugurated 7th President, Jul Medenblik, to new additions within our Development department, institutional and

support staff, the people depicted on this page have all been “Called to Serve” at Calvin Theological Seminary.



Nathan Bierma,
Educational Technologist



Karlene Werner & Barbara Blackmore. In late Summer, 2011, Karlene Werner moved to Assistant to Faculty and Barbara Blackmore to Assistant to the Dean of Students/International Student Advisor.



Christy Boersma,
Annual Fund Coordinator



Peter Choi,
Director of Distance Learning



Carolyn J. DeNeut,
Executive Associate to the
President and CFO



Jim Farman, Maintenance



Alvern Gelder, Interim
Director of Mentored
Ministries



Michelle Jun, Distance
Learning Project Assistant



Jim Luyk,
Chief Financial Officer



Jul Medenblik,
President



Tom VerKeulen,
Systems Integration &
Development Specialist

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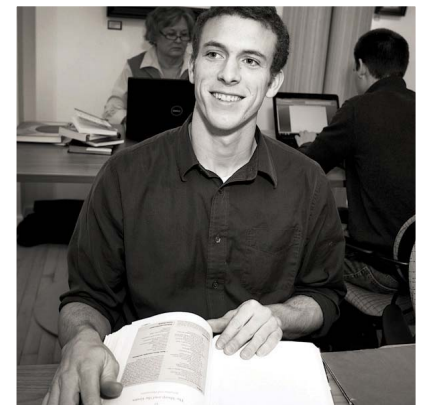
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WHERE WE ARE.”



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NEXT STEP.”