

The Commons

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DNV

Notes from

President Dennis N. Voskuil

The ministry of Western Seminary is dependent upon thousands of partnerships which we have forged throughout the church. Each individual or congregation who prays for us, supports us financially, and sends students to us is a vital partner in our ministry, for which we are grateful.

Others partner with us directly in the training process. Each of our students is located in a teaching church where he or she is engaged in ministry. Guided by mentors, the student is encouraged to test gifts of ministry in a supportive setting. Invariably our graduates rate their experiences in the teaching church as pivotal for their preparation for ministry.

Other close partners in our ministry are those congregations who nurture our students in summer internships. This fall as a number of our seniors returned from summer internships across the church, I was reminded that servants of Christ are formed as they serve the church of Christ. Student after student expressed deep appreciation and affection for the congregations that encouraged them in their ministry. The rich academic learning that takes place in our classrooms finds expression and meaning when it is translated through the experience of day-to-day ministry.

As our student enrollment has increased in recent years, we have been pleased to enlist a growing number of partners. To meet the needs of the church during the early decades of the twenty-first century we will need to further expand our base of partnerships.

Thank you for standing beside us in our ministry.

In Christ's service,

Dennis

Growing Pains

Forty-five new Master of Divinity students entered Western Seminary this fall. "If we continue to admit at that rate," says Academic Dean Jim Brownson, "our M.Div. enrollment will increase to 150 or more full-time and part-time students in three years. That's 40% larger than it is today."

Western is growing, and students agree that it's a good problem to have. "It's a sign

Other classes have break out sessions, such as two hours with the entire class and the third hour broken up into small groups.

Brownson opts for the third hour of his New Testament class to meet four separate times each week, insuring that he can devote all of his attention to one group at a time. "In terms of time, it turns out that I'm teaching the class twice," he explains, "but meeting



that things are changing and that there's good leadership here," says middler Andy Rozendaal.

Kerri Haveman, also in her second year, notes that class sizes are getting bigger, but the community as a whole stays together, still building relationships.

Professors get creative about making large classes feel smaller. Dr. Tom Boogaart, for instance, invites students over to his house every other week for an informal session to answer questions about class, to provoke students to new ways of thinking, or just to talk.

"It helps that not all classes are large," says BJ VanKalsbeek, "and there are other small enough circles to get to know one another, like peer groups and coffee hour."

Dean Brownson is concerned with class participation. "This is graduate level coursework - people must have the chance to engage. The more people there are in a class, the more each person has to be verbally aggressive to talk."

The dean has split some classes in half, with professors teaching multiple sections. This is particularly necessary for language courses, which simply don't work well in large groups.

with four groups of 13-14 students is better than dividing a class of 55 in two."

"Professors realize people won't speak up in large groups," Rozendaal comments.

"We've filled up the equivalent of 1^{1/2} full time faculty positions just in accommodating the larger class sessions," Brownson continues, "in a year in which we're already two members below our regular full-strength team." In addition to filling two open positions - one in Ethics &

Theology and the other in Pastoral Care - the faculty is planning on adding another position as soon as it can be configured.

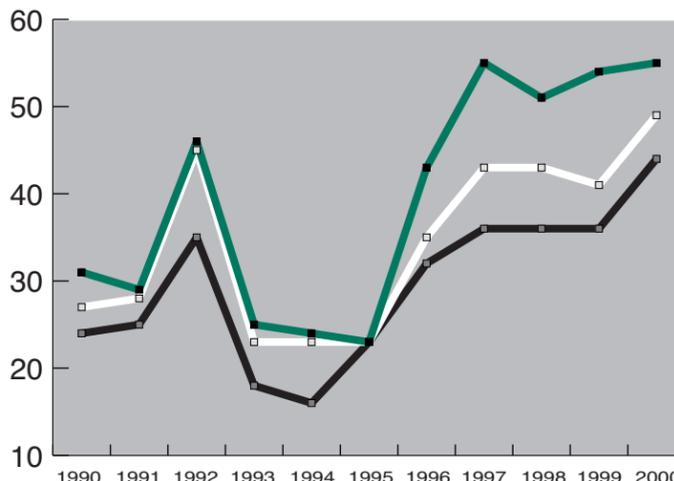
Although professors have a heavier load than ever, students still find them very accessible. "Everyone has their doors open," says Haveman. "Professors are very approachable about any question I have."

Another challenge to the seminary is that there is only one classroom that can accommodate more than 30 students. This leaves Semelink Hall as the only other large room. Between lectures, luncheons, special events, and meetings, Semelink is bustling with activity and frequently means rushing one group out to set up and make room for the next.

"We're pretty confident that some sort of building expansion is in our future," says the dean, "but we don't know exactly what that will look like." The Board of Trustees is considering this expansion

within the larger context of an emerging strategic plan.

Growth has its challenges, but Western's students, staff and faculty agree that this is an exciting, vital time for the seminary.



Worship and Ministry

by Cal Rynbrandt

With 35 years in the ministry and 61 years in the church, I have made some conclusions about both worship and ministry. Worship style is personal and subjective, with no style being more worshipful or spiritual, and ministry is a matter of preaching and pastoral work, not a religious version of a bottom-line business.

Recently a pastor said that his church was moving to a “more contemporary and worshipful” type of service. For him that may be true, but it is not necessarily so for others. Both contemporary and traditional services are pleasing to God and can be meaningful to the participants. It is just a matter of personal taste and experience.

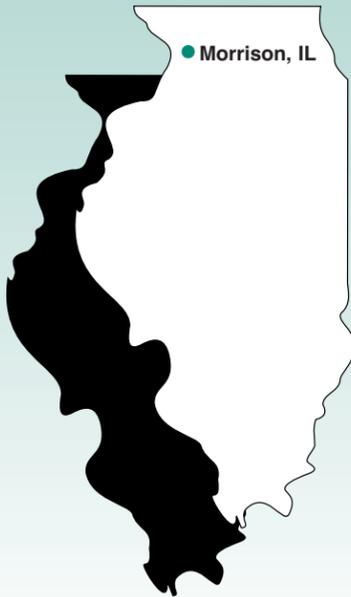
In Scripture God gives three reasons for worship: He commands it, He deserves it, and we need it. Style is not an issue.

What then determines our style? We settle on the type of worship that is meaningful to our congregation and which will draw and keep visitors coming from our surrounding community.

Churches thrive and grow with traditional services; they thrive and grow with contemporary. Pipe organs and hymns inspire some people to worship. Drums and electronic guitars inspire others. Some congregations choose a blended approach. Large churches have more financial resources and a wider talent pool for leadership in worship. Small churches have the advantage of developing the potential talent of all members, regardless of ability.

As congregations determine what is best for their membership, the decision process can be difficult and painful. Sometimes people judge others’ spirituality by their different tastes in music. When the decision making is done in a way that doesn’t cause warfare, God is pleased. Only the devil is happy with fighting in the church.

And what about ministry? The purpose of the church is



to call people to commitment, growth and service. How are we to do that? Vince Lombardi said, “Football is simple: It’s blocking and tackling. And if you block and tackle better than the other team, you win.” Ministry is about preaching and pastoral work. If we feed the sheep and care for them, they give us wool. And because they are satisfied, they tell others. This is still a good method for church growth.

Unfortunately, some pastors may feel pressured to be CEOs, managers, and programmers – running the church like a bottom-line business. They can become so spread around that they become “jacks of all trades and masters of none.”

What is the main concern of pastors? It is faithfulness in preaching and pastoral care, not as is said, “hustling bobs and bucks.” Programs for meeting needs are important, but somehow the pastor must still have the time to focus on feeding the sheep and caring for them.

The late Dr. John Piet, Professor of Mission at Western Seminary, told us that the Reformed Church in America had missionaries in the Arabian Gulf for forty years before there was one convert. Look what’s happening now in Kuwait. There is a thriving, self-supporting church. Today, in our church growth atmosphere, with its yearly quotas, we would have pulled the plug on the Arabian Gulf missionaries after three years.

Regardless of our perspective, we know that God will continue to bless us as we worship and work for Him.



A Quarter Century of Service

Dr. Stanley A. Rock, the Florence M. Charavay Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, has been given long-term disability leave from the seminary. After fifteen years of struggling with Parkinson’s Disease and cardiac complications, doctors advised Stan to gradually withdraw from his work as a professor and counselor.

For 24 years, Dr. Rock has been guiding and touching lives at Western Seminary. Prior to being called to Western in 1976, he had never expected to enter a seminary career. He recalls that when he started, he was amazed at the great variety of responsibilities placed upon professors. The years since then have been filled with the freedom to grow and change in many directions. His greatest satisfaction came from helping students to teach one another in the peer process; in essence, training facilitators and modeling a collegial approach to ministry.

Although it has been difficult to let go of the daily rewards of teaching and counseling students, Stan looks back upon his years at Western Seminary with a grateful heart. He hopes to find ways to continue to be involved in the seminary community, not as a professor, but as a mentor, colleague, and friend.

Regarding the future, Dr. Rock smiles. “I hope not only to experience joys such as leisure and travel, but also to discover special ways to face a progressively disabling disease, knowing that God suffers with us.”



Farewell

Marilyn Essink has seen a lot of changes in the 14½ years since she started working at Western Seminary. She has witnessed a complete turnover of the staff, and only three members of the present faculty have been here longer than she has: Sonja Stewart, Chris Kaiser, and Paul Smith. Marilyn was hired as secretary to all of the professors in the biblical and theological fields at a time

when the staff had just started to use computers and none of the faculty used them. The biggest change she has seen is that now most of the professors do their own work on computers. She has served under two presidents: Marvin Hoff and Dennis Voskuil. She has been an assistant to Dennis ever since his arrival in 1994.

Marilyn is looking forward to camping, traveling, volunteer work, and spending more time with grandchildren, but she says she will miss being part of the seminary community. “This community has been a wonderful support in times of rejoicing as well as times of sorrow. Western has been a place where I have learned a great deal, experienced meaningful worship, and grown in my faith.”

“I will also miss graduation,” she says. “Graduation has always been a very moving experience, because I felt that I had a small part in preparing the graduates for ministry.”



Continuing Education for Christian Training and Service

Schedule of Events

To register, call LuAnne Van Slooten at 616-392-8555

- Feb 13** **Terry Lapinsky PREPARE/ENRICH seminar**
Pre-marital and marriage counseling training
9:00-4:00 p.m., Semelink Hall, \$125 including lunch
- March 6-7** **William Placher - M.E. Osterhaven Lectures**
March 6, 11:15 a.m. “Incarnation”
March 6, 1:30 p.m. “Cross”
March 7, 11:15 a.m. “Resurrection”
Mulder Chapel, no fee, open to public
- March 16-17** **Karl Barth Preaching and Prayer Conference**
George Hunsinger, Princeton Seminary
Fleming Rutledge, The Episcopal Church
I. John Hesselink, Leanne VanDyk, WTS
Haworth Conference Center, Holland, MI
For costs and to register, call Kerri Haveman at 616-395-3682 or email: redchum@hotmail.com
- March 20** **John L. Bell Lecture**
“Why Should God’s People Sing?”
11:15 a.m., Mulder Chapel, no fee, open to public
- June 15-30** **Rome: City of Peter and Paul**
Overseas CONnECTS trip with WTS Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology, Don Bruggink (donb@westernsem.org or 616-392-8555)
Deposit of \$500 reserves cost of \$3,090 from Chicago
- June 19-22 & 25-27** **Sonja Stewart workshops**
June 19-22 - “Children and Worship”
June 25-27 - “Following Jesus”
For costs and to register, call Sally Vis at 616-392-8555

Dr. Calvin J. Rynbrandt is Senior Pastor of Ebenezer Reformed Church in Morrison, Illinois.



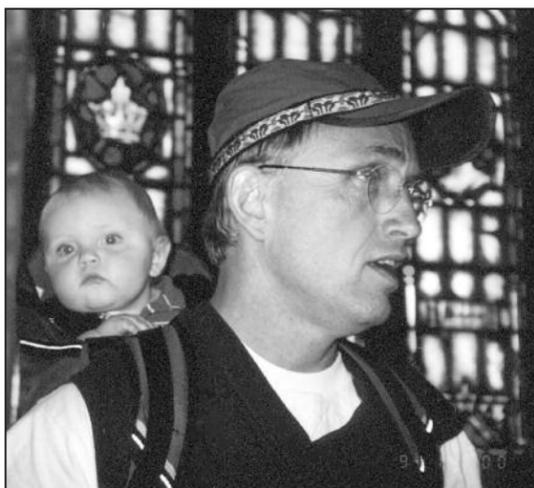
with Tim Brown

The preaching of one verse changed Tim Brown's life. Read on, as Commons editor Carla Weese talks to Tim about his conversion and life's work...

CW: When did you know you wanted to be a pastor?

TB: Spring of 1970. It was actually the day I was converted. The very day, hour, moment. I was not a believer when I came to Hope College. I went to Daytona Beach with some fraternity brothers, where I did all the bad things that parents hoped their sons wouldn't do. Three days into the trip I found myself strung out and very discouraged, and I happened along a band shell on the beach. It looked like a rock group but was actually a Campus Crusade for Christ ministry team heating up for a day of evangelism. They had a band, so I was listening, when all of a sudden a guy got up and started preaching from this text: II Cor 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!" While he was saying those things, I felt awakened, enlivened. It was the preaching of the Word that was calling forth life, and I was, in fact, born again. A little later someone asked me if I wanted to receive Christ, so I knelt in the sand, they walked me through the four spiritual laws, and I became a Christian.

I knew then that whatever that person was doing that day is what I needed to do. I was so amazed that something like this could happen – it was the farthest possible thing from my mind when I woke up that morning, and at the end of the day it was all I could think about. What happened there dramatically changed the way I saw everything. I was converted! And preaching can do that.



Grandson Thad along for the ride

CW: Where was your first experience preaching?

TB: In a little church in Battle Creek the very next year. It was on Luke 2:52: "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." I had four points. I remember thinking, "I don't know what I'm saying!" but I was eager to preach.

CW: Has preaching changed since then? Do you teach it differently than you were taught?

TB: Definitely. First, in the 25 years since I graduated, we've become much more aware of the post-Christian, post-modern dimensions of our culture. That shapes the way we form the gospel we preach. In my training days, we still lived with this notion of America as a Christian culture.

Second, there has been a dramatic shift from a literate culture to a post literate cul-

ture. People are again conceiving of things orally. Even the internet, which appears to be literacy, is actually oral in its conception: you look at things, you hear sounds. All computers today play music back to you, or they talk to you. That's just evidence of our oral culture. It makes enormous demands on a preacher.

I spend a good bit of time talking to students not merely about what to say in the pulpit, but how to say it. Illustrations and narrative are part of it, but rhythm, word choice, and repetition are all important for an oral culture. You've probably heard students laugh in chapel when I preach and say, "I want you to come with me" – that's the standard laughable line. But it's an indication of how deeply I've bought into this notion of orality. "But now having said this about the Bible, I want you to come with me. I want to show you how this works. Look at it." I'll tell a story about someone or something because I want you to see this thing enlivened and enlashed.

CW: What compelled you to come to Western Seminary?

TB: Two things. First, the most dramatic... I returned to my office on a December afternoon, and my secretary said that Dennis Voskuil was on the line. I picked up the phone and said, "Hello, Dennis." "Hi, Tim," he said, and then: "I need you to feel a call of God and come to Western Seminary to teach preaching."

Well, I was the senior pastor at Christ Memorial, and Nancy

and I were committed to be there until we retired. A church gets to a certain size, and you just don't leave. But it was as though the voice of God and the voice of Dennis were one. It was a pretty profound moment. Honestly, I don't think I can overstate it, because from that moment I never prayed once, "Lord, is it your will that I should do this?" It was as if I could imagine the Lord saying to me, "What about 'I need you to come to Western Seminary' don't you understand? I need you to go and do this!"

Secondly, God worked into my heart a significant birthing instinct. When you're a preacher and committed to preaching the Gospel, at some point you develop this instinct to want to reproduce: to encourage and develop other



Rev. Dr. Timothy Brown, Henry Bast Professor of Preaching

people to do the very thing that you're doing.

CW: What do you miss about being a pastor?

TB: First line pastoral care to the terminally ill, being called into the life of a person who is dying. I found enormous satisfaction and calling to that – maybe selfishly, just because it's such holy ground. I also miss ministry to the unsaved. When you are a professor in a seminary, you are farther behind the lines than you've ever been. When you're a pastor, you are directly equipping the people who are in the world, and from time to time you get called into it. I had more contact with unbelievers than I do today, and I miss that a lot. I don't think anything so confirms the gospel in your own soul than when you try to articulate it to someone who doesn't accept it.

CW: What do you love about your job at Western?

TB: Everything I do related to empowering young people to preach the gospel. I love being able to think more deeply and complexly about the task of preaching in a post-Christian culture. When you're a pastor you just have to do it. When you're a professor of preaching you have to think about it. And I work with some of the best human beings on the planet. I have a whole faculty of information at my fingertips.

I also establish and nurture relationships with prospective students. I'm on 8-10 college campuses a year preaching in chapels, and students come up afterward

(continued on page 4)

Lifenotes

b. Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1951
 B.A. Hope College, 1973; M.Div. Western Theological Seminary, 1976; D.Min. WTS, 1992
 Married Nancy Johnson in 1971; three children: Sarah, 26 (married to Matt Lefebvre with son Thaddeus, 1), Jonathan, 24, and Rebekah, 22
 1976-1981, Pastor, Fellowship Reformed, Hudsonville, MI
 1981-1983, Co-pastor, First Reformed, South Holland, IL
 1983-1995, Pastor, Christ Memorial, Holland, MI
 Spiritual Mentor: Rev. Bill Brownson
 Favorite Book: *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Faculty Interview...

(continued from page 3)

to talk to me. I have coffee or Coke with them or give them my email address...and there it goes.

There's a story behind the story. In the mid to late 80s Christ Memorial was full of college students. Of that group, there were two students that really stood out: a young woman named Meredith DeWitt and a young man named Tim VanderVeen. Both of them developed leukemia and after an awful, three year battle, died. God gave me a very deep pastoral relationship with each of them. It was as if I was the chaplain of their souls asked to lead them to heaven. That awakened within me a love for ministry with college and graduate students. In a sense Tim and Meredith both taught me how to do what I'm doing now.

CW: And lastly, what do you want students to learn from taking your classes?

TB: I just want them to be ever more in love with God and eager to preach.

Faculty Notes

Sonja M. Stewart, Professor of Christian Education, published *Following Jesus: More about Young Children and Worship* (Geneva Press) in March of this year.

Leanne Van Dyk, Professor of Reformed Theology, was the keynote speaker for the Christian Life Academy weekend at the First Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, MI on October 28-29. She spoke on the unity and diversity of Christian understandings of salvation and the implications for Christian community and its service to the world.

Matthew Floding, Director of Formation for Ministry, spent the first week of November teaching at the Khartoum Center for Biblical Studies at the Khartoum Evangelical Church (Presbyterian) in The Sudan. One hundred twenty five pastors and Christian workers from throughout the country were trained.

This month, Wadsworth Publishing Company releases the second edition of "Readings in Christianity," an introductory textbook featuring primary-source readings in church history, by **Robert Van Voorst**, Professor of New Testament.

Stanley A. Rock, Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, has been given long-term disability leave from the seminary. **Stanley Hagemeyer**, a 1965 graduate of WTS, is the interim professor of pastoral care and counseling.

George Brown, Western's professor of Christian education as well as director of M.Div. and D. Min. programs, co-led the "Christian Formation Through Worship" workshop at Synod of Great Lakes Renewing Our Worship Conference held at Calvin College October 27-28. On November 4 he led "Cultivating Spiritual Gifts for Ministry" at the RCA Educators event, Partners in Learning: Diversity in Education for the 21st Century.

A Time to Celebrate

I recently had the privilege of attending a retirement dinner for my parents. I wish every Western Seminary student could have been in attendance that night, because it would have given them a glimpse of the joy that may be experienced through ministry. It was incredible to see over 500 people joined together to celebrate forty-one years of ministry in the Reformed Church.

As I sat there that evening, I was reminded of what a wonderful privilege it is to be called by God into full-time ministry, but also of what a wonderful blessing it can be as well. Western has been training leaders for the Church since 1866, and God willing, Western will continue to train them long after many of us are gone. But in the meantime, as laypeople, we have a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the many pastors who have impacted our lives thus far and to give thanks for those who are preparing to impact us in the future. And pastors, you have a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the many people who have been a blessing to you in your ministry.

God has richly blessed us; let's not forget to celebrate!

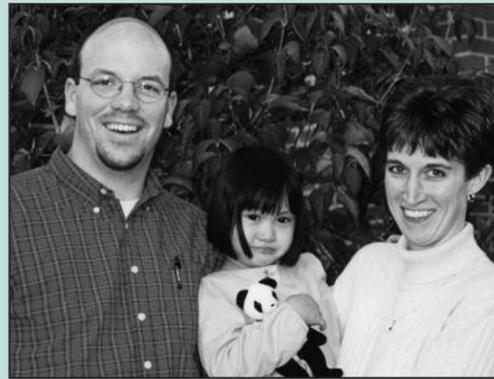
Thank you, Dad & Mom (James & Barbara Neevel), for modeling Christian ministry every day and for teaching me how to celebrate.

Ken Neevel

Director of Advancement and Communications

Hearing the Call

Meet some of Western's first year students...



M.Div. student **Troy Van-Beek** with his wife Pam and daughter Courtney. Pam works in Western's Beardslee Library.

God used a duck blind to catch my attention. On a cloudy, drizzly morning three years ago, I sat in a boat on a marsh, waiting for a good shot. Instead, in that hour before dawn, I was enveloped in silence. No ducks appeared, and gradually in the stillness a heavy sense of guilt began to fall on me. An image of me with fingers in my ears, refusing to listen, crept into my mind. I was standing before God that way. I realized I had been listening to everyone BUT Him. I listened to family, my wife, customers, and employees, but not God. I left the duck blind that day, resolved to change. I prayed and dove into the Word, especially the pastoral letters of I & II Timothy and Titus.

As I listened with newly receptive ears, I heard the call to ministry. Through an amazing series of events (as only God can orchestrate things), I was able to sell my landscaping business and return to Northwestern College full-time to finish my undergraduate degree. What had been drudgery ten years before was now a wonderful time full of "aha!" moments. I had a purpose for being there, and now as I enter my first year of seminary, I can see in so many ways how I've been blessed by the timing of God's call.



Vishal Varghese and John Paul (J.P.) Sundararajan, both M.Div. students

India, a country one third the size of the U.S., holds one billion people, and only two million of those are Christians – a mere 2/10 of one percent. Imagine, then, the surprise of John Paul (J.P.) Sundararajan and Vishal Varghese when they each arrived separately to Western Seminary (J.P. by way of Northwestern College and Vishal from New Brunswick Seminary). Not only are they both Christians from India; they're from the same church!

J.P. and Vishal attended Emmanuel Baptist Church in Cooke Town, Bangalore, and J.P. remembers Vishal in the senior high youth group while he was in the junior high group.

"The first day here I noticed her nametag on the table, because it was an Indian name," says J.P. "When she walked in, I thought, Vishal Varghese...wait, I know that name. I know her!"

J.P. and Vishal are well into their first semester at Western, and both intend to return to India for their ministries.

J.P.'s parents were the first in their Hindu families to become Christians, and for many years they were ostracized. They became missionaries, and J.P. grew up wanting to be one, too. He would like to incorporate a semi-secular field into his ministry, something technological which would help to spread the Gospel in India. Currently there are 1,658 languages, but only a little over 120 have the Bible.

Vishal says that India holds a big place in her heart. "The needs there are huge – social, economical, political, and spiritual." She is grateful for the "solid, right-on-track" Bible teaching she received at Emmanuel Baptist. Vishal's parents work in Oman. Her father is a pastor, and her mother retired from teaching Omani girls English ten months ago. Vishal came to seminary because her father inspired her to be a pastor, and her mother and grandmother were role models, willing to go where no women had gone before. Women's ordination is an issue back home, so she is certain to encounter dissonance.

"But there are so many people groups without the Bible or a single Christian," Vishal says. "I'll go where God makes a way."



Harry Koops

I'm on my third career. I avoided the call by becoming a truck driver. Then I got closer by becoming a counselor. Eventually I realized that good psychology is actually Bible-based, so I followed the call to seminary. I'm finally here!

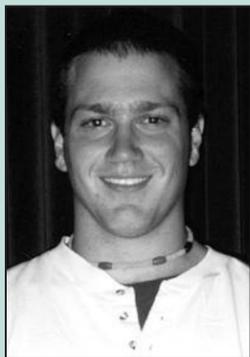


Dana Daniels

Throughout my husband Jim's first year at Western, he'd share with me the learning and growing that was taking place in his heart and mind. We talked about working together in ministry, but the M.Div. did not fit where I saw myself. I dropped the idea of attending seminary, but a desire had been planted in my heart.

One day I was looking through the Western catalog and happened across the pages describing the Masters of Religious Education program. As I read further, I found myself saying, "This is me!"

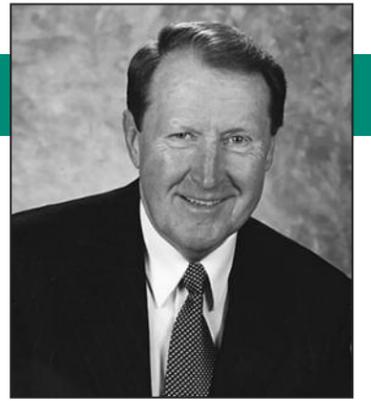
I am excited about working in the educational ministries of the church, whether with young children or young adults. Education has always been an adventure for me, and I am eager to serve the church in this capacity.



Justin Meyers

I was entering my senior year as a chemistry major at Grand Valley State University. God used a brick on me through the influence of a couple of friends. "Wake up, dummy, you're not a chemist — you belong in seminary!" I changed all my classes and applied to Western — it's the seminary that made sense and fit.

AlumProfile



Rev. Dr. Vernon L. Hoff
WTS 1962

"When I was in junior high," Vern recalls, "my pastor and other leaders of the church started suggesting that I go into the ministry. I avoided it at all costs." After graduating from high school, Vern quickly signed up to study law at the University of South Dakota. He didn't sleep much that year. "It was unsettling," he says. "The Lord was making it very clear I was in the wrong place doing the wrong thing."

At the end of the year his parents came to pick him up. "I can still see them sitting in the front seat, and I was in the back. I thought I'd better tell them, so I said, 'Oh, by the way, I'm not coming back here.' My mother said, 'Oh! Why not?' and I said, 'Well, I'm going to be a pastor.' Without even turning around she said, 'Oh, we know. We've been praying for that.' And they had never said a word. They had conspired against me in prayer." Vern laughs. "Parents, grandparents, a bunch of people praying me out of there."

Remembering what it was like to be at Western Seminary in the early 60's, Rev. Hoff says, "In those days 98% of the students were single, and it was highly competitive. Henry Bast's preaching classes were the highlight — there was such competition to be sure to get an A. It was a very positive, inspirational, and challenging time. We could hardly wait to get out and get going."

When Vern married Judy Kuiper in 1961, they literally pledged to the Lord, "Wherever you want us to go; whatever you want us to do, we'll do it." Five years later He sent them to Singapore, where there was an opening for an English-speaking pastor. Their world view has never been the same.

Coming from very Dutch, provincial backgrounds — Judy grew up in Grand Rapids, Vern in Iowa — it was the first time in their lives that they lived in a culture where Christians were the very small minority. "And because of that every Christian in Singapore desperately needed each other." Vern says. "It didn't matter whether you were Baptist or Methodist or Lutheran. Those distinctions just did not exist, and the bonding of the church people and all of the missionaries who were there was so strong — it was

very refreshing to live in that kind of relationship with people of other denominations. We had greater culture shock coming back to the U.S. where once again we became aware of the invisible walls."

Their years in Singapore also clarified the glorious, grace-filled distinctions of Christianity compared to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. "The other religions are so focused on the necessity of works — doing what is going to make your god be pleased and accept you." Vern explains. "The refreshing, wonderful truth of Chris-

tianity is that Christ has done that for us. We began to see what the free gift of salvation and grace really meant."

After Singapore, Vern pastored 24 years, leaving in 1994 to become the Executive Minister of the California classis, the first classis to support that as a full time position. For five years he helped to create new ministries and to develop and initiate a vision plan for the California classis. The process had a powerful influence on him, and when the opportunity arose to use that experience on a national level, he took it.

Rev. Hoff became Director of Ministry and Personnel Services (MAPS) in July of 1999, and soon he was confronted with the growing realization that the RCA is facing a shortage of pastors. "For instance, our ethnic council executives say there's no one in the pipeline being trained now to pastor their churches," Vern explains. "Just by process of retirement, in five years one fourth of our churches could be without senior pastors. Right now one out of eight don't have senior pastors."

Tim Brown of Western Seminary was thinking along the same lines. He and Vern joined forces in June of 2000 and gathered representatives from all the major areas of the RCA to discuss the issue. "We wanted to see if other people would get nervous about this also," Tim says.

Out of that launching pad and Vern's presentation at General Synod, the issue moved upward quickly. General Synod approved an impact study, and the task was given to the MAPS office to complete with recommendations by March 2001. Hundreds of people will be involved,

determining the need and where to go from here. "Evangelism and New Church Development plans to plant eighty new churches in five years. Plus, there are other churches with great potential but small member-

ships and financial constraints. Where are they going to get the pastors?" Vern asks. "Many churches are now going outside the denomination to find them. Other denominations are not only using the seminary-trained route — which is absolutely important; we can never give that up — but they are also using gifted elders in expanded roles to pastor churches. We need to do something. It's an exciting time and exciting problem."

With 1^{1/2} years under his belt and seven other areas of priority for the MAPS office, Vern looks forward to the challenges and variety ahead in his work.

Lifenotes

b. Sheldon, IA, 1937
Univ. of South Dakota '55-56, B.A. Hope College '59, B.D. Western Theological Seminary '62, D.Min. Fuller '79
Married Judy Kuiper, 1961; Children: Linda, 35; Lorna, 33; David, 29
Pastor, Spring Valley Reformed, Fulton, IL 1962-66
Pastor of Prinsep St. Presbyterian, Singapore, 1966-69
Pastor, First Reformed, Holland, MI 1970-77
Pastor, Bethany Reformed, Redlands, CA 1977-1994
Executive Minister of the Classis of California, 1994-99
Director of RCA Ministry & Personnel Services, NY, NY, July 1999

Alumline

Class of 2000

M.Div graduates

Adam Barr – Pastor, Fountain of Life, Lombard, IL
Randy Bremmer – Associate Pastor, Faith Reformed, Traverse City, MI
Jaeseung Cha – Master of Theology Program, Western Seminary
Dan Herrick – CPE, Albany Medical Center, Albany, NY
Doug Kiel – Assistant to Director of Church Vocations at Western Seminary; Associate Pastor at Hudsonville Reformed, Hudsonville, MI
Jean Lemmenes – Minister of Worship & Music, Fellowship Reformed, Holland, MI
Linda Looney – Director of Children's Ministries, Park Congregational, Grand Rapids, MI
Lydia Meyer – Pastor, St. Paul's UCC, Grand Haven, MI
Arthur Oberg – CPE, Lutheran Hospital of Indiana, Fort Wayne, IN
John O'Hara – Pastor, First Christian Church, Cadillac, MI
Rick Patterson – Pastor, Church Plant/Tent Ministry, Kalamazoo, MI
Rebecca Stegeman Riekse – Minister of Families and Worship, Faith Community Church, Edmonds, WA
Andy Robinson – Pastor of Youth & Families, Faith Reformed, Lynden, WA
Chad Schuitema – Pastor, First Reformed, Wynantskill, NY
Tim Ten Clay – Pastor, Dunningville Reformed, Allegan, MI
Dean Van Farowe – Pastor, Calvary Reformed, Cleveland, OH
Derek Vande Slunt – Pastor, Owasco Reformed, Owasco, NY
MRE Graduate
Lori Fair – para-church ministry, Lakewood, Colorado

Continuing in candidating process:

Peg Atkinson **Mary Frens**
Derek De Jager **Dewey Vanden Berg**
Happy Foster **David Wygmans**

News

R. Todd Wise '86 has been awarded a Fulbright grant to the University of Jordan in Amman, Jordan for the 2000-2001 academic year. The program's purpose is to build mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and the rest of the world. Dr. Wise endeavors to instill a greater awareness about the religious heritage and habits of Americans. He will teach graduate students in Jordan about American church history, as well as the interaction of world religions on the American scene. Dr. Wise is a clinical psychologist at Sioux Falls Psychological Services, located at the North American Baptist Seminary, in Sioux Falls, ND, where he also serves as an adjunct professor.

Siskus Manabung '84 Th.M. is the Academic Dean of Eastern Indonesia Theological Seminary, where he teaches Systematic Theology.

On to Glory...

Aaron J. Ungersma '29
b. Lafayette, IN, 1905
d. San Rafael, CA, 9/18/00
Hope College '26; WTS '29
Princeton Seminary, Master of Theology Marburg University, Germany, Ph.D.
Ordained in Presbyterian Church, 1929
Professor, University of Denver, 1935-38
Navy chaplain during WWII; Navy Reserve psychologist/lecturer after war.
Professor of Systematic Theology, San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1938-76

Russell J. Redeker '37
b. Litchville, ND 11/27/11
d. New Jersey, 7/28/00
Central College '34; WTS '37
Reformed churches served:
American, Primghar, IA (1937-42)
First, Spring Lake, MI (1942-52)
Third, Pella, IA (1952-56)
Assistant to the President, Central College, IA (1956-58)
Exec. Secretary, Board of North American Missions (1958-69)
Secretary, Church Planning & Development, General Program Council (1958-77)

Morris G. Folkert '41
b. Overisel, MI, 5/4/15
d. Zeeland, MI, 7/24/00
Hope College '38; WTS '41
Reformed churches served:
Otley, Iowa (1941-44)
North Holland, MI (1944-49)
Seventh, Grand Rapids, MI (1949-57)
First, Lansing, IL (1957-67)
First, Coopersville, MI (1967-80)

Henry P. Kik '43
b. Rotterdam, Netherlands, 1/23/11
d. Zeeland, MI, 7/25/00
Hope College '42; WTS '43
Michigan State University (masters)
Reformed churches served:
Calvary, Berwyn, IL (1943-45)
First, Chicago, IL (1945-49)
Fourth, Grand Rapids, MI (1949-58)
Christ Community, Spring Lake, MI (1974)
Christian Guidance Bureau, Grand Rapids, MI (1958-73)

William Bastiaan Miller '44
b. Detroit, MI, 9/22/19
d. Springfield, SD 7/12/00
Hope College '41; WTS '44
Reformed churches served:
First, Kingston, NY (1944-45)
Fonda, NY (1945-46)
Covenant, Muskegon Hgts, MI (1948-54)
Second, Fulton, IL (1954-59)
First, Lynden, WA (1959-67)
Bethel, Sheldon, IA (1967-75)
Emmanuel, Springfield, SD (1975-84)
Instructor, Hope College (1947-48)

Wilson Duke Richardson '51
b. Jeanerette, LA, 2/1/23
d. 2000
Prairie View College '44; WTS '51
Reformed churches served:

Pembroke Community, St. Anne, IL (1951-54)
Dismissed to Presbyterian Church, 1954

Robert John Ondra '56
b. Chicago, IL, 1/20/26
d. Palmyra, NY, 3/30/00
Hope College '53; WTS '56
Palmyra Reformed Church, Palmyra, NY (1956-1999)

Richard D. Bouwkamp '57
b. Grand Rapids, MI, 8/31/31
d. Waupun, WI, 3/26/00
Hope College '54; WTS '57
Reformed churches served:
Faith, Lanark, IL (1957-61)
First, DeMotte, IN (1961-66)
Alto, Wisconsin (1966-77)
Dismissed to the Assembly of God, Waupun, WI.

Paul Frederick De Vries '58
b. Grand Rapids, MI, 1929
d. Crete, IL, 7/1/00
Hope College '52; WTS '58
Reformed churches served:
New Era, MI (1958-63)
Community, Lafayette, IN (1964-68)
Hope, Sheboygan, WI (1968-77)
Fellowship, Lombard, IL (1977-83)
Chaplain, Chicago Rest Haven Christian Services and Chicago-O'Hare Int'l Airport from 1983

Cornelius Van De Hoef '68
b. Sheldon, IA, 4/4/30
d. Louisville, KY 8/15/00
Northwestern College '65; WTS '68
Reformed churches served:
New Era, MI (1968-77)
Church of the Rockies, Denver, CO (1977-81)
Bethel, Bellflower, CA (1981-88)
Church of the Cross, Sarasota, FL (1991-)
Special Ministries for Southwest Michigan Classis (1988-90)

Louis E. LaFountain, Jr. '84.
More information has been received regarding Lou. He was serving a Methodist church in Minnesota when he died of a sudden heart attack in his home on December 27, 1995. He was 39. The funeral was held at Doster Community Reformed Church, where Lou grew up near Plainwell, Michigan.

Let classmates and colleagues know about the milestones in your life. Send your news items to "Alumline", Western Theological Seminary, 101 E. 13th St., Holland, MI 49423; fax 616-392-7717; or email carlaw@westernsem.org

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Editor: Carla Plumert Weese, **Art Director:** Maria Orr

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