

# *Impact*

## REPORT



2020



**CALVIN**  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY

## Dear friends of Calvin Seminary,

The year 2020 opened with anticipation. We wondered what we would see not only in a new year, but also a new decade. My wife, Jackie and I, were preparing for a preaching and teaching (and fun) trip to Indonesia in mid-March and then we heard concerns about a coronavirus. Our plans changed. Your plans changed. We hoped that by Easter, we could return to “normal,” but our plans kept adjusting to the reality of a global pandemic.

Usually, we begin this Impact Report with key notes of praise and thanksgiving. You will still hear those notes, but among friends we need to also sound the notes of lament and sorrow. As one of my friends simply summarized, ministry in 2020 was harder and less joyful.

And yet, God did show His faithfulness to us. Because of earlier investments in distance education, we were able to pivot to offer online education more broadly than ever before. A summer conference where we hoped to gather turned into an online conference where we distributed information to more people than ever before. A summer of rest became a summer of providing resources with a global reach.

As you read and reflect on what did still occur in a global pandemic, we hope and pray for you, your family and your communities of faith. As you read about how we responded in this moment, please know we could not do this without your prayers, support and encouragement. COVID-19 challenged us all, but it also provided opportunities for us as a community of faith and learning. Thank you again for your partnership in the gospel!

We do not know what 2021 may bring, but we hope and pray for healing and we also pray that we may be agents of healing and renewal as we bear witness and testimony to a God that calls us to serve.

Calvin Theological Seminary is still Called to Serve the Church as the Church serves the Mission of God! 145 years and counting! May God be praised!

In His Service With You,



Jul Medenblik, President







# CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY







# *Professor Traces Ancient Roots* And Connects With Current Churches in Egypt

Mary Vanden Berg still remembers learning from her fourth grade teacher about the pyramids at Giza, and wanting to see them ever since. But when she made her first trip to Egypt in January, she had deeper reasons to see the country up close.

“I’m interested in the symbolism of the Old Testament, and you can’t fully understand that symbolism without knowing the cultural context,” says Vanden Berg, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary.

She gives the example of reading in Genesis 1 that humans were created in the image of God. In ancient cultures, kings and pharaohs signified their

rule with statues that bore their image, only to have their statues defaced when they died—some of which Vanden Berg saw for herself in Egypt. Humanity itself, she says, signifies God’s rule by bearing God’s image.

The trip was led by James Hoffmeier, an Old Testament professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, whom Vanden Berg met while on study leave there. She received funding from the Faculty Heritage Fund to support her travel. Jeff Weima, professor of New Testament at Calvin Seminary, who leads tours of Greece and Turkey, also made the trip.

Just as important as learning about ancient Egypt, Vanden Berg says, was connecting with Christian churches in Egypt today. She says she was struck by hearing Egyptian Christians express pride in the fact that Egypt is where Mary and Joseph found refuge from Herod after Jesus’ birth. “They were





“I’m interested in the symbolism of the Old Testament, and you can’t fully understand that symbolism without knowing the cultural context”

—Mary Vanden Berg

the first place to give safety and hospitality to the holy family,” she says. And they celebrate receiving the gospel from the Apostle Mark, whom tradition holds was the first missionary to Egypt.

The tour included a visit to a Coptic monastery, which has its roots in one of the earliest Christian communities in the Middle East. Vanden Berg also met with Anne Zaki, a Cairo native who earned her M.Div degree at Calvin Seminary and became the first woman to be ordained by the Presbyterian Church in Egypt, who now teaches at Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary in Cairo. “She’s breaking barriers there, and it’s great to see one of our alumni doing that,” she said.

Vanden Berg also says she was struck by the experience of Egyptian Christians as a persecuted minority. She guest lectured on the topics of suffering and lament to a group of pastors in El Minya, with Zaki translating, but said that the

subject took on new resonance as she listened to Christians talk about suffering persecution.

“I may have learned more from them,” she says, “than they learned from me.” ●





# Students Follow Christ's Footsteps on Israel Trip



In January, 34 students joined professors Gary Burge and Danjuma Gibson, and staff member Mitchell Schroder, for a trip to Israel to walk where Jesus walked and experience the setting of various gospel stories. The trip was made possible for students through the Tos Family Travel Scholarship.

“A generous financial gift to the seminary helps support this trip and make it possible for students to go for a significantly lower cost,” Schroder reflected. “To say that the investment in this trip is paying off is an understatement. Students get a chance to physically walk a mile in Christ’s shoes. That opportunity is guaranteed to have a lasting impact on their ministry, no matter what form that ministry takes.”

The two-week journey to the Holy Land was a full tour that covered all the way from Galilee, to the southern desert landscapes around the Dead Sea, with a long stretch held in the holy city of Jerusalem. The trip was a biblical, spiritual, and emotional journey that had a lasting impact on all of the students who were able to be there.

“This has been a dream of mine for many years, and the opportunity to do it this way, at this time, with this group and leadership has been far beyond any expectations,” wrote MDiv student Josh Grimes, in a book of reflections and photos given to the Tos family. “I now have a vast vault of vivid images to bring to my classes and learning, but also to the pulpit.”

“I have looked at maps [of the region] countless times while in seminary, but only after this trip does the map actually hold meaning for me,” wrote MDiv student Heather Haveman, adding that the trip will deepen “the way I will read and study scripture for the rest of my life.”

“The first noticeable change that students begin to show is almost a childlike glee at watching the world of the Bible become extremely real and tangible,” Schroder said. “The world that these students have imagined and pictured in their minds for all the Bible stories they have learned over the years suddenly has a physical setting they can touch, see, and smell.”

One example of a scriptural setting coming to life was when the group was on a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and a storm began.







“You could not even see the shoreline,” Schroder recalled. “We knew exactly how the disciples felt during their experience in the storm.”

Here are some of the places that different students identified as their favorite memory from the trip:

- Visiting the Church of the Nativity
- Boating on the Sea of Galilee
- Walking the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem
- Swimming in the Dead Sea
- Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Communion at the Tomb of Jesus
- Worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher

“To touch and see the Holy Land and everything mentioned in the scriptures is so helpful for the reconstruction of my imagination of the scriptures,” wrote ThM student Jiabin Qie. “Now I could see the place where Jesus stood in my mind. It’s so tangible and meaningful. This is like Word becoming flesh.”

As the Bible stories came to life for the students, said Schroder, so did the spiritual side of the journey.

“You begin to notice students taking their free time to seek out secluded areas of our trip to either pray, meditate, or read scripture,” he said. “It seems like a normal thing to do a devotional in the morning to

many of us, but that feeling of connectedness to the scripture is somehow magnified when you are in a setting like the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.”

Many students would wake up before dawn to find a completely empty church where they could pray and reflect on what they were learning. Schroder said he noticed that different stages of the journey elicited different emotional responses for each participant.

“God reveals himself to us all in different ways, and this journey to the Holy Land was no different,” he said.

Schroder also remembered how visiting the Garden of Gethsemane became a monumental point in the trip.

“There in that physical place of lament and emotional anguish for Christ, some of our students poured out their hearts to God,” Schroder recalled. “Emotional moments like these were not only life changing, but also a significant sign that God was at work among these students.”

“These students will go into the world and bring the good news of the Gospel to all,” he said. “We are so thankful that they get to do this with eyes that have seen the physical land where Christ walked and with hearts that have been filled with the Holy Spirit through this journey.” ●





# 2020 Highlights



Koyoung Youl (Joshua), his wife Kuiim (Jessie) Jung, and President Medenblik.

## JANUARY

### Stob Lecture: Kasab

The 2020 Stob Lecture Colloquium guest speaker was Najla Kasab, president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Moderated by Dr. Gary Burge, Kasab discussed the hopes and challenges of the Reformed Church in the Middle East.

## MARCH

### First Online Chapel

We held our first ever online chapel on March 18th, 2020 via Zoom due to COVID-19. Rev. Jeff Sajdak offered the devotion with students, faculty and staff attending virtually. Watch the chapel here: [vimeo.com/calvinsem](https://vimeo.com/calvinsem)

## MAY

### Drive Through Commencement

Calvin Seminary held a drive-through commencement on May 23rd, 2020 from 11.30am to 1.00pm. Cheered by staff and faculty, students drove through the parking lot and took a picture with President Medenblik by the CTS Seal in the Veenstra Memorial Garden.



Here the group is overlooking the Sea of Galilee.



This picture captures one of the earliest virtual (Zoom) faculty meetings.



## JANUARY

### Israel Travel: Gary Burge & Mitch Schroder

Gary Burge (Prof. of New Testament) and Danjuma Gibson (Professor of Pastoral Care, Co-Director of DMin Program) led a group of 35 Calvin Seminary students to Israel.

## APRIL

### Virtual Seminary Breaks and Meetings

As more of the annual events were cancelled due to the pandemic, more meetings were being held online via zoom including meetings and classes.

## JUNE

### Annual Golf Event

The Annual Golf event took place on June 8th, 2020. Golfers socially distanced, wore masks, and received an individually packaged lunch to keep safe from COVID. The event was attended by 100 guests and raised \$200,000 net.





Reverent Cooper (far right) having a conversation with students from the Calvin Prison Initiative who recently reentered society.



Dr. Cory Willson

## JULY

### Loving Your Neighbor

Loving Your Neighbor 2020 (LYN2020) held on July 6th and 7th and was live streamed due to COVID gathering restrictions. The theme of the LYN2020 was Forming Citizens of God's Kingdom in Prison and Upon Reentry. The keynote speaker was Rev. Dominique DuBois Gilliard who spoke about the response of the Church to mass incarceration.

## SEPTEMBER

### Scholarship Breakfast

Calvin Theological Seminary was blessed with the opportunity to bring donors and students together to meet safely in person on September 25, 2020. Below are pictures of students and the donors meeting in the tent.

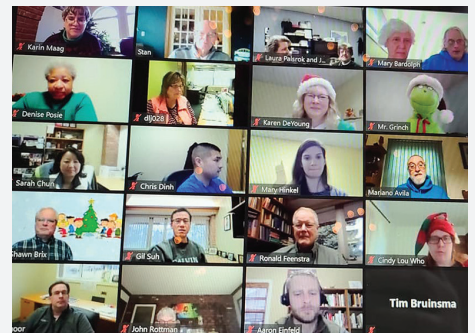
## NOVEMBER

### Presidents' Legacy Society

The 2020 Presidents' Legacy Society event featured the launch of a new book titled "Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy," co-authored by Dr. Cory Willson and Dr. Matthew Kaemingk. The conversation was facilitated by Prof. John Witvliet.



Faculty members Lyle Bierma and David Malone in the tent after the convocation ceremony.



## AUGUST

### The "Revival" Tent

Calvin Seminary continued to explore creative ways of gathering due to COVID 19. We installed a large tent, "The Revival Tent," where we held the August staff retreat and classes.

## SEPTEMBER

### Convocation

Our Fall 2020 Convocation was recorded and streamed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Students, faculty, and staff gathered for refreshments in the tent afterwards.

## DECEMBER

### Virtual Christmas Around the World

The Seminary celebrated Christmas virtually through Zoom. Led by the Staff Council, faculty and staff gathered to share light moments of the past year and to pray for each other.



# *Thank you!*

Despite a pandemic, in the fiscal year that just ended, financial support for Calvin Seminary reached an all time high and I am pleased to report a record fundraising total of nearly eight million dollars raised. Thank you for your extra concern, prayers and financial support during these unique times. We have been blessed by our seminary community!



Robert Knorr  
Director of Development





# COVID-19 Update



The global pandemic has given Calvin Theological Seminary the opportunity to adapt and innovate as we continue our mission of equipping leaders for Christ's church. Because of our decade of experience with distance learning, it took us three days to switch to purely online instruction when the pandemic arrived in Michigan in March 2020. Thanks to the determination of faculty, students, and staff, teaching and learning continued to thrive throughout the semester—culminating in a virtual commencement that honored our 61 graduates from Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, South Korea, and the United States.

This summer, Calvin Seminary partnered with Calvin University and the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship to launch a new series of online mini-courses called Ministry in a Covid-Shaped World. These courses were designed to help ministry leaders to creatively adapt their ministries amidst the pandemic. More than 300 leaders in all stages of their careers completed courses in areas such as trauma, discipleship in a digital world, organizational leadership, and worship. This new effort resulted in regular online mini-courses throughout the 2020–21 academic year. We hope to continue to expand our offerings in these areas.

We also were able to provide a completely virtual conference entitled Loving Your Neighbor: Forming Citizens of God's Kingdom in Prison and Upon Reentry. The entire conference, filled with moving stories and strategic ministry insights, can be found at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7340817>.

The fall 2020 semester brought further innovation and flexibility as students were given the choice to attend courses in-person, online, or a combination of both, based on their needs. From the use of an outdoor tent to turning our chapel into a classroom space, the fall semester was an adventurous and memorable one. Nearing the Thanksgiving holiday, the seminary was once again required to move all instruction entirely online.

Our community has rallied in powerful ways as circumstances have changed throughout the past year. We would like to especially commend those who worked in supporting IT functions and providing programming support—including Daryl Boersema, Technology Support Manager, and Chris De Man, Organizational Systems & Strategic Initiatives Manager. We also have been blessed by the team leadership of Margaret Mwenda, Chief Operations Officer, and Jeff Sajdak, Dean of Students, who co-led our Covid-19 Response Team.

We do not know what 2021 may bring, but we hope and pray for healing and that we may be agents of healing and renewal as we bear witness and testimony to a God that calls us to serve. Calvin Seminary is still called to serve the church as the church, 145 years and counting! ●

## Online Conference: Loving Your Neighbor: Forming Citizens of God's Kingdom in Prison and Upon Reentry

Watch the entire conference, filled with stories and ministry insights at [vimeo.com/showcase/7340817](https://vimeo.com/showcase/7340817)





## *Golf Outing*

Despite restrictions caused by the COVID pandemic, the Development Office was able to work with Thousand Oaks Golf Club to organize a safe and fun golf outing in June. This is an event that many looked forward to, we are grateful to all that worked hard to ensure this annual event happened.

A combination of social distancing, masks, and individually packaged player gifts and food made sure that each guest had ample safety measurements in place. Participants were able to relax and enjoy a "breath of fresh air", as many of them described, due to the hard work of all involved.

A total of 100 golfers played the full 18 at Thousand Oaks with the team donated by Jerry and Jess VanderWall taking the first prize. The Development Office looks forward to pulling off another safe and successful golf classic this summer and is grateful for the many persons and businesses that support this event! ●







# *Scholarship Breakfast*

This fall the Development Office changed gears on its annual scholarship dinner. Instead of an evening program and dinner at Meijer Gardens like past years, the development office came up with a new and safe format to allow donors to meet their students. Tents were set up on the grounds of the seminary and students met with donors outdoors and spread out around the campus with a take out lunch and good conversation. It was certainly a smaller affair, but the critical relationship between donor and student was still allowed to flourish. We look forward to the challenge of providing the same level of experience in 2021. ●



# Our Impact in 2020



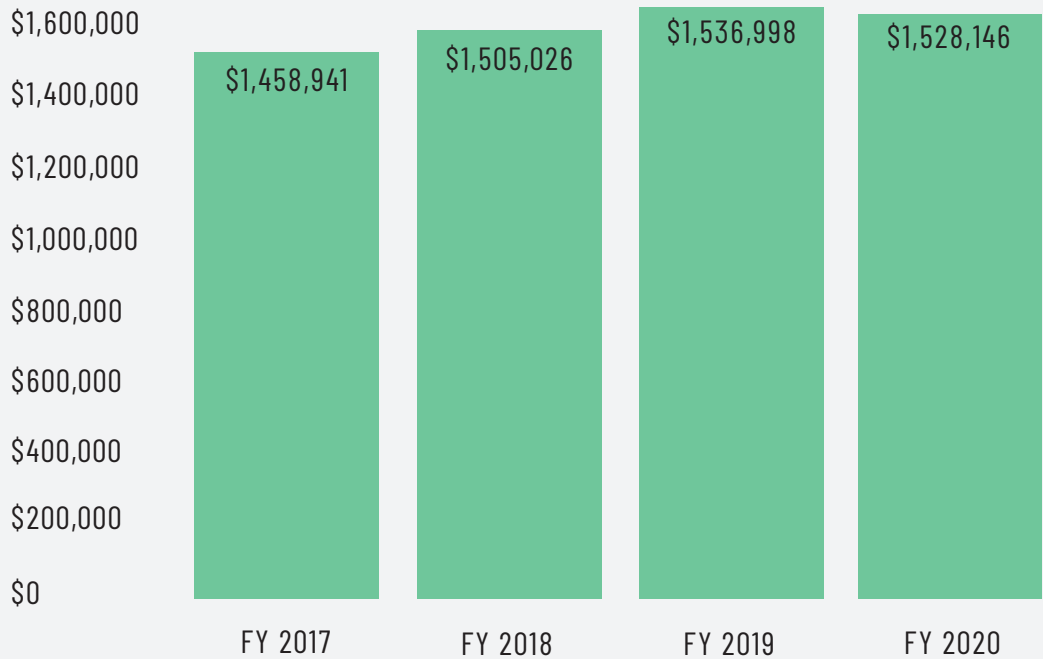
## OUR STUDENTS

27  
Number of countries represented in the student body

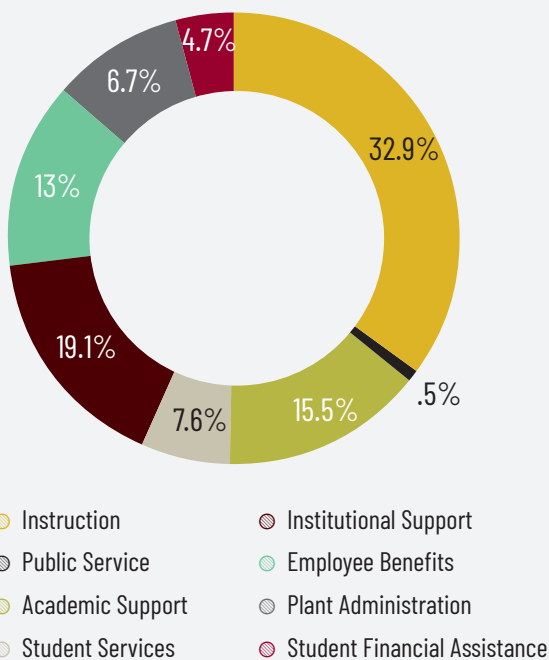
- Master of Divinity:** 129
- Master of Arts:** 53 (English & Spanish)
- Master of Theological Studies:** 26
- Master of Theology:** 43
- Doctor of Philosophy:** 35
- Doctor of Ministry (New in 2020!):** 12
- Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC):** 27
- Latina/o Ministry Certificates:** 17
- Faculty & Staff:** 70
- Certificate in Bible Instruction/Ministry Leadership:** 8



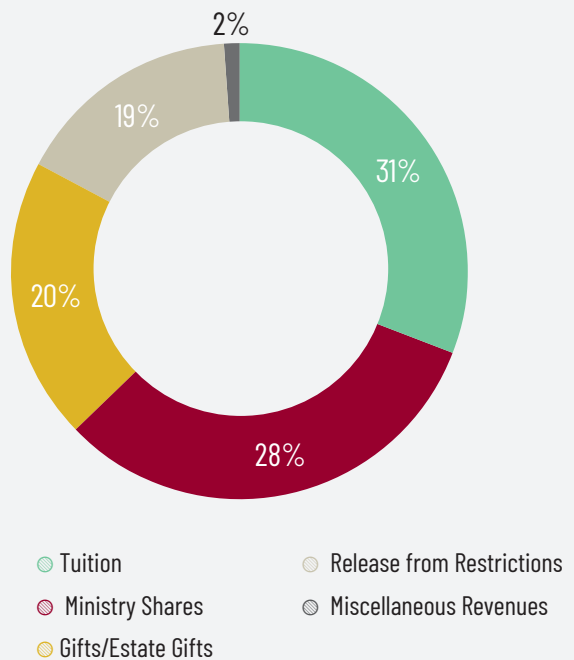
# Annual Fund Gift Support



FY 2020 OPERATING EXPENSES  
\$7,151,835



FY 2020 OPERATING REVENUE  
\$7,792,295



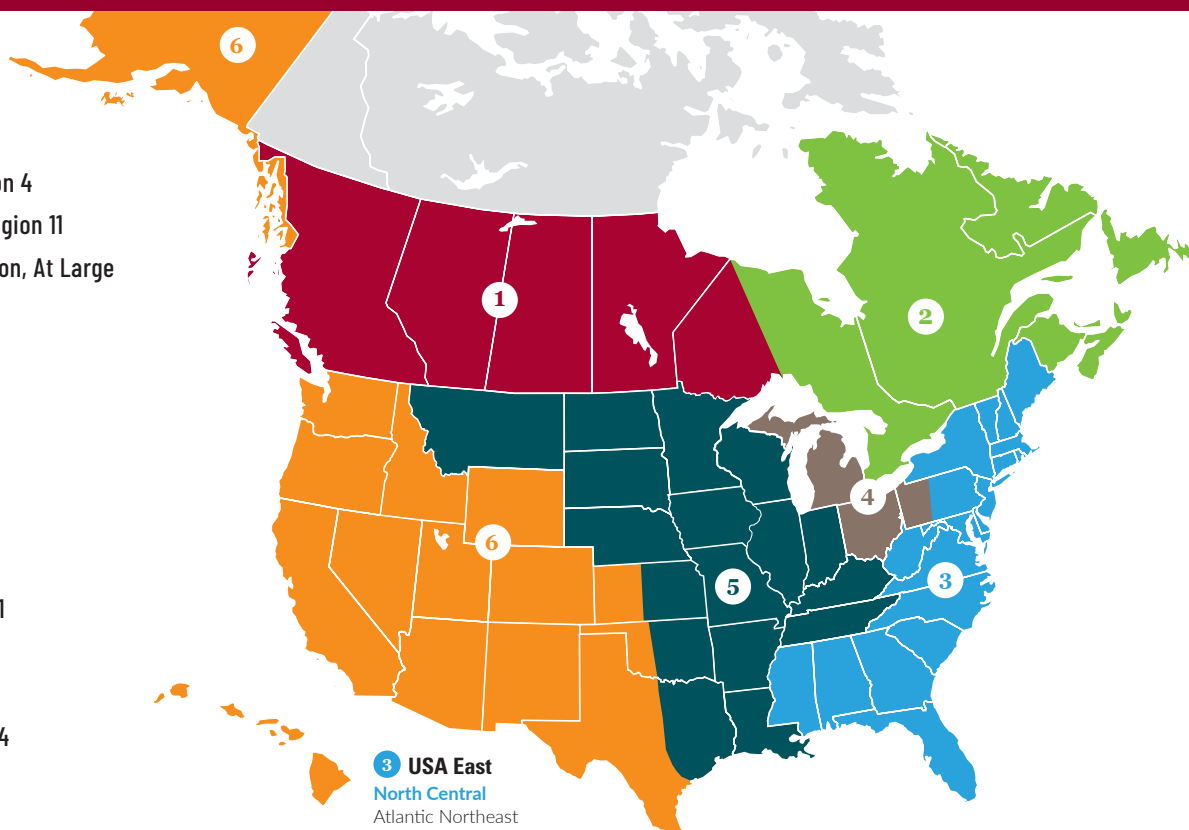


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B.C. North-West  
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**Lakeshore**  
Georgetown  
Holland  
Kalamazoo  
Muskegon  
Zeeland  
**Greater Michigan**  
Lake Erie  
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Central Plains  
Northcentral Iowa  
Wisconsin  
Lake Superior (USA)  
**Chicagoland**  
Chicago South  
Illiana  
Northern Illinois  
**Upper Plains**  
Heartland  
Iakota  
Yellowstone (Montana)  
Minnkota

## 6 USA West

**Rockies**  
Arizona  
Red Mesa  
Rocky Mountain  
Yellowstone (Utah)  
**Southern**  
California South  
Greater Los Angeles  
Hanmi  
Ko-Am  
**Northern**  
Columbia  
Central California  
North Cascades  
Pacific Northwest