

### Dear friends of Calvin Seminary,

As part of preparing for and entering into a new decade, I suggest we first look back.

While I was a pastor in New Lenox, Illinois, the local churches presented an annual Good Friday Crosswalk service. As part of that service, we moved through four different churches and "followed" the cross. One of my favorite parts of that experience was to look back and see the people on the journey as we moved toward and through a local cemetery. Looking back allowed me to appreciate the journey and those who gathered for this singular purpose: to give praise and honor to God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This Impact Report is an opportunity to look back and see how God has used and is using us on the journey of serving together at Calvin Theological Seminary.

I know you might not find yourself in the pictures that are included—but you are! Because of the support, encouragement and prayers that you provide, we are able to train leaders for service in God's world and the local Church. You are a vital ministry partner for all we do at Calvin Seminary.

When I began my time as President of Calvin Seminary, we did not have distance education. When I began my time as President of Calvin Theological Seminary, we did not have a Latino/a ministry program. When I began my time as President of Calvin Seminary, we did not have even one student coming from China.

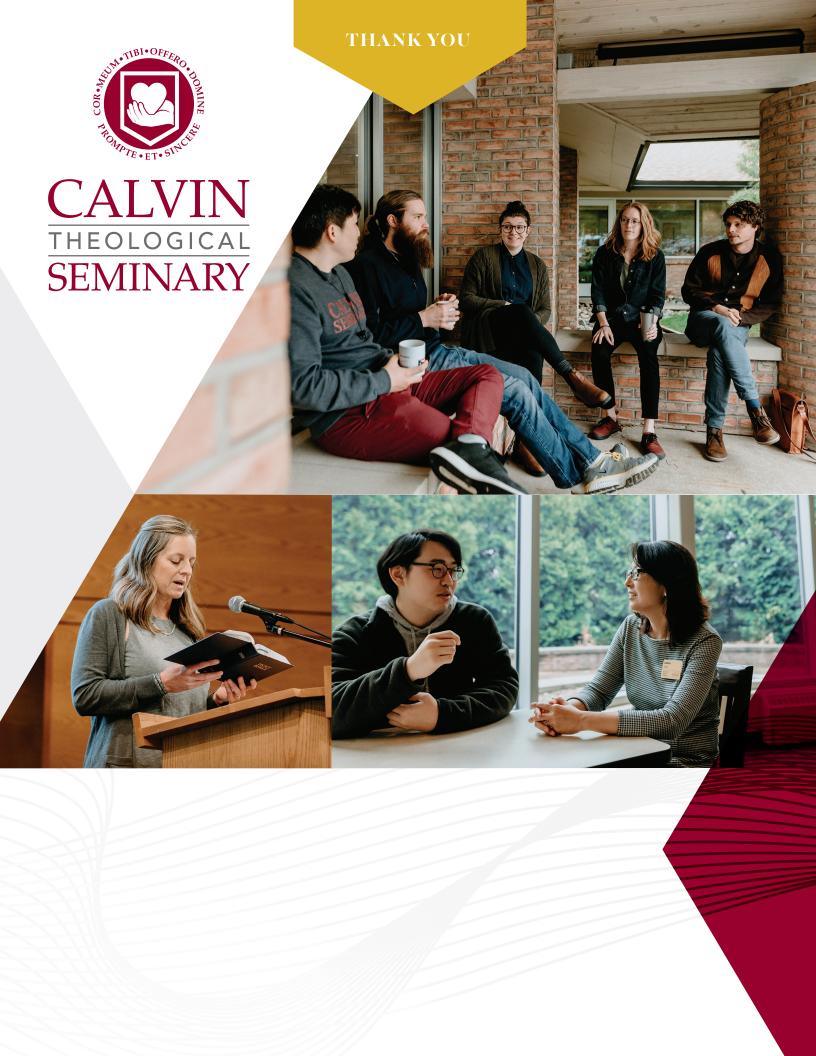
I could continue the list, but I think you get the idea that change has come and is still coming to Calvin Seminary. I am grateful for the faculty, staff, students, board members and supporters that have helped catalyze these changes. We are still rooted in the Reformed tradition and serving the local Church by focusing on leadership development, but we do so in new ways and with new tools of connecting.

We are thankful for the stories that are yet unfolding from the investment that you and countless others have made. This Impact Report gives all of us an opportunity to look back and turn all praise and glory to God for what He has done and is doing!

Thank you again for praying for, supporting and encouraging the work of God! This Impact Report is one way we can say "thank you." It's truly because of your investment in the impact of Calvin Seminary that we can tell these stories of 2019.

Serving with you,

Jul Medenblik, President



# Seeds of Justice, Harvest of Shalom

# A travel course to Mexico City hosted by Professor Mariano and Rosy Avila

By Cory Willson

I have been privileged to join Professor
Mariano and Rosy Avila twice for a travel
course to Mexico City (2016 and 2018). The
course title is "Seeds of Justice, Harvest of
Shalom" and it explores the intimate
connection between justice and peace in
biblical theology. Alongside of Scripture,
students are exposed to several expressions
of this biblical vision of shalom in
ministries in the larger Mexico City area.

In this report, I will first outline the theological commitments and then proceed to discuss the learning goals and desired formational outcomes for students. I will then conclude the report with evidence of (trans)formation of students in their own words. Before I get ahead of myself, let me first briefly discuss some of the main activities and field visits of this trip.

### **ACTIVITIES AND FIELD VISITS**

A class that focuses on justice and peace should not overlook those areas in society where these purposes of God are not a lived reality for individuals and communities. On this trip, we visit a vibrant ministry that serves dozens of the over 1 million street children in the city. Niños de la calle ("children of the street") has been serving children and their families who live on the streets spread throughout the poorest areas of the city. Seeing how the men and women serve these families by providing education to the children and resources to the family is deeply moving. We also visit churches working with immigrants to Mexico from Central and Southern America. The numbers of immigrants fleeing violence and starvation has increased in recent years, making this part of the Church's witness and love for their neighbors an urgent matter in Mexico. Often overlooked in North America are the indigenous people groups who have been pushed to margins of society. Students get to learn about the Mazahua people and the holistic ministry taking place among them by churches.

Mexico is full of beauty and diversity. Alongside the brokenness and pain there is life, beauty, and resilience in Mexican society. This is an important reality for students to experience. Spread throughout these ministry field trip visits, students are educated about the historical and contemporary development of Mexican society. We tour several key historical sites to learn of the rich cultural history and beauty of the diverse ethnic groups in Mexican society. University professors, seminary professors, and local pastors guide students to understanding the historical developments that play into the current makeup of social life. There is no one single story or image that captures the breadth of Mexican history or contemporary life. The field trip activities, lectures, and discussions all aim to present a holistic picture of life in Mexico today.

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The juxtaposition of the Bible with visits to ministry contexts is intentional and plays a role

in the holistic formation of students. Biblically speaking, justice and peace provide the necessary vision and understanding of God's plan for creation and humanity, to inspire a lifestyle and ministry that conform to God's goodwill for the cosmos, society, the Church, and the individual person. But it is also important to see firsthand how in the name of Jesus, seeds of justice are being planted and shalom is being weaved into human communities amidst suffering, poverty, and injustice. Rather than waiting until after graduation to apply what they have learned in seminary, student formation should involve bridging the gap between the Bible and life today in real time.

#### STUDENT LEARNING GOALS AND FORMATION OUTCOMES

The purpose of the trip is to expose students to different churches and cultures, understand the dynamics and learnings needed to minister peoples from other cultures, and to study models of collaboration between churches and local Mexican partner agencies. The course will broaden the horizons of students and equip them for holistic models of ministry, both at home in parish ministry and abroad as missionaries.





To understand and experience Mexican reality is a significant way to start understanding the realities of immigration and your Spanish-speaking neighbors in the United States and Canada. This trip equips students to minister Latino communities in our own context.

### In the student's words

### From Kelsi Jones

Immigration in the United States is a highly-debated topic; however, the people that it directly applies to are often not fully given agency. While in Mexico City, we were able to go to a shelter where people who were migrating from various countries in Central America lived. Hearing stories from the men and children who had left their family behind to seek safety and jobs helped me look past my own context and see the suffering that my brothers and sisters were facing. The CRC can be very insular: private education K-12, college, and then seminary. Many people haven't seen anything outside of their own family, friends, and denomination. Being in Mexico City—a city my great-grandfather lived and worked as a missionary for the CRC years previously helped show how much more connected our world and Church truly are.

### From Anne Marie Scherer

The most memorable experience for me was visiting Los Niños de la calle's families and workers. What I believe was most memorable about this experience was the perseverance to do justice and care for these families in poverty even though the workers at Los Niños de la calle were neither going to "fix" systemic poverty, nor were they going to possibly care for all of the children in Mexico City, let alone the small region that they were helping. The call of these Christian workers was the call of all Christians: To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with their God. They were the constant, loving, and gentle presence of Christ to these families and supplied real, substantive, and important physical care so that these children and families may thrive. It helped me see, along with other readings and conversations this year after experiencing this trip, the reality that doing justice for the oppressed does not mean we can change these circumstances, but it does mean caring for those in need that we know and see.





### **From Kent Sanders**

The seminary classroom with our world-class scholars and academic resources offers opportunities of which I am increasingly thankful. However, to reduce ministry to something that can be taught in classroom seems at times radically insufficient. Trips like these, but especially this one, offers fertile fields in which the Holy Spirit plants and nourishes particular seeds of faith, culture, compassion, and mission that simply are not available in Michigan. To not go on this trip, I think, is to miss out on a brief snapshot of what the Lord is doing in the global Church.

### From Tricia Bosma

Even if it has this result outlined as a learning objective, no classroom course, no ministry context in West Michigan could have taught me this lesson. I returned home a different person than when I left. I don't think God will call me to minister to people of different ethnic cultures, but there is no doubt that I will minister to folks with different lived experiences than I. Having been brought to the mountain with a different vantage point, I can see each individual and each culture with different lived experiences but with the same basic human needs.



While Calvin Seminary's mission has remained the same for over 140 years—to serve the church through equipping and shaping future ministry leaders—the way this mission is lived out continues to unfold. Through the development of new programs, formats, and methods of teaching—Calvin Seminary is better able to serve the church through being more broadly available to a wider audience of interested students. Calvin Seminary's Latino Ministry and

Distance Learning programs are two examples of programs that opened doors to a larger audience. These programs were also dependent on the generous support of forward-thinking donors and friends of Calvin Seminary in order to launch. As both these programs move towards their 10 year anniversary, current students reflect on what the program has meant to them as they felt a calling to theological education.

# Latino/a Ministry

# STUDENT EXPERIENCE

By Magdalena Lozano

I, Magdalena Lozano, am thankful to God who made known to me the plan of salvation in His mercy, grace, and love—His love unto me. Above all else, I put God first because He healed me and gave me life, joy, and energy to live my life as I understand His amazing, soul-restoring Word. He teaches me that I am very beloved by the Almighty. Now I live in Jesus' hands.

Even though He healed my wounds and transformed my thinking, there was something I didn't understand. I understood it when God guided me to Calvin Theological Seminary. God knew what I always thought. My thinking was influenced by my mom. She was so sexist, more than my dad. She believed that my sister and I had the duty of serving my four brothers, even before serving my dad. We had to do everything for them, whether that was serving them food or carrying water so they could take a shower. My brothers were allowed to go out while my sister and I were not.

In the Family Care program, I understood why my mother was that way. We went through a module on sexism and poverty. My poor mom grew up without a dad and my grandmother did the same thing my mother did to my sister and I. Not only did this Hispanic program help me understand my mom but also to understand myself. I was so rebellious and was constantly challenging my mother. I did what I wanted, such as leaving for work without her permission.

This Certificate on Family Care was very good. I do a lot of Bible studies. I help women who are victims of domestic violence. Above all, I have God's Word in my heart and mind. I can use this program I took at the seminary and do it again at my church and alongside people I study with: men, women, and youth. This Family Care Certificate is wonderful. We learned where it talks about God's image, that God created us in His image and likeness.

"Every person needs to know [God created us in His image] so that God gives them dignity again. I'm very thankful to God first and foremost because He guided me all the way to seminary, and to Pastor Mariano Avila and his wife, Rosy."

I'm thankful to those who donated their money in order that I could learn more. I'm thankful because they opened my mind to serve effectively and help my neighbors. God bless you!



# Distance Ed STUDENT EXPERIENCE

By Joy Elizabeth Lawrence

I never planned on going to Calvin Theological Seminary. First, I'd already been to seminary for an academic degree. Second, I'm not Christian Reformed. Third, I imagined it would be stodgy. The phrase "frozen chosen" does get around.

But God had other plans for me.

When I was called to pastoral ministry in my mid-thirties, I planned on attending another seminary nearby. But between the challenge of childcare, an under-employed husband, and a sense that it wasn't time yet, I put matriculation on hold. Dr. Witvliet, who I knew from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, recommended that I take his course on worship in the meantime. I'd only had one class in worship in my first round in seminary, and I knew this would be different, so I registered. This class led to the invitation to apply, which led to acceptance and financial aid.

I quickly realized that none of my previous objections held much water. I was learning different things, it didn't matter that I wasn't part of the CRC, and it was not stodgy. Rigorous, yes. But because the curriculum focused on my own spiritual formation as a person and pastor, it called me into inner spiritual renewal. God has continued to sanctify me through the Spirit's presence in the classroom and through the learning at CTS.

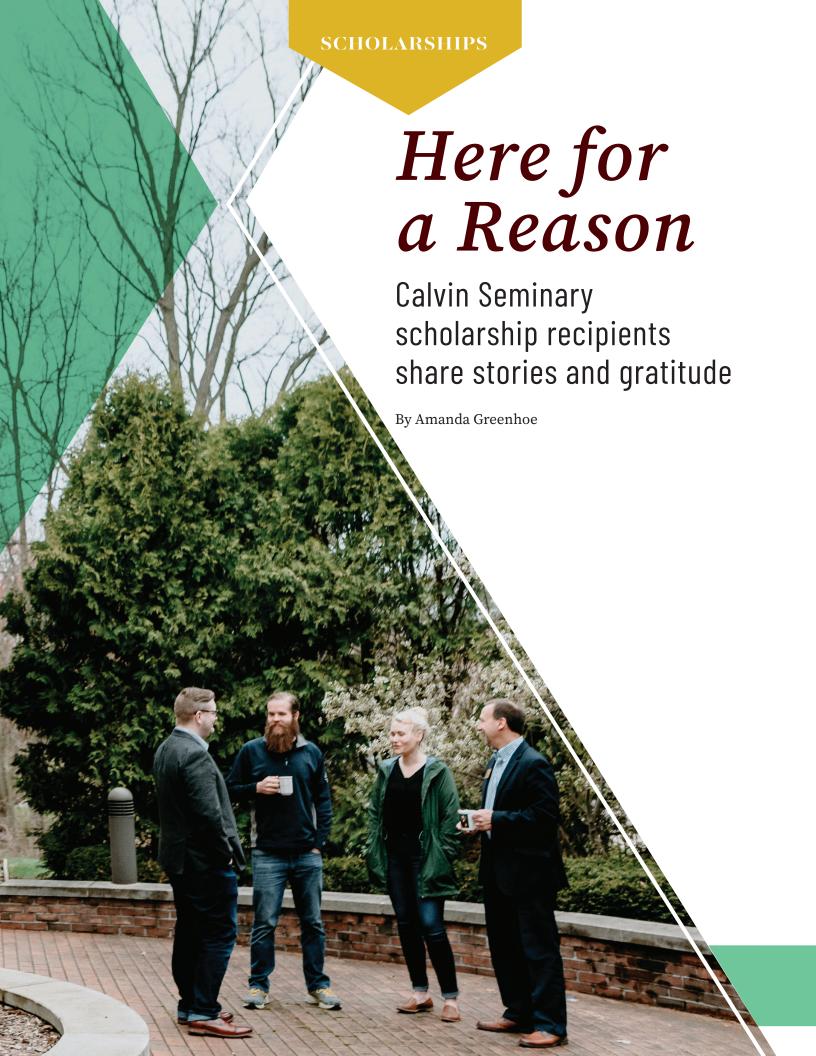
When my family moved away from Grand Rapids (for a much-prayed-for job for my husband!) after two full-time semesters in the M.Div. program, I became a distance learning student. I considered

transferring to another seminary closer to my new home, but after visiting I knew that God was continuing to call me to finish where I'd so surprisingly been placed by Him.

In the distance learning program, I have appreciated the cohort model, as I have developed relationships with my colleagues that have been edifying, challenging, and encouraging. Attending seminary while working part time as a pastor have enhanced both experiences and provided hands-on praxis for the material explored in the classroom. The intensives, though intense, have continued to be a relational and educational highlight each semester.

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I'm thankful for the stream of the Reformed tradition, and how its historical rootedness, hermeneutical strength, and emphasis on the Spirit (thank you, John Calvin!) continue to influence the Protestant Church today. I'm excited to graduate in May, but I'll miss my colleagues and the interaction with faculty and staff.





garLand Mason III served 23 years in the U.S. Army and is currently in his first semester of the Master of Theology (ThM) program at Calvin Seminary.

Mason was among three students this fall who were chosen to share a glimpse of their stories with seminary supporters at the 2019 Scholarship Dinner.

Mason shared with donors that he was moved by what he found to be a "spiritual vacuum" in the military community. While the military is effective in its purposes, he says, there is more to be done for soldiers after they return home from war. In seeing that need, Mason found his calling to stand in the gap.

Through his studies, Mason is preparing for parachurch ministry to soldiers and their families.

"No one knows a soldier like a soldier," he explains.



HANG JIANG is a third-year Master of Divinity (MDiv) student from China, trained to be an engineer, but called to be a pastor and missionary.

He shared with supporters that he is the survivor of a failed abortion, a fact which made him grow up questioning his ability to be loved, wanted, and valued. But Jiang's Christian grandmother, whom he never met, left him a book of Bible stories, introducing him to the love of a savior.

Jiang also has many memories of being beaten by his father. After a severe beating, which caused Jiang to temporarily lose his vision, he cried out to God. Immediately, Jiang heard a voice saying, "be strong and courageous, for I am with you." Later, he would recognize this scripture to be from the book of Joshua. For this reason, Jiang uses Joshua as his American name.

God transformed Jiang's family, and his parents are currently serving churches in China. Jiang and his wife are also preparing for ministry in his home country, however God will lead them.



JODI VANWINGERDEN shared with scholarship dinner attendees that it took her some time to find her way to seminary. Now in her second year of the MDiv program, she brings with her a degree in social work and experience leading youth group, teaching Sunday school, serving on church council, and working as an editor.

VanWingerden says her time at Calvin Seminary has given her a bigger picture of who she can be and things she can do—and "more than that, a bigger picture of who God is and the ways that God imagines His kingdom in this world." Through seminary faculty, staff, internship partners, and peers, VanWingerden has been affirmed in her studies and ministry preparation.

Also a reason for gratitude, VanWingerden says, was "the scholarship that was given, without reservation, in full faith that I am here for a reason."

# The Meeter Center Remembers the Swiss Reformation

By Karin Maag, Director, H. Henry Meeter Center

On September 13 and 14, 2019, roughly 80 people gathered at Calvin Seminary for a two-day conference to mark the start of the Swiss Reformation. More than 500 years ago, in 1519, Huldrych Zwingli began his public ministry in the Swiss city of Zurich. Although Martin Luther is better known, Zwingli's Reformation laid the groundwork for Reformed Protestantism, later taken up and developed by John Calvin and John Knox.

The conference featured five plenary presentations by internationally-known speakers, including Bruce Gordon (Yale Divinity School), Amy Nelson Burnett (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), John Roth (Goshen College), Esther Chung-Kim (Claremont McKenna College), and Jordan Ballor (Acton Institute). Their topics included Zwingli's impact on the course of the Swiss Reformation, the Lord's Supper, the role of the Swiss Anabaptists in the Reformation, poor relief and pastoral care in Reformation Zurich, and the Swiss Reformation's approach to issues of church and state.

On the first evening of the conference, the Meeter Center organized a reader's theater reenactment of the first public debate on religion in the Swiss Reformation, held in Zurich in 1523. Participants from Calvin Seminary and Calvin University(comprised of 20 faculty, staff, and students) portrayed Zwingli and other Reformers, his Catholic opponents, and the magistrates who were charged with adjudicating the debate. A wide audience of seminary students, families, community members, and conference participants deeply enjoyed the performance and ensuing dessert reception.

Among others, students in the fall 2019 ThM elective on the Swiss Reformation deeply enjoyed the conference, meeting several of the scholars whose works they were reading in class-especially Bruce Gordon, who wrote the definitive work in English on the history of the Swiss Reformation. Many students even had him autograph their course textbook. The conference also had an impact well beyond the walls of Calvin Seminary. We had invited the honorary Swiss consul from Detroit, Mr. Walter Wegmuller, to join us. He sent us the following message: "Congratulations! Your conference commemorating the start of the Swiss Reformation led by Huldrych Zwingli 500 years ago was most interesting and very well organized and presented. I reported our visit and wonderful experience to the Consulates General of Switzerland in Chicago and New York."

Thank you to the Heritage fund for its support of this outstanding event!

The plenary presentations are available at calvin.edu/centers-institutes/meeter-center/swiss-reformation-conference



# Opening Doors: the history and impact of the Latino/a Ministry program

By Mariano Avila

As Calvin Seminary's student body continues to diversify, leaders at the seminary have been identifying ways to partner with church and ministry leaders locally, who are outside of the seminary's traditional circles. One of these partnerships has been growing through Calvin Seminary's Latino Ministries Program. Dr. Mariano Avila, Professor of New Testament, saw a great opportunity to partner with the Hispanic community by creating a ministry training program for those desiring to grow in their ministry context. In 2011, Dr. Mariano Avila and Dr. Edwin Hernandez met with 50 Hispanic/Latino(a) pastors in the Grand Rapids area to determine their needs and desires related to ministry training. Nine years later, the program is thriving and impacting communities throughout West Michigan, thanks to donors such as Lilly and Devos foundations

### COMPOSITION OF THE FIRST COHORT

In the fall of 2012, Calvin Seminary, in partnership with the DeVos Foundation, launched the Certificate for Hispanic Ministry (CHM) for pastors and leaders in the Grand Rapids area. Students came from a wide variety of denominations, countries, cultures, and generations. Of the 40 students who enrolled, 37 graduated in 2015.

By the end of the 2020 school year, we anticipate 149 total graduates of the CHM, Master of Arts, Master of Divinity, and Master of Theological Studies programs—all part of the Latino(a) ministry program.

### SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

In reflecting on the impact of this program, several key characteristics have emerged:

- The program is culturally attuned because it is taught by Hispanic professors who understand the realities of the Hispanic communities
- The program is offered at a discounted rate (students pay about 10% of the total cost), thanks to the initiative of and partnership with the DeVos Foundation
- The courses are academically robust and do not lower standards but broaden them
- The program values, respects, and integrates the denominational and theological perspectives represented in the students

#### **TANGIBLE RESULTS**

By God's grace, we are seeing incredible results of the program:

- Enrichment and empowerment of pastors.
- Unity and fellowship among pastors.
- A community eager to continue learning.
- A broader horizon for ministry.
- Impact in the communities where the students' churches are.

This is just the beginning. By coming alongside these gifted ministry leaders, equipping and shaping our Hispanic and Latino(a) brothers and sisters to lead within their context, doors are opening to new areas of ministry in partnership with the local, national, and global Spanish-speaking church and beyond. We look forward to seeing the incredible ways in which God will grow this ministry in the years ahead as we together celebrate this transformational program.

# 2019 Highlights



### Stob Lecture Series

The 2019 Stob Lecture Colloquium was presented by Willie Jennings (right), Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale University. He was interviewed by Danjuma Gibson, Calvin Seminary's Professor of Pastoral Care.



### Marsden Birthday Event

George Marsden celebrated his 80th birthday at Calvin Seminary, sharing stories and thoughts from his acclaimed career. Marsden is the Professor of History emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and is currently a Distinguished Scholar in the History of Christianity at Calvin Seminary. He was interviewed at this event by fellow Calvin Seminary Distinguished Scholar, James Bratt.



### Commencement

Calvin Seminary honored and celebrated the faithfulness of God and the accomplishments of the class of 2019. This year's class included graduates from the Latino(a) Ministry program.



## Christian Schools International

#### CSI Announcement

In February of 2019, Calvin Seminary, in collaboration with Christian Schools International (CSI), announced the new Certificate in Bible Instruction. This fully online program is designed for the K-12 Bible teacher. Students in the CSI program will gain valuable biblical and theological insight, enriching their teaching.





The Van Zanten Urban Ministry Lecture Calvin Seminary celebrated the ministry of Tony and Donna Van Zanten with a series of talks and interviews on the topic of urban ministry.





### Synod

Calvin Seminary hosted an alumni reception during the 2019 CRCNA Synod, which took place next door at Calvin University. Close to 75 alumni and their spouses visited this open house.



### **DIG Program**

Calvin Seminary's Dig program brought together high school students interested in exploring issues around vocation and calling. Through intentional conversations and insightful excursions, Dig participants were encouraged to see how their specific gifts and work can connect with the larger mission of the Church.



### **Opening Convocation**

Calvin Seminary's Convocation recognized the recently-named Calvin Seminary Board Chair emeritus, Sid Jansma, Jr. In his talk, "Creating With God," Jansma encouraged and shared the insight he has gained through years of service to the seminary and his experience in the business world.



### **Published Professors Panel**

Calvin Seminary celebrated the accomplishments of five recently published faculty members in a panel event. Hosted by fellow faculty member and recent author Scott Hoezee, this panel included Mariano Avila, Amanda Benckhuysen, Gary Burge, Young Ahn Kang, and Bob Keeley.



### Alumni Reception at Inspire Conference

Calvin Seminary's Alumni Reception at the 2019 Inspire Conference attracted close to 100 guests. The event overlooked the Detroit River and skyline, providing a picturesque backdrop for old classmates to catch up and reconnect.





### The Patricia S. Duthler Seminar for Church Renewal

Author Orrin Woodward, with President Jul Medenblik and Pastor Scott Vander Ploeg, headlined this conference focused on leadership and church renewal. Titled "Launching a Leadership Revolution in the Church," the gathering provided church leaders a framework to support their local ministry work.





Christmas Around the World
The Calvin Seminary community
gathered for this annual event,
showcasing the diverse community
represented among Calvin Seminary's
student body. Traditional Christmas
food and music from a variety of
cultures were at the heart of this
much-anticipated event.



2019 Legacy Award at
Calvin Seminary's Annual
Scholarship Dinner
Sidney J.
Jansma, Jr.



Sidney J. Jansma, Jr., a business leader in West Michigan and a tireless champion for kingdom causes around the globe, was granted the 2019 Legacy Award at Calvin Seminary's annual Scholarship Dinner last fall.

The award was made to Jansma in recognition of his more than two decades of exemplary service to the seminary as a trustee, including 18 years as chairman of the board. During his long tenure on the Calvin Seminary board, Jansma worked closely and collaboratively with seminary Presidents James DeJong, Cornelius Plantinga and Jul Medenblik.

Following his retirement from the board last year, Jansma was named chairman emeritus and continues to serve as a trusted adviser to President Medenblik, who hailed Jansma as a creative catalyst for virtually every innovation and improvement at the seminary for the past quarter-century.



"Sid has been an enthusiastic and visionary leader for the seminary in his role as trustee and especially as a chairman, who models what it means to be a devoted servant of Christ," said Medenblik. "He has fostered a culture of deep commitment to our faith tradition in the Christian Reformed Church, but also a fresh openness to the global church and new ways to serve, like the Calvin Prison Initiative."

—Jul Medenblik

# Our Impact in 2019

167 CEP/Lilly Endowment Seminars and Workshops

168 CEP/Lilly Endowment Peer Groups of Preachers

1500+

Worship Symposium (with The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) & Calvin University)

DID YOU KNOW CEP had 14,500 unique visitors per month to their website

# OUR STUDENTS

26

Number of countries represented in the student body

**Master of Divinity: 159** 

Master of Arts: 46 (English & Spanish)

**Master of Theological Studies: 28** 

**Master of Theology: 69** 

**Doctor of Philosophy: 34** 

**Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC): 36** 

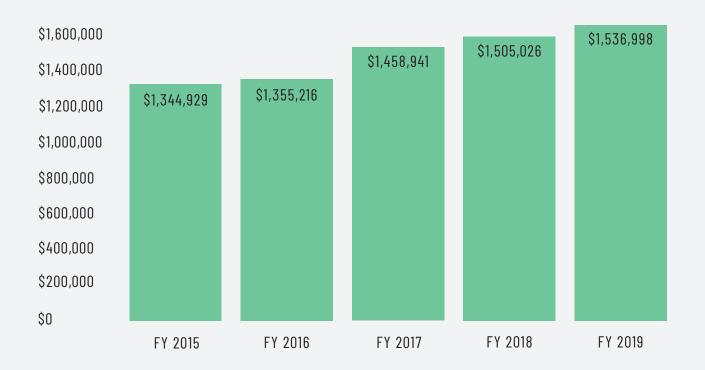
Latina/o Ministry Certificates: 44

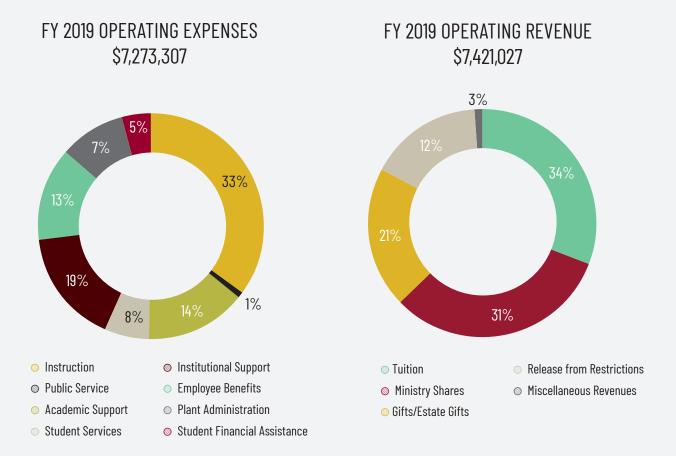
Faculty & Staff: 67

Certificate in Bible Instruction/Ministry Leadership: 5

Non-Degree: 20

### Annual Fund Gift Support





### **Board of Trustees**

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

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