

# FORUM

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY • VOLUME 30 NUMBER 2 • SUMMER/FALL 2022

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Bienvenidos

# Hospitality



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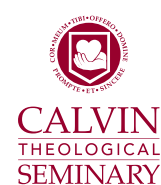
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# The Gift of Hospitality

We are made in the image of God. That profound biblical insight grounds who we are and our place in this world. It also should affect how we treat one another as fellow image-bearers of God.

This Forum issue may not directly address some of the “hot topics” in the church, but it certainly should affect how we approach such topics.

In an age of polarization, the work of coming together and opening up our hearts and our homes to others is a counter-cultural posture and service. Hospitality runs against the grain because hospitality is not dependent on our agreeing with others.

We are not to just extend hospitality to people who are “just like us” or who we know already agree with us. Hospitality has a spine and it stiffens to walk across rooms to listen and learn from others – including those who may be different from us.

As I write these words, I have been deeply involved in two different contexts. The first context is attending my 13th in-person Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The second context is my mother's recent death and our memories of her gifts.

I will link these two contexts by this one word – hospitality. The best of Synod shows up when people reached across the aisle and engaged each other by the Fruit of the Spirit as brothers and sisters in Christ. The worst is when they don't and humility can become hubris in a moment.

One of the “best memories” that I have of my mother is that whenever there was someone new at church, she would usually invite them over for Sunday dinner. My mother had a way of extending the family table to include others even when my father was not always so sure.

May you be encouraged to remember and renew your commitment to return to one of the key ways that Christians have always expressed and shown the love of God in and to this world that He still so loves.

Let us be hospitable to others! Let us love one another in words and deeds!



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**JUL MEDENBLIK**  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
President





# The Hospitality of God

CORNELIUS PLANTINGA  
PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**Over the years I've dipped into etiquette books quite often, particularly those of Judith Martin, aka Miss Manners. I do it because the books are deceptively important. On the surface they are about domestic niceties—how to eat (in many cultures, no audible slurping, please), what to wear (no sleeveless tees to a funeral), and when to send out a wedding invitation (earlier than you think).**

But good etiquette rests on deeper foundations than we might suppose. Most of etiquette is good manners. And most of good manners is good morals. What the etiquette books are really talking about is justice (don't cut in line) or respect (don't disgust other people unnecessarily). And, of course, striving for justice and respect stems from the call to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Half of what Miss Manners says belongs in a sermon.

In no case is good etiquette more plainly about neighbor love than in the case of hospitality. It's obvious, isn't it? Hospitality is all about making room for others and then helping them to flourish in the room you have made. You welcome them to a meal and feed them. You welcome them into your home and house them. You welcome them into your life and embrace them. A symbol of hospitality is open arms. So, the hospitality industries (principally restaurants and hotels) teach their employees never to fold their arms in the presence of guests because this move is unwelcoming.

Etiquette is good manners; good manners are good morals; good morals stem from love of neighbor. And hospitality is classic love of neighbor. That's why it's all over the Bible. Welcoming sojourners. Welcoming Gentiles. Welcoming tax collectors. Welcoming sinners.

Remarkably, our acts of welcoming register in heaven. It never fails to surprise me that in the most vivid portrait of final judgment in all the gospels, namely in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, Jesus' interest centers where we aren't looking. It never fails

to surprise me what Jesus Christ points to first. What's the standard for dividing people? How do you tell whether somebody is fit for heaven?

You look for hospitality. "I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

The readiness to welcome a stranger. The readiness to hand somebody the food or drink they need. Who would ever have thought that a person's destiny could seemingly hang on this homely virtue?

The truth is that we human beings were created to spend ourselves. The truth is that we thrive only when we help others to thrive. And the reason is that we have been created in the image of God. Even at the center of the universe, life hums with the glad give and take of hospitality.

Let's see how this is so.

In John 17 Jesus' hour has come. He's only one chapter from the place where Judas and the soldiers will meet him with their torches and weapons, and what does Jesus do? He prays for his disciples. He thinks of them and prays for them. He thinks even of the next generation of disciples who will be gathered through evangelism, and he prays for them too. Protect them, he prays. Holy Father, protect them. Sanctify them. Unite them. Fill them with joy. Let me be in them, and you in me, and they in us. Let your love, which has been my own life's blood from before the foundation of the world—let your love be in them and I in them. Let your love be in all the generations who will believe the truth on account of the disciples' evangelism.



# Etiquette is good manners; good manners are good morals; good morals stem from love of neighbor. And hospitality is classic love of neighbor.



So, Jesus says (vs. 20ff) "I ask not only on behalf of [the disciples], but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

In, in, in, one, one, one. Starting with Gregory of Nazianus, and spreading all over the place, Greek and Latin fathers reflected on this mysterious in-ness that partly constitutes the Trinitarian persons' oneness and developed a doctrine of the persons' perichoresis, or circumincessio. The fathers were talking about the divine persons' interpenetration. The idea, especially on the Greek side, is that each divine person envelops the other two. At the center of the universe, self-giving love is the dynamic currency of the Trinitarian life of God. The persons within God exalt each other, commune with each other, defer to one another. I know it sounds a little strange, but we might almost say that the persons within God show each other divine hospitality. Each person harbors the other two at the center of his being. In a constant movement of overture and acceptance, each person envelops and encircles the two others.

Supposing that hospitality means to make room for others and to help them flourish in the

room you have made, I think we could say that hospitality thrives within the triune life of God and then spreads wonderfully to the creatures of God—"that they may be one as we are one," Jesus says. The one who spreads the hospitality is a mediator, a person who "works in the middle." We ordinarily think of Jesus Christ as the mediator of redemption, but I think we can say that those mysterious places in the New Testament that speak of creation happening "through Christ" reveal that the mediator of redemption is also the mediator of creation. Christ is the person designated to work in the middle both times.

The act of creation itself fits the pattern of hospitality. In creation, God expands the realm of being, making room for billions of galaxies, each galaxy comprising perhaps 100 billion stars, and most of the stars with their own orbital systems. God generates all this galactic wealth, and inside it, the one planet that we know, a planet inhabited not only by salamanders and sandhill cranes and fringed gentians, but also by human creatures who are living icons of God himself.

In the Incarnation one of these creatures, the fierce and blessed Virgin Mary opens herself to the God who comes as a stranger. Mary makes room in her heart and in her womb for this holy stranger and helps him to flourish there. God comes so often as a stranger, and not the least as the child of Mary. Advent and Christmas therefore celebrate the hospitality of the blessed Virgin Mary, mother of the incarnate Son of God.

**"In the brave new world of Christ, people defer to each other, welcome one another, make room in their hearts for each other."**


Maybe that's why the gospel of the Son of God is like the gospel of the law and prophets: it makes room for strangers and for sojourners, for people with disabilities and people with a past. As the saying goes, "even the best people have a past; even the worst have a future."

The New Testament gospel brings a lovely novelty: in Christ there is room now for Gentiles and for slaves and for women. In the brave new world of Christ, people defer to each other, welcome one another, make room in their hearts for each other. In Trinity, creation, incarnation, and redemption, the seemingly homely virtue of hospitality shows up as a first-class virtue of God and therefore of the image of God.

That's why we want it, and that's why we celebrate it.



**CORNELIUS PLANTINGA, PH.D.**  
President Emeritus of Calvin  
Theological Seminary



# Hospitality in the Doctrine of Election

MARY L. VANDEN BERG  
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## There are few topics in Reformed theology that cause as much general angst as the doctrine of election.

At least this is true in my classroom. Everything is fairly comfortable as we cruise through the fine points of salvation until we get to the question of election. Regardless of whether we consider double or single predestination, the idea that God chooses some and not others doesn't sit very well with many people. It seems, at least on the surface, that leaving the choice to us would be preferable. But would it?

The doctrine of election states that before the creation of the world, God ordained some for eternal life and passed over others. The idea of God's sovereign choice arises from biblical texts like Ephesians 1, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his son" (v. 4). This choosing or predestination is done out of God's love through Christ, in whom we become God's beloved adopted children (v. 5). A similar teaching can be found in Romans 9.

The beauty of God's sovereign choice in election is that it emphasizes our complete inability to save ourselves, and God's immeasurable grace in choosing those who would not, on their own, choose him. Prior to God's grace invading our lives, we are like the abandoned, unwashed, naked newborn in Ezekiel's allegory about Israel (Ez. 16). We are helpless, unable to do anything to bring ourselves into a personal relationship with God. Recognizing human inability to choose God, John Calvin makes clear that we are not elect because of anything we have done, or because we are more holy than others. We are neither holy nor deserving of God's grace. Rather, we are elect to be holy (Eph. 1:4) for the purpose of doing good works (Eph. 2:10), works that ultimately bring praise and glory to God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, III.22.2-3



This is not an isolated teaching but follows a more general pattern throughout Scripture. We see it, for example, in God's call to Abram in Gen. 12. God tells Abram to leave Haran where he is comfortable, and follow God "to the land I will show you." This command in itself is quite disconcerting. I can imagine myself wanting to know where we were headed, what route we would take, what it would be like in that place. Would the land be good? Would the weather be nice? Maybe I would look it up on Google Maps or Wikipedia to try to find out more about where I was supposed to be going. Of course we have no record of what Abram thought. What we do know is that he obediently left, "as the LORD had told him (v. 4)." We also know that God blessed him, promising to make him into a great nation, to make his name great, and, significantly, to bless all the people on earth through him (v. 2-3). Abram is called into a relationship with God and blessed in order to be a source of blessing to all nations. Abram will begin the restoration of God's original blessing on all humans in Gen. 1. The election and blessing of Abram and his descendants, in other words, has outward momentum toward serving the world.

One way to consider this service is through the lens of hospitality. Cornelius Plantinga suggests that hospitality is making room for someone and helping that person flourish in that room.<sup>2</sup> Creation entails God making space in the Divine economy for humans, giving us what we need to flourish, and most importantly, giving us a place to live in God's own presence. After our rejection of the boundaries of that original space, God once again makes provisions for us to flourish in his presence by calling a people to be his own who will mediate God's blessing to the world. We see a glimpse of God's people blessing the world in Joseph, whose wise service in Egypt results in all the countries of the world being fed during a famine (Gen. 41:57). The one true mediator of the blessing is revealed, however, in the incarnation.

## The beauty of God's sovereign choice in election is that it emphasizes our complete inability to save ourselves, and God's immeasurable grace in choosing those who would not, on their own, choose him.

In the incarnation we have the opportunity to see the hospitality of God in action through the life and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus's life exemplifies both the opening up of himself to others, and the pouring himself out for others that is a hallmark of hospitality. In Christ, God opened himself to the world in a new way, taking on human flesh and blood, experiencing what we experience, pouring himself out for us so that we could be blessed through him (Phil. 2:6-11). Our representation of God to the world must be modeled on this sort of opening up and pouring out for the sake of blessing others. God's election of us is for the purpose of blessing those around us. We are not elect to be like the priest and Levite who found reasons to ignore the wounded man on the side of the road. We are elect to bless the wounded, the prisoner, the immigrant, the refugee through expending ourselves on their behalf. More precisely, we are elect for hospitality toward others that represents God's hospitality toward us.



The implications of this are numerous. At the very least, we have no need to sit and wonder about who is elect and who is not. That question is irrelevant along with the question of why God chooses some and not others. What is relevant to daily life is that the elect are called to serve; that the fruit of election is self-giving hospitality. This self-expenditure will include providing for the physical needs, like the Samaritan did with the wounded man, but also inviting others into relationship with God, the source of all blessing.

The doctrine of election not only calls God's people to a life of hospitality, but also reflects God's hospitality toward us. Herman Bavinck writes about election that "at bottom the Reformed confessions are more magnanimous and broader in outlook than any other Christian confession." The reason for this, he writes, is because the Reformed confessions "locate the ultimate and most profound source of salvation solely in God's good pleasure, in his eternal compassion, in his unfathomable mercy, in the unsearchable riches of his grace, grace that is both omniscient and free."<sup>3</sup> Or, to sum up, we could say election is located in God's perfect hospitality, a hospitality that we are called to reflect.



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<sup>2</sup> See related article in this issue.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4 "Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation," ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 727.





# Misreading Jesus' Command to Serve

CORY WILLSON

JAKE AND BETSY TULS PROFESSOR OF MISSIOLOGY AND MISSIONAL MINISTRY

## Who Doesn't Love Playing the Host?

I love hosting dinner parties.

I love researching new recipes for dishes like Moroccan lamb, Texas-style smoked brisket, and Bavarian pork shanks.

I love waking up before dawn to get the smoker up and running, marinate the meat, knead the sourdough, and prep for the big cook.

But I mostly love what the meal makes possible – the joining together of people around our table to connect deeply over conversation, laughter,

and even tears. After the long winter of pandemic isolation, these little reunions nourish my soul.

My mother is the one to whom I most attribute this love for hosting, but my Armenian aunts and Greek neighbors were also early influences. There are certain smells that unlock memories and emotions from past gatherings around the dinner table. I treasure these gifts of hospitality and community-building that were handed down to me.

As I think back, I'm not sure I've had nearly as many examples of how to be a guest. If we learn

largely through imitation, I've had a plethora of models for how to be a generous host, and a dearth for being a gracious guest. I know what it is to approach the role of host as an act of hospitality, but I am unskilled with the role of guest as an act of humble receptivity.

Recently I read the book *Joining Jesus* by Moses Chung and Chris Meehan, and have reflected on the breakdown of human connection that occurs when reciprocity of giving and receiving

is missing, when we habitually assume the role of host and avoid being the guest.<sup>1</sup> To be a host is good, but it is only by first taking the posture of a guest that we follow the way of Jesus (Luke 10:1-9). Faithfulness to his message and mission means that we should assume the role of a guest and exhibit humility and receptivity to those to whom we are sent.<sup>2</sup> But the church in the West has struggled to embrace the role of guest in its engagement with others.

<sup>1</sup> Moses Chung and Chris Meehan, *Joining Jesus: Ordinary People at the Edges of the Church* (Cascade Books, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> I could fill this entire essay with nothing but examples from the Gospels of Jesus as guest. Here are just a handful of examples in the gospel of Luke alone: 5:29-39; 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 14:1-24; 19:1-27; 24:13-35. In these stories Jesus shows us how the posture of guest shapes the role of being a host, and it is this reciprocity that we need to imitate. Anthony J. Gittins has written a powerful essay on this subject, "Beyond Hospitality? The Missionary Status and Role Revisited," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 330 (1994).



# To be a host is good, but it is only by first taking the posture of a guest that we follow the way of Jesus

Luke 10:1-9

## Always Assuming the Role of Host is a Problem

A few years ago, I participated in a workshop on pastoral care with Timothy Leadership Training. One person in the group shared his experience as a refugee in America. “Ever since coming to this country,” he said, “people have been very generous and giving to me and my family. We are very grateful. But I’ve noticed that whenever someone comes to visit our home, they refuse any food or drink I offer them.” Then with deep frustration he explained, “Unless you are willing to receive from me, I cannot open my heart to you!”

In the rush to give and to help, no one gave him the dignity of being the host. No one understood how taking the posture of a guest could be an act of honoring him. To do that would require that we face our own discomfort with vulnerability and see ourselves as those in need of learning and receiving from him.

Christine Pohl has written poignantly about the subtle ways our desire to be the host undermines intimacy and reciprocity. She writes, “There is a kind of hospitality that keeps people needy strangers while fostering an illusion of relationship and connection. It both disempowers and domesticates guests while it reinforces the hosts’ power, control, and sense of generosity.”<sup>3</sup> Pohl’s words drive home the truth that the well-intentioned hospitality offered to my friend undermines the kind of interdependent relationships that Jesus calls his church to embody. Sadly, my friend’s experience is not a “one-off” example in church history.

Nearly a century ago, theologian and missionary J.H. Bavinck sounded the alarm about this very pattern in the life and mission of Western churches. He noted how when European missionaries went off to Asia, Africa, and Latin America, they took on the role of host even though they were in every sense

a guest in those lands. Prior to their arrival, these countries “had been already penetrated by commerce or had already come under the control of Western colonial empires. The work of the missions was thus inevitably involved in exerting cultural influence, and frequently missions voluntarily rendered an important service in the process by which the West mastered the whole world.”<sup>4</sup> Although they entered lands where they should have seen themselves as guests, the Western Christians regularly assumed the role of host and owners of spaces they entered. Such “inverted hospitality,” as Willie Jennings calls it, ended up making the recipients into guests in their own home.<sup>5</sup>

Bavinck argues that although these missionaries had noble aims of proclaiming the gospel message, nevertheless their actions did real harm and betrayed their sense of cultural superiority. Paradoxically, the basic dispositions the Reformed confessions call us to are humility, gratitude, and receptivity. These are central attributes of our identity as outsiders and guests who have been included at Christ’s table by radical grace.

## Embracing Our Confessional Identity as Guests

I find Abraham Kuyper’s reflections on the Three Forms of Unity instructive for understanding how our confessions can instill in us the posture

of guest. He helps us make the essential move from our confession that “I am depraved and sinful” to “WE are a community of depraved sinners.” Kuyper knew that although many Reformed folks accepted the doctrine of Total Depravity when it was applied to individuals, they resisted applying this doctrine to the community.<sup>6</sup> And so he writes with urgency: even though “the church is the salvation of the world,” nevertheless, “the church remains so far below its own standard.”<sup>7</sup> In light of our Reformed Confessions we should not be surprised when we find that “the world turns out to be better than expected and the church worse than expected.”<sup>8</sup>

Professing our confessional identity means that we see ourselves as part of a community of loved creatures of God who have been deeply infected by sin and estranged from God. And yet, by Christ’s redeeming grace and the power of the Spirit, we are no longer outsiders and strangers but are given the role of honored guests at the Father’s table. Living into this confessional identity means that postures of humility, gratitude, and receptivity at the foot of the cross (and reinforced every time we come to the Lord’s table) should guide how we relate to others. Instead of assuming the privileged role of host, our identity as guests of God should open us up to honor others as our hosts and receive what they give to us.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Eerdmans, 1999), p. 119 (italics mine).

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (P&R Publishing, 1993), p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 8-9; Pohl, *Making Room*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace: God’s Gifts for a Fallen World*, vol. 2 (Lexham Press, 2019), pp. 12-14.

<sup>7</sup> Kuyper, *Common Grace*, vol. 2, p. 6 (italics mine).

<sup>8</sup> Kuyper, *Common Grace*, vol. 2, p. 10 (italics original). Kuyper interacts with the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession in reinforcing the communal dimensions of total depravity and the church’s ongoing sin and weakness (ibid., pp. 12-14).

<sup>9</sup> Readers familiar with Kuyper’s writings and his blatant racism will realize that I am “reading Kuyper against Kuyper.” That is, I am selecting parts of Kuyper’s thought to help address deep sins and racism present in his life and thought. To read others who have paved the way for reading Kuyper in this way, see Richard Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short Personal Introduction* (Eerdmans, 2011); Vincent Bacote, *Reckoning With Race and Performing the Good News: In Search of a Better Evangelical Theology* (Brill, 2020); and Jeff Liou and David Robinson, “Our Racist Inheritance: A Conversation Kuyperians Need to Have,” *Comment* (May 14, 2015) <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/our-racist-inheritance-a-conversation-kuyperians-need-to-have/> (accessed 7.6.21).





## Living Our Confessional Identity as Guests

Over the past seven years I have been invited to speak to various churches and groups about how to engage in effective ministry outreach to their neighbors. These Christians have caught a vision for the church's role in joining the Spirit's redemptive presence in their neighborhood or city outside the walls of the church. This shift from inward to outward focus is a good movement that I try to celebrate and nurture.

I try to help churches do the difficult work of living into our confessional identity by facing their own vulnerability. I want them to see that they need not only what God has to give them but also what those they are seeking to serve have to give them. Yes, they are bearers of a message from God, but that does not preclude their responsibility to first listen, learn, and receive what God wants to give them through the hospitality of others. This is one of the early lessons that Peter and the Apostles had to learn after Jesus ascended to the Father (see Acts 10). To be a faithful messenger of the gospel requires that we follow the Spirit's guidance as we humbly take the role of a guest.

Teaching at Calvin Seminary means that I have students from those same places in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that Bavinck discussed. A few years ago, our missionary in residence, Ann Kapteyn, gathered a panel of international students to share about their experience of hosting short-term missions teams. Many of these mission teams were sent with good intentions and noble motives—"to be the hands and feet of Jesus" (Matt. 25:31-40), they were often told. The students' stories highlighted the clear distinction between those teams who came with the posture of guest and those who came as hosts looking only to give.

We need to rethink how we interpret verses like Matthew 25 and Acts 20:35 ("It is better to give than to receive"). Are we reading these passages with the mentality of a host or a guest? If we interpret them from the vantage point of a host, we undermine the intimacy and reciprocity that God desires for his church.

## The Act of Being a Guest Validates Our Message of God's Gracious Hospitality

Richard Mouw once wrote a chapter titled "Abraham Kuyper, Meet Mother Teresa" as a corrective to Christian triumphalism.<sup>10</sup> In it he offered a corrective to us Kuyper-quoting Reformed folk who emphasize the Lordship of Jesus over every square inch but who presume to take the position of host rather than a guest in those spaces. While we boldly proclaim Christ's rule over all creation, we must resist the temptation to inhabit those places as owners and rulers.

Mouw's wisdom needs to be repeated again and again. Mother Teresa's mantra was not "I am acting as the hands and feet of Jesus," but rather "How is Christ's presence already evident in those I encounter?" Her practice was to assume the posture of guest and receive the presence of Jesus "in the distressing disguise of the poor."<sup>11</sup> It is that posture that we need as we inhabit Christ's (not OUR) square inches.

Every year at commencement, another class graduates from CTS from a variety of degree programs. As each student hears their name called and crosses the stage to shake the hand of the president, they receive their diploma and a hand towel printed with the motto "Called to Serve" in bright red letters. It is an honor to participate in this sending service of women and men to serve Christ and his church. It is my hope and prayer that they interpret that charge in light of the gospel story of Jesus, who became a guest so that we can be partakers of the Father's gracious hospitality.



**CORY WILLSON, PH.D.**  
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<sup>10</sup> Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (IVP Books, 2010), pp. 159-169.

<sup>11</sup> Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers* (New World Library, 2010), p. 33.





## MISSIONARY-IN-RESIDENCE

# Bringing Global Mission Experience to Calvin Seminary

**MARGARET MWENDA**  
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

Calvin Theological Seminary has been equipping “individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word”<sup>1</sup> for more than 145 years, and countless CTS graduates have gone on to serve as missionaries in pastoral and lay leadership capacities across the globe.

We are grateful that many of these graduates have returned to Calvin Seminary to serve in our Distinguished Missionary-in-Residence program. This program, which was started in 2010, is open to missionaries who have served outside the United States and Canada for a minimum of four years and are now transitioning to a life in North America.

Our missionaries-in-residence teach or participate in courses, give lectures on missions and related subjects, and interact closely with faculty members and students. By sharing their life lessons and global ministry experiences with the CTS community, they play a significant role in preparing current students to serve in culturally diverse contexts.

<sup>1</sup> Calvin Theological Seminary’s mission statement <https://www.calvinseminary.edu/about/vision>



In this article, we have selected five missionaries who have served in the Missionary-in-Residence program at Calvin Seminary in the last 10 years to share their experiences, including the call to global ministry and how their global ministry context experiences might have prepared CTS students to serve in culturally diverse contexts.

### Ann Kapteyn, MTS 1993

Ann Kapteyn served with Wycliffe Bible Translators for almost 25 years where her job was to help local translators improve their translation to be more exegetically accurate. Her calling to this ministry was a combination of growing up and living in various global contexts as a child including England, Australia and a local Hispanic community in Arizona. Combining her theological education, the study of languages, and cross-cultural experiences, Kapteyn's calling into Bible translation ministry was a great fit. As a missionary she served in Brazil, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic.

Transitioning to Grand Rapids, Michigan, from living overseas, Kapteyn joined Calvin Seminary as a missionary-in-residence for two years from 2016 to 2018. During this time, she taught a couple of courses which, she says “explored cultural differences and how we might present the Good News differently or minister differently from culture to culture.” She also led discussions in language classes, demonstrating how languages around the world work differently from English and from Greek and Hebrew and the challenges that arise in Bible translation to various languages. Kapteyn shared one of her cultural lessons with students:

**“I loved interacting with students at Calvin Seminary... my life was enriched by these interactions.”**



Kapteyn in Bangui, Central African Republic with Ange Marius Pagbanda, Coordinator of Trauma Healing Services for ACATBA (the Central African Association for Bible Translation and Literacy).

“We learned that some cultures focus on guilt and innocence, whereas others put more emphasis on shame and honor or fear and power. We also noted that all of these themes are present in the Scriptures, and that different cultures will notice and pull out different themes in Scripture.”

Kapytey also learned from her experience: “I loved interacting with students at Calvin Seminary in the context of formation groups and ESL groups, and my life was enriched by these interactions.”

Kapteyn continues to serve in Bible translation with SIL and has since earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary.



### Albert Strydhorst, MDiv. 1993

Albert Strydhorst served as a missionary-in-residence from 2012 to 2014. His calling to serve as a missionary grew from his cross-cultural experiences during the mid-80s while at the Reformed Bible College (now Kuyper College) and after a year-long internship in Nigeria in 1990 as a Calvin Seminary student. Strydhorst and his wife Carolyn felt drawn to ministry among unreached people and served among the Avadi people of Northwestern Nigeria for seven years, following which he served as Director of Christian Reformed World Mission (now Resonate Global Mission) from 2000 to 2012.

Reflecting on his experience of being a front-line missionary reaching people in Nigeria and connecting with Nigerian churches for partnership in ministry, Strydhorst shared his greatest lesson for students discerning their call to global mission work as follows:

“My experience among unreached people in West Africa – the Avadi of Nigeria and the Fulani of Mali and Guinea – helped me to communicate to students at CTS the urgency of gospel communication to those who have never heard. At the same time, my connection with large and missionary-sending churches of Nigeria

helped me to communicate that missions is not a matter of ‘from the west to the rest,’ but is ‘from everywhere to everywhere.’” Strydhorst also reminded students that ministry means that “we are partners in ministry with others from around the globe; interdependence is needed in missions activity today more than ever.”

After his time as a missionary-in-residence, Strydhorst has continued serving the global church through the Timothy Leadership Training (TLT), now under RaiseUp Global Ministries, a ministry of the CRCNA.

### Jeff Bos, MDiv. 2003

Jeff Bos served as missionary-in-residence for one year from July 2017 to June 2018. Reflecting on his call to global missions, Bos shares that during his Seminary years he “struggled with God” but through a yearlong internship in Bangladesh, sponsored by Christian Reformed World Missions (now Renotate Global), his calling to go to God's world became clearer. Bos said: “What had led me to seminary was a search for Truth and for God. What led me away from home in North America to South Asia was a search for myself. I found God and myself in

the urban jungles of Dhaka from 2003-2017.”

Reflecting on how his global mission experience helped him equip students for their calling within or outside the North American context, Bos shared the following:

“I preach and teach a God who lives among and in the poor, the destitute and the marginalized. I saw joy in the slums that I couldn't fathom. If wealthy persons, like myself, are going to fit through the eye of the needle, then we need to get out and go



“What had led me to seminary was a search for Truth and for God. I found God and myself in the urban jungles of Dhaka...”

Troy Bierma, MDiv. 2005, ThM 2007

Troy Bierma served as a missionary-in-residence in 2017 to 2019. Growing up in a Christain home in Sioux Center Iowa, Bierma experienced the Holy Spirit stirring up a restlessness in him that led him to relocate first for work to the Netherlands and then to Australia and New Zealand. For the first time, Bierma experienced a new language and a culture and he felt the world opening up in new ways that led him to think deeply about



down because that is the direction that justice flows. If the Kingdom of God is for the poor, then the best place to seek it is among the poor.”

Bos also observed that the global church in Bangladesh and the diaspora Christian community living among Muslims in Oman, places where Bos has served, have “a hope and a faith that North Americans desperately need,” in other words, North Americans have the opportunity to learn from the global church.

After one year as a missionary-in-residence, Bos returned to global mission work and is currently serving in the Sultanate of Oman at the Al Amana Center.

his childhood faith. During his travels, Bierma engaged in spiritual conversations with “fellow wanderers” who were also searching for their calling and faith. This led him to Kuyper College and then Calvin Seminary where God affirmed his calling to serve unreached people groups.

After a yearlong internship in the Philippines, Bierma and his wife Faith served as missionaries in Bangladesh and Nepal for ten years. On returning to the United States as a missionary-in-residence at Calvin Seminary, Bierma shared his experiences of engaging with non-Christian religions and worldviews. His conversations with students at CTS had an impact that he describes as follows:

“Classroom engagement and casual conversations helped several students consider their own potential calling abroad, as well as the increasingly cross-cultural and religious nature of ministry in North America.”

At the end of his service as a missionary-in-residence, Bierma went to serve as the Resident Outreach Pastor at Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, and Co-Director of Grounds/Facilities Manager at the Hermitage. Bierma is also currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam).



Stan Kruis, MDiv. 1984

Stan Kruis has served as a missionary-in-residence since July 2021 and plans to go through June 2023. Kruis’ call to the missionary field was as a result of meeting a family that was serving in Australia and hearing about their work overseas. While at Calvin Seminary as a student he joined the Missions Club and had a missions professor, with both experiences drawing him more towards missions. Seeking to affirm his calling, Kruis signed up for a year of service in the Philippines and later returned as a missionary for long-term service where he served for 26 years in the Philippines and three years in China.

As a missionary-in-residence, Kruis strives to bring stories about ministry that are both realistic and balanced, sharing both the joys and the challenges of ministry. He further reflects on the impact of his ministry on student formation at Calvin Seminary:

“My experience in several mission contexts enables me to challenge students with perspectives, values, and cultural patterns...”



My experience in several mission contexts enables me to challenge students with perspectives, values, and cultural patterns that they otherwise may not have considered. This sometimes includes perspectives on Scripture passages that challenge them to think in new ways. For example, through my experience and understanding of different ‘cultural lenses’ I may be able to challenge them to critique North American values and practices that the church tends to accept without much question. These challenges will help students serve with greater wisdom whether in North America or elsewhere [and] also deal with the cultural diversity they will face in this continent.”



MARGARET MWENDA, PH.D.  
Chief Operations Officer



# ALUMNI SERVING AROUND THE WORLD

For over 145 years, the primary mission of Calvin Seminary has been to equip pastors and leaders for the flourishing of the church.



## LLOYD WICKER

**Year of graduation:** 2003

**What is your current place of work/leadership?**

U.S. Navy, Command Chaplain of USS Ashland (LSD-48)

**How does your work serve the mission of the Church?**

Chaplaincy is a specialized ministry of healing and reconciliation. It is an extension of God's activity and mission in the world coming alongside those who are hurting, in crisis, uprooted or dislocated. In my work as this ship's chaplain, I experience life every day with my "congregation". We work, live, eat, and sleep in a community on the ship. They call me "Chaps" and this highly relational ministry has allowed me to be their trusted pastor and shepherd. I lead worship services, offer Bible studies, provide confidential pastoral care, and advise

my senior leadership on matters of religion, ethics and command morale. I also have opportunities to lead community service projects giving sailors opportunities to serve as well as meeting with and encouraging local community leaders around the world. My calling church cares for me as they would any missionary and an important mission field. Many Sailors and Marines are young and seeking to discern who they are and how they fit into the world. Most have some kind of religious past that is still there but not much of a priority in their lives. This makes for a tremendous "ministry of presence" whereby conversations can help them (re)connect with God and strengthen their faith foundation.

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?** Calvin Seminary gave me a solid theological foundation and Reformed worldview. To see the world and how God is actively at work in it in every sphere of life has been perhaps the most important thing I have taken into my life and ministry. The academic rigor was all the more appreciated after I graduated and entered into ordained ministry. The relationships that were built at CTS have continued to be important as well – to include fellow students, faculty, and staff.



## AMOS WINARTO OEI

**Years at Calvin Seminary:** 2007-2012 **Year of graduation:** 2012

**What is your current place of work/leadership?** President Aletheia Theological Seminary Lawang, East Java, Indonesia. Chairman of the Department of Dogma and Teaching of the Synod of the Church of Christ the Lord in Indonesia.

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?**

I was formed spiritually, mentally and academically by my time of study at Calvin Seminary. Particularly, I learned to have a

heart offered to God sincerely and promptly as a response to his call into ministry.

**How does your work serve the mission of the Church?** My work serves the mission of the Church by preparing seminarians to become transformative God's servants for churches in Indonesia and abroad.



## DARIUSZ BRYCKO

**Years at Calvin Seminary:** 2002–2009

**Year of graduation:** 2009

**What is your current place of work/leadership?**

I currently work as College Minister at First Presbyterian Church (ARP) in Columbia, South Carolina.

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?** As I reflect back on my time at Calvin Seminary, I see the following three areas as the most formative and influential: methodology learned from Prof. Muller, Berkhof-Bavinck systematics, and an Aristotelian philosophical framework/natural law ethics.

**How does your work serve the mission of the Church?** Our church is located just a few blocks away from the University of South Carolina, and some of my tasks (in addition to regular ministerial duties) are to lead college Sunday school and take care of the students who attend our congregation. I also continue to publish and translate theological literature into the Polish language for a non-profit organization called Tolle Lege Institute, which was established while I was still at Calvin Seminary.

**Quote:** I grew up in Warsaw, Poland, as a Protestant Christian in a majority Roman Catholic country. By “minority”, I mean that there are more Protestants in Saudi Arabia than in Poland – less than 1% of the population in Poland is Protestant. I pursued my doctoral studies at CTS in historical theology under Dr. Richard Muller with the intention of returning to Warsaw, and finally did so with my family in 2015. I’m continually amazed at how essential my CTS training was for the work I now do every day, both in my ministry of Word and sacrament in the Warsaw church plant of the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Lithuania, and educationally through Tolle Lege



**“The thorough knowledge of primary sources and sound methodology I gained at CTS is useful to me in every sermon I preach, every publishing project Tolle Lege undertakes, and every conversation I have.”**

Institute, the NGO I founded in 2007 (while still a student at CTS), which now operates a study center and publishing house in Warsaw. When it comes to religion and piety, life in Poland today somewhat resembles life in Europe before the Reformation. The thorough knowledge of primary sources and sound methodology I gained at CTS is useful to me in every sermon I preach, every publishing project Tolle Lege undertakes, and every conversation I have. Crucially, Poland lacks Protestant clergy who are both committed to the historic Reformed confessions and able to interact on an academic level with the highly trained Roman Catholic intelligentsia, and I believe God in His providence used CTS to prepare me for this challenging and important task. I couldn’t do it without my American wife, Brooke (formerly Levitske), who graduated from Calvin.

## WON TAEK LIM

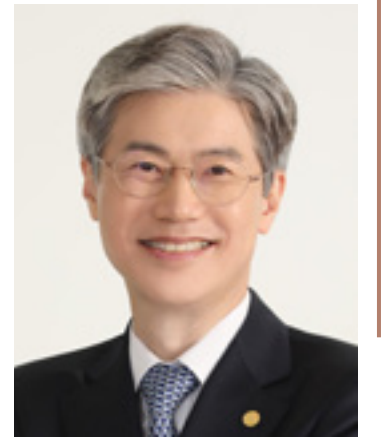
**Years at Calvin Seminary:** Th.M. program, January 1993 - May 1994. Ph.D. program, September 1994 -2000.

**Year of graduation:** 2000

**What is your current place of work/leadership?** Teaching Historical Theology & Church History at Baekseok University, Seoul, Korea.

**How does your work serve the mission of the Church?** Since 2001 I have taught the students at Baekseok University. At first I taught Church History to undergraduates for some years. These days I teach graduate students. Most of them are M.Div. students, and some of them are Ph.D. and Th.M. students. I try to equip my students for serving the church as sincere pastors.

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?** I came to know that the Reformed theologian can have a very comprehensive mind that embraces the Gospel and our society together. I learned from my teachers at Calvin both academic punctuality and spiritual generosity. Calvin Seminary nourished me with Jesus’ love that I also try to impart to my students at present and in the future.



## TAKASHI YOSHIDA

**Years at Calvin Seminary:** 1996-1999    **Year of graduation:** 2011

**What is your current place of work/leadership?** President of Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary, as well as a pastor of a local congregation

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?** As a Ph.D. student, I have been trained and taught in what a scholar is supposed to be, what “academic” means, and how a scholarly work is to be done. As a seminary student, my eyes were widely opened to the diversity and reality of the Christian world through the fellowship with North-American and especially overseas students. As a Christian, I was deeply grateful to have experienced the Reformed church life, in many ways, in Grand Rapids.

## PHILIP WANDAWA

**Years at Calvin Seminary:** 2003 – 2011    **Year of graduation:** 2012

**What is your current place of work/leadership?** Principal of Kampala Evangelical School of Theology, KEST

**In what way(s) were you formed by your time of study at Calvin Seminary?** Calvin Seminary introduced me to Reformed theology in perhaps the best and most rigorous way possible. As a member of a Reformed church that meets on campus—Woodlawn CRC—I experienced Reformed Theology as a lived tradition first hand. As a doctoral student at the Seminary I scoured the heights and plumbed the depths of Reformed theological thought, and drank from the wells of its spirituality. I found its twin emphasis, on creation and providence on the one hand and the gospel on the other, an apt theological framework for wrestling with the issues and conundrums in my own African context, namely in the encounter between Christian faith and, what someone has called, the “perennial spiritualities” of my African religious tradition, past and present.

**How does your work serve the mission of the Church?** KEST equips men and women for works of ministry and service in Church and society through formal and non-formal programs.



# New Faculty Hires

## DR. YUDHA THianto

Dr. Yudha Thianto comes to CTS with over 20 years of teaching experience as a Professor of Theology at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. Prior to serving at Trinity Christian College, Dr. Thianto was an adjunct professor at Cornerstone University, Calvin Seminary, a visiting lecturer at Reformed Evangelical Seminary in Jakarta, Indonesia and currently serves as a visiting professor at Southeast Asia Bible Seminary in Malang, Indonesia.

“We are grateful that the CTS Board was able to learn more about Dr. Thianto during his board interview in May and are excited to have him serve as a new faculty member,” President Jul Medenblik said in an email to the seminary community announcing Dr. Thianto’s appointment. “Speaking on behalf of the search team and faculty, I would say that we were impressed and encouraged by Dr. Thianto’s teaching ability, scholarship and commitment to serve the global church.”

Gary Burge, former dean of the faculty, echoed the same excitement. “Dr. Thianto is a native of Indonesia and will bring remarkable global awareness to our classrooms. He is a dynamic and thought-provoking teacher, a recognized Calvin scholar, and someone who will inspire and challenge our students. We are eager to greet him on campus.”



**“I am looking forward to working with and for international students at CTS, as a way to engage with the global church.”**

“This year marks the 30th anniversary of my first arrival at Calvin Seminary. I came from Indonesia in 1992 to get my MTS degree at CTS, not knowing that 30 years later I would come back to Calvin to teach,” said Dr. Thianto. “Still thinking of my days as an international student at CTS, I have a large place in my heart for international students. I am looking forward to working with and for international students at CTS, as a way to engage with the global church.”

Dr. Thianto said he looks forward to setting down roots in the CTS community and the greater Grand Rapids area.

## DR. WILSON CUNHA



Dr. Cunha comes to CTS with ten years of teaching experience in Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew. Most recently he taught at LeTourneau University in Longview, Texas.

“Speaking on behalf of the search team and faculty, I would say that we were impressed by the teaching ability, scholarship, and collegial commitment that (Dr. Cunha) has displayed,” President

Jul Medenblik said in an email to the seminary community announcing Dr. Cunha’s appointment. Medenblik also noted Dr. Cunha’s service at LeTourneau and within local church contexts as evidenced by his time in Brazil, in the Netherlands (where he received his PhD at Leiden University), and in the US—which included adjunct teaching for CTS.

“After years of recognized teaching excellence and a full publishing record, he will quickly become one of the seminary’s valued teachers and leaders,” said Gary Burge, former dean of the faculty. “Dr. Cunha will bring to the seminary further international diversity and strong links to the Brazilian Presbyterian Church (by which he is ordained).” Dr. Cunha plans to move his ordination to the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the coming years.

“I feel honored to return to CTS now as an Old Testament professor,” said Dr. Cunha. “Building on the solid foundation of those who came before me, I look forward to participating in the seminary’s more than 145 years of history of helping the Church encounter God anew by carefully hearing his voice in the pages of his life-giving Word.”

Dr. Cunha and his wife, Katie, said they look forward to setting down roots in the CTS community and greater Grand Rapids with their three children.

**“Building on the solid foundation of those who came before me, I look forward to participating in the seminary’s more than 145 years of history...”**



# Calvin Theological Seminary Retirees



## DR. JOHN ROTTMAN

Dr. John Rottman began his teaching ministry as Professor of Preaching at Calvin Seminary in 2004, after having served for many years as a church pastor.

During his time at Calvin Seminary, Dr. Rottman has been an advocate for preachers to show, not just tell. He has been a proponent of using God-active language to emphasize that God keeps His covenantal promises to His people. The Four-Page Method was a grammar Dr. Rottman used to help students learn to see trouble in the text and trouble in the world, but also see grace in the text and grace in the world.

The emphasis on the grace of God is key to understanding Dr. Rottman's deep involvement in and stewardship of what is now known as the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI). Dr. Rottman was the first professor who taught an enrichment class at Handlon Correctional Facility. The class he taught was Dying and Rising in Christ. He has continued to be deeply involved in the development of CPI and has helped turn a prison known for violence into a place where the name of Christ is lifted up and lives are being transformed by grace.

Dr. Rottman's emphasis on elements of basic discipleship like prayer and visiting the prisoner have been examples for others to follow. He has come beside students who did not think they could communicate God's grace, and has given them guidance on how to be conduits of God's grace.

Thank you for your teaching, Dr. Rottman, and your training of the heart. Calvin Seminary was and is blessed by you.

**"Dr. Rottman was the first professor who taught an enrichment class at Handlon Correctional Facility. The class he taught was Dying and Rising in Christ."**

## DR. MARIANO AVILA

Dr. Mariano Avila came to Calvin Seminary via Mexico and Miami, and began his teaching ministry in 2001 as a Professor of New Testament.

During his twenty-one years of ministry at the seminary, Dr. Avila has been known for his hospitality, compassion, empathy, and the trips he led to Mexico City on the topic of *shalom*. His desire for all those who travel to get to know him and to understand the biblical imperative to seek justice has been evident. Looking back on his experiences at the seminary, he says that "students were always the best part of my time at CTS. I learned from them and had the privilege to be a part of their formation for the many ministries they represent."



**"Opening doors that had previously been closed has been a blessing for the Latino/a community; Calvin Seminary is now known for welcoming Latino/a pastors and leaders,"**

After many years of prayer and developing relationships in the West Michigan area, Dr. Avila started a class of forty Latino/a pastors from across the denominational and theological spectrum. The group studied the letter to the Ephesians, focusing on the theme of unity in Christ and through Christ. Through this initial class, Dr. Avila became the founding director of the Latino/a Ministry Program at Calvin Seminary. The Latino/a Ministry Program has grown to become a well-established program that is widely recognized and appreciated. "Opening doors that had previously been closed has

been a blessing for the Latino/a community; Calvin Seminary is now known for welcoming Latino/a pastors and leaders," Dr. Avila reflected when thinking about highlights from his tenure at CTS.

Dr. Avila was a shepherd pastor during the pandemic and showed deep concern for students and the churches they came from. Thank you, Dr. Avila, for being such a remarkable teacher, mentor, and a pastor to pastors.



# Calvin Theological Seminary Retirees



## DR. LYLE BIERMA

Dr. Lyle Bierma's career encompasses forty-two years of faithful teaching and working with students. He initially taught at Reformed Bible College (now known as Kuyper College) for nineteen years, and then accepted a position at Calvin Seminary, where he taught for the next twenty-three years. At Calvin, Dr. Bierma followed in the footsteps of President Emeritus Neal Plantinga in teaching Systematic Theology, and later succeeded Professor Emeritus Richard Muller as the P.J. Zondervan Professor of the History of Christianity Chair. Over the years, he also served as dean of faculty and director of the PhD program.

Dr. Bierma's inspired teaching on baptism, the Heidelberg Catechism and the confessions have served generations of students. His years of teaching ministry at Calvin Seminary have been marked by kindness, collegiality, efficiency, and using his gift of administration with fairness, care and concern. When asked to share a highlight of his tenure at CTS, Dr. Bierma said: "I can't point to just one highlight from the past twenty-three years. The whole experience of doing something I love at a place I love with people I love for the cause of Christ and his church has been one big highlight in itself."

In addition to serving at Calvin Seminary, Dr. Bierma has served within and beyond the Christian Reformed denomination. He served on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) and participated in dialogue with Roman Catholics for nearly a decade. He has been an example of a winsome Reformed witness in such dialogues and gatherings.

When reflecting on his years at CTS, Dr. Bierma shared that he will miss "the daily rhythms of seminary life: class preps, research, writing, and conversations in my office; engagement with students in the classroom; interaction with faculty, staff, and administrators throughout the building; chapel services; community events; even faculty meetings, believe it or not!"

## JEAN GAREHAN

In May, Calvin Theological Seminary hosted "Thanksgiving in May" to celebrate the end of the academic year and to honor staff who were retiring. During the event, Bob Knoor, Director of Development, shared these words about Jean Garehan, Gift Processing Coordinator, who retired after thirty years of faithful service to the Development Office and CTS.

*"As I reflect on Jean and her contributions to CTS over the years, I keep coming back to a visual of Jean in her work space. Jean's work space is arranged with a front counter that holds two bowls she keeps fully stocked with chocolates and mints.*

*Every day, when faculty, staff or students pass by, they pause at Jean's front counter. They rest their elbows on the counter and reach for a mint as Jean asks them how they are doing. Jean makes time to check in on everyone. Jean is truly a connector.*



*For the last thirty years, these brief but important moments have happened every day over and over again. These interactions often extend to former students or former colleagues who make a point of stopping by to say hello to Jean. I've even noticed that donors drop off checks in person, not because they don't trust the mail but because they want to see Jean in person.*

*Jean's connections over the years have evolved into strong relationships that extend far beyond the walls of CTS. When Mitch, Jul and I are out and about in North America, our donors always ask how Jean is doing, or tell us about a recent conversation they have*

*had with her. Jean is always there to take care of them but also share a laugh or a story about a grandchild.*

*All of these interactions add up to a beautiful thirty year ministry.*

*We are grateful for your thousands of front counter moments that taken in total have worked to draw our CTS staff, faculty, students and donors closer together. Well done, Jean!"*

Thank you for your many years of service, Jean, and your heart for the ministry and mission of Calvin Seminary!



## JIM LAKIN

Jim Lakin started serving as the seminary's Facilities Manager in 2008 and has served in this capacity for fourteen years. Jim has played a critical role in the maintenance of the CTS office building facility, student housing, parsonage, and automobiles. In addition, Jim has provided leadership in ensuring the safety of students, faculty and staff, not only through safety training but also through maintaining safety codes throughout the building. During the time of the CTS building renovation, Jim's expertise in construction was invaluable when it came to interacting with contractors and overseeing the renovation as the CTS point person. As he retires, he leaves behind a welcoming and beautifully designed interior that is supported by a new HVAC, boiler, elevator, and a backup power generator, thanks to the generosity of many donors. Jim also worked closely with a student crew that helped

clean the seminary building and set up for events, and in the summer helped clean and paint student housing. Jim saw his work with the student crew and with his colleagues as a ministry, often starting the day's work with a brief meeting and prayers.

Beyond his official role as the Facilities Manager, Jim excelled in ministering to the community through hospitality, ranging from impromptu ice cream or popcorn treats, to pancakes and French toast, to cereal and much, much more. Many at CTS will hold fond memories of Jim's gift of hospitality.

As he approached the end of his career at Calvin Seminary Jim, being the prolific outdoors enthusiast that he is, purchased a camper to continue his outdoor adventures of camping, fishing, hunting, and hiking.

Looking back at his time here at Seminary and looking ahead, Jim offered the following words:

**"It has been a privilege to have served at Calvin Seminary these fourteen plus years! I am leaving the Seminary Building in better condition than I found it, and I have made lasting friendships and accomplished many goals..."**

*"It has been a privilege to have served at Calvin Seminary these fourteen plus years! I am leaving the Seminary Building in better condition than I found it, and I have made lasting friendships and accomplished many goals to make the seminary a better learning/working environment for students, faculty and staff. I will miss the fellowship with my fellow colleagues! Dawn and I are looking forward to this new chapter in our lives as we travel the US visiting family and friends along the way. Blessings to you all!"*

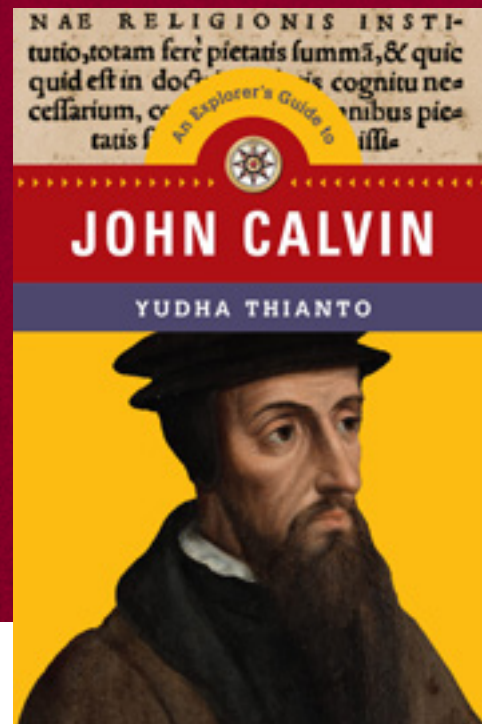
Jim Lakin, the CTS community thanks you for serving us all so well. We pray a blessing on you and your family as you take this next step.



## FACULTY BOOK HIGHLIGHT

# An Explorer's Guide to John Calvin

**BY DR. YUDHA THIAN TO**  
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND  
REFORMED THEOLOGY



In his new book, *An Explorer's Guide to John Calvin*, Dr. Yudha Thianto provides readers with an engaging and accessible overview of John Calvin's life and thought. The first half of the book illuminates Calvin's personal and historical context. Readers learn about Calvin's life, education, ministry as a pastor, and his work in reforming the church in Geneva. Readers also gain insight into the culture of sixteenth-century Geneva in particular and Western Europe in general. This section of the book includes a helpful discussion of "Frequently Asked Questions about Calvin," in order to correct common misconceptions that many contemporary readers have about Calvin's views.

The second half of the book focuses on major topics and themes in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Dr. Thianto guides readers through each of the four books that comprise the *Institutes*. In doing so, he provides an important service to readers who are encountering Calvin's *magnum opus* for the first time, or who find the text difficult to follow. As a result of reading this *Explorer's Guide*, readers will be better equipped to navigate the *Institutes* on their own and delve deeper into the material.

When asked about his goals and hopes for the book, Dr. Thianto explained, "While it is based on my years of studies and research on Calvin the person and his theology in their sixteenth-century contexts, it is written in a style that I hope is easy for readers to follow. I hope readers can get a good look at Calvin as a pastor and Reformer who loved God, his words, and his church, and who courageously faced challenges of his time in order that God's people could live as faithful followers of Jesus." Numerous reviewers have affirmed that the book fulfills these hopes, describing it as "a fresh, faithful, and accessible guide"<sup>1</sup> that they recommend highly.<sup>2</sup> We encourage our *Forum* readers to get to know John Calvin better by reading this excellent guide.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jessica Joustra, Redeemer University

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Timothy George, Beeson Divinity School

## NEW STAFF MEMBER

## Kim Benedict

Development Data and Donor  
Communications Coordinator



Hello, I'm Kim Benedict, the newest member of the seminary's development team. I grew up in Seattle and also spent a lot of time with extended family on the Olympic Peninsula. My three teenage children and I now live in Grand Rapids. Having grown up in the Northwest, we love being by the water, so we go out to Lake Michigan as often as possible! My professional background is in teaching, writing, and editing.

In my new role as the seminary's Development Data and Donor Communications Coordinator, I have the privilege of communicating with our amazing donors to let them know how much we appreciate their support. I also help process gifts and write grants. Every day, I'm inspired by our donors' generosity; their commitment to the seminary is an encouraging reminder of God's faithfulness.

In addition to working with donors, another rewarding aspect of my job is being immersed in the seminary's vibrant educational environment. As someone with a background in teaching, I enjoy seeing our seminary students explore new ideas and develop the skills they need to follow God's calling. I also admire our faculty members' passion for mentoring students and caring about their well-being.

Although I started working in my current position in February 2022, my first connections to Calvin Theological Seminary were forged during the 2015-16 school year, when I taught

Written Rhetoric in the Calvin Prison Initiative program. Through that experience, I met seminary professors John Rottman and David Rylaarsdam. I also developed a strong interest in prison education programs in general and the Calvin Prison Initiative in particular. I'm thrilled that one of my current responsibilities is to write communications pieces on behalf of CPI, in order to spread the news about how the program is changing lives and transforming prison culture in the state of Michigan.

Further connections with Calvin Seminary were forged in the summer of 2021, when I was working as a freelance writer. I had the opportunity to collaborate with a talented team of staff and faculty to write a proposal for a \$1 million Lilly Foundation Pathways for Tomorrow grant. During our eight-week collaboration, I was impressed by the staff and faculty's energy, collegiality, and innovative spirit. We were thrilled when we learned that Lilly had approved our proposal! The grant funds will support the seminary's Next Steps Initiative, a program designed to make theological education accessible to a wider variety of ministry leaders than ever before in the seminary's history.

Having had such positive interactions with Calvin Theological Seminary, it was an easy decision to say "yes" to the invitation to join the seminary staff in 2022. I'm thankful to work alongside such gifted and dedicated colleagues to further the seminary's mission of forming church leaders.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

# Harvey Kiekoover

Being born and raised as a farm boy in West Michigan, farming was in my blood and a natural goal as a youngster. After graduation from high school, I achieved that goal as I farmed with my dad and ran a milk route as my personal business. I liked my work, but gradually and persistently a vague, unsettling stirring in my soul grew into a conviction that obedience to God required going back to school.

In 1958 I yielded; I enrolled in classes at Calvin College, hoping to become a Bible teacher, someone like my high school teacher Mr. Hero Bratt. That goal shifted in the middle of my sophomore year at Calvin College. Banner articles I read, sermons I heard, challenging conversations I had—all presented the need for pastors, forcing me to consider the “impossible” possibility that God might be calling me to become a pastor.

Again, I yielded to the call; I became a pre-seminary student, taking summer classes to complete the required courses in four years. In September of 1962 I was sitting in Calvin Theological Seminary classrooms, beyond my depth but enjoying theological studies and growing in confidence that I was in the right place doing the right thing. Two summer assignments in Salt Lake City gave me

challenging and satisfying practical experience, the second year being especially good because I was there with my bride, Thelma Alberda.

When Rev. Henry Evenhouse spoke to our graduating class in 1965, he challenged us to consider serving as missionaries. His comment surprised and perplexed me: “Right now we are looking for four pastors to serve in Nigeria. We can get doctors and nurses, teachers and houseparents, builders and engineers, but we can’t get pastors.” Wow! Did we have to consider going to Nigeria? When I got home and shared that question with Thelma, she responded quickly and explosively, “What!? You never told me that.”

The more we prayed and thought, the more open to the idea we became. Among the calls we considered, it was the call to Nigeria by our home church, Drenthe CRC, that became God’s



“Open your heart to God’s love and let that love pour through you as you serve.”

call for us. By November 15, 1965, a pregnant wife and a recently ordained minister were on their way overseas. For the next nineteen years, we served in various roles; most of the time we were involved in pastor training, first at Veenstra Junior Seminary and then at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria.

Early in the 1970s, Thelma was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. By 1984, the disabling disease forced our decision to return to the States. We felt deeply grateful for the time we had spent in Nigeria; we felt intimidated, afraid, troubled, worried, and very uncertain about our future as we returned to our “home” country. During that first year in the States, I taught a course at Reformed Bible College, took Clinical Pastoral Education at Pine Rest, and enrolled in a class at Calvin Seminary. Subsequently, Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids encouraged me to consider a call to become their Minister of Congregational Life. On June 9, 1985, which was our twenty-first wedding anniversary, I was installed and began serving as a minister in that position.

Sadly, as Thelma’s condition worsened, it became necessary in 1988 to get professional nursing care. Half of a room at Raybrook (Holland Home) became her “home.” In visiting her, I saw first-hand the value of and need for pastoral care in such a facility. In 1994, Holland Home called me to become its chaplain, a position I gratefully held for about 19 years—the first half full time, the second half part time.

Multiple sclerosis took my wife from me and my sons in 1996, but it didn’t take her from her Lord. I miss her, miss sharing with her the blessing of three daughters-in-law and six grandchildren with a seventh on the way. And I wish she could be here to express with me our deep gratitude for the Lord’s leading and for the role that Calvin Theological Seminary had in shaping our lives for service in the Lord’s Kingdom.

I want to share the following thoughts with the graduates, thoughts I have found helpful in my ministry and which continue to challenge me:

Make the prayer of Robert Robinson (1758) a lifetime prayer: Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing (and preach and live!) thy grace.

Open your heart to God’s love and let that love pour through you as you serve.

Hone the gifts God has given you and use them gratefully. Resist the temptation to envy others and their gifts.

Listen, listen, listen—to God and to those with whom and to whom you minister.

Be responsible for what you are responsible; avoid taking responsibility for what you are not responsible.

In summary, I say with St. Paul: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

# Stanley Workman



Stan Workman was born and raised in Muskegon, Michigan. He and his wife Mary Lee raised four children; today, they are blessed with thirteen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Stan graduated from West Michigan Christian in 1962, Calvin College in 1966, and Calvin Seminary in 1969.

Stan was ordained in 1969 and served the CRC as a pastor for the next forty-five years. He shepherded churches in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Olympia, Washington; and Orlando, Florida. Alongside his pastoral work and preaching, Stan devoted his energies to leadership development and church planting. As part of these ministries, Stan worked with twenty-three interns from Calvin Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary. By God's grace, this labor produced spiritual fruit: eleven of the interns got involved in church planting, and the local church served as the parent church for twelve church plants.

**“You are about to step into an exciting and rewarding career of presenting the Good News of the Gospel. Work hard, stay positive, and enjoy!”**

In addition to working tirelessly at the local level, Stan was engaged in multiple activities at the regional and national levels. His ministry commitments included:

- Coaching pastors throughout the U.S.
- Serving five years as part-time Regional Director for Classis Southeast
- Serving twenty years as Ministry Coordinator for Classis Southeast
- Serving as part of Kingdom Enterprise Zone with CRC/RCA
- Serving as a delegate to Synod ten times
- Serving on multiple denominational boards and committees
- Serving as a regional representative for the Development team of Calvin Seminary

Reflecting on his life in ministry, Stan says that “All the work with interns, coaching, committees and pastoral care was always a two-way process, with me learning just as much as I gave. It was a challenging but satisfying career that I would do again.”

To the 2022 Calvin Seminary graduates, Stan offered these words of encouragement: “You are about to step into an exciting and rewarding career of presenting the Good News of the Gospel. Work hard, stay positive, and enjoy! Never forget it’s not about you, it’s about Christ. It’s His church, not yours. And always remember to ‘trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths straight’ (Proverbs 3:5-6).”





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