



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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# 2017

prospective candidates



June 1, 2017

Dear Delegates of Synod 2017,

Enclosed in this booklet are descriptions of the candidates being recommended to Synod 2017. For each person there is a photo, a brief biographical sketch, a statement of their faith journey, and the stated reason for pursuing candidacy. Each of the candidates has their own unique story and their own unique gifts. They are united in a desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. We trust that these pages (presented this year in electronic format) will help the delegates of Synod 2017 become a bit more familiar with each recommended candidate.

The Candidacy Committee expresses its gratitude to the faculty and administration of Calvin Theological Seminary for their role in preparing the candidates for this significant event in their respective ministry journeys. Many of the candidates have spent several years at Calvin Seminary. Those who have graduated from other seminaries have participated in the EPMC (Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy), a program approved by synod, overseen by the Candidacy Committee, and carried out by Calvin Seminary. The educational process to become a candidate is long and challenging. The completion of this period of preparation is significant and needs to be celebrated.

As a Candidacy Committee we are pleased to present these individuals to the church. We rejoice in what God has done and will do through each of them. We invite each delegate of synod to use this electronic booklet as a prompter to pray for the church and for the candidates as they wait for and respond to calls from the church in the coming months.

The Candidacy Committee  
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*Name:* Patrick Anthony

*Place of Birth:* Modesto, CA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

California State University  
Stanislaus  
B.A., 2005

Theatre Arts  
Talbot Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Spiritual Director, Institute of  
Spiritual Formation  
Talbot School of Theology,  
La Mirada, CA  
January 2012 - May 2013

Trinity Presbyterian (PCA),  
Orange, CA  
August 2013 - June 2015

Youth Pastor (current position)  
Escalon CRC, Escalon, CA

*Contact:*

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pastorpatrick@escaloncrc.org

### *Faith Journey*

I was raised in a home by two professing believers. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was five, was baptized at six and then lived through a tumultuous upbringing consisting of attending fourteen different schools and two parental breakups. I was not disciplined. I learned some superficial Christian concepts and ideas here and there along the way but never came to actually trust that God was good and satisfying in himself. At fourteen I had a palpable spiritual experience. I had a clear sense that God was calling me to forsake my own plans and desires and to follow Him wherever He would lead me. At the time the call seemed absurd. I eventually found solace in drugs, alcohol and unhealthy relationships of various kinds.

In retrospect, I knew God on some level throughout my life, in spite of the fact that my character eventually landed me in an antithetical lifestyle. I can remember praying childish prayers for things like the ability to fly, to be accepted at school and promising to obey if only God would do certain things for me. In my memories now there is a sense that my spirit was connecting to God's Spirit in those prayers. And after coming to know Him, I recognize that the One I was talking to is the same person I know now. I tried to extricate myself from that lifestyle several times but did not experience myself with any power to change. Eventually, I discovered that lifestyle to be utterly dissatisfying. Thankfully God graciously and simultaneously intervened in my life through circumstances, relationships and giving just enough strength, moment by moment, to alter my life's trajectory. I gave my life to Christ at the age of twenty-four.

That is when my journey in life really began. Prior to that my primary focus was to increase pleasure and decrease pain. There's a reverse proportionality involved in that kind of life. As I pursued pleasure the quality and quantity of the pleasure decreased while adding to the pain I was trying to numb – so when I became a Christian, I truly began to feel for the first time in my life. Initially, I had a quid pro quo relationship with God. I thought if I obeyed his rules he would bless me. Eventually, I realized I could not obey his rules and because I could feel, it was agonizing to try. This resulted in a brief relapse that God rescued me from and then plunged me into a new chapter in my Christian walk. God filled my life with consolations at this time. I began to discover that God loved me. I began to experience him in powerful ways filling up my soul with his love. He took away my pain by His Spirit and brought a community around me. I devoured scripture and books. I joined everything I could at church.

During this consolatory period, I met the woman who would become my wife. The joys of this relationship were immediate and potent. Yet, the difficulties of navigating an intimate personal relationship brought me back into my pain. I became spiritually disoriented because of that experience. I did not understand how much I had to repent of. I did not see how much my felt needs were driving my behavior and my decisions – except now with a Christian veneer rather than sinful pleasure. In my pursuit of equilibrium, I married my wife and we set out for seminary... where the Lord lovingly brought me down.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

The less interesting part of seminary was my growing delight in reformed theology. My wife was raised in a reformed church and simply wanted to baptize our children someday. I used the resources at seminary to resolve the baptismal question in my mind. I discovered covenant theology and we joined a Presbyterian church! The more interesting component of seminary was the journey into my soul. I discovered that God is (and always has been) with me in my pain. I learned how to repent. I learned how to love – first through loving my wife, then our children and now as a pastor, those God has called me to serve. I learned how to wait and to trust. I learned that God loves me regardless of my felt experiences. And I learned the truth of that love is displayed on the cross and made real to my soul by His Spirit through the infallible words of scripture. All of life is grace. I see now how He has come alongside me and led me through it all for His purposes and His glory. Throughout this journey God's call has been clear as He led me and prepared me to be where I am now.

Patrick Anthony

*Statement of Reason*

The reason I am seeking candidacy and pursuing ordination in the Christian Reformed Church is because it is the next step in a Spirit-led process of aligning my credentials with my calling. The first step began when I accepted Christ as Savior in 2004. From that point on my interests, my gifting's, my internal call and the affirmation of that call have propelled me on a journey through seminary and into my current role as the youth pastor at Escalon CRC. This has been a long journey full of many confirmations of that call as each difficulty has proved to be another moment of refining rather than a road block. I watched many friends in and through seminary who were led by God to attend seminary and (for some) to graduate seminary, only to discover the call was no longer there. I have anticipated that might be the case with me as well but it has not. And I am humbled and grateful to stand in the place I now stand. My candidacy with the Christian Reformed Church specifically has to do with my theological trajectory. Although I attended Talbot Theological Seminary, my theology has become decidedly reformed, which led me into the reformed tradition and my current position serving at a reformed church.

Patrick Anthony





*Name:* Josiah Bokma

*Place of Birth:* Truro, Nova Scotia

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Redeemer University College  
B.A.

Tyndale Seminary  
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*  
New Hope CRC, Hamilton,  
ON, Canada  
Oct 2011 - May 2013  
  
International Teams Canada,  
Elmira, ON  
Oct 2011 - Oct 2012

*Languages spoken:*  
Spanish

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### *Faith Journey*

In reflecting on what I believe and how I have gotten there, I find that Dr. Cornelius Plantinga's quote summarizes it well: "Our accents lie more on the sovereignty of God, on the authority of Scripture, on the need for disciplined holiness in personal Christian life, and finally, on Christianity as a religion of the Kingdom. (*A Sure Thing: What We Believe and Why*).

I come by this faith commitment honestly. I was baptized into and raised within a Christian Reformed family and church. The sovereignty of God was not just an abstract concept; we often reflected on and lived into this through our conversations, our making of decisions and wrestling through the presence of evil and death in our world.

As family, every day after lunch and supper we would give space to the authority of Scripture in our lives as we read Scripture and prayed. My father's love and memorization of Scripture was contagious and has inspired me and my siblings towards a Biblically rooted practice of Christianity. My mother modelled a humble Christlike servant attitude, always ready to serve us.

My time at Redeemer University College deepened my understanding and appreciation of the Christianity as a religion of the kingdom of God. The holistic worldview of the Reformed faith challenged me to do away with any secular/sacred dualism and catch a vision for how Christ has claimed every inch of his creation for himself. I was also impacted by my relationships with Catholic and Pentecostal Christians who showed me practices of disciplined holiness, such as contemplative prayer and fasting.

Being a missionary in two foreign cultures has enabled me to celebrate diversity in the Body of Christ and learn from my brothers and sisters around how they see God and his kingdom. I have seen that the kingdom of God is deeper than our differences and wider than our imperfect attempts at mission.

Josiah Bokma

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because I believe that I am called by God to serve the church and especially the Christian Reformed church as an ordained minister. This candidacy process is vital because a person's call to church leadership must be both personally and communally discerned and affirmed, where we are called by God through His church and to His church. I am excited for how I will be able to better serve God and His church through ordained ministry, especially in the areas of missions and chaplaincy.

Josiah Bokma



*Name:* Yoon Chul Choi (Daniel)

*Spouse:* Ji Yon Hong

*Age:* 46

*Place of Birth:* Seoul,  
Republic of Korea  
Canadian Citizen

*College Attended:*  
International Theological  
Baptist Seminary  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Licentiate in Theology, 1996

*Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2013

*Internships:*  
Health Intervention Service,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Summer 2011

Hahn-In CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
September 2011 — January  
2012

*Languages:* Korean, Spanish,  
and English

*Contact:*  
616-929-3349  
ycc04@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

Being born and raised in a faithful Christian family is a providential blessing that the Lord planned to build my Christian faith.

Learning how to be in the presence of God was what formed me during my adolescence. However, it was in my teens when I perceived and felt the love for pastoral ministry. It happened when I was in junior high school; I have a memory of preaching the Gospel to myself in front of the mirror in my tiny restroom. I enjoyed this so much that I often went to preach alone, in preparation for my calling. Almost every time I did this, I felt profoundly passionate about bringing people back to Jesus for salvation through the ministry.

The Lord invited me to enter into communion with him through his Word. My faith was solidified in Scripture through personal devotions which led me to dive into the presence of the Lord. Studying the Gospel of John, I came to understand that God is the One who created me, and that the ultimate goal of my life is to glorify Him, and one day I will live in his presence forever. This marked the direction of the view of my life.

The love to serve the Lord, Jesus Christ, and his church and the plan of God inviting me through the ministry was confirmed when two pastors suggested to me to get theological preparation which led me to take undergraduate studies as a Theology major. However, not all of my faith journey was well paved; rather a stormy time was waiting for me to reflect and discern what I would do in my life. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I moved to Canada with my lovely wife to pursue an extra step of preparation of study in the Master of Divinity Program at Regent College in Vancouver. We never could foresee the oncoming financial difficulty. My supporters had financial problem and they could no longer support us. We decided to jump from the school into the world. We worked hard, but saving enough to resume the study seemed illusory. The farther we went from the call to ministry; the more we felt the force that was pulling us back.

Visiting Weaver Creek Hatchery in BC and observing thousands of salmon swimming against the current and jumping over many the obstacles was a deeply impressive experience. Some salmon accidentally swam to the wrong place, where they faced death or being eaten alive by seagulls or other animals. Even though the salmon went forward in only one direction to lay their eggs, the direction was always up the river, to create new life. The image of the salmon after achieving this life goal was nothing beautiful. All of them had wounded mouths, cut fins, and torn tails, but for this reason each one of them deserved respect because they had poured out everything they had into being what they were born to be. It helped us to reflect deeply on the journey of our call to pastoral ministry that we had deep in our hearts. After praying to God for guidance, and with full conviction, we decided to proceed to Calvin Theological Seminary to continue our preparation for the call to ministry. The study time at Calvin was the hardest study time in my life. However, joy and thanksgiving flowed continuously in my heart. The Lord was faithful in renewing the hope that we had lost.

My goal is to use the gift and the preparation that I received to serve the people, the church, the body of Christ, so that they can live an abundant

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

life in a relationship with God and with others, and consequently they can grow healthy and maturely in the knowledge and in faith of God.

Yoon Chul Choi (Daniel)

*Statement of Reason*

Since the early stage of my life, I felt love for the church. Throughout my faith journey He confirmed his calling to be and walk together with his loved church. I believe God has called me to serve His church through ordained ministry and as a step to follow this call I am pursuing candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that the reformed doctrines represent the Scripture best. In my journey in Christian Reformed Church, I have found confidence as a place to serve, to love, and to grow together in the truth of Word of God and in his immeasurable grace and love of God.

Yoon Chul Choi (Daniel)



*Name:* Laura de Jong

*Place of Birth:* St. Catharines, ON

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

The American Protestant  
Church of The Hague, The  
Hague, Netherlands  
August 2014 - November 2014

Zion Christian Reformed  
Church, Oshawa, ON  
June 2015 - August 2015

*Languages spoken:* Dutch

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

My story of faith is quite unremarkable, which is perhaps remarkable in and of itself. I grew up in the church – was very literally raised at the church, as my mother has been our church’s administrative assistant my whole life – and so the community of believers is home for me. I went to Sunday School, GEMS, the middle school youth group and the senior high youth group. I’ve been in Christian Education now for 21 years. I’ve grown up in church and grown up believing in God.

Early on I was interested in the peculiarities of being Reformed. I recall a debate in Grade 7 between myself and another student over infant vs. adult baptism, an event most of my fellow classmates groaned over. I got into a similar debate in Grade 9 with a dispensationalist classmate over the interpretation of Matthew 24. Again, my classmates groaned.

But perhaps for this reason, starting at a young age, peers have come to me with questions about their own faith. With their own doubts. Sometimes these questions were more on the mundane side. But other times people had very real, very hard questions. They came with their stories of suicide, addiction, sexual assault, and each time, I felt the burden of having to defend God. They would come to me with their anger and their doubt and their weeping and ask me to make sense of it all. And I couldn’t. I can’t. I can quote scripture or the catechism’s answers on providence, but at the end of the day, I’m left with “I don’t know.” These questions and events have led to some of my darker nights. But God’s faithfulness through these events, has led me to a place where I am okay saying, “I don’t know. Yet I believe.” Reading Marilyn Robinson’s *Gilead* was a hugely formative event for me. John Ames consistently has to tell Jack Boughton, “I don’t know. Yet I believe.” And I see my role in these relationships, and as a pastor, to help people be okay with saying, “I don’t know. Yet I believe.”

And it is not simply the difficult aspects of our faith that leads me to a place of questioning and bewilderment. The entire Gospel story leaves me in wonder. How can such a thing be? How, as Pi says in Yann Martel’s book *Life of Pi*, could God wish death upon himself for our sake? “Why make dirty what is beautiful, spoil what is perfect?” Father Martin responds, “Love.” Like Pi, I find myself in awe and astonishment at this story. But the joy of ministry is the task of pointing people to moments when this story has revealed itself to be true. Because even amidst the darker nights, God reveals himself in moments of glory, sometimes muted, sometimes astonishing. “Nature’s first green is gold,” writes Frost, and even while we know that the gold will fade, we see it - that moment of sparkling delight - and we know it will come back again, more full and perfect than we could ever imagine. God gives us glimpses of the new creation wherever we look – we simply need to keep our eyes open.

My faith is marked by wonder, but a wonder made all the more wondrous by certainty. By looking back at God’s faithfulness through the dark nights, I know he is present, and I know new creation is coming. I can think of no better thing than to invite people into that faith and wonder, to experience that faithfulness and love.

Laura de Jong

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*Statement of Reason*

Henri Nouwen speaks of the necessity to forgive one another for not being God, for not loving us as we want to be loved, but also the necessity of celebrating that the perfect God loves us perfectly. I feel called to a ministry of inviting people into that place of community and celebration, where we remind each other “You are the beloved son” and “You are the beloved daughter.” My particular community is the Christian Reformed Church – it’s home. And so I am seeking candidacy to honor this call, and to love and serve my community however God sees fit.

Laura de Jong



*Name:* Darrell Delaney

*Age:* 38

*Place of Birth:* Toledo, OH

*Name of Spouse:* Kia

*Number of Children:* 3

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Kuyper College  
B.S., 2005

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2102

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Th.M., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Internships:*

Holy United Believers Church,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Sept 2009 to June 2012

*Languages spoken:*

Spanish, Biblical Hebrew

*Contact:*

616.204.0736  
darrell.l.delaney@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I am the oldest of four kids. I have a younger brother and two younger sisters. I grew up in a single parent family. My father spent most of his life in the Army. I hardly saw him, as he traveled overseas often. By the time I was seven, my mom and dad split up. This is why I describe my mother as a single parent. Around the age of eight, my mother began to use drugs. She developed quite the drug addiction which tore our family apart. This happened in a variety of ways. She began to leave us days at a time, where I had to be the big brother/parent. I was the one who cooked and cleaned, and also missed countless days of school to take care of the ones too young to go. My mother, despite her drug addiction, had a deep spiritual background. She began to send me to church. I became a Christian at eleven years old but I had no one to walk with me and disciple me. Consequently, my Christian faith went “dormant” for a few years while I watched my mother deteriorate mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually with her boyfriends, who were not a great example for me either. Between the boyfriends and abusive relationships, the children came and that is how I got my siblings. Eventually, the State (of Michigan DHS) saw my mother’s neglect of us and terminated her rights as a parent. So my two younger siblings were taken into foster care. The one sibling not living with us (who has a different biological mother) stayed with my stepmother in Texas. I was too old to go into foster care so I got to stay. This was one of the saddest times of my life. By the time I was eighteen, I became a pretty bottled up person. I tried drugs, partying, and girlfriends to help me forget all the anger and pain that I had inside. Yet I continued to go to church.

I joined a church called New Covenant Christian Center in Saginaw, MI (my hometown). This is the church where I had found my first spiritual father figure, Dr. Ron Frierson, and reaffirmed and rededicated my life and faith to my Lord. My mother’s life did not get any better, it actually got worse. I ended up moving out and staying with my grandmother; the pressures of being part time parent were too overwhelming for me. This year after my graduation from high school, I lost my grandfather at 69 years old. I must say that this man was truly the most tangible father I ever had. He was truly a hero to me. Make no mistake, I love and appreciate my biological father, he always sent me things I needed, like clothes and money. The only tangible father I had was my granddad. He taught me how to be a man. So when he passed in 1996, it was a devastating blow to me. I believe it also propelled me into maturity.

Anyway, the years from eighteen to twenty one were the most tumultuous for me. This was the time I believe when God began to truly work on my heart, character, and passion for Him. I began to separate from my friends who were only interested in getting high, chasing women, and partying all the time. Needless to say I was rejected by them. I was rejected by my mother when I began to really pursue Christianity. She once told me that I was “losing touch with reality”. I got into a relationship with a girl, got engaged, and ruined it because I was unfaithful to her. I had broken her heart and found out that I do not have it in me to maintain a relationship on my own intellect and cunning ability. I found out that I was a truly selfish and prideful person.



Academically, I was pursuing an engineering degree. I started at a local junior college. I then transferred to Grand Rapids Community College. The year was 1998. The excitement of a new city and a clean slate excited me. However, the “monkeys on my back” followed me here. I had yet to deal with my rejection, and past lifestyle with the old friends because it was creeping into my present life here. When I got to GRCC, I met a guy named Al. Al introduced me to a man who God would use to change my life forever. His name was JR Pittman. He was on staff with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. I joined the local college bible studies weekly on campus. I began to be fed and nurtured by the Word of God. I joined a church, as well. There is the place that God called me to ministry. Suddenly, engineering did not seem so appealing anymore. I also learned that my motive for becoming an engineer was wrong; I wanted to do it because I would make lots of money, and because I was told that I would be good at it. These were not good ideas to become an engineer. I sensed my call to full time ministry as a preacher and pastor. This call was affirmed by JR, who disciplined me on a weekly basis, along with my pastor at the local church. Meanwhile I served as a volunteer college campus staff intern for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in my college days. I was the president of the student led group. I also met my future wife in the group.

I then sought biblical training. When I visited RBC (now Kuyper), I felt that it was the place to go. When I was admitted, I transferred there once I acquired my associate’s degree from GRCC. The year was Jan. 2001. I then moved and changed churches. My pastor gave me his blessing and committed to pray for me in my spiritual endeavors. I joined the church JR was attending. At this church I began to put my gifts in action, singing on the praise team, teaching Sunday School, and leading middle school youth group. This is where I developed my passion for youth and training up God’s people.

In June 2004 I married my college sweetheart, Kia. The following year I graduated from Reformed Bible (Kuyper) College. At the time I was working at Target as a Team Leader. After four years at that job (Aug. ‘02-May ‘06), I received my first full time job as a youth director. After I received the full time opportunity at Grace Reformed Church, we changed churches again. We (my wife and I) had three girls that we were responsible for: Keysha, Keonna, and Tishana. The former two are biological sisters of Kia, my wife. Her story is similar to mine, with the drug addicted parents and foster care. She became legal guardian of her sisters before we got together. So when I married her it was a “package deal”. The latter sibling is my sister. God gave us an opportunity to adopt her last year. So we lived together as a family of five, when Keysha was home from college. I supported them all on my salary alone, because my wife was a student. *Note:* Our mothers have become clean and have improved their lives since then but we retained our siblings. Now we feel like we have completed this mission, with all of them being successful adults, two out of three having college experience at Tuskegee University, and all of them working and independent.

Since this time I have completed Western Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity, developed a gift to preach, and started Calvin Seminary. God willing I will graduate this spring with a Master of Theology. One day I will pursue a Ph.D. For now, I will celebrate our marriage of almost 12 years, our three children, and our life together while I eagerly and patiently await the next step of God’s plans for us.

Darrell Delaney

### *Statement of Reason*

The reason why I am applying for candidacy is because I have always believed God has a greater call on my life than youth ministry. I have been preparing for a long time, and I pray that it is finally time to lead the wider intergenerational context. All my experiences, education, and theological training have brought me to this point. In my heart I held on to the fact that it was always in God’s plan for me to pastor. I have a passion to preach and proclaim God’s Word. I have experience in evangelism, discipleship, and working with ministry teams, due to my 15+ years of experience of youth ministry. I believe these experiences qualify me for the pastoral position at the Square. These I bring with me, along with a Master of Divinity degree from Western Seminary, and a Master of Theology in Pastoral Care.

Darrell Delaney





*Name:* Mark DeVos

*Place of Birth:* Cambridge, ON

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Redeemer University College  
B.A., 2008

Covenant Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Huron Feathers Presbyterian  
Centre, Sauble Beach, ON  
Summer 2007 and Summer 2008

Mission St. Louis, Journey  
Church St. Louis, MO  
Sep 2008 - Dec 2009

Redeemer University College  
Ancaster, ON  
Academic Year  
Sep 2012 - Apr 2015

St. Catharines General Hospital,  
St. Catharines, ON, 2015

Canadian Association for Spirit-  
ual Care - Certified Spiritual  
Care Practitioner  
(Completing 2 Basic Units and  
2 Advanced Units as of May,  
2015)

*Languages spoken:*

Spanish (not fluent yet)

*Contact:*

289-880-2699  
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*Faith Journey*

I grew up in the CRC bored. In late middle school I remember saying to a Youth Elder, "When I get the opportunity I will be out of this church". He said to me, "Be patient with the church Mark"; through my teen years I stayed in the church I was baptized in, in part due to his admonition, but largely through the community of faith that I eventually did discover. My parents had a business that went bankrupt when I was 14. We lost a great deal - our home, our reputation in the community and the Christian education that my parents valued.

The September following high school graduation I began studying at Redeemer University College where I wrestled through questions that emerged from the contexts of the local church, campus life and downtown service learning trips. I began to explore what it meant to see "every square inch" of the city under the Lordship of Christ. I was a business major and had been running a lawn care and landscaping company that I had started in grade ten. I began to question - how does one's vocational ambitions relate to the gospel? I can remember saying to my pastor, "My enthusiasm about God and what He is doing in and around me keeps me up at night. I can't speak on business or sell a lawn care package the way I used to".

In my 3rd year at Redeemer a unique opportunity came up to pastor at a small PCC (Presbyterian Church of Canada) church that summer. In the company I interacted with many lonely, elderly people battling with illnesses and it was my impression that that's what pastors spent most of their week doing, which terrified me. Near the close of the summer I remember defining the terms with God: If they ask me back a second summer, you win - I will go to seminary!" They did ask me back and in that second summer our great missionary God sustained my heart to communicate His Word to those inside and outside the church. I went off to seminary with a burden in my gut and skip in my step: "Cause me to understand the way of your precepts that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds." (Ps 119:27).

In seminary I was thoroughly submerged in the study of counselling, evangelism and missions, church history, Greek, Hebrew, the Bible and its context, church planting, campus ministry, church leadership, apologetics, children's literature, educational ministry in the church, preaching, justice, etc. I was involved in evangelism with international students and discipleship with young men in the 99% African American neighbourhood where I lived. I spent my summers in Canada paying the seminary bills by running the lawn care company, and serving as a speaker for youth SERVE projects.

Upon graduation from seminary, within a span of one month both of my parents were diagnosed with cancer. This was not in my plan post-seminary, but these events allowed me to see the CRC at its best. The prayers and diverse acts of love from people at Maranatha CRC in Cambridge carried my family and I at this time.

Post-seminary I have wholeheartedly sought to follow Christ in the trenches of cultural renewal, working 3 years at Redeemer University as an Assistant Chaplain, 2 years at Cardus as a Project Coordinator and one year largely with elderly people as a chaplain in a hospital

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

What does it mean to follow Christ while seeing through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:12)? In one word – trust. I am still running the lawn care and landscaping company – exploring what it means to love Christ and my neighbour and to grow where I am planted. Throughout my journey I have experienced a deepening unction to pursue ordained ministry.

Mark DeVos

*Statement of Reason*

Why pursue ordination? I have a sense of calling deep in the bones that doesn't seem to go away. Some of my reasons for pursuing candidacy include: a sense of God's leading in my story, my experience of weighty joy when serving in ministry and the affirmation of friends, colleagues and mentors.

I believe that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab 2:14). I believe that Christ's Kingdom is coming; I believe that the CRC is participating in this Kingdom and I believe that I am being summoned to equip the saints for the work of ministry as this Kingdom advances (Eph 4:12). As already mentioned in my story, I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity to give back to a church that has given my family and I so much.

I grew up in the CRC. My heart, mind and hands have been formed through the humble faith, skilful wisdom and sacrificial love of diverse unsung leaders within the church. While I have served in diverse ministry contexts outside of the CRC, my doctrine, piety and determined commitment to cultural renewal are most at home within the CRC. I currently serve as an elder at 1st Hamilton CRC, which is a great responsibility and a wonderful privilege.

Mark DeVos



*Name:* Elisabeth DeVries

*Date of Birth:* 28

*Place of Birth:* Pella, Iowa

*Name of Spouse:* Daniel DeVries

*Number of Children:* 2

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Kuyper College  
B.S., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

LaGrave Avenue CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
June 2013 to September 2013

Mayfair CRC, Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2013 to May 2015

Plymouth Heights CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
June 2015 to August 2015

*Contact:*

616-218-7909  
eadv048@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

The fundamental beliefs of my Christian faith are accurately summed up in the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions. That is to say, I believe in a triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who created the cosmos, who has gone about the work of redeeming his creation from all that ails it—most definitively in the person and work of Jesus Christ—, and who continues that work through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of the Church—that is, God’s chosen and holy people. I believe that Jesus will return to earth and make his rule fully known. At that time the dead will be brought back to life and creation will be cleansed from all sin and evil. This, I believe, is the Christian hope—not simply that we get to go to heaven when we die, but that heaven and earth will be joined together when Christ returns and God dwells fully with his creation again. In the meantime, I believe that being a Christian means living an abundant life in the power of the Holy Spirit. The way of life that the Bible sets out is not a repressive set of rules to follow, but rather it gives us the parameters within which we are able to flourish as God’s beloved children.

I believe that the Bible is God’s authoritative word and that it is true in all the things that it intends to teach. There are many things in the Bible that are not crystal clear, but God has made clear those things that are necessary for our salvation and for his glory. However, that means that God, in his infinite wisdom, has also given us room for wonder, curiosity, and awe. In those areas of scripture that are not always clear I believe we should exhibit love and charity towards each other insofar as our respective beliefs exhibit love and charity towards creation or those outside the Christian faith.

I suppose I came to believe these things in large part due to my parents who brought me up to love and serve God (Deut. 6:6-7). In the past there have been times when I regretted that I didn’t have a dramatic conversion story that showcased a big act of God in my life. However, I have come to believe that my story is a testament to God’s “ordinary” grace seen in his covenant faithfulness to his people. I was raised in the reformed tradition and baptized as an infant and so I have come to believe that God set a claim on my life in baptism and that I am able to love him because he loved me first.

As a teen/young adult I experienced big doubts about the existence of God, which were crippling at times. My experience with those doubts has deepened my empathy for those outside the Christian faith. I have seen the importance of living the Christian faith with humility so that the gospel of Christ will not be discredited by what I say or how I live. When I experienced doubts I was only discouraged by the anger and fear that I saw in some strands of Christian belief such that I was dissatisfied with Christianity on both a practical and existential level. After being wooed back to faith by some faithful Christians (and ultimately by God’s grace!) I am most concerned that God’s grace and hope for the future would be shown in my life and in my theology – I am less concerned with propagating the finer points of Calvinism, even if I do happen to believe many of those finer points.

Elisabeth DeVries

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because I believe God is calling me to minister to his people through the administration of the sacraments and the preaching of his word. Through the sacraments and through preaching I want to see people come into contact with God's grace and God's love. I want to serve by giving people the language they need to articulate the sin and evil in their own hearts and in our world. Once they have done that I want to help people see the great grace and hope that the God offers through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

Elisabeth DeVries



*Name:* Brad Diekema

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Kuyper College  
B.S.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

New Life, Grand Junction, CO  
June 2015 - July 2015

Pleasant Street Christian  
Reformed Church,  
Whitinsville, MA  
June 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*

616-570-4771  
bsd063@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

Though I grew up in a Christian home, God has used experiences to show me who he is. After I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, I had this deep desire to live for God in all I did. I began to see those who were the least of these especially those who were bullied. One day God broke my heart and prompted me to hang out at recess with a female classmate, who was bullied and whom everyone found to be super annoying. I obeyed and found that she was not as annoying as everyone thought. Though we did not become friends nor did I continue to hang with her at recess, I experienced God's heart and love for the outcast and the least of these.

Another experience happened at a Teens encountering Christ (TEC) weekend. I entered into the church where TEC was being held with a skeptical heart. What would I get out of TEC. Over the course of the weekend God worked on my skeptical heart. I remember my small group leaders begging and pleading with us to open up assuring us that it was safe. Inside I smirk at their efforts. I reasoned that opening up would be a bad idea. Then on the last day, after reading a letter from my parents praising me how proud they were of the young godly man I was becoming, I broke. I confessed to people who I had only known for forty-eight hours about the deep hypocrisy I was living. That weekend, I deeply experienced God's grace and forgiveness.

I believe that God uses experiences to guide and lead his people. God used my friend Mike to lead me into ministry. One morning, while sipping his coffee and I my hot chocolate, Mike asked me, "Brad, do you know want to know what you are going to be when you grow up?" I shrugged my shoulder and said, "Sure." Mike responded, "You are going to be a youth pastor." I just laughed. Up to that point my career plan was to become a marine biologist. But as I got involved in being a student leader in youth group, the more the idea of vocational ministry appealed to me.

Then one day in the fall of 2011, after spending a summer questioning my calling into youth ministry, Mike asked me if I had heard about the accelerated M.Div. program that Kuyper College and Calvin Seminary had established. I told him I had. He then said, "I think you need to consider going to seminary." I told him I would think and pray about it. As I prayed about the decision to whether to go to seminary or not, a memory from when I was young came back to me. I recalled writing a note to the pastor asking him if someone else could preach on Sunday night. That someone being me. I realized that this was my earliest thought of pastoral ministry. With the support of my parents, I made the decision to enter into the pre-seminary program at Kuyper College with the intention of going to seminary, earning my M.Div. degree and perusing pastoral ministry in a local church.

As I look back upon my journey, I see God's faithfulness and his guidance in my call to ministry. God used people and experiences to accomplish his will. I know that all the good experiences and even the doubts were part of God's plan to lead me to where I am today. For that I am ever thankful to God. I am excited to see what God has in store for me.

Brad Diekema

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*Statement of Reason*

I grew up in the CRC and want to be a candidate for three reasons. The first reason I am seeking candidacy is that I see a strong desire for unity. I see this in the conversations over tough issues at Synod. I see this in CRC's strides to be a more ecumenical church, which I greatly appreciate because I see this as only increasing the Church's witness to the world. The second reason I am seeking candidacy is because I appreciate and respect how the CRC decides ecclesiastical matters. I appreciate the care that is taken to explore and study issues that are raised. I also appreciate the system that is in place so that local churches and classes have an opportunity provide feedback to Synod. The third reason is that I deeply respect reformed theology and the CRC's particular accent. For all these reasons I see God at work in the CRC and desire to be part of that good and great work.

Brad Diekema





*Name:* Kyle Dieleman

*Spouse:* Andrea

*Age:* 25

*Place of Birth:* Sully, IA

*College Attended:*

Dordt College  
B.A., 2009

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2012

*Mentored Ministries Internship*

Monroe Community Church,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Summer 2010

Willard CRC, Celeryville, OH  
Summer 2011

Ocheyedan CRC,  
Ocheyedan, IA  
Youth Director 2009

*Contact:*

641-990-4575  
kdielem2@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

My faith journey is one that began the moment I was born. I was raised in a Christian family, baptized and brought up in the Christian Reformed Church, and educated in Christian schools. Intellectually speaking, I have been a Christian all my life. I have always believed the basic beliefs of the Christian faith, and I never doubted the reality of God as He is revealed in the Bible. Because Christianity has been my belief system my entire life I have difficulty pinpointing a specific conversion point in my life.

As I got into my later high school years my faith started to become much more real to me. Again, rather than one pivotal moment, I experienced my growing faith in a variety of smaller ways. Through conversations with my teachers, words from my catechism teachers, or the challenging words of a chapel speaker, I began to feel that my faith was real and that my relationship with God was important. I started to realize that there was more to faith than simply being able to sign off mentally on all the right beliefs. At the time the progression did not seem very significant, but looking back I can see the way my faith was becoming more real and personal in my life.

Up until the beginning of my college years I had never really considered what God had planned for my life. As far as I was concerned, it was up to me to decide what I wanted to do and who I wanted to become. But once I realized the all-encompassing claims of the gospel on my life, I knew my life was not my own but God's. So, I began to contemplate where God was calling me to and what He wanted me to do. I began to feel a call to become a pastor. In keeping with the rest of my faith journey, the call was not instantaneous or momentous, but it was something I could not seem to shake. I declared a major in theology and began to prepare for seminary. Overall, my time at college gave me a stronger faith and provided the time and space to develop a better, closer relationship with God.

The problem in trying to give my testimony and tell my faith story is that faith stories never really end. It would be dishonest to say that my faith has been strong and perfect ever since my later high school and early college years. Faith is not something I can grab hold of; it is not a tangible, quantifiable thing I can measure and check off my personal evaluation form. Faith, my faith, ebbs and flows like ocean waves. But always I know and I feel that I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. The faith that I belong to my Savior and Lord, that is a life changing faith worth having and a journey worth taking no matter where it leads.

Kyle Dieleman



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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy so that I can take a call as a pastor in a Christian Reformed Church. I have completed or am in the process of completing all the requirements for candidacy, and, as such, would like to be considered for candidacy. I believe the candidacy process to be a part of the calling process to ministry. Therefore, completing the candidacy process is a crucial part of the path towards ordained ministry. For these reasons, I am seeking candidacy this year.

Kyle Dielman



*Name:* Brian Dunn

*Place of Birth:* Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Spring Arbor University  
B.A., 2011

Grand Rapids Theological  
Seminary  
2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

First CRC, Rocky Mountain  
House, Alberta, Canada  
May 2015 - August 2015

Cross Cultural  
Nov 2015 - April 2016

*Contact:*

403-844-5945  
dunnski@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I must confess to having a mixed history when it comes to my faith involvement or at times lack thereof. I grew up in the mid-lower peninsula of Michigan, in the small town of Beaverton. We attended a Lutheran church until I was somewhere around eleven. For many reasons, we stopped attending regularly and church/faith became an afterthought.

I spent my teenage years in utter rebellion from the church. I saw it as something that would restrict me and not allow me to do what I wanted. So, I spent much of those years doing what I wanted. I was not a bad kid, but I was not interested in much in the way of faith either. I remember refusing to do events that may have something to do with the church because I did not want anything to do with it. Looking back, I praise God for giving me a strong conscious otherwise I may have gotten in to more trouble than I did!

Things began to happen spiritually for me when my first daughter, Zoe, was born. I remember looking at her, crying, and thinking I wanted something more for her! At this point, I was not sure what that was. A few months later, I proposed to my soon to be wife, Kassy. Her father, a United Methodist Pastor, connected us with a church in the town we were living in that was willing to give us a deal if we began attending regularly. The culmination of regularly being in worship, being involved in a great, loving community and the mentoring I received softened my heart. With plenty of seeds planted, I remember God using a sermon on Mark 4:35-41 to save me the summer before our wedding. Afterwards I got involved in the youth ministries of our church which became a strong point of interest for me. I thought one of my first lessons for the kids, and I began exploring with my mentor what ministry might look like. I needed to finish my Bachelor's Degree and through some family connections and guidance, we decided about a year after our wedding to move to Spring Arbor, MI so I could complete my Bachelor's Degree at Spring Arbor University.

After the move, and now with our second daughter Oliva born, working a few part-time jobs while going to school began to be difficult. I attended the main campus of SAU for a year and half. However, practically and for the sake of my family, I felt the need to get a full-time job so I could better provide. This meant I needed to change my program to find a more flexible option to finish school. I enrolled in the local satellite campus of SAU in Jackson, MI which offered a BA of Family Life Education on a more flexible schedule. Still in my sights were visions of ending up in ministry. While being assured this was still plausible, I entered the Family Life Education program.

Things began to swing up for my family and I after this. Our third daughter, Amelya, was born, and I landed a good job working in a residential treatment facility for youth and eventually completed the classes for my BA with only a looming internship left. Enjoying my work, I began to become complacent. I thought maybe I was fine just working; maybe I did not even need to finish my internship and my degree. This thinking led me to leave my degree hanging for nearly five years. During that time, I landed an even better job eventually managing a

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

2-1-1 call center in Jackson, MI, which I also loved and was climbing the ranks very quickly.

If things were going to change, I was going to need a shakeup. That is exactly what I received when after eight years, my marriage was on the brink of falling apart. For a short time, Kassy and I separated and my world, everything I was working to establish and provide for seemed to coming to an end. My faith and the scriptures were the only things I had to rely on, and I held them tightly. By the grace of God, Kassy and I were able to work through our issues by entering into Godly counseling and determination to one another. During this crisis however, something had changed in me. I began to look at the scriptures differently. Through various influences, such as Francis Chan, Mark Driscoll and others, as well as personal study, I came to a Reformed understanding of the scriptures.

With this wakeup call in hand, and a new look on the scriptures, I had a renewed interest in entering the ministry. Prior to this, I had only done youth work, and I wanted to explore pastoral ministry in more of a lead role. Still needing to finish my BA and as part of an internship, I interned at my local Methodist Church to explore aspects of ministry I had not yet explored such as preaching, administration and visitation. Through this internship, I learned how much I loved pastoral ministry, especially preaching. However, I also learned that my new understanding of scripture was not compatible with the Methodist Church.

Without a Reformed home but knowing ministry was something I wanted to pursue, I began looking at seminaries, Calvin Seminary being my top choice. Calvin suggested I consider the Christian Reformed Church, which I was excited to do not having a current Reformed home. Cascades Fellowship CRC in Jackson, MI became our home for the first four years of my seminary career and was instrumental in giving me a foundation. I am grateful to Cascades for walking with me as I failed and succeeded, and I am grateful to Chris Lanham, the pastor of Cascades for mentoring me along the way. I have since become the Pastor of Congregational Life at First CRC in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta which has awoken me even more to my love for the ministry. I have been blessed through these experiences and am grateful to have felt God's hand and his grace all the way!

Brian Dunn

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe God has called me to do so. I have felt an internal calling through the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. That has been affirmed by the church of Christ and his people he has given me the opportunity to serve thus far. It is a blessing, honor and privilege to be able to build up the body of Christ, the church in the capacity of pastoral ministry, and I will not take this responsibility lightly. I pray for the continued guidance from the Spirit, and the people of God as the Lord carries me to fully understand the work he has called me to do.

Brian Dunn



*Name:* Trent Elders

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Name of Spouse:* Kelly Elders

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Church of the Servant CRC,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2012 to May 2015  
(Full time job + Internship)

Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services +  
Spectrum Health  
Clinical Pastoral Education  
May 2015 to August 2015

*Contact:*

616-856-6913  
tme045@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I am a Christian, specifically Christian Reformed. I affirm the Creeds associated with the Christian Reformed Church. I believe in a Trinitarian God who had perfect community within himself, but had so much love that it poured over into creation, and thus started the greatest love story ever to be told. He could have created robots that automatically loved him back, but he created human beings with the capacity to choose whether or not to believe in him so that their love would mean something real. The cool thing is that because God is omnipotent he already knows who will choose him. God then sent his son Jesus to die for our sins and then rose again. Because of my family of origin, my doubts, my friends, and relentless pursuit of what is true. I am on the receiving end of that love story. I continue to live a life that doesn't live up to the gratefulness that I owe, I am totally depraved. But Christ first found me, loved me and will work in me through sanctification until he calls me home. Because I am so great full for this blessing I try to live my life in a way that reflects that thanks by loving God's law and God's people. I believe that the ideas in scripture are God-breathed and therefore inerrant. I believe the Holy Spirit works in us humans to bring those inerrant ideas out. As scripture was being written God had to accommodate the intelligence level of the day, and the fact that humans can make interpretation mistakes, it is our ongoing task to study and exegete scripture without changing it.

I grew up a Christian, I was baptized as an infant to represent that God first loved me. My parents and grandparents taught me what that meant at a young age. In sixth grade I made profession of faith because I liked a girl in the profession of faith class. In 8th grade I realized that I was only a Christian because my parents were Christians. I realized that if I was born in Tibet, with different parents, I probably would not have been raised a Christian. That really bothered me, and I was thrown into a period of severe doubt. Until I realized that faith and doubt go hand in hand. Doubt makes our faith stronger.

From that point on I decided to search out truth, without the fear of doubt. This adolescent period of searching sparked an interest in learning as much as I could about Christianity. In high school this learning was done in religion class, outside reading, and two youth groups. I had a number of very interesting Christian mentors, who happened to be youth pastors. Their influence inspired me to follow in their footsteps. Throughout high school these mentors inspired me to lead chapels savoring on my interest in ministry.

Throughout attending Calvin College I began to feel "over church'd". This led to a period of my life where I participated in small group "house church" settings and focused on personal devotion growth. It also inspired me to as Gandhi put it: "be the change you want to see in the world". I decided that in order to deal with my frustrations with the church I had to be a part of the change. I created a major at Calvin College geared towards youth ministry. I began volunteering with various youth ministries, worked at Camp Roger for a summer. Began leading faith-based wilderness trips for Calvin, and got accepted into a two-year internship with LaGrave CRC.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

The Youth Pastor Bob Grussing has been at LaGrave for 30 Years. It was an amazing experience to see how his longevity as a youth pastor has effected LaGraves program. This in depth internship solidified the fact that at the time youth ministry was the vocation where my greatest passions and the world's greatest needs met. As this internship wrapped up I decided to go to Seminary to further my education. I love learning, but something weird happened in my first semester of Seminary. I felt a strong feeling that I was not in the right place and needed to be back in practical youth ministry. So after much thought, and much discussion, I decided to put my full time education on hold and pursue a career in what I felt called to.

The last three years I have worked at Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids MI as their youth and young adult director. Throughout my work at COS I was slowly taking seminary classes. After three years of working full time and slowly chipping away at credits I felt called to finish out my seminary education. I spent the summer in Clinical Pastoral Education at Pine Rest and Spectrum learning about pastoral care and self-awareness and am currently completing my last semester at CTS.

These are some of the experiences that have shaped me and led me to the belief statement above, and to pursuing full time Ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

Trent Elders

*Statement of Reason*

I would like to candidate and become ordained in the Christian Reformed Church. In my life I have felt called by God towards ministry, lately this call has been zeroed into specifically pastoral ministry. After working at LaGrave CRC, Church of the Servant, and growing up at Plymouth Heights CRC I have come to love this denominations culture beliefs, and mission. Which has inspired me to pursue a career with this organization. I have a passion for the CRC's past, present and future and believe that the CRC's best days are still ahead.

Trent Elders



*Name:* Kendra Ettema

*Age:* 27

*Place of Birth:* Southfield, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.S., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2015

*Internships:*

Cragmoor CRC &  
Restore Innocence  
Summer 2012

Women's Huron Valley  
Correctional Facility  
Summer 2013

Centered Life, Colorado  
Springs, CO  
Denver Health  
Summer 2014

*Contact:*

810-358-4064

ken21ruth@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Even when I was young, I felt drawn toward ministry and especially toward working with people suffering in painful places, both emotionally and spiritually. I believe that God meets us in our pain and that God alone can satisfy us. God's calling on my life was felt inwardly and was also affirmed by others around me. My family, friends, and mentors have encouraged and challenged my faith throughout my life. Much of my spiritual growth came from grieving the deaths of many people close to me. Each of their deaths caused me to evaluate the purpose of my life. I made my profession of faith trusting that I fully belong to God. I wanted to express my commitment to God and to the community of believers.

Throughout the years, I have been blessed with experiences and opportunities that have impacted my faith. In high school, I attended the Calvin Theological Seminary's Facing Your Future program and learned about church planting by going to Calgary, Alberta. On a mission trip to the Ukraine, I built relationships with children at a Ukrainian children's home. I also assisted in leading children's worship and VBS for my home church. While at Calvin College, I went to Malawi and Mozambique on an interim trip where I became very sick all the while continuing to learn more about my calling towards Recreation Therapy as well as ministry. Over the past five years, I was a high school youth and young adult leader at Madison Square CRC and I was also a Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders (GRIL U) mentor.

Believing that each person is an image bearer of God and deserving of love, I was led continually towards ministry through chaplaincy. Over the past couple of years, I completed three Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internships. For the past three summers, I participated in a variety of experiences through CPE including some of the following: pastoral care at Cragmoor CRC in Colorado Springs; ministry with survivors of sex trafficking; serving with Prison Fellowship at Women's Huron Valley Prison in Ypsilanti, MI with women reentering society; as well as ministry to military and hospice chaplains returning from service. This past summer, I was in Denver at Denver Health Hospital offering chaplaincy services to people from all sorts of backgrounds. Much of the time I was in the intensive care units and in the jail of the hospital. These experiences affirmed and drew me towards following God's calling on my life.

Throughout my years in college and seminary and especially in my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) trainings, God continually drew me to himself as he consistently met me in my pain. He equipped me and allowed me to meet with others wherever they were in their lives. I believe God holds us in our pain and we can have hope through Christ's resurrection and by knowing God is always with us. I've been thankful to come home to my calling as a chaplain and I'm hopeful and excited to see where God will lead me in my life through this ministry.

Kendra Ettema



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*Statement of Reason*

Even when I was young, I felt drawn towards ministry and working with people suffering in painful places, both emotionally and spiritually. God's calling on my life was felt inwardly and was also affirmed by others around me. My pastor from eighth grade through high school, Ken Vander Horst, spoke into my life encouraging me to consider going to seminary. I initially thought that I would attend seminary later in life after I had more experience, but through a variety of circumstances, God guided me to attend seminary. I am applying for candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church to fulfill what I believe God is calling me to be in ministry. Additionally, I am applying for candidacy as my job as a Certified Recreation Therapist Specialist at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services drew me towards chaplaincy. Chaplaincy fits well with my desire to meet people where they are in life and to be with them in their pain.

Kendra Ettema





*Name:* Kendall Everett

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* Ridgewood, NJ

*Name of Spouse:* Amy Everett

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
William Paterson University (NJ)  
B.A., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*  
Cross Cultural Internship  
at Madison Avenue CRC in  
Paterson, NJ  
June 2014 to August 2014  
  
Pastoral Ministries Internship at  
Hope CRC in Grandville  
May 2015 to December 2015

Institute of Global Church  
Planting and Renewal  
Renewal Lab Intern  
Sept. 2014 to present

*Contact:*  
973-202-7934  
everettk702@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in God the Father who created all things good. People took what God created good, rebelled against God and opened the door for sin to enter the world. I believe that Jesus Christ is God's only Son, fully God and fully man. I believe that he was forsaken by God, suffered and died to pay the ransom for sinners. I believe that he rose again from the dead to conquer sin and death, promising eternal life to those who believe in him. I believe that he has ushered in a new kingdom where He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords—a kingdom in which all things are being made new. I believe that Jesus sits at God's right hand, interceding on our behalf and ready to judge the living and the dead, promising to return and conquer evil once and for all. I believe that the Holy Spirit works in our hearts producing faith in Jesus, assuring us of eternal life, and making us wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for him.

These are some of the basic beliefs that I have been taught my entire life. I grew up in a Christian home, was baptized into a Christian Reformed Church where I attended most of my life, I went to a Christian school from pre-K through 12th grade and was active in Sunday School, Catechism, Cadets, and Youth Group ministries. Though I was taught these things from a young age, in high school I began to realize that they were words on a page, ideas in my mind, and truths, but I hadn't made them my own. I knew that I looked like a textbook Christian from the outside, but was still wrestling with making that faith real in my heart. At a youth retreat, the Holy Spirit moved me to commit my life to Christ in a more real and tangible way. Shortly after, I professed my faith before my church. In college, God challenged me to daily give my life to him even when it wasn't easy. I was a Christian on a campus where Christianity was often mocked, ridiculed, or regarded as irrelevant. Keeping Christ at the center of my life helped solidify my faith in the face of adversity. It is this foundation of faith that I rest on daily.

Kendall Everett

### *Statement of Reason*

The Christian Reformed Church has been crucial for my faith formation. It was within a Christian Reformed Church that I learned about God's Word, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and how the story of the gospel intersects with my life. I learned and studied the Ecumenical Creeds and the Heidelberg Catechism. These were formative for me in figuring out what I actually believed and why I believed them. At a secular college, I found myself falling back on these things to defend and articulate my faith when Christianity was misunderstood or others had questions. The Christian Reformed Church has shaped me and formed me into a disciple of Jesus Christ called to follow him and give my life to him. It is for this reason that I love this denomination. I felt a clear call to ministry during my college years through my involvement with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. It was here that I began to feel a burden on my heart to serve Christ and preach the gospel to Christians and non-Christians alike. God's desires to seek and to save the lost became my own desires. This is what led

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

me—and is still leading me—to seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. I hope and pray that God will use me to serve the church by impressing upon others the heart of Jesus, which invites us all to join him in his work redeeming and restoring all of creation.

Kendall Everett



*Name:* Tara Foreman

*Age:* 36

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Name of Spouse:* Mark Foreman

*Number of Children:* 3

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Hope College  
B.A., 2002

Fuller Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2007

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Internships:*

Small Groups Pastor - Pasadena  
Church of God, Pasadena CA  
June 2004-2007

University Christian Church,  
Cincinnati OH  
Pastor of Spiritual Formation  
June 2008 to May 2011

CPE - Mercy Hospitals  
Muskegon, MI  
September 2011 to February 2012

Bethany CRC Muskegon  
Pastor of Congregational Care/  
Interim Worship Coordinator  
August 2014 to present

*Contact:*

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tareforeman@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Christian home in Grand Rapids - the story is quite “typical” of many others - Christian schools, members of a RCA church, etc. My faith was personal and real to me from a young age. I am thankful for that part of my journey. However, participating as a member of churches from three different denominations and attending a non-denominational seminary forced me over the last ten years to really focus on the essentials of my Christian faith. I believe God used this time to shape me and disciple me that I might better be prepared to serve him in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society. Beliefs I once held tightly to I have since let go of and others I hold more loosely to. Through this process, however, I have been even more convinced of the centrality of God’s love for me, for others and for our world. A love demonstrated through Christ’s death on the cross and his conquering of death on our behalf through the resurrection. I believe in the Holy Trinity, three persons yet One God.

I believe that through the virgin birth of Jesus he lived his life on earth as both fully human and fully divine. I believe that his time on earth initiated a coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. A Kingdom in which God continues to be at work through his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues to empower his bride, the Church, to bring about his kingdom purpose in the world. God uses his empowered Church to bring about restoration, healing, reconciliation and salvation to a sinful, dying and broken world. Although I appreciate the ecumenical experience I’ve gained, it has also brought me to a deeper appreciation for the faith perspective we know as “Reformed”. The reformed faith’s centrality in God’s Word, and the emphasis on always “reforming” ourselves to that Word gives a foundation to my own faith in a ever-changing, pluralistic society.

The reformed emphasis on God’s covenantal grace is a comfort and place of rest for me in my own faith journey. The covenantal aspect of our faith is a comfort but also a lifelong call to obedience in partnering with God in his redemptive work in me, and the world. I believe that God calls his people to join him in this creative work in every realm of life. This work involves, among other things, creation care, expressions of love and justice to both individuals and communities and a special preference for the poor and marginalized. I believe that God does not empower us as some distant, powerful, yet hands-off Being, but by his grace and forgiveness invites us into personal relationship with him. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus as our Lord that we are initiated into the community of believers signified through baptism and join other Holy Spirit-empowered community in living out God’s purposes in the world.

Tara Foreman

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*Statement of Reason*

Attending a non-denominational seminary, spending time working part time at two churches outside of the CRC as I also began a family and learned to be a “mom” left me a lot of time to really consider the shape of my call. More and more as I discerned and had different ministry experiences I began to understand that the centrality of my call was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had no idea that a call to that would be available to me, as a woman, within the Christian Reformed Church. It was only after moving to Muskegon, and visiting a local congregation here, that God opened my eyes (and heart) to that possibility. Bethany Christian Reformed Church has provided opportunity for me to explore and use my gifts from the first day I step foot in the door.

Through the guidance of my mentor pastor and participation on the preaching team of the church, my call has been confirmed and further shaped. This local congregation, although far from perfect, has also been a testimony to me of a reformed expression of faith and one that has convinced me that my own call fits within the greater call of the Christian Reformed Church. My EPMC classes at Calvin Seminary have further convinced me that the CRC is a denomination in which God’s could use me to preach his gospel and lead his people to him. I find myself both grateful and surprised that God has led me to seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church!

Tara Foreman



*Name:* Richard France-Coe

*Place of Birth:* Denver, CO

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2006

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2013

*Internships:*

Madison Square Christian  
Reformed Church, Ford  
Campus, Grand Rapids, MI  
October 2010 - May 2012

Brighton Reformed Church,  
Rochester, NY  
Summer 2011

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

Although I grew up in a Christian home, I never had the sense as a child that God was real, that God was anything more than an abstraction or a distant figure that needed to be pleased. During my sophomore year at college I experienced God's presence and peace in a way that changed my life and my heart forever. It was during these years that I became convinced that, first and foremost, God is love. I began to understand that God is deeply concerned with and participating in the life of the world and in individual lives and stories. Participating in a bi-weekly prayer group that met in an older couple's house helped me to grow in my ability to receive God's love and also care for other people with the strength and love of the Holy Spirit.

Living in an intentional community house with other adults taught my wife and our family the beauty of community and caring for people in thick and thin. I believe that a strong and honest community is formed through the gospel of Christ, one that can work through struggles and challenges and grow together in the process.

I also believe that the gospel encounters human cultures, and neighborhoods and nations and brings about new life and transformation. I believe that God wants us to live lives of justice and equity, honoring and loving our neighbors and seeking to live in a way that pays homage to the King and seeks to live according to his kingdom. I desire to be a part of a kingdom community that is seeking reconciliation, justice and kingdom engagement with the context that surrounds us. I believe this can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit who is the impetus and primary agent in any transformation or growth.

Richard France-Coe

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the CRCNA because I believe that God has called me to wrestle with the intersections of Scripture, communities, individual lives and the reality of life in this world. I believe that the world is in desperate need of a word from the Lord and I desire to be part of a community that seeks to demonstrate Christ's lordship over all of creation. I want to give me life to the church and to serve the Lord and the communities that I am a part of. I believe in the local church is the hope for the area that it presides in and want to live into that hope through the joy and renewing work of the Holy Spirit who is already working in the neighborhood and in the lives of God's people.

Richard France-Coe



*Name:* Joshua K. Friend

*Place of Birth:* Cambridge, ON

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Heritage Bible College  
B.A.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Service Learning  
(Bowden Men's Penitentiary),  
Bowden AB, Canada  
2014

Cross Cultural Internship -  
Special Needs  
Weekly Church Services Red  
Deer, AB, Canada  
November 2015 - present

Pastoral Internship  
First CRC, Red Deer,  
AB, Canada  
2016-2017

Continuing education and  
Independent Studies  
in Preaching

*Contact:*

587-377-6745  
pastorjoshfriend@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

What you believe matters. What you believe will become what you say, and what you say becomes what you will do (and ask others to do), which will determine who you are, and eventually where you are going. Thought→Action→Being→Destiny. This is what I believe:

- I believe that since the Creation of the world, God has been a person in relationship with people. We have been made for relationships with each other, and we grow more when we grow together.
- I believe that God has called me into relationship with Him, which is only accessed through the free gift of grace found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Because of His work, God has forgiven my sin, called me to a new life and has been actively preparing me for this new call and life.
- I believe that the church belongs to Christ; the whole church, and I her servant. I believe that there are many servants like me, whose company I should keep and whose accountability I should ask for. I believe in relationships with other pastors and denominations in order to bring to light the fact that the whole world belongs to God.
- I believe that the church is ancient. I believe that the church should be pertinent. I believe that while we are pulled in many directions, that in the decisions made in the church, authority rests with the governing body of the local church to understand the context and direction of the local church. The global church's context and direction are best understood by a coming together of the local churches in a larger assembly.
- I believe that our history is important. I think it is important to know how the church has behaved in the last 2000+ years and to honour those things we have been called by Christ to observe. This includes our history in worship, preaching and doctrine as we consider the future of these important areas
- I believe, above all, that my salvation comes from God in Jesus Christ, and that by His Spirit working within me, I will be able to serve the church- His Church- for the rest of my life.
- I believe in the next generation, including my family. I believe that God desires relationships with our entire family, including our children and we should do all that we can to engage and promote spiritual growth and discipleship in our homes and communities.

What I believe will impact all I do and say, and I came to these beliefs and others through the grace of God. God called me to his salvation through a song when I was a child in the Reformed Church in Ontario. I was encouraged in my faith by faithful teachers and preachers and have enjoyed the life of growth in the church my whole life. I look forward to continuing my journey with God as I learn and grow in my love for him and his church.

Joshua Friend



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*Statement of Reason*

My reasons to seek candidacy and ordination in the Christian Reformed Church are based on my commitment to Christ, to the Call and to the Church.

First, in Christ, I have discovered myself- not by what I am able to do, not by what I have amassed for myself in learning and discipline nor found in any of my relationships, it is rather the one relationship I have with Jesus Christ in which I find myself.

Second, I believe that all Christians are called to discern their place in the work that God has for each of us, and with much time, learning and wise counsel, I have discerned that I have been called to serve the church as a Minister of the Word.

Lastly, the church is a community of people- like a family. I have a supportive family who have encouraged me, including several Classes in the CRC denomination, both physically and emotionally; I believe in the church. I believe that I have been raised through the church to answer a call to serve Christ, honour the Call and love His Church. For these reasons, I would like to declare my desire for candidacy.

Joshua Friend





*Name:* Cari Fydirchuk

*Place of Birth:* London,  
ON, Canada

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
University of Calgary  
B.A., 2003

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
St. Thomas Anglican Church,  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada  
Cross Cultural Internship  
Summer 2015

New Hope Hillside CRC  
Pastoral Internship  
2015 - present

*Contact:*  
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### *Faith Journey*

#### **What I Believe...**

I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home where I came to know a loving God; as the One who cares for us, protects us, guides us and invites us to be in relationship with him through our Savior, Jesus Christ. At a young age my Dad taught me that FAITH stands for Feeling Afraid I Trust Him. These words have always stayed with me and I've often repeated this to myself as a reminder that I'm not alone on this journey. It is this faith that enables me, even through life's challenges, to respond to God's call on my life because of his gift of grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)

I was raised in the Anglican tradition and introduced to the Christian Reformed Church in my early twenties. It was here that I began to understand the concept of God's everywhere active presence. Through the authoritative lens of Scripture, we come to recognize and experience his presence in our everyday lives. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1) This understanding that all of life matters to God and is held by God is now the basis for my faith and interaction with the world around me.

#### **How I Got There/Here...**

On a particularly humid day in late-August of 2012, after tearfully kissing and hugging my daughter goodbye – this would be the first time in her two years of life that we would be apart for more than a day – I found myself boarding a plane to Chicago. I'd been to Chicago once before for a Willow Creek Church conference and was now travelling that way again, but just a little further to a place called Grand Rapids, Michigan. In less than twenty-four hours, this would be where I would 'officially' answer God's call on my life: a call into ordained ministry. Even as I write these words today, almost five years later, it takes my breath away. God is good. "The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33:4, NIV)

At an early age, I felt a deep calling from God to go into formal ministry in the Church. I'll admit, my 'faith' and 'call' story is a bit cliché... but it was one of those moments that defined me. I was at a summer Bible Camp and after one of the evening chapel services my friend and I stayed behind to pray with one of the leaders. During that prayer, I asked Jesus to come into my heart and into my life; as did my friend. Afterwards we went over to the bonfire, where most of the other campers and counselors were. As we settled in, one of the counselors got up and asked who had asked Jesus into their heart that night. I GULPED... SERIOUSLY...IS THIS HAPPENING...I DIDN'T KNOW I WOULD HAVE TO TELL ANYONE! I sat quietly as people began saying, "I did" and raising their hands, etc. I began to literally heat up. For what felt like an eternity, but was probably only a couple of seconds or maybe minutes, I sat with what felt like a ball of fire in my gut and it burned up into my throat and out my mouth as I said (quite loudly) "I accepted Jesus into my heart tonight!" I was shocked, but then at peace. I thought, what just happened? Without "knowing," I knew it was from God.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

The next morning, I spoke to my camp counselor about it, and she talked to me about the Holy Spirit. She also helped me understand some of the fears I was having around that moment. I told her I sensed God was asking me to be a minister. I said it scared me a great deal because at this time in my life, my Dad was in seminary, and I was living-out firsthand what that meant. I knew it wasn't an easy life or an easy calling...from what I could tell at the time, it seemed to come with a lot of sacrifice. The counselor assured me that if that was God's desire, He would settle my fears, and I would feel joy and know that was truly God's call for me. And well, that was it, for twenty years, I waited on God. Or perhaps God was waiting on me?

In 2010 God nudged me to start talking to my family, pastors and other confidants in my life about this sense of calling and possible next steps. It just so 'happened' that the perfect seminary program became available at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), where I could stay in my hometown of Calgary, continue to be a stay-at-home mom and still begin studies. God even took care of providing the resources necessary to start this education. Through these initial steps in what would soon be the journey of a lifetime, God revealed to me His heart of grace and love, beyond my human comprehension. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7)

Cari Fydirchuk

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe God has called me to minister to his church and his people. I've been blessed to have this internal call and my gifts for ministry affirmed over the years by pastors, mentors, colleagues, family and friends. Perhaps more than any other time in my life, God has given me a real sense of pastoral identity; who he has created me to be as a part of His mission. I'm a 'pastor' of the people (both inside and outside the church) with a focus on pastoral care and counselling which is integrated into my love of God's Word and preaching. Learning to be Christ to others – witnessing to another's experience – another's journey. Nouwen teaches in his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, "God has created us and redeemed us in love and has chosen us to proclaim that love as the true source of all human life." (pg. 30) I'm eternally grateful to be called to share God's love through formal ministry.

Cari Fydirchuk



*Name:* Tyler Greenway

*Spouse:* Johanna

*Age:* 24

*Place of Birth:* Munster, IN

*College Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2010

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2013

*Internships:*

City Grace Church,  
New York City, NY  
Summer 2011

Wayland CRC, Wayland, MI  
July 2011 — Present,  
Concurrent

*Contact:*

616-240-5116  
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### *Faith Journey*

My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather served the church as Ministers of the Word for their entire lives. I grew up watching my dad lead Christians through the highs and lows of their faith and hearing stories of my grandfather's mission work in Mexico and Sri Lanka. This has had a profound influence on my life.

From an early age I embraced what my parents taught me. I saw the immeasurable value of Christ. I understood the problem of sin in my life. I witnessed the transformation that the message of grace could kindle in the lives of the hopeless. I believe there is a deep need for Christ in this world. Without him we are lacking. This is true for every part of our lives. Christ influences our studies, careers, families, and worship.

This desire has influenced my life thus far. From an early age I have served the church in whatever capacities I could. I have served in nursery, Sunday school classes, youth group activities and trips, and on committees. I've been on multiple service trips to Tennessee, Canada, Mexico, and Nicaragua. Currently I serve as the intern pastor at Wayland Christian Reformed Church. I have the privilege of preaching the Word of God, catechizing teenagers, and providing pastoral care.

I recognize the necessity of Christ for this world. We are transformed by the work of Christ, but without him we are lost. I recognize that God has called me to devote my life to him and to ministry in his church. I wish to serve the church in whatever capacity I can. I believe that God is calling me to serve as a Minister of the Word in the CRC and I hope to serve in this role with the gifts that God has given me.

Tyler Greenway

### *Statement of Reason*

I wish to be a candidate in the Christian Reformed Church in North America because I believe that God is calling me to become a Minister of the Word and I agree with the creeds, confessions, and mission of the CRCNA. God's calling on my life has prompted me to seek training to become a minister. As I continue my schooling, I feel that my internal calling has been confirmed. I have been raised in the CRCNA my entire life and I wish to continue serving in this denomination and to have the opportunity as a candidate for my calling to be recognized by a congregation within the CRCNA.

Tyler Greenway



*Name:* Robert Gruessing

*Spouse:* Sue

*Age:* 39

*Place of Birth:* Zeeland, MI

*Number of Children:* Four

*College Attended:*

Cornerstone University  
B.S., 2010

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2014

*Internships:*

70 X 7, Holland MI  
Summer 2012

CPE, Pine Rest,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Summer 2013

*Contact:*

616-748-0493  
rjg66@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

My belief in God and experience of Him are all about relationships. I have seen how God has loved and walked with me throughout the struggles of my life in a variety of ways. I was born and raised in a good Christian family, and would consider my faith journey as an ongoing process of enlightenment. My beliefs can be summed up in the 'reformed' Christian creeds and confessions that I hold dear.

The high point of my faith came after I got married. First we had a daughter and two years later a second daughter was born. Three years after that we found we were pregnant with a son. I was excited to have a boy! But, that elation soon turned to grief as we learned halfway through the pregnancy that he had thanatophoric skeletal dysplasia, which caused his demise shortly after birth. This was very hard on me. I cried out to God...how could He do this to me?

My Grandfather reminded me that God knew what I was feeling. He, too, foreknew that His son was going to die. In fact, He put it into motion for us. That got me thinking.

Because of that 'discussion' with God over all that pain and misery I have grown stronger in my faith. It was at times a difficult and long journey of faith, however I found peace letting God have control over all things, and I have come closer to Him than I have ever been.

Since then we have had a second son and a third daughter! This call to the ministry has been a long and sometimes painful process. I have always felt the call, yet I was hesitant to accept it. But every roadblock and hurdle I put up was either answered or removed. God has truly provided for me in ways I will never understand, and He will use the education at Calvin to help me come to grips with and answer those hard questions I faced over my lifetime.

Robert Gruessing

### *Statement of Reason*

I feel called by God to serve Him in active ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to further His kingdom. I am excited as well as humbled to answer this call and to continue a life of service to Him. I stand in awe of the awesome responsibilities active ministry entails, but with God's help I will strive to faithfully serve Him.

In Christ, Robert J. Gruessing



*Name:* Laura Guichelaar-DeRuiter

*Age:* 31

*Place of Birth:* London, ON

*Name of Spouse:* Jonathan DeRuiter

*Number of Children:* 1

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.S. 2006

Northwestern University  
2006-2008

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2014

*Internships:*

Davenport Christian Fellowship,  
Davenport University,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Sept 2010 to May 2013

A Christian Ministry in the  
National Parks, Grant Village,  
Yellowstone National Park  
June 2011 to Aug 2011

Woodlawn CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
May 2012 to Aug 2012

*Contact:*

616-648-6102  
lag56@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

In brief, I believe in the triune God revealed in the Bible and made known through the life and death of Jesus Christ. I believe that the goodness of God's creation was corrupted by sin following humanity's disobedience. I believe that God didn't abandon His fallen creation and that He has been working out His plan of redemption, which was accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus. I believe that God has given us the Holy Spirit to continue His work of salvation on earth. I believe that God has called people throughout the world to Himself and that He has given them the task of expanding His kingdom and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. I believe that Christ will return one day and bring every action, good or evil, into judgement. I believe that we are saved through faith in Christ and that this is a gift from God.

Growing up in a Christian home, attending Christian schools and a Christian church, I have always had some awareness of God. I grew up understanding that God existed, I was sinful, but that Jesus had died and risen again at Easter, so my sins were forgiven. Although I always knew this, it wasn't until I was in high school that I began to understand the significance of my faith. In the aftermath of a tragic car accident in which three classmates were killed, I began to recognize the power of the Biblical story and the significance of Emmanuel, 'God with us'. As I delved into Scripture, I came to recognize that God wanted me to live a life that reflected my love for Him. Since that time I've experienced wonderful times of deep insight, I've grown in my love for God and my neighbor. I've also had rough times when questions and doubts seemed to overshadow my faith. Through it all I've come to realize that my hope is anchored in Christ and that God is at work all around us.

My faith plays out in my life in many ways. First and foremost, recognizing God as our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer fundamentally shapes my understanding of reality and affects the decisions I make. I believe that we are called to be people who embrace and embody God's justice, mercy, compassion, grace and love here on earth. I know that these things won't be achieved until Christ returns; even so I believe that the church is called to embody God's love for the world and spread the good news of God's grace.

Laura Guichelaar-DeRuiter

### *Statement of Reason*

My journey towards candidacy has at times felt long. It took me a while to admit that I felt called to seminary; longer still to acknowledge that I felt called to pastoral ministry. But even with the slow start and various twists and turns along the way, I've found that sense of calling to be affirmed, over and over again. Looking back I am amazed and thankful to see God's faithfulness as He has brought me to this point.

Whenever I stop to think about why I'm pursuing candidacy in the CRCNA, I come back to Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." As I've come to understand who God has

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

created me to be and how I might best use the gifts He's given me, I've repeatedly felt called to offer those gifts in service of the church. It is my hope to be able "to equip [God's] people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:12-13). To God alone be glory.

Laura Guichelaar-DeRuiter





*Name:* Ernesto J. Hernandez

*Place of Birth:* Chihuahua, Mexico

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
ITESM Monterrey, Mexico  
B.S., 1999

All Nations Seminary,  
El Paso, TX  
Associate in Ministry, 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
Valley Ridge CRC, Socorro, TX  
Pastoral Ministry Internship  
June 2016 - May 2017

*Languages spoken:*  
Spanish, German

*Contact:*  
915-258-1310  
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### *Faith Journey*

My faith journey started with the marriage of my father, a Roman Catholic, with my mother, a Lutheran. By the providence of God, and by the insistence of my father to have religious education, I started attending a small community Baptist church in my neighborhood, when I was around six years of age.

There I started learning about the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the prevalent Arminian-Dispensationalist theological school, then being the most common school in the denomination. In childhood, I participated in most of the activities of my church, with my two sisters (mother and father only attended on special occasions, like Easter or Christmas) and participated in the children's choir, and several theatrical representations.

When I started middle school, I decided to obey the Lord and go through the sacrament (ordinance) of baptism, at around 12 years of age, but in high school my interests led me out of the church, and more into the academia, where my main interests were the sciences. I earned an associate diploma of electronic technician before I enrolled in the university to pursue the same field of study.

It was in my college years when I left the church. It was in this period when in my senior years, The Lord acted providentially upon my mind and spirit and made me come back to the Gospel. In the last two years of college, I participated in a fellowship group on campus, where I started using my leadership gifts, leading Bible studies and helping the leadership team of the fellowship. It was on this time when I started revisiting my theological convictions, first rejecting my Dispensationalist beliefs, the Arminian beliefs went down a little bit later...

When graduating from college, I wanted to pursue theological studies, and my pastor persuaded me to do so. So I continued searching for my personal conviction, and started reading reformed authors, like Charles Spurgeon, then J. I. Packer, to the point that I came to the conviction of the Reformed Baptist position. All this happened in the 1990's, when I got married and attended a local Bible School that helped furnish my theological mind with more arguments for the reformed views.

Ernesto J. Hernandez

### *Statement of Reason*

Ever since childhood I felt very strongly that the Lord was calling me for the ministry, especially the ministry of the word as a teacher/pastor. Since I got to know the CRCNA, I've been blessed to finally have found a reformed denomination I could work with. So I want to give my life and my gifts to Christ in this church, for the glory of God and for the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven, especially among the Hispanic segment of the church.

Ernesto J. Hernandez





*Name:* Ryan Hoekstra

*Place of Birth:* Sioux Center, IA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Northwestern College  
B.A., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Baruch Senior Ministries  
Chaplain  
May 2014 - August 2014

CPE Bronson Methodist  
Hospital  
August 2015 - January 2016

CPE Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Hospital  
May 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*

712-441-4319  
ryan.hoekstra2@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I believe in the triune God, Father, and Holy Spirit. I believe that God created the heavens and the earth. I believe God created humans in God's likeness and to be in relationship and communion with God. However, because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden, sin and brokenness entered the world. Although humanity brought sin into the world, God continued to be faithful to God's creation and humanity. God established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (the people of Israel.) While God continued to be in covenant with the people of Israel, God in the form of God's son, Jesus, took on human flesh. In doing so, Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of God's law and saved us by God's love and grace. After Jesus rose to be with God the Father, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with us. The Holy Spirit is the continued presence of God in our lives.

While this is just a short statement of what I believe, I believe all of this because of the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the Holy Spirit used the people in my life especially mentors and my parents to show me the love and grace of God. I believe that the Holy Spirit convicts me of the truth of these beliefs which are found in Creation but more fully in the Word of God—the Holy Bible. I was able to get to this place of belief because of the faithfulness of God to God's people. I know that I am a part of a larger story of God redemption. Through the wisdom and instruction of the Church, I have come to know God as the ruler of the universe and as the God who saved me by grace alone.

Ryan Hoekstra

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that God has called me to serve God's kingdom as a chaplain. Being raised and shaped by the Christian Reformed Church, I feel great affinity and love for the Christian Reformed Church. I believe that it provides me a great foundation, framework, and theology to serve God's kingdom as a chaplain. For these reasons, I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church.

Ryan Hoekstra



*Name:* Grant Hofman

*Age:* 24

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Kabala CRC, Kabala,

Sierra Leone

July 2014 to August 2014

Spirit and Truth Fellowship,

Philadelphia, PA

June 2015 to August 2015

North Avenue Presbyterian

Church, Atlanta, GA

June 2012 to August 2012

*Contact:*

616-745-7407

gh019@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in one God almighty. This God is also three persons, who dwell in intimate communion with each other: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Out of the overabundance of love shared between these persons, this Godhead created heaven and earth. God spoke them into existence by his Word, proclaiming creation “good.” This good creation, however, rebelled against God in sin. In spite of this, God has not given up on this creation, clinging to it in love. As loving Father, God upholds his stumbling children by his hand. Like a nursing mother who cannot forget her child, God continues to comfort the fallen family.

Out of this love, God elected the people of Israel to participate in restoring the goodness of this creation. God made covenant promises to Israel to bless them and keep them in steadfast love. Since this family continued to act against the family promises, though, God had to hold up both sides of the family promise where his people failed. He did so by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ, the only faithful Son to live up to these promises. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, fully God and fully human. The cost of holding up the covenant promise was being crucified, dying in place of the rebellious creation that was running headlong into death, forgiving them of their sin. He was buried in a tomb; yet, after three days, he rose again from the dead in resurrection life.

Through our baptism, we are offered the promise to share in this death and resurrection, to be adopted into God’s family—the communion of saints, the new Israel—his one holy, Catholic Church. By Jesus’ dying and rising, then, there is a new family promise: that, through this Son, people from all nations who were running away in sin might be adopted into the family of God as daughters and sons. By ascending into heaven, taking a seat at the right hand of God the Father, Jesus insures that this promise is one for life everlasting in God’s family. It is completely by God’s grace, then, that we have this offer of new life. We gather the benefits of this family promise through faith, daily clothing ourselves in the sanctifying power of Jesus Christ’s new life.

Such new life, I believe, can only come when the Holy Spirit stirs it within us when we hear the story of God’s Word. Such new life will also extend beyond individuals, finding its fulfillment in a whole new creation, now free of the rebellion of humankind. Here, God will come to judge the living and the dead, abolishing sin once and for all. Then God will be able to dwell with us in perfect, loving communion once again, as it was intended at the outset of creation. We anticipate this holy communion with God, the wedding feast of the lamb, each time we come to the table for the family meal of the Lord’s Supper, gaining a taste and hunger for the time where there will be no more mourning or crying or death or pain. Where we will finally be completely accepted into the family of God.

These beliefs have been given to me by the hand of my biological and church families, fostered through Grand Rapids Christian High School, Calvin College, and Calvin Seminary. The faith this cloud of witnesses has revealed me to is a beautiful one. The Holy Spirit has overwhelmed me by it, and these Christian communities have helped me, by the Spirit’s hand, to learn a more deeply enfleshed life of belief, keeping my eyes on Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Grant Hofman

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*Statement of Reason*

I am pursuing candidacy, most simply, because I have felt called to be ordained as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Already from a young age, I knew God was calling me to follow his footsteps, no matter where he was leading and no matter what the cost. The beauty of this walk was exemplified for me in my spiritual mother, the Christian Reformed Church, as well as my biological mother and father in a way that drew me in. When I professed this faith publically, we sang the song "Step by Step," with the whole community, together singing the words, "step by step you lead me, and I will follow you all of my days." Through the prodding of the Spirit upon my heart, as well as the affirmation and encouragement of key mentors and church leaders in my life, it has become clear to me that God's steps are leading me into full-time ministry in his church. Candidacy is the next crucial step on this path. I cannot help but follow.

Grant Hofman



*Name:* James Hollendonner

*Place of Birth:* Oak Lawn, Illinois

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Central College  
Judson University  
B.A.

Wheaton College Graduate  
School Northern Seminary  
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Crossroads Community Church  
College and Youth Adult  
Pastor/Teaching Pastor  
February 2010 - March 2014

Wayside Cross Ministries  
Counselor and Teaching Pastor  
March 2011 - March 2012

*Contact:*

708-846-3523  
jchpastor@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in one God, who has revealed Himself in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; co-equal in Divinity, yet distinct. As seen in God's name and essential to God's nature, God desires to be known. God declares both through and to creation, "I Am." God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, creating for the praise of God's own glory. In sovereignty, God intimately sustains creation out of love for it. I am created to praise God, reveling in God's love. But when I look at the stubbornness and rebellion of man, I ask the question, why should God want to save sinners? And especially, why should He want to give His unique and beloved Son to die the agony of God's holy judgment in bearing our sin on the cross?

Scripture shows us that redemption and salvation was the plan for creation since the fall in the garden, which is sustained by God's unmerited favor (grace). Salvation brings glory to God and it does so because it manifests the nature and character of His person (Eph. 1:6; Phil. 2:11). Salvation reveals the reckless love of God that brings glory to the person of God, and shows us the reasons for His redemption and salvation: (1) it reveals His love. That God would reach out to sinful man by sending His only begotten Son is the greatest manifestation of His love. It declares God provided salvation because He is a loving God (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-10, 16). (2) Salvation through the person and work of Christ is also a manifestation of God's grace (Eph. 2:7-9). Only Christianity offers a salvation based on grace rather than works. All the other religions of the world have man working to acquire salvation/enlightenment. (3) The salvation of the Bible also manifests the holiness of God. God provided salvation through the person and work of His Son because He is a holy God. In His love and grace God desired fellowship with man, but man's rebellion and sin created a barrier between God and man that hindered any fellowship with man whatsoever because of God's infinite holiness. Both God's holiness and His love were set on display, by the person and work of Jesus so that man can be reconciled to God and have that fellowship restored. (4) Adam and Eve were created in the image of God that they might give a visible display of God's character as they walked in fellowship with the invisible God. But when the human race fell through Adam's sin, the image was not only marred, but man lost the capacity for fellowship with God. Through salvation, the capacity for fellowship is restored and also is man's ability to manifest, though imperfectly, the goodness of God. And much like Adam and Eve's fellowship with God, God allowed us to have fellowship with his Son; the Word made flesh and dwelled among us (John 1).

As the sacrificial Lamb, Jesus bore in himself the debt of our human sin. Jesus has been restored to divine glory and given the name above all names, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is Lord and Savior. He is the victor over death, the fulfillment of the Law, and the brother of all who are in Christ. Jesus is both the teacher and the subject taught. I am his follower and disciple. My principle obligation in this relationship is not one of understanding, but of continued presence and obedience. Though separated from God by my idolatrous sin, Jesus' life, death and resurrection accomplished for me salvation: my sin is forgiven and I am no longer a slave to evil, and now live as a citizen



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus will come again to judge the world and consummate the Kingdom, and usher his bride, the church, into glorious intimacy and peace forever.

I believe the church is all who are in Christ; those who have been chosen, adopted into the family of God and given the Spirit. As a called-out community we are a chosen instrument of God's self-revelation to the world. The church speaks of the great "I Am". In worship it declares, "You are," and in mission, "God is." As the Body of Christ, the church is to continue Christ's ministry of reconciliation, healing and proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The church is to live out the attributes of the Kingdom to the world and seek to promote Kingdom values of love, peace and justice in society. Christ's disciples are called to obedient participation with the Spirit's transforming work by means of private and corporate spiritual disciplines such as prayer, study, service, stewardship and simplicity, becoming both apprentices to Jesus and accomplices with him in the Kingdom on earth as also in heaven.

I believe the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and the closest companion of Jesus' followers. The Holy Spirit equips Christians to live now into the effectiveness of Christ's victory (2 Peter 1). The Spirit is the Almighty God that desires to be known and experienced intimately. The Spirit inspired and empowered the prophets of old and today gives guidance, conviction, illumination and supernatural gifts for the strengthening of the body of Christ. By the Spirit believers are transformed into Christ-like character. The Spirit stimulates Scripture, enabling understanding, and giving it power in the lives of its readers. The Holy Spirit lives in me, enabling me to live as a citizen in the Kingdom of God that Jesus welcomes all to join.

James Hollendonner

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking Ordination in the Christian Reformed Church as a part of the culmination of God's pastoral call on my life. This is confirmed through my wife, family, mentors, and other pastors, and to be a part of something bigger than myself. I believe the Lord has called me to reach the spiritual adolescent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Becoming part of the family of ministers in the Christian Reformed Church is about submitting your life first to God, your family, your parish, your flock, and also to your fellow 'Ministers in the trenches!' The support system that is central to the ordained connection in the Christian Reformed Church are the biblically and theologically rooted men and women who have adhered to the call of the Lord to serve the world around them in Word and Sacrament. My hope and prayer is that every day I can wake up to the Lord's new mercies and bring more people into His narrative, into His Love, and watch Him change their life.

James Hollendonner



*Name:* Sarah Hoogendoorn

*Age:* 29

*Place of Birth:* Clinton, IA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College

B.A., 2008

Western Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary

EPMC, 2014

*Internships:*

North Park Presbyterian  
Church, Grand Rapids, MI  
September 2008 to May 2009

The Warm Friend (Resthaven  
Care Community), Holland, MI  
September 2009 to May 2010

Powell River Reformed Church,  
Powell River, BC  
June 2010 to August 2010

Journey Center for Learning,  
Holland, MI  
September 2010 to May 2011

*Contact:*

605-370-1790

sarahhoogendoorn@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My journey to faith is best explained by the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 32:

Question: But why are you called a Christian?

Answer: Because by faith I am a member of Christ  
and so I share in his anointing.

I am anointed

to confess his name,

to present myself as a living sacrifice of thanks,

to strive with a good conscience against sin and devil in  
this life,

and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for  
all eternity.

I am basically the poster child for any person from a Reformed tradition. I was born to and raised by a CRC pastor and his wife. I've attended Christian school from the get-go. I did my undergraduate work at Dordt, and then went on to earn a Masters of Divinity from a Reformed seminary. I have lived and worked in ministry for the entirety of my life. This isn't to say it has been smooth sailing. My faith journey is littered with stories of how I've strayed, how I've questioned, how I've made wrong decisions, how I haven't relied on God or the community of believers, how I haven't lived up to the title of Christian. But despite all this, the constant in my faith life has been this: "I am a member of Christ and so I share in his anointing." Christ's redemptive work in my life means that I am not only united with him, that I not only share in his anointing, but that I am called to be an active participant in the furthering of the Gospel Kingdom.

When I began the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) in 2013, I wasn't sure what to expect, nor could I necessarily fully articulate why I was entering into the program. I was adamant that I didn't want to be the pastor of a church. I knew, however, that God was calling me into a life of ministry. I knew that although I didn't agree with everything we were doing, I loved my denomination and wanted to dedicate my life to it's wellbeing and continued presence. I knew that even though I wasn't sure where it would lead, that I trusted God to guide my footsteps as I walked this EPMC path. This journey - the three years I've put into a two year program - has not been easy. I've put in hours of classwork and of mentor meetings. I've wrestled with long moments of self-doubt, of wondering if God is truly calling me or if I am simply doing this because I have no other plans, if I am rightly gifted and equipped for such a life. I stepped away from candidacy in order to work through unhealthy parts of my life. In spite of all that has transpired - both the good and the bad - I today stand where I've always stood: reliant on the faithfulness and leading of God in my life.

This is what I've come to understanding during my journey toward ordination: that God's faithfulness, his grace, his love, and his mercy are longer, deeper, and wider than I could ever hope or imagine. My call into ministry is a call to be a servant to God and his Kingdom. His ever sufficient grace, sustained by the power of the Spirit through the power of Christ's sacrifice, guide me to live with integrity before Him as an example to those around me.

Sarah Hoogendoorn

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*Statement of Reason*

When I look at and try to evaluate my call into ministry I can't help but cling fast to the words "My grace is sufficient for you." It isn't my role to change hearts, to force ministries to succeed or to fail, or redeem people. That is the work of the Lord, and I am just a tool he can use. My calling, at its core, is to live a life worthy of the Father's love, to rest in the grace of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, and to find the ability and power to do so through the power of the Spirit. This is every single person's call, no matter what vocation he or she chooses to enter into. My chosen vocation, the one I believe God has gifted me for, is professional ministry. This has been affirmed by the Spirit's grip on my heart and by those around me. From my family to my friends to my mentors to my fellow congregation members, I constantly feel the affirmation of my vocational call into ministry. God has used many people to encourage me, and continues to do so, even when I wrestle in self-doubt about the plans he has for me. As I move toward candidacy and as I continue to think about my pastoral identity, my hope is this: That God's ever sufficient grace and abiding love will continually spur me into a life of integrity before Him and before others so that I can do His good work in the world.

Sarah Hoogendoorn



*Name:* Jeff Hoos

*Place of Birth:* Buffalo, Grove, IL

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*  
Calvary Christian Reformed  
Church, Holland, Michigan  
March 2013 - June 2015

Igreja Presbiteriana Jardim de  
Oração, Santos, Brazil  
Cross-Cultural Internship  
July 2014 - August 2014

Escape Ministries,  
Holland, Michigan  
Pastoral Internship  
June-August 2015

*Contact:*  
616-990-8502  
jeffhoos@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus is the Lord over my life and I am completely surrendered to serving him and the kingdom for the rest of my life. My purpose in life is to serve and please the Lord and to spread the Gospel. My identity is in Christ. I am a work in progress and am devoted to allowing him to change me from the inside out and to being used by Him to help others in the same way.

My faith formation has been both a blessing and a journey. I was brought up in a nominal Catholic home and family. Eventually we moved from one town to the next, and I was placed in public schooling. The foundation that I had from my Catholic upbringing and background did not last as I went about life and aged. As I got older, I began attending church again and was able to re-kindle my love for God after experiencing him in very evidential and tangible ways. I learned about the kingdom, what it meant to be a disciple, surrender, discipling others and God's Word. I began attending the Chicago Tabernacle Church in Chicago, IL and learned about the power of prayer, worship and serving. I immediately got involved in ministry and had the amazing opportunity to lead ministries. After a season of sensing God's leading toward more involvement in ministry, I began to fast and pray for God's will to be done in my life. Eventually, I felt the call to become a pastor which evolved from seeking God's word, prayer, and the counsel and wisdom of others. For me, the desire to enter full-time ministry was a no-brainer. Soon after, I moved from the Chicagoland area to West Michigan with my wife Sarah, and we began attending seminary and serving in the CRC church.

Jeff Hoos

### *Statement of Reason*

I have felt called to the CRC for several years now. I feel that I can bring unique gifts to the table, such as the ability to be a bridge-builder in the area of ethnic diversity and in the area of networking with leaders from other denominations and churches for the purpose of uniting, enhancing and building His kingdom. My passions lie in the area of church planting, evangelism, pastoral care, networking, preaching, teaching, prayer and discipleship and would like to offer these gifts to the CRC. I greatly appreciate and value Reformed theology and the impact it has had on my life.

Jeff Hoos



*Name:* Sarah Kim Hoos

*Place of Birth:* Huntington  
Beach, CA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Taylor University  
B.A., 2006

Keller Graduate School  
of Management  
M.B.A., 2011

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Calvary Christian Reformed  
Church, Holland, MI  
Pastoral Internship  
June - August 2015

Calvary Christian Reformed  
Church, Holland, MI  
Church Internship  
April 2013 - August 2015

Jardim de Oracao Igreja  
Presbiteriana, Santos, Brazil  
Cross-Cultural Internship  
July - August 2014

*Languages spoken:*  
Korean

*Contact:*  
312-972-3983  
sarahkimhoos@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I was blessed to have been born into a God-honoring family with a father who is a CRC minister and planted multiple Korean-American CRC churches in Southern California and in Holland, Michigan. While my personal history is rooted in the ways of the Lord with a ministry-intensive upbringing, I estranged myself from the Lord and other Christians after I had experienced a painful betrayal in my early years as a missionary. It was not until I experienced the great love and mercy of God pursue me, instead of leaving me alone in my misery, that I fell back in love with God. I believe God, who is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is outrageously good and overflowing with love for God's children. The intentions of God are always good with the inherent desire to bless, redeem and restore all of his creation. The holy wrath of God for the sins of the world was poured out once and for all on God's Son Jesus Christ, and now there are no more sins to pay but a great gift of salvation to receive. This salvation that is offered solely through the Lord Jesus Christ comes with a new life in the Holy Spirit and a life transforming relationship with the Father. I have experienced the tangible love of God come through in the form of his forgiveness, grace, mercy, healing, provision, calling and guidance. God has been my Rock and Refuge in my brightest days and most troublesome seasons. Having experienced the power of the Gospel for myself, my heart's desire is to proclaim the good news. No matter the trials and challenges we face in this life, God is our sure foundation and his kingdom will never be shaken. Our living God watches, hears and cares for our every need. I find it is an awesome privilege and adventure to be blessed with a relationship with the Lord so that I might also be a blessing to the world.

Sarah Kim Hoos

*Statement of Reason*

I am blessed to have been baptized into and raised in the Christian Reformed Church since my father is a Korean-American CRC minister. However, I sensed a calling into the CRC as an ordained minister of the Word much later into my adult life. I have always held a deep sense of appreciation for the CRC's upstanding commitment to the Word of God and reformed theology, the cultural mandate to join God in redeeming and restoring the world and the value of Christian education. Personally, I would like to help bridge the cultural and generational gap within the denomination. Many younger generations seem to be departing from the Christian Reformed Church, and there is room to grow multi-ethnically to more faithfully embody a Kingdom witness as demonstrated in Revelation 7. The CRC has been like a family to me since my childhood and it would be an honor to give back by serving this family of God with the Word and the Sacraments.

Sarah Kim Hoos





*Name:* Joseph Hwang

*Spouse:* Yumi

*Age:* 32

*Place of Birth:* Philadelphia, PA

*Number of Children:* One

*College Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2004

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2012  
Th.M., 2012

*Mentored Ministries Internships:*

Korean CRC of Kalamazoo,  
Vicksburg, MI  
November 2011 – May 2012

Michiana Korean Church,  
Elkhart, IN  
Summer 2011

Trinity CRC, Broomall, PA  
Summer 2010

Korean Grace CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
September 2007 – May 2010

*Languages:* English and Korean

*Contact:*

616-916-5346  
joeaug@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Growing up in a minister's family was a blessing. My parents did their best to raise me as a child who learned to love the Lord with all my strength and soul and my neighbor as myself. As a child, I obeyed what I learned from the Korean church and my parents. In my teens, I began to rebel against my parents who seemed to be more concerned about their ministry than family life.

The seeds of rebellion blossomed in college. I desired autonomy and succeeded in executing my plans. Education was not my priority, so I did not study. For a while, I stopped going to church. I had to distance myself from God so that I would not feel guilty. Deep down, I felt trapped and longed to turn my life around. I wanted God to help me. That is when I met Pastor Moonbae Kim.

Pastor Kim began mentoring me in a small college group Bible study. God used him to lead me back to church and restore me in my relationship with God. For the first time, I could stand with confidence and not dwell on my shame. God assured me of his love, grace, and mercy as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. Since then, I have spent my life trying to live as a disciple of my Lord and Savior.

In the process of restoration, I realized that I had a passion for God's Word. When I understood God's Word, it helped my faith grow. I yearned to be equipped with the tools to serve the Church. Yet, after college, I had to wait three years before I could enter seminary. I needed to develop discipline and learn to be faithful to the tasks before me.

At Calvin Theological Seminary, I have learned many important things about the CRC, what it means to be a pastor, and something about myself. I enjoy studying, teaching and preaching God's Word. I pray that God will help me to be a faithful steward to the task He sets before me, to trust Him wholeheartedly, and to grow even more in love for my wife and daughter.

As a candidate to be a minister of the Word of God in the CRC, I am in full agreement with and believe what is stated in the form of subscription.

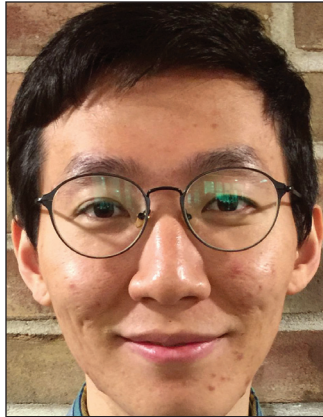
Joseph Y. Hwang

### *Statement of Reason*

In 2007, God brought me to Calvin Theological Seminary so that I could begin my preparation to become a minister of the Word of God in the CRC. As I am about to graduate, I see that God has been faithful to me on this journey. Through each stage of my journey, God has affirmed his calling through the local churches, classis, and hopefully, in the candidacy committee. He continues to assure that He has a purpose for me in His church. That is why I am seeking to be a candidate in the CRC.

Joseph Y. Hwang





*Name:* Eunjun Jeong

*Place of Birth:* Seoul, South Korea

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Faith Baptist Bible College and  
Theological Seminary  
B.S., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2015  
Th.M., 2017

*Internships:*

United In Christ Ministries  
(UICM), Grand Rapids, MI

Academic Mentoring Program  
(known as the Black Hills  
Community)  
January 2012 - May 2014

Community CRC, Wyoming, MI  
Cross-Cultural Internship:  
Arbor Park Apartment Ministry  
(governmental subsidized  
housing)  
June 2012 - July 2012

Jeshurun Presbyterian Church,  
Hwasung, South Korea  
Pastoral Internship: Director of  
Educational Department  
June 2013 - August 2013

*Languages spoken:*  
Korean

*Contact:*

616-227-8524  
eunjunjeong@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I have experienced different theological schools and different denominations in my journey of life. I was born in Christian family. My father is a Presbyterian pastor (from Chongshin) in Korea. Now he has ministered one church for 30 years. So I grew up in Presbyterian background until I went to my first college in Korea.

After I recharged my military service in Korea [January 2004 – January 2006], I went to Hansei University with Christian Education major. It was founded by the Pentecostal church, (which is the world biggest church, Yeouido Full Gospel Church in Seoul). While I was going to that school, I had a chance to see the totally different atmosphere of worship style and spiritual life style from I grew up with in my father's church. Even though I studied there only one year and I did not practice speaking in tongue or other spiritual gifts they were usually excited about, I liked the energetic worship style and songs and the loud prayer time.

During this time, my father let me ministering the Children and Youth group as a director of Sunday School, in his church. It was a small church, so it always needed some people to lead the groups and teach the Bible to the children and youth group. Even though I studied only two classes about the Bible, that was the Introduction of the New Testament and Old Testament, I started my ministry experience there for one and half years before I left to the United States. In this period of time, finally I realized that God might call me to become a pastor.

After I finished my English Language course at Iowa State University for one semester, I went to Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, IA from January 2008. FBBC is based on the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, which called GARBC. It is the third biggest Baptist church group after Southern and Northern Baptist denominations. It was very conservative Baptist school, so I generally studied about Baptist theology and expository work for four years. My major was a Biblical Studies and Bible Exposition with Greek Emphasis. I achieved B.S. degree in May 2011. During this time, I served the local Korean church (called Iowa Grace Church in Polk City, IA from Korea Evangelical Church Of America) as a Sunday School director for two and half years from January 2009 to June 2011.

In August 2011, at last, I came to Grand Rapids, MI for my M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary. At that time, I barely knew about CTS, but one of my father's friend, who as also a pastor, strongly recommended CTS for me. So without much concern, I applied for only one school, Calvin. I spent four years to finish my M.Div. program [September 2011 – May 2015] and I have been spending another two years to finish my Th.M. program at the same school [September 2015 – May 2017]. Also, I have served the local church, Korean Grace CRC from January 2015 to now for two and half years as a pastor of College group (Korean Ministry).

I experienced five different denominations: Presbyterian (Chongshin), Full Gospel Church, Baptist (GARBC), Korea Evangelical Church Of America (Sung-gyeol), and Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA). Also, I spent 10 years in the United States to study the Word of God at two different schools: FBBC and CTS and finish three different degrees: B.S.,

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

M.Div., and Th.M. I am so thankful how God leads me in my journey with His perfect plan, through His perfect will, and with His perfect way. I am very excited to expect how God use my experience in my future ministry. I am ready!

Eunjun Jeong

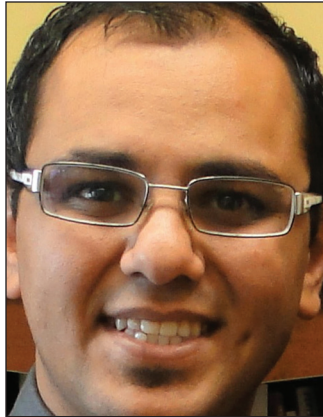
*Statement of Reason*

I believe that becoming a pastor of Christian Reformed Church is the best choice I can make and the best way I can follow the plan of God, which He offers and leads me during the last 6 years, in my life at this point.

There are two main reasons. First, God sent me here at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI and He has taught me and trained me. Even though I was not familiar with CTS or CRC denomination, CTS was the only school I applied for at that time I was graduating the college because my father's friend, who is also a pastor, strongly recommended me this school. And now I am here. Second, during the last 6 years (4 years of M.Div. and 2 years of Th.M.), I have studied about the systematic, biblical, and practical theology based on the Reformed tradition and I have dreamed about ministering the church with the polity and system of CRC. I deeply appreciate what I have learned and how I have been prepared with those plentiful sources and effective tools.

Right now I can make few choices after I finish this Candidacy Process, but I am still not sure which way exactly God wants me to step in. For example, I could become a CRC pastor in North America, or I could become a loan pastor and go back Korea to serve the churches there. Or I may become an Army chaplain because I am planning to join the US army this year. However, I believe that God, who has led me here at CRC and has trained me for the last six years at CTS, offers me a chance to become a pastor of Christian Reformed Church now.

Eungjun Jeong



*Name:* Rafik Kamel

*Place of Birth:* Egypt

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Redeemer University  
B.A., 2006

Covenant Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

New City Fellowship,  
St. Louis, MO  
Pastoral Intern  
2009-2012

*Languages spoken:*

Arabic

*Contact:*

306-715-7168  
kamel.rafik@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Reformed home in Egypt, and I am glad to say that I cannot remember a time when I did not have a deep love for Christ. Our church was very evangelistic. From a young age, I had a desire to grow up to be a missionary and to tell people about Jesus. As a child, I gave my life to Christ several times, and I publicly professed my faith when I was 12.

Although I grew up in a Christian home, it was not until much later that I would have a fuller sense of the grace of God. I have always had a strong conviction of my own sin, and I often felt like God was disappointed in me because of that. Consequently, I felt a great degree of shame because of my many failures and shortcomings. When I was in my first year at Redeemer University, I remember feeling so ashamed of my sins that I told my friends that I was going to take a break from God for a while until I dealt with some of my sins first. It was during this period that I also questioned my call to ministry. I could not fathom that God would ever use a sinner like me in a position of leadership in the church.

It was not until my last year at Redeemer and throughout my time at Covenant Seminary that I began to hear about my identity in Christ. I began to realize that in God's sight, I am as perfectly righteous as Christ himself was, because of my union with him through faith. The words of Q&A #60 of the Heidelberg Catechism are very dear to me: "God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me." I am learning to live by grace, rather than by my performance, and I am finding this grace of God to be a powerful motivator towards sanctification. I believe that there are many people, both in the church and outside of it, who long to hear this wonderful news of the gospel, and I have a strong desire for God to use me to proclaim this news to them.

Rafik Kamel

### *Statement of Reason*

I have been serving as a commissioned pastor at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Saskatoon for the past 15 months. My wife and I feel that the CRC as a whole is a good fit for us theologically and that we can serve God faithfully as part of this denomination. I am pursuing candidacy because I believe that my ordination as a Minister of the Word will allow me to serve Christ more fully in my new denomination.

Rafik Kamel



*Name:* Moses Kang

*Age:* 35

*Place of Birth:* Seoul, Korea

*Name of Spouse:* Jungsun Hwang

*Number of Children:* 1

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Seoul National University  
B.A., 2004

Princeton Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2007

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Th.M., 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2009

*Internships:*

Pilgrim Church PC (USA),  
Paramus, NJ  
Sept 2004 to Aug 2007

Hahn-in CRC, Wyoming, MI  
Sept 2007 to May 2009

*Graduate Studies:*

Currently pursuing Ph.D.  
Toronto School of Theology

*Languages spoken:*

Korean, Thai

*Contact:*

201-477-8089  
mkjundo@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I was born in Seoul, Korea as a minister's son. Although that may be the start of my faith journey as the human being I am today, I believe the prayers of previous generations had led me to this point where I am ready to declare myself a candidate for ordination to the ministry of words and sacraments. I had grown up knowing that my parents had prayed for me to be a minister before I was in the womb. Growing up I had always thought I would go to seminary to fulfill that calling that my parents had prayed about.

This calling became a personnel moment for me while attending university. I realized that I enjoyed my time in church ministry over anything else. It was at this time, the pastor encouraged me to attend seminary and seek ordained ministry as a full-time vocation. In 2004, I decided to pursue this journey of theological exploration starting with M. Div. studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. Among the many disciplines and areas of ministry, I felt called to the preaching moment and a calling to pursue this discipline for further studies. This had led me to Calvin Theological Seminary to pursue a Th.M. in Preaching.

My time in Grand Rapids was eye-opening not only because I could study preaching but I got to experience the gifts of the Christian Reformed Church and realize that I found a home to be who I am as a person of faith and as a minister with the calling to preach the Word. Upon graduation, I decided to act upon this realization and registered for the EPMC in declaring publically my desire to be an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. At the same time, God had given me the opportunity to pursue further studies in the field of homiletics at Toronto School of Theology. Although many of my colleagues had reservations about my choice to study in Toronto, this experience of working with different members across the ecumenical spectrum helped me realize that I truly belong in the Christian Reformed Church and this is where I can see myself continue in the faith journey.

Many people come to North America searching for their dream and vision. I, too made that journey to North America to continue on in the vision God had instilled in my heart. I believe this has led me to the Christian Reformed Church of North America and to seek ordination to the office of minister of word and sacrament in this church. I do not think this is the end of this journey, but a public statement that this is where I see the Holy Spirit leading me as I continue on this faith journey.

Moses Kang

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*Statement of Reason*

The office of the minister of the word and sacraments is a call to preach the Word and administer the sacraments – to preach the Word as Paul instructs Timothy (2 Timothy 4) and to feed the lamb as Jesus instructs Peter (John 21). I have always considered these to be at the crux of my understanding of ministry. In my discernment process, I have experienced a strong call to seek ordination to the office of minister of word and sacraments in the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA), a church that expresses the importance of the words and sacraments. The CRCNA is a representation of how my family views the church and through ordination in this church, we hope to continue to carry the reformed faith and tradition to the world through the word and sacraments.

Moses Kang





*Name:* George Keulen

*Place of Birth:* Vancouver, BC

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Trinity Western University  
B.A., 2005

Regent College  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*  
Ladner CRC, Ladner, BC  
September 2012 - May 2013

*Contact:*  
604-802-0659  
gckeulen@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in God the Father who is the creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus his Son who came to earth fully man yet fully divine to show us the way of discipleship and ultimately to die and be resurrected to save humanity from their sins and to provide a way to new life. I believe in the Holy Spirit who is present with us now. The Spirit is the gift of the Father through the Son who enables us to walk in paths of obedience and who guides us in our mission to the world. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist together in the Holy Trinity, three persons in one essence.

I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. Though it is written by human hand it is God who speaks to us through it and who inspired it. The Bible is God's special revelation to us and it is through it that we gain knowledge of Him and his call on our lives.

I believe that through the work of the Spirit in human agency God has given us the three ecumenical creeds, to help summarize the faith and guard it against heresy. As Reformed Christians, we have also been given, as a lens to interpret Scripture and the world around us, the three confessions of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort. These, like the Creeds, are not of the same authority as the Bible but are our guides to interpretation and life.

I believe in one Holy Catholic Church. The church is called to be the incarnate body of Christ in the world today. The church is called to be a sacramental reality of the Kingdom of God that Christ inaugurated and in which the church is called to help usher in today. Christ is the head of the church and we are his bride.

As Christians we are called to carry out Christ's mission to the world; this being to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Christians we need to repent for neglecting this call for far too long and for instead following along in the ways of the world. As Christians our lives belong to God. We are called to die to ourselves, to set our hand to the plow and not look back. In all these things we rely on the power of the Spirit as we toil as servants in the Kingdom of our God.

I have come to know and trust the Christian faith as interpreted and lived with a Reformed accent by both growing up in the Christian Reformed Church, but also through struggling with my own questions, doubts, studies, and discussions with others. I was formed at an early age by my parents and the faith they exhibited, and also through learning about the integration of faith and life by attending Christian Elementary and High School. During my Undergrad I attended an Evangelical University (Trinity Western University) where my Reformed accent was challenged and where I came to greatly appreciate my Reformed upbringing.

I continued to be formed in my faith through many trials in my health, which caused me again to dig deeper into my hope and peace in Christ. When I began to feel God's call to ministry, I enrolled for my MDiv at an interdenominational school (Regent College) where my Reformed accent was once again challenged and where I once again gained a



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

deeper understanding of what we believe, how we see life, and how we interpret and live out the Scriptures.

George Keulen

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church in order to seek to follow God's call in my life to the best of my ability. I have come to deeper and deeper understandings of the Reformed tradition and have gained a great appreciation of it, and therefore, seek to be a Minister of the Word within that tradition. I believe whole-heartedly that God is calling me to serve him in an ordained and pastoral way. Throughout my work in the local church and in my studies I have felt God's affirming hand in my life and have also received affirmation from my local church and its ordained leaders. I feel that seeking candidacy is the next step in my own faith journey as I seek to serve him and serve his church in my life.

George Keulen



*Name:* Jungseong Kim

*Place of Birth:* Seoul, Korea

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Silliman University, Philippines  
B.A., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016  
Th.M., 2017

*Internships:*

Hope Network,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
June 2013 - Aug 2013

Korean First Central United  
Methodist Church,  
Madison Heights, MI  
October 2013 - May 2014

Korean Presbyterian Church of  
MI, Farmington Hills, MI  
June 2015 - December 2015

*Languages spoken:*  
Korean

*Contact:*  
616-881-6297  
jk026@calvinseminary.edu;  
ksamuel0520@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

Hello, my name is Jungseong (Samuel) Kim, who graduated from the Master of Divinity program May 2016 and now currently enrolled in Master of Theology program (Worship). I would like to share how God led me in His plan through my surprising life story. I am a missionary kid. My parents worked in the Philippines as church planters who spread the gospel to lost souls. I'm thankful to have been raised in a godly home. I grew up attending public schools through high school and during that time, I was very active in soccer and basketball. I really love competitive sports.

While in high school I was a youth leader in my church. Our youth group volunteered every Saturday at a nearby rehabilitation facility. We helped wash people's hair, gave baths, cleaned rooms, did dishes, helped people walk and set up recreational activities for them. We enjoyed making them happy. Also at this time I sang with the youth choir as a bass singer. Before I knew it, I was finished with high school and had moved to the Philippines to begin my college education.

For the first time in my life I began to waver in my walk with God. There were many negative influences. I never stopped believing in God, but my faith was challenged. God used a very serious accident I was in to redirect my path. Through this very difficult experience, I rededicated my life to God in my freshman year. After a long hospitalization, I finally returned to school but changed my major and also changed my social position from a non-handicapped person to a handicapped person.

My dream to be a doctor and make money no longer mattered to me. Instead I decided to pursue English Literature and English because I believed this would be an important tool for sharing the Good News with the world. I learned to overcome cultural differences and worked and studied in the English language. When I was in my junior year, I was elected President of the HI-SAW (International Student Organization) which represents twenty-three different countries. Also in my senior year, I was elected Vice-President of the English Society and oversaw student activities.

When I became a student in the Master of Divinity program at Calvin Theological Seminary, God gave me unbelievable internships at Hope Network (2013), Korean Methodist church in Detroit (2014) working with youth and Korean Presbyterian church at Detroit (2015-2016) working with young adults. God has also given me the special opportunity to serve the weak in society and people with disability at Calvary CRC church at Wyoming, MI every Wednesday. Furthermore, God had given me unexpected experience which I could serve Calvin Seminary as representative of second year students (2013-2014) and third year students (2014-2015) in the M.Div. program. Through those ministry and service experiences, I experienced inner healing and was given a vision for my future ministry. Most importantly, I found out who am I in eyes of God and am healed of shame: I am a person with a disability who is weak, but my strength comes from God. How amazing is God's grace! I remember singing the hymn "Amazing Grace" and confessing with all my heart "I once was lost but now I'm found, Was blind, but now I see." My whole life is gratitude to God!

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

I attribute my success thus far to God for the wisdom and the strength he has given me in pursuing my goals. God has called me to share His love and Good news as a servant of God. God gave me the opportunity to study at Calvin Theological Seminary as my current destination to pursue His vision for me. I relish the opportunity to enrich my studies and fulfill the call that God has given me. This is exactly why I am here now. Calvin Theological Seminary is where I belong right now. Everything in my life is by the grace of God.

Jungseong (Samuel) Kim

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking Ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because my vision for ministry in the future includes confronting discrimination, seeking justice in Christ and promoting unity in one body of Christ within the congregation. God blessed me when I became a person with a disability by serious motor accident. In this way, God gave me the heart to embrace the weak in society and persons with disabilities. Particularly, a lot of people with disabilities and their families face indifference and discrimination not only from people in society but also from the church, which still lacks a coherent ministry with them. In fact, I have seen many families who bring children with a disability receive no welcome from a typical congregation. I also am called to serve as a member of a visible minority who endures a lot of suffering in society. If they hear the Gospel, they will receive new hope.

Also, my goal for future ministry is that I want to deliver the true message of the Gospel to people in society. Modern society presents God as irrelevant to people's lives. Nowadays, some sermons seem like they do not focus on Jesus Christ but put more focus on humanity and human interests. The church does not need to focus on man to be relevant. Why do we need to read the Bible? We have to know Jesus Christ and God as our Father Lord and listen carefully to His voice daily. So I want to hear the true voice of God and deliver it to the people. It is my goal for future ministry. The word of God is going to work in us every time and at every moment.

I want to promote professional ministry for the disabled, especially for people with a disability and their families. Also I want to structure services so that anyone can join without discrimination. The Bible invites everyone with the word "Come" (Isaiah 55) to meet the Lord, even sinners. I like this motto: "Called to serve, Called to love!"

For these reasons, I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church.

Jungseong (Samuel) Kim



*Name:* Jonathan Kool

*Age:* 25

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan

*Name of Spouse:* Kaitlin

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Azusa Pacific University  
B.S., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*  
Wayland CRC, Wayland, MI  
August 2013 to present  
  
Campus Ministries Intern,  
Calvin College,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2014 to present  
  
Pine Rest CPE Intern,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
September 2015 to March 2016

*Contact:*  
616-638-6662  
jak053@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I was born on March 6, 1991, in Grand Rapids, Michigan to Ron and Tammy Kool. I was privileged to be raised in a Christian home and was introduced to Christ very early in my life. My father has been a pastor at a Christian Reformed Church for my entire life, and very early in my life I identified myself as a Christian. I had this childlike faith and Christian life for most of my upbringing, but it wasn't until high school that I really began to own my faith. Throughout my experience I was taught the basics of reformed theology, and through excellent teachers, coaches, and mentors I confidently came to know what it meant for me to be a reformed Christian.

After high school I moved from West Michigan to Southern California and began studying biology at an interdenominational Christian University called Azusa Pacific University (APU). I had plans to become a doctor, and attended APU with the intention of attending medical school afterwards. The fact that APU was a Christian university was merely an added benefit. Little did I know, that Christian perspective would have a profound effect on my life.

Growing up in the CRC in West Michigan, I had learned a strong basis of reformed theology, and I had always affirmed the reformed perspective on just about every topic. These views had very rarely been challenged, and were supported by nearly everyone I met. While attending APU, I was suddenly in the classroom with a Methodist professor, and attended by a group of people with a vast spectrum of Christian backgrounds. One particular moment I remember is when my professor was challenging my Calvinist view of justification. He did this very gracefully, and I believe his goal was to help me to think about and possibly reaffirm or articulate my own beliefs. It was during this class that I began to realize the importance of understanding my own theology on a deeper level, and the passion I had for my reformed convictions, and also my own passion for teaching and learning.

It was also in Azusa that I began to feel a call to ministry. I remember one evening in the mountains north of Escondido, California, having a powerful discussion with a friend about the life that God calls all of us to. At the time, I was trying to convince him that not everyone was called to be a pastor, but that God's Kingdom has a purpose for everything from a CEO to a stay at home parent. In the end, my friend told me, "I understand not everyone is called to ministry...but I think you are." That voice felt like it was directly from the Spirit, and was one of the most profound moments in my faith and call formation.

After my experiences at APU, I came back to the Midwest and began attending Calvin Theological Seminary. Here I developed and grew in my faith and gifts for serving the Lord. I confidently believe that Jesus is Lord, and that the best way to understand God and humanity's relationship with Him is through the reformed lens that I have been taught at CTS. I have strong convictions that Christ has introduced His Kingdom to the world, and that we are living in the already but not yet fully present Kingdom of God. This means that we are called to be ambassadors of the Kingdom. As we are sanctified by the Spirit, we are called to bring the good news of the gospel to the world, and also to live more and more as citizens of God's Kingdom of love, justice, and shalom.

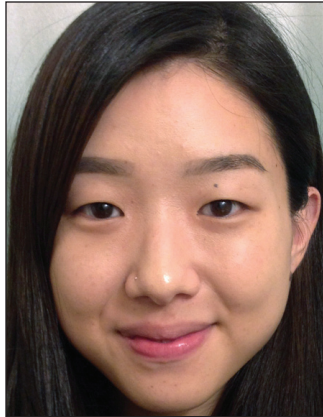
Jonathan Kool

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination because I believe that God has called me to serve him in a vocational ministry setting. I began to feel a call to ministry during my undergraduate college experience, and have been pursuing ministry ever since. God has blessed me with the opportunity to develop my gifts of preaching, pastoral care, and leadership, which can all be used for His glory and service. I was blessed to be raised in a Christian home, and attended a Christian Reformed Church my whole life. I am committed to the CRC and its values, and look forward to being a part of God's work through this great denomination.

Jonathan Kool



*Name:* Hannah Ryou Lee

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Michigan,  
Ann Arbor  
B.A., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Clinical Pastoral  
Education (CPE)  
May 2015 - August 2015

Hope Community CRC,  
Indianapolis, IN  
Pastoral Ministry Internship  
June 2016 - August 2016

Calvin College,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Campus Ministry Intern  
September 2016 - May 2017

*Languages spoken:*

Korean

*Contact:*

616-304-9575

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### *Faith Journey*

What do I believe and how did I get here? Like a majority of Christians, I grew up in the church being taught to pray to “Our Father, who art in heaven” and to sing ‘I love you, Jesus’. I was taught that Jesus is my Savior, the one who died and rose again for me. I learned that God loves us so much that He sacrificed His only son. Through him, we get to go to heaven. For much of my life I took in what I was taught without much thought. I thought I knew what it meant to follow Jesus. I truly believed that I had faith.

And though I don’t think I can dismiss it point-blank, when put to the test my faith crumbled pathetically and with little hesitation. It seems my faith was nothing more than a seed that fell on the “rocky ground” or a seed choked by thorns. When my mother unexpectedly passed away, the loss proved too much for me to bear, and I descended down a long and winded path away from God. I was angry at God and doubted all that I had known of him, especially his goodness, in light of my sufferings. Like Peter denied Christ under scrutiny, I did the same and estranged myself from him.

But as God ordained it to be, in His good and perfect timing, I encountered His grace so abundant and merciful. Through small moments and few faithful people, God beckoned me once again into His presence. He granted me the understanding of things I had not fully understood before. I began to grasp within the depths of my soul the vastness of God’s love, His beautiful and wholesome will, and His perfect sacrifice through Christ, His son. I began to see wrongs of my past and the foolishness of my desire to know the world and not He who fulfills and satisfies my soul. I began to understand the broken state that all people share; separated from God by sin and shame, all of humanity hungers for restoration, healing, for Christ. But most importantly, I understood for the first time that God did not delight in my sufferings, but mourned with me and was present with me.

Through God’s grace, today I am able to know Him more intimately and confess that He is God, that His son Jesus Christ is my Savior and the Lord over my life. I continue to learn what it means to submit my life to him, to be united to Christ, and to be led by the Spirit. As I continue to learn the enormity of his grace, the confession of Peter echoes in my heart often, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”. But I also increasingly see that it’s beyond just me; Jesus Christ also died for the church and for the world. Jesus loves me and desires restoration for me, yes, but he also loves his people and that all of history has been God acting on a mission of grace, to reconcile all things to him. With Christ’s death and resurrection as our foundation, I believe the church is called to faithfully dance between the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ of the age to come, as “new creation [is] in collision with the present age.” I believe that as we submit to this calling, we continue to be formed and fed by God’s Word where his will is revealed wholly and perfectly, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for everyday living.

Hannah Lee



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*Statement of Reason*

Richard Mouw, in the beginning pages of his book *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport*, introduces the analogy of a theological shelf. He uses it to explain his attitude toward the particularly hairy doctrines that divide denominations; the “shelf-doctrines”. But I think the analogy is a helpful image in general. What are the doctrines that sit on my theological shelf, regardless of where the proverbial books may sit (shelves closest to the ceiling where they are hardly touched or at eye-level for regular access)? The reason I seek candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church is because my theological shelf is filled with Reformed doctrines. That sounds rather dry, and here I suppose the analogy starts to fail, because my theological shelf is not only a piece of intellectual furniture, but where my worldview, and thus my very heart, sits. When I chose Calvin Theological Seminary four years ago, it was a careless choice of practicality. But now at the end of my time at Seminary, I am so grateful that I was careless and yet God was not. Reformed theology, and the CRC’s expression of it, has given me a firm foundation by which I understand my faith and build my pastoral identity. This is my reason for seeking candidacy in the CRCNA.

Hannah Lee



*Name:* Hope Lee

*Place of Birth:* Denver, CO

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Denver  
B.A., 2009

Denver Seminary  
M.Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Languages spoken:* Korean

*Contact:*

720-940-1059  
hopeguan@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I always grew up in a Christian household, however I always say I was never sure of my faith until my junior year in high school. I went to a Christian school from pre-K through the fifth grade, thus, I always knew who Jesus was and knew that there was no life outside of him. However, this truth was tested as I entered my adolescent years when I realized the Lord made me different than other individuals. I was born with a birth defect that challenged my trust in the Lord as I experienced ridicule and criticism around it. To add to this matter, I also had a brother, who has severe ADHD that causes him to have schizophrenia tendencies and become incredibly violent. Over the years, my brother would be a drug addict that would only add even more violence and rage. And because of these matters, I would find myself always questioning whether God is faithful, whether if he was truly good, or even a God who loved us as much as he said he does. After all, I found myself thinking, if he was all those things, then why would I be born 'unfairly' and why would my brother be created the way he was? These kind of thoughts drew me away from reading the Word and praying for nearly four years.

It was my junior year in high school when my parents sent me to a conference called, JAMA, Jesus Awakening Movement for America. There I stood in the presence of God and over 4,000 young attendees. In this moment, I saw my peers, lift their hands to the heavens as we were praising, and deeply crying out to our God. So I remember being awestruck by this sight and decided to pray for the first time in over four years. I just remember crying out, "Jesus if you are real, come reveal yourself to me!" Instantly, I felt the Holy Spirit stir insanely in my heart and there before my eyes were many images of my past where I remember standing so alone and so broken and the Jesus revealing he was walking alongside me the whole way. Since then, the rest has been history. I was so depressed, so alone, so unhappy before this encounter with Christ, and my life was drastically changed. The biggest change was the amount of hope I felt in Christ and in living for Him.

I knew that this moment that there really is no one other than Christ. How nothing in this world can satisfy the way Jesus can. So, I recommitted by life to Him and decided that that I'll never look back.

Hope Lee

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination for three specific reasons. The first is because I desire to be within a community that will remind me that I am not doing ministry alone and can keep me accountable. Being in a non-denominational church, I realize there have been many moments where I have felt that I lacked the resources to do ministry well. In these moments, I long for accountability, people I could turn to to help me navigate through ministry, but not just in any way, but through some kind of structure. The second reason I am seeking ordination is because I feel at this point in ministry this is my next step. Ordination allows my congregation and other congregations to affirm my calling and I feel that God is leading and anointing this time for me to do so. And the

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

third reason I am seeking ordination is to have peace that though I desire and pray earnestly that I could be apart of the community I serve until I pass from this life, I know when God calls me elsewhere I need to be ready. Joining a denomination gives me peace knowing that I will find community and even a calling in the future, if this is the will of the Lord.

Hope Lee



*Name:* Samuel (SangMyung) Lee

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* South Korea

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College

B.S., 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Service Learning at Degage  
Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2013 to May 2015

Calvin College Campus  
Ministries Intern (Barnabas  
Program), Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2013 to May 2014

Immanuel CRC, Ripon, CA  
August 2015 - May 2016

*Languages spoken:*

Korean

*Contact:*

616-881-9052

smll0601@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

When I decided to major in theology as I was going to college, all I had in my mind was, “I love God, I like reading and studying the Bible, and I would like to share this ‘good news’ with other people.” Looking back now with a critical eye, I could describe that state of faith as being naive, but sometimes, I miss that time of innocence. When I first began my study in theology, I found myself like a child trying to hold onto and defend “my” faith. For this reason, I fell in love with studying systematic theology, apologetics and doctrines because I thought that I was able to have clear-cut answers to the questions presented regarding God and Scripture. Nevertheless, I eventually came to realize that I was too caught up with my own selfish concerns that often times the element of loving and caring for one another (living as a citizen of God’s Kingdom) was far from my thoughts. I found myself having fallen into the trap of pride, not much different from the Pharisees in the New Testament. Through these moments of pondering, I have come to realize that true faith is not merely what I believe, but rather it is defined by who I am (way of being) in the world.

After this realization, my theological education at Dordt College and Calvin Theological Seminary, became a source of transformation. While I acknowledge the transcendental nature of God, I do not see God as some distant, objective being about whom we make mere metaphysical assumptions about. True knowledge of God is not mere contemplation of His essence. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of God that occurs in life as a whole. I believe in the God of the covenant who is the Creator and Sovereign, yet is intimately involved, near, and concerned for humanity and for the entire cosmos. I believe that just as God Himself came in the midst of our brokenness out of His love for us in Jesus Christ, we are called not only as recipients, but also as agents of His love through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In this respect, theology became a transformational academic discipline that planted in me a greater passion for God’s church and the world.

I believe that every act, thought, and word in my life is a form of worship before God, and thus, my faith becomes evident in my life as I struggle to live as who I am called to be in Christ—in my daily interactions with people, in how I spend my time and even in my leisure. In the midst of this struggle, the church and the Christian communities serve as the core of my Christian identity, values, goals, ways of life, nourishment, and encouragement. I long to be a part of and to work together towards building a Christian community that is continuously fed by God’s abundant grace but also strives to live with an alternative consciousness in the world as signs and foretastes of God’s Kingdom.

SangMyung Lee

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because God has given me the heart and passion for ministry, and I am seeking candidacy specifically in the Christian Reformed Church because I have been deeply formed and shaped by Reformed theology and Reformed worldview. My hope is to become a pastor, a missionary and a theologian. I have heard people telling me that it is not possible to combine all of these three vocations. However, my thoughts are a little different. What I realize more and more is that I, as a follower of Christ, need to have a pastoral heart like a shepherd loving and caring for his sheep, a missional heart to participate in God's on-going mission to His people and the world, and a theologian's heart to desire life-long learning about God and His Word. I hope to pursue this in the Christian Reformed Church because this is where my three-fold vision has been developed and because I have deep appreciation for our denomination.

SangMyung Lee



*Name:* Sheri J. Leisman

*Age:* 53

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Name of Spouse:* Ross Leisman

*Number of Children:* 4

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A., 1984

Eastern Michigan University  
Graduate work, 1986-1988

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Madison Square CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2015 to May 2016

*Contact:*

616-682-0440  
sjleisman@comcast.net

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is all Sovereign, All-knowing, All-powerful, and Almighty Creator of all things in heaven and on earth. I am created in God's image to live and flourish in His presence and am loved and held always in His care. He guides and enables me, through the Holy Spirit, to be the person He created me to be and to do the things He prepared in advance for me to do.

God actively upholds and sustains the whole world and all creation. Everything good and beautiful is part of His gracious, creative gift and reflects His intricacy and delight. Yet all humanity and beautiful creation are broken and ruined by sin. In relentless love God provides a redemptive trajectory throughout all history fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. God also provides His Holy Word to reveal who He is and to serve as a template for life and wellbeing within His created order. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we are able to respond in grateful obedience to His Word and receive the bounty of His promised blessings. One day this will culminate in His return and the coming of New Creation and eternal life with him.

Because of this, I believe I am not my own but belong body and soul to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. I know this is true not only from the Word, but also because I have experienced the real and present arms of God. Through carving loss and abundant blessing, God continues to tenderly hold and guide. With gratitude and wonder I perceive the way I am being uniquely shaped by God to serve in hospital chaplaincy. In obedient thanksgiving, I continue this journey in His call.

Sheryl Leisman

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking Candidacy in the CRCNA to honor my call from God to Hospital Chaplaincy. As I graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary I will begin a new phase of this journey in CPE training toward board certification. The authority and accountability of the Church is an important requirement to enable me to move into this occupation of being the loving hands and feet of Christ to those who are broken and hurting.

Sheryl Leisman





*Name:* Michael McGowan

*Place of Birth:* Pontiac, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Mississippi Gulf Coast  
Community College  
A.A.S., 2008

University of South  
Carolina Beaufort  
B.S., 2012

Fuller Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Sanctuary CRC, Seattle, WA  
September 2015 - June 2016

Ann Arbor CRC, Ann Arbor, MI  
January 2017 - March 2017

*Contact:*

228-209-1454  
m2mcgowa@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

It took me moving over 2,000 miles from Michigan to learn about the CRC, but God has been with me since Day 1.

I was born and raised on the east side of Michigan. My father is a sheet metal worker and my mother is a high school science teacher. I cannot remember a time when the Christian faith was not a part of my life. My brother and I were raised in a Catholic home and faithfully attended Mass every Sunday. We kneeled at the bedside every night to say family prayers before crawling into bed. I came to know and love God as a close friend and often found myself in prayer throughout the day. The example of my mom and dad living out their faith in all areas of their lives prevented me from viewing my faith as only a Sunday morning event. I was shaped by the liturgy on Sunday morning and carried this with me during the week.

During my college years the Christian faith became my own. I affirmed the lordship of Christ over all areas of life and devoted myself to following Him. It was during this time that I wrestled with the significance of the crucifixion and resurrection and everything it meant for a fallen humanity; I embraced his acceptance of me. Although I was no longer a member of the Catholic Church at this point, I was searching for a place to fit into Christ's body.

After many geographic moves and several years of looking for a church home (both locally and denominationally) I wound up in Seattle, WA. My wife and I were invited to attend a neighborhood CRC, our first exposure to the denomination. It was here where we found a fit with our theology and worldview. Even more importantly, we were warmly embraced and loved by the church.

I believe in the sovereignty of God over all things, and I am thoroughly convinced of God's desire to use the church—his people—in carrying out and proclaiming his mission of reconciliation in Christ. God has led me to this place of working to build up the church for this mission (albeit by a strange course at times), and I am grateful that we do this together in the power of His Spirit.

Michael McGowan

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church because I have received an internal and external call to gather in and equip members of the church for the purpose of building up the church of Jesus Christ. I have sensed an internal call from a young age, and have experienced God's leading into the ministry throughout important life phases. This call has been affirmed and encouraged by many significant individuals and groups in my life: my wife, parents, grandparents, pastors, previous bosses, seminary professors, church councils, and congregants. God has given me a passion for walking alongside his people in ways that equip and encourage them to live out their identity as Christ's body.

Michael McGowan



*Name:* Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

*Place of Birth:* Holland, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2012

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

CRCNA Office of Social Justice,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
September 2013 - May 2014  
September 2014 - May 2015  
September 2015 - May 2016

*Contact:*

616-566-7652  
kyleschaap89@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My testimony is a familiar one. One marked not by “rock bottom” or radical conversion, but by faithful parents and patient growth. I have known the name of Jesus since I was old enough to talk. Biblical narratives were my bedtime stories; a children’s Bible my first book. I have never known a time when I did not know the Christian story.

My time in middle school and high school was marked by high expectations for me, and I learned quickly the art of “going through the motions” in order to avoid disappointing my parents, teachers, and peers. I was rather mature for my age, and didn’t engage in any of the easily identifiable “sins” (drinking, smoking, sexual activity). Perhaps for these reasons, I was marked early as a spiritual leader among my peers. I was chosen to be a small group leader at my school, I was an intern at my church for two summers, and I was told often by numerous teachers how impressed they were with my maturity and how much they expected of me in the future. Feeling that I must live up to their expectations, I learned to hide inconsistencies and to repress doubts. I put on the face that I thought everyone expected of me. My reputation flourished, but my faith stagnated.

Upon coming to Calvin College in 2008, I resolved that this would no longer do. I began to seek out authentic Christians living out their faith in meaningful and compelling ways. I was surprised to find that, upon looking, I found them! For what felt like the first time in my life, I met adults and peers who were taking their faith seriously; who weren’t shrinking away from big questions, but were asking them with earnestness and searching for answers together. I became involved with the Environmental Stewardship Coalition and learned that a robust gospel does not negate advocating for environmental sustainability, but requires it. I worked at the Service-Learning Center and learned that a concern for justice is not simply an add-on to the story of Jesus, but that a gospel devoid of justice is no gospel at all. I learned that failure and doubt in my faith walk is not only okay, but necessary for honest and deep growth to occur. I came to Calvin a lifelong Christian, but felt like I discovered grace for the first time.

After Calvin College, I took a year off from school to work full-time at the CRCNA Office of Social Justice, where my passion for gospel-centered advocacy flourished. In 2013, I started at Calvin Seminary, and found it to be a difficult fit. After visiting Duke, Princeton, and Western Seminaries, my wife and I moved to Holland in 2014 to finish my M.Div. at Western Theological Seminary. It was a wonderful fit, and I flourished in my calling to be a leader in the Church of Jesus Christ in general, and in the Christian Reformed Church in particular.

My faith expression is not particularly emotional. I will rarely be emotive in a worship service, or claim to feel the presence of God. I have been discovering, however, that my faith is highly intuitive. The story of the long arc of salvation, stretching from creation to the cross and beyond into the eschaton makes sense. The vision of the new kingdom characterized by a universal saturation of shalom is so beautiful, I can’t believe otherwise. The story of a manger incarnation, resulting in a crucified king is so bizarre and unexpected that it has to be true. This

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

is the story into which I have chosen to live, and I believe God has been drawing me deeper and deeper into its fullness for my entire life. God, the creator of everything seen and unseen. God, distinctly three, distinctly one. God, the lover so head over heels with his creation that the thought of abandoning it to its own sinful devices was unbearable. God, the One who entered into the mess we had made of His world in order to wrench it around from the inside. God, who invites us into the work of joining Him in reconciling all things to himself. God, the Father who loves me so much that he revealed Himself to me before my first breath, and has patiently walked with me ever since.

My faith is my life. I do not mean this in the syrupy, platitudinal way that I might have in high school, but in the enduringly practical and wholly sincere way of one who cannot imagine his life devoid of his faith. I literally would not live the life that I do today if I did not believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has forever altered the reality and the purpose of this world and, as a result, the reality and purpose of my life. I would not attend regular worship with the body of Christ, for what encouragement would I need or what way of living need I be reminded of? I would not participate regularly in the activities of my church body, for why invest in a community at all? I likely would not have worked at the CRCNA Office of Social Justice, for what good is seeking justice in a world forever broken if new creation is not waiting in the wings? Perhaps I would not have even gotten married, for what is the purpose of marriage if not to empower and encourage each other to live into the reality of the kingdom of God daily? My faith is evident in my life because it is my life. If not for my commitment to the story of a crucified and risen Christ, I simply would not be the person that I am today.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe with all my heart that God is calling me to serve the Body of Christ through its particular manifestation in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The CRCNA is the body that I was baptized into, that grew me in the faith that taught me the principles faith, service, discipleship, and justice that have come to characterize my life and ministry. I believe that the providence of God saw fit to grow me in the CRCNA for a reason, and it would be the honor of my life to serve this body and to facilitate the same experiences for generations to come. I do not agree with every position taken by the CRCNA, but this is precisely why I feel called to serve it. True relationship built on more than ideological affinity and theological hegemony—it is built on mutual respect, love, and a commitment to growth. I am committed to respecting, loving, and growing alongside of the CRC in the years to come.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap



*Name:* Cory Nederveld

*Place of Birth:* Zeeland, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Davenport University  
B.A., 2005

Grace Bible College  
B.R.E., 2005

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Cottonwood CRC, Jenison, MI  
Commissioned Pastor:  
Associate Pastor  
Director of Youth Ministries  
2006-2016 as Youth Director  
2013-present as Commissioned  
Pastor (Associate Pastor of  
Youth & Leadership)

*Contact:*

616-450-9225  
corynederveld@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

So often I am tempted to think of my testimony as “boring”. I do not have a major 180 degree story, but as a pastor once told me, “it is always miraculous when God redeems a sinner.” I grew up in the Reformed tradition and the Lord blessed me with wonderful parents. I was taught the catechism, became involved with my youth group and God blessed me with Christian friends. I saw what it was like to be involved in the church and live under the guidance of wonderful Christian influences, yet for all the information that I had (and indeed believed), it wasn’t until my sophomore year of high school where I would not only believe in my heart, but also confess with my mouth (Rom 10:9).

Looking back I am grateful for the way in which those experiences shaped me and the ways in which my family led and guided me, but those things guarantee nothing. We are all sinners and even though I do not have what some would consider an “extreme” testimony, I have come to be convinced of how greatly separated from God all of us are because of our sin and misery (HC Lord’s Day 2). Yet by God’s grace through the gift of faith, we are saved (Eph 2:8). I am so thankful to the one who is truly human (Rom 1:3) and truly righteous (2 Cor 5:21)—the one who is the true God (John 1:1)—my faithful savior Jesus Christ. His work in my life, and the lives of any sinner, is nothing short of miraculous.

In the few years that followed my profession of faith in high school, my faith would be tested and refined as I saw several close family members suffering illness and ultimately go on to be with the Lord. This was a difficult time, but it was also a time where God’s presence became palpable in my life and it was also in this time where God called me to ministry. I am so thankful for what God has done in my life through the wonderful and formational childhood that I had, as well as for seeing me through such a trying time. For the past 16 years since, I have worked in youth ministry and as a commissioned pastor. It is such a joy to be able to serve the Lord vocationally. I now believe God is now calling me to ordained ministry as a way to continue to serve and express my gratitude for the grace he has shown in my life.

Cory Nederveld

### *Statement of Reason*

I believe that God has called and equipped me for ministry. I am thankful for the internal call that the Spirit has laid on my heart and for those who have affirmed that call. I believe that the CRCNA and its confessions faithfully reflect God’s Word. We have a sovereign God who has chosen to covenant with us to establish his kingdom. He has done this not just so that we can experience the privilege of being adopted into his family (being co-heirs with Christ), but so that we can bless the nations. I believe the CRC is serious about our calls both to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. I am seeking to be ordained in the CRC, because on the local and denominational level, we are serious about the mission of God—both domestically and abroad. God is bringing together every nation, tribe, people and tongue for his glory (Rev 7:9). I am excited about being a part of that work as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA.

Cory Nederveld





*Name:* Fikre Norcha

*Place of Birth:* Ethiopia

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Evangelical Theological College  
B.A., 2003

University of Gloucestershire in  
Global Issues in Contemporary  
Mission- UK  
M.A., 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
Dégagé Ministries  
Cross-Cultural Internship  
June - August 2015  
  
Woodland CRC  
Friendship Ministry  
Service Learning  
2014-2015

*Languages spoken:*  
Amharic and Guragigna

*Contact:*  
616-334-6317  
fikrehm@yahoo.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in South West Ethiopia in a strict Coptic Orthodox family. My father was a part-time Coptic Orthodox Church priest and influenced the family in Orthodox beliefs. Consequently, I grew up in the Orthodox tradition and my father's plan was to make me a priest in the Coptic Church. However, I preferred to attend formal school and I had finished my elementary school. Then my father sent me to Addis Ababa the capital of Ethiopia for further study.

I had finished my high school with Diploma in electrical technology and joined the Electrical and Electronics Institute. In my second year of this Institute, one of my class mates told me about his faith in Jesus and led me to the underground church. Then in 1988 I gave my life to the Lord. Fifteen days after conversion I began to witness to college friends and many came to Christ. I graduated and the government assigned me to work in North Ethiopia in an area called Gojam (the area which is Coptic Orthodox dominated) as an electro-mechanic. When I started government work, I had a sense of call in my heart for full-time ministry. Finally, I decided to be a full-time minister in 1993.

- I believe all Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, and it requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life.
- I believe in one God and sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and his virgin birth.
- Being alienated from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace.
- The true church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ.
- Jesus Christ will come again to the earth-personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.
- The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all nations.

I came to this faith by accepting Jesus Christ as my own savior and sound teaching of my church.

Fikre Norcha

### *Statement of Reason*

I was a pastor for the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia (PCE). For more than 16 years, I was pastoring, planting churches, and organizing wholistic activities, schools and involving in denominational leadership and teaching in the Bible schools. After many years of intensive ministry, the Lord has opened a door for me to study at Calvin Theological Seminary, and now I am a MDiv final semester student. The reason I am seeking ordination is that: First, while I am studying at Calvin Theological Seminary, the Lord also has helped me to connect my church with CRCNA. As a result the 2016 synod, approved the PCE to have fellowship with CRCNA "churches in dialogue category".

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

Therefore, if I am ordained as CRCNA minister, I may play a significant role to strengthen the two churches relationship into a better level. Secondly, I have also a sense of call to minister cross-culturally. Hence, recently, I am trying to organize a new Emerging Ethiopian CRC church in Grand Rapids. Finally, I also want to learn from CRCNA reformed heritage so that I may influence my country ministry in Reformed theology, and also I may share the global south ministry experience with CRCNA ministers, churches and CRCNA at large.

Fikre Norcha





*Name:* Arek O'Connell

*Place of Birth:* Roseville, CA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Biola University  
B.A., 2011

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Emmanuel Reformed Church,  
Paramount, CA  
June 2010 - January 2013

Hillside Community Church,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
February 2013 - present

*Contact:*

616-272-6639  
aoconnell@hillsidech.org

### *Faith Journey*

I was born on June 15th, 1990 in Roseville, CA. I did not have the fortune of growing up in a Christian home. Quite the opposite. I grew up in a home defined by deep brokenness, addiction, and abuse. If we ever did find ourselves going to church, it was on one of the major holidays and the questions I would ask after the service to my parents was enough to keep us away until the next holiday. By the time I was 12, I had witnessed my mother go through two divorces while being the victim of domestic abuse in both of those marriages. In the years that are traditionally known to be the most formative to identity, I grew up in a home full of drug addicts and alcoholics. Truly, all I knew was brokenness until I was 14.

At age 14, God first began revealing himself to me as I spent a summer with my uncle and aunt in Lincoln, CA. My uncle was the pastor of a church and his family was the most wholesome family I'd ever come into contact with. It wasn't until that summer that I saw my first healthy conflict between two adults. It was this summer in Lincoln that I first began to wonder who was this God that made my uncle's life so much better than mine. When I returned home back to my normal brokenness, it didn't take long for me to forget how God pursued me that summer and to start engaging in the same addictive behaviors I'd grown accustomed to seeing for so many years.

At age 16, I was in the depths of a generational cycle of brokenness and addiction that my family had invited me into. It was in this depth, that the gospel message was presented to me in a way where I could no longer resist God's grace. My youth pastor revealed God to me in a way that changed my life forever. From that day on I committed my life to Jesus and to the church. Soon after I became a Christian, my youth pastor allowed me to do an internship at his church where I experienced three months of intense discipleship.

I attended Biola University in La Mirada, CA with the intent of graduating with the necessary skills to be a vocational youth pastor. While I did graduate 3 ½ years later with a degree in Christian Education Ministries and an overwhelming enthusiasm to serve the Lord, college was not a walk in the park by any means. During my freshman year my father was murdered in a bar fight. It forever changed my life in many ways. I experienced grief and loss in a way that I didn't know was possible. However, through the generosity of Biola and the care from my Christian community, I learned what it truly meant to place my hope in God alone. Through counseling and the power of genuine Christian community, God gave me the opportunity and empowered me to be able to share the gospel message with my father's killer and forgive him in court during his sentencing. If I were to write all that God taught me during this time of my life, I would not have enough pages. During this season of my life I truly learned that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

Shortly after all this, I had the great fortune of meeting my wife Jamie. Although Jamie experienced a different type of pain than I did, she nonetheless experienced great pain as she was diagnosed with cancer at age 18. Soon after we met, it became clear to us that God had gifted

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

one another to us because of our unique ability to walk with each other through the trauma that life had brought our way. We got married less than a month after we graduated in January 2012.

During our first year of marriage, I worked at a church in Paramount, CA and she truly was (and is to this day) my partner in ministry. Before our one-year anniversary, God had made it clear to us that a time of transition was coming. That transition resulted in us moving to Grand Rapids, MI where I became the high school youth pastor at Hillside Community Church. Although we left everything and everyone we ever knew back in CA, God has showered us with an unbelievable amount of grace, love, and support through Hillside that we could have never expected. They have truly become our family.

We have had the pleasure of serving at Hillside Community Church for a little over four years now and have been blessed to share five years of marriage with one another. Although my journey is one with plenty of detours, my wife and I know that God has been, currently is, and will forever remain faithful and keep us in his arms. We are excited to see the next step that God has for us going forward.

Arek O'Connell

*Statement of Reason*

Ever since I became a Christian at age 16, there has not been another vocation other than ordained pastor that I have seriously given thought or consideration to. God's grace met me in such a powerful way when I was saved that I can't help but give my whole life over to serving his church. I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe it is what God has called me to all these years. I desire to lead others in preaching the word and delivering the sacraments. I desire to someday perform the marriage ceremonies for the babies I baptize. I want to give my whole life over to the church and the people in it. I am seeking candidacy so that I might be faithful to God.

Arek O'Connell



*Name:* Katrina Olson

*Age:* 32

*Place of Birth:* Listowel, Ontario

*Name of Spouse:* Jim Olson

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

The University of  
Western Ontario  
B.A., 2006

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Th.M., 2016

*Internships:*

Westwood CRC, Kalamazoo, MI  
September 2006 to May 2015  
January 2013 to April 2013  
(cross cultural)  
September 2013 to  
August 2014 (PMI)

*Contact:*

269-377-5643  
katolson5318@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My understanding of God is ever changing and yet solidly rooted. God is beyond what I comprehend and still He considers me, satisfies my personal needs even as they change. God loves. God saves. God redeems. God is patient when I am frustrated...or more importantly—frustrating! God is Truth with a capitol “T”. God gives. God expects me to live in grateful obedience.

I am thankful for the gift of grace He freely gives. I have to trust in God’s justice, even when I see inexplicable evil. There are traits within myself that help me understand God because He’s given them to me, like love, laughter, peace, kindness. Yet God is bigger than my understanding, with gifts beyond what I can experience in others or myself. God is omniscient, omnipresent. Trying to understand God is like scooping up the ocean with a soup spoon, but I am convinced He delights in my curiosity, in my desire to know Him more and more.

How could I not be absolutely committed to a God like this? How could I not be absolutely committed after feeling the power of the Holy Spirit within me? I pray that it radiates out from my very pores. I feel His call in my life. He challenges me to always be living in a right path with Him. When I stumble and sin, He challenges me. When I celebrate Him, it reverberates within me. Even in times of deep sadness I have joy. The joy God gives me is not a happy-feeling that most have come to associate with joy, but a deep-seated comfort and bliss in knowing that I belong to Him, body and soul.

This is the God that I’ve come to know. I was raised in a Christian home but faith was never easy. There was immense pain growing up that caused me to grapple with faith: bullies in school and at church, abusive boyfriends, secular schools, and death before death was expected. The glittering vices of the world lured me in and I stumbled down a road I don’t wish anyone else to experience, but God was ever faithful in my life. He used friends, mentors, and church families to bring me back into a faithful walk and when I look back over my life I can see the promise of baptism traced throughout. God has seen me through some intense pains of life, when evil seemed to press in, and on this side, I see how He redeemed them into a deeper relationship with Him.

Katrina Olson

### *Statement of Reason*

If you ask my Oma (my grandmother) when I first felt God’s call, she would tell you it began when I was about five years old. She fondly reminds me of my answer whenever asked what I wanted to be when I grew up: a minister. It seems surreal to be applying for candidacy in this moment, reflecting on the events of life that led me from that point to this. Why did that little girl want to be a pastor—why do I want to become one now? I suppose I don’t have a concrete reason and would rather sit in the mystery of the call. I can cite my longing to serve to the church, a love of teaching God’s word, and a desire to spread the gospel...but shouldn’t all Christians feel the same way? I am seeking candidacy because I have felt God’s nudges—and frankly, some hard pushes—into ordained ministry and when I follow the path He has laid

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

before me, I feel affirmed and excited by the Holy Spirit. I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because God has called me and led me to this point in both life and in faith and I am eager to take this next step despite the path being shrouded in mystery.

Katrina Olson



*Name:* Jennifer Palkowski

*Age:* 27

*Place of Birth:* Toledo, OH

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Hope College

B.A., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Ada Bible Church,

Ada, Michigan

September 2015 to present

Harderwyk Ministries,

Holland, MI

June 2015 to August 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary,

Facing Your Future,

Grand Rapids, MI

July 2014

*Languages spoken:*

Spanish

*Contact:*

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jlp098@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Christian home. Through the age of eleven, my family and I attended Community Christian Reformed Church in Lambertville, Michigan. It was a small church and my family was highly involved in its programming; my parents, for instance, were the leaders for both GEMS and Cadets and they organized and facilitated community events such as Parents Night Out, Family Fun Night and Wednesday Night Soup. The youngest of three children, I attended all of these events with my parents and simply loved them. Needless to say, because of my parents' intentional participation in the outreach of our church, I learned the basics of the Christian faith at a young age and quickly internalized the importance of ministry. While my parents were crucial to my formation, it was during an elementary school chapel service that I accepted Christ as my Savior; I was in kindergarten.

In sixth grade, my family moved to Portage, Michigan, where we attended Westwood Christian Reformed Church; my brothers and I attended Kalamazoo Christian School. For the first time, I had the opportunity to experience church and school on a larger scale. Once again I became involved in GEMS at Westwood. I was blessed with an exceptional GEMS leader and it was through her mentorship that I grew abundantly in my faith. Because of GEMS and a summer camp experience in sixth grade, I chose to fully commit my life to God. I began to actively live out my faith, organizing Bible studies with my friends and dreaming of ways to bless the less fortunate. Later, when I was about fourteen years old, I was sitting in church when our pastor said, "Now if any of you young people feel called to missions, don't close your heart to God." Somehow, I felt certain that God was speaking directly to me. I grabbed hold of these words and began the process of discerning where God was leading me.

I entered college and pursued a degree in English (Creative Writing) and Spanish so that I could communicate the Gospel in two languages; my plan was to make money while doing missions by being a journalist. During college, I lived abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for about a year, completing courses at the universities there in order to enhance my Spanish degree. I viewed my time abroad as an opportunity to share the Gospel. When I came home to Michigan, I quickly left to work as a Site Director on a mission field in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. It was not until I returned home to Michigan this second time that I realized I was not equipped to do missions long-term. I knew I needed training. I wanted to be able to better understand why I believed what I believed; I also wanted to be able to articulate my beliefs with others, especially with those who believed mine were wrong. Thus began the process of my applying for Calvin Seminary.

Seminary has pushed and challenged me. It has led me to a greater appreciation for the Christian Reformed tradition, a deeper understanding of and commitment to Reformed teaching, and a passion for the unity and collaboration of the ecumenical Church. Put simply, I believe in the Bible, the true Word of God, and in that which is taught in the official creeds and confessions of the Reformed faith.

Jennifer Palkowski

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe God has called me into ministry. Additionally, I believe in the teaching of the Reformed faith and the potential of the Christian Reformed denomination. As such, I am applying for candidacy, remaining obedient to the call of God and following wherever He leads me.

Jennifer Palkowski





*Name:* Ryan Taylor Pedde

*Place of Birth:* Edmonton,  
AB, Canada

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Vanguard College  
B.A., 2008

Taylor Seminary 2010-2017(1/2 )  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*  
Bethel CRC Edmonton  
Associate Pastor  
2013 - present

Classis Alberta North  
Commissioned Pastor  
October 2013

Bethel CRC Edmonton  
Director of Youth and Young  
Adults Ministries  
2008-2013

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### *Faith Journey*

I am a child of the one and only Living God, who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. My God created the heavens and the earth perfect, and saw that they were Good. The pinnacle of His creation was forming Image Bearers – male and female. While God created us for relationship, to join in the joyous dance of the Trinity, we fell into sin. Each of us has gone astray and find ourselves spiritually dead and doomed.

There is hope. The LORD is a covenant making God who reached out to us in our defiance, rebellion and brokenness. He picked Abram and took him out of his father's home. God promised salvation would come through him. Abraham was given Isaac, who was given Jacob, who became Israel. The nation of Israel was to be a royal priesthood and a light to the nations. In Egypt, the desert, the conquest, the judges, the monarchies, and their exiles – God's nation failed to obey the LORD. The prophets spoke of one who would come and fulfill Israel's calling.

The true Israel, the second Adam, the Messiah, Jesus came into the world. God became flesh and dwelt among us. He lived the life we could not, and died the death we could not. His perfect sacrifice has brought hope to a world in darkness. Now through the cross of Jesus all things are being reconciled to God. The church joins the Holy Spirit in seeing the Kingdom come and God's will done.

I am part of God's elect, the church. I live and love and serve, honoring the will of God as revealed in the God-breathed, Holy Scriptures. My spiritual formation happens best in community. Through Bible reading and prayer, through times of solitude and times of fellowship, through my wife and my children, through the stranger and the friend, through my work and my play – I find Christ at work in all things. He faithfully calls me to Himself, and is in the process of making me like Him. I eagerly await a refined New Heavens and New Earth. Come Lord Jesus!

Ryan Taylor Pedde

### *Statement of Reason*

The reason I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church is because I believe that God has called me to a life of pastoral ministry. I have a passion for preaching the Word of God, and seeing people come to know Jesus Christ. I have had the pleasure of working as both a Youth Director and Associate Pastor in the CRC for the last nine years. I feel this is my ideal denominational family.

Ryan Taylor Pedde





*Name:* Kristen Pikaart

*Age:* 46

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Name of Spouse:* Sanjay Choudhrie

*Number of Children:* 2

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 1992

San Francisco  
Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 1999

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Internships:*

Grace Presbyterian Church  
Walnut Creek, CA  
August 1997 to August 1998

*Graduate Studies:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Contact:*

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kjpikaart@yahoo.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe that God created this entire wild and beautiful cosmos out of a tremendous outpouring of love and creativity and desire. This God of ours can be big and seem mysterious, and yet is ultimately knowable through the fingerprints all around us—through moments of stark personal revelation, through the scripture, through the church, but mostly through the manifestation of Jesus.

I have always been enamored of Jesus and the gospels that tell of who he was when he was incarnate here on earth. When God and God's ways feel particularly inscrutable, I recall that Jesus is our interpretative tool. We know the heart and character of God by looking at the person of Jesus Christ. Through his incarnation, Jesus raised humanity up. In offering himself up as a sacrifice, in a transaction that I cannot fully comprehend, Jesus made us free—from slavery to sin, from the specter of death, for the next life in eternity, certainly, but more importantly for the here and now.

The Holy Spirit prompts our hearts toward faith, and through the saints has built up the church of Jesus Christ. It is a flawed institution, to be sure, but it is the vehicle in which we learn and grow, where we are called to worship, offer ourselves up to service, and live in community with other followers of Jesus. All of these tasks remain the job of the church and are pertinent to life in our times and will remain so, no matter how the church changes through time.

The liturgy for the commissioning of new elders asks the elder if he or she "believes the Bible to be true and trustworthy". That is the best phrase to describe my relationship with the Biblical text. Is it simple and easy to understand? But it is totally trustworthy. It is the story of all stories. It contains the most overarching story of all times—creation, fall, redemption—and the many smaller narratives therein. It is a collection of historical documents written by and for particular groups of people, and it is simultaneously the living, breathing Word of God for all times and places.

I can remember the first sermon that I really listened to as a child. Rev. Veenstra preached on Romans 8:28. "We know that all things work together for the good of those who are in Christ Jesus." I learned that day, when I was only 9 or so, that while each individual circumstance may not be or feel "good", that God has a grand scheme going on, that we are part of it, and that in the great end, all things will come to the good plan of this Good God. It is still at the heart of my faith.

Kristen Pikaart

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*Statement of Reason*

I have been a hospital and hospice chaplain by profession and by God's calling for the past 15 years. Daily, I witness the tread of theology hitting the road of mortality in stark ways. Daily, I try, to varying degrees of success, to do the good work of loving and caring for God's beloved ones. Daily, I accompany people in pain and suffering, and almost as often, am given glimpses of the ways that God encounters those same tears and suffering—sometimes redeeming them right there for all to see, sometimes making us all wait to see how and when and where this will happen.

I attended a seminary of the PC (USA) a decade and a half ago. There were two of us CRC-raised folks there at the time, and one CRC professor. After theology class one day, a classmate of ours said, "I notice something in common about you, Phil, and Dr. VanDyk. All three of you take the Bible so terribly seriously." This is at the heart of my re-engagement with the CRC and my desire to seek Ordination of the Word. Though I have struggles with the denomination as a whole from time to time, it is this fact of taking the scripture very seriously that brought me back and keeps me here. My vocation has formed me into a pretty ecumenical being. And yet, the Christian Reformed Church has been my home—one that I have been returned to and welcomed back into and am committed to. It has been a good path to come back to where I started, and to, in the end, find a graceful place of belonging. In many ways, my calling to seek ordination as Minister of Word is a desire to serve more fully and completely in ways that I already do—to have title meet functioning.

Kristen Pikaart



*Name:* Allen Pontarelli

*Place of Birth:* Grand Haven, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Grand Valley State University  
B.S., 2004

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
Madison Christian Reformed  
Church (Ford Multi-Site)  
May 2014 - May 2015

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### *Faith Journey*

The powerful words of the Apostle Paul and Timothy in their opening prayer for the Church in Philippi, speak vividly into the reality of my faith journey. “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). The God of the universe who knew me in my mother’s womb, began a good work in me from the moment of my baptism not long after I took my first breaths. I had no idea what was happening when I was an infant, and truth be told, I would really have no idea until I became an adult.

However, it was with that beautiful sacrament that God was smiling down on me and my parents and declaring that “This is my precious son Allen, and one day he will gloriously declare that Jesus Christ is his faithful savior and without HIM he would be lost by the devastation of sin and the eternal reality of its consequences. Until then, teach him to fear me and my perfect law, and guide him to be a part of my glorious Church.” This was the start of my faith journey and I am grateful to now have eyes to see it, and a renewed mind to understand it. I have been through a time-tested journey since that special occasion so long ago. I have walked away from the Lord or at least tried my hardest to prove to myself that the Christian faith was a lie and that my purpose in life was to seek my own personal pleasure. I rebelled against the lack of faith in my parents, and I rebelled against the hypocrisy of the church. This manifested itself in a plethora of sinful behavior that would have long term consequences even to this day. My rebellion climaxed when I found myself dropped out of school, drinking and smoking pot, unemployed, in a violent relationship, and oblivious to the truth of who God really was.

The reality though is that God was always right there with me. Whispering ever so softly, but I was so focused on myself to hear Him. I thought that the answer to my situation was the U.S. military and so I enlisted into the United States Army Reserve. The stereotype of military basic training and the impact it has on you physically and mentally is spot on. After 18 weeks of rigorous and mental training I felt born again, but deep down I was just as spiritually dead as I was before. But God was always there, forming and shaping me preparing me for that encounter that would open my eyes to the reality of the power of the Gospel. That encounter came on a military deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba shortly after the U.S. terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. I found myself alone and broken down before the Lord on a rainy day on top of a mountain ridge that overlooked the Caribbean Sea. I knelt on the ground and began to shake my hands at the Lord and in those moments as the rain stopped and the sun peaked through the clouds, that still small voice that had never left became crystal clear for the first time in my life. As a well-known worship song declares, “I was no longer a slave to sin, but I was a child of God.” In those miraculous moments, God reminded me of the faith that He had initiated so long ago, but that I had been running away from for so long. It was in those moments that I made a profession of faith before the living God that I was not my own but belonged in body and in soul and in life and in death to my faithful savior Jesus Christ. Although I have still encountered trials and

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

tribulations since that glorious moment, I am confident that my life has never been the same.

I now walk in confidence knowing who I am in Christ Jesus, and living each day with a renewed purpose that is focused on being obedient to God's will. I am now proud and bold enough to proclaim with the church of history that: I believe in God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten son, and I believe in the Holy Spirit. I affirm the entirety of the Apostle's Creed as well as the other ecumenical creeds and Reformed Confessions that so clearly proclaim the Christian Reformed believer's reflections on the Truth of God's Holy Word. His good, and perfect Word. Amen!

Allen Pontarelli

*Statement of Reason*

Seven years ago, I felt the internal call from the Lord to train myself up as a minister of the Word and Sacrament within the Christian Reformed Church. Obedience to that call initiated a journey that would mold and prepare me to one day be used by God in the office of Pastor within His Church. This journey has not been without trial and testing, but He who called me is faithful and will continue to guide me according to His will. Last year through the Christian Reformed Home Missions department, Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, and a small group of faithful leaders in my neighborhood, I received an external call to step into the role of plant pastor of a new emerging Church on the southwest side of Grand Rapids. With both an internal call and external call to the office of Pastor, as well as reaching the end of my seminary training, I am formally seeking candidacy within the Christian Reformed Church.

Allen Pontarelli





*Name:* Marg Rekman

*Place of Birth:* Windsor, ON,  
Canada

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
McMaster University  
Certificate Occupational  
Therapy

Mohawk College of Applied  
Arts & Technology  
3yr. Diploma Occupational  
Therapy

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
First Sarnia CRC  
Pastoral Internship, including  
Church Renewal Process  
(ongoing)  
June 2015 - March 2016

Timothy Leadership Training –  
Romania  
Cross-Cultural Internship  
June 2015

*Languages spoken:*  
Dutch

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### *Faith Journey*

God loves me, calling me child, and lavishing his love on me. That is so rich!! God is my loving Father, Christ is my all in all, my Saviour, and the Holy Spirit lives within me to lead me forward in becoming more Christ like. Outside of Him, I can do none of this myself, and all my efforts are feeble. But my strength and comfort come from who I am in Christ by the Grace of God. So my faith encompasses who I am and what I do.

I have been taught from a very young age by my parents this simple profound truth that God is my Father. They set for me a rhythm of daily devotions and weekly worship and as a struggling immigrant family, modeled the importance of belonging by their determination to participate in the life of the church. Augustine described the church as “a fellowship in the joy of God” and that’s the picture I have of our church family in my growing up years. It’s a picture still worth looking to today.

I did profession of faith at age sixteen before spending six weeks on youth mission team to Ottawa. It was there while “evangelizing” to vacation bible school parents that the words of grace I was speaking to them bounced back to me. Why should God let us into his kingdom? Because of what Christ did.....not my own strivings, not my own efforts to do good, not because I have done right but because of Christ. That was a turning point for me as if a weight had been lifted and replaced by Jesus’ love for me. It is one of many lessons of grace God continues to teach and show me.

Because of Christ’s deep love for me, I want to know him more and more, and by this, to be always praising him. Christ says ‘follow me’, he says ‘do as I do’ – I am called after him, to learn from him, and witness of him. Seeing the power of his love and how it transforms our lives, makes me marvel. Studying at Calvin Theological seminary has deepened this wonder and my faith; increasing my desire to not only study God’s word but to find meaningful ways to share it with others. As my understanding of the many challenges the church faces as it tries to reach into the world has deepened, so has my desire to see the church grow and step forward boldly into culture.

Ephesians 2:10 describes God as a craftsman who is shaping us all for His purposes. I desire to be attentive to God’s workmanship by listening, watching and submitting to his work, being aware of what areas in my life need change or strengthening, what gifts need to be nurtured and which sin crucified. This is what it means to be created in Christ Jesus. A gift of grace that allows me to live in relationship with my loving Father but also to do the works that have been planned and prepared for me. God has placed a call on my life to preach and teach, and to equip his people for the work of ministry. I want to do this wholeheartedly, purely, and in love, keeping in step with the Spirit and with a desire to be part of the great movement of advancing the Kingdom that Christ he has called his church to. In this, I desire to point others to Christ and help them in their journey of recognizing and cooperating with God’s workmanship in their lives, in order to build the body to do good works for his glory and for his kingdom.

Marg Rekman

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*Statement of Reason*

The church today faces so many challenges in being relevant to culture, bringing the gospel to a diverse society, standing firm in her beliefs and fighting for justice and mercy to prevail. But in facing these challenges, God is faithful, through his Spirit equipping and leading his people to a life of worship and witness. One of the tasks he calls his people to is that of minister of the word, and I believe God has placed a call on my life for this service: to preach hope, to extend grace through the gospel message and sacraments, to pastor and love his people and to encourage all to grow in the use of their gifts so that together we may be built up.

The CRC has always been my church family and being called to serve a congregation as Pastor is one I am humbled to consider but look forward to with joy. I desire candidacy in the CRC recognizing that as part of the broader church, it brings gifts of commitment to scripture and truth and the pursuit of justice and mercy while seeking to redeem all of life.

Marg Rekman



*Name:* Janet Ryzebol

*Place of Birth:* Orangeville, ON,  
Canada

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Seneca College  
R.N., 1983

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
River City Church  
Cambridge, ON  
Pastoral Internship (ongoing)  
Grand Rapids thru Montreal  
to New York City  
Cross-Cultural: Sea to Sea  
August 3-23, 2013

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### *Faith Journey*

I have always known the love of God, born into a nurturing faith community, the fourth child of Dutch immigrants. I was baptized at Orangeville Christian Reformed Church, as were my husband and all three of our children. Church community was very formative and one of my first faith memories is at 6 or 7. I was sitting in the back seat of the car on the way home from church and inviting Jesus into my heart as our Sunday School teacher had taught us that morning. As a teen, I attended Calvinettes and catechism. But when it came time for Profession of Faith, I needed more time. I wanted to ensure that I was indeed professing my faith, rather than graduating from church education. At the age of 20, with 2 years of college and some life experience, I felt that I could, with integrity, profess my faith.

I was already aware of a sense of call at this time, but female pastors were not part of the CRC story at that time, and so instead I pursued a career in nursing. I have been blessed working as a nurse for the last 34 years and am grateful for skills and competencies that crossover from caring in a health care setting to caring in a ministry setting.

In 1992 Brant and I married and are now parents to three adult children; Reuben, Kiana and Lucas. As my children grew, the restlessness to be working in God's kingdom also grew. I had always been involved in church activities: VBS, Gems, coffee break and evangelism committee. For me, some of my most valuable times of spiritual growth, came through belonging to small groups. Through a particular small group, I grew in awareness of the Holy Spirit and learned to pray in a way that was new to me, and so intercessory prayer became an important part of my time with God.

A sense of calling was still niggling at the back of my mind, but as Brant was a farmer we were 'tied to the land' to a certain degree. Curious, at one point as a family, we explored other denominations visiting many wonderful local churches and enjoying different styles of worship, but in the end recognized that the Christian Reformed Church was truly home. When we left farming and moved to Guelph, attending New Life CRC opened many doors for me to engage in ministry activities during the service such as prayer and becoming part of the preaching team.

It is wonderful to look back and to see God at work preparing me for seminary. It was during this transition time that I was delighted to be a part of the three-year leadership development group hosted in Burlington and my time with the ECLDN strengthened my sense of call. On the horizon, we could see the possibility of a Distance Education program at Calvin Seminary. I also became more involved denominationally through Classis Huron Home Missions and the Classis Huron Ministry Committee, which opened my eyes to the function of the larger CRC and its governance. In 2012, I was fortunate to be a delegate at Synod which gave me an even greater appreciation and love for the CRC. In the fall of 2012, finally surrendering to God's call, I began seminary as part of the inaugural 5 year, hybrid distance program. My story is a story of God's faithfulness through the years.

Janet Ryzebol

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*Statement of Reason*

Called by God to serve his people, I joyfully seek candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church. I am committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and to seeing lives transformed by the renewing of the Spirit. It has been exciting to see my internal call to ministry confirmed through others as I use the gifts that God has equipped me with to preach, teach, comfort and shepherd. God continues to shape and mold me for ministry and has given me a deep love for the CRC denomination and a desire walk alongside his people as they “work out their salvation.” Awed by the responsibilities of ministry, I trust in God’s faithfulness, to me and to his beloved church.

Janet Ryzebol



*Name:* Ivan K. Santoso

*Age:* 25

*Place of Birth:* Surabaya, Indonesia

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Purdue University  
B.S., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Sunrise Community Church,  
Austin, TX  
June 2014 to July 2014

Visalia CRC - Visalia, CA  
June 2015 to August 2015

*Languages spoken:*

Indonesian

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

My faith journey didn't start when I was born into this world, it had started even earlier. My faith journey had started in eternity past. Before God created anything, he had mysteriously chosen me to be one of his children. God chose me to be one of his children not because of any good that was in me, and for that reason, I absolutely can't boast the fact that I'm one of God's children. God, in his wisdom, mysteriously made me one of his children, I don't know the reason why, and I don't think I will ever know the reason why. One thing I know though, I know that now, as a child of God, it is my privilege and honor to share the Good News from my heavenly Father to the world in need of that Good News.

As regards my faith journey after I was born into this world, I was, one more time, privileged—not because work of my own—to be born into a Christian family, and I'm grateful for that. My parents brought me for baptism when I was still a child, and I am, yet again, grateful for their decision. At my baptism, my parents made a promise before all of God's people to raise me in the Christian faith; but, not just that, at my baptism, God made a promise, when I still couldn't make a promise myself, before his people to adopt me as one of his children and to love me forever from then on. My earthly parents and heavenly Parent—God—both made a promise to raise me in the faith at my baptism, and, indeed, they—God and my parents—have thus far been keeping their promise. By God's grace and by my parents' dedication, I can't remember a time when I didn't believe in God. As a child, I might not yet be able to articulate my love for God as I can do right now, but I always knew that I loved my heavenly Father; and this also was the work of my heavenly Father by his grace, and not my own work.

During my high school years, my love for my heavenly Father grew in one direction. During that time, my faith in God grew intellectually. My appreciation of my heavenly Father grew in terms of my wanting to get to know about him better. During that period, I loved studying and talking about the Bible and theology, and debating about them also sometimes, with my friends. In that season in my life, I grew in my knowledge of who my heavenly Father is.

This exploration in getting to know about God continued for the next several years during my undergraduate studies. At the same time, I started to appreciate more getting to know my heavenly Father, not just with my head, but also with my heart. By God's grace and through the guidance of different mentors, whom God had put in my life, I grew in my intellectual knowledge of God and in my personal relationship with him. I still loved studying the Bible and theology, but I also wanted to get to know God better personally through my study. My intellectual knowledge and personal knowledge of God became more synchronized. It was also during this season of my life that I felt called to ministry. God used both his Spirit within me and people around me to lead me to that conclusion. I accepted God's call for me to go to seminary.

At seminary, my faith journey has been continuing. My call to ministry has been re-affirmed and re-shaped. For the first time, while at the seminary, I sensed a call to parish ministry. I had loved God and his Church, and had felt called to serve and labor in his Church; but I'd

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

felt called to a teaching ministry at a seminary. For the first time at the seminary, I felt called to serve, not only in the Church, but also in a local church. I haven't completely forsaken my call to teach at a seminary, but for the next couple of years after seminary, I'm quite certain that God's now calling me to a parish ministry. In addition, it was also at seminary that I completely realized that nothing, literally nothing, I could do to make God love me less or love me more. God's love for me has been secured, not by what I do, but by what's been done by Christ for me. What God had planned in eternity past was actualized by Christ's work of redemption.

My faith journey hasn't ended yet, and still continues. I don't know what the future holds for me. I know though that he who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion (Phil. 1:6). Wherever I will end up or whatever ministry I will end up in, I'm sure that by myself I will be defeated, but with God, I can walk confidently. Thanks be to God!

Ivan Santoso

*Statement of Reason*

Even when I still felt called to teach at a seminary (see my Statement of Faith), I felt called to ordination. I believe that being ordained as a minister in Christ's Church will always remind me that my duty is first and foremost to love and serve the Church. I feel called to candidacy and ordination in the Christian Reformed Church very strongly. I've been a part of different denominations in the past; some denominations focus too much on preaching the Gospel through words, while others focus too much on preaching through the Gospel through deeds. The Christian Reformed Church, I believe, offers me a happy medium, emphasizing the importance of both proclaiming and living out the Gospel. For that reason, I've especially felt called to get ordained in the Christian Reformed Church.

Ivan Santoso





*Name:* Bailey Sarver

*Place of Birth:* Pella, IA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College  
B.A., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Facing Your Future  
Live in Leader  
July 2014

Sunrise Community Church,  
Austin TX  
June 2015 - August 2015

Calvin College Campus  
Ministries Intern  
August 2013 - May 2017

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### *Faith Journey*

I am a rural Iowa native and my mother is a florist. Plants and nature have always been one of the primary ways in which I've connected with God and understood my faith journey, so please pardon the excessive use of plant metaphors to come. My faith journey has often struck me as being ordinary or even mundane, but I have grown to view it in light of God's loving faithfulness. I was born into a Christian home and baptized as an infant. I have come to understand that through the waters of baptism, God set a claim on my life, and I can now love God because God first loved me. Seeds of faith were planted and watered. Though I was born in a Christian home and had the privilege of attending Christian school, the Good News Chapel (where my family attended church) is where my faith really began to take root. At the Chapel, I was surrounded by a cloud of faithful witnesses that helped my faith sprout and that encouraged my questions and enthusiasm. They even lovingly offered pruning when necessary. The Chapel is an outreach focused on congregation. It's where I first felt the warmth of God's love and felt the call to share God's love. They diligently tended and cared for one another, and through their diligence my roots began to grow deeper. Due to opportunities and experiences I had at the Good News Chapel, I remember feeling a call to ministry early in life. I was excited and eager to branch out and share the good news of the gospel. I wanted to participate in this community that I had been so lovingly and diligently grafted into. This early faith cultivating was foundational for the later years of my life.

After high school, I attended Dordt College where I studied theology. While I was a student at Dordt, I was able to learn and grow. But, I also struggled with difficulties and doubt. I sometimes felt dormant and like I didn't belong. I didn't feel the warmth of God's love and I wondered how God could have convicted me of my calling at such a young age, only to leave me withering as a young adult. These years often felt like a drought and at times God seemed distant. Through these dry seasons, I began to rely heavily on the foundations of my faith. I began to develop a deeper love and greater appreciation for the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions, seeds of faith that had been planted in my early years that were a nourishment in less fertile seasons. I found peace, comfort, and security in their true and historic words. Like a crocus pushing up through the ground after a long and cold winter, this foundation helped my faith to grow and blossom.

After years of wondering and wrestling, I finally decided to follow my call to seminary. I am thankful for God's call on my life, and for wise mentors that could help me faithfully discern this calling. During my time at seminary, I have been blessed with a variety of experiences and a wonderful community. There have been seasons of tremendous growth and blossoming, but there has still been seasons of drought and dormancy. I am constantly reliant on and reminded of where my roots are planted, on the foundations of my faith and the comfort and assurance that can be found in the creeds and confessions. I am constantly reminded that I am not my own, but belong to my faithful savior, Jesus Christ. That belonging makes me eager to join in the tending, to faithfully serve God by walking alongside others in the

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

various seasons of their lives so that they may know the warmth of God's love, the depth of God's mercy, and the breadth of God's grace.

Bailey Sarver

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe God is calling and equipping me to minister to God's people. I am striving to remain obedient to the call placed on my life and affirmed to me by a cloud of witnesses; mentors, leaders, and loved ones. In remaining faithful to that call, it is my sincere hope to share God's love, mercy, and grace through the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments. I am hopeful and eager to obediently live into the call of ordained minister.

Bailey Sarver



*Name:* Kurt Schaefer

*Spouse:* Anne

*Age:* 56

*Place of Birth:* Peoria, IL

*Number of Children:* Two

*Colleges Attended:*

Bradley University  
B.A., 1980

University of Michigan  
M.A., Ph.D., 1980 – 1984

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2014

*Internship:*

Calvin College  
Campus Ministries  
2012 – 2013

*Languages:* English, German,  
and Hungarian

*Contact:*

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schk@calvin.edu

### *Faith Journey*

In a word, I believe the three ecumenical creeds and three confessions of the Christian Reformed Church; I believe that one of the great gifts of the Spirit to this denomination is its tradition of thoughtful engagement with the world, especially the world of ideas; I believe that the Church is called to simultaneously pursue unity with Christ, and incarnation as His body in ministry to His world. How I got here is partly a story of good parenting as a child, and partly a story of adoption by our denomination.

I was born to a pious Lutheran family in 1958. I was baptized at age two weeks, have always been attracted to God, and was fortunate to always be in a position to take the next step in a maturing relationship to God. The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod is a theologically-conservative, Christian-education promoting, historically ethnic, confessional, Reformation church—probably as near to the CRC without being CRC as is possible.

I grew up in Richard Prior’s neighborhood in Peoria, Illinois—an urban working-class ghetto—so my church community was something of an island of normalcy. Surrounded by decay, we lived a mix of Bach chorales and American spirituals, of catechism classes and Billy Graham rallies. I attended a Lutheran grammar school, at which we had the usual subjects, plus one hour a day of Bible, plus one hour a day of doctrine and church history. Then I attended a large urban public high school. The formative personalities in my life, in roughly chronological order, have been Danny Kaye, Martin Luther, Mark Twain, Abraham Lincoln, Steve Martin, John Stott, Mister Rogers, and Pope John Paul II.

I began having my own daily devotions early in high school, under my brother’s influence, who was in turn influenced by both our church and the high school Campus Life group. Combined with making good high-school friends from a diversity of Christian backgrounds, this had an enormous positive effect on my adolescent spiritual development. I was better able to make my faith my own by beginning to see it from the perspective of believers with slightly different backgrounds than mine.

Then I was involved in leading Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship chapters in college (Bradley University) and graduate school (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) as I studied for my bachelor’s and doctorate in economics. I had come to love economics for the way it trains analytical skills, and it seemed to me that there was much work to be done in economics by Christians who would work from a basis in the Christian tradition, as this academic field is markedly secular. In those days, Inter-Varsity was known for its leadership development and advocacy of reading and thinking. It was in these circles that I was exposed to Reformed theology. Gradually, during college and graduate school, I came to understand that Reformed theology was what I had been looking for since I left grammar school. I was so intrigued by the things I was reading from faculty members at Calvin College that one summer day my wife and I drove up to Grand Rapids from Ann Arbor just to take a tour and see this place we were reading about.

I believed that God’s place for me was as an evangelist and Christian academic on a hostile secular campus, and my first two academic jobs were consistent with that belief. But my family was not happy with living

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

in upstate New York, and wanted to return to the Midwest. It was a difficult decision when I left a tenure-track position at Hamilton College to take a one-year visiting position at Calvin College, because this move challenged my understanding of my basic vocational calling as a believer. The Calvin position became permanent, and it has been a very good fit. In retrospect I can see that my ability to think faithfully about my profession, and to teach faithfully, would have been severely stunted without coming to Calvin, and so my sense of calling to be a Christian witness in academic life has been served by being in Grand Rapids.

We had two children in the 1980s, and child raising became a very large and delightful part of my life. When our kids were grown I began to think about going to seminary, which I'd always wanted to do. Then our son enrolled in seminary, and I saw my chance to enroll with him. I was intending to finally receive some theological training so that I could be a better Christian economist, so I enrolled in the MTS program. But after three years of MTS work, I concluded that I should be in the program that would help me consider whether I should be contemplating a change in jobs, so I switched to the M. Div. program. And now, at the end of seven years of seminary work, I am navigating the candidacy process.

Kurt Schaefer

*Statement of Reason*

In my 27 years as a professor at Calvin College, I have always thought of myself as working in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. One of the special gifts of the Spirit to our denomination is its ability to thoughtfully and theologically engage the world, especially the world of ideas. I have delighted to be a part of our denomination's exploration of this gift, and to be a part of our attempts to give this treasure back to the Church Universal. And as I have been a part of this work, I have been given opportunities to develop my pastoral gifts with students and colleagues, my administrative gifts through a variety of leadership appointments, and my preaching and teaching gifts. It may be that I am called to remain in my current position. But having completed the M.Div., opens up other possibilities of service. And so I am pursuing candidacy in order to make myself available to the Spirit's leading and the church's direction.

Kurt Schaefer



*Name:* Kelli Sexton

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* Portage, Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Ohio Northern University  
B.A., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2015

*Internships:*

World Missions in Cairo Egypt  
July 2014 to August 2014

Fruitport CRC, Fruitport, MI  
June 2015 to August 2015

*Contact:*

269-270-4284  
kelli5686@sbcglobal.net

*Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Christian household, in a town that was predominantly Christian. My parents raised my sisters and I in reformed churches as that was my mother's background. My father had not grown up going to church consistently, so he was often learning new things about God and faith right along with us. The thing I remember most about growing up, and something that I believe has deeply formed my faith, is the way my parents encouraged me to ask questions. I occasionally encountered youth leaders at church who suggested that asking questions about God was a sign of a weak faith. My parents, however, taught me that God would rather we admit when we are curious, and put in the effort to seek an answer. It is by asking questions about God that our faith can grow and deepen. My parents also pushed me to truly make my faith my own. They told me constantly that their faith was theirs, and that it was important for them to raise all of their children in the church, but that I needed to find my own path to God.

This background has led me to my beliefs today. I firmly believe that God is big enough to love all of his children, but also fatherly, and personal enough to love the unique details of each individual. I find rest in the assurance that God's providence will sustain all of creation; but I also find rest in the assurance that God will lead and guide me down my own path in life as well. I believe that God takes great pleasure in my efforts to serve him, even if they sometimes fail. I am a lifelong perfectionist, and for most of my life I did not know what it truly meant to live in God's grace. I feared that if I was not perfect, then God would be disappointed in me. Today, though I still feel the urge to be perfect, I have learned to see how my imperfections leave space for me to learn humility and grace. I believe that I know God better when I fail, because he gives me the strength to continue in my efforts. I also believe that we will all be surprised by God in the end. I loved the lecture in seminary in which we learned that the perspicuity of scripture is only in so far as knowledge is necessary for salvation. I like the idea that God allows a bit of wonder and awe to remain about him and creation. And I believe that God is more than we can fully comprehend, but that knowing that, we should strive to be lifelong learners.

Kelli Sexton

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church, first and foremost, because I believe it will enable me to better serve others. I feel that God has called me to use the gifts he has given me to care for others. I know that my ministry will always involve coming alongside of others as they seek to answer the questions they have about God, and as they strive to grow in their faith despite fears and doubts. While ordination is not necessary for me to listen to others, or to offer a word of hope and encouragement, ordination is required to be able to baptize and marry these people I am serving. It is necessary for me to invite them to the Lord's feast and to bless them as they go forth to do God's work. As these acts are ones that can bring comfort and holistic healing in the Christian context, I desire the ability to more fully care for those I serve.

Kelli Sexton





*Name:* Eunchong Shin

*Place of Birth:* Seoul, Korea

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Cascade College

Exchange Student, 2008-2009

Korean Christian University

B.S., 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2014

Th.M., 2018

*Internships:*

Liberty University,

Lynchburg, VA

Chaplain Assistant

August 2010 - August 2011

Detroit Vision CRC,

Farmington Hills, MI

Cross-Cultural Internship

June 2011 - May 2013

Community CRC, Wyoming, MI

Cross-Cultural Internship

May 2013 - August 2013

Hope CRC, Ann Arbor, MI

Pastoral Care Internship

September 2013 - August 2014

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I once dreamed about becoming a doctor. At that time, I had a vision from God in my heart. I set my role model as Dr. Jongsoo Won who was a cancer specialist in Detroit. A reason why I had picked him as my goal was I wanted to be a servant who God wants like him. I prayed for this vision during my high school years. This dream was not about making money or pursuing the comfortable life but to become a surgeon that spreads the truth about God to the world.

However, my chance for this dream disappeared at that time. I blamed God for a while because I couldn't understand the reason behind my broken dream. I used to pray, "God, I want to be your servant and chose this way. But, why did you break my dream like this..." I couldn't understand why God put me in this situation. I didn't know what to look forward to and how I could possibly glorify the Lord with my broken life.

In this distress, God's helping hand guided me and I came to the United States to study business and theology. I was learning His will step by step. I realized that my previous difficulties were also a part of His plan through my life to refine me. Now, I can see that He listened to my prayers and He called me as a doctor. One thing different between God and me is that God didn't want to make me as a visible doctor like I prepared and dreamed once. Rather, He wanted to make me as a doctor for souls who need spiritual care.

Jesus already became a living example as a spiritual doctor on the cross once. The feature of his dying on the cross still touches and cures many souls' heart in this era even after 2,000 years and Jesus even glorifies God now. When Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice, it was not just a simple death of a being. Rather, it was His way of fixing creation's body and soul with a spiritual scalpel. I am also trying to hold a spiritual scalpel, which is His word, in my hand and help others like Jesus did. Because, Jesus is my mentor who not only died on the cross but also resurrected from the grave and sits on the right-hand side of God and instructs me. I pray that I can take the role of comforting my neighbors and leading others, who possess a broken heart like me, years ago, to the Lord.

This dream of mine is not the one that I envisioned and pursued before. Rather, it is the task that Jesus obeyed and accomplished with His very own life. I want to be bold and fearless to walk on the path that Jesus laid before me.

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Eunchong Shin



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*Statement of Reason*

I believe that God has called me to build up his church, which is his body. On this call, God has equipped me in a various way through diverse volunteering, serving at the church with my internships, and seminary education. Over this experience of past few years, I have confirmed my call as unchanging promise from God no matter what circumstances I placed in. Based on this belief, I am pursuing candidacy especially in the Christian Reformed Church with confidence and thankfulness.

Eunchong Shin



*Name:* Sharon Smith

*Age:* 48

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids

*Name of Spouse:* Rev. Reggie Smith

*Number of Children:* 3

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 1990

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Internships:*

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Feb to May 2008

Warm Friends, Holland, MI  
May to Aug 2010

Roosevelt Park CRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Jan to May 2010

Freedom Christian Schools,  
Hudsonville, MI  
Jan to May 2012

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a strong Christian family in West Michigan. We were very actively involved in our RCA church where I was taught the values of being committed to serving our church and our neighbors. There was a strong emphasis on evangelism and being a witness to unbelievers. I felt the call to ministry at a young age and took it very seriously. I made Public Profession of Faith when I was just 10 years old and began witnessing to my friends and inviting them to church.

I became a leader in my church youth group, played piano on Sundays, and sang in the choir. I volunteered to read the bible to a retired missionary who was blind. She inspired my faith as a single woman who sacrificed much to serve God. Church attendance prepared us to serve during the week. It was a way of life for our family.

My grandmother also had a strong influence on my faith and mentored me on how to read the bible and how to listen to God. She taught me to expect to be transformed every time I read the Word of God. I saw my parents participate in a bi-weekly evangelism effort that welcomed newcomers to our community and witnessed to them and invited them to our church. I began a morning bible study for Christian students in my public high school that continued for seven years.

I felt God's leading in preparing me for ministry and was motivated out of love and gratitude to serve God. Yet, I never imagined ministry beyond being a teacher, nurse, missionary, or pastor's wife. I never saw a woman preach and, although my high school gifts survey suggested I be a pastor, I was not encouraged to follow that.

I chose to attend Calvin College because I wanted to receive more biblical training and prepare for ministry. At the time I did not know the difference between a Christian College and a Bible College. When I learned in my sophomore year that there was no "missions major", I turned my attention towards sociology and social work. I was not interested in being a teacher or a nurse. Through God's leading, I was exposed to urban ministry settings in Chicago and Grand Rapids and discerned that I did not need to leave the US to be a missionary because the nations were coming to us! I felt a clear calling to urban, cross-cultural ministry and followed up with a semester-long internship in Chicago's largest housing project, Cabrini Green.

I met my husband, Rev. Reggie Smith, while he was attending CTS and came to the college to find some African American students who I had become friends with. We were married my senior year and immediately after graduating, we moved to Lawndale to serve for a year at his home church, Lawndale CRC, on Chicago's West Side.

Through the years God moved us to various ministry settings and our family grew. We spent the last 21 years serving at Roosevelt Park Community CRC in Grand Rapids until it's closing in July 2015. I was the founding director of Roosevelt Park Ministries, a Christian Community Development Organization founded out of our church and participated in multiple ministries and worked hard against community violence, drug trafficking, and improving the neighborhood where we lived and

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

purchased our home. I loved what I was doing and felt I was living into my calling as God intended.

Yet, when our youngest two entered school full-time, I became restless. I felt God stirring me to do more. I had tried pursuing my Master's in Social Work a couple times and it was always interrupted. Someone suggested I attend seminary. It had never occurred to me! I applied and was accepted at Western Theological Seminary and chose to go there since the CRC was still undecided about women in office and I was unsure about it myself. I began as a part-time student in 2007 and have continued to grow and discern my gifting and calling to ministry. I have grown tremendously and my calling has been confirmed in multiple ways. I am so thankful for this journey that God has taken me on and look forward to what He has planned for my future!

Sharon Smith

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy to become a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA. I have been a member of the CRCNA my entire adult life, beginning with my college years when I began attending Madison Square Church. I have many strong relationships within our Classis that have been nurtured through an annual Pastor and Spouse Retreat. I have many close relationships with other pastor spouses from my internship and volunteer board experience with Sustaining Pastoral Excellence in planning and attending several bi-annual Spouses Conferences and through small groups. Although I attended Western Theological Seminary, I am firmly planted in the CRC and our longevity in Grand Rapids has allowed me to develop many personal relationships that I value greatly. I am seeking candidacy in order to perform the duties that come with being a Minister of the Word and hope to use my pastoral gifts more fully in caring for others.

Sharon Smith



*Name:* Julie Stuelpnagel

*Age:* 40

*Place of Birth:* Denver, CO

*College Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 1994

Northern Illinois University  
M.S. Ed., 2000

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2010

*Mentored Ministry Internships:*

Christina Reformed World  
Missions  
El Salvador, Summer 2008

Clinical Pastoral Education  
Fargo-Moorhead CPE,  
Fargo, ND  
Summer 2008

Willoughby CRC, Langley, BC  
Summer 2009

Covenant Health Care,  
Saginaw, MI  
Pastoral Resident, August  
2010-Present

*Contact:*

616-648-9546  
jstuelp6@calvinseminary.edu

*Statement of Faith*

Growing up in a Christian home, the Christian faith has always been a part of my life. Some of my earliest memories are of my dad praying with me at bedtime. Through experiences like this, I gained an appreciation for prayer and for God's word. These early experiences have given me a firm foundation throughout my journey of faith. My faith has been a journey. On this journey, there have been highs and lows. There have been times that God seemed very close and very real. There have been times that God seemed very distant.

As I look back on my journey thus far, I can see how God has always been with me, in the good times and the bad. I have gained a greater appreciation for God's grace. Through God's grace I have been saved by faith. This is not something I have earned; it is a gift from God.

My journey has not always been easy, but through it all God has led me closer to him. I have a greater appreciation for the beliefs that were instilled in me as a young child. I believe in the authority of God's word. God has revealed himself through his Word. I also affirm the Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed confessions. I have found them to be reliable guides to Scripture.

I believe in a triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is one God in three persons. I believe in God the Father, the creator of the world. God's continues to work in the world, upholding and sustaining the universe.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I know that Jesus died for my sins, and that I belong to him. Fully God and fully human, Jesus came to redeem us. It is through Christ that I have eternal life. I believe that Christ lives, that he will return and make everything new.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe that the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers, helping them to live as reflections of Christ in the world.

I wholeheartedly believe in this triune God that loves us and guides us. God continues to work through his Church. I know that the faith that I was raised with is true. As I look back, I see how God has been molding me and shaping me throughout my life. I also know that this will continue. I know that God will always be with me as I continue to serve Him.

Juli Stuelpnagel

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church after recognizing God's call on my life. I believe that I have been called by God to minister in this denomination. I have lived and worked in many places. Living overseas, I worshipped with people of many different denominations. As much as I appreciated these experiences, I have always been aware of my roots in the Christian Reformed Church. I am truly thankful for this faith that I was brought up in. I feel called to minister in the Christian Reformed Church. I have felt this call in my

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

heart, and have received affirmation in this call from others. I want to use the gifts Christ has given me to further His kingdom. I love God and I love people. I am thankful for the chance to serve God and His church.

Juli Stuelpnagel



*Name:* Ricardo Tavárez

*Age:* 30

*Place of Birth:* Brooklyn, NY

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Grand Rapids  
Community College  
A.A., 2008

Kuyper College  
B.A., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

The Nehemiah Center,  
Managua, Nicaragua  
July 2012 to August 2012

Esperanza Evangelical Cove-  
nant Church, Grand Rapids, MI  
May 2013 to January 2014

Madison Square Church,  
Grand Rapids  
Director of Outreach  
October 2012 to present

*Languages spoken:*

Spanish

*Contact:*

616-634-8581  
tavarez.ricky@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

That I can recall, my first exposure to Reformed Theology was in the halls of Kuyper College when I was 22-years-old. Until then, my framework for understanding the Christian faith had emerged from a Plymouth Brethren upbringing and an exposure to Pentecostalism. While I believe that there are many who do come to faith through those traditions, my previous church experiences, however, often left me with more questions than answers. When I came to wrestle with the Reformed perspectives it was like a chisel was being set against a wooden heart, my wooden heart. At first I was stubborn, holding to credos that I didn't really understand. But, as God revealed to me the power of His Sovereignty over all and His redemptive grace, my heart was made glad and free. I found my faith revived, more than ever before, with a great desire to join God in His mission for this world. To join God in His mission, he has called me serve Him through the Christian Reformed Church.

I appreciate the confessional heritage of the Christian Reformed Church and embrace it as my own. I believe that because of the Fall, humankind has inherited a fallen and sinful nature. Salvation from our state of misery comes through the grace set before us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is fully human and fully divine, and that there is no other means by which we may be saved. Our works of service and gratitude to God are a proper response to this grace, but not a means of salvation. I believe in God, the Father almighty, Christ, His only begotten Son, and in the Holy Spirit. I believe that our God is one and He alone is God. We have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. God has revealed himself to us through His creation and also through His authoritative word, written by men as they were moved and directed by the Holy Spirit. I have found assurance in these tenants of our faith through a Reformed hermeneutical understanding of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart.

Ricardo Tavarez

### *Statement of Reason*

In short, my first and main reason for seeking ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church is because the Holy Spirit has led me in this direction. But, to say a bit more, I believe that Reformed theology provides the best lens for understanding our world, sin and salvation. The CRC exercises its ministry through this Reformed perspective. It also has a confessional heritage that I have come to embrace as my own. This is a critical yet opportunistic time for the CRC. Churches are dying, yet there is a desire for church planting and renewal. The CRC must and is discovering what it means to maintain its Christ-centered identity while becoming adaptable to changing neighborhoods, ethnic diversity and changing structures. I believe the denomination is up for the challenge and so am I. While I was not raised in the CRC, I have received its investment and encouragement to me over these last several years. I am a member of a CRC congregation, have served on staff at this church for 3+ years as its



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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

Director of Outreach and have even become a board member for one of the denominational agencies. The CRC has become my home. No church or denomination is perfect. I have come to love this denomination with its beauty and its moles. Now, I look forward to serving with the CRC as an ordained minister.

Ricardo Tavaréz



*Name:* Jason Terpstra

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* Holland, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A., 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2015

*Internships:*

Degage Ministries,

Grand Rapids, MI

June-August 2012

Shalom CRC, Sioux Falls, SD

June-August 2014

*Contact:*

616-648-6871

jt079@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I believe that God created the world good but this world became corrupted when Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God. At that point all humans are born into sin, are corrupted and can do nothing to save themselves. So, humanity needed a savior and God sent his son, Jesus who is fully God and fully human to earth where he suffered and died for my sins and made me righteous before God. Therefore, through my faith in Jesus Christ I have been saved by God's grace. I believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead after three days, then ascended to heaven and is with the Father their now. I also believe that one day he will come again to rule in the new heavens and new earth.

I believe that God is one essence with three distinct persons which are: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as stated in the Belgic Confession. When Jesus ascended to heaven the Holy Spirit was sent in his stead. The Holy Spirit works in me (and all humans) and continues to sanctify me working to purify me. The Holy Spirit opens my eyes to what God wants me to see and teaches me.

I believe and am committed to the creeds and confessions of the CRC and what they teach. I also recognize the importance of preaching the gospel and spreading God's word as Jesus commands his disciples in Matthew 28:16-20 and am committed to living out this command. Throughout my life God has guided me and put others around me to teach me about him. He continues to walk with me on my faith journey and I am committed to God and these beliefs that I have stated. Looking back on my life I can see that my faith journey began at the very beginning and has led me to what I believe today.

I was born and raised in a Christian family where my parents placed heavy importance on talking about God, praying to him and reading God's word. I was baptized in the Christian Reformed Church and from an early age my parents prayed with me, taught me Bible stories and through them God instilled in me a great love for him and his word. Through my parents, my teachers at the Holland Christian Schools and through adults at my church, my faith began to grow. Then one day, when I was around 8 years old, I remember one of my Sunday school teachers talking about how Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins. As we were all standing in a circle, in the classroom, the teacher invited us to say a prayer and accept Jesus into our hearts. That Sunday morning was the day I accepted Jesus as my savior.

As the years continued God placed many people in my life to nurture my faith. As a teen I discovered that I had the spiritual gifts of leadership and administration and became involved in the church through running the sound system and singing on worship teams. As I continued to grow in my faith I could feel God urging me to take on this faith as my own and profess it in front of the congregation. So when I was thirteen I stood up in front of church and professed what I believed and made my commitment to God.

Throughout high school I went on many conventions which helped strengthen my faith but a mission trip to Mexico had the largest impact on me. I witnessed people come to Christ and had the opportunity to share my testimony and what I believe. Then I went to Calvin College

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

where I began to feel God's calling to ministry. I majored in religion, learned a lot about the Christian faith through my various classes, which tested and ultimately strengthened my faith. As the years went by, I gradually began to sense a stronger calling from God to go into ministry. So, then I found myself at Calvin Seminary. During my time here I have learned a lot about God, the creeds and confessions of the CRC and pastoral ministry. I have also greater discerned and have been affirmed in my call to ministry. I am still on my faith journey and will be till the day God calls me home. However looking back on my life I can see how God has placed people and events around me that have shaped what I believe about him. I am committed to these beliefs and am committed to preaching the gospel and teaching about the gracious work of God for the entirety of my life.

Jason Terpstra

*Statement of Reason*

Looking back on my life I can see how God has gradually led me to ministry in his Church. From an early age he instilled in me a great love for him, his word and gave me a desire to learn more about him. Throughout the years I have grown in my faith, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and made a commitment to follow God and to share God's love and gospel with others. I seek candidacy for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church as a result of God's calling in my life. God has called me to be a leader in his church where, being empowered by him, I will preach and teach the gospel. God has instilled in me a love for his church, specifically the Christian Reformed Church and the creeds and confessions to which this denomination holds. Through the time I have spent at Calvin Seminary, I have discerned that God has called me to lead, to serve and to minister to people in his Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. This calling has been affirmed time and time again through the internships I've done, the sermons I've preached and ministries I have been a part of. I will not and cannot ignore this calling.

Jason Terpstra



*Name:* Mark Van Andel

*Place of Birth:* Chapel Hill, NC

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.S., 1997

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.A., 2010

Moody Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Central Detroit Christian  
Community Development  
Corporation  
2009-2010

Hesed Community Church  
May 2016 - December 2016

*Contact:*

313-850-7483  
mvandel3@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

Because of God's sovereign grace, I have been saved, justified, and am in the process of being sanctified more and more into the image of Christ. I was baptized as a sacrament of God's covenant promises to me while an infant. As I grew older, I repented of my sins and received the promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. I have been involved as a member of the Church since birth, going through Sunday school and other formation activities as a child, then having a variety of opportunities to serve and lead as I grew through adolescence and into adulthood. Through this journey, I grew in faith through learning the spiritual disciplines and trusting God in a variety of circumstances. Each time I entrusted myself to God by obeying him, he showed himself faithful to shape me, even through difficult circumstances.

In addition to my experiences of growing in faith, I learned that I can be confident of God's promises to me because of the truth of the Bible and the fruit of the Spirit that is evident in my life. The Bible is God's perfect Word for His people. The Word of God is the source of understanding of God's revelation and contains all that we need for life and Godliness. It is always true and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. The scriptures have been food for my soul throughout my life, and I continue to grow in love for them the more I read them.

Throughout college, I had the opportunity to provide spiritual leadership to teenagers I mentored, as well as, through other ministry leadership experiences. It was during this season that I sensed a calling to vocational ministry, and I continued to explore different ministry contexts to grow and learn. Through the Holy Spirit's work in these experiences, my calling to ministry was consistently confirmed both internally and externally. Over the past few years, I have particularly grown in my appreciation of the church as a community of saints who preach the gospel, celebrate the sacraments, and exercise church discipline for the glory of God and the furthering of his Kingdom. My journey through two different seminary degrees has taught me much about loving God and loving people. I am grateful for the opportunity to study and share knowledge with God's people.

My family and marriage have been instrumental in my journey of faith. The heritage of faith passed down to us from generations of believers has been an inspiration and an anchor for our own family. My wife is a support and accountability for my journey with Christ. My three sons encourage me to receive the love of my heavenly Father and to faithfully live in obedience to the law of the Lord. My first ministry is to my family, and I believe that proceeding from the gift of my marriage and family, my love for Christ's church will grow into fruitful service.

As I grow in knowledge of who God is and what He has done for His people, I desire to live wholeheartedly for Him. God is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of the universe. He is the creator of the universe in all of its goodness. Because of our sin evidenced through Adam, He also set forth His plan for our redemption through Jesus Christ. And by His grace, he continues to sustain and restore the creation for His glory. Because of God's love for me, He has placed in me a love for Him and His people. I desire to use the gifts that God has given me for

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

the edification of the Church and for the demonstration of His glory through His body.

I am grateful to be at this point in my journey where I will be able to join with my sisters and brothers within the Christian Reformed Church to be a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

Mark Van Andel

*Statement of Reason*

I desire to be a candidate for ministry of Word and Sacrament within the Christian Reformed Church because I desire to be aligned with and submitted to this denomination. The Reformed theological convictions as demonstrated through the creeds and confessions act as an anchor for the church as we order ourselves around the authority of the Bible. With that anchor, we can live as agents of renewal in this world and navigate the continuing tensions between fundamentalism and theological liberalism. I also desire to partner with CRC churches in our calling to faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship. Overall, I desire to submit to Christ and serve his people through this faith family called the Christian Reformed Church.

Mark Van Andel



*Name:* Michelle VanDenBerg

*Place of Birth:* Holland, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 1996

Western Michigan University  
B.S., 1998

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Providence CRC, Holland, MI  
September 2011 - May 2015

Crosspoint CRC, Chino, CA  
June 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*

616-886-2221  
michelle.r.vandenberg@  
gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I was born into a Christian home and family and was baptized as an infant in a Christian Reformed Church. I made a public Profession of my Faith at the age of 16. I have participated in worship through music and song since I was a young girl. I have always loved the church and participating in the life of the church. When I was in college, I believed in God but didn't really know what that meant or how to live like I loved God in my everyday life. I never fully left the church but I did wrestle with a lot of inner turmoil for several years. Over time and through prayer, I slowly began to turn back to the Lord by way of the Biblical text. In my wrestlings I realized the reality of my need for God and the love, mercy, and grace that only God can give us in this life. Today I can claim with full confidence and trust in God what it is that I believe as a Christian:

I believe that God is the Creator and Sustainer of this world and everything in it. God is the one, wholly loving, sovereign God of the universe, one God in the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's attributes are vast and perfect including God being infinite, immutable, impassible, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, wholly loving, good, just, and patient.

I believe Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. Jesus, God's son, was born of a human woman who was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. The work and ministry that Jesus did while on this earth is my model for discipleship and the Christian life. I believe that I have been set free from sin and death in my life because of what Jesus did for each one of us on the cross. Through Christ's death, resurrection and ascension into heaven I can be assured of my salvation through faith in God. I believe in eternal life with God and the resurrection of the body when Christ returns to earth again one day. I long for the day when we can experience the perfect peace and shalom that God originally intended for us to experience. I long for the day when I can sing and glorify God with all the saints and angels saying "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty."

I believe that God's Spirit is over me and within me. The Holy Spirit offers me the power needed to live a life of Christian love and discipleship. A life marked by wisdom, trust, discernment, grace, forgiveness, peace and reconciliation.

I believe that God created all human beings in His image and declared us to be very good. God intended that we would be in relationship with God and with others; a relationship that dwells in love and unity. However, sin entered the world and distorted the image of God within us and distorted the relationship we have with God and others. Yet, God does not abandon us to our sin, instead, God offers us a rescue plan through his Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we are redeemed and made new. Thanks be to God!

Michelle VanDenBerg



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*Statement of Reason*

The reason I am seeking candidacy for ordination in the Christian Reformed Church is because I was born, baptized, and made Profession of Faith in the CRC church. I grew up in the CRC. My roots are here. I also appreciate the historical footings of the Christian Reformed Church denomination as a whole. The footings of the CRC denomination that I most appreciate are that it is distinctly Reformed, seeks after justice, is missional and confessional. I love that and desire future generations of the church to appreciate those aspects of the CRC denomination as well. Lastly, I have felt challenged to stay in the CRC even though sometimes it has seemed it may be easier to pursue ordination elsewhere. However, the CRC is a part of who I am and I feel called by God to share my love for God's church and the CRC denomination with others.

Michelle VanDenBerg



*Name:* Greg Vander Horn

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Diploma in Ministry, 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Coit Community Church  
July 2014 - October 2014

Celebration Fellowship Church  
June 2016 - June 2017

*Contact:*

616-249-8960  
gvh57@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in Jenison, MI and attended Ridgewood CRC for the first 19 years of my life. Growing up with two older sisters and wonderful parents our lives were firmly rooted in Christian faith. There is nothing special about my faith journey, no revelation and no mid-life coming to Jesus. Nothing like the stories you hear of people who have fallen to the depths only to be lifted up by the Holy Spirit. Just a life filled with faith and grace.

As I began thinking about how and what to write for my faith journey, I was reminded of one of my early memories of my mother. I struggled through school, beginning with the first grade. There were times when I was filled with anxiety to the point of tears about going to school. To fix things, my mother started a tradition that would last for 7 years. Every morning, she would insist on holding hands and praying for a moment before heading off to the bus stop. I could feel the fear and anxiety fall away as she prayed. It may have not rid me of all of anxiety and tears, but Mom had introduced me to the Grace of God from the beginning. I am blessed to say, that my 10 year old son, and I continue the tradition of prayer before he leaves for school every morning. And at times, if I forget he is eager to remind me that we need to pray.

Things were pretty hum drum through high school. I still struggled with school, however I still had God's grace that would carry me through to graduation. After high school I joined the working world and learning a lot about the world outside the halls of a Christian school. Things were very different and exciting for me, and I couldn't wait to go check out things for myself. After high school is where I gained the education that would last me for a lifetime. I made life decisions that were designed and ordained by God for me, whether I knew it or not.

I have thought about this time in my life many times, and I have mapped out every major life decision I have made and have seen that God's providence in decision that has led to the next stage in my life. I would highly recommend mapping out your life. It will amaze you and will prove to amaze anyone that Jeremiah 29:11 is a very true statement from God. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God isn't finished with me yet, as the old cliché says. My best decision I followed was marrying Rhonda in 2003. It led me to become a husband and a father immediately by way of her daughter Nicole and then once more being blessed with our son, Peter. It is because of the support from my family and the grace of God, that I now can struggle less through school in my pursuit of my calling.

God has been amazing to me in my life. The rough edges I had created in my soul and spirit have been smoothed out and sharpened by his grace. Proverbs 27:17 teaches us "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." I use this as my motto in my ministry. It is the only way that I can think now to serve in response to God's grace. I may not be the best at it yet, but I am still learning. And trust me, every part of my life is a teachable moment that God will use. God has made his grace available to me on my faith journey, and it is available to anyone who

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

accepts it. I would be willing to talk about it with anyone willing to make Jesus the king of their life on their own faith journey.

Greg Vander Horn

*Statement of Reason*

I, Greg Vander Horn, wish to seek candidacy as a Minister of the Word and sacrament within the Christian Reformed Church. I strongly feel that it is my call from God to spread the gospel, deliver the sacraments, and bring others to Christ as instructed by Jesus Christ in the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 19 & 20. The Lord has granted me so much grace in my life that I wish to make it my personal mission to introduce people to that grace and to Jesus Christ so that they may in turn welcome him and make him Lord of their lives.

Greg Vander Horn



*Name:* David van Eyk

*Age:* 39

*Place of Birth:* Chatham

*Spouse Name:* Barb van Eyk

*Number of Children:* Three

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Huron University College  
B.Th., 2010

University of Western Ontario  
M.A., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2015

*Honors Received:*

Dean's Honour Roll, 2006-7

*Internships:*

Stratford CRC, Stratford, ON  
June-August 2013

Hospital Chaplain  
St. Joseph's Health Care  
London, ON

Regional Mental Health Care  
London  
May-August 2014

*Contact:*

519-358-3525  
mrdavidvaneyk@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I was born in 1976 and I have never known a day when I have not known the fear of the Lord. From my earliest existence, my father and mother taught me the Christian faith and raised me to know and understand the mercy of God toward me. As I grew older I confessed faith in Christ and after leaving high school followed my father into the construction business. I worked for various contractors in town, but felt that something was lacking in my life, the lack was not something which could be filled but rather a lack which identifies a giftedness which was not being utilized. So I began to attend to different teaching opportunities within the church such as Sunday school, catechism classes, young people bible studies, leading prayer meetings and visiting with the sick and shut-ins.

In 2006, after many years having an over-whelming sense of calling we began the process of getting my undergraduate degree. During this time while at school, as a family we encountered a tragedy in our family which was really troublesome for us. We began to doubt God's love toward us, and the sense of purpose in our lives was upended for a while. God in his mercy, dealt gently with us and humbled us to recognize that we are dependent on him for everything even our life and the lives of our children. Having completed four years of undergraduate work I decided that I would pursue a graduate degree in theology as well, having discovered a love for academia. After earning my Master's degree, I attended to finish the goal of going to school, and entered Calvin Theological Seminary.

One of the reasons for pursuing a graduate degree was because I was hoping that I could escape the pastoral ministry and be used by God in the academy. However, having finished my graduate degree, I now know that although the academy has some very nice and enjoyable features, the Lord has not called me to that direction at this time. There continues to be a pull into the direction of the pulpit ministry, and it is this pull that I have tried for so long to escape from. There are many times when I feel like Jonah fleeing from the one thing that God has called me to do.

As has already been mentioned, I have been involved in church ministry for a long time already. Currently I am ministering to our church by serving as an elder. And as a family we are spending our time with the older people in the nursing homes. As a family we have committed to visiting the nursing home every Sunday afternoon and this has been a real joy to us, but also an opportunity to teach our children practical Christianity, that is showing them how being a Christian and denying ourselves does not necessarily mean that we have to die at the stake; it can be denying ourselves to pleasure of spending time for our own enjoyment. This has proved to be a wonderful experience for our family and for those who we have befriended in the home.

As I complete my studies at Calvin, as a family we are eager and excited to see what God has in store for us as we move forward in our faith journey.

David Van Eyk

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the CRC because the CRC is my church and this is the place where I am being called to minister. I have received over-whelming support and encouragement from the people of God, and I look forward to devoting myself to serving the people of God in the CRC. The CRC is a place that my family has found rest and a comfortable place to worship God in the Reformed faith that we cherish, but with a vision and goal for the redemption of the whole world—this is where we want to serve.

David Van Eyk



*Name:* Thomas J. Van Wyk

*Age:* 63

*Place of Birth:* Chicago, IL

*Name of Spouse:* Edna

*Number of Children:* 2

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of the State  
of New York  
B.S., 1990

Governors State University  
1993-1996

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Kelloggsville CRC,  
Kentwood, MI  
May 2015 to Jan 2016

*Contact:*

616-323-3613  
tom@vanwyk.us

*Faith Journey*

I grew up in the CRC in Chicago, IL, went to Christian schools and attended church and Catechism classes. I came to faith during those formative years, but I struggled during and after High School. I dropped out of college before completing my first semester, worked as a carpenter, and then joined the Navy (it was the last year of the draft lottery and the U.S. was still fighting in Viet Nam). I began what I now call the Jonah phase of my life. The sheltered life of Church, Christian schools, etc. left me ill prepared to defend my faith in a secular culture. I never totally abandoned my belief in God, but wandered from active practice of my faith.

I served as a Nuclear Reactor Operator on a submarine (big mechanical fish) and got married just before completing my 6-year enlistment. (We've now been married 38 years). After my honorable discharge, I worked as a Control Systems Engineer in the Nuclear Power industry for over 35 years.

Through various problems (family and other), God regained my attention. Since I did not pay attention to the gentle nudges, He increased the intensity of the pressure, and I returned to active faith. Since then I have: served as a Deacon in the CRC, taught Catechism, studied Counseling at the graduate level, led small group Bible studies, studied Apologetics at the graduate level, served as an elder in a nondenominational church (with a CRC ordained pastor), where I was ordained into pastoral ministry via Christian Leaders Institute. I pastored a small church plant for eight months until it had to close due to zoning ordinance issues and financial struggles in the sponsoring church. The experience strengthened my awareness of my call.

My wife and I had previously helped a CRC church plant in New Lenox, IL led by a (then) new CTS M.Div. graduate named Jul Medenblik. Later, when I began to feel a call to full time ministry, I went to Pastor Jul for advice, and he provided wise advice. So when the church plant I pastored shut down, I knew I wanted to explore the paths to being ordained in a denomination (preferable CRCNA), and I contacted Jul Medenblik to see if getting into the M.Div. program at CTS was even possible. I was encouraged when he quickly got me in touch with Admissions, and I applied to the M.Div. program and was admitted. I ended my full-time employment in August 2013 to attend Calvin Theological Seminary full time beginning Fall Semester 2013. I am now nearing graduation, candidacy, and the prospect of ordination. My time at seminary has been a time of continued spiritual formation, a time of affirmation in my calling, and a time to form new relationships with my fellow students who will be the next generation of faithful CRC pastors. I have been encouraged in all of this.

God never left or forsake me. My experience confirms that you cannot run from God, and you cannot mess your life up beyond the reach of His redeeming love and grace. He is able to redeem even the dark times of our lives for His glory.

Thomas Van Wyk



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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy and ordination as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in obedience to God. Having strived to imitate Jonah for a time in my younger years, He gently and firmly led me back to a life of faith – the faith I was taught growing up in the CRC. After returning to the CRC, the still small voice of His call increased in volume as my faith grew. It continued its crescendo as I pursued deeper personal intimacy with Him, and out of gratitude served in different church roles (teacher, deacon, small group leader, elder. . .). I thought the crescendo had peaked when I was ordained as a pastor (bi-vocational) in a non-CRC church. But no, His choreography of the dance of my faith journey continued. The next movement was completing the M.Div. program at CTS and seeking ordination in the CRC. As this movement closes, I know nothing of His plan for the next. Care to join the dance?

Thomas Van Wyk



*Name:* Nicole Veenkamp

*Place of Birth:* Simcoe, ON, Canada

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Granite Springs Church,  
Lincoln, CA  
September 2012 - May 2014

Redeemer CRC, Sarnia,  
ON, Canada  
October 2015 - present

Redeemer Christian  
Reformed Church  
Sarnia, ON  
October 2015 - Present

*Contact:*

519-542-9412  
nicole.veenkamp@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

God wasn't someone who I consciously chose for my life – at least not at first. It may sound odd, but before I ever had a chance to choose God, God chose me. When I was just twelve days old I felt water touch my head and heard the words "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Of course, I don't remember it, but I know that on that day God made a promise to me. Nicole. *You are my child and I love you. I will be with you wherever you go.*

I was born in Canada, but most of the first twelve years of my life were spent in West Africa where my parents worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators. I took my first steps in Africa. I said my first words. I formed my first memory of God. Every night before I went to sleep my mom and I would sing this prayer together: "Jesus tender shepherd hear me. Bless your little child tonight. In your precious care please keep me. Safe until the morning light. Amen." As I fell asleep, my little stuffed lamb safely nestled in my arms, I remember imagining Jesus wrapping his arms around me, his little lamb. Nicole. *You are my child and I love you. I will be with you wherever you go.*

On the day when God made that promise, he wasn't the only one making a promise. Other people made a promise on behalf of the church – all the people everywhere in this world whom God has chosen. The church promised to love me, to encourage me, and to teach me about God. When we returned to Canada, the church we joined kept that promise. Over and over again I heard God's words echoed through theirs. Nicole. *You are God's child and he loves you. He will be with you wherever you go.*

I've learned that God meant that promise. In college I asked him a lot of questions. I wondered if I just believed in him because my parents did. Through that questioning, I realized that no matter how angry I got with him or how much I doubted my faith, God was still there, reminding me of his promises. Nicole. *You are my child and I love you. I will be with you wherever you go.*

Now I find myself responding to the call to go into ordained ministry. I am not entirely sure what the future holds. Some days I still have a lot of questions, but that's okay. I've chosen to believe in the God who chose me, even when I don't have all the answers. *I will always be God's child and he will always love me. He will be with me, wherever I go.*

Nicole Veenkamp

### *Statement of Reason*

Already in high school I began to discern God's call on my life into ministry. Over the years, that sense of call has deepened and been affirmed through my experiences working with several different congregations. Meanwhile the theological education I've received at Calvin Theological Seminary equipped me with tools and resources needed to fulfill that sense of call. As I come to the end of my time at Calvin Theological Seminary, I am open and eager to use my gifts to serve the church through ordained ministry within the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

Nicole Veenkamp





*Name:* Femke Visser-Elenbaas

*Place of Birth:* Groningen,  
The Netherlands (NL)

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Protestant Theological  
University, Kampen, NL  
B.A., 2007

Utrecht University, Utrecht, NL  
Th.M., 2013

Protestant Theological  
University, Utrecht, NL  
M.Div., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
J-Term, 2013  
EPMC, 2017

*Internships:*

St. Joseph's Healthcare,  
Hamilton, ON  
Clinical Pastoral Education  
September 2014 - April 2015

St. Catharines General Hospital,  
St. Catharines, ON  
Clinical Pastoral Education  
September 2015 - May 2016

*Languages spoken:*  
Dutch, German

*Contact:*  
1-289-887-2201  
visser.elenbaas@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I grew up with the Christian faith in The Netherlands. I was born into a traditional Christian (Reformed) family and raised at home, school and church with biblical stories, prayers, rituals and Christian music. I enjoyed going to church. Attuned to God's presence in worship. I was an inquisitive child. My parents were and still are active members in the church and town community where I grew up. They modeled for me that faith in Christ is nourished in daily devotions and calls us to serve others. I see in my upbringing and my own Christian identity clearly two strands of the Reformed tradition: the pietist and transformationalist approaches.

As an 8-year old I felt for the first time invited by Christ to follow Him during an interdenominational Summer camp. Since then, I have experienced at a few other cross points in my life Christ's invitation to follow Him. These moments were accompanied by a great sense of freedom (grace), love (for God and people) and a longing to follow. I continue to reflect on and be nourished by these gifts of faith. Both rootedness in a local congregation and exposure to other Christian traditions (mainly Pentecostal, Baptist and evangelical branches) were part of my upbringing. The context I grew up in was a secular context, something I experienced in the school systems as well as in my church. Personal faith was not easily talked about and highly personal. As a teenager, I desired to gain a greater understanding of God and of the diversity within Christianity. Upon reflection, I think that this desire was fueled by my search for my own Christian identity and relationship with God.

This led me to study theology at the Protestant Theological University in Kampen, affiliated with the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PCN). I felt led by the Holy Spirit in my decision making. The story of Abraham became very significant. He was called out of the place where he was rooted to the land God promised him. I also felt called 'out of something' into 'something new', and by faith I went. Becoming a pastor was not my aim. I had grown up in a church tradition that has ordained women since the 80's, but I had only been ministered to by senior male pastors, did not know personally any women in public leadership roles, and so I could not envision myself as a pastor. At that time, I certainly did not anticipate being declared a candidate for ministry in the PCN in 2014, let alone being called out of my country, to one day be a candidate in the CRC in North-America.

Between 2003 and 2013 I found myself in a rich and humbling time of academic, spiritual and personal (trans)formation and growth through studies, new friendships, living in an intentional Christian community, experiences of death and loss, involvement in church and society in The Netherlands and abroad. It was during my internship in a local congregation in Heerhugowaard in 2011, however, that I discovered a deep joy in leading in worship, preaching and providing pastoral care. I experienced God's compassion for the people I was working with, while at the same time feeling the pain of brokenness in Christian life and community. My giftedness and call to Christian ministry were affirmed by others. I had and still have great mentors on my journey, friends, professors, pastors, chaplains, who encouraged me on my vocational journey.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

A new chapter in my life began when I immigrated to Hamilton, Ontario, with my American husband, in response to his call from Immanuel CRC in 2014. Major life changes that were only possible by God's grace, support of loved ones and great hospitality. I continued my vocational discernment process with extensive Clinical Pastoral Education at two local hospitals. Two core ideas of the Reformed tradition are particularly significant in this part of my faith journey: that of God's faithfulness to His people—anywhere in this world—and that I ultimately belong to Christ and not to myself. This gives me a place to rest, be secure and known in this and in each new ministry context I am called to.

Femke Visser-Elenbaas

*Statement of Reason*

I understand my seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church as a response to the Spirit's prompting in years of discernment toward ordained ministry. At this point in my life, I experience (hospital) chaplaincy as my vocational home. Serving as a hospital chaplain in the past few years, I have felt the desire for ordination strongest at the bedside of those who are nearing the end of their lives and for whom prayers and blessing were requested. I also recognize that as a chaplain, I represent for a lot of people (Christians and non-Christians), the spiritual dimension of life, the realm of faith and of meaning-making and also the community of the church. I seek to humbly journey with people through embodying, communicating and witnessing of God's care, love and grace which makes me not seldom stand 'on sacred ground' in the (hospital) community entrusted to me. I view ordination therefore as a recognition and affirmation of this priestly dimension of my work as chaplain.

My theological formation (mainly in the institutions from the Protestant Church in The Netherlands) and vocation has shaped my Christian identity profoundly and I would say that I am ecumenical at heart. I am deeply grateful for this. Since I believe that God's Spirit has prepared me through this for being able to adjust, love and serve in the new context of the CRCNA. The journey into the CRCNA is deepening my own Reformed roots and continues to reveal the theological richness of this tradition. Although I find much joy in reading up on theology, it is through the hospitality I have received and through partaking in the Christian fellowship in the CRCNA (on local, classical and denominational levels), that I have come to feel at home in this denomination. I continue to meet brothers and sisters who seek to follow Christ in their neighborly love and love for the Triune God. Therefore, I want to be held accountable to this expression of the body of Christ in my work as a chaplain through ordination into the office of Minister of the Word.

Femke Visser-Elenbaas



*Name:* Beverly A. Weeks

*Spouse:* David L.

*Age:* 53

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Number of Children:* Three

*College Attended:*

Kuyper College  
Certificate of Christian  
Foundations, 2009

*Seminary Attended:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2013

*Internships:*

Hope Network,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Summer 2011

Morrison CRC, Morrison, IL  
Summer 2012

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

God, in his covenant plan for my life, placed me in a Christian home, a Christian Reformed Church, and Christian schools kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. One night when I was 16, and at home by myself, I watched a Billy Graham telecast. That night, all the things I had been hearing over the years clicked together in my mind and heart as I listened. I honestly faced up to the enormity of my sinfulness and was overwhelmed with God's offer to take it all away. I had known and understood in my head about how Jesus' suffering and death was the only way in which my sin could be erased, but I had never before admitted that I wanted it for myself. I couldn't resist the love that came with such an offer, claimed God's promise to be my God, and committed to be his child. I have reveled in his love ever since.

When I was 17 years old, my father fell off the roof of our home and died a few hours later. That experience, tragic and painful as it was, helped me learn many things about myself, and surprisingly to me, gave me a confidence in life that I had not known before. I found that God was able to meet me where I was at and give me strength for each day.

My marriage to my husband, David, began in 1980, and God continued to lead me in new ways of what it meant to be his daughter. We partnered in ministries at our church such as worship leadership as organist, pianist, and song leader, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, as well as being part of a number of small groups that were committed to studying the Word together and learning more about this great God of ours. We participated in a couple of service projects in Mississippi and Chicago and attended a number of conferences over the years that stretched us even further.

After seven years of marriage, the first of our three living children was born. Our daughter is married, and our two sons are college students. With parenthood came a glimpse of what it must be like for God to be my Father. Such love he must have for me, and on top of that, to overlook my sin! And he overlooks it at such a huge price — the death of his own Son. That intense love came to have an even greater meaning when we experienced the death of one of our children through a miscarriage. The year afterward was one filled with a sense of living under a cloud. But God had prepared me well for all the discouragement that came, and I gained an even deeper understanding of his love and faithfulness.

Sometimes, the church, sinful just like all of us, can be a place where difficult situations develop. I went through a very painful conflict a number of years ago and plunged into a state of despair such as I had never experienced before in my life. That was when I really needed to rely on all that God had taught me earlier about the depth of his love for me. Little by little, and day by day, he took care of me and gradually healed my soul. Scars remain, but I am committed to let them serve as a reminder of what I have learned about myself, my relationships with others, and about the great love of my Savior.

I'm part of the so-called "sandwich generation" — caring for the needs of our almost-independent children and cooperating with our siblings to give assistance to our parents. During the past few years, our parents



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

have been hospitalized for surgeries and illnesses, my father-in-law died suddenly of a stroke in 2006, and my eighty-three-year-old step-father of over thirty years passed away in 2012. Even in these challenges, God has prompted me over and over to remember that no matter what, he is sovereign, faithful, and loving in all that he does. It's all part of his loving plan for my life and I willingly submit to his guidance in my life. He is my God, and I am his child.

Beverly Weeks

*Statement of Reason*

It is in obedience to God's calling in my life, that I look forward to being used by him to advance the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide. He has been powerfully leading me toward ministry through past memberships on various classical and denominational committees and boards to nudge me along to hear that call. Now, in response, I humbly offer myself as God's servant to become a candidate as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Beverly Weeks



*Name:* Mike Westerveld

*Place of Birth:* Oak Lawn, IL

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*

Pine Rest Christian  
Mental Health Services,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
May 2015-August 2015

Hope Network,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
August 2016 - July 2017

Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, MI  
September 2016 - May 2017

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I believe in the one true God who is revealed to us in the Bible. Though he is one, he eternally exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. This Triune God has created the entire universe out of nothing, and by his providence he sustains it every second of the day. God was not compelled to create the universe because of any insufficiency within his triune self. Rather, God chose to create out of his good pleasure according to his perfect will. His creation culminated with humankind, whom he made in his image and declared to be “very good.”

Even so, human beings were not content to live out our days under God’s authority. We wanted to be like God. So, we foolishly disobeyed God’s direct command. As a result of our disobedience, sin and death entered the world. We had broken our relationship with God, and so we became afraid of God and hid from him. Unable to redeem ourselves from the corruption of our sin, we were hopelessly destined to remain under God’s just curse for all eternity.

Moreover, all of creation became cursed by the effects of our disobedience. All manner of pain and suffering in the world are consequences of the fall. Death, sickness, hunger, natural disasters, sinful inclinations, injustices, and the like result from humanity’s initial disobedience. In fact, this first sin has caused every human being to be born under the curse of sin and deserving of God’s just punishment.

But God, because of his goodness, mercy, and grace—not out of necessity—promised to one day redeem and restore his creation to himself. He promised this out of his good pleasure, not by any merit of ourselves, to display his glory. In accordance with this promise, God graciously holds back the full effects of our sinfulness in order that creation might be preserved according to his purpose.

Even so, God’s justice and righteousness demand that the punishments for our sins be paid in full. Because humanity is unable to atone for our sins, God himself took on human flesh in the second person of the Trinity. While remaining fully God, he emptied himself and became fully human as well. Jesus Christ—God the Son incarnate—lived a blameless life yet suffered and died a cursed death in order that we might once again be declared righteous before God.

Moreover, Jesus displayed his victory over sin and death when God raised him from the dead on the third day. Because of this, we have hope and assurance, that we, who believe in Jesus, will one day receive the resurrection of our bodies as well. And having been raised, Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at God’s right hand. As with his resurrection, Jesus’ ascension gives us hope and assurance that, after we are resurrected, we will again be welcomed into God’s presence in the new heaven and earth. These events will take place after Christ returns to fully establish his kingdom.

At that time, all of creation will be redeemed and renewed. Sin and death will be completely vanquished. Those justified by Christ’s blood will be granted eternal life, but those who do not have faith in Jesus for their salvation will receive the eternal death of hell. Even so, the necessary faith we have in Jesus for our salvation is no cause for pride

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

or boasting. In fact, only those whom God have eternally elected for salvation, according to his grace alone, are given faith through the Holy Spirit.

It is this same Spirit, poured out at Pentecost that not only grants us our faith but also daily conforms us more and more into the likeness of Christ. Even more, by his Spirit God empowers believers to seek his will and to live obediently before him in gratitude for the redemption he has graciously poured out to us in Christ.

Finally, it is by this same grace alone that I was baptized and raised in the Christian Reformed Church. It is by God's grace alone that he has called me to service in his church. It is by God's grace alone that I have received (and continue to receive) the necessary instructions and equipping to carry out his call in my life. And it is by God's grace alone that I have been given the faith to trust in God for my salvation in Christ and the desire to serve him faithfully all the days of my life.

Michael Westerveld

*Statement of Reason*

I believe that God has called me to be a minister in his church. I have been baptized and raised in the Christian Reformed faith. In obedience to his call on my life, I have received thorough training in preparation for his service including a Bachelor of Arts in Religion. In addition, I will be receiving my Masters of Divinity this May. The Spirit's gifts of preaching, leading, teaching, and pastoral care have been confirmed in me by multiple ordained ministers in the CRCNA. My church council has also affirmed God's call on my life and have recommended me for ordination in the CRCNA. Desiring to respond in faithful obedience to God's will, and trusting in his ordained officebearers for discernment, I humbly seek candidacy that I might become eligible to receive a call and become ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments in the CRCNA.

Michael Westerveld



*Name:* Brian White

*Place of Birth:* Tulsa, OK

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Tulsa  
B.A., 2003

Princeton Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2006

Princeton Theological  
Seminary  
Th.M., 2009

Fuller Theological Seminary  
Ph.D., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*

Praise Presbyterian Church,  
Somerset, NJ  
Director of Youth Ministry  
September 2008 - May 2010

Praise Presbyterian Church,  
Somerset, NJ  
English Ministry Pastor  
May 2010 - July 2011

Bethany Korean Church CRC,  
Burbank, CA  
English Ministry Pastor  
October 2011 - July 2016

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

My family runs a cattle ranch in the far-reaches of the Oklahoma panhandle. I grew up helping out on the ranch: feeding the cattle, helping with the spring roundup, driving the tractor. I spent my evenings with my sister riding our horses all over the fields and pastures. As we rode, my sister and I would often sing the praise songs we learned at our church. Looking back, this kind of simple, practical worship was common in our household — my father sitting in his chair, reading his well-worn Bible every evening, the prayers my grandfather would whisper as he struggled to help a young heifer deliver her calf, the gentle and loving manner in which my mother treated every visitor to our home.

Even so, it was during college that I really came to know the depth of God's love for me, and my desperate need for His grace. I took a philosophy course on Socrates that had a profound effect on my faith. The professor emphasized how for Socrates, philosophy was not just an intellectual pursuit, but a way of life — a way of life that he was ultimately willing to die for. As I looked at my own life, I realized that even though I called myself a Christian, that identity did not have much to do with the way that I lived and saw the world. During this time, God stripped me of all the idols I had put in His place—idols of pride, success, and intelligence. God graciously broke down my reliance and trust in everything I had elevated over Him, and slowly began to build me back up in faith and humility. It was through this struggle that I came to not just believe in Christ and His saving work, but to live in the amazing truth of this Christian claim.

Since that time, I have experienced first-hand the freedom and joy that comes from living a life devoted to Christ. Though there have certainly been times that I have struggled, it is a struggle that is laced with glimpses of coming glory and ever-present joy. And it is the experience of this joy and this love that we have received in Jesus Christ that has given me a new identity and a new vocation to share the Good News with everyone I meet.

As I noted above, I grew up in a Christian family. As such, I also grew up believing in the truth of the Bible. However, after experiencing God's call upon my life in college, God gave me a deep love and desire to read His Word. This was initially why I went to seminary — I wanted nothing more than to devote my life to the study of Scripture. I continue to be amazed by the miracle of the Bible — the loving revelation of a gracious God who desperately desires to bring us into relationship with Him.

In this respect, the Bible is the foundation of my faith as the means by which God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. And, in accordance with the Scriptures, I believe that we, as human beings, have rebelled against God, the creator of the universe and all that there is. We rejected God's gift of love and life, and chose instead a life of rebellion and sin. And yet, out of His great love for us, God did not give up on us, but chose to intervene. God took on human flesh, became one of us in the person of Jesus of Christ, so that he could die on our behalf, taking the punishment for our sins upon himself to be crucified on the cross. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus conquered sin and death. God invites us to become His children by simply trusting in the saving

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

work of Jesus Christ. As followers of Jesus and sons and daughters of God, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the rest of the world of God's love and the promise of the Kingdom.

Brian White

*Statement of Reason*

The very fact that I came to be a part of the CRC feels a bit like a miracle, and I truly believe that God's Spirit was at work in guiding me on this path. I grew up in the United Methodist Church in Oklahoma — about as far away from the CRC as one could get. When choosing a seminary, I felt God leading me to Princeton, even though I had no connection to the Presbyterian Church prior to that. During my time at Princeton, I was introduced to Calvin and the Reformed theological perspective. This was a huge revelation to me — to experience such a concrete, systematic, and Biblical approach to theology. During my PhD studies in Christian Ethics, I continued to be informed by the Reformed theological perspective. The Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God over all of life and a covenantal understanding of God's relationship with humanity has been particularly influential in my life and work. In my own ministry, I have seen how essential it is for Christians to understand what it means to declare Jesus as Lord — that this is not just a spiritual truth, but that Jesus is Lord over all aspects of our lives.

As God was forming my theological perspective through my studies and through mentors, I also found myself serving as the English Ministry pastor at a small Korean church in Burbank, CA. It just so happened that this church was a part of the CRC. As I came to learn more and more about the CRC, I quickly realized that this small denomination that I had never heard of before moving to California felt more "at home" to me than any other denomination I had served with. I deeply resonated with the theology of the church and the denominational polity. I was moved by the CRC's faithful engagement with society. When my head pastor approached me about beginning a process of discernment regarding ordination, my wife and I both felt confident that the CRC was where we were being called. Now, having gone through EPMC at Calvin Seminary and having gotten to know the denomination more intimately, we continue to be excited about serving in the CRC and beginning this next stage of our ministry in the Church.

Brian White



*Name:* Joanna Wigboldy

*Place of Birth:* Chicago, IL

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2006

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.A., 2009  
M.Div., 2016

*Internships:*

Georgetown CRC,  
Hudsonville, MI  
September 2007 - June 2008

Calvary CRC, Wyoming, MI,  
June 2015 - August 2015

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I believe that the Triune God created the world out of love, and that humans are created in the image of God. I believe that God is active in the world and in my life. I believe that I am a child of God. Here is a bit of my story that shows how God has been active in my life.

I was born into a Christian Reformed family, and baptized into a Christian Reformed church family. In my home life, school life, and church life I learned what the Bible teaches about how to live and respond to God and neighbor. A foundation was laid for my faith.

When I was 18, I went to Illinois Wesleyan University. For the first time in my life, I struggled. In my struggles, I learned to turn to the God who is present to my struggle. Proverbs 3:5-6 became an important verse to me as I began to understand that I could not be in control of my own life, but had to trust in God and not lean on my own understanding. In this experience, God became personal to me.

Because I struggled at Illinois Wesleyan, I transferred to Calvin College. I took Developing a Christian Mind and learned the content of the Reformed faith. For the first time, I understood how theology can shape one's life, and began to discern how my Reformed theology shapes my life. I came to know the Bible as the story of God's action in the world throughout history, through which God reveals God's character. I came to know God as the one who acts. Most importantly, my faith became my own.

Genesis 3 tells us about the introduction of sin into the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience. The Fall introduced sin not only into individuals, but into societies, institutions, cultures, and all of creation. Because I was raised with such a high view of right and wrong, I always had a sense of individual wrong. As I've grown older, I have developed a sense of the sinfulness inherent in the institutions in which I participate as well.

God's very essence is love. The Triune God created out of an overflow of love. Despite the brokenness of creation, particularly in God's people, God still loves every part of his creation. God loves his creation so much that he would do anything to reconcile the creation to himself. The prophets show us the deep hurt God's people have caused God by our persistent sin. They also show us God's persistent pursuit of his people despite the pain we have caused him. As I've dwelled in books of the prophets, I have been blown away by the love God has for me despite the pain I cause him when I try to do things my own way.

God's ultimate act of love came through the incarnation. In the person Jesus Christ, God lived among his people. His life and teaching showed us the Kingdom of God. Because God is a God of justice, payment has to be made for humanity's violation of our covenant with God—for my violation of God's covenant. Jesus Christ made that payment by his death, and then rose as the firstborn from the dead. Jesus' resurrected body is the first piece of God's new creation—a promise of the new creation that I will be, along with all of creation, when Jesus returns to earth.



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

I am slowly learning to accept that grace that God freely gives to me to make me righteous in his eyes. I am learning to let that grace transform me into one who lives according to the Kingdom of God and not the kingdom of this world. I am learning to rely daily on the Holy Spirit to trust the Lord with all my heart, lean not on my own understanding, and submit to him in all my ways.

Joanna Wigboldy

*Statement of Reason*

My call to serve God's people through the Christian Reformed Church has developed over the last ten years, but it has always been a call to the Christian Reformed Church. I feel love toward and personal ownership of the people, organization, and theology of the Christian Reformed Church. The CRC is like a good friend to me: I know her faults and I know her strengths, and I love her through the faults and because of her strengths. I seek ordination in this denomination in which I love because I am called by God to serve his people and his church. I don't yet know exactly how that call will be realized, but I am confident in God's call and waiting and following in faith (even though I find that so very uncomfortable!)

Joanna Wigboldy



*Name:* Jianlou Xu

*Place of Birth:* Henan, China

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Zhengzhou University  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

*Internships:*  
Chinese Church of Iowa City  
Cross-Cultural Internship  
June 10, 2015 - August 10, 2015  
  
Nelson Ave Community Church  
Pastoral Care Internship  
June 6, 2016 - August 31, 2016

*Languages spoken:*  
Mandarin

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### *Faith Journey*

#### **God Prepared Me:**

Early 2002 or so, my ideology collapsed abruptly: although I didn't like Chinese systems, Marxism still sustained my philosophy, values, and life direction. All suddenly, however, I realized all the promoted "scientific truth" was nothing but sheer lies (This is a grace from above.). I then started studying Marxism and wrote papers on it. In addition, I started numbing myself in alcohol and worldly pleasure. Early 2004, we started the procedure of immigration to Canada, and one of my wife's high school classmate started spreading God's word toward us.

#### **God adopted us:**

June 2008, three months after we landed in Vancouver, we were baptized as God's children. The Chinese Ministry mothered us by milking, hugging and teaching; we grew well. But the leaders' disputes of the ministry resulted in, unprepared me to work as a leader of the ministry. God pushed and lifted me into a position I was not ready yet. In service, however, Amy and I had been transformed unconsciously in all aspects.

#### **God's calling over the years:**

Two tragedies happened in our extended family, which turned out that God's paving way for us to walk in His grace. In the Middle 2010, my wife went back to China with my one-year-old daughter Ariel to see her parent. But this kind visitation led to a tragedy—the divorce of her beloved younger sister. Her younger sister could not bear any child with her husband because of their unmatched blood types with three failures in a row; Ariel's turning up became the last straw to make her husband determined to divorce and bear his own child. Teary weeping continued in our family.

Another tragedy happened about one year later: my father-in-law almost lost his life because of a medical accident. He actually lost his memories over a 35 hour coma; but this led him to be converted into a Christian with my mother-in-law in August, 2013. He, however, became disabled because of the accident. Amy's younger sister has become the only support of this family in China. Otherwise, we might have been struggling in all kinds of support to her aged parents. We have seen the blessing hand of God over the rugged cross.

#### **God's hand equipping:**

The conversion of Amy's parents boosted both of us to go God's way and responded to God's strong calling. June 2013, in a dream I experienced the saving power of Jesus Christ's name. Actually, this, later I realized, was a direct calling from above. In July, I decided to quit my two jobs to study theology. I switched from a part-time worker into a full-time worker for the Lord. Over a long year, my application of student loan was finally granted on August 21; and we were so excited to be grateful as God willed us to go this way.

Over the last two years, Amy had been sick and weak. First year with TB and second with internal hemorrhoids. But through the hardship, we have not only survived but have prospered in the Lord. God broke us from time to time and has been reshaping us in His gracious love as our potter. This has strengthened us to trust that the plan God gives us is a

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

plan of hope and eternal life. May we go the way together in the glory of the Father, the grace of the son, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jianlou Xu

*Statement of Reason*

At first, because I was baptized in a Dutch Canadian CRC Church in Vancouver and I didn't know much about CRC in North America. I love our church and loved working there with wonderful people. I got a strong calling, so strong that I quit my life there to move to Grand Rapids with my family. After two and half year study here and I have realized that I love reformed theology, confessions, and wonderful CRC brothers and sisters. Mostly, I appreciate God has done for me and to me and my family over time. To apply for the candidate, I want to be a full-time worker for the Lord, in the Lord, and by our Lord.

Jianlou Xu



*Name:* Cody Zuiderveen

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Grand Valley State University  
B.A.

Gordon-Conwell  
Theological Seminary  
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC Certification, 2017

*Internships:*  
North Shore Community  
Baptist Church, Beverly, MA  
January 2014 - December 2015

*Languages spoken:*  
Spanish

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### *Faith Journey*

God is the all-powerful and everlasting Three in One, the just Judge, the lasting Source of Wisdom and the Creator, Sustainer and Basis of all truth and love. He not only created my life, but he gives it a purpose. I was created to be a child of God through faith, and it is that faith that has become the defining factor in my life.

From an early age, I discovered that faith takes many forms throughout the Christian walk, from following, to encouraging, to leading. I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home, be trained by Christian teachers, and encouraged by pastors and mentors through young adulthood. I was able to work alongside wonderful men and women of faith in my college and seminary years as they taught me about the work of the Lord and helped me envision how I could be a part of it.

Perhaps even more important than the training and leadership opportunities, however, have been the parts of my faith walk that led me to more informal growth and leadership. I think it was the small, day to day, choices and interactions that have shaped my faith the most. I enjoyed meeting with students over a cup of coffee to wonder aloud about the mysteries of God and His workings in our lives. I have loved the opportunities that my wife and I have had to talk with friends and family about faith in every sort of setting—from vacations to service at a local homeless shelter—which has helped to shape the way we live out our faith each day.

In more recent months, the Lord has used our past experiences and training to make it clear that he is calling us to serve alongside those ministering in Haiti. There are many men and women already hard at work leading the church of Haiti, and the Lord has called us to be an encouragement and support to them. We are excited to see how he will use us in the season of life and continue to grow and develop us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Cody Zuiderveen

### *Statement of Reason*

For many years I have felt called to missions, and throughout the early years of that calling, a number of my mentors, family and friends encouraged me to consider seminary as a means of being formed and equipped for ministry. As a result of that encouragement, I enrolled at Gordon-Conwell Theological seminary after finishing my BBA at Grand Valley State University. As I went through the M.Div. program, I found that I was interested not only in international missions, but also in helping train and encourage the local church to reach out to their friends and neighbors in North America. This dual nature of missions, both at home and abroad, encouraged me to complete the ordination process through the EPMC program and pursue ordination so I can continue to serve the church in a missional capacity, whether that is at home or abroad.

Cody Zuiderveen



*Name:* Brad Zwiers

*Age:* 26

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids, MI

*Name of Spouse:* Gwyneth Zwiers

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.A., 2012

Western Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2016

*Internships:*

Calvary CRC, Holland, MI  
Sept 2012 to May 2014

Pillar Church, Holland, MI  
May 2014 to August 2015

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

To talk about how “I” got “here,” or to where I am, or to where I am in my walk with God, seems a bit ridiculous. Because while I believe faith has to be personal and individual to be transformational, even more than that I believe faith is a gift that comes from God. I did not get anywhere - not alone, anyways. My faith journey takes shape only because of the good promises of our good God and the witness of the saints to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My faith journey (and I do believe I can call it “my” faith journey, now) owes every last step to the God and Savior of the universe.

But my growth in Christian faith has also come in community. So many people and places have disciplined me that it would take thousands of pages to mention them all. So suffice it to say that I am not my own. I belong body and soul to my faithful savior Jesus Christ, and I belong to those people and places Christ has put in my life to grow me in him.

I am particularly indebted to the Reformed tradition, in which I gladly put down my roots. This means what I believe is inescapably shaped by the historic creeds and confessions of the Reformed church, and more particularly, by the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. These I believe to be historic witnesses to the Christian faith and consistently valuable for living a life shaped by the gospel.

Ultimately, though, what I believe is found in Scripture. The Spirit moves in the hearts and minds of each person who reads and receives Scripture as the Word of God, who in those blessed pages finds the living Christ. And in Scripture, I discover Christ as fully as I can until he comes again. In Scripture, I discover the intimate movements of God toward and in the world as fully as I can until Christ finally brings us into the life of the Triune God. In Scripture, I discover my identity. In Scripture, I discover my identity and my true calling; I discover what I believe.

Brad Zwiers

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church in North America because this is the family that disciplined me into the Christian person I am today. I grew up in the CRCNA; I was baptized at Fuller Avenue CRC on the southeast side of Grand Rapids and spent my formative middle and high school years at Westview CRC in northwest Grand Rapids. I attended Calvin College, an institution started and maintained by the CRC, and after I entered seminary I interned at Calvary CRC and Pillar Church in Holland. The CRC, both at the denominational and congregational level, has shaped so much of my Christian experience, and as I take the leap into ministry, I am proud to throw my cards in with the denomination that raised me in Christ.

I have had my difficulties with our denomination, too. While in college, my home church went through a nasty separation with the lead pastor that soured my experience of our denomination. But as I grew in my

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

faith and my understanding of the church, I realized that my isolated experience in one local body should not, and could not, define the denomination as a whole. And as I sat under the counsel of incredible mentors, God used them to show me that as human members of the body of Christ, we will necessarily bump and bruise one another. Inevitably, we will struggle. But my hope in seeking ordination in the CRC is that we will continue to struggle with one another in Christ rather than against our fellow brothers and sisters. That excites me. And that is really why I am seeking ordination in the CRC.

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