



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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# 2010

approved candidates



*Name:* Steven Berkenpas

*Place of Birth:* New Westminster,  
British Columbia

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Columbia Bible College  
B.A. Intercultural Studies, 2011

Regent College  
M.Div., 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Ministry to Seafarers  
Vancouver, BC  
June 2014 - August 2014  
  
First Christian Reformed  
Church  
Vancouver, BC  
September 2015 - June 2016  
  
Agassiz CRC  
Agassiz, BC  
June 2017 - August 2017

*Contact:*  
778-991-7444  
Steven.berkenpas@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up as an athlete. My first sport was soccer, but I quickly got myself into any sport I could get my hands on. Eventually I chose volleyball. I was fairly successful in my athletic pursuits and got a scholarship to a good university in Eastern Canada. This identification as an athlete was always a struggle for me. I had a passion for the church and when I read the gospels, I felt compelled to be actively involved with reaching out to the marginalized. Unfortunately, I did not understand how to do that as an athlete. Practices and team meetings throughout the week and tournaments on weekends meant there was little opportunity to be seriously invested in church activities.

This tension reached its peak in my first year of university, where mid-way through, I decided I would quit volleyball at the end of the year and join a missions program at Columbia Bible College. While the choice may represent a bit of a naïve view that undercuts the value of being a Christian athlete, I found peace in the decision as I was pursuing the place where I felt God was calling me.

At Columbia Bible College, I went to another extreme. From having no time to do outreach, I jumped into a missions program that requires a year spent abroad. I ended up spending my time in a small country in Western Africa named Guinea-Bissau. I see this as an overcorrection. While I was doing Christian activities, I was still not responding in the area where I felt God was calling me towards. When I got back from my trip, I began to invest more time in the local church. After graduating from college, I spent a year in the Outreach department of a church down the street from the college. From there I began my graduate studies to begin the final stages towards my ordination.

The past few years of graduate school have been a real blessing for me. I have lived with some great people, and I have had time to dig into some of the questions I have been dealing with. Meaningful studies have included a guided study on Sport and Theology and further study on the theology of the church. I think the most meaningful things that I have picked up from grad school have been a deepening appreciation for prayer. I have grown in my understanding of God and what it means to come before him and listen to him. I look forward to joining others in this journey of seeking God's face.

Steven Berkenpas

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church that I may continue to follow where God is guiding and calling me. I do so not on my own, but with a community who has supported this calling in my life. It is my hope to serve in the Christian Reformed Church as we explore what it means to follow God and serve him in our churches and our neighborhoods. More than that, I hope to share my passion for God's word and my enthusiasm for deepening in relationship with him.

Steven Berkenpas



*Name:* Calvin D. Chen

*Place of Birth:* Chicago, Illinois

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign  
B.A., 2006

Trinity Evangelical  
Divinity School  
Certificate, 2015

Regent College  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

InterVarsity Christian  
Fellowship  
Madison, Wisconsin  
May 2006 – September 2015

First CRC  
Vancouver, BC  
September 2015 - August 2017

Coquitlam Evangelical Chinese  
Bible Church  
Coquitlam, BC  
September 2017 - August 2018

*Languages spoken:*

Mandarin, English

*Contact:*

778-968-7575  
calvindc@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I never questioned the basic Christian truths I knew. Baptized and raised in a Chinese immigrant CRC congregation, I was taught the Creeds and Confessions. However, neither did I genuinely, actively follow Jesus until much later.

Partway through my childhood, our entire family relocated to Taipei, Taiwan where my mother became worship arts director at a very large church. Initially, I acclimated well to this new church and language environment. However, by high school the cognitive dissonance and different values of my surrounding culture – pursuit of success, recognition, achievement, popularity – had far outstripped my faith in terms of life priorities. My dad once pulled me aside and asked, “Do you still have your faith?” Though at the time I vaguely identified as Christian, I replied that I didn’t know.

Upon beginning college, I met a couple Christians at a predominantly Korean American campus church who truly followed Jesus to the extent that they were willing to subordinate career prestige and wealth to follow God’s purposes. This made absolutely no sense in my worldview and value system but it intrigued me. These are truly followers of Jesus. I was unsure if I wanted to really take the plunge, but I bargained with God that I would follow him on a trial basis for a few months, try really putting him first, and seeing what happened. Jesus changed my life because I experienced an overwhelming sense of freedom, joy and purpose. I was no longer enslaved to success, or needing to prove myself. Since that summer 16 years ago when I “tried” truly committing my life to Jesus, I have not looked back. (I did decide to make the commitment permanent and profess my faith shortly afterward!) My faith looks a bit different today – as it should! – but remains just as resolute and central in my life.

After a brief period of time pursuing opera performance, I spent a decade on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and came to Regent College to complete my M.Div. Earlier on in my time with InterVarsity, I was committed to broad evangelicalism but not necessarily to the Reformed faith. I eventually reconnected with my CRC roots through the ministry of Geneva Campus Church and have come to deeply love our confessional heritage and pursuit of Christ’s lordship in every sphere. Church membership has also been a significant source of growth and edification in my faith journey. Hearing a congregation say “we do, God helping us” and live it out and my saying “I do, God helping me” have been a great source of encouragement and learning of what it means to truly follow Jesus in community.

Calvin Chen

### *Statement of Reason*

I seek ordination in the CRCNA as an act of both submission and commitment. In today’s individualistic cultural context, it’s downright incomprehensible to voluntarily submit oneself to the authority and doctrines of a council, classis, and denomination. Ordination is not “needed” for campus ministry or in inter-denominational missions work.

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

However, I seek to submit myself to accountability, community and the common doctrine of our Creeds and confessions. Further, as an act of commitment, I seek the means of being able to better serve churches in our denomination. I have a deep love for teaching and evangelism and hope that ordination to ministry of the Word provides me with more opportunities to serve our local churches.

Calvin Chen



*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:* Dan Crapo

*Place of Birth:* Indianapolis, Indiana

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Cornerstone University  
B.A. Religion, 1999

Grand Rapids Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2003

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Garden City Baptist Church  
Garden City, ON  
August 2002 - December 2002

Clinical Pastoral Education,  
Chaplain Intern  
Allina Health, St. Francis RMC  
Shakopee, MN  
October 2016 – May 2017

Clinical Pastoral Education,  
Chaplain Resident  
U of Minnesota/Fairview,  
Fairview Southdale Hospital  
Edina, MN  
August 2017 – August 2018

*Contact:*

612-669-3697  
dc009@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I look back to my early childhood and family life as the earliest memory of spiritual formation. In my earliest memories my mom and maternal aunt taught Sunday school at the Indianapolis Baptist Temple and held Child Evangelism Fellowship Bible clubs. I remember for the first time as a six year-old being able to articulate that I was a sinner and that Hell was not the eternity that I wanted. I responded to a call to the sinner's prayer at a CEF Bible club with my maternal aunt.

I remained a kid who attended church and Christian school. About six months after saying the sinner's prayer I responded to a pulpit call at a worship service to come forward for believer's baptism. After my father went with me to a brief interview with a staff pastor, I was baptized by immersion. I remember much southern gospel singing, bible stories, stories of missionaries working in primitive conditions, and the separated world of being part of a fundamentalist church.

My membership at IBT lasted until the summer before I started my third grade in school. I remember the discussions of how the church pastors had led the church into legal problems. My parents left the church and started attending Gray Road Baptist Church. My maternal grandparents and my aunt would remain members of IBT for another eight years. About one year after that eight year time, IBT's doors were chained shut by US Marshalls in relation to dodging taxes and grappling with the IRS which was called a Patriot Church. I recall seeing this in the news and hearing my parent and grandparents talk about the church drama.

I offer the memories of IBT because of the hurting people, my relatives included, that were left in the wake of a church being closed in such a dramatic way. In my early 20's I began to process these events with some perspective and realized that people have been and are hurt by religious institutions. And, I had some stirrings in my soul to minister to hurting people. I saw the struggle of a believer's faith in the face of institutional failings. With God's leading, I wanted to serve.

In the third grade, our family became members at Gray Road Baptist Church and Christian School. I found the ministry to be more about the care of people. I remained a member of GRBC through my seminary training. I learned much about following Christ from the pastor, pastoral staff, teachers and youth group. I learned bible verses in the AWANA clubs. Some of the key things I learned were in God's grace and forgiveness. I learned to pray and study the bible. I learned to serve God's people and be sensitive and to respond to the Spirit's call.

At age 18, a missionary conference was held at GRBC. Toward the later sessions of the conference, I realized that through the teaching of the Bible and the wooing of the Holy Spirit that I was being called to serve Christ's church. I responded to an invitation to meet with Pastor Glen Lockwood to speak about becoming a minister.

I entered Cornerstone University that subsequent fall with a heart open to what God had in store. In the spring semester of that year, I spoke with Professor Andy Smith about studying for seminary. The next year I embarked on the pre-seminary studies. I particularly found the philosophy of religion courses and the practical ministry courses to be of great benefit.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

During college, I volunteered at a community neighborhood ministry program which was The Other Way Ministries. In this volunteer and part time staff position, I had my earliest practical experience and discipleship of ministering to diverse people. I served in a teen club and led a bible study for junior high students. I learned much practical ministry training from TOWM's, Randy Vander Weit. I found in this ministry a spirit of humility and cooperation with ministry, discipleship and a welcoming to all.

During my upper classman years, I began to worship at Ada Bible Church. The college and singles ministry led by Bill Search helped to give context to church ministry. I matured in the ability to hear what God is doing in the lives of other people during this time and to tune my heart to God's work. Also, during this time I was an intern under college professor Phil Bustrum to lead a cohort term mission team to the Dominican Republic. During this time, my leadership abilities and my sensitivities to what God was doing in a cross-cultural setting were enlivened.

The next fall after graduation with a bachelor's in religion I entered seminary at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. I found the studies more rigorous, especially Hebrew. The growth during this time came in many ways. I particularly learned from professor David Turner about Jesus. The attention to reading the gospels was fresh for me. I found learning to ministry to families a new-found joy.

During my second year, I began dating Ruthanne, GRTS student. I could write much at this point. I will save this writing for another time. We married in 2001 and life has a different teaming long journey with the next step for Ruthanne to study at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. I was able to finish my seminary studies through courses at the Toronto School of Theology. Also, I served as an intern under pastor Dan Allen at Garden City Baptist Church, St. Catharines, Ontario. As an intern, I learned a people centered approach to ministry. I learned pastoral care when visiting members at care centers and residential settings. I also experienced the joy of working with youth ministry, many who were new to church and hearing about Jesus.

My next faith development was to accept a call to serve as a youth pastor in Calvert City, KY, Pathway Baptist Church. The support for youth work and an alignment of community wide efforts to develop young people was refreshing. Spiritual formation happened at a quick pace. I learned to work in concert with others and appreciate how the Word and Spirit were developing each person's life. I began to see how God's love was making inroads into the lives of youth.

Through the pace of ministry at Pathway Baptist Church I came to see I needed more development and more ecclesial structure than the independent church had circumference to accomplish. In one regard, I saw the value of a broader ecclesial body. I resigned from being youth pastor after eight years of fruitful work with young people and took a step of career partnership with spouse's work as a philosopher. In looking back, I see how learning from both experiences and seeing difficulties have been God's leading me down the path in my spiritual life.

I moved with my spouse, and now two kids, born in Kentucky, to Minneapolis where my spouse would begin as a philosophy professor. Some conversations with church leaders from the Christian Reformed Church led me to become a member and serve at Grace Church in Inver Grove Heights. I served as Elder for three years and have found a balance of community, conversant reformed theology, ministry that builds solid platforms for working and overall life a joy. Living faith into chaplain work over the past year as chaplain intern and now chaplain resident (both Clinical Pastoral Education programs), I have learned to be more conversant with my spiritual walk and to provide pastoral care with others from different faith and socio-economic backgrounds. I hope to continue to respond to the Holy Spirit's leading and call in pastoral care and chaplain ministry work.

Dan Crapo

*Statement of Reason*

I seek candidacy to the office of Minister of the Word to serve in the areas of chaplaincy and pastoral care. I understand my calling to be a minister of presence, a chaplain. I hear Jesus' words to minister to Jesus himself in places where the soldier serves and the sick receive medical care. I understand ministry to be incarnational, a witness to the healing that God is making in and through His church. My statement of spiritual care is the following: a grace given call to become, an intersubjective dance into the wild spaces of God's miracle-mystery-love.

Dan Crapo





*Name:* Jason Dahlman

*Place of Birth:* LeMoore, California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Wisconsin at  
LaCrosse  
B.A., 1997

Trinity Evangelical  
Divinity School  
M.Div., 2005

Trinity Evangelical  
Divinity School  
Ph.D., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Pastoral Internship at CrossWay  
Community Church  
Kenosha, WI  
2005-2007

Head Pastor of CrossWay  
Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
2008-2015

Director of Ministries  
Ebenezer CRC  
Leduc, Alberta  
2016-2018

*Contact:*

780-964-9844  
pastorjason@ebenezerCRC.com

*Faith Journey*

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, Jesus is the Word of God incarnate and the Holy Spirit is God's Spirit present and active in the church and in the world. I believe that through humanity's rebellion against God we broke our fellowship with God and with one another. I believe that in response to our sin God poured out His grace by sending promises of redemption and ultimately by sending His own Son to live a perfect life of obedience and love and to die in our place to pay the debt for our sin.

I believe that we are saved by grace and not by works so that no one may boast. I believe that the church is all of God's people from all time and that Jesus is the head of the church and one day will come back to claim His bride. All of the aforementioned beliefs unite me with the broad Christian community. But I am also a Reformed Christian and therefore I also believe and confess the three forms of unity as a faithful articulation of biblical theology.

I further believe that true faith does not consist of a series of intellectual affirmations but true faith transforms us. The life of discipleship is a life of joyful, sacrificial obedience to Jesus Christ. It is a life of love and service. And while we do not live this life perfectly, we are being progressively sanctified through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Lord will ultimately bring to completion the good work that He has begun in us.

Like so many people, my journey of faith has followed the rough contours of the prodigal son. I was raised in a Christian home where I was taught to believe and obey the Word of God and to trust Christ for the forgiveness of my sins and my hope of eternal life. Towards the end of high school and into the early years of college I wandered away from the faith. My rebellion was partly the result of theological questions that I had concerning the faith. But more importantly, I rebelled against God because I wanted to be my own God and did not want to be constrained by His will for me.

But God, good shepherd and loving Father that He is, waited patiently and sought me. He applied loving discipline as the fruit of my own sin and brought me back into His household as His redeemed child. Through my rebellion, I learned that His ways are vastly better than my ways and it is now my joy to trust, love, serve and worship Him.

After returning to the fold, I was exposed to the Reformed expression of Christianity. I had not been raised in the Reformed tradition but when I heard it explained to me, I found that it resonated with my own experience and that it provided a systematic and faithful way of making sense of the entirety of the Scriptures. Since then, though I consider all of Christendom my "neighbourhood," I have found my own particular home in the Reformed Christianity community.

Jason Dahlman

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the CRC because I feel led by God to transfer my ordination into the CRC. I had been serving as a senior pastor for in an independent church for eight years. During that time, it has been my privilege to serve the people of God through preaching, counseling, leading worship, administrating and doing all the other tasks that come with pastoral ministry. I truly love being a pastor. But the longer I served in an independent church, the more I desired to be part of a denomination. I felt a need for the support and accountability and fellowship that comes from being part of a denominational structure. And theologically, I needed to be in a confessionally Reformed denomination. And after prayerfully considering a number of options, I felt the Lord leading me to the CRC. For the past two years, I have been serving in pastoral capacities within the CRC, and I have found it to be a wonderful fit for me.

Jason Dahlman



*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-  
tual 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  
devos.mark@gmail.com

*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:* Abigail DeZeeuw

*Place of Birth:* Cadillac, Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Grand Valley State University  
B.A. Writing, 2013

Western Theological Seminary  
Hebrew Program  
M. Div.; Graduate Certificate in  
Disability and Ministry, 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Fellowship Reformed Church  
Holland, Michigan  
September 2013 –  
December 2013

Monroe Community  
Church (CRC)  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
January 2015 – June 2015

Campus Ministry @ Grand  
Rapids in conjunction with a  
CPE unit at Pine Rest  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
September 2015 – May 2016

Western Theological Seminary  
Holland, MI  
September 2016 – May 2017

*Languages spoken:* Spanish, Hebrew  
(not fluent yet)

*Contact:*  
231-884-1114  
abigail.dezeeuw@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I remember accepting Jesus into my heart when I was four during one of my Sunday school classes. I was fascinated by this invisible friend who lived in my heart and was always with me. At this age I can understand a bit more about Jesus, but my favorite place to dwell is still in a posture of fascination with the mysterious, triune God whom I love and worship.

I was raised in a Christian home surrounded by Christian family and friends and went to the Christian school in town. My parents raised me to see people as Christ sees them and to befriend those on the margins. I'm so grateful for their guidance. Even with a strong faith upbringing, I had plenty of doubts and spent plenty of nights of my pre-teen years sitting on my dad's lap and asking him big faith questions. There were so many hard truths in Scripture and life that I didn't understand. Why are only some saved? Why would a place like Hell exist at all? Why do terrible things happen even in the face of prayer and belief? In the moments when I thought I might turn away from faith in Christ, the spirit of Simon Peter's words from John 6 echoed within me: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

I have always chosen to stay with Christ, and I love reflecting on how He has chosen to stay with me throughout my life. He has always called me toward relationship with him. I wanted to be an elder when I was six. In middle school I wanted to be a church secretary who would counsel people over the phone while printing off church bulletins. I was often the one in high school who people would text with faith questions or if they just needed someone to listen. My favorite moments in church were the ones spent with God while picking up communion cups in an empty sanctuary and listening to the hum of friends and family in the fellowship hall. These memories, among others, serve as faithful reminders of a God who desires a relationship with me, and a God who moves toward me before I can even think to move toward him.

The beauty of God's sovereignty is one of the things that I love about being Reformed. In these past few years of seminary and participating in different disability ministries, I've also come to love that God is an accommodating God. He always draws near to us before we draw near to Him. He always meets us where we are at. He always accommodates our limitations by speaking to us in ways we can understand - regardless of our age or ability. This truth reminds us that we don't have to meet a certain emotional, intellectual, or physical standard in order to be a believer or to be loved by God. God loves us simply because we are His and He accommodates us so that we might love Him in return.

As a person called by God to ordained ministry in His church, I hope to live in a way that reminds all people that God loves them, God is continually drawing near to them and God will accommodate them because He craves relationship with them. I want to sit with the people on the margins and tell them they are loved even when society says otherwise. I want to participate in God's shalom wholeness and reconciliation by listening to others and walking with them through their pain. I hope to do this with individuals and also with church communities because our communities are becoming more and more

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

polarized. I look forward to creating spaces for us to listen to one another and be reconciled to our neighbors as well as to our God.

Abigail DeZeeuw

*Statement of Reason*

God has always provided spaces within the CRC for me to belong in. I was baptized in this denomination, made my profession of faith within it and have been a member for all of my life. Although there are aspects of the CRC that I wrestle with, it is still my home and I am committed to life together with those who also call the CRC home. I am seeking candidacy in the CRC because I want to join the denomination in creating spaces for all people to belong in. God has called me to ordained ministry and I am grateful that I will be able to use the gifts he has given me as a Minister of the Word within the Christian Reformed Church.

Abigail DeZeeuw



*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:* Steven Dykstra

*Place of Birth:* Ottawa, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Redeemer University College  
B.A., 2007

McMaster Divinity College  
M. Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Inner-City Outreach  
Hamilton, Ontario  
2010 - 2011

Servant Partners  
Bgy. Botocan, Manila,  
Philippines  
2011

Meeting Place Church  
Hamilton, Ontario  
2013 - 2014

Meadowlands Fellowship CRC  
Program Ministries Director  
Ancaster, Ontario  
2016 - present

*Contact:*

905-515-3850  
stevedyks@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I have wanted to know and follow God for as long as I can remember. Growing up in a rural, highly religious Christian Reformed Community, my faith expressions and cultural traditions were deeply intertwined. Praying twice a day, reading Scripture at each meal and worshipping with my cousins in church was both a cultural and formative spiritual experience. Within this context, I have never considered myself to be without Christ. I believe that Christ has known me since my birth and claimed me as His own.

As I've striven to follow God's lead in my life, I look back and see three stages of life where my faith was impacted in dramatic ways. Each of these experiences has given me new understanding of God's presence in my life and an overwhelming sense of grace.

While early faith experiences were marked by cultural experience and routine, events like Christian summer camp, and a local youth group provided powerful experiences of the presence of God in my teens. It was at these places I first heard about the Holy Spirit, experienced deep emotional responses to God's love and committed to serving Christ. A central Scripture during this time of my life was Psalm 1, and the affirmation that when one soaks in God's law the way a tree by streams soaks in water, that God's presence and blessing will be with you. I attended 'Facing Your Future' at Calvin Seminary in 2002, and Redeemer University College in 2003 with the intent of becoming a CRC pastor in a local church very much like the one I grew up in.

At Redeemer, I became engaged in a number of urban poor ministries in my twenties. I engaged Kuyperian thought and Christian theology of social justice for the first time. I felt deeply engaged exploring how the Gospels Good News impacts neighbourhoods, communities, families, schools, social systems and policies. Central scriptures in my life at this point included Isaiah 58's and James 1's assertions about justice and worship.

Third, through the more recent transitions into marriage and fatherhood, I re-learned God's heart for me as a Father and rediscovered my identity as His child. In this stage, I clung to passages like John 15 where Jesus reminds us that He is the vine and we are his branches and Matthew 11 where Jesus invites the weary to come to Him. Through this experience and the experience of working in a non-ordained role managing staff and programs in a Christian Reformed Church, I felt a sense of calling to serve the Christian Reformed Church in Reformed ministry.

Steven Dykstra

*Statement of Reason*

I am applying for candidacy because of God's deep hold in my life. I believe that through the circuitous path of discerning calling and passion, our Sovereign God has brought me to this point. I am passionate about God's word and faith formation. Studying and practicing ministry in my adopted hometown of Hamilton has nurtured a passion in me to explore the unique role that churches play in engaging their communities with the hope and love of Jesus Christ.

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

Recent (non-ordained) work in a Christian Reformed Church and further studies at Calvin Theological Seminary this past have been vital in confirming my sense of call to ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Through the sacraments and through preaching I want to see people understand and live into God's Story for their life. I want to preach the grace of Jesus Christ.

Steven Dykstra



*Name:* Benjamin Gandy

*Place of Birth:* Hong Kong, China

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A. English, 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Chertsey Street Baptist Church

Guildford, England

June 2015 - August 2015

New Community Church

Newaygo, MI

June 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*

+44 (0)759-248-3081

Blg080@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

#### **What I believe...**

I believe in God, who is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. I believe God created humans to be in a relationship with him but we have fallen from that original blessed relationship because of our sin. Sin has separated us from God because he is a holy, just and righteous God. And though we were not present when Adam and Eve first sinned, we willingly sin against God in our own ways. Indeed, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). These words convict me and challenge me and there is not a day that goes by where I do not prove them true.

Yet God, who is rich in mercy and love, has done something about our sin problem. He has made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:5). And he has done this by presenting Christ as a sacrifice of atonement. It is Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection that, when received by faith, is credited to us. Therefore, we are justified freely by grace through this work of Jesus Christ. This is not our doing. It is the free gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

I believe that this gospel is the most important message for all people everywhere. I believe that we hear this message through the spirit's prodding as we listen to the word of God rightly preached. I believe that the Reformed tradition expresses this very gospel well in her confessions. I believe that we all have a God-shaped hole in our heart and that through God's spirit piercing our hearts to turn to God, our restless hearts may find our only comfort, both in life and in death.

#### **How I Got Here...**

Though I grew up in a Christian home, my faith was not my own. It was only when I was sixteen that I felt God calling me to come to him. I recognized my sin and my need for salvation. And in a tender moment, I cried and broke down because of my sin. And at the same time, I was overwhelmed by God's grace to me. I turned my life over to Christ. Since then I've struggled, learned and grown into the Christian that I am today. I came to believe these things through the witness and love of my parents and through the patient, enduring teaching of pastors and mentors. I was raised in the Reformed tradition, and so I recognize that God has had a claim on my life even before I was born. I love him because he first loved me.

I am far from perfect. I have much to learn. I need God's grace now just as much as I always have. I lean on him to guide me through another day where I might serve him.

I continue to feel a deep calling from God to go in to ordained ministry. I am not sure what this may look like but I know that through my time at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, God has prepared me to follow him. My greatest concern is for the gospel to be preached and for people to experience and know God's grace. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)

Benjamin Gandy

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe I am called by God to serve the church through the administration of the sacraments, the administration of church discipline and the preaching and teaching of his word. I want to see people amazed by the gospel and astounded at God's love for them. God has prepared me for ministry through all my experiences and my education. I see this candidacy process as an integral part of following God's call on my life. I wish to see people encounter the grace, mercy and peace of God our father and I want to help them become disciples of Christ.

Benjamin Gandy



*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  
tsgreenway@gmail.com

*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:* Benjamin Gresik

*Place of Birth:* Kingston, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Queen's University - Bachelors  
of Science (GEN in Biology)  
B.S., GEN in Biology, 2011

Tyndale Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Westport Free Methodist Church  
Westport, Ontario  
June 2014 - May 2015  
  
Willowdale CRC  
North York, Ontario  
September 2016 - June 2018

*Contact:*  
613-483-6235  
ben.gresik@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I was born to Christian parents in a small independent church. As a child, my parents instructed me in what it meant to believe in Jesus and give our lives to him. I experienced love, affection and an understanding of what it meant to live out life with Christ in all areas of life. At about the age of six I decided I wanted to take on the things they were teaching me and began to make my faith my own. We moved to a local CRCNA congregation a few years after that.

I attended Christian School through elementary and high school age. As I moved through high school, I began to have questions about my faith as I started to understand it more fully. Broadly speaking, these were questions about how I could trust what God was telling me, and how could I respond to what he asked of me. I received answers to many of these questions but was often unsatisfied with what I had received. I continued to search further throughout high school.

As I studied and read my Bible, I began to think about serving in ministry because some adults in my church who I trusted mentioned that I might consider serving in ministry. I entered undergraduate studies in Biology with the idea that I may pursue ordained ministry after school. I thought that if I could encounter these challenging questions and any more I might encounter during my studies, I would be better equipped to help others with those same questions.

It turned out that this was much more challenging than I had anticipated. I struggled in university both with my studies and with my faith. However it came to a point near the end of my undergraduate work where I had a moment of clarity with God. I recognized that if I did not have God then nothing else mattered in my life. God was the one who had conquered death through his son Jesus. God was leading me through those challenging years of my undergrad. God was the only certain thing for me in a very confusing time. So in that time, I decided to commit my life to pursuing ordained ministry in the hopes that I might serve God in that capacity.

As I have completed theological training, I have come to appreciate the fullness of what Jesus does for us. He comes down among us. He lives like us and shares our experiences. He understands what we go through. After all of that he sacrifices himself so that we might not have to fear a life without God anymore and instead are invited with open arms into God's kingdom where we can experience the fullness of what God has created us for.

At the end of this journey, I feel well equipped to serve in ordained ministry and look forward to seeing how God might continue to lead me in the future.

Benjamin Gresik



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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because I have experienced God's call in my life both internally and through others. I feel that my skills in communication and in interpersonal relationships are well suited to ordained ministry. I am seeking candidacy in the CRCNA because it has a rich theological tradition which speaks to the challenges and questions that people have and responds thoughtfully to those challenges without being dismissive.

Benjamin Gresik



*Name:* Elias Groenendyk

*Place of Birth:* Pella, Iowa

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Northwestern College  
B.A., Major: History, Minor:  
Religion, 2013

Trinity Evangelical  
Divinity School  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Trinity International University  
Football Coach,  
Fall 2015-2017

Small Group Leader,  
2016-2018

Honduras trip for All God's  
Children with Orland Park  
CRC, January 2017

Orland Park CRC  
Orland Park, Illinois  
January 2018 - June 2018

*Contact:*

515-745-3612  
eli.groov@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God," (2 Cor. 5:21). The Great Exchange is why I am committed to Christ and why I love sharing the gospel of Jesus with others. I confidently believe my sins were nailed upon the cross with the perfect God-man because he wanted me to be an adopted son in God's family. I desperately need that grace like anyone else because I have been a repeat covenant breaker of Yahweh's First Word, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exo. 20:3). Even though I was born to Christian parents, have two older brothers, live in a peaceful, small town in Iowa, I have struggled with multiple idols through which Satan has tried to snatch me: basketball, acceptance, myself, girls, grades, technology, football, and now, ironically, ministry success. These are good things created by God, but they are just that, created things, not the Creator, and they have certainly eclipsed my devotion to Jesus at times. But as I still love to sing from *In Christ Alone*, "No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand."

The Lord has purified my faith by the refining fire of suffering. The divorce of my parents, the death of my friend's baby, the near-death of my baby nephew and other tough times have been used by God to make me more dependent on him. I share my sufferings to highlight God's strength in my life, for without the peace Christ gives me, I would crumble in weakness. The seeds of the gospel that were planted in me by my parents, brothers, Christian schools and church took root during these moments of pain. The Lord sovereignly placed people in my life to comfort me and to disciple me.

Now I am on a mission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," (Mat. 28:19-20). My hope is to encourage Christ followers in their adventures and call sojourners to faith in Christ through strong relationships. Ministry experiences such as preaching, facilitating Bible studies, leading small groups, youth pastoring, drumming in praise teams and participating in community service projects have confirmed my call to be a pastor in the body of Christ.

My big ministry dream is to witness the Holy Spirit draw many people to a committed relationship with Christ and to baptize many infants and adults into the family of the triune God. I want to hear how God's grace has changed their lives and equipped them to go and make disciples of others. If the Lord wills, I would love to be in the sending church of multiple church plants in surrounding communities. I want to continue to learn from effective church leaders such as DA Carson, Timothy Keller, and Lecrae Moore on how to proclaim the good news of Jesus in our contemporary American context through our words and actions. If any of this happens, glory be to God. If none of this happens, glory be to God. Either way, my goal is to be intentional about doing the Lord's will in my life.

Elias Groenendyk

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*Statement of Reason*

I am who I am because of the work God has done through the Christian Reformed Church. From my infant baptism on, I have been in reformed churches, schools, and circles my entire life. Some people don't care about their roots, but I do, and the CRC is mine. The CRC's impact on my family goes farther back than my parents. I am a family history junkie and our commitment to reformed churches goes back generations. I say this not to brag about my family, but to brag about how God has been faithful to my ancestors through the reformed tradition. Currently, the CRC is not the biggest denomination, but I love how our creeds and confessions anchor us in God's Word and the gospel of Jesus when the winds and waves of culture try to batter us away from the truth. I have committed myself to become a pastor in the CRC and my wife, Hannah, and I are excited to see where our adventure for Christ takes us next.

Elias Groenendyk



*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:* 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  
ernestojoehdz@gmail.com

### *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:* 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*

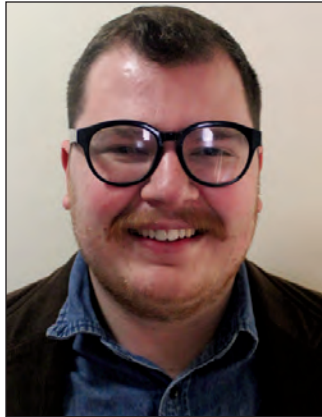
I was blessed to have been born into a God-honoring family with a father who is a CRC minister and planted multiple Korean-American CRC churches in Southern California and in Holland, Michigan. While my personal history is rooted in the ways of the Lord with a ministry-intensive upbringing, I estranged 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:* Chadd Huizenga

*Place of Birth:* Highland, Indiana

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Trinity Christian College  
B.A. History and Theology,  
2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services  
Grand Rapids, MI  
May 2016 - August 2016

Trinity CRC  
Artesia, CA  
May 2017 - August 2017

Creston CRC  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
August 2017 – May 2018

*Contact:*

219-576-4074  
chaddhuizenga@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in the One Triune God who calls us into a personal connection with him through his church. I believe in the God the Father who created and sustains all things by his loving hand. I believe in the God the Son, Jesus Christ who is fully God and fully human. He took the punishment of our sins by death on the cross and was resurrected to conquer death and meditate to Father on our behalf. Christ has called us into the ministry of reconciliation and to be in community with him and his church through one Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe in God the Holy Spirit, who resides in us Christians to guide the universal church and uses the church to bring more people into covenant with God by instilling faith in the elect.

I was born and baptized into a Christian Reformed Church. My family has been members of the CRC as long as they have been in the United States, so for me, the CRC has always been part of my identity. I grew up going to church twice a Sunday and went to reformed schools during the week. Church was not just something that we attended on Sunday, we volunteered our time to the church as well. So that meant going to Sunday School every Sunday and being in cadets and youth group throughout the week. If the church had an event, my family was going to be there, and we were probably helping run the event. Church was a huge part of my life and my identity.

I professed my faith as a Freshman in high school. During the membership class, my pastor told us about the 5 points of Calvinism, a.k.a. TULIP. I remember learning about why our church was different than other churches. I had remembered hearing about the Heidelberg Catechism as a child but not really knowing what these things meant. Even as a freshman, something about the five points of Calvinism made me hungry for more. I wanted to know more about why my faith, the faith I was born into, was different from others. I learned about John Calvin, and what he believed about particular things. I learn about Abraham Kuyper, and how he had been so influential in the faith of my grandfather. Over the four years of high school, I learned more and more about what the Reformed faith meant, not just what we believed about salvation. And as a senior in high school, I took a special church education class with some adults and my pastor where we learned what it meant to be Reformed. More than salvation, and more than predestination. I learned that being Reformed was a whole system of beliefs. Beliefs that thinkers and church people have been learning from the Bible and each other of how best we can understand who God is to love and serve him.

I grew into my faith in high school by learning what the CRC does well as a church, and what we have traditionally believed. I found that the Creeds and Confessions were answers to many of the questions I had been wondering about. The Reformed tradition gave me a framework for understanding that this great big powerful God loves and cares for me deeply. God has a plan for my life to succeed in loving him in gratitude for what he has done for me. He provides the support through the church and a way to use the gifts that he has given me. The Reformed view gave me the best framework for how to live my life in gratitude for all the my God has given to me.

Chadd Huizenga

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*Statement of Reason*

My name is Chadd Huizenga, and I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. I have felt called to enter into ministry for some time now. I started to get a sense of my call to ministry during my time in college, after exploring my call with many people and having the opportunity to explore different ministry experiences in seminary. I am more convinced than ever that I am called for ministry. My reason for seeking ministry in the Christian Reformed Church is because I love what the CRC stands for. The CRC straddles a church landscape that is becoming increasingly sectarian. The CRC maintains a moderate tradition that represents to the greater church that we can worship together while holding different beliefs. It's a church that is committed to its theological beliefs and traditions but is willing to wrestle with the issues of today. It is a church I want to continue being a part of.

Chadd Huizenga



*Name:* Steven M. Hull

*Place of Birth:* Beaver Dam,  
Wisconsin

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Kuyper College  
B.S. in Educational Ministry &  
Bible and Theology, 2007

Grand Valley State University  
Master of Education, 2008

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Fairway Christian  
Reformed Church  
Jenison, Michigan  
September 2015 - August 2017

*Contact:*

262-309-9073  
vanthull@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Today we like things that grab our attention. Adjectives like epic, ultimate and extreme are tossed around. No one really wants to be ordinary. When telling faith stories, I hear people say, “my story is not anything special.” We desire lives that are filled with something extraordinary. The reality is, God works often in the ordinary and in the mundane things of life. For me that’s how my faith developed. The ordinary life for me was attending church once on Wednesday and twice on Sunday. Bible classes and Sunday school was a part of my rhythm of life. At some point in my life faith needed to transfer from a routine to something dwelling in my heart.

The transition seemed to happen by accident on an ordinary Wednesday evening. That night I attended youth group and went to the local ice-cream shop just like every other week. In the process of bringing some friends home, a car crash changed and interrupted the ordinary day. Christ came to me that night in the form of a friend’s father. He extended his arms and embraced me. To him it may have been ordinary hug, but for me it was comfort in a time when I did not deserve any. It was a hug which took the faith that was in my head and brought it to my heart.

Without experiencing this grace my life would not be the same. Since that day God has directed my life to use talents, passions, and skills to further his kingdom. I felt God’s call and attended Kuyper College and also intended to attend seminary after graduating. Instead of attending seminary after graduation, I felt I needed more life experience in order to pastor a church. In doing so, my path detoured slightly. I graduated with a Master of Education at Grand Valley State University in 2008 and found myself selling skis and patio furniture for a time while my wife worked in full-time ministry. Though I was not in my intended vocation, I realized that this job gave me an opportunity to speak into the lives of many different people. In my ordinary day to day life, God gave me a front row seat to experience how an extraordinary God works through the ordinary.

During the years prior to attending seminary, my wife and I would experience and walk along others during difficult times: deaths of close friends and church members, losses of employment and insecure futures, losses of marriages and experiences of heartbreak. God gave us an opportunity to learn compassion for the hurting and he also worked at confirming the gifts he had in both of us. After I was ordained as a commissioned pastor in Grand Junction, Colorado, God continued develop gifts of preaching and pastoral care. Then God did what I thought was extraordinary. He paved a way for my family to move to Calvin Seminary and pursue education of a fulltime basis. My prayer is that people come to know a God that loves them deeply, even when they don’t deserve it. I also pray that we as followers of Christ realize that everything we do is a witness to our hope—even those things that seem ordinary.

Steven Hull

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*Statement of Reason*

I seek candidacy as an opportunity to affirm the internal call that I have felt to pastoral ministry. This call was initially confirmed through ordination as a commissioned pastor in Classis Rocky Mountain. During that time God developed gifts and a desire to pursue a ministry of preaching and administering sacraments in order that people may experience God's grace and God's love. The pursuing of candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church will provide an opportunity for the call on my life to be matched with the credentials of the denomination in which I hope to serve. I pray that as people recognize and experience the love of the Father and that they may grow by the indwelling of the Spirit to become more like Christ.

Steven Hull



*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.

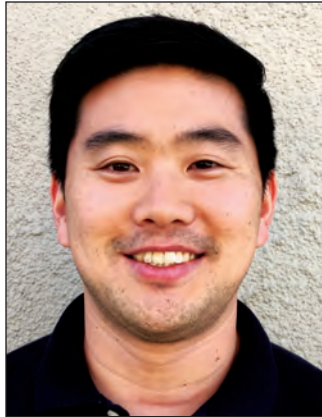
Joseph Y. Hwang

### *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:* Albert Kae

*Place of Birth:* Bellflower, California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of California,  
Berkeley  
B.S., Electrical Engineering and  
Computer Science, 2006

Fuller Theological Seminary,  
Pasadena  
M.Div., 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Methodist Hospital of  
Southern California  
Arcadia, California  
June 2013 - August 2013

Orange Korean Christian  
Reformed Church  
Fullerton, California  
January 2015 - August 2015

Union Rescue Mission  
Los Angeles, California  
November 2015 - March 2016

Faith Community Christian  
Reformed Church  
Fullerton, California  
January 2016 - March 2017

*Languages spoken:* Korean, English

*Contact:*

951-454-9449  
albert.kae@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Growing up in a loving Christian family complicates my testimony. I cannot point to a single moment when I gave my life to the Lord. I do not have an “amazing” conversion story. In fact, I envied those that experienced a radical conversion because that is what I felt was missing in my life. I figured that I, too, needed a drastic transformation in order to change the world and to live a fuller life for God. My prayer throughout most of my life was for a deeper conviction and a greater passion for God’s glory. This was a struggle that led me to wrestle with myself and God! It was not until God revealed himself to me more fully in Jesus Christ—and the theology of the cross—that I began to experience God’s transformative grace in everyday encounters.

Though I was raised in a local CRC church, I did not fall in love with theology and ministry until I left home for college. At Berkeley, I was heavily involved in campus ministry. My college pastor encouraged me to read systematic theology, which allowed me to grow in knowledge and insight. I also had the opportunity to hone my leadership and teaching gifts—gifts I never knew I had. Yet, I still felt a burning passion was missing in my life. No matter what I read or did in church was enough to satisfy my hunger. I needed more. I even prayed to God that I would do great feats of ministry to glorify God’s name, not knowing that I was actually asking God to glorify my own works instead. I, then, figured I needed a deeper knowledge of God’s grace through my own drastic transformation (like Paul or Augustine). After graduating and working as a software consultant, I foolishly sought after the pleasures of this world. I tested God by sinning—in greater depths of depravity—to see if his grace would abound. This destructive path led me to a place of brokenness and shame.

A turning point came when a CRC pastor helped me to see the cruciform God. Through his discipleship, I came to know God through the lens of the cross rather than an abstract notion of glory. I realized Jesus of Nazareth lifted God up in glory precisely by being lifted up on a cross in shame. At first, I had difficulty accepting this simple response to my lifelong search. I knew Jesus was always the Sunday school answer, but it did not seem like the profound answer that I have been searching for in books, achievements and pleasures. But that was because I still felt that I owed God a life full of passion in which I glorified his name with grand gestures. But this image of God was created from my own misperceptions and fears (i.e. parents’ expectations) as well as cultural influences and worldviews (i.e. worldly power and wisdom). God does not need my passion because Jesus fulfilled everything on my behalf through his passion on the cross. So the Father is already pleased with me, in Christ. I do not need an “amazing” conversion or life testimony to prove anything. I was simply called to experience and delight in Christ in my day-to-day “ordinary” life and ministry.

Now, I simply ask the Holy Spirit to make Jesus’ presence more tangible to me in every moment and encounter. I believe Christ reveals his presence through the promise he makes in the Gospels. For example, he makes his presence known in the church and in the sacraments (Matt. 26:26-28, 28:19-20) when we serve those who are suffering and in the margins (Matt. 25:31-46) and during moments of reconciliation and



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

prayer (Matt. 18:15-20). I have been blessed to experience Jesus in these three specific ways. First, my church consistory confirmed my passion for theology and my gifts for ministry, and they encouraged me to attend seminary while serving the church. Church ministry has given me so many opportunities to taste and touch Jesus, especially in moments of worship and prayer. Second, I was lovingly challenged to apply to my first CPE program at a local hospital. I encountered Jesus through sacred moments with suffering patients and the loved ones of those who were on their deathbeds. Third, as a chaplain at the Union Rescue Mission, I was able to witness amazing transformations of broken and oppressed people seeking reconciliation. In raw moments of confession, I have participated in the work that only Jesus can bring about.

Though I never took part in a grand and dramatic conversion story—at least not in the way I grew up wanting—my life has been full of transformative events. Throughout my life, God has shown me the deep mystery of who he is in and through the cross. These glimpses of revelation keep surprising me in the everyday experiences of my life, whether I am at home with my wife or with strangers in ministry. I am blessed by Jesus during worship and prayer at church during intense moments with those in pain and in the margins, and during profound and difficult struggles for restoration and reconciliation. That is why I keep falling in love with Jesus and with ministry. My hope is that I continue to encounter Jesus and to be renewed and converted again and again.

Albert Kae

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because Christ works primarily through his body, the Church, and I believe our Father has graciously called me to encounter him by participating in Christ's ministry through his Spirit. God has been leading me to places of brokenness (and death!) so that I can witness the transforming power of the cross and resurrection. And he has instilled in me a desire to be part of a local church that longs to demonstrate his love and radical hospitality—where hearts are restored, lives are renewed and communities reconciled. I want to live into the gospel story that promises that all our prayers and hopes are fulfilled in Christ.

Albert Kae



*Name:* Timothy Keep

*Place of Birth:* Kingston, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College  
B.A. Theology, 2009

Calvin Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Visalia CRC  
Visalia, California  
September 2016 - May 2017

Harvest EFC  
Beaver Dam, WI  
May 2017 - June 2017

*Contact:*

559-623-5886  
timkeep@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Like all faith journeys, mine is filled with moments of God's intervention – his using people and circumstances – to draw me to him. My parents did not grow up as Christians of having much positive exposure to the church. But God used the pastor of a small country church to move in our family's life. The pastor was our neighbor, and he invited us to his church; my parents started attending with four young kids in tow. It really wasn't until my older brother told us that he had accepted Christ, that our whole family sort of realized, "Hey, I think we believe this. We're Christians now."

We began looking for places to learn and grow. We bounced around churches a little bit, we attended every tent revival meeting we could find, and we watched *That the World May Know* with Ray Vander Laan to learn all we could about this faith. My parents knew they didn't have all the answers to our questions of faith, and readily acknowledged that we were all learning together.

Providentially, a Christian teacher in a public school had a desire to start a Christian school in our little town. When I was in Grade 2, this little non-denominational Christian school opened and became one of the foundations for my knowledge of Scripture and faith.

Eventually, we did settle into a small church community, where I learned at a young age that giving to and serving God's church was an important part of the Christian life. My faith grew slowly and had stages of development. One of these stages was during high school. My elementary school did not have a high school. So, we found a Christian high school some 30 minutes away. My understanding of faith grew through classes, certainly, but primarily through distinct friendships. I learned how faith changed the way I related to others. I learned what it means for Christians to build one another up in the faith; I learned what it means for iron to sharpen iron.

During high school, I faced certain struggles and frustrations about the church, faith, God; about learning, asking questions and purpose. I knew I believed in the truth of God and his saving work in Christ, but I didn't always see the church (or Christians) as capable of addressing some of my concerns. What I didn't know I was searching for was some basic grasp of theology. At Redeemer University College, in my first year, I was introduced for the first time to a Reformed approach to reading the Bible. I was introduced to a Christian approach to business and science. Things I had never been shown before, and it reinvigorated my love for and faith in God. I transferred to Dordt College the following year and was introduced to the works of John Calvin in *The Institutes*. I could not believe someone had written so much on the Christian faith in such an organized and logical form.

Studying theology gave me a way to learn more about who God is and who I am in his world. It gave me a way to talk about my faith in him and share it with others. While in college, through study, relationships with professors and friendships with peers, I learned about prayer, sphere sovereignty, lament, doubt, the Bible and so much more.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

God has also used my wife, Bethany, to teach me and grow me in faith. Having grown up in the CRC, she had rootedness that I had never known. Through our marriage, God continues to prune me and shape me. We moved to Visalia, California in 2009. We left both our families on the other side of the country to become a part of Visalia CRC. God has used this church family to grow my faith as well. We have been taught how to be the body of Christ, to love and care for others, to enfold new members into the community. We have learned that our God is the great provider and comforter.

One element of my faith journey that I'm most excited about is that my kids (and my sibling's kids) will grow up with a history and tradition of faith. They'll be able to look at their parents and grandparents and trace a lineage of grace. It's an amazing sight to see God's blessings passed down from generation to generation.

Timothy Keep

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church, because of the call to ministry God has for my life. A mentor of mine once said of becoming a pastor, "Don't do this, unless you have to." That has resonated with me. I never had ambitions to become a pastor. In truth, I've sought out other potential fields of work and study, but have always returned to the sense that I could not find my purpose elsewhere. I believe God has called me to serve his church in ministry. I am also incredibly grateful for what the CRC has provided me in terms of theological richness and history. I have been blessed by ministries of the CRC, by pastors of the CRC and by education in the CRC. If I am to serve God as a pastor, I would love to serve him in the CRC as an expression of gratitude that God used the CRC in my faith journey.

Timothy Keep



*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:* Darren Kornelis

*Place of Birth:* Visalia, California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A., Religion, 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Crossroads Church

Vienna, Austria

June 2015 - July 2015

Coopersville CRC

Coopersville, MI

June 2016 - August 2016

Central Avenue CRC

Holland, MI

June 2017 - August 2017

*Contact:*

559-909-2939

dck019@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in the core doctrines of the Christian faith as expressed in the Reformed tradition. More specifically, as expressed in Christian Reformed denomination. In other words, I confidently adhere to the CRC's three ecumenical creeds: the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasius creeds, as well as, the CRC's three forms of unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

I adhere to this tradition and these creeds and confessions not simply because this is the tradition in which I was brought up, but because the Holy Spirit has testified within me that in these creeds and confessions lies the truth of the gospel.

Thus, I echo with these creeds and confessions that there is only one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). I believe the Father sent his only eternally begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to his people here on earth to atone for our sins and the sins of the world on the cross. That three days later, God the Father raised Jesus Christ up from the grave to new life securing for us a resurrection like Christ's. I believe that the Holy Spirit now lives within me in such a way that it is daily conforming me more and more into the likeness of Christ, preserving me to the very end.

I echo with these creeds and confessions. This gospel is revealed to me in the Bible, the divinely inspired word of God. Everything I need to know concerning my salvation is clearly taught within God's word. And again, I accept the Bible as true because the Holy Spirit has convicted me of its truth and reliability by its witness to me.

I echo with the creeds and confessions that there is one Holy catholic Church of which Christ is the head. Christ is the head and we are the body. As the body, Christ has ordained his body/church to be his hands and feet in the world. Empowered by the Spirit, Christ has ordained the church with task of continuing the work he started here on earth.

This is my Christian Commitment, and the journey by which I got here was a slow and steady one. Nonetheless it was nurtured by my family, church and Christian education.

In reflecting upon my journey, I can see now that it began when I was in elementary school. Already in elementary school my favorite subject was the Bible, and this continued all the way in to high school.

However, when I enrolled at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I wanted to study something else. I knew that studying Bible and theology would lead me towards seminary and a career in ministry. While I loved studying Bible and theology, I didn't want to take this route. It was too intimidating for me, and I didn't think I was qualified.

But yet unsatisfied with all other studies, I couldn't resist. I turned to what I loved most which was Bible and theology. In 2013, I graduated from Calvin College with BA in Religion.

Still though, I didn't want to go to seminary. I didn't want to become a pastor. I was still too scared and still felt inadequate and unqualified. Thus, after college, I took a job at a manufacturing company in Michigan. But yet after seven months of working at this company, certain

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

events took place which led me to Calvin Seminary to finally give into to this call to ministry.

Although I tried to run away from this calling, God wouldn't let me. God has brought me to Calvin Seminary and ever since has only affirmed my calling. He took away my self-doubt and lack of confidence. Therefore, bringing to a close this testimony of my "faith journey and Christian commitment". I see no better way of ending it by saying "God is good".

Darren Kornelis

*Statement of Reason*

I, Darren Kornelis, desire to be ordained in the Christian Reformed Church in order to fulfill the calling that has been placed on me by God. This calling, I believe, began in my younger days as a child and has blossomed into a firm knowledge ever since. I seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because, not only do I love the church universal, but I love the Christian Reformed Church, its history and its expression of the Christian faith. I appreciate how the Christian Reformed Church is rooted in gospel centered creeds, confessions, the gospel itself, and its working out of the one gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Darren Kornelis



*Name:* Debra J. Koster

*Place of Birth:* Zeeland, Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Muskegon Community College  
L.P.N., 1987

Muskegon Community College  
R.N., 1990

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
Roseland CRC  
Chicago, IL  
February 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*  
708-570-3980  
deb@koster.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Christian home where Christ's love was modeled and taught. I accepted Jesus as my savior from the time I was a young child dreaming of growing up to be a missionary. I made a public profession of faith at age 16 and looked forward to serving God's kingdom. I chose nursing as a career path and worked as a registered nurse for more than twenty years. My favorite aspect of being a nurse was caring for people at the bedside and helping them find God's comfort amid their struggles.

After graduating from nursing school, I married my high school sweetheart, a committed Christian man, who has encouraged me to develop the gifts God has given to me. My husband and I have three children, whom we have raised to love and serve the Lord. I have been blessed to be the mom to these awesome kids, and my great joy is that they have all professed their faith and are living lives of service to God.

In 2000, an opportunity presented itself to move our family to Massachusetts. My husband and I strongly felt God's leading and provision as we made the decision to relocate. We learned a lot during our years outside of the Christian Reformed Church community. Our eyes opened to the deep pain of a world without Christ. I enjoyed having many opportunities to share my faith. Having grown up in the Christian Reformed Church, I took for granted the richness of our creeds and confessions. I came to appreciate the depth of discipleship offered by the Christian Reformed Church.

Our path led us back to Michigan in 2002 for my husband to attend Calvin Seminary to get his M.Div. I began taking classes at the seminary myself, God awoke in me a desire for learning and I began to explore ministry options. I initially looked at pursuing counseling as it is a part of my giftedness, but I bumped up against obstacles that caused me to reconsider that path. Leading a women's retreat one weekend, I enjoyed opening God's word and having a front row seat to the work of the Holy Spirit. God showed me in that moment that the passion I possessed for proclamation was the calling I was to nurture.

After Steven's seminary graduation, we were led to Illinois where he became the English language minister for Back to God Ministries International. I was blessed with the opportunity to turn my lay ministry into a job in 2010 and began a marriage and family ministry at BTGMI. I still work as a producer for our *Family Fire* program, which is one of the six programs produced by ReFrame Media, the English language ministry of Back to God. It is a blessing to encourage thousands each week in their family relationships.

My preaching internship was in an inner-city ministry on the Southside of Chicago in an all African-American community. I have such a deep love for that congregation and they have challenged me to seek God's heart for justice in caring for the marginalized. In this congregation, I discovered my pastoral identity and learned much about caring for a congregation.

It has been a leap of faith for me to follow God's leading on this seminary path as God has been preparing me for ministry. I have faced opposition to my presence in ministry because of my gender and it has

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

been challenging to persist at times. I am thankful to God and to my family who have carried me through difficult seasons of discouragement and challenging me to embrace my ministry calling.

Debra Koster

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because God has placed this ministry calling upon my heart. I am passionate about helping people to discover the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. In addition to this internal call, I have had many people encourage me to pursue the pastorate. I dismissed my ministry calling for a long time doubting my giftedness and having no experience of seeing women in ministry. I came to the seminary with great hesitation being obedient to God while I doubted myself. Through my ministry training, God has affirmed my gifts and calling at every turn. As I minister to others, I have developed a pastoral identity. I am learning to embrace the calling that God has given to me. God has blessed me with the opportunity to serve his kingdom each week through marriage and family ministry. I love God's church, and I look forward to serving through ordained ministry.

Debra Koster



*Name:* Noah J. Kruis

*Place of Birth:* Detroit, Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College  
B.S., Biology & Spanish,  
Secondary Education  
Certification, 2004

McCormick Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Chicago Regional Organizing  
for Antiracism (CROAR)  
Chicago, Illinois  
Sept 2016 - May 2017

*Languages spoken:* Spanish, English

*Contact:*

616-450-5127  
noah.kruis@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My grandfather answered a call to serve as a missionary for the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) among the Navajo people of Northeast Arizona and Northwest New Mexico. The red rock formations on that mission field became a childhood home to my father and later to me. I made my profession of faith in my local congregation, Bethany CRC in Gallup, New Mexico at the age of 12. I attended Rehoboth Christian School from kindergarten to 12th grade and later attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids Michigan.

Arriving at Calvin was a bit of a culture shock, and I soon found my place in spaces dedicated to cultivating diverse community and racial justice. A mentor at Calvin taught me to be a critical lover of institutions, identifying areas for needed change and working towards that end.

So, my career began at my alma mater recruiting students from under-represented populations and later equipping students for reciprocal service in the community to augment their classroom learning.

Meanwhile, I married Megan and together we committed ourselves to engagement in a small urban congregation, Creston CRC, and living in community in that working-class neighborhood. With our church, we founded an intentional community house for college students. We are also raising three children together: Jonah (10), Eden (9), and Samuel (3).

As I learned more about the history of our country and the church from an anti-racism lens, I came to acknowledge my family's complicity in the cultural genocide of Native Americans. This took place specifically through the Indian Boarding School where I was a K-12 student. I have been on a journey of deep discipleship in recognizing ways in which my faith has been co-opted by the idolatry of white supremacy, confessing and repenting for my part in the sin of systemic racism, lamenting its effects on all people in our society. Yet, I draw hope and joy from the redemptive power of Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in my life and in the lives of others. I feel a strong calling to engage in the work of racial justice in the church.

My family moved to Chicago where I attended McCormick Theological Seminary. My experience there offered me the opportunity to gain a theological education alongside a diverse student body. I was also able to do my field placement with Chicago Regional Organizing for Anti-racism (CROAR), through which I was able to work with church communities committed to anti-racism work. This has opened the door for continued work with CROAR's parent organization: Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training.

With Crossroads, I have begun the work of internal organizing towards anti-racism work in the CRCNA and other Christian contexts. I am hopeful that this will include opportunities to participate in efforts to confront the history of my family and my denomination among the Navajo people in a way that leads towards healing and racial justice.

Noah Kruis

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because of a strong sense that my call to the work of racial justice involves a calling to “proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and equip the members so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built up” (CRCNA Church Order, Article 11). I believe strongly that God’s Word describes the way sin has corrupted our humanity such that on our own we are incapable of living into the vision of God’s Kingdom. Our members need to be equipped by the Holy Spirit with the tools for discipleship that allow us to die to ourselves and follow Christ into abundant life. In order for the church to be built up, we must first recognize and include the gifts of all God’s image-bearing children. While I don’t sense that my call is to a traditional pulpit where CRCNA members typically imagine a Minister of the Word, I do sense that my call is vital to our church and fitting with the description of a Minister of the Word.

Noah Kruis





*Name:* Marcel Kuiper

*Place of Birth:* Heerenveen Fr.,  
The Netherlands

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Heritage Seminary/College  
B.A., Religious Studies, 2013

Heritage Seminary/College  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Fellowship CRC  
St. Thomas, Ontario  
September 2015 - April 2016

*Languages spoken:* Dutch, Frisian,  
English

*Contact:*  
519-281-2949  
marsje09@hotmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in the Netherlands during the 70s in a church that was declining and becoming more and more liberal in its doctrinal stance, for the sake of inclusivity. In 1983, at the age of 13, I immigrated with my family to Canada. In Netherlands we attended the *Gereformeerde kerk*, so naturally, we attended the CRC in Aylmer our new-found hometown.

God's hand has always been on my life. Silently, I always had an unspoken desire to become a pastor. Emigrating from the Netherlands during my early teens was one of the most difficult experiences in my life. God met me in a surreal way at the age of twenty-three during the lowest point of my life, and he assured me of his unconditional love. During that time, my wife and I started a very successful "Teen club" at our church. We moved to St. Thomas in 1999 and joined Fellowship CRC. At the age of 29 I was asked to serve as an elder. This felt like an overwhelming responsibility. A brother in the Lord reminded me that it was Christ living in me that would minister to others. Serving among other brothers in the Kingdom of God was a great blessing to me. Dealing with spiritual issues and praying for people and bringing them comfort was very edifying for me. The council that I served with recognized that I had a gifting for pastoral ministry. This eventually propelled me to pursue my Bachelor of Religious Studies and moved me now into finishing my Master of Divinity.

I adhere to the confession of the Apostles Creed which proclaims One Holy Universal Church; that is, the true Christian church of all times, in all places. The ones who belong to the church of Christ, have been baptized into the faith and share the Lord's Supper, professing unity and doctrine and love. There is oneness in the understanding of God's Word, as it is being exhorted and proclaimed, so that we can serve and minister the instructions that are exhorted. I believe that although we believe in the invisible Church of all believers, we are to find communion within the visible church. I believe that the visible church testifies to the coming reality of the Kingdom of God and that the heralding of the Word and the proclamation thereof always results in the glorification of God. I believe that the Holy Spirit directs the church according to the present reign of Christ while heading towards the eschatological reality of the sovereign reign of God. I believe that reconciliation is the heart of the gospel, is extended to us by the redeeming work of the cross and that the church is to do the redeeming work through the power of the Spirit made tangible through the works of the saints. For this reason, I believe we are sent out into the world to evangelize and proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Marcel Kuiper

### *Statement of Reason*

My reason for seeking candidacy is that I believe that this is the way that I can have the greatest impact within the CRC and ultimately in God's Kingdom. In the Christian Reformed Church, emphasis is placed on education and formal training. Therefore, I believe that it is crucial that I honor the system that is endorsed locally, and by extension, the

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

broader assemblies. The process is as much about me being prepared for ministry as it is about being accountable to the larger body. The road to ordination is as much about me, as it is about the church whom entrust to me, the privilege of serving them. The call to ministry was placed in my heart by the Holy Spirit, the moment it was placed in my heart, it became irrevocable. And because of my love for Christ, I can do no other then serve and love Christ and His people to the glory of God the Father.

Marcel Kuiper



*Name:* Todd Kuperus

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College  
B.A., Psychology, 1995

Calvin Theological Seminary  
MA: Educational Ministry, 1999

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Approved M.Div. equivalent,  
2018

*Internships:*  
Pastor of Youth, Music, and  
Outreach  
Ideal Park CRC  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
1995-1999

*Contact:*  
231-667-0181  
pastortkup@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

In God's providence, I was born to two very godly parents who instilled in me an understanding of God and his grace through Jesus Christ as well as a deep love for the church. Dinner table conversations often revolved around our faith or biblical and theological discussions. Through both church and christian school, God used teachers, leaders and counselors to challenge me to grow in my faith and in my knowledge of and love for God, his Son, and his Word.

When I attended Calvin Seminary in the late '90s, pursuing a MA in Educational Ministry, my mind and heart were stretched in whole new ways, especially through the Biblical studies classes. In these classes, God opened my eyes to see his greatness, beauty, majesty and sovereignty in ways that I had never really seen before. To see how all of Scripture was screaming out the glory and sovereignty of God was something that opened my heart to treasure him and love him all the more.

As I entered into youth ministry, I found the old adage that 'you learn best by teaching' to be so true. And not only did I learn best by teaching, but I found that, through the study that I had to do in preparation for Catechism classes and youth group lessons, I came to more fully understand and appreciate the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection and therefore came to more and more love Jesus Christ. I can remember teaching through the Catechism's section on the Apostles' Creed and being overwhelmed with how these doctrines truly "benefit" and "comfort" me. During these years, I was discovering that my faith was growing most when I would focus again and again on the grace of God shown us through Christ—how Jesus took our place on the cross, gave us his righteousness, was raised again victorious over death and ascended to the right hand of God where he intercedes for us and rules and reigns until he will come again.

I continue to be amazed at how my faith is challenged, shaped, developed and encouraged through the Church. I am so thankful for the Body of Christ and what it means to be part of the family of God. As I seek to shepherd the flock that God has placed under my care, I am grateful that God continues to use my own family and the family of faith to strengthen my own faith. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Todd Kuperus

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking Candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because after twenty years in youth ministry, I believe that God has called me into the ministry of Word and Sacrament. I believe that it is a great privilege to be able to proclaim God's Word, and I am honored to have been given the opportunity to do that as a Commissioned Pastor. I am seeking Candidacy as a Minister of the Word because I believe this process has helped me to be better equipped to preach the Word and to serve people, and being ordained as a Minister of the Word will also give me greater opportunities to serve not only the local church but also the denomination as a whole.

Todd Kuperus



*Name:* Benjamin Landegent

*Place of Birth:* Primghar, Iowa

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Northwestern College  
B.A., 2005

Sioux Falls Seminary  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships*

Youth Pastor Sanborn First  
Reformed Church  
Sandborn, Iowa  
2006 - 2010

Mescalero Apache Reservation  
at Mescalero Reformed Church  
Mescalero Apache Reservation,  
New Mexico  
2005 - 2006, 2010 - 2014

Sunnyslope Christian  
Reformed Church  
Salem, Oregon  
2015 - 2018

*Contact:*

503-507-9939  
blandegent@yahoo.com

*Faith Journey*

My life has been a redemption story of God's mercy. I was baptized, as an infant, by parents who believed that the promise of forgiveness of sins was for them and their children. I grew up in a Christian home with a father who was a Reformed pastor. My childhood was one of Christian discipleship, Bible reading, prayer and devotion to the body of Christ. Yet, years later, I found myself struggling as a young man with a rebellious attitude. I was trying to follow God by willing myself to do so. In God's mercy, He swept me into spiritual rebirth. God moved to draw me into new life in Christ. It was, as they say, amazing grace. I was a sinner, and yet I experienced the love of Christ, and the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The wages of my sin was death. Yet the gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6). This gift has brought great gratitude and humbleness to my life. I had nothing, but because of God's great love, I was not consumed. Where I didn't belong, I now belong body and soul to Jesus Christ, my Lord.

In high school I had a chance to go on a mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico. One night, I was sitting out in the open air following a time of worship. In that place I heard the Lord speak that I was set apart for ministry. That call drew me into the new direction God was taking me. I went to a small Christian college in 2001 and got involved in religion classes, music and theatre. In the summer before my senior year, I went on a missional summer of service to Mongolia. Coming back from that trip, the missional call over my life was renewed by the Holy Spirit.

When I left college in 2005, I followed that call and went to the Mescalero Apache Reservation to work at a Reformed Church in American mission. I didn't realize it then, but I was about to begin a long road of suffering. Over the following twelve years, I went through a painfully difficult marriage crisis. That story is worth sharing in another way, but needless to say, ministry was mixed with personal suffering. I was on the reservation for five years altogether and a youth pastor for four years in Northwest Iowa. Through these difficult years, I learned to walk in accountability and openness with the body of Christ around me. I learned that I was not alone as the body of Christ supported me, and the Holy Spirit interceded for me with wordless groans when I struggled. I learned to rejoice when facing trial because God was bringing a new perseverance and maturity in me. I learned that when I was weak, in Christ, I was strong.

Throughout these years, God was training and equipping me to continue in ministry. I was trained as a commissioned pastor in the Reformed Church in America. This training continued my awareness that I had a call to pastoral ministry and in 2013, I obeyed God's call to go to seminary.

My five years in seminary have been the hardest years of my life, but God has carried me through. Because of the marriage crisis, I ended up living in Salem, OR. While I had been a part of the RCA prior to this, I joined the CRC after moving to Salem and becoming part of a great congregation. My time in the CRC has been a tremendous time of healing, and I had the support of a loving community of believers when my marriage crisis ended in divorce. I've been able to say with Habakkuk, despite things not working out, "yet I will rejoice in the

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights" (Habakkuk 3). In Christ I found peace that passes understanding.

Ultimately through it all, I've grown to appreciate the Word of God as a Word of authority over my life. I love being in the body of Christ and walking through life with others as disciples of Christ. My life as a disciple comes from being compelled by the love of Christ. I've been compelled forward by the calls that God has placed on my life for missions and ministry, and I'm excited to see where He leads.

Ben Landegent

*Statement of Reason*

The reason I seek candidacy is because the Lord has placed a call on my life in regards to mission and ministry. The love of Christ compels me to obedience in that calling. On a mission trip twenty years ago, I heard the Lord call me to missions. In the years after, I had the privilege of serving as a youth pastor, commissioned pastor at an Apache Reformed mission church and as intern for two years at the Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church. Five years ago I heard the Lord calling me to begin the path towards obtaining a Master of Divinity and ordination. Though the last several years have been difficult in my life due to a personal crisis, the Lord has been faithful to strengthen me and send me soaring on wings like eagles (Isaiah 40). He has confirmed my call, taken me in my brokenness and has done a new thing in me.

I hold fast in seeking candidacy because the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases and his mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3). As the Lord draws us to participate in the Kingdom of God; in Christ I am able to say with Isaiah, "Here I am! send me." I look forward with joy to seeing how the Lord's will plays out in the next years.

Ben Landegent





*Name:* Christopher Lee

*Place of Birth:* Edmonton, Alberta

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

University of Alberta  
B.S., Psychology, 2012

Providence Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships*

Korean Church of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
September 2013 - June 2016

Edmonton Korean Central  
Presbyterian Church  
Edmonton, Alberta  
May 2014 - August 2014

Logos Korean Presbyterian  
Church  
Edmonton, Alberta  
September 2016 - June 2017

mosaicHouse Church  
Edmonton, Alberta  
January 2017 - Present

*Languages spoken:* Korean, English

*Contact:*

204-951-5238  
cleetopher@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in the church, attending as a young boy with my family. Yet, it wasn't until my senior year in high school that I developed my own sense of God. I remember a particular youth retreat in which I prayed fervently and sensed God's presence. However, I was still naïve, lacking the proper biblical knowledge and foundation of God. In my initial understanding of Christ, I did not fully comprehend the magnitude of his grace and would abuse it by indulging in sin. In the following years, in my transition into post-secondary, I slowly started to understand the meaning of having genuine faith.

Although I was attending church on a regular basis and even serving as a Sunday school bible study teacher, I lived for myself the rest of the week. Throughout my first year of University and the first half of my second year I started to embrace a lifestyle of partying which resulted in addiction. Unknowingly, my habit became so severe that I could not break the addiction on my own. At that time, I wanted to completely break my habit with alcohol, the partying lifestyle and not merely reduce them; however, I kept falling back into them. With a simple cry out to God in prayer to help me, he stepped in. Immediately, he began to work in my heart and eliminated the cravings of the empty, self-indulging party lifestyle. God not only began to present himself to me in an experiential way but seemed to be revealing himself profoundly in the people closest to me, in the bible studies at church and through Scripture.

I fell in love with the Lord. He gave me a glimpse of who he was through various means, such as the transforming of my best friend and speaking through his Word. Immediately thereafter, I began to serve Him with the right motives and grabbed at every mission opportunity that I had. God slowly but surely started to work in my heart and started to give me his eyes. Just as I had been a mere Sunday Christian, I started to develop a heart for those who attended church as a Sunday Christian. I began to have a heart for people who did not fully love God in the depths of their hearts. Moreover, I wanted others to understand the reality of the living God, not simply as just some great idea or good feeling, but as truth – with the power to completely transform a person from the clutches of sin and temptation to life and righteousness. As I reflected on the inconsistencies between my life on Sunday and on the rest of the week, I fostered a deep concern for the lives of others around me. I gained passion for peoples' souls, and I began to develop a heightened awareness of the inner lives of others.

My faith journey has been dynamic. To put it succinctly, I would describe it as ongoing construction work on my heart. There have been many game-changing bible verses and passages for me. In particular, the book of James is very close to my heart. In particular, chapters 1 and 2 spoke directly to my heart when I was coming to grips with the magnitude of God's love. After some time in contemplation and discernment, I heeded my pastor's advice to pursue seminary with Providence Theological Seminary. By the grace of God, I completed my M.Div. and now continue God's story in my life through ordination with the CRC.

Christopher Lee



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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because I believe that I am called by God to serve his people through the ministry of chaplaincy, but remain open to other areas of service. In my short, yet deep immersion in the Christian Reformed Church, I can attest that I resonate with the values and convictions of the denomination. I am grateful that my call to ministry is not a matter of personal sentiment, but is coupled with the recognition and affirmation of the church body. I am anxious about the journey ahead to equip God's people, but remain confident in the challenge and support of the broader church community across the denomination.

Christopher Lee



*Name:* Derrick Lee

*Place of Birth:* Edmonton, Alberta

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Northern Alberta Institute  
of Technology  
Diploma in Radio and  
Television Arts (Radio), 2003

Kings University  
B.A. Religion and Theology,  
2013

Taylor Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships*

Freedom Center  
Pentecostal Church  
Youth/technical ministries  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Feb 2000 - Sept 2006

Fort Road Victory Church  
Youth ministries  
Jan 2007 - April 2009

Muir Lake Community  
Alliance Church  
Youth/Technical Ministries  
Stony Plain, Alberta  
Sept 2009-June 2012

Mosaic House Church  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Sept 2015 - June 2018

*Contact:*

780-885-2409  
dekelee@hotmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I grew up in a semi Christian household in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. My father stayed home while my mother went to a Baptist church and took us kids along. I felt like I was made to go. I prayed a prayer asking Jesus into my heart when I was a child at summer camp. When I was 14 my parents divorced and it blindsided me. From that point on, I was no longer made to go to church, and so I stopped. I moved in with my dad and older brother when I began high school. My Dad had strict rules for me, and I would try to break them but there were always consequences. Later on, I thanked him for those rules. They kept me out of a lot of trouble.

Upon high school graduation, I joined the military reserves as a military police officer. I also went to technical school to learn a career in the radio industry as I enjoy listening to music and talking to people. A few years later, in my early 20's, my mother invited me back to a small Pentecostal church in one of the lower income ends of the city. This church changed my life. I knew the gospel story of creation, fall, redemption, but this time, Jesus encountered me. The Holy Spirit came to life and was moving throughout me, throughout Edmonton, and throughout the current world. I began to experience that the Holy Spirit was for all times and all cultures not just the first century Middle East. I got involved with leading the youth group. These were lower income kids who often had single parent homes and no discipline placed on them. There was no one that was speaking life to them. As my faith was coming alive, I discovered that Jesus Christ truly came to save humans from their broken selves, and that it was through Jesus Christ that the world would change for the better. I began scouring influential Christian leaders (Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Winston Churchill) to find a connection between the world changing and the gospel. I also began reading scripture for what it was, a life manual. The church saw the youth group grow from 10 kids to over 100 kids very quickly. Kids were coming because there was something there – God's love in Jesus Christ. I knew that ministry was going to become part of my life, but I never wanted to get paid for it as seeing Jesus changed lives including my own. I wanted to do it pro bono.

While I was working in radio as a producer for three radio stations, Hurricane Katrina happened in 2005. I joined Samaritans Purse for a disaster relief trip. I learned I was not made to sit behind an office desk. I quit my job in radio and did three seasons of wildland firefighting on a rappel crew. The Lord allowed me to have some adventure in my life. I loved the seasonal job but took notice of the people in the job. I saw a need to minister to these people who were hard working but feeling empty inside. During each fall, I went to The King's University for a degree in religion and theology. It was always a goal to have a degree in something, and I enjoyed theology.

God called me into part time youth ministry at an Alliance church in 2009. I loved the kids I worked with, but I was learning some deeply theological and heady things in school that I could not relate to the kids I worked with. I had agreed to work at the church for 3 years and when that time was up I felt it was time to move on. In 2012 I began working for the Alberta Motor Association driving tow truck and helping stranded motorists. Again, I saw a need to meet people with the love of

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Christ. In 2013 I got married, and graduated from King's. My wife and I began attending mosaicHouse Church in Edmonton. I felt the same presence of the Holy Spirit there and my wife felt comfortable as she grew up in the CRC. It was a good fit for both of us.

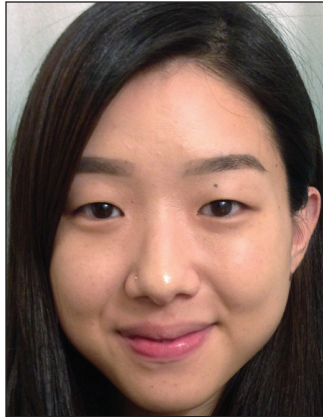
God has given me an exciting and diverse ecumenical journey through some protestant evangelical denominations, but I have come to rest in the CRC. The more I grow to understand what it means to be a Christian with a reformed accent, the more it fits who I am. Within the denomination, there are high churches with a set liturgy as well as low churches whose liturgy is the spontaneous worship of God. I love the diversity. I also love the focus on advanced education. God has created us to grow, learn and wonder. The creeds and confessions give us direction and stability in an ever smaller and polarizing world.

Derrick Lee

*Statement of Reason*

In 2015 my wife and I were at a missions conference when I spotted a couple of military chaplains. I recalled how they had encouraged me as a young soldier so I went to thank them for their service. They began asking me about my education and background. They said if I returned to school for my masters degree, I could become a military chaplain. I sat on this for six months. Was God really calling me into ministry now? I had seen glimpses of life changing ministry by participating in preaching, teaching and discipling other believers throughout my life leading up to that time. In August of 2015, I quit my job and began full time seminary with a goal of full time ministry and chaplaincy after some years of pastoral ministry in the Christian Reformed denomination. In the last few years, I have seen my passion for the vocation of pastor really blossom, and I anticipate how Christ will use me to participate in bringing shalom to the world.

Derrick Lee



*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

[hjr071@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:hjr071@calvinseminary.edu)

### *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:* James Lee

*Place of Birth:* Fountain Valley,  
California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College  
B.A., History 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships*

The New Church of Greater  
New York (RCA)  
Youth and Young Adults  
Minister  
Roslyn Heights, New York  
June 2012 to January 2015

Roosevelt Park Ministries  
Summer Intern  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2015 to August 2015

Korean Grace Christian  
Reformed Church  
English Ministry Lead Pastor  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
August 2015 to May 2018

*Languages spoken:* Korean, English

*Contact:*

616-745-8754  
leejeemin@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

Growing up as a pastor's son, I always thought that Christianity was about following rules and living as a role model. My church friends' parents would use me as an example to compare their children in disciplining how a Christian child should live life. However, as I was getting older, I struggled with my relationship with Christ because I could no longer fit the "perfect Christian mold." I thought I had the upper hand when I could do what I thought pleased God and others, but I began to feel powerless when I faced one of the biggest trials in my life. In high school, I was diagnosed with a spinal disorder called syringomyelia due to a sports injury. I was unable to even do the most common tasks, such as rolling over in bed or sitting comfortably for long periods of time. Because I felt so weak and vulnerable, I felt hopeless. I equated weakness to powerlessness which I felt I was incapable of doing anything. I lost all control. Eventually, God tugged at my heart to show me what He can do when I surrender—that God is the sovereign being who is in control. My youth pastor at the time taught with a Reformed accent, and his teachings opened my heart to experience the omnipotence of God. During my weakness, others prayed for me and cared for me. Ultimately, it was God who used those around me to uplift me from my rock bottom. I learned to become more dependent on He who is the great I AM. Hopelessness became hopefulness as I was humbled by God's grace that healed me from my sickness. It was then that I received God's call into ministry. I realized that God could use a powerless and unworthy sinner.

Today, I can testify that our sovereign God has led and guided me through every single step of my life. Therefore, I believe that our God the Father is a Creator God who is almighty. He created us and is our Lord who knows and "wills every hair on our head." (*Heidelberg Catechism Q&A Lord's Day 1*). We Christians, living in God's sovereign plan, have the holy privilege to live and breathe out that call that the Lord gives unto us. I believe Christ alone is the one who was sent by the Father to die and rise again on the cross for our sins. Christ had the call to save us from all our sins. It is Christ alone who leads us to experience grace that is given unto us as a free gift from the Lord. It is in Christ that we can have the holy obligation and privilege to stand as a witness to God's faithfulness. It is in that grace and power that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in our hearts, minds and souls for all His chosen ones. The Holy Spirit calls us to intercede on behalf of the body of Christ and to proclaim the gospel witness to those around us. In the Spirit's power, we are called to stand apart from the world. We are called to be the light in this dark world. It's in the Spirit's power that we have the Lord's covenant that we can hold onto in our commitment and dedication to the Lord.

In the spirit of justification and sanctification, I believe that I am still a work in progress. But I can testify and say that Jesus has been there with me since the beginning. For that, I stand humbled, looking forward to how God will continue to use this powerless, unworthy vessel.

James Lee



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*Statement of Reason*

I am an unworthy sinner who was saved by God's irresistible grace. In that fallenness, I am grateful to testify that God has called me into ministry. He has called me to serve as a bridge for cultures and generations. He has called me to be used to bring people together in unity of the church. I am humbled to be pursuing candidacy in the CRCNA. I seek candidacy knowing that Christ alone can fill my needs and weaknesses. He has shown me that my body and life are not my own, but belong to Jesus Christ alone (*Heidelberg Catechism Q&A Lord's Day 1*). It is pure grace that was poured onto me that I have life and can testify of God's faithfulness. I cannot continue on with this journey through my own strength. I need God's mighty power to guide me through it all. I am blessed with mentors and fellow pastors who keep me accountable with wisdom and discipline. Therefore, I seek candidacy knowing that I still have a lot to learn. My hope is to fulfill this call to ministry in gratitude and humility as I stand in awe of how God has used me and will use me for the Kingdom.

James 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:* Anthony Matias

*Place of Birth:* Paterson, New Jersey

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
William Paterson University  
B.A., Major in Philosophy,  
Minor in History, 2013

Princeton Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internship:*

Madison Ave. Christian  
Reformed Church  
Paterson, New Jersey  
May 2015 - Aug 2015

New Life Presbyterian  
Church USA  
Princeton, New Jersey  
September 2015- August 2016

El Buen Pastor (The Good  
Shepherd) CRC  
Commissioned Pastor - Solo  
Prospect Park, NJ  
April 2017 - Present

*Languages spoken:* Spanish, English

*Contact:*

201-873-8287  
anthony.matias@ptsem.edu

*Faith Journey*

I can honestly say that my life has been one where God has continuously had his hand over me. Since the moment of my birth, until the present, God has continuously been sovereign over my family and myself. I was born five months premature, weighing 1 pound, to a Guatemalan Mother and a Puerto Rican Father. As other premature children, my lungs were not developed, and I was blind for almost a year because the eye-covering that children in the womb have did not fall out. My birth was a true test for my father, mother, sister and grandparents who together with the church, continuously prayed for healing over my life. As Paul says to Timothy of the faith that dwelled in his grandmother, mother and now him, my families faith was continuously present in my life where they said, "God has given you life for a purpose."

Though I see the fulfillment of God's purpose in my life now, I did not see it as a young man. I grew up in the CRC, at one of the first Cuban mission churches here in the U.S. in New Jersey. I loved my church for the community and care they gave me. Yet going to church at a young age, felt like something I had to do because mom said so. I enjoyed participating in the different bible classes, dramas, songs and so on. But, I hadn't found my identity as a Christian. One of the first stepping stones towards this was learning how to play instruments. They were the guitar and drums which began to involve me more with the worship team that was made up of the youth group. Participating with the youth group, and later leading it, we began to study *Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. I was 17 at the time. It was through his book, along with reading the Gospels, I was convicted to ask myself, "What is my purpose and what am I seeking from God." My answer to what I was seeking was "peace." During my adolescent years a lot was going on in my life. My father was incarcerated for 10 years, my parents subsequently separated, grandfather passed away, who was a paternal figure, one of my pastoral mentors finished their term in the church and then a break-up with a girl. The ups-and-downs of adolescent life brought questions of why did God save me? For what? Therefore Jesus' words and *Purpose Driven Life's* focus on being made for God resonated with what I was searching for which led me to profess my faith in Jesus Christ for the first time as my own. As a result of this tranquility in my heart and mind, I heard God calling me to the purpose of ministry, later to be affirmed as Pastoral Ministry.

During college, I was mentored by Rev. Hernan Zapata who took over for the pastor that left our church. God, through him and a professor of college, started to mold and shape my skills to reach my goals of pastoral ministry. My mentor began to teach me theology, preaching, history, languages and pastorally cared for me as I was struggling to find a major. My college Professor, Maureen Eisner, helped bring a love of philosophy into my life, was the first to share hospital chaplaincy to me and challenged me to choose a career that would be my bliss; the thing that would make me happy. Together they challenged me to seek pastoral ministry by declaring a major in Philosophy (in order to engage critical thinking) and apply to Princeton Theological Seminary for my M.Div in order to become a pastor.

Presently, I am the Solo-Commissioned Pastor of the church where I grew up alongside working as a Resident Chaplain in order to have my

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

four units of Clinical Pastoral Education. Though this is a snippet of my journey, God has continuously shown his sovereignty by opening doors for me in order to reach the goals he has laid down in my life. I want to be a candidate because it is what God has called me to be: a servant that proclaims the grace I felt through his Son to all the world. As Scripture says, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). I have felt this love guide me through my life through its ups and downs that I can honestly say, "Here I am Lord. Send Me."

Anthony Matias

*Statement of Reason*

"For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth." – Malachi 2:7 This verse captivates the heart of why I seek candidacy. In order to preserve the knowing of our Lord Jesus and witness him as a herald of his Gospel through teaching and preaching. It was reading Jesus' words in the Gospels, how he brought grace, forgiveness and reconciliation to the world, that convicted my heart to believe and share the Lord who I have come to know. Therefore presently, the reason for wanting candidacy, is that I want to proclaim the Sovereign God of reconciliation, who brings healing through his Son, to a world that is broken by racial injustice so the promise of Scripture may be fulfilled. Where every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

Anthony Matias



*Name:* Scott Muilenburg

*Place of Birth:* Omaha, Nebraska

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
University of Nebraska-Omaha  
B.A., Speech Communication,  
2010

Westminster Theological  
Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
First CRC  
Oskaloosa, IA  
June 2016 - August 2016

*Contact:*  
402-321-5526  
scott.muilenburg@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe in the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The persons of the Trinity are co-eternal, co-equal and co-glorified. By his powerful word, the Triune God spoke creation into existence and upholds it by the word of his power. He is the sovereign creator and caring sustainer of all that is. He is the Lord of history, bringing it to its glorious consummation in the new heavens and new earth. Mercifully, the Triune God has revealed himself to us – the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

Out of his grace and love for his rebellious enemies, the Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as a substitutionary atonement to redeem a people by his precious blood. Those whom the Father has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world are those who come to faith in him and are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. Christians are those who are united to Christ by Spirit-wrought faith, and those who are united to Christ in his death and his resurrection (Gal 2:20).

The saving, redemptive work of Christ Jesus saves his people from both the guilt and the pollution of sin. As those crucified and raised with Christ, the dominion and reign of sin has been broken in the Christian's life though they still struggle against the presence of their sin. Therefore, the Christian life is one marked by walking in newness of resurrection-life in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:1-18).

History is moving towards the Second Coming of Christ when he will come to judge both the living and the dead which is a fact guaranteed by his own resurrection (Acts 17:31). Every knee? They will bow to the Lamb who was slain. Every tongue? They will confess that Christ Jesus is Lord. Our God reigns supreme, his glory will fill the whole earth and his ransomed people from every nation will sing his praises forevermore.

I wholeheartedly affirm, subscribe to and promise to teach the creeds and confessions upheld by the Christian Reformed Church.

I was raised in the Christian Reformed Church and have benefited greatly from sitting under faithful ministers of the Word. My parents raised my siblings and I in a godly, Christian home. For that blessing, I am thankful beyond words. Although my conversion would not externally appear drastic, it is, nevertheless, staggering when a sinner is brought from death to life by the power of the Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel. I made Profession of Faith in 2001 at Prairie Lane CRC in Omaha, Nebraska under the guidance of faithful elders and a faithful minister.

The ordinary means of grace – Word and Sacrament – marked the next decade of my life. More than any other human influence, I was shaped for Gospel ministry by two pastors under whom I served for several years before attending seminary. They showed me how to proclaim Christ crucified and raised, from a position of humble submission to the authoritative Scripture, to the praise of the Triune God.

My wife and I have been married for nearly five years. We have two young daughters, and we have enjoyed our time at Westminster Theological Seminary. Without the love and support of my family, seminary would be nearly impossible. This seminary season has been one truly marked by the grace and kindness of our heavenly Father. I am thankful for the



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

many pastors, professors, mentors and friends along the way who have shaped me for Gospel ministry.

Scott Muilenburg

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because of a strong call and conviction to preach Jesus Christ crucified and raised. It is Christ Jesus in all of his redemptive fullness whom we proclaim, laboring to present believers mature and complete before Christ (Col 1:28-29). My desire is to herald the unsearchable riches of Christ and equip the saints for the work of ministry. I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church in order to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and build up his church, for the glory and praise of him who sits on the throne and who reigns forevermore.

Scott Muilenburg



*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:* Jonathan Owens

*Place of Birth:* Irving, Texas

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College, 2004

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div, 2015

Vrije Universiteit  
Ph.D., Beliefs and Practices,  
in process, 2018

*Internships:*  
70x7 Life Recovery  
Holland, Michigan  
June 2013 - August 2013

The Micah Center  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
October 2013 - May 2015

Maranatha Christian  
Reformed Church  
Holland, MI  
May 2014 - September 2014

*Languages spoken:* German, English

*Contact:*  
801-834-3506  
jon.scott.owens@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

“What a long strange trip it’s been.” These words of Jerry Garcia often come to mind when I think of my own journey through faith and into the CRC. I grew up a Baptist in a loving, Christian household just outside of Dallas, Texas. But because my parents didn’t feel comfortable in church, I didn’t grow up attending regularly. By the time I was a teenager I, along with most of my friends, were agnostic and running with a rough crowd. yet due to the intervention of God into my life, a few years later, I found myself a thousand miles north at Calvin College. There I studied theology and philosophy, met my wife and first became acquainted with this Reformed denomination. After graduation, we moved out to Utah where we lived in Salt Lake City, attended what was then First CRC and I took on every cool and fun job that one could find in a mountain town. It was while living in SLC, that my faith really began to broaden and deepen. I gained an understanding of the importance of Church, the virtues of hospitality and community and where I first experienced church as a family. A half-dozen years into our stay, a call of service to the church began stirring in my heart, and after reaching out to mentors, a lot of logistical wrangling, and a whole lot of prayer, we sold our house, quit our jobs, and moved back across the country for me to attend Calvin Theological Seminary with the primary goal of serving our denomination as a professor.

After seminary, I continued into my PhD program (where I am now). Through all of this, one of the driving questions that propelled me into seminary in the first place, and which still directs my research, is trying to understand how Christians can be the best representatives of Christ, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, living in the world that we find ourselves in. How do we bring the grace that we have been given to those around us, how do we live as a light to the nations and how do we live as emissaries of justice, mercy and humility? During my study, I have been increasingly convinced that the best place for me to engage these questions is not in the academy, but in actively serving a local congregation. This past year, that feeling has crystallized into a tangible sense of call to ministry. My wife’s wise grandfather, a retired CRC pastor, once told me that if I felt called to ministry I should run in the other direction until God dragged me back through the door by my ponytail (which I had at the time). Six years of graduate work later, instead of pursuing a professorship, it has become abundantly clear that God has other plans for me!

Over these past two years, as the only Reformed scholar at a Catholic university, I have definitely strengthened my commitment to Reformed theology, especially regarding the

Sovereignty of God, humanity’s fallen nature, God’s gifts of grace and salvation and God’s active involvement in our world. I also rejoice in the fact that our awesome God has called us to participate in the renewal of this world and the growth of Christ’s Kingdom!

Jonathan Owens

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*Statement of Reason*

Six years ago, I was driven into graduate school by a desire to more fully understand how the Church is and should be engaged in the world around it. Much of my work since then has been concerned with this field, particularly involvement with ecumenical and interfaith relationships, political theology and issues of secularity and pluralism. I am now seeking to take my broad education and experience into the direct service of the church where I hope to further the church's mission as part of the Kingdom of God - helping to make the church a place which is hospitable and welcoming to all.

Jonathan Owens



*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:*

269-270-7742

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:* Benj Petroelje

*Place of Birth:* Elmhurst, Illinois

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Taylor University  
B.A., 2008

Regent College  
M.Div., 2013

University of Edinburgh,  
Ph.D., (anticipated) 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC 2018

*Internships:*

Elmbrook Church  
Brookfield, Wisconsin  
August 2008 - July 2010

St. John's Vancouver  
Anglican Church  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
September 2011 - April 2013

Fleetwood CRC  
Associate Pastor  
Surrey, British Columbia  
May 2013 - July 2014

*Contact:*

+44 (0)759-248-3081  
benj.petroelje@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

If there is a single event that has been most significant for my faith development, it is my baptism as an infant. Theologically, it is there that God's salvation—planned by the Father in eternity past; accomplished in Christ through his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension; and poured out in his Spirit—was made effectual for me, long before I could ever respond. All of the conversion in my life, then, all of my turning toward God and others, has been the flowering of that good beginning. It has been my Spirit-empowered response to a God who made the first move toward me in Christ—as a sheer gift.

I begin here because all that follows flows from it. I grew up in the Christian Reformed Church in the western suburbs of Chicago and later attended Taylor University (BA, 2008). After two years working in a pastoral position with young adults in a large, non-denominational church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, my wife Amy and I moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where I attended Regent College (M.Div, 2013). At Regent, I was formed by an academically rigorous education that was grounded in and directed toward the love of God and neighbor, combined with a love for Christ's church, committed to the centrality of Scripture and anchored in the Christian tradition—and all of this in the context of shared life together.

While at Regent, through the voices of professors and mentors, I began to see doing a PhD as vital to my own particular sense of pastoral call, and to identify the 'place' of this call as the CRC—in many respects, a return home. After Regent, I was an associate pastor at Fleetwood CRC (Surrey, British Columbia) for fifteen months (2013-14) prior to our family's move to Edinburgh (United Kingdom) for me to do a PhD in New Testament at the University of Edinburgh. Since 2015, I have also been a fellow of the Center for Pastor Theologians, an organization whose vision—for the ecclesial renewal of theology, and the theological renewal of the church—resonates closely with my own sense of call.

In 2009, I married Amy, a Minnesota native and fellow Taylor graduate, and together we have three children: Norah (5), Rose (3), and Teddy (9 months). As a family, we have been deeply shaped by the various places we've lived, and by the joys and challenges that have met us through these varied experiences. But we very much look forward, now, to the stability of being rooted somewhere, and to seeing our call clarify and hopefully flourish in a particular place, with a particular community of God's people.

Benj Petroelje

### *Statement of Reason*

As someone called to pastoral ministry, I am convinced of the importance of doing so within a confessional tradition and of allowing that tradition to continue to form and shape the church for winsome witness. As expressed in our Forms of Unity, this tradition has not only shaped me in my most formative years, it also continues to provide the basic 'grammar' of my faith—its robust view of God, the church, the world, and the absolute priority of God in all things. And so,

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

this is the small slice of the ‘one holy catholic and apostolic church’ that I wish to serve in a focused way, and to which I desire to submit myself. Furthermore, I am deeply grateful that our denomination’s understanding of what constitutes the central calling of the minister of the Word—to ‘proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture’ (CO, Art. 11)—resonates with my own sense of what is central in the pastoral task.

Benj Petroelje



*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:*

505-722-2078  
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:* Hayden Regeling

*Place of Birth:* Richmond Hill,  
Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Redeemer University College  
B.A., Music and Theology, 2012

McMaster Divinity College  
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Meadowlands Fellowship  
Christian Reformed Church  
Ancaster, Ontario  
September 2013 - April 2014

First Christian Reformed  
Church of Barrie  
Barrie, Ontario  
September 2014 – May 2018

*Contact:*  
705-279-1451  
haydenregeling@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

One of the beauties of a journey of faith is that it is a unique to everyone. There are no two stories in God's Kingdom that are the same. God uses each person and their unique personalities and experiences to reveal Himself to them and sanctify them. My faith journey is no different. Throughout my entire life, God has been using my experiences and relationships to draw me closer to Him, deepen my love for Him and form me into a clearer image of Jesus.

Early in my life and into my teen years, I discovered how my faith and the gifts that God has given me connect together strongly. I realized at a young age how blessed I was to be brought up in a Christian home with parents who love and fear the Lord, as well as deeply love and care for me. I experienced this love through the way my parents taught me and my two brothers to walk with the Lord. For the first nine years of my life, while I was being homeschooled by my mother, my brothers and I began to explore and discover different things that we were passionate about and gifted in. I discovered a deep love for music. Simultaneously, my mother made every effort she could to teach us of God's love for us and how her own faith in Jesus changed her life. Through her example, my own young faith and knowledge of God was connected to my love for music. I can distinctly remember playing Michael W. Smith's *Place In This World* on the piano and singing along as loud as I could. This connection between my faith and my passion for music, even at a young age, was the first call I felt to the ministry. I dreamed of one day using my gift of music in the church and community to glorify God!

As I grew older, I experienced a deep struggle between what I believed about God in my head and what I longed for in my heart. During my grade 9 year, I began attending the Christian high school in Barrie, Ontario and struggled to belong. Coming from a homeschooled background, I found it difficult to break into the already existing social circles, and I began to look for the approval of my peers in any way I could. I used the gifts that God has given me, being athletic and musical, to gain approval from others. This led me to do many things for my own glory. As I look back, I see the hand of the Lord protecting me from chasing this need for the approval down a more destructive and permanent path. In this difficult time, although I knew and believed in God and confessed Jesus as my Lord on the outside, on the inside I was more looking to myself and my athletic and musical achievements to satisfy the desires of my heart.

God used my time at university to rekindle a love for Jesus and confirm in me a call to ordained ministry. God led me to Redeemer University to study music and theology. As I began studying and became more self-aware, questions began to surface about my vocational calling, the radical claims of Jesus and the gift of salvation. I am so thankful that God placed professors and friends in my life who exemplified and taught me the Christian faith on a deeper level. Although I grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and believed in God and Jesus, it wasn't until my time in university that I began to really know Him. Simultaneously, and despite some fear and uncertainty about it, I experienced God calling me to ministry in the church as a pastor. One of the many things that confirmed this calling was a course taught by Dr. Syd Hielema on



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

teaching scripture. In this course, I was given a taste of scripture study and teaching, and through this, discovered God's Word in new ways. This uncovered within me a deep passion to help people see God's love and experience His grace in their hearts through the Word. When I graduated from Redeemer, God opened the door to seminary and through the advisory of some faculty and staff at Redeemer, I started studying for a Masters of Divinity degree at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario.

At McMaster and during my first ministry internship at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, God continued to show me that the Reformed faith is a gift and an invaluable lens through which I see the world. At Meadowlands, I saw the commitment that the CRC shares with my Reformed passions, convictions and theology and through working with Pastor Everett Vanderhorst, my mentor, I gained a deep gratitude for our denomination. I discovered afresh the meaning of the liturgy of the worship service and the richness of the creeds and confessions. By attending meetings and learning about spiritual care, I saw how deeply the elders and deacons, and other members of the church, love God, the church and desire to see it grow. I felt at home.

God continues to confirm my calling in ordained ministry through my work at First Christian Reformed Church in Barrie. After my first year at seminary, I moved home to Barrie. This opened up an opportunity for a placement at First CRC and be mentored by Pastor Mike Borgert. This part of my journey has led to much growth as I have been leading and teaching the youth group, preaching God's Word and journeying with the church through a revisioning process. Recently, God has blessed me in getting married to the love of my life, Tracey, who joined me in 2015 on this journey. Since then, she has been supporting, encouraging and walking with me every step of the way. As I live my life as her husband, God has used her to lovingly and graciously build me up and help me to see areas in my life where I am still in need of repentance and growth.

As I reflect back on my journey of faith, it is clear to me that we worship a sovereign God. I see His hand in my life, leading and guiding me to this point. As Tracey and I are now near the end of our journey toward ordination, we are both very excited to follow God wherever He is calling us next.

Hayden Regeling

*Statement of Reason*

I desire to be ordained as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that it is God's calling for my life. Through this calling, I desire to join God's mission in the world by using the passion for the gospel that He has given me to help others come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and to have their lives continually renewed and transformed by His love.

Hayden Regeling



*Name:* Jason Ruis

*Place of Birth:* Fergus Falls,  
Minnesota

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
University of Northwestern  
St. Paul  
B.A. Ministry, Certificate in  
Christian Counseling, 2013  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
Bethel Christian  
Reformed Church  
Princeton, Minnesota  
September 2014 - January 2015

*Languages spoken:* Spanish, English

*Contact:*  
320-980-6253  
jasonruis@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I did not grow up in a Christian home. Both of my parents grew up attending church on a regular basis but walked away from their faith after graduation. They married young and had me when they were twenty-one years old. In my early years, I remember attending church very infrequently. However, when I was nine years old I noticed things beginning to change in my family. It happened shortly after we moved to Montana. All of a sudden we were going to church every Sunday. I watched my dad come to faith, my mom come to faith, my brother come to faith, and, finally, God called me to Himself and I put my faith in Him.

Although I didn't have a "dramatic" conversion, it was obviously a turning point in my life. From that point on, I've been very aware of God's presence in my life. Looking back from this vantage point, I can also see that my faith has been growing consistently since that day. At first it grew pretty slowly. In middle school it grew a little more quickly. In high school my faith was becoming more centered in my life and in college even more.

Much like my parents, I was married young and my wife (Rachel) and I started having kids when I was twenty years old. For a time, we were caught up in the hustle and bustle of raising kids, working and trying to figure out what it means to be married. Our church attendance became less frequent and our faith became stagnant. However, this only lasted a couple years. At that point, we became connected to a young adult small group which changed our lives forever. We became very close with the leaders of this group and everyone else who attended. Our faith began to grow like crazy. We were all "on fire" for the Lord. It was an amazing point in our lives. We were part of this group for almost seven years.

In the middle of this "growth spurt," our church began talking about starting a youth ministry. I hadn't particularly enjoyed our youth program when I was in high school, so I decided to be part of the committee designing the program. The longer we talked about the youth program and some of the changes that needed to be made, the more I felt God tugging at my heart to enter the ministry. I had never planned on doing anything like that. I was running a successful dock and boat lift business on a nearby lake. However, I couldn't shake God's call on my life. I approached our pastor to talk to him about this call I was experiencing from God and he encouraged me to apply for the position. Now, I've been serving in that role for the past ten years. It has been amazing to watch God work in my life and to see His call on my life come to fruition. When I initially felt His call, I had never thought about entering the ministry. Now, I can't imagine doing anything else. This is what God has created me to do and I willingly offer my life in service to Him.

As I've grown in my love for God's people and grown in my calling as a pastor, I have also deepened in my appreciation for the Reformed faith (the Dutch Reformed accent in particular). In the midst of my "growth spurt," someone challenged me to start reading hard books. So, as I typically do, I dove in head first, grabbed both volumes of Calvin's Institutes and started reading. I couldn't put them down (and I haven't since). As I grew in my understanding of the Reformed faith, I was introduced to authors like Bavinck, Berkhof, Kuyper, Ridderbos,

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

and Vos. I have learned the richness of their theological accent and appreciate the way they handle God's Word. This appreciation only grew as I worked my way through an undergraduate program coming from a different tradition. In contrast, the Dutch Reformed tradition only grew brighter in my mind. As I've spent time discipling teenagers and serving the broader congregation, I've fully embraced this Dutch Reformed tradition. I also strive to help teenagers and adults see the beauty of it as well. We serve a big, holy, glorious, and mysterious God!

Jason Ruis

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because God has called me to this position. This internal call has been repeatedly affirmed and confirmed by the Body of Christ as I've served for the past ten years. It is a joy to walk with God's people through the ups and downs of the Christian life; to point them to Christ when they are in the pit or when they are on the mountain. I do not take this task lightly. At times it weighs heavily upon me. However, I trust that God has called me to this task and will use me accordingly. Paul's words to the Ephesian elders have become my words: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24, ESV).

Jason Ruis



*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

*Contact:*  
226-820-4162  
jryzebol@outlook.com

### *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:* Courtney Saldivar

*Place of Birth:* Brampton, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

McMaster University  
B.A. Communication  
Studies, 2008

Sheridan College  
Post Graduate Certificate in  
Public Relations, 2009  
McMaster Divinity College  
M. Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

McMaster Christian Reformed  
Campus Ministry  
Hamilton, Ontario  
September 2011 - April 2013

Chartwell Baptist Church  
Oakville, Ontario  
June 2013 - August 2013

Mission Services of Hamilton  
Hamilton, Ontario  
September 2013 - April 2014

*Contact:*

905-818-8158  
courtney.norah@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

God has always been so good to me, but I simply never knew it. Although I spent some time in a church as young girl I didn't know much about Jesus until my early twenties, nor did I know what to do with the rediscovery of this person that the people around me were calling their God and Saviour.

Is this for me? Can I start to believe in God at 20? What about all the bad stuff I've done? How do I choose Jesus?

I met a chaplain who was gracious and patient with my endless questions about Christianity and he invited me to be part of the local CR-campus ministry. I began to learn about (what to some might seem like the basics) but were actually life changing truths- things like worldview, covenant, and the kingdom of God.

I remember walking home one night after our regular dinner and fellowship bewildered by the fact that God not only cares about me but also cares about the way I recycle. I think I sorted through my blue box when I got home just in case it was true.

I continued on this faith journey for a number of years asking questions, speaking with many people and many pastors about how they have faith, and asking God to continue to reveal Himself to me.

Somewhere on the long journey towards finding faith I had an unforgettable experience with the Holy Spirit in prayer and decided then that Jesus was my God and my Saviour. I was a new person.

I wanted to go to seminary because I was now a Christian, a Christian who knew nothing. I needed more knowledge, I craved a deeper sense of community that I had found in campus ministry, but more than this I felt God gently nudging me to pursue ministry in some way. I began volunteering in a variety of places where I discovered the presence and power of Jesus among the poor, disadvantaged and broken hearted. In these contexts, I came to know and experience the overwhelming love and forgiveness of God in Christ.

The lonely were comforted, the sick were healed and the terminally desolate found joy.

I saw how Jesus was changing others and I saw how he was changing me.

For a long time before this I felt like a nobody. I believed I was too far gone in my thinking and in my attitude, in my heart and in my mind, to be cared for by God and to have Jesus die for me.

It seemed too good to be true.

But as it turned out, it was true. And it was good, very good!

The best, in fact, because my whole life was now dedicated to Jesus and sharing God's limitless grace.

I don't remember when, but at some point, I also discovered the reality of my journey.

That after all the questioning, deciding and choosing of Jesus- that actually Jesus, in love, had done everything.



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

In love, he calls us by name, invites us to draw near and pursues His people relentlessly.

I thought I had chosen Jesus, but after all that had happened, I knew the truth of Christ's words in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

Courtney Saldivar

*Statement of Reason*

Pursuing candidacy within the CRC is following God's call on my life, and I want to remain faithful and obedient to this. Candidacy also affirms that I am supported by others who have guided and encouraged me thus far. Lastly, candidacy is one step closer to pursuing chaplaincy (or another direction should it open) and loving and serving others anywhere and everywhere I am lead.

Courtney Saldivar



*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:*

765-586-7896  
ivan\_k\_s@yahoo.com

### *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

*Contact:*

641-780-8260  
bbs073@calvinseminary.edu

### *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:* Brian Schouten

*Place of Birth:* Sarnia, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Redeemer University College  
B.A. in Physical Education, 2001

Certificate in Youth Ministry,  
2013

Georgian College  
Post-Graduate Diploma in  
Therapeutic Recreation, 2002

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Clinton Christian Reformed  
Church (Youth Director)  
Clinton, Ontario  
September 2009 - June 2014

Facing Your Future - Calvin  
Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2015 - August 2015

Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
May 2016 - August 2016

Hope Christian  
Reformed Church  
Brantford, Ontario  
May 2017 - August 2017

*Contact:*

616-635-4257  
brianschouten@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I believe that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, came to suffer and die not only for my sin but for the sin of all God's people. I believe that we come to know this through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the love of our Triune God calls us to live our lives in such a way that others may come to experience the love of God through us as we live in gratitude for what Christ has done for us.

Having grown up as the youngest of five children in a Christian home, it seems that I have always had an awareness of who God is. I am blessed to have attended Christian elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools where I have had Christian adults walk alongside me in my faith journey. Having attended Living Hope CRC in Sarnia, Ontario, I am also thankful for the many adults there who helped disciple me through formal discipleship ministries and especially through a personal investment in my life.

I first experienced the call to vocational ministry while attending Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ontario. I had been studying Physical Education and Psychology, with plans to do post-graduate work in Therapeutic Recreation after graduating. With this new call to ministry, I made plans to attend Calvin Theological Seminary in the fall of 2001. It seems God had different plans.

While I was studying Greek at Tyndale in the summer of 1999, my dad was first diagnosed with cancer. He went into remission in the spring of 2000, but was re-diagnosed in the spring of 2002, and he passed away in the fall of 2002. Walking alongside my parents during my dad's battle with cancer challenged my faith and caused me to question whether I was prepared to enter full-time ministry. I know that God never gave up on me, but I struggled to understand how he could allow my dad and my family to go through what we did. Through it all, I was amazed at how my parents' faith grew stronger as my dad's physical strength grew weaker. Looking back, I can see how God used this time to strengthen my faith as well.

After my dad's death, I wrestled with what it meant to be called by God, and how this vocational call to ministry fit with other callings I believe I had. As a new husband and (eventually) a father, I knew I was called to live out my faith with a Christ-like and self-sacrificial love that would point my wife and children to the love of Christ. Our heavenly Father used these relationships to help me understand how much He loves me as His child. My wife, Aileen, continued to encourage me to explore my vocational call to ministry, and I went from volunteer to para-church to church-based youth ministry.

While working as a Youth Director in a Christian Reformed Church, I had the opportunity to study youth ministry with Syd Hielema at Redeemer University College. While taking youth ministry courses, my vision for youth ministry grew beyond the youth room into whole church ministry. From Syd, I learned that faith formation is life-long and that discipleship is done best when church and family members are sharing their faith journeys with each other across generations. As a youth director, I saw how important it was to not only work with youth but to work also with their parents, grandparents and other members of the congregation so that together the church could grow and support faith



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

formation for members of all generations. Through this, I was able to discern God calling me to seminary and to ordination in the Christian Reformed Church.

Moving our family from a small town in Ontario to Calvin Seminary and to the city of Grand Rapids, may be one of the greatest faith challenges our family has had to face. Questions about church and school communities, moving away from family, selling our house and living in another country without an income have come up frequently. Often, the only answer we can give to these questions is “God’s got this” and time after time God has shown that He does. He has the answers to our questions, and He is holding our family in His hand.

Brian Schouten

*Statement of Reason*

As God’s covenant child, I believe that I am called to live my life in such a way that others will come to know the love of Christ Jesus through me. As I have discerned the vocational call that He has placed on my life, I have been able to recognize gifts for preaching and pastoral care, and a heart for His church that have given me the desire to become a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

Brian Schouten



*Name:* Minbo Paul Shim

*Place of Birth:* Los Angeles,  
California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College  
B.A., Political Science,  
Psychology, Minor in Religious  
Studies, 2005

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.A. in Pastoral Care, M.A. in  
Christian Education, 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div, 2017

*Internships:*  
Hahn-In CRC  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
2004 – 2010

Bansuk Presbyterian Church  
English Ministry Pastor  
Stockton, California  
2010 - 2013

New Hope Church  
English Ministry Pastor  
San Diego, California  
2013 - 2016

Houston Hanbit Presbyterian  
Church & Living Water Ministry  
English Ministry Pastor  
Houston, Texas  
2016 – 2018

*Contact:*  
616-633-9333  
minboshim@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I had the blessing of being born into a Christian family where my parents modeled for me at a very young age a sense of faithfulness and joy in response to the Gospel. Being the son of a pastor and professor, I grew up in the church and always had a special place in my heart for not only the church community, but in serving God by the gifts that He had blessed me with. I was always serving in the church, finding time to share my faith, answer questions about God and faith etc. in a natural manner. Having received Christ of my own choosing in eighth grade and having grown up in the church, I also had a front-row seat into the brokenness of the church and thus, I ran away from the conviction and calling that I had received in middle school to pursue ministry. But God has His way with His children, and so I enrolled in seminary to begin a chapter of “fear and trembling” in the pursuit of full-time ministry. There are many successes and failures that I have had in every arena of my life personally, academically, in ministry etc, but what I have come to understand after all this schooling and the path of life in ministry are these two things: everything is accomplished by God for God’s glory and when I serve the church emptying surrender, I feel God’s joy and there is nowhere else that I would rather be. This has spurred me to a life of seeking God’s movement and striving to faithfully join in the work that He is already doing. My guiding ministry “mantra” is, “More faithful today than yesterday and more faithful tomorrow than today”. I didn’t really have a dramatic conversion story. My call to ministry was only a bit more tumultuous because of my own stubborn arrogance and even then, God used those around me to confirm and generously push after God’s moving. In all things, I believe and have seen, God provide and reveal His glory in every season and sphere of existence as the sovereign King. I don’t have a 20-year plan in terms of what kind of ministry and where and how many people etc. My only hope is that in life, ministry, family, community, service, job, friendship, education and all the things that God is sovereign over, that He will continue to use me as a servant and instrument to bring Him glory by the words of my mouth, meditations of my heart and the work of my hands and feet.

Minbo Paul Shim

### *Statement of Reason*

The reason that I am seeking ordination into the CRC is in order to more effectively and completely serve the body of Christ as a pastor. As an ordained pastor, I will be able to more effectively serve in a manner that allows me to shepherd and lead others to Christ through baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, by ordination, I seek to be a part of something larger than myself in order to be supported and to support, find fellowship and to give fellowship, to be held accountable in the Gospel and to hold other fellow servants to the Gospel etc. I am eager to join a fellowship and body that seeks to glorify God and make Christ known in all creation by the moving of the Spirit. Finally, I take ordination as an act of support and confirmation by the church of the gifts and calling that I discern and have received from God in order to serve the body of Christ.

Minbo Paul Shim



*Name:* Matthew M. Slack

*Place of Birth:* Lake City, Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Kuyper College

B.S., Pre-Seminary & Biblical  
Studies, 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

London City Mission  
London, UK  
June 2016 - July 2016

Calvary CRC of Lowell  
Lowell, Michigan  
January 2016 - March 2018

*Contact:*

231-394-1794  
matthewmarkslack@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I wasn't born, raised, or reared in a Christian home or under any explicit Christian influence. That's perhaps unique for a CRC candidate. Nevertheless, what first brought me into an encounter with authentic Jesus-followers, and therefore surprised by the reality of God, was a high school youth group in a small-town CRC in Northern Michigan. I should be more honest. I went to church because I liked a girl there. I had grand plans for how all this was going to go, but God's were grander.

For all my cynical doubts and critical questions about Christianity, I soon found myself unable to resist the fellowship of this church, particularly the Youth Leader and his family. They had this inextricable gravitational pull in the way they spoke and moved that I would only later come to understand as Christlikeness. It was only a matter of time, a year or two, before seeing things like "love" and "peace" and "joy" and "hope" so effortlessly embodied that it made me curious about how this happens, why it happens and how I could experience it.

The Reformed flavor of it all was an added joy. It gave me the ability to understand the Christian faith in ways I felt like I already half knew but could never put into words. It thoroughly scratched the itch of skepticism and doubts I had towards Christianity, and plunged me into depths of theology and rich tradition I didn't know existed.

But it was in digging into Scripture, or rather Scripture digging into me, where Jesus confronted me. Before then, he was always a little blurry around the edges in my mind. When I truly met him for the first time, he was stark, clear, frightening and good. His grace got a hold of me before I even had the chance to wrap my head around it. And I still haven't.

The Spirit quickened me in a way my family couldn't keep up with and still can't. I was baptized and immediately felt called to Kuyper College where, over the course of my undergrad, slowly developed and strengthened a call toward pastoral ministry which brought me to Calvin Seminary. I am supremely blessed by my wife Emily and our daughter Juniper. You would never believe she's the same girl that got me through the doors in the first place. In all, going from being the furthest thing away from what a Christian is to being a brother and leader among them within the span of a decade has left me humbled, confounded, equipped, and compelled to serve Him.

Matthew Slack

### *Statement of Reason*

I wasn't born into the CRC, I was adopted into it. There's an argument out there that the adopted have a stronger grip on the family ties that bind them because they can still remember where they were before. Because the CRC adopted me relatively recently and dramatically, my love for it is immediate and mobilized. Therefore, because God has placed a singular intention on my heart to serve Him by feeding his sheep, I seek candidacy within the context of the family that first brought me into the fold of Christ in the hope of building up the flock and bringing more of the least, last and lost in.

Matthew Slack



*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:*

616-452-9052  
smithsharon.67@gmail.com

### *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:* Eric Snyder

*Place of Birth:* Syracuse, New York

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

State University of New York  
at Buffalo  
B.S., 2004

Dallas Theological Seminary  
Th.M., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Trinity Fellowship Church  
Richardson, Texas  
August 2009 - June 2010

Zion Congregational  
Church Pastor  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
June 2011 - November 2016

Hillcrest CRC  
English Pastor  
Denver, Colorado  
November 2016 – present

*Contact:*

307-365-0680  
ericpsnyder@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I was raised in Upstate New York by parents who loved Jesus Christ and were committed to his church. I'm thankful for God's grace in this. We were faithfully involved in the local church, my parents regularly prayed and read the Bible with me. I can't remember a time when I didn't believe that God created and loved me and that Jesus died for my sins. It took some time for me to put flesh and blood on these beliefs, though.

In high school, I became involved in Young Life. Our church consisted mainly of my relatives and some older couples. Occasionally, we had a pastor who had some children, but rarely my age. Without peers, it was hard for me to see how my faith played out in everyday life. Young Life helped me begin to ask questions. What does it mean to follow Jesus in the public school? What does it look like to be a Christian on the football team? How do I talk about God's love for us with friends who have no faith? These were questions that I had never considered.

This was my first sense of having a calling to Christian ministry. Peter's response to Jesus in John 6:68 has always resonated with me. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." What else is there but to know and love God? To give our lives to him in service and devotion? Service in God's kingdom takes many forms but I was beginning to feel a tug toward pastoral ministry.

My undergraduate years were a formative time in testing my calling. I was heavily involved in Young Life; first as a volunteer leader and then in a student staff role. I loved working with teenagers and sharing the love of Christ with them. However, through increased involvement in the local church and through counsel with my pastor, I found that I had a love for the entire church from young to old.

Seminary was a time of deepening an old love and meeting new loves. First, I'm thankful for the time that was given to studying the Word especially in the original languages. Second, I was exposed to and made friends with a great cloud of witnesses which were Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, Calvin. Finally, I met my wife Radha and we had two children whose names are Lily and Ben.

Following seminary, I accepted a call to pastor a Congregational Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and it was during this time that I was exposed to the CRC. I found that the CRC's 'accent' on the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, discipleship, and the Kingdom matched my own. This led us to Denver where I am currently serving a CRC congregation. God's grace in my life is overwhelming, and I am incredibly grateful that He has called me to participate in His mission to redeem and restore His creation.

Eric Snyder

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that God has called me and gifted me to serve the body of Christ. I desire to use my gifts to build up and equip the Church so that she might be faithful to God's purposes for her. I seek to be ordained in the



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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

Christian Reformed Church because I cannot, have no desire to, nor did God create us to do this alone. I am thankful for the theological tradition expressed in the creeds and confessions—both for its guidance and instruction and also for the accountability and boundaries which they set. I am thankful that the CRC is both confessional and missional, rich in worship and service to the world. I've found a home in the denomination. My desire is to serve Christ and it would be an honor to serve him in the CRC.

Eric Snyder



*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:* Gale Tien

*Place of Birth:* Sheldon, Iowa

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College  
B.A. Secondary Education  
(History), 1985

University of Missouri - St. Louis  
M.A., Elementary Education  
Administration, 1993

Sioux Falls Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Calvin Church  
Lemars, Iowa  
February 2015 - December 2015

Ireton CRC  
Ireton, Iowa  
January 2016 - August 2016

First CRC  
Orange City, Iowa  
September 2016 - June 2018

*Contact:*

712-541-2744  
galtetien@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I believe that Jesus is God's Son and with the Father, and Holy Spirit form the Trinity. Humans are, from conception, sinners and not capable of achieving salvation. God, through His wisdom and mercy, has put in place a plan of salvation. The plan of salvation involves Jesus dying a sacrificial death to pay for human sin and rising from the death as proof of the defeat of sin. Human involvement in this plan is to simply accept and believe. This plan is the "golden thread" that is woven through the Bible. This plan is wonderfully and compactly described in the second question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism. The question asks, "What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?" The answer states three things: first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sin and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance. This answer has been part of my life since a very young age. I believe that the Bible is the holy, infallible word of God. The Bible is the method that God has and continues to use to reveal Himself and His will to humans. The Bible is in some ways a "textbook for life" and gives practical instruction about how to live. The Bible is primarily "God speaking to people".

I was made aware of these truths as a very young child. I was blessed to be born to two parents who love Jesus and desired to honor God in all parts of their life. The Bible was read much and often in my home. I love to share that I had a "covenant conversion". By this I mean that my parents, from my earliest memories, shared and described God's love for me and God's plan of salvation for people. When I was in high school, I began to take this knowledge more seriously and when I was eighteen years old, I made public profession of my faith. The doctrine or concept of sanctification is also an important part of my life. From that time in high school when I sensed being drawn into a deeper relationship with God, I have been blessed by a strengthening and maturing of my faith. Events that God has put in my life have facilitated the maturing. A first job, getting married, children being born, job changes and family moves all have been opportunities to rely more on God and His love. A major opportunity was given to my wife Cathie and me in 2000 when our third child was diagnosed with autism. The last eighteen years have been a testimony of God's love, faithfulness and provision for our family. David is now 20 years old and enjoying a full and meaningful life. These opportunities to experience God's guidance, love and direction continues with the birth of our first grandchild. Our oldest daughter and her husband were blessed with a little one recently, and we thank God for the opportunity we will now have to tell him about God's love and faithfulness.

Gale Tien

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy because I humbly and certainly believe this is a calling from God. I participated in SWIM (Summer Workshop in Ministry) in 1981 and knew at some time in my life God would call me into full time pastoral ministry. I was a teacher and administrator for over thirty years and was blessed by that calling but approximately five years ago, I felt God's instruction to shift from educational leadership

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

to church leadership. The decision has been confirmed over and over again over the last four years. I have been given the opportunity to serve as the interim pastor for two area churches during their vacancies, and I am currently the part-time “pastor of visitation” for my own church. Over the last four years, I have been employed at a factory as the teacher/trainer for new hires. I am not the “plant pastor” but the factory is owned by a Christian family and they have given me permission and encouragement to be “pastoral” in my work with the new hires. I have also been blessed for the last three years to be part of Friendship Ministries. The first two years I was a mentor, but this current year, I am the large group Bible story leader. The interim pastor opportunities, the visitation work, the work with new hires and the involvement with Friendship Ministries have been wonderful, enjoyable and confirming experiences for my calling to serve the Lord as a church leader.

Gale Tien



*Name:* Rebecca Tjapkes

*Place of Birth:* Antigo, Wisconsin

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Calvin College

B.A. Psychology, B.S.W.  
(Social Work), 1992

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
May 2016 - August 2016

Calvin CRC  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2017 – August 2017

Church of the Servant  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
August 2017 – April 2018

*Contact:*

616-843-1313  
becky@zmagnet.com

### *Faith Journey*

I am an only child of a single mother, but we made the best of it. Looking back over my life, I can see God working from the beginning. From as long as I remember, church was a big part of my life. I grew up in a different denominational background. I remember learning to love God early in life and giving my life to him at an early age. But the tradition I grew up in, had a large emphasis on guilt and condemnation. So, while I loved Jesus, there was a healthy amount of fear and wondering if I was good enough. But through all of this, my mom taught me how important prayer is. We prayed in all situations; if the car broke down, if we were sick, if we were afraid, if we were thankful, before leaving on a trip. She taught me that we could talk to God anytime and any place. But having no father figure in my life, made it difficult to relate to God as a loving Father.

As I went off to college, God led me to Calvin where I majored in psychology initially and later adding social work. It was at college that my faith really began to become my own. I began to learn about God's grace and love. I began to seek out time with God because I wanted to know him more, not because I thought I had to in order to earn his approval. But I still struggled to understand how much he really loved me.

After my husband Paul and I were married, I joined the CRC and became involved in various ministries of the church such as Stephen's Ministry, women's Bible study, various youth ministry roles and discipleship ministry. God continued to work through these years. He showed me who he was and who I was in him. But, I still had difficulty really grasping God's love for me. I still thought I had to earn it in some way by being good enough. I began to get a better sense of his love for me when I had children. As I looked down at them in the middle of the night, I was filled with love for them. And I realized that, the love I had for my children, was just a fraction of the love that God has for me.

Then about six years ago, I was studying Ephesians. For the first time, it hit me that God had chosen me before the foundation of the world. As I continued that study, I came 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 pondered that, along with the fact that God had chosen me and had a purpose for me, I began to have a sense that he had something more for me to do than my current work as a budget counselor at a Christian non-profit agency. I didn't know what at that time.

Later that summer, my pastor asked me to help lead a discipleship ministry at our church. As I prepared for this new role, I began to learn how Jesus led his disciples and to put these principles into practice in my own life. God began to change me. I found my eyes opening to the spiritual struggles going on in the lives of the clients I was meeting on a daily basis at work. God used this and people in my life to lead me to seminary. At first, I had all sorts of reasons why this couldn't work. The timing seemed all wrong. This was such a big change for me at this point in my life. What would it mean for our family for me to change careers and become a pastor? Also, we had teenagers who would be going to college in a few years. How could we manage all of it?



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

God has been faithful. My faith has grown through my time at seminary. With each challenge, God has met me every step of the way. I have learned more about God and the Bible. I have also learned about myself. I have learned that sometimes God calls us to difficult tasks, but he doesn't leave us alone. He gives us his strength to see them through.

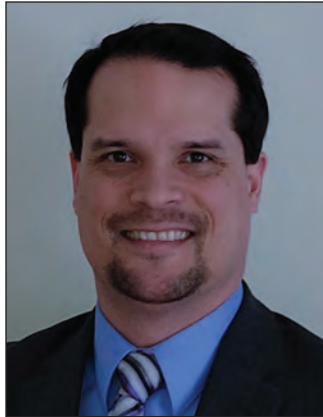
The more I learn about Jesus, the more I love him. How he could have lived here on earth for 33 years, giving up the glory of heaven and taking on the pain of human existence and still remaining free from sin never ceases to amaze and awe me. Then he died so that we could live and belong to him forever. I am not my own and I am wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for him.

Rebecca Tjapkes

*Statement of Reason*

It is with great joy and humility that I seek candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church. I believe that God has called me and equipped me for this ministry. It is only through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that I can answer this call. I have a passion for helping people to become whole-hearted disciples of Christ, who have a full understanding of their identity as children of God. I believe that God has given me abilities to guide people into deeper relationships with God through teaching, preaching and pastoral care. The CRC has become my spiritual home, and I am excited to see what God has in store for this denomination. I pray that he will use me in some way as we serve him together.

Rebecca Tjapkes



*Name:* Norman Underland

*Place of Birth:* Patuxent River,  
Maryland

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
William Jessup University  
B.A., Pastoral Ministry and  
Biblical Studies, 2007

Fuller Theological Seminary  
M.A., Theology with Bibli-  
cal Studies and Theology  
Emphasis, 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
Plymouth Height CRC  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2017 - May 2018

*Contact:*  
206-617-3368  
normanunderland@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My spiritual journey has been a colorful one. As a child, I remember going to Sunday School classes at the local Lutheran church and playing with the other kids, coloring pictures of Jesus' smiling face and watching as our teacher deftly manipulated the felt board characters. However, "becoming" a Christian was a foreign concept to me until almost 20 years ago. It seemed to me that going to church and praying the prayers and singing the songs meant I was one already and therefore I didn't have to "become" one. I have always known about Jesus and what He did for me, but the concept of a personal relationship and accepting Him "into my heart" was entirely new to me. I always thought of myself as a "good kid" and tried my best not to get into real trouble. I had no intention of ever serving the Church, and after high school when my parents left it up to me to decide if I wanted to go, I chose to sleep in on Sundays. A rather nasty church split had left a sour taste in my mouth so I was happy to not have to go any longer.

I began my college career as a Theater Arts major, and thought I would have my own morning radio show someday. After my first semester of college and a SCUBA diving class, I wanted to be a marine biologist. When I discovered that most grad students end up on a cold river in Alaska counting salmon, I decided medicine might be the path for me. I was more concerned with worldly things, and having a nice house and fancy car seemed to be fairly high on my list, so medical school seemed a great way to get them. I didn't give church another thought. I was still a Christian, but I didn't need to go to church, that was just legalism. I could be a good person on my own. I moved to San Diego to live with some friends and finish my undergrad when I was 21. Probably not the best place for a 21 year old living away from home for the first time. I may have called myself "Christian" but I certainly didn't live like one. After three years of doing things my way, I realized that things weren't as great as I thought they would be. It was then, at a college service in San Diego, that I encountered a different kind of message, a different way of being a Christian that changed the way I viewed the faith I thought I knew all about. I came face to face with my brokenness, and discovered a gratitude for what Christ had done that I had never felt before. I moved back home to San Jose, California and started going back to the church I grew up in. It was then that God started to use people to speak purpose into my life and the first seeds of being a pastor were planted.

Since that time, God has steadily been revealing to me what I must not have been ready to understand when I was younger. I have come to a much fuller understanding of what it means to abide in Christ and have Him abide in me. I also realize everyday that I have a long way to go. Knowing that I have the Holy Spirit to guide me gives me hope for the future and the strength to continue in my walk. The road to seminary has not been an easy one, and God has used many of the obstacles encountered along the way to mold me and teach me lessons I have grown to appreciate. Over these last 20 years God has been slowly working through my stubbornness and teaching me that I don't have to do it all myself. I have been learning to trust in Him and His plan. This colorful journey has taken me to places I never thought I would go: from the Bay Area to Sacramento, California, to Seattle, Washington, and now

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Grand Rapids, Michigan. While I have no idea where this journey will take me, I am gladly along for the ride.

Norman Underland

*Statement of Reason*

God's love was extended to me even when I was the most distant from Him, and I have grown to understand that He has this same love for all of Creation. God desires to have a relationship with all of His people, and I believe he has chosen to use me as an instrument of His love to share it with others. Through my experiences during my undergrad and my time in seminary, God has reinforced the call I felt many years ago. A friend of mine from my undergrad, now a pastor in the PCUSA, asked me one day not long after starting at Calvin, "If there was anything else you could do with your life, anything else that you thought would make you happy but still feel like you were honoring God?" I took a moment to think about his question and the only answer I could come up with was, "No." My wife and I grew up in two very different Christian traditions, but it is in the CRC that we found our first church home. It is in the CRC that our children have been baptized. It is in the CRC that we have felt the strongest calling on our lives to serve God's people. It is in the CRC that I seek ordination and hope to

Norman Underland



*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:* Robert Van Zanen

*Place of Birth:* Edinburgh, Scotland

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College  
B.A., Secondary Education,  
Social Studies and History, 2013  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
New Horizons Foundation /  
CRC World Missions  
Lupeni, Romania  
July 2015 - August 2015  
  
Middleville CRC  
Middleville, Michigan  
June 2016 - June 2018

*Contact:*  
616-634-0163  
robertvanzanen@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Reflecting on my faith journey thus far, I visualize it as falling into three phases. Each one has been important to shaping my understanding of who God is and who I am in relation to Him. Yet with backwards reflection, I also look forward to how God will continue to lead me into a deeper relationship with him.

As a child, at the beginning of my faith journey, I accepted the Christian beliefs of my parents as true but it was never reached beyond an intellectual knowledge into a personal faith. I grew up as a pastor's and missionary kid. My parents worked diligently to teach me their faith and values. At the end of high school, I had developed my knowledge base but did not yet appreciate my faith as life changing and shaping. I often talked about what I believed, but I did not act on it.

The second phase was one of developing a personal commitment and desire to grow and live out my faith. After participating in Facing Your Future at Calvin Seminary between high school and Calvin College, I discovered a personal faith in Jesus. That year began a process of forgiveness and growth for me. Over the course of the next four years, my friends and classes at Calvin College shaped me and affirmed my reformed upbringing. My junior year I had the opportunity to serve as a youth ministry intern at a church in Florida. Thanks to the internship and Calvin professors, I began to consider the possibility of attending seminary but thought that it was a distant future possibility. When I graduated, I had earned an education degree, but I did not know what was next for me. Thankfully, God did.

After being unable to find work all summer, I finally started teaching at Calvin Christian Middle School in September. As I taught a Bible class, I came to realize that I needed more knowledge and understanding of scripture to answer the questions of my students and my own as well. Being part-time, I was able to take Bible Survey at Calvin Seminary and found that I enjoyed and was blessed by the class. Having received generous financial aid, the encouragement of friends and family, growing in a personal desire to learn more, I began my studies at Calvin Seminary full time the next year.

Through seminary, I moved from a focus on returning to education, to considering chaplaincy, to feeling a call toward pastoral ministry in a parish setting. The church that I was attending began a renewal process, and I was invited to be part of the team. I became deeply convinced of the need for renewal in struggling churches and desired to be a part of that process. God then opened the door for me to serve as a Renewal Lab intern at Middleville CRC. There I have grown in my enjoyment of preaching and conviction of the need for discipleship of Christians and outreach to those who do not know Jesus.

Being a part of the CRC throughout my life, I have been blessed by teachers who taught me the Heidelberg Catechism, professors who have applied scripture to their subject areas and preachers who exegete scripture using a reformed hermeneutic that I too now have the opportunity to apply. I have been formed by mentors who have taken time to help me consider my faith deeply and who taught me about loving others well. I am deeply grateful for the conversations I have had



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

with friends and family of different faith traditions who have challenged my reformed understanding of scripture and its application and, by doing so, have grown my faith. I am confident that God has led me to this place and that he will use me to lead his people as we together seek to become more like Jesus.

Robert Van Zanen

*Statement of Reason*

I believe that God has called me to serve in the CRCNA. God has provided the opportunity and support for me to attend Calvin Seminary and has used CRC pastors and leaders to shape and equip me for ministry. He has instilled in me a deep love for His church and the desire to see the gospel spread. As someone who grew up in the CRC, I believe that I can minister well within its cultural context. Yet, as someone who has also lived internationally, I can help the church expand beyond its cultural barriers. Ultimately, I am seeking candidacy because I believe that it would be unfaithful for me not to do so. I feel called to service in Christ's church as pastor and have experienced confirmation from members of His body. I step forward into this next part of my journey trusting that Jesus will lead me as I continue to faithfully follow the path that He has laid out for me.

Robert Van Zanen



*Name:* Jenna Veenbaas

*Place of Birth:* Abbotsford, British Columbia

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Dordt College  
B.A., English Literature/  
Theatre Arts, 2010

Regent College  
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*

Hope Church RCA  
Spencer IA  
May 2016 - August 2016

Hillside Baptist  
North Vancouver, British Columbia  
September 2016 - June 2017

*Contact:*

604-751-6221  
jennaveenbaas@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

It was the summer after I graduated from Dordt College in 2010 that I distinctly felt the LORD taking a hold of me and setting me in a new direction—one that I never would have imagined for myself. His ways are always humbling, and I had recently completed a Bachelor of Arts in English and Theatre with absolutely no sense of direction and no sense of purpose. I landed up working on a pig farm, which draws to mind the humility of the prodigal son—having squandered much of his time and Father's finances away, and having no where else to turn but back to his Father. My attention was diverted, and I began to seek answers in the Scriptures, which led to a new-found fascination for context, literature, narrative and the drama that was found in the characters of the Bible.

This ignited a flame, which continued for the next year, as I scrambled through the books of the Bible, seeking after the Father's heart and trying to understand what I had 'known' for so long, and yet felt as if I had not really known at all.

After a year's worth of re-exploration, I found myself looking outside of the covers of Scripture and into the context of the church. Who were we supposed to be? What was church meant to look like? How could I be involved in what God was doing? I had developed a passion for the community of believers, desiring to see their own lives transformed as mine had been.

Wondering what the Holy Spirit was doing, I blindly sought out mentorship from the church leadership and waddled my way onto the Creative Team. This led into opportunities to put on dramas for the Sunday morning services, which led to speaking on a Sunday morning, which led to my pastor enquiring about a potential call to ministry and to attending Seminary. I laughed at him.

Eventually, God pushed and nudged (and sometimes shoved) me closer and closer to Regent College, where the call to ministry was only further assured and affirmed with each new semester. The many bumps and bruises along the way are only proof of my incessant doubts and fears, as I continued to challenge His call, being ever-more aware of my own fragility and limitations.

But the affirmations and encouragements of my mentors and peers, combined with the variety of opportunities presented to me to serve, gave me a pulse to remain on the long road of obedience; the road of self-sacrifice and humility. My desire to serve Him broadened into a desire to serve His people, and I grew to understand my sense of vocation as an array of giftings that, I believe, can best be utilized in the context of the church.

As I have continued to preach and intern in varying contexts, the Spirit has continued to develop within me a deep-seated sense of call to the equipping and building up of His children. Yet my devotion and commitment remains as such: to be a listener at the LORD's feet, and a beggar who simply wishes to tell other beggars where to find bread.

As the song goes, "In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song."

Jenna Veenbaas

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*Statement of Reason*

Ever since the LORD first planted the seed of seminary in my mind through my pastor, I have been supported, encouraged and equipped (spiritually and financially) by leaders and members of the Christian Reformed Church. Although the LORD has opened up opportunities for me to serve within the contexts of other denominations, He has continually kept calling me in the direction of the CRC and has placed a burden on my mind and heart for this particular branch of the global Church. I am seeking ordination because I sense the LORD's desire for me to utilize my giftings within the context of the church; to shepherd, teach, empower and equip congregant members in their Spirit-enabled gifts and help to foster future leaders. Through my seminary training and the encouragement and affirmation of those around me, I have sensed a passion for discipleship, servant leadership and pointing people towards Christ through the exhortation of Scripture. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I desire to serve the people of God to the best of my abilities and, Lord-willing, see them drawn deeper into relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Jenna Veenbaas



*Name:* Benjamin Verkerk

*Place of Birth:* Hamilton, Ontario

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

McMaster University  
Honors Bachelor of  
Commerce, 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*

A Christian Ministry in the  
National Parks  
Waterton Lakes National  
Park, Alberta  
May 2016 - August 2016

Caledonia CRC  
Caledonia, Michigan  
August 2017 - May 2018

*Contact:*

616-448-8668  
ben.verkerk@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I didn't understand what faith was all about until I was well into high school. I knew that Indiana Jones stepped out in faith in *The Last Crusade*, but that didn't have much to do with faith in Jesus. It was at a youth mission trip that I began to take Jesus a little bit more seriously and started to realize the wisdom that comes from a closer walk with Christ. Quickly, I started spending my time with friends who had also started to take their faith seriously. I professed my faith to my church in my senior year before moving away for university.

As a university freshman, I was ready to test my metal against the world. Yet my primarily Christian circles were left behind as I moved into a secular university setting. Here I found many of the alluring wiles of the world, but among all of that, I also found a little campus ministry hosted by a Christian Reformed chaplain. This small dinner fellowship group grew on me more and more and by the end of my first year, I volunteered to be a part of the leadership team.

Through the last three years of university, I came to truly understand what it meant to be a Christian all the while leading my fellow believers in this campus ministry. Despite my constant involvement in ministry leadership in high school and college, seminary and full time ministry didn't seem like a reality I could actually live up to. I knew better than anyone how sinful I truly was. Surely God didn't want me to lead his church. Despite several people encouraging me to consider it, even in high school, I put it from my mind and quickly dismissed the thought any time it came up. I volunteered in my church, and that was the closest I thought I would ever come to full-time ministry.

After struggling to find my place in the workforce, I was accepted into a masters program to study ancient hebrew literature at my alma mater. It was almost like studying the bible. That "almost" is the final push I needed. While sitting in my dingy, windowless, basement office poring over an ancient manuscript only a handful of people had ever read, trying to write a paper on it that even less people would read, I accepted that God had a plan for me. I was tired of circling the drain like a penny in one of those old coin donation funnels. After moving closer and closer to ministry, right up to studying ancient texts that were literally adjacent to the Bible, I finally accepted my call to serve God through his church. I remember the moment a few days later when I first spoke the words out loud to myself: "I will finish this paper. I will apply to seminary. I will find a way to pay for it. God will make it happen."

Within a few weeks, I finished my classes, I was accepted to Calvin Seminary, and I was offered classical funding. God is truly faithful, and he not only called me to seminary, but he continues to provide the means for me to get through it. He has been faithful to me financially, spiritually and intellectually as I prepare to graduate, and even brought a Godly woman into my life to walk alongside. I am still terrified of going into full-time ministry, but if I've learned anything in seminary, it's that my own strength, skills or ability aren't going to save the day. If it's his will, God will make it happen.

*The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thess. 5:24*

Benjamin Verkerk

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### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church on my path to ordination in order to follow the instruction of God. He has entrusted me with skills and the means of acquiring knowledge related to pastoral ministry and the leadership of his church. It is my desire to use these things to the best of my ability to serve him by serving the church as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament. I wholeheartedly believe that God has given each person a way in which they can joyfully serve the Lord, and it just so happens that the way I can do that, is by working in and among his gathered people. Within this calling, one that I fought and struggled with for years, I have been reassured regularly through my study and experiences that I am following God's will for my life. The feeling as a result of the work I've done in my internships has been one of reward and accomplishment. It has been meaningful to see believers grow in their faith and their relationship with Jesus, and it's a privilege to have been a part of that.

I am particularly interested in candidacy and ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because of our focus on two things. First is that we are a people based church. By this I mean that we care for individuals through denomination-wide initiatives that are executed on local levels. The denomination supports one another and comes together with ties that are greater than our oft shared ancestry.

Second, we are a denomination who seeks the truth and the Truth. As a body of believers, we seek justice as often as possible for our community, the neighbours around us and our neighbours around the world. We seek to understand the scriptures as best as possible, constantly challenging and honing our understanding. This eternal quest for knowledge contributes to our quest for the Truth, with a capital T. Jesus is at the center of our denomination; the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It can be easy to be bogged down by our own preferences, presuppositions, and biases and yet we aim to remain focused first and foremost on Christ. These two things are the foundation of not only our own denomination, but of what the church universal has been called to do: To love our neighbours, and to love God. By seeking out the lost and caring for the found, we love our neighbours. By pursuing a deeper understanding of God's word and remaining in Christ, we demonstrate our love for God.

Benjamin Verkerk



*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:* Christopher Walker

*Place of Birth:* Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Cornerstone University  
B. Mus., 2001

Western Theological Seminary  
M. Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Covenant Life Church  
Worship Arts Director  
Grand Haven, Michigan  
August 2012 - present

*Contact:*  
616-648-9738  
phatb1@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

My spiritual journey is marked with examples of God's faithfulness and patience. He has provided wise voices to speak into my life, painful experiences to break down easy answers and a calling that seems to become clearer by the day.

As a child, I found a steady Christian foundation within my family. My parents are strong Christians who were at the steps of our Baptist church every time the doors were open. As a second grader, I prayed what was known as "the sinner's prayer" when a Sunday school teacher invited us to follow Jesus making sure I'd be in heaven after I died. Even though I didn't fully understand what I was committing to, I certainly was sincere in my commitment. Of course, this didn't stop me from praying to be saved over and over again continuously. Once I started to hear what Hell might be like, I certainly didn't want to go there and would pray the extra prayers just in case.

I was baptized as a fifth grader. Reading my short testimony in front of the congregation at the time. These were important movements for me through my childhood, and my parents and older brother were with me through every step.

It wasn't until high school, however, that I really began to investigate this Christian faith, in an effort to make it my own. My youth pastor was the first person outside of my family that I really believed was intentionally brought into my life by God. He challenged the ideas of faith that I'd simply accepted from my parents, he displayed how his faith affected his everyday life, he prayed for me and over me, and he always pointed toward scripture for guidance.

After graduating, I found myself at Cornerstone University as a music major. There were a handful of heavily formational relationships that I built with friends, professors and my freshman year Resident Director. More specifically, it was sitting in a coffee shop where this R.D. basically unraveled all of my assumptions about God and the Bible by asking some simple theological questions I had never considered. I was becoming frustrated with "the church" (whatever that meant), disillusioned by a faith that felt formulaic and angry at people who called themselves Christians but looked no different from the world. I didn't realize it at the time, but up until this point, my faith was mostly related to the afterlife which was insurance to keep out of hell, and only providing a basic checklist for things I needed to get done while I waited.

His questions were simple. They didn't come with simple answers, and it sent me spinning, Trying to decide what I actually did believe about God, salvation, the scriptures and what it all had to do with life before life after death. I walked away from that conversation needing to rebuild my faith; a terrifying and exciting endeavor. This drove me to seek an understanding of the relational aspects of faith that, very slowly, overtook the formulas that I had accepted up to that point.

In the 20 years since then, God has been pulling me deeper into ministry which I have been hesitant about if I'm honest. I spent a decade in a non-denominational mega church context. Serving in worship arts ministry and as a community pastor. I continued to ask substantial

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

questions about faith. These questions occasionally led to answers, but often led to frustration at the gap between the exciting vision for the church that I saw in the Scriptures and the reality of Church, Inc. In large part because of convictions the Spirit was stirring up in me, my wife and I left the megachurch context hurting. However, God was carrying us through the pain. For multiple reasons, it was one of the most heartbreaking seasons we had experienced. Yet it was also one of the most intensely rich seasons of walking with God.

Through all of this, I was discovering the Reformed stream of our faith. I'm grateful that I'm a sort of "denominational mutt," with varying perspectives in my background. But the Reformed voices I encountered resonated deeply with me; it felt like a theological "home." We found ourselves, almost miraculously, landing in our current context. I have served for the last eight years as the Director of Worship and Arts at a Christian Reformed Church in West Michigan. This community has been a true gift of grace from God!

We have found ourselves in a community of believers that care deeply for prayer, seek the Holy Spirit, have denominational convictions without boxing in the movement of God. They share our values for worship, creativity, community, and culture, while constantly weighing our motives against scripture. This has also been a community of healing, encouragement and support while I followed God's call to Western Theological Seminary and figure out what God has next for me in ministry.

I continue to ask honest questions, hoping to trust and treasure the Lord over all else even while I wrestle with faith. I'm grateful for a relationship with our Creator, rather than a formula for avoiding hell. I'm confident that all is grace and my only hope is Christ.

Christopher Walker

*Statement of Reason*

While I never imagined a path leading me into pastoral ministry, that call has become clearer over the last 10 years. Each step along the way has been a move toward obedience. I am trying to faithfully follow God's leading in pursuing candidacy in the hope that I can continue to serve my current church through the ministry of Word and sacrament. The Lord has stirred up in me a passion for the preached Word, the sacraments and the worshipping life of the church. Whether gathered or sent, I hope to serve the Bride of Christ as she represents the reign of God in the world.

Christopher Walker



*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:*

616-691-8040  
baweeks@calvinseminary.edu

### *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:* Michael Yang

*Place of Birth:* Los Angeles,  
California

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
University of British Columbia  
B.A., 2013

University of British Columbia  
Bachelor of Education, 2014

Regent College  
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary  
EPMC, 2018

*Internships:*  
Evangelical Chinese  
Bible Church  
Burnaby, British Columbia  
October 2015 - August 2016

The Tapestry Church  
Richmond/Vancouver,  
British Columbia  
September 2016 - April 2018

*Languages spoken:* Mandarin,  
English

*Contact:*  
604-761-8968  
myang117@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I did not grow up in a religious home. I spent the first 12 years of my life in Vancouver (B.C.) unaware of what a “Christian” was. I arrived in Taiwan to start my grade 7 year. My parents enrolled me into a private Christian international school, but did not tell me it was a religious school! Christ encountered me there, saved me and began transforming my life. When I graduated from high school, I was accepted into the University of British Columbia (UBC) to pursue a career in teaching. By God’s plan, the same year I graduated, my high school chaplain also moved back to Vancouver herself. She introduced me to a local church. Over time I fell in love with the church. She chose me to be one of our church’s small group leaders and to serve on a ministry leadership team. From there I grew tremendously in my faith, and also was affirmed in gifts that I would later understand as pastoral gifts: teaching, leading, and shepherding.

Up until my third year at UBC, things were going well. However, the year proved to be a difficult one (family tragedy, personal failings, close friends betraying my trust). I was broken and felt helpless. It was here that I experienced God’s redemptive work in such a palpable way. I call this my “born again, again” moment because it really turned things around. It was also here that I began to see clearly the seeds of a calling to pastoral ministry. The church had wrapped its arms around me and began, along with the Spirit, to heal me and put me back together. I knew from that day forward that whatever I had experienced through this process, I wanted to be around that transformative power and presence for the rest of my life.

Fast forward a few years, I became a certified B.C. teacher, and yet, I could not resist this persistent and growing call to pastoral ministry. So I started attending Regent College. I dug deeper into my church community and began to serve on staff as a pastoral intern. I eventually moved on from that church and have now been serving as a pastoral intern at a CRC church called The Tapestry.

In many ways, God has been guiding me throughout my life; being saved by Christ in the most unexpected of places. My training as teacher has powerfully shaped my ministry and pastoral calling. Attending Regent College, with its diversity of denominations and student body (culturally and vocationally), has reinforced my love for the church catholic. Lastly, the gift of serving in a large and long-established ethnic church and now serving in a CRC church plant, has allowed me to draw upon two different church climates and cultures.

In light of these experiences, this is who I believe God to be and what I believe God is up to: I believe the Living God is on a mission to bring about God’s kingdom and new creation in this world by restoring and redeeming it. I believe Christ embodies that mission, and the Holy Spirit empowers that mission. And wonder of wonders, I belong to a church that is part of this body of Christ, and we are being led by the Spirit to participate in building for this kingdom, and living as the new creation in the midst of the old. I am committed as a disciple to the way of Jesus. I belong to Jesus, who has given me purpose and identity in this mission of



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

God. I cannot imagine a life without him. So wherever he wants to take me, wherever he is leading, I want to follow.

Michael Yang

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination for two main reasons. The first is to acknowledge that I am not my own, and am not doing ministry on my own. Rather, I belong and feel called to this larger family (Christian Reformed Church) and tradition (Reformed) that seeks to be faithful to Christ and Christ's mission. This tradition and family are, of course, part of this larger body of Christ followers known as the church catholic. So ordination is a way for me to enter and live within that universal body through a particular expression. It roots me somewhere so that I can better engage the world not of my own accord, but alongside others. The second reason is that I believe this is the next step God is leading me to. I have been blessed to follow Jesus and to serve his church. Therefore I see ordination as an affirmation of Christ's calling in my life, and how he is equipping me to better follow him and serve his church. For these reasons, the CRCNA is my denominational home, and I seek the blessing of my denomination as I seek candidacy.

Michael Yang



*Name:* Josiah Youngquist

*Place of Birth:* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Moody Bible Institute  
Bachelor's Degree in Pastoral  
Ministry and Bible, 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
A Christian Ministry In The  
National Parks  
Glacier National Park, Montana  
June 2015 - August 2015  
  
Talbot Street CRC  
London, Ontario  
June 2016 - August 2016  
  
Pillar Church (CRC)  
Holland, Michigan  
June 2017 - August 2017

*Contact:*  
616-607-4934  
youngquist.josiah@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

Reflecting back on my faith journey, I can see many people who have been influential in my faith and in discerning my calling to ministry. In each step of the way, I have seen how Christ has used events and people to draw me closer to him.

I grew up in a Christian home. For much of my life, I grew up in a community of faith. My parents were influential in the early years of my faith journey. They faithfully taught my siblings and I about God and his grace shown towards the world in his son Jesus. They taught me the importance of God's word through having devotions and going to Bible studies as a family. They also taught me that faith is something that should be lived out in one's life. From a young age, they had me and my siblings serving the community through volunteer work at *Love In the Name of Christ*. They taught us the importance of showing the love that we have received from Christ by serving others.

In middle school, Ferrysburg Community CRC's youth group went to a Christian music festival. During one of the concerts, a band member spoke about his faith, what it meant in his life and how he lived out his faith. It was during this talk that I decided to make my family's faith my own. I cannot remember a time when I did not believe in Jesus, but this is the point that I see myself taking an active role in faith journey.

During my summers in high school, I had the opportunity to go on a few short-term mission trips to Central and South America. It was during these trips, I had the opportunity to share my faith with the people we were serving. In conversations with the people we were serving I shared with them about my relationship with Jesus, what he had done for humanity, and how that had changed my life. I was nervous at first, but during that experience, I felt it was perhaps something that God was calling me to. It was during these trips that I first felt a calling towards ministry.

To explore this calling more, I decided to go to Moody Bible Institute for my undergraduate education. The city of Chicago, and the opportunity for ministry while pursuing my education and their emphasis on the Bible, is what drew me to attend. While there, I was able to explore my sense of calling and have this calling start to be confirmed by those around me. I had a mentor at Moody who was a theology professor that helped me to think deeply about my faith. Even though we differed greatly on some topics of theology he allowed me to explore the tenants of the Reformed faith I grew up in. It was a great learning experience for me to be able to know more about the faith I grew up in and was a part of and how that differs from other Christian faith traditions.

Also, while at Moody, I was able to live out my beliefs in practice. Throughout my time there, I was able to be part of a ministry who walked alongside the homeless population in Chicago. One thing that I have made a part of my faith journey is that I not only have a deep knowledge of the historic Christian faith, but I put that faith into practice.

After graduating and feeling a calling towards pastoral ministry, I went to Calvin Theological Seminary. Over the past three and a half years of my studies there I have grown even deeper in my walk with Christ. The

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

professors have allowed the space for me to explore the Reformed faith deeply. There was a time early on in seminary that I did deeply question my faith. But during this time, close friends and mentors helped me sort out and reflect on what I was going through. That experience helped me see that Christianity truly must be lived out in community, walking alongside others, as we look to Christ. I have grown to love the Reformed accent of orthodox Christianity. I have come to value my Reformed faith, the one I grew up in, as stated in the confessions and catechisms we hold to in the Christian Reformed Church. It is my hope that through work as a servant of the Church that I am able to share this faith in and grace of Jesus Christ with others.

Josiah Youngquist

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe I have an internal calling towards pastoral ministry. I believe God is calling and equipping me to be a minister to his people. I have been affirmed in this calling by mentors, leaders, and people close to me. I hope to minister humbly and faithfully wherever I am called to serve. It is my hope to share God's grace and love through the word and sacraments. The deep truths I have come to know from our theological underpinning has drawn me closer to Christ. I feel called to share these truths, wherever I serve, in the hopes that it will draw others into a closer relationship with our Savior. Now, in seeking to remain faithful to that call, am seeking the external calling from the denomination I love.

Josiah Youngquist



*Name:* James Zwier

*Place of Birth:* Santo Domingo,  
Dominican Republic

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*  
Calvin College  
B.A., Communication and  
Rhetoric, 2006  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary,  
M.Div., 2018

*Internships:*  
Lao CRC  
Holland, Michigan  
June 2015 - August 2015  
  
Pine Rest Christian Mental  
Health Services  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
June 2016 - August 2016

*Languages spoken:* Spanish, Lao,  
English

*Contact:*  
616-284-1434  
jz063@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

My story fits into God's story and clarifies my calling. I resonate with the life God created, the loss I've experienced, the love that surrounds and overflows from me, and the abundant life which I can almost taste. God made humans to live a flourishing life, full of beauty and truth. God made people to bless one another and co-create a good life that reflects God's image. However, we lost our way, driven by sin and death. Humans were not meant to lose the life God made for them. Darkness and decay entered all creation and overshadowed the image of God in humankind. God chose people to love so that they might love others and restore creation as image-bearers of God. God's Spirit inspired the story told in the Scriptures. God is most fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, God's own son, "true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father" (Nicene Creed). Christ destroyed the powers of sin and death by dying on the cross. By rising from the dead, he points to the time when all things will be made new. The life of abundance, color, and beauty will be unveiled and realized so that all creation can live as God intended.

I was born and raised in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic with family roots in Dutch Reformed and Mennonite communities. I grew up speaking Spanish and English, crossing between Dominican and American cultures at church, school and my neighborhood. Before my senior year of high school, I came to Calvin Seminary for Facing Your Future. It is a program that opened my eyes to Reformed theology and ministry as a life calling. I decided to attend Calvin College, where I learned alongside international students, heard stories from African Americans about racism, lived in an intentional community house, grew in my passion for social justice, and explored my calling to ministry. Upon graduation, I interned with World Renew in Laos for two years and continued as a full-time Program Advisor for six more years. I returned to the US in 2014 to prepare for ordained ministry by studying at Calvin Seminary. During seminary, my wife and I lived with college students in an intentional Christian community house.

I believe that ministry happens through a divine partnership with God and humans. The Triune God, self-giving, self-receiving love, overflows into creation. I believe in love, faithfulness to Scripture, and the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe the gospel welcomes all people and all nations into the kingdom of God. God guides and redeems my life story in ministry. I believe God is faithful to me, suffers with humans in the brokenness of existence, and delights in our co-creative participation in God's world.

My story parallels God's story of life, loss, love and abundance. I have experienced the joys of multicultural upbringing, the pain of disappointment and death and the deep love of relationships and new life. I look forward to the abundant life God has for all and can taste and see glimpses of it in this life. Multicultural living has always been a part of my life and will continue to be a common thread as I minister in North America. God calls me to be a bridge among cultures, to embody the good news in word and deed, and to walk with God and my family toward abundant life.

James Zwier

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*Statement of Reason*

In the Reformed tradition, God's call comes to the individual and through the church. I feel called to ministry because God's story intersects with my story in ways that draw me into serving the church. Though I didn't grow up in the CRC, I have been member of the church for half of my life. Since I know it better than any other denomination, I want to serve in it. I hope God's call on my life will be confirmed and through the call of the Christian Reformed Church into ministry in a specific place. As part of the global church, I hope to draw communities of faith into active participation in the worldwide communion of faith through Word and Sacraments.

James Zwier



*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:*

616-560-3153  
brad.zwiers@gmail.com

### *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.

Brad Zwiers