CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2019

approved candidates

Name: Joel S. Altena

Place of birth: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
Bachelor of Arts, May 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M-Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Three Rivers CRC
Three Rivers, MI
Sept 2015 - May 2016

Resurrection Life Church
Cary, NC
Septe 2016 - May 2017

Resonate Global Mission
Volunteer Missionary
Klaipeda, Lithuania
July 2018

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Faith Journey

I consider the greatest blessing in my life to be the fact that I was born and raised in a faithful and covenantal Christian family. I mean this in a variety of ways: I was born into a Christian family with parents who valued teaching me Christian morals, practices, and faith. I was baptized into the family of Christians who were a part of the Christian Reformed Church at Shawnee Park CRC. And, I was educated and formed in the Grand Rapids Christian School System family, where I had teachers who taught me a Christian worldview as well as mentors who walked with me along the way. In each of these respects, I owe much of who I am to the brothers and sisters in Christ who formed, raised, and challenged me throughout my walk.

I was baptized as an infant, and my faith became my own when I was fifteen years old. It was at this age that I was mentored through a process that taught me the core values of the Reformed faith and which then led me to make profession of faith in front of my church family. It was here that I claimed the same truths that so many Christians throughout time have also claimed: the Bible is the Word of God, and it tells the story of God and his people throughout history. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, incarnate, who came to earth to spread the good news of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit is alive and active in Christians, acting in power and truth to aid us in our walk with God. I also learned the creeds and confessions, and they became near and dear to me as I continued to be shaped by mentors, Christian day school, Sunday school, and the enduring prayers of those who loved me.

When I was in high school, I wanted to be an architect. I loved how space so powerfully affected our ability to build relationships, community, and identity. I eventually decided to go to Calvin College, since I didn't have much of a portfolio ready to apply to architecture schools and Calvin at that time had a architecture minor. So I went there pursuing that, and soon after I realized my love for space came out of a deeper longing. The deeper longing was a desire to be a meaningful voice in the spaces where faith is formed. My faith wasn't just something to believe in, it was something to share, and to teach, and to proclaim - and I wanted to do this in the multitude of spaces where we find ourselves in daily life.

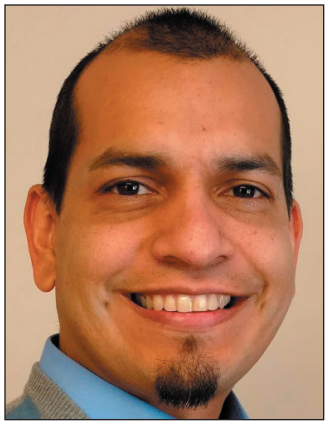
Ministry happens in space. It happens primarily in the sanctuary, but also in the narthex, and in the post-church gathering over coffee, and at dinner tables, in living rooms, on street corners and in the front seat of cars. Ministry happens in all of life's spaces because faith isn't something that is formed once and then left alone. And it's not something that you just think about on Sunday morning. Faith shapes all the choices we make, and the loves we pursue, and work we accomplish. My faith journey has been grounded in space. That is, it has been real, enfleshed, and played out in the physical world where we sing, and dance, and pray, and mourn, and preach, and teach, and love, all in community. My faith has been shaped by grand moments of God's presence coming upon me, but also in normal, mundane moments of life. These are the places where people exist. And this is the place where my faith continues to be cultivated. That is why I love ministry. It's because, as we enter into a multitude of spaces on a daily basis, God's Spirit's there already working, and we get to join in to share, testify, preach, teach, proclaim, and love. I thank God for the journey that has happened so far, and I look forward to the journey ahead.

Joel Altena

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I am a follower of Jesus Christ who desires to respond to God's leading. I have sensed a call over the past eight years that God is, and has been, calling me to pastoral work in the CRC. I have sensed this through affirmation in my heart, through the support and encouragement of Christians around me, and from God's own confirmation as he has opened doors and provided opportunities. I consider this call threefold; from God, from myself, and from others. In addition to that call, I am seeking ordination in the CRC for two other reasons; first, this is my home denomination. I have been a member at a Christian Reformed church my entire life, from my baptism to now. Second, because this is the theological area that I affirm as my own. I affirm the teachings and theology of the Reformed faith, and find it has particular and emphatic meaning for my own life. This Reformed worldview gives me great hope and passion to continue pursuing the work of the kingdom of God and the spread of Christ's good news to all who need yet to hear it.

Joel Altena



Name: Israel Alvarado

Place of birth: Mexicali,
Baja California Mexico

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Universidad Autonoma
de Baja California
Mexicali, Mexico
BA, International Business, 2002

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Pine Rest Christian Mental
Health Services
Grand Rapids, MI
CPE internship
May 2018 - Aug 2018

Pine Rest Christian Mental
Health Services
Grand Rapids, MI
Residency Chaplaincy
Aug 2018 - expected to finish in
Sept 2019

Languages spoken:
Spanish, some French

Contact:
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Faith Journey

My faith journey starts in Mexico, where I was born and raised. I was born to first generation protestant Christians who had converted from Catholicism. I grew up in a Pentecostal church. This is where I get my passion for outreach, as the Pentecostal church placed a strong focus on outreach activities and one on one evangelism.

At the age of 12 years old, I made a decision to surrender my life to Christ and receive him as the Lord and Savior of my life. At the age of 16 I was baptized in the sea of Baja California in Mexico. Around this time in my life, my dad was commissioned to start a new church in a rural village in my hometown. I helped my dad playing the guitar during worship services, translating for missionaries from the USA and doing outreach activities like breakfasts, used clothes drives, and medical and dental clinics. Through this church plant many people came to faith in Christ, including the drug dealer who lived across the street from the church and who controlled the whole village. Seeing the power of God's word at work encouraged me to continue telling others about the amazing power of the resurrection and how their lives could be changed.

It was during my high school years where I was given a prophetic word that I would be used to preach the good news of the gospel to people that have never heard it. At first I was excited but then the excitement started fading away, especially after I went to college and majored in International Business.

After college I moved to Phoenix AZ, where I got involved with an Assemblies of God church plant. It was in this church where I got excited about church planting because I could see how many people were coming to faith in Christ and how church plants are highly outreach focused. After a few years of living in Phoenix I developed an interest in missions, so I decided to serve as a volunteer with Campus Crusade for Christ in Mexico City doing campus ministry. After my time with Crusade I got married and moved to West Michigan.

A few months after my wife Michelle and I moved to Holland Michigan, I was given the opportunity to plant a Spanish speaking church in Wyoming MI. My upbringing had provided me with the experience of an evangelist, with a passion to reach the lost, discipleship and leadership development, so God blessed our work with this church, and we saw many people come to faith in Christ and be baptized.

During my time as the pastor of Iglesia Alas de Aguila in Wyoming I was introduced to Reformed theology. At first, I was skeptical about it, mainly because of the similarities with the Roman Catholic church (infant baptism, the use of "sacraments" and the use of a catechism), but after digging deeper into Reformed theology I realized that God had predestined me to be Reformed. Therefore, after almost 7 years of leading the church I stepped down from leading the church and became a full-time student at Calvin Theological Seminary.

In my last year of seminary, the Lord opened a door for me to do a one-year residency as a chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. This is where I have been serving the Lord for the past 6 months. It has been a great uplifting and enriching experience that has

Faith Journey (continued)

helped me develop the skills I need to be able to provide pastoral care to those that are in crisis, believers and non-believers, showing them the love, care and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ in the toughest times in their lives.

Israel Alvarado

Statement of Reason

Before moving to Michigan, I had never heard of Reformed theology, much less of the Christian Reformed Church. I believe that God placed me in the Christian Reformed Church so that I can use my God-given gifts and ministry experience for his glory. God opened the doors of the seminary for me to study Reformed theology, God connected me with a caring and loving CRC church for me to get involved in and become a member. The Christian Reformed Church has welcomed me and my family and have been supportive of my call to ministry. I want to be part of what God is doing in this world through the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, either it is by the preaching of the Gospel, building Christ's church through discipleship, sharing God's grace through the sacraments, raising the new generation of lay leaders, or caring for the "least of these" in a chaplaincy capacity.

Israel Alvarado

Name: Ram S. Aryal

Place of birth: Kathmandu, Nepal

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of North Alabama
B.S., Biology, 2006

University of Saint Joseph
M.S., Biology, 2009

Birmingham Th. Seminary
M.A., Pastoral Leadership, 2013

Calvin Th. Seminary
M. Div., 2017

Internships:

Redeemer PCA, Florence, AL
Aug 2011 - Oct 2012

Thornapple Covenant Church
Sept 2013 - Sept 2015

Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Nepali-speaking Community Ministry
Minister, Part-time
Oct 2015 - Oct 2016
Minister, Full - time
Nov 2016 - July 2018

Hanley CRC, Grandville, MI
Ministry to Nepali-speaking Community
Aug 2018 - Current

Languages spoken:

English, Hindi (Indian), and Nepali

Contact:

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Faith Journey

I was introduced to the gospel message by my hall director in Jacksonville State University, my undergraduate school dorm room in Alabama when I was a freshman. After several weeks of Bible studies, I began to realize that the movie I had watched but was not able to understand as a high school student in Nepal was about Jesus. I was asked if I would like to receive Jesus in faith. I said, "Yes." Then, my Bible Study teacher led me to Christ, gave me a Bible to study, and asked me to join his church. Within a month I received water baptism and made public confession of my faith in front of a Church congregation. Thanks be to God. This happened in October 7, 1997.

During graduate school in 2008, I connected with a Nepali Church planter in Boston. He shared the need for reaching out to the Nepali community people there. Commuting a two-hour drive weekly from Hartford, CT, was worth it for me to see many people coming for the Bible Study and worship in a house church setting. I sensed my call to serve Christ by obeying him wholeheartedly. This call was also confirmed through my wife for me to join Birmingham Theological Seminary (BTS) in Alabama in 2009. Then, I served as a visiting student pastor at Restoration Ranch in North Alabama from July. 2010 until Aug. 2013. The people I served were going through rehab. They came out of drugs, alcohol, and broken families.

In May 2013, I graduated from BTS. An opportunity came open to serve the Nepali-Speaking Community at Thornapple Covenant Church in Grand Rapids as a ministerial intern/staff member. There, I served as a minister of Nepali-speaking Community until the end of July, 2018. I planned and oversaw the weekly Sunday morning worship service, preached/taught, fostered a welcoming environment to both Christians and non-Christians, and equipped and discipled believers from the Nepali Community. I met regularly with pastors, mentors and supervisors. At Calvin Seminary I served as a chapel planning team member for two years. In 2017, I earned my M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary.

I have been leading 30-35 Nepali-speaking people for the last seven months. We meet at Hanley Christian Reformed Church for Sunday afternoon worship service in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Community people from both Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds join our small group fellowship.

I am dedicated and diligent student of the Word, with a passion for excellence in preaching. As a servant of Christ, I am committed to serve the marginalized and struggling as well as all other families. I am committed to learning about how faith families are doing. Some of my friends share that the word "stranger" is not in my vocabulary. I treat each person I meet with dignity, genuine concern and interest. I often like to remind people that they are precious in the sight of Christ and that he deeply cares for them. I enjoy spending time with my family.

I hope to pastor a church, a congregation that would like to promote diversity and unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope to work with pastors, evangelists, and disciple makers of Christ in that community to connect with the unreached English-speaking people and people

Faith Journey (continued)

from other ethnicities. I believe that making disciples, sharing our lives with them and empowering them to help others gain the knowledge of Christ by creating a nurturing spiritual environment could enhance the discipleship process and make us better citizens of the Kingdom.

Jesus Christ is God's Son, Savior and Redeemer of the world. Jesus seeks to save the lost. I have been saved through faith. Jesus is my Lord. This is God's gift for me. "I am not my own, I belong to Christ...my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." I have been forgiven, redeemed and adopted into the family of God in Christ Jesus. I have a commitment to live my faith by sharing the Good News to the unreached, shepherding God's people entrusted to me and to continue lifting up Christ through Worship, Word, Sacraments, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism and prayers.

God is love. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. Christ loved us unconditionally and laid down his life for us on the Cross. He called us to love one another. Therefore, we must love each other. I believe that God is calling us to extend His grace and mercy to all who are unknown to the Lord Jesus Christ and do not have relationship with Him.

Ram S. Aryal

Statement of Reason

I am seeking Candidacy and ordination of Word and Sacraments through the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) for three reasons: First, to feel free to lift up our Triune God by preaching the Word of God, by worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth, by making disciples of Christ, and for building relationships among English-speaking believers through fellowship without regard to race and color, so together with others I may encourage them to continue to grow in their faith with me and to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls and minds; and second, to teach and empower believers to spread the Good News of the Gospel among the unreached bilingual Nepali and other people of national/international origin and cultures, speaking many languages; and third, to love the creed, confessions, history, polity, and the cause of Christ for which the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) stands, to support diversity and ecumenism among different denominations because of the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ that the CRC promotes, and to participate in the way Christian Reformed churches and their members support the unreached find and follow our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ram S. Aryal

Name: Seth Atsma

Place of birth: Sioux Center, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College
Sioux Center, IA
BA Computer Science, May 2002

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Wedgwood Christian Services
Grand Rapids, MI
Sep - Nov 2018

Providence CRC
Grand Rapids, MI
May - Aug 2019

Contact:

(360)-990-6376
saa030@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

My grandmother always encouraged me to enter the ministry. She, however, lived in Iowa, and I grew up on a dairy farm in Oregon, so we didn't see each other very often, but whenever we would visit she would plant the idea in my head. As a child I resisted that idea because I did not want to do a public speaking event every Sunday, and so I dreamed of more 'fun' occupations. I would much rather have done paleontology, archeology, or some other 'ology' (spoiler alert, I ended up in theology!).

I grew up, graduated from Dordt College, joined the Navy, got married, had a daughter, got out of the Navy, and got a civilian job. While I was in the Navy, my family attended a CRC church, and the pastor there was a mentor to me and showed amazing love to my family. Two years after I left the Navy, that pastor retired, and we went to his retirement party.

It was late when we left the party. My daughter was asleep, and my wife was tired, but a third passenger was a bit more active. I felt a tapping on my shoulder, and a voice telling me it was time, that I was ready for the ministry. I woke my wife and we talked. We prayed. Following this call would cause an enormous change in our lives, and we were nervous.

As we continued to pray, and talk with family and friends about our call, I realized how important my time in the military would influence my ministry. I started meeting veterans and family members of veterans everywhere I went. I realized that God was using my military service to prepare me to minister to them and to all of God's people.

But my wife and I still didn't know how we were going to do this, but we decided to step out in faith. God continuously opened doors for us, and my wife and I have continuously been amazed by God's faithfulness. We are at another transition in our lives, and though we are nervous, we know that God will continue to be faithful and lead us into the future.

Seth Atsma

Statement of Reason

God has planted me in the CRC. The CRC has been a part of every stage of my life, and the life of my family. For better and worse, I love the people of the church and have no desire to leave. Since I have received a call from God, and because I want to follow that call "well and in good order", I seek ordination within the CRC.

Seth Atsma

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: Jonathan Bosma

Place of birth: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA in Economics, May 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Bellevue CRC
Bellevue, WA
Summer 2014

Unity CRC
Prospect Park, NJ
July 2015 - July 2016

Dig at Calvin Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, MI
July 2017

Mayfair Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Aug 2017 - June 2018

Contact:
(616)-610-2265
jkb088@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

I believe that I am a fallen man. I have a standard for my own life that I do not live up to. If I am unable to live up to the standard of my own life, how could I ever live up to the standard that God has placed on my life? I know that I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor in my thoughts, words, and deeds. Because of this sin in my life, I deserve God's punishment. I believe in a God that is righteous and just, so God cannot just look past my sin. The cost of my sin is death. I wish there was something that I could do to escape this punishment, but there is nothing I can do. I can try as hard as I want, but I will always come up short.

However, I also believe that God is loving and merciful. God is a God of grace. God loves me so much that he provided a substitute for my sin. God the Father sent God the Son here to earth to step in and take my punishment. This Son, Jesus, was uniquely qualified to take my punishment. Him being fully human and fully God made him not only eligible to pay for my sins, but able to withstand the weight of the punishment for me, but for all sinners. Christ through his work on the cross took my sin upon his shoulders and took the punishment for me. But Christ did not stop there. Christ then overcame death and rose from the grave, and in doing so he conquered both sin and death.

God now invites me into a life with him. Through no work of my own, but through the grace of God I have been forgiven of my sins. God has given me the gift of life – eternal life. God has now called me from a life of sin to a new life with and for him. I now strive to honor God with everything that I do. I know that I am not perfect, but I do my very best to give glory to God through my thoughts, words, and actions. I do nothing as a means of earning the salvation God has given me, but I act out of a means of gratitude for this gift God has given me. Through the work of the Holy Spirit I now move closer to God. The Holy Spirit empowers me to love both God and my neighbor, and it is my hope and prayer that God will use me to transform lives and communities for his kingdom.

What I believe has been developed over a lifetime. God blessed me with a Christian family and Christian parents. They raised me in a home that was intentionally Christian. Our faith was important to us, and our faith shaped how we lived. Over time that faith became more and more my own. God used the people at my church, school, and so many other places to draw me in towards him.

It was in high school that I was first encouraged to consider being a pastor. This was an encouragement that I took seriously. I have spent much time in prayer, and in conversation with others about being a pastor, and each time I feel God has continued to open that door. As I look back on my life, I see God regularly putting me in positions to prepare me. God opened the door for me to lead a Bible study in 8th grade, join the youth group leadership team in high school, run a Bible study on my floor in college, and be a resident assistant. God has placed me in internships in four different churches. Each time I gained more responsibilities, experienced more, and was challenged in more ways. I believe that God has called me to be a pastor, and I am humbly following after him. I know He will continue to be with me and equip me so that His glory will be being proclaimed everywhere I go.

Jon Bosma

Statement of Reason

I seek ordination in the CRCNA as an act to follow the direction I believe that God has put upon me. God prepares and equips each of us to follow his calling in different ways. I believe that this is the path that God has placed before me. I have a desire to see more and better disciples, and I look forward to being a part of the development. I know that this is not a role that I can complete on my own; I must be completely reliant on God. I believe that the Holy Spirit will inspire me and give me the wisdom to lead a congregation into a deeper relationship with Him. The CRC has been my spiritual home for the entirety of my life, and I eagerly look forward to giving back to this denomination through this position.

Jon Bosma

Name: Christopher L. Bouma

Place of birth: South Haven, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
B.S. Biology, 2012

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA
M.S. Ecosystem Science and Management, 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Forest Grove CRC
Hudsonville, MI
June 2017 - Aug 2017

Degage Ministries
Grand Rapids, MI
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:
Some Spanish

Contact:
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ch.bouma1@gmail.com

Faith Journey

There is not a time that I can remember where I did not know Jesus. I grew up in a Christian family, but unlike many families, my father's career in the U.S. Navy never kept us in one place very long. Every few years, my father would get reassigned and we would pick up and move.

There is something to note about growing up as a Protestant Christian on a military base. Attending the Protestant service, we were a blend of many different denominations and backgrounds. The word we heard was dependent upon the denomination of the minister leading the service. While I did not know it at the time, this experience provided me with a deep appreciation for not just my own theological tradition, but what other traditions offer. More importantly, it instilled within me the practical sense of our confession, "I believe in one Holy catholic and apostolic church."

This upbringing provided me a unique setting for the cultivation of my Christian faith and walk with God. Yet, it also provided me the opportunity to interact with people from many different cultures, faith groups, and backgrounds. While I obviously disagreed with many beliefs and practices of the people with whom I interacted, I also organically learned that the image of God is present in every person. This is something I carry with me to this day and deeply value this conviction as a gift from God.

As I continued to grow in age and faith, God persevered in holding me and nurturing me through his Spirit. As I entered my twenties, God unmistakably began his work in calling me to ministry. In this process, I considered more thoughtfully the tradition of my own denomination, the Christian Reformed Church. I explored the intricacies of our theology, finding answers of comfort and promise, notably in the Heidelberg Catechism.

As I continue in formal and informal ministry, I am deeply rooted in God's Word and what this means for our lives. One of the basic Christian callings is to serve as Christ served us. This is done through the power of the Spirit as a reflection of the service Christ has done for us on the cross. Practically, I hope to serve the church. Yet God's calling should not be restricted just to the church. Rather, I am called to serve God's kingdom wherever it is coming, discerning God's will in this process, so that all may know the name of Jesus.

This is all rooted in the love of Jesus Christ, who died on a cross. He descended into the darkest place so we do not have to experience eternal darkness. And on the third day Jesus rose again from the dead. Jesus now intercedes for us at the right hand of God the Father almighty. In this perfect sacrifice, God has forgiven those whom he calls. In this forgiving power, God calls us to turn around on the path we were following (what we call repentance) to live in service to God. The Holy Spirit empowers this work and convicts us of the truth that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

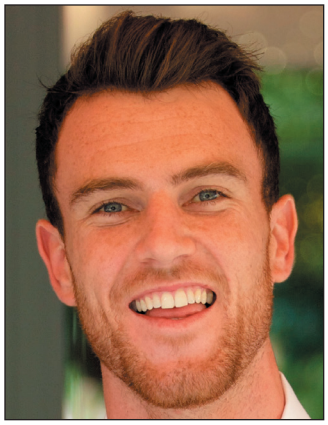
Chris Bouma

Statement of Reason

I have felt God's call to be a servant of Jesus Christ in his church. More specifically, the Holy Spirit has moved me to fulfill this calling in ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. God has confirmed this calling through the ministry contexts in which he has already placed me. Furthermore, having roots in the Christian Reformed Church, I deeply value the denomination's high view and interpretation of Scripture. In all of this, I feel the Christian Reformed Church is where God is calling me to serve.

Looking toward ordained ministry, I pray God will continue to use me as his instrument to disciple Christ's body, the church, as we walk the road of sanctification together. My hope in all of this is that the Holy Spirit will help us, and the world, to more fully grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, who died for us.

Chris Bouma



Name: Luke Carrig

Place of birth: Dublin, Ireland

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Kuyper College
Grand Rapids, MI
Bachelors of Science, 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
MDiv, expected May 2019

Internships:
Hope CRC
Grandville, MI
May 2017 to present

Contact:
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Faith Journey

There was a time when I would have categorized my faith journey as: life "before" I became a follower of Christ, and life "after" I became a follower of Christ. This description is helpful, of course, because there is a continual dying away of the old self as we live in to the new life of grace that Christ gives us. But the contrast of before and after doesn't quite capture my full experience of Christ's grace in my life. Perhaps, a better characterization of Christ's work in my life is not, "before Christ" or "after Christ" but always Christ. The grace of Christ has always been woven between the contours of my life's journey; in joys and griefs, successes and losses, friends and foes. Christ, by his grace, has always been drawing my toward the things of the kingdom.

It is by grace that I was born into a home where my mother brought me to church, taught me to pray and lift my thoughts Godward. It is by grace that I was raised in a community where people were intentional about my faith formation, with mentors who showed me the basics of discipleship as they lived faithfully. It is by grace that I met my wife who loves Jesus, and who God used to bring me back to the things of faith when I had left it in pursuit of lesser things. It is by grace that I felt a call to ministry in the Church while stacking shelves at a retail store.

It is by grace, that I, an Irish kid, ended up at Kuyper College in Grand Rapids after a late night google search. It is by grace that people came into my life to help me pay the tuition bill. It is by grace that I grew in the knowledge of God, the Bible and cultivated gifting to serve the Church. And, it is only by grace that I approach graduation at Calvin Theological Seminary with the rich prospect of serving in the CRCNA.

My journey of faith and continual road toward Christian maturity has always been marked by the gracious activity of a loving God through his providence, provisions and presence. Christ has always been with me, and I trust his promise that he will always be with me as I seek to follow in his way.

Luke Carrig

Statement of Reason

I am a foreigner yet the Christian Reformed Church welcomed me in. I was a theological wanderer yet in the Christian Reformed Church I have found a firm place to stand. I was a stranger and yet the Christian Reformed community has been to me a friend. The Christian Reformed Church has hospitably cared for my wellbeing and my formation as a ministry leader, which gives me confidence that this particular church community is where God has placed me to serve. I believe that I been called and equipped to serve in Christ's Church, and it is with contentment and joy that I pursue that calling in the CRCNA.

Luke Carrig

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

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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 salmons 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

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: John Cleveringa

Place of birth: Sioux Center, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Northwestern College
Orange City, IA
Bachelors in Christian Education

Western Theological Seminary
Holland, MI
M.Div., expected May 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Haven CRC
Zeeland, MI
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Contact:

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Faith Journey

My parents brought me to be baptized in an RCA church in Maurice, Iowa during the summer of 1979 when I was just a few months old. This is a part of my faith journey because it is a faith that I have been submerged in since before I even knew it, with a God that holds me as one of his own. I was raised in a family and community of believers who witnessed to the faithfulness of God, even in the ups and downs of life. I grew up in the Reformed Church of America and lived in Orange City, Iowa, Hudsonville, Michigan, and back again to Orange City. From my first memories of God, pretending to read the Bible under the pew during church, I have loved God and felt that he draws me to him.

In my junior year of high school I had a moment when I felt that my life could go in an either/or direction. I remember consciously and wholeheartedly choosing to follow Jesus Christ and that has made all the difference. I decided to go to Northwestern College (Iowa) and studied Christian Education and Youth Ministry which propelled me into serving as a youth pastor in Michigan for 18 years. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served at Faith Reformed Church, in Zeeland, MI, Orchard Hill Church in Grand Rapids, MI and for the past six years at Haven Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, MI. I have been taking seminary classes for almost a decade while working there full-time. This has placed me on a slow track to ordained ministry, however this past decade has formed and transformed me as I have been able to immediately put into practice what I have been learning in classes, books and conversations and it has slowly shaped me and the ministry that I am a part of.

I believe that I have been called by God to be one of his disciples who serves others by showing, teaching, telling and living out what sums up the Law and the Prophets: love God and love others. I believe that this is what Christ taught and showed in how he lived and in his death and resurrection. I believe this because this is the call to discipleship that I see throughout the pages of Scripture, and I believe this because this is what I have seen in the grace, mercy, love, patience, and truth lived out in other followers of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am grateful for the people before me who have been faithful and to the places that I have lived where I have been cared for, but ultimately my gratefulness is to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for drawing us to himself out of God's own gracious love.

John Cleveringa

Statement of Reason

I am seeking Candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that God has called me to be a minister of the Word. Frederick Buechner says, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." My deepest gladness is that I am known and loved by God and I believe one of the world's deepest hungers (though it may not know it) is the same. My desire is to be a faithful servant of God through pastoring his church as we are witnesses to the world the grace and truth of the of God, seen most vividly in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John Cleveringa

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

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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.

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. Catharine's, 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 Spirt 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 Douglas Crossen

Place of birth: Oshawa, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
McMaster University
Hamilton, ON
B.Eng., 2004

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Calvin Prison Initiative
Ionia, MI
Sept 2016 - June 2017

Celebration Fellowship
Ionia, MI
June 2017 - June 2019

Agassiz CRC
Agassiz, BC
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:
French

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Faith Journey

My faith journey began about 13 years ago. This journey began from a place of much skepticism, many misconceptions and a lack of understanding of who God is and our relationship to Him. The Lord used my journey to bring me to a place of solid faith with, what I believe to be, a much clearer understanding of Him. The revelations I have been given on this journey have had significant implications on how I see God, the world, and my role in it. While I find language to be unbearably inadequate to describe my view of God and my love for Him, I pray he will accept my meager attempt to do so by explaining my journey. More importantly, however, I pray that, through the help of the Holy Spirit, I can demonstrate my love for and commitment to Him through how I live my life and love my neighbors, both in and out of the church.

I grew up in a non-Christian, but strong values-focused, family. I was skeptical of the church and religion and swayed back and forth between agnosticism and atheism. I had a sense that there was a god but could not reconcile God with the church I saw, the violence in the world, Christianity's exclusivity and many other barriers. I received many powerful messages from secular society's "conventional wisdom" that science and evolution had disproved God. Like many, I had put little effort into discerning truth about God or life, which allowed these barriers to become stumbling blocks to faith. However, overtime, I became discontented with what secular society offered up as "normal life", I recognized gaping holes in philosophical naturalism and the inability of science to answers many of the "how's" and all of the "why's" of the universe. This led me to question who God is or if there is a God.

At around the same time, I was introduced to Jesus, in 2006, by participating in a community event that was put on by a local church. I was struck by the selfless love poured out on the community, which softened my skeptic heart. This kindled my pursuit of truth which included prayerfully reading through the Bible multiple times, along with books by authors such as Augustine, John Calvin, C. S. Lewis, Tim Keller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, A. W. Tozer, N. T. Wright, Watchman Nee, Shane Claiborne and many more. Through very careful introspection and sifting out my will from God's will, I found the daunting, but liberating, truth in the gospel, and my agnosticism seemed completely inept at answering life's questions and was revealed as a god of convenience.

Some of the most shocking discoveries on this journey occurred from reading the Bible and getting to know God through Jesus. While I understood that God had sent His son to die for our sins, I did not understand the depth of Jesus' love for us or His profound selflessness. He lived homeless roaming town to town teaching anyone who would listen of the love and mercy of God. I was touched by His love for *all* people regardless of condition. He lived among the homeless, prostitutes, tax collectors and even touched and healed lepers. He did not simply tithe to charitable causes, but He lived His life among those rejected by society, affirming their humanity and worth in God's eyes. I have learned that God, as demonstrated through His Son, is concerned with justice and righteousness. As a follower of Jesus, I believe that I am to conform to His image, to grow in Christlikeness, and so also be loving and merciful and concerned with the things that Jesus was concerned

Faith Journey (continued)

with. I also believe that there is a cost to truly believing in and following Jesus. God must be the purpose of my existence over all other things including money, family, pride and even self. I believe in and have fallen in love with *this* God, the one and only God, the God of love, mercy, and justice.

Discovering the truth of *this* Jesus profoundly changed my life. It dramatically changed how I see myself, other people, money, possessions, work, the church and our call as humans, created in the image of God. We are to love *all* people unconditionally, to serve others and fight for justice and righteousness. We are to do so not for earthly rewards, or even for the hope of rewards in the afterlife, but because, in recognizing the truth of the gospels, it would be disingenuous to live any way but in accordance with its truth. When we truly understand the depths of the grace and mercy that have been shown to us, the only logical response is to reorient and surrender our lives to Him out of thanksgiving. This is what led to me listening to the Lord's call on my life, pursuing an MDiv at Calvin Theological Seminary, and dedicating my life to His service.

Words cannot express my gratitude for what Jesus did for me, for what God has done in my life, how He welcomed me home like the father He is. I can do nothing in return. However, I commit to give Him my life as a blank canvas. I will follow His lead wherever He takes me. I will show God's love in action as it was shown to me, so God can give this wonderful gift to others, as He gave it to me. I am His servant.

Jay Crossen

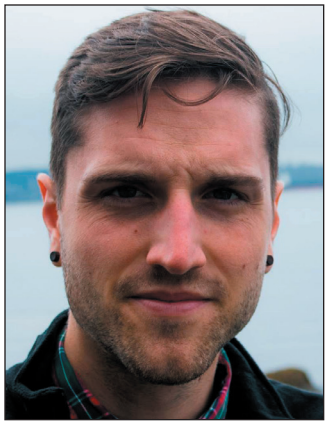
Statement of Reason

I love the Lord with all my heart. I am unbelievably thankful for Him revealing Himself to me and calling me His own. It is my heart's desire, out of thanksgiving, to live my life in service to Him. I seek to share the Good News with others with hopes that others may come to know the joy that has been so freely given to me.

It is humbling to think that while I am yet a sinner God has called me and equipped me for ministry. When I initially spoke to my pastor about feeling called to ministry he gave me some peculiar advice. He said, "Avoid it at all costs." He then explained that if I was truly called to ministry that I would not be able to avoid it, that it would weigh heavily on me. I have not been able to avoid the Lord's nudging and believe the Lord has made it abundantly clear that He has called me. While I will follow the Lord wherever He leads me, I believe that he has made it evident that the passions and giftings He has given me can be used well in pastoral ministry. I am seeking candidacy in the CRC in order to be obedient to the Lord and follow the call He has placed on my life.

I am seeking candidacy specifically in the CRC because I have found truth in the reformed faith, appreciate the accountability the CRC provides, and also believe that my faith story is one that can contribute positively to the body of CRC believers.

Jay Crossen



Name: Zack DeBruyne

Place of birth: St. Catharines, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Brock University
St. Catharines, ON
Honors Philosophy BA, 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Resurrection Church
Ottawa, ON
Aug 2015 - Aug 2016

Encounter Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Sept 2016 - May 2018

Calvin College Barnabas Program
Grand Rapids, MI
Sept 2017 - May 2018

Cascade Fellowship CRC
Ada, MI
Aug 2018 - June 2019

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Faith Journey

I have always been a *Christian*. I grew up in the Christian Reformed Church. I was baptized a baby, participated in Sunday school and youth group, professed my faith in young adulthood, and always considered myself to be a believer in Jesus Christ. However, in my high school and early college years, my life did not reflect those externally declared and internally held beliefs. In fact, many would not have been able to tell the difference between my life, and anyone else on this Earth pursuing pleasure as the ultimate goal.

Then, one day, I had a existential crisis of sorts. A friend of mine (my now wife), saw right through my 'golden boy of the church' facade, and spoke directly and clearly to the false dichotomy that I was living. She spoke exactly to what my heart always felt - I had a choice, either pursue this faith thing with all that I have, or don't do it at all.

By the grace of God I pursued. Or better yet, He made clear to me that He had always been pursuing.

Over the course of the following year, I participated in a Youth With a Mission trip and experienced God in a way that I didn't know was possible. I worked as a worship and youth pastor at a 3 month old church plant in downtown Ottawa. I befriended and learned from individuals from all walks of life and perspectives at the local coffee shop that I worked out to sustain my church planting work. It was amidst hearing the stories of those both hurt by the church, and dangerously confused by what the church was, that my wife and I felt that God was leading me to Calvin Seminary.

God always has and always will be challenging my perspective. Growing up in the faith, with a CRC pastor for a Grandfather, Christian parents, Christian siblings, Christian friends, and a Christian dog has created a foundation of love, support, and faithfulness that has sustained me. My faith is a product of the environment that God had placed me in, of the experiences that He has gifted to me, and of my continual covenantal wrestling as I journey faithfully as a broken agent of His redemption and reconciliation to a world that needs Him desperately. Whether they know it or not.

Zack DeBruyne

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because this is what God is calling me to. I have a passion for the church. My heart wells up with love for God's people, and in seeing them truly grasp the endlessly beautiful and powerful words of God to us in Scripture. God has and continues to give me a narrative of His faithfulness that I must share with those both inside and outside of the four walls of the church. I believe so deeply that this is what God has created and called me to do. He placed me in a specific place, in a specific time, for a specific reason. This place is the CRC, this time is the 21st century, and the reason is to be a Minister of the Word who seeks to share the relentless love, reconciliation, and redemption of our Father's covenantal promises to all of His creation.

Zack DeBruyne

Name: Cara DeHaan

Place of birth: Cambridge, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College
Sioux Center, IA
B.A. Philosophy, Communication, English, 1999

University of Waterloo
Waterloo, ON
M.A. English, 2003

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Resonate Global Mission
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Jan 2017

Immanuel CRC
Caledon, ON
Sept 2017 - Aug 2018

Contact:

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Faith Journey

Over the past couple of years, I've found myself asking occasionally, "How did I get here?!" Lecturing in very broken French to a small group of Haitian seminary students. Praying with strangers after one of their young neighbours was allegedly murdered by his mom's estranged boyfriend. Reading the poetic scrawls of a man recently released from prison, whose current home doesn't even have a toilet. Preaching a sermon about the Holy Spirit completely note-free. Preparing written statements for CRC ordained ministry!

The answer, in short, is Jesus.

Jesus is my Savior, my Rabbi, my Hope. His Father is my Father, Creator, and Provider, and his Spirit is my Comforter, Power, and Guide. Jesus' Body is the Church in which I've thrived since birth, and his Mission is the kingdom vision drawing me into contexts and opportunities in which I feel vulnerable and challenged—and alive!

I was baptized into the Christian Reformed Church when I was only 11 days old, and I've come to know and trust the Triune God in consistently loving environments—Christian family, Christian Reformed congregations, Christian schools. My experiences of belonging have grown in me a desire to help others to encounter Jesus and to experience the love and joy of belonging to God's family.

Fostered in loving contexts, my faith and trust in the Triune God have deepened and broadened through 14 years of Christian day school, six years of studying and working at Dordt College, and five years in the Distance M.Div. program at Calvin Seminary—not to mention innumerable sermons, Sunday School and catechism classes, small group discussions, and personal devotions. I've come to know the characters, tensions, plotlines, and themes of God's Grand Drama of Redemption. I've become familiar with words like sovereignty, divinity, humanity, sanctification, covenant, shalom, eschatology, and even the word faith itself. I've come to say with conviction and hope that Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension are the turning points of history, that God is making all things new, and that I have a part to play in God's redemptive drama.

The most challenging part of my faith journey, I think, has been wrestling with God's calling in my life. Inspired by my parents' word and deed, I've always felt "blessed to be a blessing." Given gifts of learning, music, communication, leadership, and empathy, I have sought to bless others in Jesus' name by contributing widely to congregational life, fulfilling volunteer opportunities gladly, caring deeply for my family, and pursuing academic interests with a strong sense of kingdom responsibility. But underlying it all, there's been a question mark: what is my passion? Five years ago, my best answer was "serving the Church," so I enrolled in seminary to become better equipped for that purpose. Since then, my Father, my Savior, and my Comforter have slowly shaped in me a passion to serve the Church by leading as a pastor. I am passionate to encourage others in their journey toward and alongside Rabbi Jesus, as we all seek to conform to his likeness and participate in his reconciling work.

Cara DeHaan

Statement of Reason

I came to seminary very tentative about my ministry calling. It was not until my fourth year of studies that the Holy Spirit convicted me to say out loud, "I want to be ordained in the CRC! I want to have full credentials to lead and to serve." I am weak and vulnerable, but God is strong, and he will empower me through his Spirit to do what he desires. Sometimes I wonder whether ordination is necessary, since God can reveal his love and his glory in me no matter what my credentials. But ordination gives me access to particular opportunities for equipping and empowering the Body of Christ, as well as access to an excellent structure of accountability and resources within the CRC. So, I seek candidacy for ordained ministry, and I say once again, as I've said throughout my seminary journey, "Thank you, Jesus, for leading me. Help me to take this next step towards you and your dreams for me. I offer you all of me. Help me dance with you in your mission."

Cara DeHaan

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

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

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

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: 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.

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: Christopher Ganski

Place of birth: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, NJ
MDiv, 2003

Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI
PhD, 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships

Church planter/lead pastor of
City Reformed Church
Milwaukee, WI
2012 to present

Contact:

(414)-231-0348
chris.ganski@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I did not grow up in a Christian family. I was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran church (LCMS) but entered a church with my parents less than 5 times after that. I came to Christ my freshmen year in high school through a non-church attending Pentecostal family. I was Spirit-baptized at an Assemblies of God revival and eventually believer baptized at a Bible church that disbelieved in those kinds of "signs and wonders." That's three baptisms if you're counting! Not long after my conversion I was connected with a local evangelical church where I was able to grow in my faith and have many wonderful mentors. I have studied theology at institutions run by fundamentalist Baptists, mainline Presbyterians, German Lutheran Pietists, liberal Episcopalians and Jesuit Roman Catholics. From early in high school I embraced a Reformed view of salvation and grace, but it wasn't until after my time in seminary that I came to understand and embrace a fully confessionally Reformed understanding of the faith.

Early on in my faith journey I had a strong sense of calling to the ministry. In high school I devoted myself to learning the bible and was given many wonderful opportunities to lead and teach that helped instill within me a deep sense of pastoral vocation. My conversion to Christ was also my birth into an intellectual vocation. It was grappling with issues of faith and belief that led me to a love of learning and reading. I remember receiving seminary catalogues in the mail while I was in high school. I knew I wanted to be a pastor even before I started college, however, I took a long journey to get there. In college I studied philosophy with the understanding that I wanted to be well prepared for seminary. After seminary I pursued and completed a PhD in theology. All along during my academic training I was actively involved in worship and service in the life of the local church. For a period of time I considered pursuing an academic path by teaching in a seminary context. However, as I was completing my theological studies, I had a deepening sense of conviction and calling from God to do pastoral ministry in the local church.

As I was completing my studies at Marquette University I was serving as an elder at Brookfield Christian Reformed Church. During this time, I had many opportunities to preach, teach and shepherd the flock. This experience reawakened and confirmed my love for pastoral ministry. While at Brookfield there was a community group which began meeting in city-center Milwaukee that I belonged. Brookfield was a commute out to the suburbs and many in the group were expressing a desire for a Reformed church presence in downtown Milwaukee. As Milwaukee residents who avidly love the city we all shared the common experience of feeling a structural disconnection between our Sundays and the rest of our week. We found that our desire to dig in deep and to minster within our local communities, to share the gospel with co-workers and neighbors, to care about the social welfare of the city, were at cross-purposes with driving outside the city every Sunday. We desired to close this gap. We desired to fully inhabit the place that God has set us and this meant worshiping closer to where we lived. But more important than any of these reasons is the simple fact that city center Milwaukee was in desperate need of more robust gospel-driven churches. The community

Faith Journey (continued)

approached me about leading a church plant out of the Brookfield church when I completed my degree. I sensed God's calling in this opportunity and decided to go for it. In the fall of 2011, I completed my PhD studies and immediately threw myself into church planting. After over two years of planning, praying and growing together as a community we launched our first public worship services in February 2012.

City Reformed Church is a city-center church plant in one of the busiest and most culturally active places in Milwaukee. We are located in a diverse and dynamic ministry context which allows us for lots of missional adventures in the city. The church is now approximately 7 years old, growing and vibrant, and is fully organized with its own council of ordained elders and deacons.

Christopher Ganski

Statement of Reason

I believe that service in pastoral ministry is an ordained office. When we started City Reformed Church I was examined and ordained by classis Wisconsin to the office of Commissioned Pastor. Now I am seeking to complete this next stage of my ordination to the status of Minister of the Word.

Christopher Ganski

Name: Daniel J Gregory, Sr.

Place of birth: Layfayette, Louisiana

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Judson University
Elgin, IL
B.A. in Biblical Studies,
April 2005

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, IL
M.Div., December 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Elgin Community Church
Elgin, IL
Sept 2009 - Dec 2009

Fox Valley CRC
Crystal Lake, IL
Jan 2011 - Present

Contact:

(847)-989-9648
preachingit@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I was born into a Christian household and from as early as I can remember my family was active in our local church. I was baptised in the Lutheran church as an infant, but about three years later my family started attending an Assemblies of God congregation. By the time I entered grade school we were very involved in the church, attending on Sunday morning and evening, and participating in Wednesday night activities.

My family regularly had nightly devotions (mostly when my father was not flying on a trip), as well as a time of Bible reading as part of our homeschool curriculum. All this to say that faith formation was an integral part of my upbringing.

Prior to entering high school my family started attending a baptist church in Elgin, IL. Soon after this I sensed God calling me to become a pastor. After seeking advice and counsel about this perceived call, I entered a discernment period to ascertain if indeed God truly was calling me. During high school I was blessed with many opportunities to engage in ministry as a part of this discernment process. I helped teach in children's Sunday school classes, volunteered at a Christian after school program, and was often asked for spiritual advice from many of my friends. By the time I graduated high school I felt very certain that God wanted me to enter vocational ministry.

Throughout my college and seminary career I had many opportunities to engage in ministry and leadership to fellow students. The successes and failures of these activities (and lessons I learned from them) served to confirm that I was on the right track as I pursued vocational ministry.

While in college I explored the Reformed faith and was rather taken with it. At the beginning of my junior year I left the Baptist church my family attended and started attending Fox Valley Christian Reformed Church. I learned much about Reformed theology during that time and was given ample opportunity to do ministry. After graduating from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, I was called by Fox Valley CRC to be their pastor. Over the past 8 years I have learned much about ministry and have grown firm in my commitment to a Reformed expression of faith. I am very grateful to be a part of the CRCNA and look forward to ministering to churches within our denomination.

Daniel Gregory

Statement of Reason

I believe that the local church is the vessel through which God builds his Kingdom. It is through the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, as well as individual and corporate witness that God's grace is communicated to the world. I am passionate about helping people come to know Jesus Christ and growing in their love and worship of him. I desire to see his Kingdom come on earth to the glory of his name. This is why I am committed to the church and feel blessed that God has called me to shepherd his people. I desire to serve within the CRCNA because I feel that a Reformed approach to Scripture is the most faithful. Furthermore, I believe the structure of church government within the CRCNA is the most helpful, since it provides for both accountability and collaboration among its churches. I am glad to call the CRCNA my home.

Daniel Gregory

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 mean 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

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: Nathan Groenewold

Place of birth: Rock Valley, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, May 2014

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Hamilton, MA
MDiv., expected May 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Global Resonate,
Iglesia Reformada
de Mangulile, Honduras
Oct 2015 - Dec 2016

Ministerio Mies
Lynn, MA
Dec 2016 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:

Spanish

Contact:

(616)-635-8957
nathan.groenewold@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I was baptized into a Christian (and Christian Reformed) family, but I see both my calling and my Christian conversion as a series of events that have led me to a relationship with Christ and toward formal ministry. On one of my first pastoral internships, my mentor repeatedly quoted the prophet Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Since those words were engrained in me that summer, they have held my faith intact as I've discovered that my own Christian faith was often perceived as more of a judgment than a hope, and they have guided my wondering over the hundreds of hypocrisies, political ideologies gone wrong, and sexual scandals that have emerged from the Christian church. The gospel isn't that the Christ-follower has her life together, but rather the exact opposite. When I look at the person of Christ, how he transcended prejudice, taught the oppressed not to hate, and proclaimed both forgiveness and justice, I realize our need for the transformation of the Spirit that comes through Christ. This transformation—of both systems and individuals—is at the heart of the Christian gospel.

My own reliance on the transformational grace of God has shaped my commitment to ministry. I have served as a ministry fellow in Honduras with Global Resonate, where I adapted and led Timothy Leadership training programs on family violence and pastoral care. I preached weekly and co-founded and co-led several youth clubs in underserved neighborhoods, equipping local teens from the church and the community as leaders and mentors. I discovered my deep love for contextualizing the gospel in diverse settings: meeting people where they are at, learning from their faith practice, and teaching scripture in a way that will meet their day-to-day needs. Upon returning to the United States, I began my Masters in Divinity at Gordon-Conwell in Boston, MA, with a renewed focus on contextualized theologies and hands-on justice work. Throughout my studies, I served as a pastoral intern at a Spanish-speaking church, leading a redesign of their bilingual K-8 Sunday School program, co-teaching weekly groups on healthy sexuality, and receiving mentoring from their lead pastor. God has given me the ability to build trust across cultural barriers, listen pastorally, and cast vision for innovative Christian communities which participate in God's transformative work.

Nathan Groenewold

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because we are a denomination filled with people united by the broad vision and mission to share God's transformational love. We participate together in God's power to comfort the suffering, heal the sick, and address inequalities in our communities. As an ordained minister, I will have the opportunity to lead this work alongside the healthy support and guidance of our denominational structure. Over the past three years, I have lived within four intersecting worlds. As a student at Gordon-Conwell, pastoral intern at a Latino church north of Boston, a professional working in a public high school, and an EPMC student at Calvin Theological Seminary, I have approached my theological and pastoral work with a deeply practical bent, engaging with diverse students, colleagues, and congregants within and outside of the church. The Christian Reformed Church holds a refreshing commitment to this blend of work and worship, and I am eager to support others as they live out the redemptive work of the Christian gospel.

Nathan Groenewold

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: Aaron Gunsaulus

Place of birth: Newton, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Northern Iowa
B.A. English, 1995

Reformed Theological Seminary
Orlando, FL
M.Div., expected May 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Newton CRC
Newton, IA
Nov 2009 – Present

Contact:

(641) 521-3947
ajg019@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

I was raised in the church (ELCA) and confirmed at age 15, but the gospel didn't take root in me until I was in my third year of college. In my first two years at college, I was largely directionless. Then, at the beginning of my third year, a college friend invited me over to share the gospel with me. He began telling me about his experience with Campus Crusade, and before he even got to the gospel, I realized that I needed to repent and trust in the Christ that I had heard preached all my life. I dropped out of college the next day and returned home to be discipled by a Christian couple I had met the previous year, and to figure out what direction God wanted me to go.

As I spent time with my mentors in their home and in their church (UMC), I developed a passion for theology, church history, and ministry. Eventually, through this couple and their pastor (who had become *my* pastor too), I was encouraged to pursue vocational ministry. To that end, I returned to college in 1993 to complete my undergraduate degree in English at the University of Northern Iowa.

During those two years, I was introduced to Reformed Theology for the first time. I quickly became a "convert" to it, and began devouring a new group of books, topics, and authors. I was also married at that time, and as my wife finished school, and then as we moved a couple of times, I served in various churches, both formally and informally, on staff and as a volunteer. However, as our family grew, seminary seemed to become less and less possible.

However, in 2009, an interim opportunity became available at Newton CRC in Newton, IA. I applied for it and was selected; and that became both my introduction *to*, and my service *in*, the Christian Reformed Church. Since then, I have been working to earn my M.Div. from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, as well as working on all the aspects of the EPMC through Calvin Theological Seminary, with the help and guidance of the CRC Candidacy Committee, Classis Central Plains, and my church council.

Looking back, it seems like a very circuitous route to have taken, but I am thankful to God for both the journey and for its destination in the CRC.

Aaron Gunsaulus

Statement of Reason

I seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church: 1) in obedience to God, as I continue with others to discern the path he has laid out for me, 2) out of genuine interest *in* and affection *for* the CRC, flowing from its rich theological heritage, and from the blessing that the denomination and its members have been to me in my relatively few years in the CRC, and 3) as an expression of gratitude to God for the way that he has taken something that looked impossible to me, and made it possible by his grace and providence.

Aaron Gunsaulus

Name: John Kyu Hahn

Place of Birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

William Jessup University
Rocklin, CA
B.A., Bible and Theology, 2013

Western Theological Seminary
Holland, MI
M.Div., 2018

Internships:

Glory Korean Church
Sacramento, CA
Feb 2011 to March 2012

Davis Korean Church
Davis, CA
May 2012 to Aug 2013

Granite Springs Church
Lincoln, CA
Sept 2013 to present

Languages Spoken:

Korean

Contact:

909-569-8068
qlosopher@gmail.com

Faith Journey

On the first day of 2011, I was sitting at a small Korean immigrant church in Sacramento, California. I was twenty-three years old at the time, and it had been six years since I left the church. In my despair, I prayed, "If you're really a God who lives and speaks, please show me that you are alive. I'm scared and lost. I need your help." It had taken twenty-three years and a lot of trial and error for me to get to a place of vulnerability with God. There, for the first time in my life, I willfully turned toward God and stood before him as I was.

I grew up as a pastor's kid. Yet, church was never a place of belonging for me mainly because of my dad who seemed like a hypocrite. Home wasn't a safe place either due to frequent moving, financial challenges, and emotional instability. Besides these circumstantial factors, life as an immigrant kid brought challenges that toppled my sense of security and identity. I had concluded at an early age that God is a distant God who is ignorant of his people's pain and suffering. So, I left the church when I had the chance.

After several years of wandering, I found myself as depressed and drug addicted. Then in the fall of 2010, my dad closed down his church in Sacramento and left home with a new lover. In my despair, I reached out to God on the first day of 2011, and God immediately began to reveal himself to me. It felt like he had been waiting for that very moment. Since then, I've been slowly and consistently growing in faith that God has always been sovereignly involved in our world and that he has called me to be a part of his ongoing work.

God's sovereign grace guided each step of my spiritual formation. Through the gift of seminary training, my experiences of God became encompassed and nurtured by safe boundaries of theological wisdom. Through relationships with thoughtful mentors and friends in ministry, my leadership gifts and sense of call have been confirmed and strengthened. Most of all, through the five years that I have been serving in a Christian Reformed Church in Northern California (Granite Springs Church, Lincoln), my sense of identity has not only become nurtured by Reformed accents but rooted in the Gospel story of the Church of all times and all places. Along the way, I sensed a call to Army Chaplaincy and am currently pursuing active duty chaplaincy as a reservist officer.

Every morning I remember the first day of 2011 – where I was and who I was apart from God. I am grateful to have been called by God and to continue this journey with the Christian Reformed Church.

Kyu Hahn

Statement of Reason

My personal encounter with God was radical enough to open my eyes to a silhouette of God, but it wasn't deep enough to give me a clear understanding of who he is and why he does the things he does. I am seeking ordination with the Christian Reformed Church because I believe its rich tradition and rootedness in ageless Christian confessions will connect me more deeply to Jesus, my own story, and the story of the Church of all ages. Plus, the people that make up the denomination seem to be attractive in ways that benefit the Gospel. Over the years, I have had opportunities to be in relationships with several people from Christian Reformed Church, and I find many of them to be genuine in their walk with Jesus, humble in their approach to the Bible, and thoughtful in how they engage the world and its people. I would love to be a part of the family!

Kyu Hahn

Name: Cris Harper

Place of birth: Quito, Ecuador

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Samford University
Birmingham, AL
B.A., Communication Studies, 2013

Beeson Divinity School
Birmingham, AL
M.Div., 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:

Mosaic Birmingham Church
Birmingham, AL
May 2013 – May 2015

Office of Spiritual Life
Samford University
Birmingham, AL
Aug 2016 – May 2017

Shades Valley Community Church
Birmingham, AL
Aug 2016 – May 2017

Clinical Pastoral Education
Chaplain Resident
UAB Medicine
Birmingham, AL
Aug 2018 – Aug 2019

Contact:

(949)-680-7655
harper.cristopher@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I've always understood Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son as a story about two sons. The younger son rebels by leaving home and wasting away his inheritance; the older son rebels through self-righteous pride, staying home and assuming that his Father values him more because of his work. I understand my faith journey through the experience of the older son. By this I mean that though I was close to the Father and his work, I struggled to know and receive his love because of my own sin and brokenness.

I was born into a family of ministry and missions. My parents served as missionaries in North Africa and Europe, sharing their faith with people who have no access to the gospel. Growing up, we moved frequently, traveling from one country to the next. As a result, I experienced worship and God in a variety of contexts; some of which include: church plants, house churches, traditional congregations and campus ministries. Within these different cultures I came to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior. This brought about life-changing transformation for me in how I personally related with my family and those around us. However, I failed to understand the depths of God's grace, not only for others, but especially for myself. I still held the view that my faith was dependent upon works. I also relied on the praise from my family and church which led me to seek out ministry opportunities at a young age.

A shift in this paradigm happened for me in my last year of high school. I had become a spiritual leader among my peers in school and at church. And yet, I still was living according to others' expectations of me. I remember hearing a sermon on Revelation 3, the Letters to the Churches, which deeply convicted me regarding my own participation in "lukewarm," "status-quo" faith. What softened my heart that day was not only the strong language of discipline, but the Lord's earnest desire for repentance. God's immense desire to show mercy reshaped my mind and heart. I no longer needed to live as one who deserved his love, not that I ever could. Instead I live as one who is unconditionally loved, sent out into the world in order to offer the same grace that has been shown to me.

I began discerning a call to ministry during this time which was later confirmed while serving in a church during college. As a response to this call I sought further ministry preparation at an interdenominational seminary in the South, Beeson Divinity School. Through my theological education and further pastoral experience the Lord refined and deepened my love for Scripture and his church. This provided me with a reformed perspective on salvation and an increasing appreciation for the sacraments in Christian worship. Through much prayer and discernment, these passions have led me into ministry within the CRCNA.

For as much of the world as I have been blessed to experience, I feel that I have been given a special glimpse into the vibrant complexity and diversity of God's kingdom. The vision of Christ's body comprised of all nations and tongues offers exciting possibilities for the North American church today—if only we can respond in faith towards what God is already doing. In whatever context the Lord calls me to minister next, I am committed to the spiritual practice of learning and service. As a husband, I am reminded daily of Christ's sacrificial love for his church as I strive every day to demonstrate this to my wife. As a father, I learn in greater

Faith Journey (continued)

detail God's unyielding compassion and patience for us, his children; a role I assume in how I care for my own children. My recent ministry experience as a chaplain has enhanced my awareness of how God has uniquely shaped me and deepened my gifts as a pastor within the church. This is the life of faith I desire to take with me in order to further embody and share God's love as an act of joyful worship. *Soli Deo Gloria*

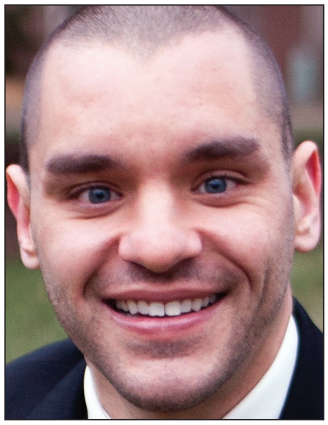
Cris Harper

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy in the CRCNA as an act of joyful obedience to the ministry God has called me. I desire to shepherd and lead as a pastor through the teaching and application of God's word for the encouragement of fellow believers in their faith and also for the witness to those who have not yet received God's love. I approach ministry with a focus on pastoral care and empowering other believers to use their gifts as part of the community of faith. My diverse ecclesial background has given me great appreciation for many traditions within Christian faith. However, my understanding of God's vision for the Church through the Scriptures aligns theologically with the reformed church.

I desire to serve within a context that lives in close association with the historic faith of Christianity, regularly celebrating the sacraments with reverence and intentionality. Some of my past experiences in church ministry have been in non-denominational and independent contexts that lacked valuable connection with other churches; they also functioned with less accountability. I have sought communion with the CRCNA because of the firm support and accountability it offers to its pastors; so that when the challenges of ministry arise, I am meaningfully connected with fellow believers for these trials. As I commit to the denomination in candidacy, I feel as if it has also committed itself to me in my own journey of faith and ministry—a helpful reminder that we are all one in Christ, reconciled with our Father in heaven, and strengthened through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Cris Harper



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.

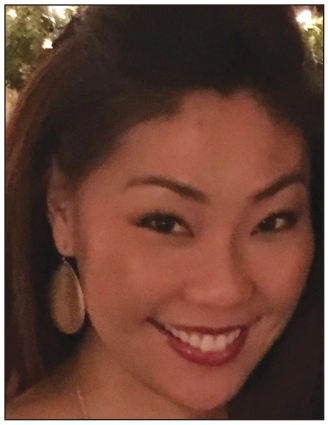
My faith formation has been both a blessing and a journey. I was brought up in a nominal Catholic home and family. Eventually we moved from one town to the next, and I was placed in public schooling. The foundation that I had from my Catholic upbringing and background did not last as I went about life 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: Libby Huizenga

Place of birth: Jacksonville, Florida

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, Psychology, 2014

Western Theological Seminary
Holland MI
M.Div., expected May 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Madison Square Church,
North Campus
Grand Rapids, MI
Sept 2015 - Sept 2017

Sunrise Community Church
Austin, TX
June - Aug 2016

Contact:

(616)-485-0024
libbyhuizenga@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I was born into a CRCNA church planting family where I learned from a young age that the gospel of Jesus Christ affects all aspects of our lives. I can see how God was at work in me even from a young age. I recall serving root beer communion to my stuffed animals and late night chats with God before I fell asleep. My faith and my calling have grown gradually, shifting and deepening throughout the years. It is also through work in ministry that my faith has been transformed. My journey has brought me to state:

I believe in our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is united in holy love that God graciously shares through creation, sustaining the world, and ultimately saving and transforming the world by sending the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I believe the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus provides all creation with the means of salvation. I believe that the Holy Spirit plants faith in Jesus Christ within us, grafts us into Christ giving us union with God and union with the Church.

I believe that God continues to hold together the world today, and acts among us by the presence of the Spirit moving through the Church. And it is through the Holy Spirit that I know that I am counted among God's own.

God keeps God's promises and is working the world to set all things right, returning all things to alignment with God's love, justice, and mercy. God started this work and it is God who will finish it, but we the church have the opportunity and the mandate to work alongside God to build for God's kingdom of peace and restoration.

This is the reason for my hope and my calling. I've seen the love of God manifest in my life and also in the church. Though the church is far from perfect, I see limitless hope and I know that the world only grows better through the love and grace of God. Christ is at work in me and in the world, and I can't wait to see where God will lead me.

Libby Huizenga

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church to respond to the call that I believe God has put on my life to serve God's people. This denomination raised me and sent me out into the world. I have immense hope for the future of the church and, just as this church helped form me, I hope to accompany the CRCNA into a future that looks more and more like God's Kingdom. Though I am uncertain of the exact form that ministry will take, I am eager to see where the Holy Spirit will lead.

Libby Huizenga

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.

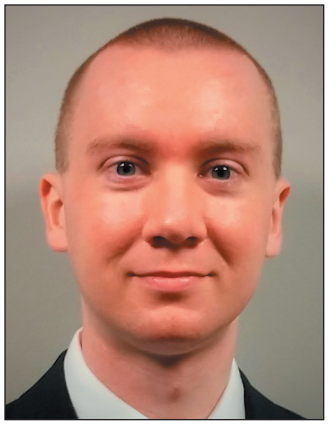
As a candidate to be a minister of the Word of God in the CRC, I am in full agreement with and believe what is stated in the form of subscription.

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: Mark A Janowski II

Place of birth: LaGrange, Illinois

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
University of Illinois at
Urbana Champaign
Champaign, IL
B.S., Mechanical Engineering,
May 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Healing Haiti
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
May 2016 - July 2016

Encounter Church (CRC)
Kentwood, MI
Feb 2016 - May 2017

Contact:
(708)-955-7146
maj077@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

I was baptized and raised at Bethel Reformed Church in Chicago, Illinois. As a member of a small, traditional RCA congregation, I was able to participate in many facets of the church. I was one of only two early teenagers when I reached middle school and began the preparations for my profession of faith, and so was able to study closely with the pastor, elders, and my Sunday school teacher. After months of studying catechism, I made my Profession of Faith in March of 2003. It was during this time at Bethel that the seed for ministry and mission work was planted in my heart, while I met visiting missionaries who were briefly home from their global ministries. During my senior year in high school my family began attending Downers Grove Community Church (DGCC). I was able to find my place playing with the Praise Band while home from college, and volunteering at the Caring Community Kitchen on Wednesdays. Unfortunately, I was never able to find a college church home that "fit", and my visits home and to DGCC were a particular blessing during these years.

After college, while working as an engineer for Navistar, I found myself unhappy with my job, my markedly "corporate" version of success, and my future, and so I began to feel the calling to mission work. After a little initial resistance and a lot of prayer, I finally said, "I'll go!" to God, and went on a short-term trip to Haiti in November of 2013. By the second night of the trip, my heart had broken for the Haitian people, and I knew God was calling me to serve in Haiti. I accepted the role of Aquaponics and Sustainability Programs Missionary upon my return and moved to Haiti in January of 2014. I had the opportunity befriend and teach many of the children living in the local orphanage. While working with these amazing children, I realized that my true callings in ministry mission work are teaching, mentorship, and youth ministry.

As I finished my time in Haiti, I felt God's strong push toward seminary. I had learned a lot about international missions, Christianity outside of the U.S., and my calling to ministry, but there was so much more to learn! And so, just two weeks after returning home from Haiti, I applied to the MDiv program at Calvin Theological Seminary. I was accepted, and began my studies in the fall of 2015.

During my first two years of the MDiv program, I was blessed to complete a cross-cultural internship in Haiti and a pastoral internship at Encounter Church. Returning to Haiti for 5 weeks was a wonderful way to reconnect with my former staff and students, and use what I had learned about modern missions from my courses at seminary to help guide and disciple short-term missionaries. During my pastoral internship I coordinated with other interns as Encounter kept growing and the need for a second service arose. I collaborated with the Lead Pastor to design and develop a tailored congregational care plan for the church. I worked with other staff members on many projects, including a community engagement project.

In the middle of those whirlwind first two years at seminary, I also was selected as a Chaplain Candidate in the Michigan Army National Guard. During my final week in Haiti, I had met a Chaplain from the Texas National Guard, and God worked through him to point me towards

Faith Journey (continued)

military ministry. I commissioned as an officer in November of 2016. I am currently attached to the 507th Engineering Battalion.

As I complete my seminary studies, God continues to call me to ministry. I currently serve as the Director of Discipleship and Youth at Community CRC in Roselawn, IN. I am excited to continue to serve as a chaplain in the National Guard after becoming ordained, and I feel God calling me to serve as a pastor focused on discipleship, spiritual formation, and youth ministry within the CRC. I fully trust that God will continue to use me to share my passion and love for Christ!

Mark Janowski

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because God, through the Holy Spirit, has called me to a life of ministry and service. I began to feel this calling while working as an engineer and I have continued to feel this calling as I left engineering to serve as a missionary in Haiti, study at seminary, and serve at a CRC church in Indiana. I was raised in the Reformed tradition and I believe that the CRC is the best expression of this tradition, holding tightly to the Word of God and serving the world in which He has placed us by sharing the love of Christ. I am fully committed to the beliefs and values of the CRC and I look forward to continuing to serve God as He continues to work through this denomination.

Mark Janowski

Name: Daniel Joo

Place of birth: Los Angeles, California

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
Double Major in Religion

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Encounter Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Fall of 2014 - Present

San Jose CRC
San Jose, CA
June - Aug 2017

Languages spoken:
Korean

Contact:
(616)-264-4613
danieljoo44@gmail.com

Faith Journey

My faith journey begins at a very young age given that I was born into a Christian family who made sure I took my faith seriously. So I owe a lot to my parents who modeled a Godly life for me to follow. I also had my core group of friends at church rather than school so that encouraged me to go to church every Sunday because unlike other kids, I only saw my friends once a week. I went to all the extra curricular events and retreats to spend more time with my friends. At one of those retreats in 8th grade, we had an intense, end-of-retreat prayer sessions and that's when I felt called into ministry. But at the time, I also felt called to be a lawyer or a professional gamer or a businessman or an engineer. I thought my convictions to become a pastor would change, just like all those previous ones did.

However, God had different plans and called my parents into full time mission work in Guatemala. I consider the next three years the "boot camp" season of my life at Christian Academy of Guatemala. I struggled throughout my sophomore year in a new place but things turned around my junior year, where I found a good community and more importantly, strengthened my relationship with Christ. When it came time to go to college, I decided I'd major in religion and philosophy with the goal to go to seminary. You know what they say about those majors, you can either become a professor, lawyer, pastor or work at McDonald's. So I locked myself into the path of becoming a pastor. College went by in a breeze, met some awesome people that encouraged me to continue my journey of going into ministry. I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for my friends and family who supported me thus far.

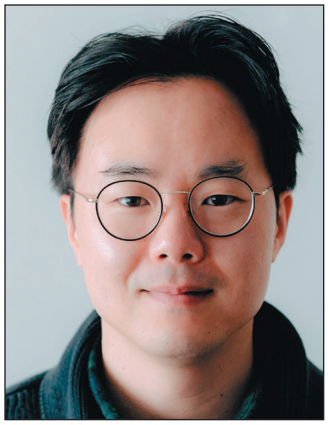
When it came time to apply for seminary, I thought to myself, "Wow, another 4 years of school, I don't know if I'm up for that." But looking back, God worked some major miracles in the past nine years of my life so I just prayed seminary would go by faster than undergrad did. It only seems like yesterday when I prayed that prayer and now, I'm here writing this so I guess He answered that prayer. Grateful that He's guided me this far and excited to see what He has in store for me next.

Daniel Joo

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the CRC in order to continue serving God's kingdom. This community has done so much to support me through my journey and it would be a disservice to not pay them back in every way that I can. Hopefully, God will place me in a community that will allow me to exercise the gifts that He's given me and to bring as many people as possible to Christ. They say saved people serve people; this is the best way I feel I can serve others and do Kingdom work. I am excited to enter into the ever changing landscape of the CRC as we continue to reform and mold our lives and community to look more like the teachings of Christ.

Daniel Joo



Name: Seok Won Jung

Place of birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Prairie Bible College
Three Hills, AB
B.A. in Ministry, April 2007

Regent College
Vancouver, BC
M.Div., April 2013
Th.M, April 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Vancouver Onnuri Church
Langley, BC
English Ministry Youth Pastor
2010-2013

Tapestry Church
Richmond, BC
Youth Pastor
2015 - current

Languages spoken:

Korean

Contact:

(236)-998-9588
swj037@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

I grew up in a Christian home and that kept me in church throughout my childhood and teenage years. However, during my teenage years, I shelved my faith in order to fit in with the friends that I hung out with. Although there were occasional camps that kept the spiritual fire going, I often backslid into the lifestyle that did not reflect my Christian values. I was a Christian on Sunday but from Monday to Saturday, I was a completely different person.

After graduating from high school, I went to Tyler, Texas for Youth With A Mission's Discipleship Training School. It was here that I realized that I was living a life that was contradictory to what I believed. I knew God was real and I believed Jesus to be my saviour but my life did not reflect that belief. So I've recommitted my life to Christ during this time and decided that I would not return to the old lifestyle when I returned home.

After returning from Texas, I went to Prairie Bible College for further training in Scripture. I came back from Texas with a greater desire to study the Bible and learn theology so that I would be able to better articulate my Christian beliefs. It was during this time that I developed a habit of private worship where I would play my guitar to sing and worship God in my dorm room. Through this, I learned to write songs and developed a keen sense of being aware of God's presence. I cultivated a regular habit of having quiet times to read the Bible, pray and journal. This was the time when I grew quite close to God.

After graduating from Prairie Bible college, I moved to Vancouver to attend Regent College. I had applied for graduate studies thinking that I would enter into academia but after arriving, I came to the realization that I was not very good at research and writing. Learning that the academia was mainly to do with research and writing, I was lost as to where God might be leading me, which led me to pray about where God was leading me to. One night, God revealed to me that He was calling me to pastoral ministry. After a few weeks of praying and discerning, I switched my degree to the M.Div. and began to take classes that would prepare me well to teach Scripture within the church.

I also began ministry at a Korean church where my pastoral identity began to take shape. I learned how to minister in a Korean immigrant church context. There were so many cultural nuances and expectations that I had to re-learn to minister but it was during this time that I learned the importance of relying on God in ministry. I became more conscious of the need to draw near to God daily. Even though I came close to burning out at the end of my time there, I never lost sight of my calling as a pastor. I resigned to pursue full time studies at Regent again but was unshaken about the sense of call in my life.

After a couple years of more full times studies to complete my Th.M. at Regent college, I applied to the Tapestry church for a youth pastor position. I sensed that God was calling me to trust in Him despite my insecurity and uncertainties. I didn't know how I would do but I decided to trust that God would enable me to do what He's called me to do. With such conviction, I was able to go through the process with confidence and eventually God opened the door for me to begin ministering to the youth at the Tapestry church. While there were still difficulties in

Faith Journey (continued)

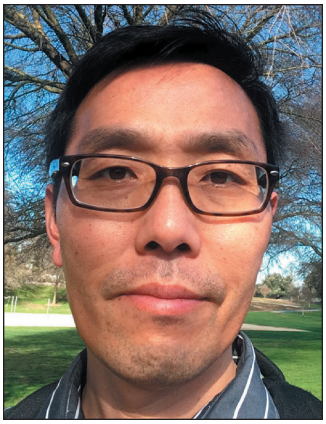
ministry, it led me again and again to go before God to find consolation and comfort. Every time I did, I found assurance of His calling repeatedly to know that I was indeed where God had called me to be. I am looking forward to how God will continue to shape me for the work of ministry in His Church.

Seok Won Jung

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in ministry because I want to be affirmed and commissioned in my pastoral calling by the community of believers. I am seeking ordination within the CRCNA because I have grown up in the reformed tradition, which has been the primary factor in shaping the foundations of my faith. I also want to join this denomination because I want to be part of a bigger body that I have grown to love and appreciate after having gone through the EPMC program. For this reason, my desire is to continue serving God and His people in the Christian Reformed Church.

Seok Won Jung



Name: Kiseok Kang

Place of birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Oikos University, CA
M.Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:
Korean United Church of Modesto
Modesto, CA
Aug. 2014 – present

Languages spoken:
Korean

Contact:
(209)-566-3955
kk057@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

Chapter 1. Water to Wine
In the sixth grade of elementary school, my sister, who is my one sibling, fell to an unknown illness and grew near to death. I was young, but I was attending Sunday School. I prayed earnestly to God, and due to the prayers of the congregation and the mercy of God, my sister was raised as a miracle. My father and mother did not know God and were opposed to my church life. But the miracle was enough to lead our family to God. The purpose of making water of wine is to reveal his glory and to make disciples believe. (John 2:11) It was that supernatural event that drew our family to believe in God.

Chapter 2. Wandering
I worked hard in church life until high school. But when I went to college, I started to wander. I did not feel responsible for the life of an adult and indulge in freedom given all of sudden. I was just enjoying my time and relationships in college, as a result I went away from the church. I was afraid of God, but I had no courage to return to church. How weak and selfish are humans. When the anxieties and fears of the future came to me, I joined the army and spent two years of hardship and loneliness.

Chapter 3. Repent and Recovery
I was discharged from the army and returned to the church with a strong lead of God. God has made me repent in my selfishness. I began to teach youth groups, young adults and also started a passionate relationship with God. I met Anna Lee in church and got married in 1997.

I visited a mission field in Japan three times with high school students and young adults. Proclaiming God's truth to those who are economically developed, but do not know God has become a great challenge for young Christians.

Then I and Anna started to worry about the Christian education of our first and second children. Where can there be a school that declares God's work other than this secular evolutionary public school? God has allowed us to commit to Christian schools since 2007. We left our hometown and we devoted energetically to the Christian Schools in the countryside and did our best to establish God's school. I believe God wanted me and students to try outreach trip again. At that time, I led a group of 27 students together with a chaplain to visit the Ukraine mission field and the ruins of 7 churches in Asia Minor.

We might witness God's work in us when it is difficult to resolve. In a comfortable and convenient life, not only is it difficult to see God's work, but we tend to interpret this easy situation according to our own benefit.

Chapter 4. Immigrant and CRC
In 2012, God led our family to U.S.A. with 12 exchange students in Ripon Christian School in a mysterious way. As a coordinator for helping Korean students, God opened the way for me to study Master of Divinity. Even in the difficulties of immigrant life, we were able to grow up in the CRC church by the guidance of God. With the warm attention and love of the CRC, not only did M.DIV. finish well, but YWAM's DTS (Disciple Training School) is also finished. When I finished these programs,

Faith Journey (continued)

I was called as the youth pastor in Korean United Church of Modesto. While learning the CRC practices and doctrines, I strongly sense the providence of God who wants equip, uses me who is weak and unworthy as the ambassador of Jesus Christ in order to spread His good news.

Chapter 5. Expecting
In student ministry, my family meditates the Word of God every morning for an hour with three Korean students from 2014 living together. Five years has passed in my youth pastor ministry at the Korean church. Now I trust God's guidance and prayerfully expect God to lead the next chapter. He always led me without a mistake.

He has always invited me to the place of proclamation of the gospel, which I believe is the most valuable thing in the world.

I do not want to set my heart high, but I only expect to share Jesus Christ's good news and His unfailing love with the poor, the oppressed, and those who need the gospel.

Kiseok Kang

Statement of Reason

The first is to proclaim the gospel of God. It is to proclaim the gospel according to the example of Jesus (Luke 4:18), who declared the Gospel to the poor, weak, powerless, and oppressed. This is to love Jesus. The second is to obey to the command of Jesus,which is to go and make disciples(Matthew 28:19). This is a great commission that cannot be delayed and cannot be avoided. I believe that the making of Jesus' disciples begins with serving them, such as Jesus washed His disciples' feet. Third, CRC's creed and confessions are so precious. This is because I honor the precious confessions that can effectively be the tool of proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Kiseok Kang

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, Famington Hills, MI
June 2015 - December 2015

Languages spoken:
Korean

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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!

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: Noah J. K. 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

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:
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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 *Gereformerde 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 minster 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

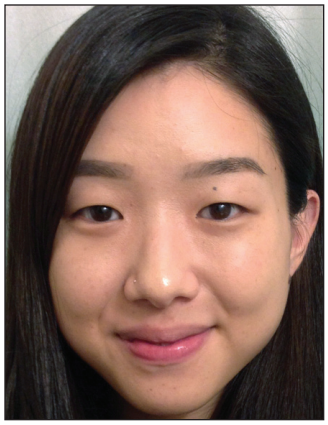
Statement of Reason

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

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: 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

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

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: Aaron Mamuyac

Place of birth: Fresno, California

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Indian River State College
Fort Pierce, Florida
B.A.

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div

Internships:
Sunlight CC
Port Saint Lucie, FL
current

Languages spoken:
English / Tagalog

Contact:
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aaron@sunlightcc.org

Faith Journey

I grew up as a Filipino boy in southern California who did not have any regard for faith and found a church to be boring and confusing. It was ritualistic and I did not understand the purpose. All I knew was that my parents made me attend and the kids there were weird. Jesus came to me in the form of a 70-year-old grandma I called Lola. She lived with us cooking meals for our family every day, walking me to school, helping me with class projects. She taught me how to read, write, walk, speak. Most of all she taught me how to pray, who God was, who Jesus was. She taught me that God is the reason for everything. She lived a humble and simple servant life with us, and seemingly for me. I only found out 20 years later that she lived like a filipino queen in the Philipines. She had 4 maids, 2 drivers, 1 cook, a 3 story house, and a compound that housed the entire clan. This only spoke to her character and gave validity to me for my faith later in life. God used her as the foundation for my faith.

While I attribute my faith to a 70-year-old Filipino grandma, I attribute the maturation of my faith to a 30-year-old Dutchman. When we moved to Florida Scott Vander Ploeg felt moved disciple me. He taught me about who God was on a more intellectual level. I learned apologetics, systematic theology, eschatology, all the "ologies" actually. I felt like my faith exploded because of him and the practice of discipleship. On the outside, we had nothing in common. I thought it was weird that he would want to disciple me. But it turned out the God was up to something amazing in my life. Scott Vander Ploeg was just being obedient to the Great Commission in his life and because of it, I know about the God who saved me.

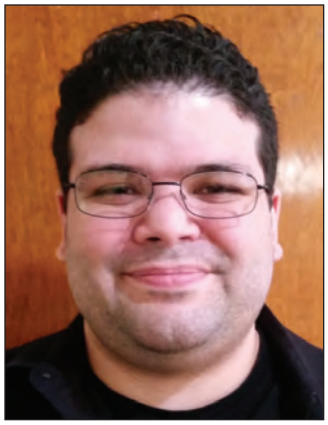
My faith journey is a testament of the sacrifice and obedience of two individuals in my life and I thank God them. I only hope God can use me in the same way in other peoples lives.

Aaron Mamuyac

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 want to follow in the disciple-making footsteps of those who came before 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 a relationship with him.

Aaron Mamuyac



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

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: Timothy J. McHugh

Place of birth: Clifton, New Jersey

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Nyack College
Nyack, NY
B.S., Communications, 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Hahn-In CRC
Wyoming, MI
May 2018 - July 2018

Elevation Church (RCA)
Wyoming, MI
Oct 2016 - Present

Contact:

(973)-985-9307
tjm006@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

God has been faithful to me. I was born to Christian parents, raised in Christian schools, and was regularly involved in church. I grew up in the Reformed faith, from Sunday School, through Catechism, I was immersed in the truths of Scripture. Perhaps one of the biggest influences on my faith journey was my grandfather. "Bumpa", as we called him due to my brother's early inability to pronounce grandpa, was a pastor who regularly conveyed to us through word and deed, the faithfulness of God. In fact, Bumpa was the one who baptized me.

At age 12 I felt the Holy Spirit compelling me to publicly profess my faith and confirm what had been claimed in my baptism, that I belonged to Jesus, and that I affirmed God's faithfulness. I carefully filed away for later my pastor's suggestion that I consider becoming a pastor after going through classes in preparation for that profession of faith. That was the first time I can remember hearing the call of God. At age 13, I found the guitar and a love of music, it wasn't long until I was playing in bands and learning to lead worship. Music became the biggest part of my life, and I had perhaps unrealistic goals of being a professional musician.

Throughout high school and college I continued to lead worship on the side of doing my own musical pursuits, but in 2009, in my third year of college, I was enlisted by a fledgling church plant to be their worship leader as I was one of the only ones with experience leading. I would lead worship there from 2009 up until 2013. During that time, I felt God call me again to the idea of becoming a pastor, but it seemed like the door was closed on that at the same time. Confused, but knowing I needed a direction, I completed my degree in Communications. After college, I got a job working in digital advertising in New York City. I had continued to lead worship at the church plant during that time and by the standards of the world, through my promotion and raise, I was doing quite well. Yet, God's call became louder and harder to ignore, and I found myself absolutely miserable in a job that by all accounts I should be loving. God met me there in New York City and called me out from there to follow Him in ministry. I left the city and took a job leading worship at a church in rural New York state. It was there God began to prepare me for His mission, teaching me new things about myself and gifting me by His Holy Spirit for His work. From 2014 to 2016, I led worship there, and God continued to show His faithfulness, confirming my place at Goshen Christian Reformed Church.

In 2016, Bumpa went home to be with the Lord. God had showed His faithfulness through Bumpa, and it became evident that God was speaking again. As we buried my grandfather, the common refrain was Great is Thy Faithfulness, and God confirmed to me that I could no longer wait, I needed to take the step, in faith, and follow the call. Not to honor my grandfather, but to follow the call of the One who is faithful. And so, He brought me to Calvin Theological Seminary, which has only confirmed for me, more and more, this call to shepherd God's people, and has reminded me again and again the heart of the gospel which restores broken stories and redeems hopeless lives.

Tim McHugh

Statement of Reason

I seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I grew up in its tradition, I know and understand its culture, and I hear God calling me to proclaim the gospel and shepherd His people no matter where He might call. I believe that in serving in the Christian Reformed Church, I can preach the good news of Christ's death and resurrection, the sovereign saving of God's people through it, and call God's people to seek His shalom in this world by the power of the Holy Spirit. All of this is why I seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church.

Tim McHugh

Name: Matthew Mulder

Place of birth: Zeeland, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights IL
B.A. in Music and Theology, 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:
Fuller Avenue CRC
Grand Rapids, MI
Oct 2016 - May 2018

Fuller Avenue CRC
Grand Rapids, MI
May 2018 - Aug 2018

Contact:
(616)-886-3934
mpm003@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit: Three persons in one Trinity. I believe that God created everything and made humans in His image. I believe that humans have fallen from God's perfection and, because of this, each and every person is born depraved and sinful, both because of an inherent original sin, and because of the sins we commit every day. I believe that, in spite of this, God, in His everlasting love, sent His only Son to stoop down to our level and become incarnate so as to redeem us from our sins. I believe that Jesus died on the cross to save me and the rest of God's elect from our sins. I believe that God sent the Holy Spirit to live within Christians so that they might be a light for God in this dark and sinful world as a part of the Body of Christ, the church. I believe that Jesus is currently in Heaven at God's right hand, interceding on our behalf. I believe that one day, Jesus will come again to earth and bring us to be with Him eternally in the everlasting Shalom that is the New Creation.

I was born and raised in the CRC in West Michigan to parents who faithfully exemplify what it means to be a follower of Christ. I grew up being taught a very strong conviction to the Christian faith and to the church. For our family, this meant never missing the evening service on Sundays, being involved in Cadets and Youth Group, and going to Christian schools. This also meant having a robust study and understanding of Scripture and the Creeds and Confessions from an early age. I made Profession of Faith at age 10 and in preparation for that my father and I went through the Confessions. We also had weekly Bible Study time on Sunday evenings for a few years, and as I grew up more in a CRC church, I enjoyed learning more about God, the Bible, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

In college, I set off to get a minor in Theology and enjoyed my classes as I learned more about what a Reformed Worldview and Theology looks like. Through some providential circumstances, I ended up changing that Theology minor to a double major along with Music and I was able to further delve into my theological studies, learning more about church history, Calvinist studies and more modern Reformed thought. Through all this I was further confirmed in my faith and fulfilled in my desire to learn more about how God reveals Himself to us.

It was during this time that I was also convicted by God that a large part of Christian life is the church. I had stopped going to church for a couple years during college out of laziness, but, providentially, I was given an opportunity to play bass at a local PCA church plant. Through my attendance at this church I was reminded how lifegiving and integral it is to have a community of believers in one's life. It was also at this church plant where I began to articulate my call to ministry as they opened their arms to me not only as an attender of worship but also as an intern.

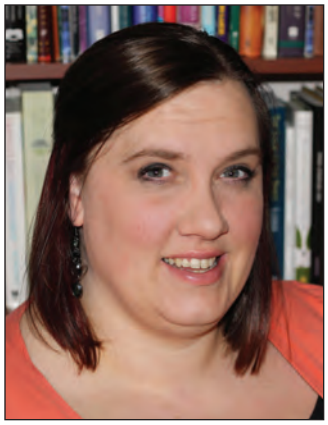
In my time at Calvin Seminary, I have been further affirmed by my friends, family, mentors, church, classis, colleagues, and professors in my call to ministry in Christ's body and bride, the church. I can see the ways in which God has been faithful to me thus far in my life and how God has continually been transforming and sanctifying me. I look forward to what God has in store for me as I strive to follow God's call to ministry.

Matthew Mulder

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church of North America because I firmly and truly believe that God has called me by the Holy Spirit into service in ministry to God's people in a church setting. This call has been confirmed by the church communities that I have been blessed to be a part of as congregant or intern as well as through my experiences over the past three years at Calvin Theological Seminary. As Christians, we are all on a journey of transformation and renewal as we seek to follow God's will for our lives. I believe that in following His will, God has led me to this point in my journey of education and ministry. I seek to continue to follow God's will so that I may equip and serve the members of the body of Christ as we all seek to proclaim God's love and mercy to this fallen Creation.

Matthew Mulder



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 soupspoon, 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

Statement of Reason (continued)

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

Katrina Olson

Name: Jennifer Palkowski

Age: 27

Place of Birth: Toledo, OH

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Hope College
B.A., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2016

Internships:
Ada Bible Church,
Ada, Michigan
September 2015 to present

Harderwyk Ministries,
Holland, MI
June 2015 to August 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary,
Facing Your Future,
Grand Rapids, MI
July 2014

Languages spoken:
Spanish

Contact:
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

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: Shawn Richardson

Place of birth: Dayton, Ohio

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, May 2013

Beeson Divinity School
Birmingham, AL
MDiv, expected Dec. 2018

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships :

Cahaba Park Church, PCA
Birmingham, AL
May 2016 - Dec. 2018

Contact:

(205)-703-3044
shawnrichardson559@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I had the privilege of being taught from a young age that Jesus Christ loved me and died for my sins. My parents were new Christians and eager to raise a family to love and serve the Lord. I always enjoyed going to church. In many respects it was the central part of my week; I looked forward to it leading up to Sunday and reflected on it afterward. When I was in the Sixth Grade Old Testament survey Sunday School class I made the decision that I went to church because I wanted to go and not simply because my parents took me. While I believe I grew in Biblical knowledge and understanding throughout my middle school and high school career, my family attended a Wesleyan/Holiness church. I spent much of my high school years frustrated that I was unable to do better and stop sinning. It was not until I became a student at Calvin College that I discovered I not only lacked a Reformed understanding of the faith, but any theological understanding whatsoever! I failed the first test in Theology 131 and quickly realized I had a lot to learn.

Throughout my years at Calvin my faith grew in Bible Studies, Resident Assistant meetings, chapel services, and the local church where I was a member. I began to realize that God had placed a calling on my life from the very beginning of time. At the time I interpreted that calling as a command to seek justice for the oppressed. During my final year at Calvin I interned at a non-profit called the Michigan Abolitionist Project where I worked to raise awareness of human trafficking through special events and education opportunities. Non-profits seemed the perfect way to live out my calling to work for justice in an unjust world. Upon graduation I joined AmeriCorps and accepted a position at College Forward in Austin, Texas.

My very first Sunday in Austin I attended Sunrise Community Church (which at the time was the only English-speaking CRC in Austin) and felt welcomed from the very start. Sunrise and Pastor Mark Hilbelink will always have a very special place in my faith journey and I thank the members there for loving me so well at a time I needed to feel God's love and leading. I began to experience an inconsistency between what I learned and felt in the community at Sunrise and the work I was doing throughout the week. I would sit in program meetings at College Forward and hear the Executive Director talk about our plan to alleviate poverty through education and then think to myself "none of this is possible without Christ!" The first time I called Pastor Mark to talk about this frustration he asked me if I had every considered ministry. I laughed, but he said I should consider it and the first thing to do was to preach next month.

Mark threw me in the deep end of the ministry pool and gave me opportunities to grow at Sunrise Community Church. I began to spend almost as much time serving the church as I did at my "day job." At this time I discerned a call to ministry and began applying to seminaries. The choice to attend Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama was less of a "spiritual" choice and more practical: my wife got a job in Birmingham so we went where the bills would be paid. However, throughout my years at Beeson, the Lord has constantly confirmed that this was the place for me. I was able to grow not only in my Spiritual formation, but also in my academic and intellectual confidence. This

Faith Journey (continued)

rigorous program taught me that my tendency to think little of my abilities is not true because Christ provides what he requires. On the most difficult of days I was provided with "his energy that he powerfully works within me."

One last piece of my faith journey came about halfway through my seminary years when I began to discern where God might be calling me to serve. In a special chapel service I heard Rev. Dr. Jason McConnell speak passionately about rural ministry. After studying further and reading Dr. McConnell's dissertation I was reminded of the great need for the Gospel I found in my own rural upbringing. Though seminaries so often glorify urban ministries I began to feel called specifically to rural ministry settings and have pursued such opportunities since.

Apart from answering the call to ministry I have been honored to answer the call to lead my wonderful wife and daughter to live a life of faith in Jesus Christ. I do not take this responsibility lightly and consider it my greatest call to teach my young daughter about our Lord who wants to draw her closer to himself into the love of a Covenant relationship.

Shawn Richardson

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church for a number of reasons. I believe the calling to ministry is to proclaim the Lord's Word in his church and I desire to serve him in a church that holds God's Word at high esteem. First, the Christian Reformed Church is where I learned the Reformed worldview that every square inch of creation belongs to the Lord. Second, as I discerned the call to Gospel justice over "social justice" I found a home in the Christian Reformed Church because the denomination works to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. Finally, as a historian I appreciate the common bond the denomination has in the history of its people. Sharing an identity is important in the Church and the CRC uses its history to point to God's work in the Church. I am honored to be a part of a denomination seeking to serve the Lord as effectively as possible.

Shawn Richardson

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 or7. 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

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.

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: Kyle J. Sandison

Place of birth: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
B.A. English, 2008

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton, MA
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Center for the Study of Global Christianity
South Hamilton, MA
Jan 2014 - April 2014

First Evangelical Free Church
Maplewood, MN
May 2014 - Aug 2014

Bellevue CRC
Bellevue, WA
May 2015 - Aug 2015

Contact:
(616)-745-4313
kjs023@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

Less than a month after I was born, I was baptized in a Lutheran church in Grand Rapids, MI. Though I obviously have no memory of that day, I know that God was present with me in that moment. In the waters of baptism, God welcomed me into his covenant community and promised that I would belong to him. God has been faithful to his promise.

Growing up in a Christian home, we attended church regularly, and I went to a Christian school. My story growing up does not include a dramatic conversion experience. It was more of a slow and steady process of faith forming practices: hearing stories in children's worship, learning what seemed like countless Bible memory verses, attending youth group retreats, praying before Cross-Country races, and many other moments like that. I am thankful to my parents, teachers, mentors, and pastors for the ways they invested in me, shaping me and encouraging me to grow in faith.

I did not know it at the time, but a significant aspect of my faith formation was learning to play the guitar. I mostly wanted to learn Dave Matthews songs and impress girls (my Cross-Country physique wasn't exactly doing it for me). But God redeemed even those rather ignoble desires, using my love for music to keep me involved in the church. I joined the church's worship team in high school, led worship on campus when I was a student at Calvin College, and music has remained an important part of the ministries God has called me to since then.

For several years after college I wondered if God might be calling me into ministry. I worked at a Christian after school center in Jersey City, New Jersey, then as the director of worship for a church plant in New York. Through these experiences God nurtured my faith and developed within me a deep love for his Church. I believe the Church is God's covenant community, made up of the people he has called and gathered together. I believe he has called his Church to carry on Christ's work of redemption and reconciliation, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in proclaiming the gospel to the world and caring for those who are last and least among us.

My love for the Church, passion for its mission, and, ultimately, God's gentle directing led to me to enroll in seminary in order to pursue ordained ministry. In seminary, I developed a deeper love for God's Word, pouring over the grammar of the original languages and learning the cultural and historical backgrounds of the books of the Bible. I believe God speaks to us in his Word, revealing his plan to redeem all things in Christ. Since graduating from seminary, I've had the joy and privilege of preaching and teaching God's Word, seeing how it shapes our lives as God's people, and how it guides the Church in carrying out God's work of redemption and reconciliation on earth.

God has faithfully directed my life, from before my baptism, through seminary, and now in the candidacy process. I look forward to seeing where God's Spirit leads as I continue this process toward ordination. To God be the glory.

Kyle Sandison

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy because I sense God's call to serve him as a Minister of the Word. More specifically, I sense God's call to serve him as a pastor of a congregation, preaching the Word of the gospel, and also serving the members of the church and the community through pastoral counseling, discipleship, and community engagement. I am seeking candidacy in the CRC because of my faith's "Reformed accent." I deeply appreciate the Reformed emphasis on God's Word, God's sovereignty and grace, the church as God's covenant community, and the Lordship of Christ over all creation.

Kyle Sandison

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

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:

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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

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: Garrett Saul

Place of birth: Houston, Texas

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Moody Bible Institute
B.A. in Biblical Exposition, 2015

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary
MDiv., June 2019

Internships:
Beckwith Hills CRC
Grand Rapids, MI
August 2015 - Present

Contact:
312-399-5156
garrettsaul21@gmail.com

Faith Journey

Like many in the Reformed tradition, my faith begins with the faith of my parents. My dad grew up as an atheist and my mom grew up as a nominal Roman Catholic. Shortly before I was born, my dad responded to the gospel call and became a Christian. My mom followed my dad in her confession and renewed her commitment to Christ. My mom and dad did not really know how to raise a family as Christians should, so they both read and deliberated as often as they could. So, I always grew up in the church but it was quite a diverse experience.

My family and I first attended a baptist church followed by a Nazarene church and then a suburban megachurch. I spent my teen years at the suburban megachurch. Although the megachurch I attended was bringing many people in to hear some bible teaching, the news they proclaimed was more about how God makes us better people rather than how we need a Savior from our sins so that we can share in God's life through his Son by his Spirit. As a result, I never heard that I was a sinner. I never heard I needed a savior and I ended up living a good life...on the outside. That's actually why I applied to Bible college; because it seemed like the right thing to do given how much time I spent at church! I was quite the moral teenager to those around me but it was not until I read Francis Chan's book Crazy Love that I saw for the first time that my good life was not good enough for God. Francis Chan clearly showed me what the Bible teaches; if a person wants to enter the Kingdom of God and have eternal life they have to repent. Well, that's exactly what I did! I broke up with my non-Christian girlfriend, rid myself influences that would stir up my sinful desires, and three weeks later I was at Bible college.

When I arrived at Bible college, I really did not know anything about doctrine, theology, or how to interpret the Bible. But I did know that my Father loved me...and I loved him back! I wanted to get to know him! And that's what I did. I spent the next four years intensely studying the Bible. My roommates were all upperclassmen and the dorm floor I was on loved to study theology. It seemed like a great fit, until I realized that at the end of my first year I had grown cold in my devotion to God. It was at that point I saw I had been learning a lot about God but I had been failing to know God personally. Once I was able to distinguish between knowledge about God and knowledge of God it felt like I was reborn in my zeal and devotion to God. Ultimately this manifested itself in doing street evangelism in downtown Chicago up to three times a week and leading me to pursue a Master of Divinity. My undergrad equipped me with theology and preaching capability, but I wanted to know God more. He gave me the opportunity to do so at a seminary that had a rigorous biblical languages program which I enjoyed.

Moreover, God provided me with a ministry as a youth pastor at a Christian Reformed Church where I have served since the start of my seminary career. I already found myself within the Reformed tradition, so why not join the denomination I'm already serving in? I sometimes feel like an outsider, but I know God has me and my family in the right place to maximize our gifts he has given us!

Garrett Saul

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I feel called by God to build up his church by proclaiming His Word and administering His Sacraments. Moreover, I have discerned that God has gifted me with the gift of evangelism which I hope to use to train others to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know Him. I hope to live out my calling and use my gift of evangelism to further strengthen the faith of Christians within the CRC and to proclaim to others not only the richness of the Reformed tradition, but also the richness of knowing Christ. In short, I love God and His Church and I want to make his name known! I think the CRC is in an expectant posture to reach the lost and live faithfully. That's where I want to be!

Garrett Saul

Name: Terence Schilstra

Place of birth: Smithville, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Mohawk College
Hamilton, ON
I.M.M., 2010

McMaster Divinity
Hamilton, ON
Hebrew, 2018

Tyndale Seminary
Toronto, ON
"Church in the City" M.Div.,
Expected 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:

The Village Church CRC
Thorold, ON
Sept 2016 - Present

Crosstowne CRC
Milton, ON
May 2018 - Sept 2018

CRC Classis Hamilton
Home Missions
Dec 2018 - June 2019

Contact:

(905)-359-4004
terenceschilstra@gmail.com

My Faith Journey

I came to know God as a boy growing up on a dairy farm in the Niagara Peninsula. As a kid, I recall being close to God, praying to Him in bed at night in our old farmhouse. Later in life, I would forget God, but he did not forget me.

I was raised in the embrace of Christian family, learning sacrificial love and hard work. I grew up in the covenant community of Smithville CRC (Ontario), where I was baptized and catechized in the faith. By the time I was 19, I had become bored with "church" and stopped attending. What's more, I began drifting away from God.

When I was 20, I started working in the trades, which turned into a 15-year career as an Overhead Crane Technician, specializing in Mechanical Technology. Early in my career, I was exposed to a world beyond the cradle of Christian community. In this season, I made a series of bad decisions; overindulging in work, alcohol, and unhealthy friendships. When I wasn't working overtime, my idea of fun was drinking excessively with co-workers or friends. Although my career flourished, my daily routine soon came crashing to a halt. When I was 25, a serious single vehicle crash nearly cost me my life. I'd been careless, travelling too fast on an icy road. For several weeks afterwards, I was laid up with injuries at home. While off work, I began to reflect on my life's purpose. During this time, I became profoundly aware of God's presence. As I lay in bed, I began to pray to the God I talked to as a boy. I developed an insatiable thirst for God and His Word. In my time with God, he convicted me of sin. I asked Him for forgiveness for my past and present; I fell into the loving arms of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In 2008, God led me back to the church. I got involved in a new church plant in Thorold, Ontario, The Village CRC. I immediately fell in love with a wonderful group of Christians and grew in my love for Christ and for serving in the community. In that same year, I bumped into my high school sweetheart, Karen Vangeest; we fell in love and got married the next year. Later we were blessed with four beautiful children.

The next 11 years at The Village Church would become the most formative years of my life. I got involved in the leadership team, prayer ministry, discipleship, and outreach in our city. In 2016, God called me into ministry. I enrolled in the Church-in-the-City program at Tyndale Seminary; a Master's of Divinity degree program for leaders actively serving in ministry. The program coupled well with my most recent ministry context at the Village, co-planting a missional community in downtown Thorold. On this journey, God gave me a heart for the poor, marginalized, and unsaved in our city. Further, God affirmed in me a passion for calling the church to mission in their neighborhood; challenging the church to an intentional lifestyle of repeated actions growing in intensity to impact lives and community for Jesus Christ.

Terence Schilstra

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy because I firmly believe that our Sovereign God has called me to serve as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. I pray that God will continue to give me strength and devotion to persevere wherever He leads and directs.

Terence Schilstra

Name: Mitchell Sheahan

Place of birth: Mt. Pleasant, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI
B.A. 2005

Reformed Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, Michigan
M.Div., 2014-2017 (transferred)

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div. 2019

Internships:

Director of College and Young Adult ministries
Mt. Pleasant Community Church
Mt. Pleasant, MI
Aug. 2010 - Aug. 2016

2nd CRC - Byron Center
Byron Center, MI
Intern Pastor
Aug. 2017 - Oct. 2018

The Refugee Education Center
Grand Rapids, MI
Volunteer Coordinator
Apr. 2018 - Aug. 2018

The River
Kalamazoo, MI
Intern Pastor
Oct. 2018 - Current

Languages spoken:

English, Turkish

Contact:

(269)-225-7823
mitchell.sheahan@gmail.com

Faith Journey

"Maybe you will be a pastor someday!" My high school friend said this to me after a long conversation about his personal problems. This was surprising because I was actually running from the church and God, but now found myself giving him Christian advice. I have never forgotten those words. Shortly after, God placed a local pastor in my life to mentor me during that turbulent season of my life. While in high school, that pastor introduced me to a local college ministry where I witnessed people who were excited about their faith. This gave me a desire to check out college ministries during my freshman year at the University of Michigan. I was involved in three college ministries and was also being mentored by two different campus pastors. All the while, I was still engaging in some of my old ways of life.

Fortunately, God got my attention in a drastic way at the end of my freshman year. Through a few important events, including an intense journey through the major world religions, I realized that this was not simply an American religion or my parents' belief. It was my faith. From that point on, I made a commitment to become a faithful disciple of Christ. My faith was formed under the leadership of Cru and a local church. I was given opportunities to lead and went on several mission trips, including to Turkey. I saw a lot of fruit in my own life and the lives of others. My two best friends and I started bible studies in our dorm that multiplied and grew to over 200 people in a few years. By my senior year, I was certain that God was calling me into ministry somehow and sometime.

During the end of that year, I met the woman who I would soon marry. She went to a different university and had one more year remaining. After graduating, I proposed and moved closer to her. We married six months later. A vision was growing inside of me during that time. I could not ignore it any longer. After only one month of being married, I told my wife about how I felt called to be a missionary in Turkey. With grace and excitement, she said, "I have always wanted to teach abroad, but never knew where. Let's go!" In faith we looked for and found jobs, and we were living in Turkey six months later. Our goal was missions, and the best way to do that in Turkey was through a career.

After about a year, we found ourselves back in Michigan after a surprise pregnancy with our first child. It was an incredibly difficult decision, but we needed to start our family closer to home. I began working for my father as a machinist in my hometown. These were refining years where I struggled to discern my call and vision for life and ministry. My wife and I had become members of a Presbyterian church and jumped into leadership. I was being mentored by one of the pastors. After a few years of volunteering, the senior pastor invited me to join their staff in order to start a college ministry and help lead a multi-venue service.

This pushed me further to discern whether my call to ministry was as a layperson or a vocational minister. My father had already offered me the business upon his retirement. However, I realized that, for me, my father's company would always be simply a way to do ministry, and that was not fair to my father and what he built. I decided to take the call from the church.

Faith Journey (continued)

I worked there for six years. Over that time, I had many different roles including being on their executive and preaching teams. I weathered a church split and three senior pastor changes. During that time, I also started my M.Div. degree. Eventually, I decided to leave this church and position, so that I could move to West Michigan and expedite the education process that I had started a few years prior. This journey brought me to CTS and, God willing, an opportunity for pastoral ministry in the near future.

Mitchell Sheahan

Statement of Reason

God has led me on a journey that has allowed me to test and discern whether pastoral ministry is the place that I am supposed to be. He put many pastors in my life to personally disciple me. There have been many opportunities for me to choose a different path. Yet, I constantly reflect on the impact that these pastors, through every phase of life, had on me. In many ways, other career paths may have been easier, more lucrative, and less time consuming. However, I cannot imagine doing anything else. In fact, I only hope that I can have as much of an impact on others as those pastors did on me. I am excited for the opportunity to be ordained in the Christian Reformed Church, because of the values and positions that they hold. Despite being raised in Brethren, Baptist, Church of Christ, and independent churches, it was always apparent to me that God was wholly sovereign and in control of my life. No matter how hard I tried to run from God, he would never let me get far. These Reformed instincts have only been encouraged and refined through my undergraduate years, seminary education, and leadership opportunities in Reformed churches. Therefore, I value being part of a denomination that will encourage the Reformed tradition. I also appreciate the CRCNA's long history of focusing on discipleship, particularly, in raising up young men and women to be strong in their faith. It was a large part of my story, and I can only hope to pass along those values wherever I will pastor.

Mitchell Sheahan

Name: Hilary Smith

Place of Birth: Smithers, British Columbia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended

Kings University
Edmonton, AB
BA in Psychology and minor in business administration, 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Trinity CRC
Edmonton, AB
May 2017 - Aug 2017

Ranchito de Esperanza
Camichines, MX
Jan. 2-16, 2018

El Paso, TX
Juarez, MX
March 23-31

Contact

587-589-3472
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Faith Journey

I have a memory when I was younger (perhaps 8 or 9 years old) when I was in my friend's room. I told her, "I have a secret." She said, "what?" I led her to the corner of the room and told her quietly, "God chose me."

How did I know that? I don't remember learning it, but it's possible someone taught me. What I'll never forget is the strong presence of God in me somehow knowing I was special in some way. I've made my way from whispering in the corner of a bedroom all the way to the pulpit – proclaiming loudly and publicly the good news of God's special love for his chosen covenant children.

Ever since I can remember I've known the presence of God. I attended church and church programs regularly, went to a Christian school, and was also disciple at home. Growing up wasn't easy and I had many struggles – (too many for this essay!), but God was always faithful. I continued to grow to know about this God who had made himself known to me.

After graduating from University, I worked downtown at an organization who provided for the city's most vulnerable. There I learned about wholistic justice and what it really meant to treat everyone as made in the image of God. After 2 years in that formative setting I set out to teach English abroad. I taught in the Czech Republic and in China. It was during this period of time when I realized my greatest passion even though I couldn't put it in words yet – participating in the Mission of God.

When I moved back to Canada 6 years ago I accepted a position as a youth pastor at Trinity CRC in Edmonton, AB. I like to say that didn't know I was called into ministry until I was called to ministry. Now I know I'll be in some form of ministry for the rest of my life. There is nothing that satisfies my soul more than joining in what God is doing and leadings others to do the same.

Many people contributed to my discipleship and faith formation and I don't want to end this without mentioning one of them - my dad. With grateful tears I remember the long walks where he would teach me about the life of Jesus. I remember his availability and patience when I would call him at random times to ask theological questions. My dad, a former pastor in the CRC, did not always have a positive ministry experience. Yet, he continued to worship Jesus and serve him. My dad taught me ministry can be painful and difficult, but we are not to forget that we are servants and our primary purpose is to take the spotlight off of ourselves and place it on Christ.

Hilary Smith

Statement of Reason

The end of Exodus is a bit of a tedious read. God's people are preparing the *place* where they would worship. In addition, God's people are given instructions to prepare the *people* who would lead worship. Aaron and his sons were to be ordained and it would be a lasting ordinance. It could be argued that they could have led worship without it. I suppose I could carry on in ministry unordained. The reason those practices were put in place is the reason I want to be ordained: To highlight the presence of God and be recognized as set apart for ministry.

Hilary Smith

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

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: Loretta Stadt

Place of birth: Smithers, British Columbia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
King's University/
University of Victoria
Edmonton, AB / Victoria, BC
B.A

University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB
B. Ed

Taylor Seminary
Edmonton, Alberta
M.Div., May 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:
Bethel CRC
Edmonton, AB
Sept 2011 - Dec 2012

Hope CRC
Stony Plain, AB
March 2015 - Aug 2015

Avenue CRC
Edmonton, AB
Jan 2018 - June 2019

Contact:
(780)-455-9359
loretta.stadt@gmail.com

Faith Journey

My desire and passion to learn about God and follow wherever he leads began at a young age. I remember, in grade two, memorizing Psalm 8 while a storm raged outside the windows. The storm and the words of the Psalm came together, and I was awestruck by the majesty and power of God. I remember, at age 10, standing beside my Mother while she paid for my very first personal Bible. I felt special and somewhat awed by having my very own Bible to read. Something I began to do on a daily basis.

My teenage years were difficult due to having two siblings diagnosed with schizophrenia and a mother with Multiple Sclerosis. I didn't know why my family had to suffer so much and cried out to God for answers which never seemed to materialize. God seemed very distant and remote and, though he was sovereign and all powerful, he wasn't personal. Despite this I made profession of faith at age 16. I knew deep down that despite all my questions and doubts Christ was still the only answer.

I grew up in the Christian Reformed Church at a time and place where people attended two services a Sunday, sent their kids to the Christian school, and to weekly Catechism classes. By age 16 I was familiar with the Bible, the basic tenets of the gospel, of covenantal theology, and confessions of the CRC. I knew a lot of information and had a strong desire to know and follow God, but experientially I didn't truly believe that God loved me. I understood intellectually that I was saved from my sins through the death and resurrection of Christ, but the 'joy of his salvation' never really penetrated.

This began to change in my early twenties when I was diagnosed with depression. For years I had struggled with exhaustion and aching limbs but I never knew why. The impact medication had on my physical health was dramatic. It was like being physically reborn and this had a positive impact on my spiritual health. I kept thanking God for legs that no longer felt like lead, for a body free of pain, for energy to do my daily activities, and the sheer joy of just being alive. I was able to sense God's presence in a new way and to believe more strongly that he really did love me.

As time went on, the experiential side of my faith grew, and as I came to experience the grace and mercy of Christ personally, my love for others also grew. I always had a passion for justice and a heart for the marginalized, but now I also desired people from all walks of life to know how great the love of Christ is for them and to be able to LIVE in that love.

My passion for understanding God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) more also continued, and this eventually led me to taking seminary classes. The more I learned through these classes and other sources, the more I have come to realize that God's greatness, his love and mercy, is truly beyond my understanding. I very much appreciate the reformed perspective and the confessions of the CRC, however I have also come to believe that no denomination has all the answers. I have come to believe that God's grace and mercy are far greater than we can possibly grasp, and that our main calling as believers is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Loretta Stadt

Statement of Reason

I never expected to be seeking ordination as a 'Minister of the Word' in the CRC. I began my seminary journey in 2004 for the purpose of deepening my understanding and strengthening my faith. My passion, however, has always been to follow where God is leading, and slowly, over the past 15 years, God has led me to this point. Having grown up in the CRC it has always been my home, but as I have served the church in various ways over the years, God has increased my love for the people within the denomination. God has also increased my appreciation for the reformed perspective, and so I seek to serve as a 'Minister of the Word' within the CRC in obedience to God's call.

Loretta Stadt

Name: Jaleesa Stanford

Place of birth: Luverne, Minnesota

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College
Sioux Center, IA
BA in Secondary English Education with endorsements in Middle Level Language Arts and Social Studies, 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Gold Avenue Church (CRC)
Grand Rapids, MI
Sept 2016 - current

Contact:

(616)-250-7391
pastor.jaleesa.gold@gmail.com

Faith Journey

I grew up in Chandler, Minnesota where my parents were farmers and later grocery store owners. We were members of the local CRC; as such I spent Sunday mornings and evenings in a pew, Monday nights doing crafts at GEMS, and Sunday afternoons in front of a Bible-story flannelgraph. My two older brothers and I attended the local Christian School, and we grew up memorizing scripture and reading the Today around the table after supper.

When I was eight, my dad discerned a call from the Lord to step into ministry and my family moved to the big city of Borculo, MI. My dad attended Calvin Theological Seminary and served as an intern pastor at Borculo CRC. When we'd packed up the U-Haul, we had no plans for housing beyond the first couple of months; neither of my parents had jobs. Within the first month we were moved into Borculo CRC's parsonage, and my mom was offered a tremendous job. In this season the Jesus on the flannelgraph became a real, living, moving, and active person for me—a person who heard my prayers, who honored faith, and who cared for me and for my family.

While in Borculo I attended Borculo Christian School and again spent Sundays in church, Mondays at GEMS, and Wednesdays reciting Heidelberg Questions and Answers. I also had a front row seat to watch my dad grow into ministry. I loved to participate with him in any way that I could. I got up early on Sunday mornings so I could stand with him at the church doors to greet —I even memorize every face and name in the church directory so that I could greet each individual by name. I scrolled through my dad's Hebrew flashcards and sat in his study listening to class lectures on the tiny tape recorder he collected them on.

After four years in Borculo, my dad took his first church in Sanborn, IA. I was just finishing middle school. It was hard to move, but again I saw the Lord honor our faith in following his lead; our years in Sanborn were blessed. My family served as foster parents and adopted my younger brother, I made friends, and I headed off to high school at Western Christian High. I kept going to church and catechism on Sundays and youth group on Wednesdays because my friends were there, and because I was supposed to, but my interests were shifting. It wasn't as cool any more to be the pastor's kid or the kid who knew all the answers in catechism.

I spent high school largely doing my own thing. I wanted to have friends and to be a cool kid, and being a good kid wasn't really what made you cool. By the time I needed to make some choices regarding what was next, I knew that my own way was not going so well. I was not making good choices, and I knew I had no idea who I was or what I wanted to do with my life. I needed some direction. I remembered how God had shown my parents where to go. In prayer I asked the Lord what I should do next. He led me to Dordt College to study to be a teacher.

For four years at Dordt I wrestled back and forth with wanting to do what I wanted to do and longing to find out who God made me to be. There were beautiful times and some deeply difficult times. I earned a BA in Secondary English Education, but senior year I found myself on my knees before the Lord still not sure who I was or what I was made to do in this world. God led me into the desert.

Faith Journey (continued)

For two years I lived in Manama, Bahrain teaching 10th and 12th grade English. Like so many of my favorite Bible characters, it seems the Lord brought me out into the desert to break me, to have some hard conversations with me, and to begin to build me back up in Him. I taught in a predominately Muslim school, was friends with Reformed and Charismatic missionaries, and I learned much about God's Holy Spirit and how he heals, delivers, equips, and empowers us for ministry.

By the end of the two years I was engaged to my best friend, Brendan, from back home in Iowa, and I knew that it was time to go home. God had begun to use me to do ministry in Bahrain; he was beginning to whisper to me about going to seminary, though I wasn't sure when. He was beginning to show me who I was in Him and what I was made to do.

Brendan and I were married on a glorious Fall day in 2014, and by Fall 2015 we felt led to start seminary. In the last four years at CTUS the Lord has done a mighty work in me. He has blessed me with mentors and friends who have walked with me in incredible ways. In this season the Lord has brought me tremendous healing, he has called forth and raised up gifts in me, he's strengthened my inner being to know I am truly loved apart from anything that I could ever do or say, he's brought rich depth and unity to my marriage and to my relationships, he's filled me with his love and holy hunger for his Kingdom, he has increased my faith and dependence on him in the face of Brendan serving as a soldier and a law enforcement officer, and he's given me humbling opportunities to be his hands and feet in the world.

My journey with the Lord has been one of ups and downs, one of deep sorrows but also one of tremendous love, joy, and peace that passes all understanding. I'm astounded at the ways that the Lord has met me, carried me, humbled me, used me, and lifted me up over the years. I am eager to continue this glorious journey with my heavenly Father and to go wherever he may lead.

Jaleesa Stanford

Statement of Reason

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I love the Lord and his church, and I feel called to serve this specific expression of it. I am humbled by the calling that God has placed on my life, the gifts he has given me to use, and the community that he has blessed me with to learn and to grow within. I am eager to serve the church—to lead her to walk in her identity as an expression of the Kingdom of God not yet here but breaking through. I believe that God has tremendously beautiful plans for this denomination to use her to embody the gospel and to proclaim its message of love and of freedom to the world; I'm eager to continue to follow the Lord's leading in serving his church and his world to that end as he continues to lead.

Jaleesa Stanford

Name: Brad Stolman

Place of birth: Royal Oak, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
Bachelor of Arts in Business, 2003

Reformed Theological Seminary
Orlando, FL
M.Div., expected 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Dearborn Christian Fellowship (CRC)
Dearborn, MI
June 2007 - Aug 2017

Contact:

(313)-208-6437
the.stolmans@sbcglobal.net

Faith Journey

I was born and raised by two loving parents who loved and served Jesus Christ as Lord. Though I was baptized in a Lutheran church as an infant, my family transferred to an Evangelical Presbyterian Church when I was five years old, where I attended until college. The years spent at that church were foundational and formational in my faith journey as God, by His providence, used the pastors, Sunday school teachers, and youth leaders to help bring me to faith and trust in Jesus Christ. During one of the middle school youth trips the Holy Spirit used the speaker's presentation of the gospel to grab hold of my heart so that Jesus Christ became that which I could not live without from that moment forward. It was within the high school youth ministry that God began to plant a seed for future ministry as youth leader after youth leader invested in my spiritual walk with Christ and, by God's grace, I recognized and valued the effect of their influence on me and desired to make that type of impact on others in the future.

I attended Calvin College from 1999-2003, where I received my B.A. in Business. It was at Calvin that I met the love of my life and, in 2003, Lisa and I were married in Dearborn, MI, the city where she spent her entire life. In desiring to be near both families in Metro Detroit, we moved back home, bought a house in Dearborn and started to attend Dearborn Christian Fellowship (CRC), while I began my career at Comerica Bank in branch management and then commercial lending. We volunteered as youth leaders since both of us had a passion for youth ministry and desired to be actively involved in the life of our church. Within three months of working with the youth group, the other leaders all stepped aside and the church decided to make me the Youth Director on a volunteer basis beginning in 2004. In 2007, the leadership at DCF asked me to leave the bank and take a staff position at the church as both the Youth & Worship Director, to which my wife responded, "Of course you need to say 'Yes!' to this." We were privileged to witness God do amazing work in the lives of our youth through the power of the gospel and to see the ministry become one that also reached out to and shared the gospel with many students from the city who were not a part of the church. To God be the glory!

In 2016 the church again asked me to consider pursuing a Masters of Divinity in order to be ordained as a Minister of the Word in the CRC. This was a call which my wife and I engaged in deep prayer and counsel for six months, desiring to move in this direction only upon receiving the internal call of God, which we received during that time. I enrolled at Reformed Theological Seminary in August of 2016 and plan to complete my M-Div work by August of 2019.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, who created the world good as a place which reflects His glory. Through the sin of the one man Adam, all have died and God's entire creation has been affected by the curse for sin. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who through His glorious incarnation, perfect life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection and ascension, has redeemed all whom God has, by His grace, granted faith to believe on the Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit who applies the work of Christ to our lives and dwells with us, as the guarantee of our inheritance which is to

Faith Journey (continued)

come. I believe in the church, as the people of God, whom He has been assembling since the fall through His Covenant of Grace. I deeply love and am committed to the Reformed faith, subscribing to the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful interpretation of the authoritative, inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Brad Stolman

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that I am called by God to be a minister in His church by His grace in order to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and administer church discipline. I am deeply committed to the Reformed faith and the creeds and confessions which express that understanding of Scripture. I want to see people redeemed and transformed by the gospel and the love which God has for them through His Son and then live as agents of God's grace in all facets of their lives, praying that God's kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven. I believe that the CRCNA provides an environment that is conducive for God's church to flourish as He gathers a people for himself and preserves us until He comes again.

Brad Stolman

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:
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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 28:1620 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

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
galetien@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

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?

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: Kathy Vana

Place of birth: Cadillac, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Central College
Pella, IA
1998

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Moddersville Reformed Church
Jan - May 2017

Workplace Chaplains
May - Sept 2017

Contact:

(231)-667-4146
klv003@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

Five years ago, when this whole "crazy" idea of seminary started to form in my mind, I remember sitting with my husband and our pastor at Big Boy with tears in my eyes, saying, "I love Jesus and I just want to tell others about Him." That was my simple, child-like mentality coming into seminary. It still rings true today.

I can't say that I ever truly pictured myself as a pastor. I had many dreams of being a missionary or adopting children into our home, but I have found that God has a great sense of humor and will not let our hearts rest until we truly follow His lead. My teacher-husband jokes that since I wanted to marry a pastor and that didn't happen, I decided to pursue the road myself instead!!

A quick background check shows that I have spent all of my life in the CRC: loving VBS and Kids Praise musicals, singing and playing piano in church, attending Sunday School, youth group and conventions. And of course, like any good faithful family in the CRC in the 80's and 90's, church twice on Sundays throughout my childhood!

I also experienced the great joy of having supportive parents and role models who encouraged and loved me all the way through. These people placed within me the desire to be a teacher in a Christian school, coordinate the music program at VBS, start Bible Studies, and join my husband in youth leadership. But, even in all of these roles, I still felt God pressing me to pursue Him more. Since starting seminary, I have taken on new roles in pastoral care and chaplaincy work and I find deep joy in being a witness to the story God writes in each of his children.

To me seminary has meant a process of putting aside all of the fears that held me back, letting go of the security blanket and each of the "but what ifs," and entrusting God with each anxiety that comes along. It has also meant learning more about the Jesus I love and gaining skills to share his good news in effective, creative ways. This has been a beautiful, challenging journey for me, and I'm thankful for God's faithfulness each step of the way. Now that I am almost done and have grown in ways I would never imagine, I know one thing for sure: "I love Jesus and I just want to tell others about Him."

Kathy Vana

Statement of Reason

I believe God has given me a heart for people and a deep love for the church, despite all her wounds and scars. My desire for ordination in the CRC stems from a simple longing to walk beside others and "do life together" with them, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit. I am so thankful that God takes broken people and redeems them as His own, offering hope in the midst of brokenness, and I am deeply humbled that God has invited me to be a part of His restoration work.

Kathy Vana

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

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: 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.

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: Klaas Walhout

Place of birth: Silver Spring, Maryland

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
B.A. in Religion and Philosophy, 2016

Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, NJ
M.Div, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:

Reformed Church of Highland Park
Highland Park, NJ
May 2017 - Aug 2017

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
Grand Rapids, MI
CPE - May 2018 - Aug 2018

First Presbyterian Church of Dutch Neck
West Windsor, NJ
Sep 2018 - May 2019

Contact:

(616)-516-9636
walhout.klaas@gmail.com

Faith Journey

On December 4, 1994, I was baptized at Silver Spring CRC, MD. This was the day I was welcomed into the family of God, receiving the sign and seal of God's grace and love for me that would follow me my whole life long. It was also the day that the congregation of Silver Spring CRC would make its promises to care for and encourage me in faith.

Though my family would move back to our native Grand Rapids, MI a couple of years later, we remained in the church, where I continued to be nurtured in faith and welcomed as a child of God. Growing up at Eastern Ave. CRC and Neland Ave. CRC, I was taught Bible stories, learned about God's love, and discovered my faith in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection gave new life to me and to all who believe. In addition, I began sense my belief in God had a Reformed inflection. I became acquainted with the Heidelberg Catechism, and began to understand God largely through the lens of sovereignty and grace.

On April 10, 2011, I made Profession of Faith at Neland CRC. I received the Lord's Supper for the first time. The profound mystery of the sacrament fed me in my faith. I felt fulfilled in my faith at the time, and loved expressing it through participation in church youth group and in theological conversation with friends and family.

But I felt my faith falter in early college, and 'walked away' from the church for a time. In retrospect, I have come to understand that this walking-away was an expression of what had gradually become for me a lonely and intellectual faith. Not rooted in spiritual practice or life-giving community, it felt at this young age like it my faith had already run its course. But eventually, through a return to church, and participation in liturgy and sacrament, I rediscovered the grace that I had already received. It was the grace of a loving God who would not let me go.

Moving through college, I had interest in theology and philosophy, and considered applying to divinity school to pursue further study. Along the way, a few of my friends and professors in the Religion department encouraged me to look into ministry programs the college had to offer. For the first time, I let myself actively entertain a prospect that I had long kept in the back of my mind: serving the church through ordained ministry. So, in the summer of 2015 I served in my first church internship, experienced great joy in it—especially in the hours I spent in prison ministry each week.

Yet, I still found myself drawn to the academy. But when I enrolled in seminary in 2016 and soon after began serving in church field education internships, I quickly discovered a joy much deeper than my classes alone had given me up to that point. When I finally was able to break free from my addiction to achievement and academic success, I felt as if I fell backwards into a tangible ministerial calling for which God had been preparing me.

I believe in one triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as expressed in the ecumenical creeds. I believe that the Bible is the living Word of God, endlessly useful in pointing towards the truth, and comforting to those who seek it. I believe that Jesus Christ took on human flesh, was crucified, died, was buried, and was resurrected for the forgiveness of

Faith Journey (continued)

sins and the redemption of all humankind. This is my deepest comfort. I also affirm the three Reformed confessions: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. These documents contain the lens through which I read the Bible, which is the truth that sustains me in faith and ministry.

Klaas Walhout

Statement of Reason

I wish to be a candidate for ministry in the CRC because I have come to believe that I am called by God to serve the church in this capacity. I experience this call internally. As I have grown in faith, I have continually returned to the wellspring of Word, Lord's Supper, my baptismal identity. Grounded in these things, I have developed a deep love for God's church, along with a desire to serve it through proclaiming the Word, administering the sacraments, and fostering discipleship. I believe God has equipped me with the maturity and skills to serve in these ways. This call has also been nurtured as I have been led along towards ministry by mentors, friends in faith, and by my home congregation, who have continually pointed to God's work in me, even in the times when I have felt unworthy. So, it is with great humility and joy that I find myself knocking at the door of a potential career in ministry, confident in God's call on my life.

Klaas Walhout

Name: Chad Werkhoven

Place of birth: Pomona, California

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Cal Poly State University
San Luis Obispo, CA
B.S., Agricultural Engineering Technology, 1994

Reformed Theological Seminary
Orlando, FL
M.Div., expected June 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Sunnyside CRC
Sunnyside, WA
Nov 2017 - June 2019

Contact:

(509)-839-2423
preacher1349@gmail.com

Faith Journey

My life can be described as what some have deemed a 'covenant conversion,' in that throughout my life I have known Christ. This comes as a result of a solid Christian home, church upbringing, and Christian education.

In some respects my call to ministry has taken place over the last 30 years. There was always a small part of me that was interested in vocational ministry during my high school and college years, but circumstances and other opportunities kept vocational ministry out of reach. Already while I was in college, I found an outlet in which I could experience the aspect of being in ministry which I enjoy the most-teaching doctrine. I have taught classes now almost every year since to just about every age group. I also had several opportunities to serve on our church council, both as an elder and a deacon.

I had always been interested in theology, so when Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) began their 'virtual campus' years ago, I began taking the classes, mostly just for my own benefit and edification. As the credits starting stacking up, it was evident that I had a knack for it.

While I certainly felt an internal call to the ministry, I was a bit frustrated that I never experienced an explicit external call. In my mind, an external call was somebody out of the blue coming up to me and saying that I needed to drop what I was doing and go into full time ministry. People would often joke that sooner or later I would be the *dominee*, but I think people just assumed I was where God was calling me since we had a successful business.

Soon just teaching catechism classes was not enough to fill my appetite. I asked our council to recommend me to our classis for a license to exhort within our classis churches, mostly for pulpit supply. I received the license, and began preaching in our own church and neighboring churches. My sermons were well received, and it was after the second or third experience that I made arrangements to begin the RTS M.Div program. Both our local church and classis have been very supportive of this, and have also helped me with funds for tuition.

It did not take long for it to become obvious that I could not run a business, fire station, raise a family, prepare sermons and catechism lessons, and keep up with RTS classes all at the same time. My dad was nearing retirement, and it was very clear to me I did not want to continue in business, so we began the process of winding the business down. My plan was to get it sold off or liquidated in some form, and then do some consulting work or other part time job while I concentrated on finishing the mDiv so I would be ready for full time ministry.

A few months ago, right as we were beginning to wrap things up in the business, God opened the next door in my ministry. A full time staff position opened up right in the church our family had been attending for decades, and I was blessed to be selected for that position, which has enabled me to experience nearly every facet of pastoral ministry. This also meant another exam from our classis, this time for the designation of Commissioned Pastor.

Faith Journey (continued)

Throughout this process I have been blessed to have the full support of my wife and four daughters, as well as my parents. We are all very much looking forward to where the Lord will call us next on this ministry journey.

Chad Werkhoven

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy within the Christian Reformed Church because I recognize God's calling in my life to serve Him as a Minister of the Word. I have been privileged to enjoy a twenty five year career in business and the fire service, and I look forward to seeing how God will use me as a vocational minister. I am deeply committed to the doctrines of Reformed theology, and one of the key reasons I seek ordination in the CRC is because of its commitment to being a confessional church. The CRC has been a tremendous blessing in my life, having provided the ecclesiastical foundation for our family going back several generations. I have greatly enjoyed working as a Commissioned Pastor, and look forward in reliance on God's providence as I move forward as a Minister of the Word.

Chad Werkhoven

Name: William R. Whitt

Place of birth: Bluefield, West Virginia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV
B.S. in Journalism, 2000

West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV
B.A. in Psychology, 2000

Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA
M.A. in Human Relations, 2006

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Westminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Bluefield, West Virginia
2002-2004

The Wade Center, EPC
Bluefield, West Virginia
2005-2011

Sunlight Christian Reformed Church
Port Saint Lucie, Florida
2011 - present

Contact:
(772)-242-3386
wrw065@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

My faith story begins in West Virginia, where I was blessed to grow up in a Christian family. We attended a Southern Baptist church, where God called me to faith at a very young age. At this church, I learned to rely on God's grace alone for salvation, and I learned that my mission in life was to serve him out of love and gratitude.

As I grew older, I began attending a college Bible study at Westminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church. This was my first exposure to Reformed theology, and it was in many ways like my first exposure to prescription eyeglasses. For the first time, what had always been cloudy was now crystal clear! I learned how to trace the theme of covenant through the Old and New Testaments, seeing God's grace woven through each book of the Bible. I learned about God's sovereignty and his loving providence. I discovered there is a systematic way in which all Scriptures fit together to form a single story of God's merciful pursuit of his rebellious people. And I developed a passion for helping other people have similar eye-opening experiences with God's Word!

Meanwhile, in college I earned bachelor's degrees in broadcast journalism and in psychology. I worked in TV news, honing my skills in writing, speaking, and telling compelling stories. I even earned a regional Emmy nomination for my reporting. After some time, I began to feel God calling me to use these same skills to help the Church tell the most important story ever told! God provided me with an opportunity to work at Westminster, where I created their first website and helped them to begin using new technology in their worship ministries. During my time there, the pastor took an interest in my story-telling abilities and trusted me with the tremendous opportunity of preaching my first sermon. Later, I took the lead in youth worship ministries, and when the opportunity arose to plant a mission church across town, I became its worship and media director. During this time, I also completed my master's degree in human relations, sensing a call to help people in their times of crisis.

In 2011, Pastor Scott Vander Ploeg heard of my work through a mutual friend and recruited me to direct worship and media ministries at Sunlight Christian Reformed Church in Port Saint Lucie, Florida. He mentored me through the process of gaining licensure to preach in our classis and then through the process of becoming ordained as a commissioned pastor. During my time at Sunlight, we have roughly doubled our membership, constructed a new 700-seat auditorium, and launched many exciting new ministries and partnerships. For example, we are now the home of the Center for Church Renewal, an organization that helps churches gain missional focus. We are also offering advanced theological training combined with practical ministry experience through our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary. Recently, we have become a multi-campus church and have planted numerous churches internationally as well. At the heart of all this is a focus on discipleship and leadership development through one-on-one mentoring, as well as a dedication to proclaim the Gospel with conviction and passion.

Faith Journey (continued)

While at Calvin Theological Seminary, I served on several leadership teams, including the Distance Learning Student Advisory Team and the Distance Learning Chapel Team. As I graduate with an M.Div. degree, I humbly look forward to seeing how God will continue to use me to accomplish his purposes in and through the Church.

William R. Whitt

Statement of Reason

I am seeking candidacy so that I might become a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. My heart's desire is to proclaim the timeless truth of the Scripture in a timely way to today's world. I long for the Church to boldly speak into culture, bringing transformation and healing to a world in desperate need. I believe leaders' chief tasks are prayerfully following God's leading, bolding proclaiming the faith, and equipping the saints for the work of ministry. I have seen God radically change and reorient lives, and it is my prayer that His mighty work would continue in all our churches.

William R. Whitt

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

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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

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