



Christian  
Reformed  
Church

# Approved Candidates 2025





June 3, 2025

Dear Delegates of Synod 2025,

Enclosed in this booklet are descriptions of the candidates being recommended to Synod 2025. For each person there is a photo, a brief biographical sketch, a statement of their faith journey, and the stated reason for pursuing candidacy. Each of the candidates has their own unique story and their own unique gifts. They are united in a desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. We trust that these pages (presented via an electronic format) will help the delegates of Synod 2025 become a bit more familiar with the candidates.

The Candidacy Committee expresses its gratitude to the faculty and administration of Calvin Seminary for their role in preparing the candidates for this significant event in their respective ministry journeys. Many of the candidates have spent several years in study at Calvin Seminary through either the residential or distance programs. Those who have graduated from other seminaries have participated in the EPMC (Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy), a program approved by synod, overseen by the Candidacy Committee, and carried out in partnership with Calvin Seminary.

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

The Candidacy Committee

Rev. Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy

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*Name:* Peter Urie Bae

*Current Place of Residence:*

Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2023

*Experience:*

Ann Arbor Hope CRC  
Ann Arbor, MI, USA  
Worship Leader  
September 2012 – May 2017

Arbor Bridge Church  
Ann Arbor, MI, USA  
Worship Pastor  
September 2017 – September 2019

Tabernacle Community Church  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Worship Intern  
September 2019 – September 2020

242 Community Church – Ann Arbor  
Ann Arbor, MI, USA  
Worship Intern  
September 2022 – September 2023

242 Community Church – Livonia  
Livonia, MI, USA  
Worship Pastor  
April 2023 – September 2025

*Languages:*

English (Native Speaker)  
Korean (Fluent)

*Contact:*

ub045@calvinseminary.edu  
(734) 904-0123

### *Faith Journey*

My name is Peter Urie Bae (many know me as Peter Parker). My passions include Jesus, worship music, and professional women's soccer.

I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to my sweet parents who met at Calvin. Following God's call, our family moved to a church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where my father has been faithfully serving as a pastor and which I have called home for my entire life. CRC-affiliated Ann Arbor Christian School was also my home through my elementary and middle school years. The Lord's providence saw to my nurture and formation in a loving, Christ-revering home and community from the moment of my birth until now.

From an early age, the Lord gave me a passion for music. After seeing me pick up a plastic toy guitar and prop it up against my chin in an attempt to play it like a fiddle, my parents enrolled me in violin lessons at the tender age of 4, and they have been the bedrock to my lifelong musical ventures. In middle school, my cousins gifted me a Hillsong United CD full of their worship classics; I think those 20-something songs are the only sounds I let in my ears for that entire summer. From that point on, music+Jesus was all I lived on. Even standing in front of the congregation to lead cheesy old worship songs in my broken Korean didn't stop me. But unbeknownst to me then, I was determinedly doing worship ministry on a cart that had been put away before the horse. In other words, I was music-ing with so much passion about a relationship with Jesus that I didn't quite fully understand yet.

Cue my 20s, when the Lord plopped me squarely in front of the breath-taking beauty of the Gospel and made me discover what I had been so ardently music-ing about. I experienced the grace of God that quite literally swept me off my feet and onto my knees in reverence and love. Through my schooling at Calvin and the jewels of the Gospel that the Lord gifted me through servants of his like Spurgeon and M'Cheyne, I began learning what I had been so passionately singing about all those years. And thus I grew in my knowledge and love for the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So now, Jesus is who I wish to proclaim, music or not! The Lord has directed my steps into ministry, and by his grace, I wish to be obedient to his call for me to share the Gospel with those he puts in my path. It's all him. Christ! Christ is all!

### *Statement of Reason*

I believe the Lord has equipped me with my M.Div degree to share the glories of Christ's Gospel of grace; I wish to be obedient to this call. As a child, I grew up in the CRCNA (at school, at home, at church), so I am only happy to be led by God as he brings me around full circle to serve in ministry in the CRCNA. I also see the potential for the Lord to use my Korean-American identity to place me in a ministry setting where I can share the Gospel with individuals with a similar ethnic identity as me, if he so desires. The same goes for music.

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*Name:* Joseph E. Bartels

*Current Place of Residence:*

Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA

*Education:*

Dordt University

Sioux Center, IA

B.A. in Worship Arts, 2020

Gordon Conwell Theological  
Seminary

Hamilton, MA

MDiv, 2025

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI

EPMC, 2025

*Experience:*

Orland Park CRC

Orland Park, IL, USA

Director of Worship

May 2020 – June 2022

Crossroads CRC

San Marcos, CA, USA

Pastoral Intern

May 2023 – August 2023

Orland Park CRC

Orland Park, IL, USA

Pastoral Intern

June 2024 – August 2024

North Shore Community

Baptist Church

Beverly Farms, MA, USA

Volunteer in College Ministry,  
Children's Ministry, and ALPHA  
course

### *Faith Journey*

I was born to a Dutch Reformed family (my dad having grown up in the RCA, my mom in the CRC) in Orange City, Iowa. I was baptized at First Reformed Church (RCA) when I was 23 days old. My parents agreed with the CRC's value of Christian education, so my siblings and I went to Orange City Christian School, unlike many of the kids at our RCA. While I was still quite young, a group of families – including mine – left the RCA. A much more conservative Presbyterian church was started, which my family and a few others left after several years. I spent my high-school-aged years at what I assume is the most Dutch Reformed E-Free Church on earth. My parents still worship there. I don't share this to shame any of these churches or my family, but to illustrate why I developed a great desire for catholicity/ecumenicism. This desire only strengthened as my in-laws are part of a URC, as I've studied at an interdenominational seminary in one of the most post-Christian counties in America, and as I read God's word.

More personally, there have been crucial moments in my life when Jesus called me to follow him, demanding a true faith which works out that which it claims. One of these moments was in my second year of undergrad at Dordt. I found myself lonely and depressed; my failures were ever before me. Yet I self-destructively compensated for this despair with narcissism, pride, competition, and further sin. It was a downward spiral. But Jesus made himself known to me in a way which I hadn't consciously experienced before. He revealed his desire to dwell with me – for me to acknowledge and enjoy his real presence. Augustine's Confessions was blessed resource in this time, not to mention mentors, peers, and family who supported me. I haven't experienced depression with the same power since. Very quickly after this, I developed an interest in ministry. I wanted to bring Jesus – who had healed me of my sin and shame – to people. My third year of college, four independent instances of people's sin were made public. Some of these people were more victims than others, but the overwhelming conclusion in my heart was a sorrowful resolve to bring the Gospel to those who are weary of sinning and being sinned against. My desire to see God's rest and peace deliver individuals from lonely misery grew even more.

In recent years, I have been convicted of my desire to have control in life – over relationships, over what I produce/create, over how I feel, etc. So another crucial moment has been learning more about submission to God – the perpetual surrender which Christian disciples are called to. One would think I'd have been better at this, having been successfully catechized with an emphasis on God's sovereignty. But, again, my beliefs needed to be transformed into faith. It's incredible how long it takes to truly understand simple things about Christian life. I hope for more crucial, sanctifying moments, in which God might ordain circumstances for me to humble myself and surrender to him anew by a maturing faith.

### *Statement of Reason*

I discern a call to become a minister because God has regenerated my will to delight in his ministry of reconciliation. And I desire to be in the CRCNA because I believe this is a part of the Body which is uniquely equipped to have a peculiar witness in our contemporary society. I am endlessly fascinated and energized by God's mission in the world, in which I pray the CRCNA and myself might be extensively utilized. The Dutch Reformed tradition being

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

merely a part of the Body, I desire to authentically embrace the tradition myself, and then add its distinctive strengths with those of other brothers and sisters in order that we would see Gospel rebirth and renewal where we live. May we testify to our King's character of mercy and truth by which we ourselves have found abundant life.

2023 – 2025  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC  
2025

*Contact:*

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*Name:* Jeremiah D. Basuric

*Current Place of Residence:*

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

*Education:*

The King's University  
Edmonton, AB  
B.A. Environmental Studies and  
Theology, Micah Certificate, 2013

Kairos University /  
Taylor Seminary  
Edmonton, AB  
M.Div, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*

mosaicHouse Community CRC  
Edmonton, AB  
Commissioned Pastor - Teaching  
2018 - present

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I have always felt like an outcast. I grew up in a Christian home; but also a broken one. My parents were from the Charismatic Pentecostal tradition which valued personal evangelism over everything else; unfortunately this included their own marriage. I had my first conversion experience when I was four years old after my mother asked if I wanted to go to hell or not. At the time, I believed in the rapture as understood by the *Left Behind* series and I asked God to take me up before I died. From that moment on, I began to know and relate to God as a father, because I did not fit in with my own father or family. Our bi-racial family struggling with poverty also did not fit in the rest of society.

Even though he knew me first, I really didn't know the Lord Jesus until I was baptized at 15 years old after a rebellious streak stemming from a great desire to be accepted - a desire I tried to gratify by hanging out with an older crowd experimenting with drugs and alcohol. I wanted to feel accepted and loved so I tried to hide my faith and my cultures behind my friends and their acceptance. Jesus Christ met me in this broken state and saved me from who I could have been.

And so I became the outcast I feared. I left all my friends, quit all the partying and drinking, withdrew into my studies of the Word and tried to follow my Jesus. When I did that my loneliness miraculously disappeared and I was truly a new creation. I no longer found my primary identity in the colour of my skin or being accepted by others, but in Christ who embraces us all. I drew closer to my family and I slowly began to see people, and myself, with the eyes of Christ and not the eyes of *white*.

I kept up such a pace until I went to university. At this point, I enjoyed being an outcast and a loner. God has used my experience as an outcast to enable me to serve others. I became President of The King's University Prison Ministry team (where I met my beautiful wife) and also became involved with inner-city ministry. But something was missing: intimacy within a community created by covenant. I moved away from my individualist view of the church and embraced the idea that God makes covenant with a people and their descendants. God has promised. God remembers. God is faithful. Because of this, my view on baptism would radically be changed.

At King's my theology was also dramatically transformed. Rather than seeing salvation as the result of an individual's autonomous decision, salvation is primarily the work of a sovereign God who foresees, elects, and conforms to the likeness of Christ. Humans merely respond to God's act of grace. Rather than the cross eclipsing all aspects of theology exclusively, I learned that the Kingdom of God is what led Jesus to the cross. Redemption is not only about disembodied individuals being saved from sin and death, but it is also living in the reality of the Kingdom of God here/now/not yet in the Holy Spirit of Jesus who penetrates all spheres of society and the whole of creation.

After discernment, The Lord called my wife and I to attend mosaicHouse Community CRC. Through the mentorship of Rev. Victor Ko, the Spirit of Jesus called and equipped me to become a Commissioned Pastor and now he is calling me to become Minister of the Word for the purpose of participating in the Kingdom through the planting of a church - a church filled with outcasts wholly relying on the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Jeremiah D. Basuric

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

I seek ordination in the CRCNA as an act of obedience to our Lord knowing it is both a blessing and burden. As a blessing I will be within a unique family of God with a uniquely reformed *accent* and worldview. I look forward to being a partner of the gospel within the denomination, serving it and learning from its rich resources. I will ever be thankful for the kingdom work being accomplished through collective effort. I also accept the burden of commitment when times are pleasant and challenging; in times of unity and disagreement. I accept accountability from the denomination and will continue to grow in the fruit of the Spirit and character of Christ as we grow together. Within this God's diverse and unified family, I will encourage us to live up to that picture of Revelation 7 in which all nations and cultures are worshiping Jesus our King and Saviour.

Jeremiah D. Basuric





*Name:* Tha L. Bawi

*Current Place of Residence:*

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Chin Institute of Theology  
Falam, Myanmar 1998-2000

Pacific Bible College  
Guam, USA 2000-2001

Western Theological Seminary  
Holland, MI, USA  
M.Div, 2024

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
EPMC, 2025

*Internships/Experience:*

Pastoral Apprentice  
at Princeton CRC  
Kentwood, Michigan 2022-2024

Evangelist at Chin Christian  
Church CRC,  
Kentwood, Michigan 2017-2020

Abundant Life  
Youth Ministries  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
2022-present

*Languages:*

English  
Burmese  
Falam  
Mizo

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### *Faith Journey*

This is how it all started somewhere in the remote mountainous region of the western part of Myanmar. By God's sovereign will and foreknowledge, I was born to the family of No Sun and Sui Hnem on January 29, 1981, in Falam, Chin State, Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. My great-grandfather on my mother's side, Con Bill, was the first convert among the Chins and became a Baptist minister in 1917. Likewise, my grandfather, Ta Kio, followed in his footsteps as a Baptist minister. My great-grandfather and grandfather on my father's side, however, did not practice the Christian religion, and they died at a young age. My grandmother converted to Christianity when a mighty revival broke out in the Losua village. So, my father was born into a Christian family. He was a statesman and an elder of the Church until he went to be with the Lord in January 2018. I have one brother (deceased), eight sisters (two deceased), six nephews, and five nieces.

So, I grew up in a small town called Falam. I graduated from high school in 1998 and attended a theological college from 1998 to 2000. I developed a deep love for language, music, history, and politics during this period. Particularly, I was very fond of the town because of its history, poverty, persecution, and oppression of the government. The country of Myanmar at that time was in total disarray and upheaval. So I moved to the United States and resettled in Grand Rapids, Michigan in search of a better life.

I call the years 2001 to 2009, my formative years for many reasons. First, transitioning to the US from a developing country like Myanmar was a big shock, culturally and socially. My worldview was challenged, reshaped, and renewed during this period. The only life I knew then was the ideology of an oppressive regime where you are not allowed to have the freedom of conscience. I had to relearn to live life again, from total bondage and poverty to liberty and prosperity. Without family or guidance, with countless mistakes with many failures, and through some tears, I learned to swim in the currents of life. Secondly, during this period, three of my siblings and one of my nieces passed away. This was the first time I ever experienced the bitterness of death. It produced an intense craving and longing to know the meaning of life and my existence here on earth. At the same time, my heart was weighted down with the burden of sin. I was depressed and oppressed by life so much around 2008. Thirdly, I met a missionary, David Khai, under these conditions and circumstances. By God's providence and through this missionary, I heard my effectual call to ministry in 2008, although I considered myself to be a Christian all my life. Oh, the wonder of wonders! What a beautiful voice, the electing love of Jehovah! This was the turning point of my life and family.

Then, the second phase of my faith journey took a different turn when groups of refugees from Myanmar started to arrive in the Grand Rapids and Kentwood area between 2006 and 2000. So, out of necessity, as I was one of a few first settlers, I was responsible for starting a church in our native Falam language. Two other leaders and I started the Chin Christian Church of Grand Rapids in 2008, which was incorporated into CRCNA in 2016. In this setting, I came to love preaching and teaching God's word and serving the body of Christ.

In 2017, I was installed as an evangelist (the equivalent of a commissioned pastor in the CRCNA) among the Chin Churches in the United States, and I got to travel and preach to different churches within our association. I often

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

encountered various problems and difficulties confronting the Church, which eventually led me to invest in theological education at Western Theological Seminary and now the EPMC program at Calvin Theological Seminary.

So far, this has been my family's and my own story, just as it is written in the Book of Chronicles in Heaven. Currently, my wife and I have been leading Abundant Life Youth Ministries of Grand Rapids since 2022, where we engage in weekly worship and discipleship and organize a summer camp each year for English-speaking Burmese-American youth. So, the journey continues.

*Statement of Reason*

I believe this is where God has led me to pursue and comprehend His calling for me. Without hesitation, I can say that God's providential care and His strange leading led me and my family to the CRC. I am pursuing ordained ministry in the CRC because I want to be part of a denomination where strangers at the gate and other ethnicities are generously welcomed and embraced, which, in fact, my people and family received abundantly at my home church, Princeton CRC.



*Name:* Kyle P. Beckrich

*Current Place of Residence:*

Dyer, Indiana, USA

*Education:*

Indiana University  
Indianapolis, IN, USA  
Bachelor of Arts, 2014

Covenant Theological Seminary  
St. Louis, MO, USA  
M.Div., 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
EPMC, 2025

*Experience:*

Campus Outreach Indianapolis  
Indianapolis, IN, USA  
Senior Director

January 2014 - December 2022  
Bethel Christian Reformed  
Church  
Lansing, IL, USA

Lead Pastor  
January 2023 - Present

*Contact:*

kbeckrich@discoverbethel.org  
(219) 712-6906

### *Faith Journey*

I didn't grow up in the church. My parents weren't believers and didn't claim to be. Instead, I was raised with a hedonistic mindset. Pursue happiness at all costs, so that is what I did. My childhood was centered around sports, parties and relationships. I found my identity in whatever brought me the greatest sense of accomplishment or pleasure.

In the fall of 2010 I went off to college in Indianapolis. My first day there was a knock on my dorm room door. There was a student signing up other students to play on his intramural flag football team. As someone who took (way too much) pride in their high school football accomplishments I couldn't help but accept the invitation. Later that day the student came back and over a game of Madden he looked at me and asked, "Have you ever heard of the Gospel?" My only knowledge of the word gospel had to do with music, I had no clue. That night I was told that God is holy, we are not, but Jesus came to bridge the gap between us. Over the course of the next 6 months I began to investigate the claims of Jesus, I attended church with my friend and went to a weekly Bible study. On March 3rd, 2011 I put my faith and trust in Jesus as the Savior from my sin and the Lord of my life.

During my college years I became involved with the ministry of Campus Outreach, the same ministry that my friend who led me to the Lord was a part of. We worshipped at PCA church in Indianapolis, but I wanted to find a church in my hometown in northwest Indiana. I emailed each of the churches in my hometown and only one pastor replied, the local CRC pastor. I eventually became a member of that church and was baptized there. The rest of my college years were spent growing in my faith, studying God's Word and seeking to make disciples on the campus.

Upon graduation I was offered a campus staff position with Campus Outreach, it was a dream come true. I believed God was calling me to full-time vocational ministry on the college campus. I worked on staff with Campus Outreach for 9 years and it was such a privilege to share the Gospel with non-believing college students, see some trust in Christ, disciple them in the faith, equip them to make disciples, plug them into a local Bible-believing church and then export them from the campus. By the time I left I was the Senior Director for Campus Outreach and had the privilege of leading our staff teams, strategies and had the privilege of speaking throughout our different ministries.

During my time on staff with Campus Outreach I believed I needed more development and training, so I enrolled as a Master of Divinity student at Covenant Theological Seminary. I loved the experience and training I received as a student there. While I was a student at Covenant and toward my later years on staff with CO my heart began to fall more deeply in love with the church. It was becoming more clear that God used the local church to advance the Gospel forward. During this time I began to feel an internal call to pastoral ministry while the external call was also present with affirmation from peers, mentors, coworkers and churches that had reached out to gauge my interest in possible positions. After speaking with my wife and asking God for clarity on His will, we moved forward in candidating with churches in the PCA and CRC. In January of 2023 we accepted the call from Bethel CRC in Lansing, IL because we firmly believed the Lord was calling us here. It has been such a privilege.

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the CRC because I believe that God has called me to preach the Word, shepherd His people and reach the lost. My understanding of God's Word aligns with the 3 Forms of Unity and ordination within the CRC allows me with confidence to preach the Word in a like minded denomination. My desire is to see many more people come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus, to be discipled and grow in their affections for Him, to take their faith and share it to the ends of the earth.



*Name:* Rylan W. Brue

*Current Place of Residence:*

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

*Education:*

Dordt University

Sioux Center, IA

B.A. in Philosophy and Theology:

Biblical Studies, 2022

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI

M.Div., 2025

*Experience:*

Lee Street CRC

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

Ministry Intern

September 2022 - April 2024

Borculo CRC

Zeeland, MI, USA

Summer Pastoral Intern

May 2024 - August 2024

*Contact:*

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(712) 578-9249

### *Faith Journey*

The landmarks on my journey of faith are familiar, perhaps, to many who were baptized before their lips could properly shape the words “Jesus is Lord.” Arch Books that retold the stories of God and his people in color and rhyme. Dark December Iowan nights lit up by our family’s Advent candles—25 of them—making our living room brighter and brighter as we waited for Christmas. Grandparents who taught me to pray before dinner and before bed. Parents who ended our meals with devotions and answered my questions about faith and science on the way back from Saturday night hockey trips. Sunday school teachers that helped me write haikus about God’s character. A book of essays by an engineering professor that upscaled my vision of Christ’s kingdom to cosmic proportions. Catechism mentors who weren’t afraid of big questions. And sermons—yes, even sermons!—where I can still hear, as if it were yesterday, Pastor Herm’s slow and gentle voice cutting me to the heart on a Sunday evening saying about Joseph’s scheming brothers and grace, “They just didn’t get it.” I’m not sure that I do either. Grace exceeds explanation. I know not why God’s wondrous grace to me has made known, we would sing, Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for His own. Yet I do know that when I was baptized, a chorus of voices promised to “welcome me in love, pray for, encourage, and help nurture me in faith.” My journey of faith is unimaginable apart from God’s church—the community of ordinary saints who oriented their lives around Jesus and invited me to participate in that story too. All we bring is guilt. All God gives is grace. All that’s left is gratitude.

That my journey of faith should bring me to Seminary and seeking ordination in the CRCNA is also thanks in large part to particular persons who have encouraged me at just the right moment. A high school English teacher who asked me whether I had ever considered becoming a pastor (I hadn’t) and if I hadn’t, I should at least start thinking about it (and so I did). My Greek and Hebrew professor in college who made me fall in love with the Bible all over again. The written works of the church past and present that have challenged and deepened my faith: Augustine, John Calvin, the Bavincks (Herman and JH), C.S. Lewis, Frederick Buechner, Eugene Peterson, Wendell Berry, and Cal Seerveld to name only a few. Like Lucy in C.S. Lewis’s *\*Prince Caspian\** who finds Aslan bigger only because she has grown, in my reading I have found a deepening worship and wonder for the infinite God whose ways are beyond tracing out. To put it another way, God has so often used ordinary people and ordinary words to draw me closer to him. It is my prayer that, in grace, God might use me in like manner.

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination because I believe that this is one way that God has equipped me to say thank you for all that he has given me in Christ. Eugene Peterson once said that the most important words a pastor can say each week is, “Let us worship God.” I consider it a deep honor to be invited to say those words as a pastor and witness how the ordinary means of grace give shape to the formation of God’s people. More specifically, that I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church in North America is because, for one, it is the denomination that first introduced me to Jesus. Moreover, I am grateful for its Reformed heritage as articulated in the Three Forms of Unity and vision for life—all of life—lived before the face of God.

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*Name:* Melissa J. Burmaster

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

University of Waterloo  
Waterloo, ON  
BMath, Business Information  
Systems, 1996

Redeemer University  
Ancaster, ON  
B.ED, 2013

Tyndale Seminary  
North York, ON  
MDiv – Church in the City, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*

River City Church  
Cambridge, ON, Canada  
Connections Director  
October 2017 - June 2023

Guelph Campus Ministry  
Guelph University Campus,  
Guelph, ON, Canada  
Campus Pastor - Interim 4 months  
January 2023 - May 2023

Waterloo Campus Ministry  
Waterloo University & Laurier  
University, Waterloo, ON, Canada  
Campus Pastor - Interim  
July 2023 - Present

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*Faith Journey*

If there is anything to learn from Hebrews 11, it is that by faith we are to step out and just follow God's lead. This is the thought that comes to mind when I consider the journey that I have been on and with coming to terms of becoming a pastor. I grew up knowing the stories of the Old and New Testament from faithfully going to Sunday School in the United Church. When I went to church camp to become a summer camp counsellor, my biblical knowledge stored up in my mind was turned into a genuine faith response to Christ. The Camp Director preached the gospel at our counsellor training weekend and the Holy Spirit whispered to my heart "This is truth." I let the truth sink into my heart in the form of belief. The Jesus I had been taught about previously became a Jesus I loved with my heart, mind and soul.

From there, my spiritual formation in Christ was marked by three things: faith seeking understanding, devotion to the Lord and serving for God to make more disciples. In daily quiet times, I grew in the knowledge of Christ by reading the scriptures. My life priorities began to change from the things of the world to the things of Christ. I engaged in mission by teaching Sunday School, playing piano for church worship services, leading Youth Group, becoming president of an Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at University of Waterloo.

As I proceeded to marriage and children, my serving experiences evolved to be more about leadership and discipleship. During this stage of my life, I became a Small Group Director at River City Church in Cambridge which is a church plant of Classis Huron. I was starting to sense a call to ministry. I took the challenge to preach under the guidance of my pastor. It was strongly affirmed by my pastor and others. Other preaching experiences were consistently affirmed. Yet, I had reservations about taking it further. For one, those who are to teach are to not enter into this lightly and I really wondered why would God call someone with a Bachelors of Math to become a pastor!!!

To discern this calling, I fully challenged it by pursuing another career in teaching. I obtained a Bachelors of Education at Redeemer College and University. There were many that could see me being a teacher, it was a way to change the world but God was making the pathway work towards a full-time job. While I got some contracts to teach, there was an emptiness to what should have been a fulfilling career. A feeling of God's pleasure was not in this pursuit for me no matter how hard I worked to be successful at it. As noble as teaching children really is, God was gently saying to me "...this is not where I want you to be."

Stepping out in faith, I took another staff position at River City Church as Connections Director and started a Masters of Divinity at Tyndale Seminary and continued to supply teaching as a side-hustle. With each course in seminary, I sensed that I was in the right place though I didn't know yet what God wanted me to do with another degree. Everything I was learning at seminary shaped the work I did in my staff role that focused on evangelism, outreach and welcoming new people to the church. When I received acceptance to the EPMC program, there was an unexpected peace in my soul and then came affirmations from God that he had something for me to do. Before graduating from seminary, God lined up a four-month sabbatical coverage at University of Guelph as a Campus Chaplain. That then led immediately into another campus chaplaincy position at University of Waterloo/Laurier.



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

As long as the journey has been for me, it has taught me to exercise faith and trust God leading no matter what because he is faithful. I have learned that you cannot pursue a career no matter how noble it may be when God has a calling on your life. Further to that, I have had to learn to let the Lord lead even when I think I have better ideas. I have made many plans on my own, but it is God who directs the steps just as scriptures say. Campus ministry is presently where God has been leading me to exercise leadership, pastoral guidance and make disciples of Jesus. I love supporting students with vocational discernment, engaging in challenging conversations and exploring multicultural evangelism. With joy, I am looking forward to whatever God has in store and know that there is no greater pleasure than serving him and building his kingdom here on earth.

Over the period of my candidacy, Psalm 40:1-3 has been the prayer of my heart.

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

May God lead me in helping many see and fear the Lord so they may put their trust in him.

Melissa J. Burmaster

*Statement of Reason*

The reason I am seeking to serve as a pastor is that I have thoroughly come to know in my heart that pastoring is what God wants me to be about. He has given me experiences of serving in different ministries which has prepared me to be a knowledgeable support to other leaders. Even if it seems lofty or difficult to lead in these times, I will not shrink back from the task at hand as one who does not have faith.

I believe the fields are ripe unto harvest. Though post-modernity and modernity have put a damper on faith in our Western culture, this impact will wane and a wave of something else will come in its place. Some will turn back to God in these times. I am seeking to be in position to work with God as an outpouring of his spirit comes to the next generation.

Finally, I am seeking ordination specifically with the CRC church as I appreciate the reformed accent that emphasizes faith seeking understanding and the missional focus of the denomination. Faith is not just optimism but also well reasoned thought about all things of this world. Through the creeds and confessions, there are well-reasoned thoughts to guide us on our way. Further to that, the missional focus of this denomination brought River City Church into my life. I would not be where I am today if it were not for this church plant of the CRC. I seek to give back to this denomination for growing me as a follower of Jesus, developing me as a unique leader and for guiding me to be a shepherd of God's people.

Melissa J. Burmaster



*Name:* Josiah D. Chapman

*Current Place of Residence:*

Vienna, Maine, USA

*Education:*

University of Maine  
Farmington, ME, USA  
B.A. in Psychology, 2020

Liberty University  
Lynchburg, VA, USA  
M.Div., 2025

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
EPMC, 2025

*Experience:*

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship  
Farmington, ME, USA  
Student Leadership  
September 2015- May 2020

Maine Army National Guard-  
Brunswick, ME, USA  
Religious Affairs Specialist  
November 2016- August 2022

Maine Army National Guard  
Augusta, ME, USA  
Chaplain Candidate  
August 2022- Present

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### *Faith Journey*

I was raised in a Christian home, and I credit my parents for an upbringing that never featured a prodigal son chapter. My family was involved in charismatic churches for most of my childhood, and I was baptized when I was 7 years old into the Church. In my preteens, we moved to a baptist church whose young adults (my sister among them) attended a bible study that would be the seed for the CRCNA, Summit Faith Community in Farmington, Maine.

At the time that we followed my sister to this new church, I was struggling with justification and reason for my faith. Many of my questions, brought on by a history of poor theology, were answered without my prompting in Pastor Ryan Goding's early sermons. I have been a member of the CRCNA since.

As time went on, I began to evaluate my spiritual gifts in an attempt to discern God's will for me as I grew. I felt called to be an actor, and was heavily involved in theater. In the artistic community, I found pain, trauma, and loss that I could minister to. I found my affinity to communities of lost and hurting individuals further confirmation that God had placed me in this role for a reason.

As time went on, I joined the Army National Guard to pay for college. There in Basic Combat Training, I found another community of the lost and hurting. I found myself ministering to my fellow young soldiers in ways that overshadowed my experience in theater. I also met an Army chaplain for the first time and learned that their job was precisely this. Through a furious chain of letters and other correspondence with my father and my pastor (and prayer), I discerned a calling to chaplaincy.

Over the last decade, I have pursued this calling through educational and spiritual means. I am deeply thankful for the time it has taken, as God has afforded me the opportunity to mature. Over the time this process has taken, I have endured my own trauma, loss, and pain. I have developed from calculating apologist to empathetic counselor with so much more room to grow still. I have pursued ministry in every situation afforded me every step of this journey. As an undergraduate student and enlisted soldier, I served on campus ministry and as the religious affairs specialist for my battalion. As an officer, I continue to serve my fellow service members, and I hope to continue to serve God in this way as long as He wills it.

### *Statement of Reason*

I seek ordination in the CRCNA because it is in this church that I found my calling and was sent on this trajectory. I affirm our Three Forms of Unity and find reformed theology to be some of the most complete and reasonable. As a denomination, we have few military chaplains, which I believe to be a detriment when such a rich mission field exists. Since discerning The Lord's calling for me, over a decade ago, I have not wavered in my conviction. My heart's desire is to love God, love others, and make disciples by bearing His image and His light in the darkest of places.

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*Name:* Raymond D. Evans

*Current Place of Residence:*

Fort Saskatchewan,  
Alberta, Canada

*Education:*

Grant MacEwan University  
Edmonton, AB  
Diploma Police Studies, 2012

KAIROS University  
Sioux Falls, SD  
M.Div., 2025

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2025

*Experience:*

Government of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB  
Court Security and  
Prisoner Transport Sheriff  
May 2014 - Dec 2023

Sherwood Park Alliance Church  
Sherwood Park, AB  
Youth Leader  
Sept 2014 - Aug 2021

Bridge Church  
Fort Saskatchewan, AB  
Youth Director  
(Aug 2021 - Nov 2023)  
Community Formation Director  
(Aug 2022 - Nov 2023)  
Associate Pastor  
(Nov 2023 - Present)

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### *Faith Journey*

I was born and raised in a Christian home and have been blessed by the opportunity to grow up knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. However, as I got older my faith receded into the background of my life and became purely preformative. My relationship to God was contained in a box, and that box's purpose was to bless the plans I made. I had every success that our culture tells us we are to have at an early age; I graduated from post secondary with distinction and no debt, I got a job immediately in the field I studied for, was able to buy a house in my early twenties, and shortly after that I got married. Every box checked, or so I thought. Little did I know that God had a two-pronged pincer approach to knock me out of my rut and shake up the life I had built upon the sand.

The first prong was through my career as a court security and prisoner transport Sheriff. In that role I had daily interactions with a lot of hurting people who hurt other people. You think of a crime and I have dealt with someone who has done it. In that type of environment the common trajectory is for public servants to grow disillusioned, apathetic, and hard hearted. By God's grace that was not what happened to me. Over the almost decade I spent in that field God grew my empathy and compassion for the lost and hurting. It's easy to see on reflection that God was imparting true knowledge and understanding that we are all made in God's image, and that even those who have done terrible things can be forgiven. This was a gradual process that took several years to fully understand, but I can see clearly now that in that time God was growing in me a passion to share hope to the lost.

The second prong was through going through the lowest point in my life, when my wife left me in the early summer of 2018. Things between her and I hadn't been going well for several months, but I always thought we could work through the issues. I was wrong. There were many secrets, attacks, and surprises that she shared all at once that shattered my world, and then she walked out the door. Here I was at my lowest point; broken and hurting and suffering from the natural consequences to my pride and ignorance. In that moment, God comforted me. Despite all the ways in which I had neglected God, he comforted me at that time. In the months that followed with all the lows, and well, lower lows that I hit; not once did God abandon me. When I was T-Boned on my way to have a meeting with my wife months later, to her confirming she wanted a divorce while I was getting checked out for a concussion shortly after the accident, to having her come by a week later with her boyfriend to move out her things, in each hit that came God revealed to me his love, mercy, grace, and strength to face the day. His love and his faithfulness became the light in the storm. I recommitted my life to Christ in that time and made following him, studying his Word, and sharing his love with others the new pillars of my life.

Having this rejuvenated focus of my life I felt a bit aimless, I wasn't really sure where to go and how to step into the new life I was building. Clarity came in March 2019, when I chaperoned a youth Serve Trip. One of the days we were assisting at a soup kitchen in Brampton and during lunch I talked with one of the patrons who was in a dark and difficult place. Between the empathy I had gained from the Sheriffs, and the renewed focus on Christ I was able to earnestly share the hope of Christ with him. Later that day during prayer and reflection God revealed his calling to me, to pursue ministry.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

There isn't a manual out there to go from Sheriff to Pastor, but as I pursued God's calling he continually opened doors and provided affirmations of my calling. I started attending a CRC Church Plant, Bridge Church, in February 2020. Under the mentorship of the Lead Pastor I was able to start earnestly making steps towards ministry. It was through this connection that I was able to grow in my understanding of the reformed faith and truly appreciate the rich theological history it stands upon. As I have embarked on this journey I have been constantly in awe of God as he opens doors, heals wounds, and teaches me through his Word what it means to be a follower of Christ. I am beyond excited to continue to learn more throughout my life and to share those learnings with my wife Kaite, our twin daughters Ruth and Eliza, and all those we encounter as I pursue this calling God has placed on my life.

This path was not initially my plan, but it's always been God's plan, and I joyfully await to see where God continues to lead me and my family.

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the CRCNA because I am convicted that God has called me into the ministry of pastoring in the reformed tradition. God has equipped and prepared me through the many trials and tribulations in my life for such a time as this. Through my faith journey, I have learned the vital importance of a covenantal Christ-centered community, the firm foundation that comes from standing on God's word, and the power of sharing the hope we have in Jesus Christ with others. My conviction is that through ordination with the CRCNA, those learnings and passions I have been given have a way to be acted upon so that God may be given all the glory and His kingdom may come.



*Name:* Masao Fujishima

*Current Place of Residence:*

Oyama, Shizuoka Prefecture,  
Japan

*Education:*

Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, NJ  
Bachelor of Science in Account-  
ing, 2011

Westminster Theological Seminary  
Glenside, PA  
M.Div., 2022

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2025

*Experience:*

Grace Community Chapel  
of New Jersey  
Teaneck, NJ  
Young Adult Pastoral Intern  
April 2018 - October 2023

Shoutai Christian Church  
Kawasaki, Japan  
Partnered Missionary  
December 2023 - Present

*Languages:*

English (Native Speaker)  
Japanese (Proficient)

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### *Faith Journey*

I did not grow up in a Christian home. My mother came to America from Taiwan to pursue an education degree. My father came to America from Japan to look for work. They were hard-working immigrants who did all they could to raise me and two brothers. Growing up, we never really attended church. Life wasn't particularly hard in any way, but I grew up with no connection to God.

It wasn't until I was in college where I encountered Christ in a powerful way. I was struggling with loneliness and was unsure what my future would look like after college when I met a friend at a college bus stop. That moment was the start of a long friendship for us. I knew he went to church every week so I finally asked him if I could tag along one time. The church was Grace Community Chapel of New Jersey (GCC), and other college students greeted me, and I felt so welcomed. I wanted to know more and so after that first Sunday, I kept going back.

It wasn't until later that year in the summer, when the church held a New Testament bible reading retreat. I reluctantly went and it was there when I read the four gospels that I realized that Jesus' act on the cross was what true love was all about. On top of that, it was a true genuine love for me! I decided then to learn more about Jesus and Christianity. It was about five months later at the end of 2011 when I was baptized. It was then that I really wanted to dedicate my life to serving the Lord in whatever way possible.

After graduating college, I began working in 2012 and for two years I worked and served in the college ministry at GCC. I realized how much I loved building relationships, shepherding, and bringing others closer to the Lord. In 2014, I realized I really wanted to step out of the comfort of my life, so I decided to dedicate one year to serving overseas in Japan. I taught English classes with another missionary from GCC as local outreach for a church in Kawasaki, Japan – Shoutai Christian Church.

Serving overseas really stretched my faith as there were many moments in which I felt like I was being ineffective because of culture and language barriers. However, through many people around me, the Lord encouraged me to persevere. On top of that, the ministry was fruitful in really building bridges for non-believers to connect with the church for the first time. One year quickly ended and I ended up committing to stay another 3 years.

During that time, the other missionary from GCC and I eventually started dating and were married in 2016 and we had the privilege to lead high school house church ministry at Shoutai Christian Church. We learned what it meant to pour out to these young people expecting nothing in return. It really helped us understand the heart that God has for his lost sheep and when some of our youth students were confirmed in their faith, it really encouraged us that the ministry work in Japan is completely worth it! It was then that the Lord really called me to full-time ministry. So our family of three at the time planned to return to America so I could attend seminary at Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, PA.

While in seminary, I served at the church I was saved – GCC – and learned so much about what it means to sacrifice, train, disciple, and model a healthy Christian lifestyle. Commuting to and from school, finances, even the COVID-19 pandemic were all difficulties of balancing school, ministry, and

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

family; however, God was so faithful every step of the way. Our family even grew from three to five during the four years of seminary.

After graduation in the Spring of 2022, our family planned to return to Japan to continue ministry work with the vision of raising disciples and being a source of refreshment and revitalization for churches in that nation. Since December of 2023, we have been in Japan serving at a Christian boarding school in Gotemba, Japan while also serving at Shoutai Christian Church in Kawasaki, Japan.

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the CRC as a response to God's call in my life to make disciples of all nations. Although I lack much, the Lord has used people and life experiences to affirm his call to disciple and shepherd his sheep. I have grown to have a love and deep appreciation for the Reformed tradition, and I affirm the CRC's creeds and confessions. My desire is to be the salt and light in Japan where he has called me to serve. I hope to be able to be a part in bringing more and more Japanese people to come to know the Lord and his great love for this nation.





*Name:* Julia Gho

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2025

Pepperdine University School of  
Public Policy  
Malibu, CA  
MA in Public Policy, 2019

Calvin University  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Bachelor of Arts, 2016

*Experience:*

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health  
Services  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Clinical Pastoral Education  
May 2024 - August 2024

Princeton CRC  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
September 2022 - May 2024

ReFrame Ministries  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Prayer Ministry Intern  
September 2022 - May 2023

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Korean (Fluent)  
Japanese (Fluent)

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*Faith Journey*

I was born into a Christian family and have been a Christian all of my life. Surrounded by my faithful and loving family, I grew up hearing and witnessing God's great sacrifice and love for me. There was never a time when the Word was far from me. And because I was born into a Christian family, there was never this singular moment that led me to choose to come to the faith in Christ. Instead, as I grew up and continued to learn about Christ and the faith, I naturally came to accept Christ as my own. It was through God's grace and mercy that I am able to walk in faith alongside Him. In times of both happiness and despair, God is with me.

And as I grew up, I also realized what a privilege it was for me to be born into a Christian family and to be a Christian. Since my parents were (and continue to be) CRC missionaries, I grew up on the mission field in Japan. Japan is not a Christian country. On top of that, it has millions of gods. Other than the Japanese Christians I met at church and at my Christian international school, the majority were non-Christians. Over the years, I saw a number of non-Christians become Christian. However, I also witnessed how some struggled to be Christian in a secular environment, where many people are Buddhist or Shintoist. It made me all the more grateful to have a family that supported one another in the faith and motivated growth. And though it was small, I also appreciated the community of Japanese Christians that I encountered throughout my years in Japan. I witnessed their passion and dedication to Christ, even when the odds seemed to be against them. Nothing is impossible to God the Almighty.

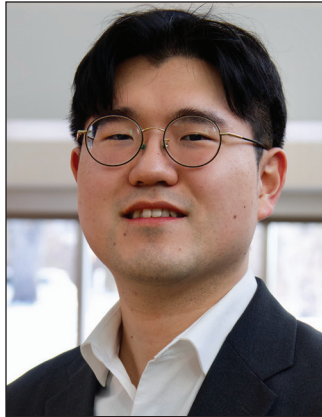
For a long time though, I had never actually considered doing full-time ministry. I felt that I could do God's work in whatever other field of work that I might eventually enter into. Ministry work doesn't happen just in certain spheres. God's work takes place anywhere and everywhere. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, while teaching my students at a school in Japan, I felt the call to go to seminary. In seeing my young students and the rest of the society struggle with life and death and mental health, my heart was stirred and I felt the desire to be a healing presence for such individuals who might not have family, friends, or God in their lives. And so, I applied to Calvin Theological Seminary with the hopes of pursuing hospital chaplaincy so that I might be God's ambassador, sharing his presence, love, grace, and mercy. Now, at the end of my seminary journey, I am very thankful for the call that God has placed in my life and excited to see how it will continue to unfold in the future.

Looking back on all of my life, I can see more clearly how God has been at work in my life and faith journey. Even when I was uncertain of my next steps, God knew and guided me through the people around me. And so, moving forward, I continually place my life and faith in God's hands, knowing that He is good and will strengthen me to do His works.

*Statement of Reason*

I am pursuing ordained ministry in the CRC because I feel that this is where God has called me to be and the next step I need to take to do His work. I believe that God has called me to be a healing presence and to pursue reconciliation, to bring people to Him that they too may know of His love and mercy.

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*Current Place of Residence:*

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Handong University  
Pohang, Gyeongsangbuk-do,  
South Korea  
Bachelor of Arts, 2022

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
M.Div., 2025

*Experience:*

Heritage CRC  
Byron Center, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
September 2022 - May 2024

Seed Church  
Queens, NY, USA  
Ministry Intern  
June 2024 - July 2024

Korean Grace CRC  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Youth Leader  
September 2024 - Present

*Languages:*

Korean (Native Speaker)  
English (Fluent)

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### *Faith Journey*

As I was born into a Christian family, my family members always went to church, sang Christian songs, and had a deep fellowship with the community. These kinds of cultural settings first gravitated me to the Christian life, and they formed me with the basic mindset to receive God's words. My mother, a pastor in South Korea, was especially devout in her passion for God, such as prayer, fasting, and Scripture. I cannot even describe how greatly she affected me spiritually while growing up.

After high school, I ended up entering a Christian university. I met many faithful friends and learned from them how Christians should think and care for the Kingdom. I experienced a worship leader position and had the privilege to give the message to students each week. Although it wasn't a regular kind of preaching but more of reflection and devotion, the experience of standing behind the pulpit and leading the liturgy, which consists of songs, messages, and prayer, was fascinating, and I felt the need to be educated theologically and searched the appropriate seminary for me, and I got into Calvin Seminary.

Looking back on my seminary life, I don't think everything went well and smoothly. At first, I encountered the solitude of walking into the people where I could not find any cultural common ground. So, to make connections and bridges I should learn the language and understand the cultures. In this vein, two years of internship requirements and classes formed in a great way. Those are totally cross-cultural experiences, but I enjoyed being myself with God and feeling God's help in each situation in life in the States. I had a stigma that ministry was just demanding and tiring, but God broke it for me. God has provided for me both with material needs and through people, let me see hope for the desperate people and sometimes he worked through the feeling of frustration and scarcity, like in the wilderness, but he gave me "manna" to sustain our lives under God's wings. My two-month summer internship in New York City in 2024 was also an unforgettable moment for me. The members of the Seed Church were unconditionally hospitable to me. When I was struggling with my car breakdown (recklessly, I drove my 13-year-old car from Michigan to NYC), they cared for me and helped me to do an internship without any inconvenience. When I drove out of NYC with a new car finally after the internship, I was thrilled to see God's helping hands. Also, I learned through the mentor and pastors that ministry can be challenging and that I need to have a basic principle of faith that allows me to wait for God's work in the midst of it. I thank God for allowing me to experience something that I would not have even tried to experience if I had stayed in Korea, and I am now more boldly preparing for the next ministry with confidence that God is good all the time.

### *Statement of Reason*

The reason I am in the candidacy process is because I want to share with people the great grace and love that God has given me. I know how big and huge the bondage of sin is, and I have experienced that God's grace is even bigger and greater than that. The more I live and learn about what the Reformed call total depravity, the more I realize that we cannot live a single day without God's grace. My Christ-like life in Galatians 4:19 is that. I thought that if my job was to be in a community where I pursue a Christ-like life, where I enjoy the freedom God has given us and share my gratitude through preaching, pastoral care, and teaching, then I'd be able to align my call with my life purpose.

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*Name:* David F. Kerkstra

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Dorr, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Cornerstone University  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Bachelor of Science in Biblical  
Studies (Philosophy), 2021

Puritan Reformed  
Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2024

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*

Crossroads Prison Ministry  
Curriculum Writing Intern  
January 2020 - May 2020

First Byron CRC  
Discipleship Intern  
September 2022 - May 2024

Beaverdam CRC  
Pastoral Intern  
May 2023 - August 2023

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### *Faith Journey*

I had a deep religious consciousness from a very young age, but I was something of a little legalist. I knew the Gospel. After all, I had heard it 1,000 times. But at the same time, I thought every prayer and every Bible reading plan carried the weight of God's expectation, and I thought sin was enough to undo all the progress I might have made. It seemed God was just waiting to condemn me, and I felt the weight of that every day. This led to times when I would give my life to Jesus just about every night, just in case I hadn't done it quite right the time before. But I was more scared of Jesus than anything. I was terrified of hell and had very little hope that I could ever avoid it. After all, I could never hit God's mark.

Over time, God showed me that I was exactly right. The truth was that I was totally missing the mark. I was missing the mark both in terms of doing what God required and understanding what the Good News was really about. At this point in my life, I was heavily influenced by an evangelistically focused ministry named Living Waters. Central to this ministry was a simple Gospel presentation that moved from the Ten Commandments and our guilt before God to the forgiveness and grace found in Jesus Christ. I consumed all the resources they offered - from tracts to books to an evangelism course to a TV show. But really all of this was many different repackagings of the same presentation of guilt, grace, and gratitude, misery, deliverance, and service that I had heard so many times at church. One day - I always guess that it was February and I was thirteen, but I don't really know - this message finally set in. I realized I could never get to God by my own feeble efforts, but he had come so near to me in Christ. I cried out to him for salvation, and for the first time, I felt a true peace with God. Was I saved before this moment? Like most who grow up in the church, I'll never know. But in this moment I knew for sure that I was forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. He was never going to let me go.

I still struggled for many years with a nagging sense of guilt, mostly a sense that I was not doing well enough for God to really accept me. It was that inner legalist from my younger years trying to convince me that it was best to add some works to the Gospel for good measure. This is where my church was central. With each of the pastors we have had during my two and a half decades at First Byron CRC, I can think of a sermon or a conversation where I was powerfully confronted by the forgiveness and grace of Jesus Christ that, when accepted by faith, takes away the root power behind our sense of guilt forever. In this way, my church has been quietly and consistently discipling me in my faith from the moment I was born even to today through faithful teaching and preaching but also through the presence of other believers. Being with God's people, whether it be my small group or my catechism class or the many, many "hellos" and "how are yous" and other opportunities to share our lives together.

I see every day areas where I still miss the mark. But what I see most clearly - what amazes me and captivates me more than anything else - is the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ. I have never been able to get over it. That is where I find forgiveness of sins. That is where I find true joy and real satisfaction. And that is where I find the new life that allows me to press forward in faith, seeking every day not to prove my goodness to God but to respond in thankfulness through obedience to the all-surpassing grace he has given me. At the heart of my calling into ministry is bringing this amazing grace to God's people in the same kind of loving, grace-filled community that fostered me from my very first moments.

David F. Kerkstra

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*Statement of Reason*

Although my sense of calling began at a young age, my clear call into Gospel ministry began when I had to answer the internal question, “Who is going to pastor my generation?” I gradually realized that God was calling me to be a part of the answer. God has tasked me with bringing the timeless truth of the Word of God to the people of God in our time and place, communicating its transformational message of Good News in a manner that is understandable and clearly applicable to our daily lives. I truly believe the local church proclaiming the Gospel message and embodying it in our life together is what can change our communities from the inside out. I seek ordination in the CRC because this is where I have experienced this kind of Gospel focus and love my whole life. My family has been in the CRC for generations, and I believe that the rich confessional and biblical heritage and loving, Gospel focused temperament of the CRC uniquely suit it for our cultural moment.

David F. Kerkstra





*Name:* Dylan Kern

*Current Place of Residence:*

Bradenton, FL, USA

*Education:*

Kuyper College

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

B.S. Pre-Seminary Studies, 2016

Cornerstone Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

M.Div., 2020

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

EPMC

2023

*Experience:*

Remedy Church (now closed)

Kentwood, MI, USA

Worship Leader

2013 - 2018

Bentheim Reformed Church

Hamilton, MI, USA

Worship Leader

2018-2019

Bradenton CRC

Bradenton, FL, USA

Associate Pastor

2020 - Present

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### *Faith Journey*

The story of my faith begins when God elected me for salvation before he laid the foundations of the earth (Eph. 1:4), in the Fall where humanity plunged itself into sin, and at the Cross where God the Son received the Father's wrath for my sin. I begin here because it is foolish to recount the story of my faith without recognizing that it has nothing to do with me. As our catechism declares, "I am not my own." I was bought with a price and for a purpose, and that purchase wrapped me up into a story far greater than myself.

By God's grace, I was born into a home with a godly mother who raised me in faith. Also by God's grace, I enjoyed a broad ecclesiastical variety in my early life, which gave me many perspectives on the Christian religion. From high-church Catholicism, tiny Southern Baptist churches, African Pentecostalism, and more, God has given me a broad perspective on his body and an appreciation for his work in many places with many people.

It wasn't until I began my education at Kuyper College that I ever heard of the Christian Reformed Church, and yet it wasn't long before I found myself connected to the Reformed tradition. I quickly grew to appreciate the depth and beauty of the Reformed love for God's Word, and as a result I abandoned the undiscerning charismatic faith I had inherited more from youthful excitement than from scripture. During this time I took my first ministry position as a worship director. I'm grateful that God gave me this opportunity to begin my vocational growth at a young age; it made me much more ready to begin full-time ministry than I otherwise would have been.

Through my education at Kuyper College, and later at Cornerstone Theological Seminary, God worked on both my heart and my mind in preparation for vocational ministry. At Cornerstone, I had the privilege to be part of the Pirsig Fellowship, a scholarship program that put me through seminary with a cohort focused on spiritual formation. Through this program, I formed spiritual friendships that will last a lifetime. Yet, even being a part of such a rich program in a rigorous seminary, I found that my faith was always shaped more by the church than the academy. I now realize that this shouldn't surprise me: God was sanctifying me through the use of his ordinary means of grace which he supplies through his church. While I acknowledge the value of the skills that God trained me to use in the academy, and especially the heart work he did on me during my time in school, there is just no replacement for the preaching of scripture, prayer, and the sacraments.

At this stage of my life, there is nothing I value more than Christ's church and the ordinary means of grace he supplies through the corporate worship of God's people. I value the fellowship of the saints, and I cherish the glimpses of eternity Christians see every time the church is gathered together. "Beyond my highest joys, I prize her heavenly ways. Her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise."

### *Statement of Reason*

I am pursuing ordination with the Christian Reformed Church in North America because God has called me to preach his Word and shepherd his flock, and I am in full agreement with the doctrines of the historic Reformed tradition as defined by the Three Forms of Unity. As such, I am eager to minister in a denomination that wholeheartedly affirms the biblical truth expressed therein.



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*Current Place of Residence:*

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

*Education:*

Singapore American School  
Singapore, Singapore

Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
B.A. in Philosophy, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2025

*Experience:*

Living Water CRC  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
September 2019 - May 2020

Westview CRC  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
September 2022 - May 2023

Ministry Intern Korean  
Presbyterian Church (Nasum)  
Singapore, Singapore  
June 2022 - August 2022  
June 2023 - August 2023  
June 2024 - August 2024  
December 2024 - January 2025

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### *Faith Journey*

My journey of faith has not been marked by a single dramatic moment of conversion but rather by a series of grace-filled transitions that have shaped my understanding of God, discipleship, and calling. God has continuously led me, sometimes subtly and sometimes profoundly, through my family, cultural experiences, education, and ministry. Each of these experiences has deepened my faith and formed my identity as a follower of Christ.

I was born into a Christian family in Korea, where my grandfather and uncle served as pastors in a traditional Korean Presbyterian Church. Though I was too young to remember much, their faith shaped my parents and extended family, laying the foundation for my own spiritual formation. The subtle spiritual practices and daily disciplines lived out in our household, such as prayer, Scripture reading, and a deep sense of dependence on God, unconsciously shaped my faith. These practices instilled in me a rhythm of Christian living that I would later come to recognize and embrace more fully.

When I turned eight, my family moved to Singapore, where I attended an international school surrounded by diverse cultures, beliefs, and worldviews. Growing up in this globalized and multiethnic environment deeply shaped my intercultural understanding, teaching me how faith is expressed in different cultural contexts. While I worshiped at a Korean Presbyterian Church on Sundays to stay connected to my Korean heritage, my daily interactions were with peers from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

This experience broadened my awareness of the cross-cultural need for Jesus Christ. I saw how faith is shaped by cultural narratives, yet the core need for redemption, hope, and truth remains universal. It also broadened my understanding of how faith interacts with the world beyond the church, deepening my appreciation for the ways in which believers engage with society. Singapore's corporate culture exposed me to Christians who lived as agents of renewal in their workplaces, integrating faith into business, finance, education, and other industries. This shaped my understanding of Christian discipleship as a holistic calling that extends beyond church walls into every sphere of life. Looking back, it foreshadowed my interest in Reformed theology, particularly its emphasis on God's sovereignty over all creation and the Christian's role in engaging the world with faithfulness and purpose.

Upon coming to Grand Rapids for Christian education, my faith deepened through academic curiosity. My undergraduate studies in philosophy at Calvin College sparked my interest in theology, leading professors and mentors to encourage me to pursue further studies at seminary. I did not initially enter seminary with a clear sense of calling to ordained ministry, but rather with a willingness to explore, learn, and grow. However It was cut short due to the global pandemic.

During COVID-19, I took the opportunity to complete my military training in Korea, a formative period that reshaped my understanding of both my Korean identity and faith. Having spent most of my life in international settings, returning to an ethnically homogeneous society allowed me to see Korea in a new light. I developed a deeper appreciation for the cultural nuances of a nation shaped by both Christian history and Confucian values, recognizing how these influences shape both personal and collective identity.

This experience also gave me greater insight into the internal struggles of im-

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

migrants, their children, and third-culture individuals who, like me, navigate multiple cultural worlds while trying to reconcile heritage, belonging, and faith. It deepened my empathy for those wrestling with cultural dissonance and further shaped my perspective on identity, faith formation, and ministry in multicultural contexts.

When I returned to the U.S. to resume my seminary training, my call to ministry became clearer as my education became more oriented toward spreading the gospel and synthesizing classroom learning to meet the contextual needs of the diverse communities I have been part of and continue to engage with. Among the many unique and talented workers at God's disposal,

He has guided me through a journey filled with invaluable experiences, each shaping me in ways I may not yet fully understand. I trust that there is a specific purpose behind the path He has led me on, and I am committed to making the best use of all that He has given me. I know that these gifts and experiences are not for my own sake, but for the advancement of His kingdom, and I seek to steward them faithfully for His glory.

I thank God for His faithfulness and goodness through it all. Though my journey may seem scattered, without the stability and consistency that many in the Midwest experience, God has always been my source of comfort, peace, and clarity, allowing me to live according to His will. I look forward to what lies ahead, knowing that the path He has set before me has always been fruitful, shaping and preparing me for what is to come.

*Statement of Reason*

God has called me and guided me through diverse experiences in Korea, Singapore, and the U.S., shaping my faith and deepening my understanding of ministry in multicultural and global contexts. My call to ministry has been a gradual transformation rather than a singular dramatic moment, unfolding through theological study, ministry involvement, and cross-cultural experiences.

I seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) because I believe God is calling me to serve His church through preaching, teaching, and equipping believers. The CRC's Reformed theological depth, commitment to biblical preaching, and holistic discipleship align with my conviction that God's sovereignty extends over all spheres of life. The church's dedication to both theological integrity and cultural engagement further affirms my desire to minister in diverse and dynamic settings.

As I continue to discern and follow God's call, I seek to faithfully proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and serve the church's mission with the gifts and experiences He has entrusted to me. I trust that the same God who has led me thus far will continue to guide me in this calling.



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*Current Place of Residence:*

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

Redeemer University  
Ancaster, ON, Canada  
B.A. in Psychology and Youth  
Ministry, 2009

University of Waterloo  
(Conrad Grebel)  
Waterloo, ON, Canada  
Master of Theological Studies, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
M.Div., 2024

*Experience:*

Ottatown Discipleship School  
(CMU)  
Winnipeg, MB, Canada  
Leader/Mentor  
August 2012 - May 2015

Mountainview CRC  
Grimsby, ON, Canada  
Pastoral Intern  
May 2021 - April 2022

Bethel CRC  
Acton, ON, Canada  
Interim Pastor  
January 2024 - April 2024

Maranatha CRC  
York, ON, Canada  
Interim Pastor  
January 2025 - April 2025

### *Faith Journey*

I don't have a dramatic conversion experience. There's not a specific moment I can point to. I was born into a life of ministry. As the son of a pastor and the grandson of a pastor, I was brought up in a situation where leadership in ministry was a clear focus in the family. This did not determine the outcome for me, in faith or leadership, but it went a long way towards demonstrating what this life could look like.

I have had many opportunities to grow in faith and character. Church, parachurch organizations, a CRC leadership training summer, ongoing engagement in missions, Christian elementary, high school, and university, have all been influential in teaching me about Jesus and what living for Him looks like. I've held many employment and leadership positions outside of Christian circles as well, where I've learned that a life of faith means more than just what happens Sunday mornings. While I am grateful for incredible spaces of formation, there is much I continue to learn.

As I've grown in leadership, developed in my faith, and received ongoing affirmation and encouragement throughout my formative years, something I've had to navigate is wrestling with never feeling "good" or "ready" enough. At times this has not only impacted my life in general but also my life of faith. I'd like to say that as I've continued to take steps towards formal ministry leadership, these doubts and uncertainties have gone away. But, they haven't. And as I look back on years of training and preparation for a life of faith and Christian leadership I can still often feel like an imposter. What gives me the right to do any of this?

As I've thought about this and reflected on it in my journey of faith I've recognized a few things. First, while in my upbringing I learned a lot of things about God, I often felt disconnected from the One who I was wanting to build my life around. All my theological training, knowledge, and experiences could never be a substitute for sitting in relationship with Jesus. This realization has led me to a strong desire to find routine and places in my life that are carved out simply for relationship. In this, I've found that engaging with the spiritual disciplines has been a great way to create space for Jesus; space that isn't just about knowledge, but about presence. Doing this alongside a genuine community has also been where I experience growth.

Within this I'm discovering that I will never be 'good enough,' at least not on my own. On my own I will never have what it takes to genuinely bring God's word, to minister to the "least of these," to disciple the wandering, to lead in ministry. And honestly, that discovery is starting to be a lot more freeing. I was never meant to do any of this on my own. None of us were! And as I've begun to let the Holy Spirit take the lead, leadership and a life of faith become so much more exciting, especially as I invite others to do this with me!

Of course, change and growth doesn't happen all at once. Recently, while spending time at a monastery, I learned that while I may not have a specific conversion experience, the life of a Christian should be a constant experience of conversion. Every day taking steps to grow in what it means to walk alongside the one who has, in fact, made me "very good." So I'm excited that today is a conversion experience and tomorrow will be as well. I'm excited that my journey of faith keeps moving forward; all through the One who walks with me and gives me strength.

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*Statement of Reason*

I have often described my calling as sounding like a gentle and constant whisper. I know God is calling me to a life of Christian service and leadership, but I do not know specifically where His voice is leading me. As I've followed God's voice He has led me to some pretty amazing places along the journey. Seminary was a step drawing nearer to this whispered call, and seeking ordination in the CRC is another faithful attempt to follow where God may be guiding me. I'm excited to see where this may lead because, as I've talked about in my Faith Journey, I know that wherever I end up I do not go alone. More than anything I look forward to continuing to draw closer to my Saviour and I pray that I can invite, encourage, and walk alongside others as we seek to do this together.

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Spanish (Proficient)

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*Current Place of Residence:*

Burbank, IL, USA

*Education:*

Moody Bible Institute

Chicago, IL, USA

BA in Pastoral Studies

2013 - 2017

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

Dyer, IN, USA

M. Div, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI, USA

EPMC

2025

*Experience:*

Immanuel CRC

Burbank, IL, USA

Commissioned Pastor

2023 - Present

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### *Faith Journey*

My faith journey began at birth, as I was raised in a loving Christian home by parents who deeply loved the Lord and were dedicated to instilling in me and my siblings a strong foundation in the faith. From an early age, I was immersed in the teachings of Scripture and the rhythms of church life, growing up in an independent Pentecostal church where I first learned about God's great love and His calling on my life.

While my upbringing in the church was formative, it was not without challenges. One of the greatest struggles I faced was the lack of strong biblical leadership. Though I developed a deep love for God and His people, the church environment was often marked by disorder and scandal. Yet, even in the midst of that chaos, God's hand was at work in my life. It was there that I was given the opportunity to lead the youth ministry, a role that would become the catalyst for my call to ministry.

In the summer of 2007, I married the love of my life, Mariana, and together we pursued theological education at Instituto Bíblico Ebenezer, a non-accredited Bible school. This experience provided us with structured and systematic training in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, equipping us for future ministry.

Upon completing my studies, I became the associate pastor of a Pentecostal church plant, serving alongside my brother-in-law, who was the lead pastor. However, over time, I began to wrestle with some of the theological positions within Pentecostalism. As I studied Scripture more deeply, I found myself increasingly drawn to the doctrines of grace and the Reformed tradition. This theological shift led my wife and me to make a pivotal decision—we would move to Chicago so that I could pursue further theological and pastoral training while immersing myself in Reformed theology.

In the fall of 2013, I enrolled at Moody Bible Institute, where I studied biblical theology, church history, and pastoral ministry. My time at Moody was instrumental in shaping my understanding of Reformed theology, especially through courses like John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion. A month or so before graduating in the spring of 2017, I was ordained as an elder at a Reformed Baptist church, where I was privileged to shepherd the congregation and guide them toward deeper spiritual renewal.

Eager to continue my theological education, I enrolled at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in the fall of 2020. My studies there deepened my grasp of covenantal theology, the doctrines of grace, and the sacraments, especially the doctrine of baptism. Through rigorous study and engagement with historic Reformed confessions, I gained a fuller understanding of the richness and depth of God's redemptive purposes.

After graduating Mid-America, I was ordained as a commissioned pastor at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, where I have been serving for the last year and a half. Immanuel is a lovely congregation, and it is my joy and privilege to serve this covenant community, as I continue to seek ordination of a minister of the Word in the CRCNA.

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church as I have found a theological and spiritual home within the Reformed tradition. My journey of

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

faith has led me through various Christian communities, including Pentecostal, Baptist, and Reformed Baptist congregations, each of which has shaped my understanding and appreciation of biblical truth. Through this path, I have been deeply blessed by sound, Christ-centered preaching, and I now feel called to share that same richness with others.

I desire to be ordained so that I may faithfully serve both God and my neighbor through the ministry of the Word. My passion lies in preaching, discipling, teaching, and shepherding both lifelong believers and those new to the faith, guiding them toward deeper communion with Christ. While I do not yet know all that God has in store for me and my family, I am committed to preparing diligently for whatever calling He may place before us. My prayer is that, through His grace, I may be equipped to serve the church effectively and glorify Him in all things.





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*Current Place of Residence:*  
Chicago, Illinois, USA

*Education:*  
Moody Bible Institute  
Chicago, IL  
B.A. in Educational Ministry, 2011  
  
Moody Theological Seminary  
Chicago, IL  
M. Div., 2019  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*  
Hebron Presbyterian Church  
Prospect Height, IL, USA  
- Assistant pastor (Korean-speaking  
young adults ministry)  
- Pastor (Elementary Ministry)  
- Assistant pastor (English-speaking  
youth group/middle school)  
- Pastor (EM-English speaking  
young adults ministry)  
- Assistant pastor  
(Elementary Ministry)  
- Pastor (Korean-speaking  
youth group)  
January 2008 - Present

*Languages:*  
Korean (Native Speaker)  
English (Fluent)

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### *Faith Journey*

#### **Early Childhood**

I am blessed to have a family that encouraged and supported me to go into the ministry. My childhood was filled with following my parents to attend church functions. My parents were the first ones to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in the family. We went to church on Sunday, revivals, retreats, early morning prayers, and even fasted together as a family. My family always held our family worship every night till my college years. It was difficult and tedious sometimes, however, we made sure we worship together everyday. We always gathered around 9PM and sang hymns, read a chapter, and then prayed-I still remember this experience as a family to this day. Also, My parents always prayed for my sister and me every morning before they left for work early in the morning. I could definitely say my family shaped my faith from my earliest memories, both individually and as a family.

#### **Adulthood**

My father developed kidney disease and required extensive treatments. I know he was struggling physically, yet he never complained. He even shared with me how God humbled him through his ordeal-that he thanked God for all the hardships, which I never understood at that time. My father eventually passed away due to kidney disease and other complications and his passing brought our family closer to one another and God. It was truly difficult to deal with his sickness and death and our family found our solitude and peace in Him alone. Personally, I decided to take an extended leave of absence from college in order to support my family when my father was sick. It took me 8 years to get back to school to graduate-I believe it was 8 years where God was shaping and molding me into His plans. Eventually, I felt my calling into ministry and decided to attend Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois.

#### **Late Adulthood**

I have been serving at Hebron Presbyterian Church for last fifteen years and I had a privilege to learn from great pastors as my mentors. Rev. Oak, Rev. Kim, and Rev. Lim always encouraged me, rebuked me when I needed it, and most importantly, they lived what they preached on the pulpit. I still cherish all of our conversations and examples they have lived out before me—I am truly humbled by their love for the LORD and the ministry they were entrusted with. Their leadership and mentorship guided me through my times at Hebron. I was assigned to various educational ministries due to situations and problems. It was not easy because I was assigned to fill in as an interim to maintain ministries with immediate needs and issues. I took it as a blessing, for I was able to experience both Korean and English speaking ministries from elementary to young adults.

Young Geol J. Lee

### *Statement of Reason*

I was introduced to CRC by one of my fellow educational pastor at Hebron. I am relatively new to CRC but I am excited about this opportunity to get to know its members and look forward to build relationships. I was intrigued by CRC's tradition and history- I especially being an immigrant church in American. I grew in the Korean-American church and I find similarities and familiarities between the two. Also, I definitely value and agree with CRC's reformed theology on the Sovereignty of God and the authority of Scripture. I have been serving as a youth pastor and it is clearly evident that the world and its culture are turning into self-centered and self-love. It is imperative to

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

equip current and next generation with the Word of God and teach them to live as Christ-followers. I believe that I could continually learn and grow in CRC to serve God's Kingdom's works.

Young Geol J. Lee



*Name:* Kevin W. Lobert

*Current Place of Residence:*

Langley, BC, Canada

*Education:*

Redeemer University  
Ancaster, ON

B.A. Theatre Arts, English, &  
Christianity and World Missions,  
2008

ACTS Seminary  
Langley, BC  
Master of Divinity,  
2025

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC,  
2025

*Experience:*

Youth Pastor  
Langley Immanuel CRC  
Langley, BC  
September 2008 – Ongoing

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### *Faith Journey*

I was born into a loving Christian family, baptized, and raised in the Christian Reformed Church. Born in Edmonton, AB, I moved to Victoria, BC, when I was five years old. The CRC was all I knew growing up. I attended Pacific Christian School and learned about God, church, and what it meant to live for Jesus at home, at school, and at 1st Victoria CRC. While I believed it all, I didn't give it much serious thought for most of my childhood.

That changed in my final year of high school. Two of my closest friends experienced powerful conversions that completely transformed their lives. Being so close to them, I witnessed firsthand how their faith in Jesus – His life, death, and resurrection – impacted every part of who they were. Their stories stirred something in me. If Jesus was that important to them, I figured it was time to dig deeper into the faith I had grown up with. I started paying more attention in church, reading my Bible more consistently, and listening carefully to the testimonies of others.

A series of events – like a bus crash, high school graduation, moving back to Alberta, a year of work, and meaningful conversations with family and friends – eventually led me to Redeemer University. I initially went to Redeemer planning to become a high school teacher. While there, I made lifelong friends, grew in my faith, and found myself inspired and challenged by the community – especially by my (now) wife, Nikki. My understanding of the church as the Body of Christ deepened, and I even picked up a minor in Christianity and World Missions because I wanted to learn more. It was in this season where I did my Profession of Faith at Covenant CRC, in Edmonton, Alberta.

In my final year at Redeemer, God made His calling for my life unmistakably clear. One Sunday in October, I was sitting in church when, out of nowhere, I felt a strong prompting from the Holy Spirit about leading a youth ministry. I started thinking about youth ministry models, the value of mentorship and discipleship, and even brainstorming activities for youth groups. I had never once considered youth ministry before that church service, but I couldn't shake the feeling that God was calling me to it. After talking with Nikki and – admittedly – using some poor theology, I told God that if this was His plan, He would have to make it happen. I was willing to follow, but He had to open the doors and lay the groundwork.

That same week, I received an email with a job description for a Youth Pastor position at Langley Immanuel CRC. I decided to trust that God was up to something and applied. After months of sending in resumes, writing letters, providing references, and going through interviews, I was offered the position. It was the only church I applied to. I've now been serving as the Youth Pastor at Langley Immanuel CRC (LICRC) for over 16 years.

During my time at LICRC, I've fallen in love with youth ministry and the community here. Discipleship, mentoring, and leadership development have become both passions and gifts of mine. While the role can certainly be challenging, I find immense joy in walking alongside youth and young adults in their faith journeys. In this time, I also married Nikki, who has been an incredible support in my ministry work, and together we've been blessed with three daughters. Becoming a husband and father has deeply reinforced the importance of having a strong foundation of faith.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Over these past 16 years, I've been affirmed and encouraged in my calling to ministry. The church has also continually challenged me to pursue ordination, and after a decade, I finally took the plunge. I began my M.Div. program seven years ago while continuing to work and raise my family. It's been a challenging journey, but one that has shaped me in profound ways and confirmed that I'm exactly where God wants me to be.

I don't know everything God has planned for me in the seasons ahead, but I'm confident that He has called me to this work, gifted me to serve His church, and prepared me well to become a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. I look forward to seeing how God will continue to shape me for ministry, and I pray He uses me to bring glory to His name.

*Statement of Reason*

I believe God has called me to serve as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Throughout this journey, the church has consistently encouraged and affirmed my calling, providing tremendous support as I've pursued ordination. The church is the place where people from all walks of life – regardless of age, race, or background – gather together under the authority of Scripture, and I feel called to serve in this diverse and unified body wherever and however God allows me. I am also completely convinced that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most powerful, compelling, and only true salvation story the world has to offer – one that is not dependent on our efforts but is offered by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus is a calling for every believer, and I am humbled to respond to God's call to carry out this mission as a Minister of the Word in the CRC.



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*Current Place of Residence:*  
Plainfield, Illinois, USA

*Education:*  
Moody Bible Institute  
Chicago, IL  
B.S. in Biblical Studies, 2018  
  
Westminster Seminary California  
Escondido, CA  
M.Div., 2022  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Experience:*  
Kings Church, PCA  
Long Beach, California  
Youth Ministries Director  
May 2015-June 2018  
  
Southern California Presbytery  
Providence OPC,  
Temecula, CA  
Under Care towards ordination  
2019-2022  
  
Orland Park CRC  
Orland Park, IL  
Pastoral Intern  
June 2021-August 2021  
  
Plainfield CRC  
Plainfield, IL  
Commissioned Pastor  
June 2022 - Present

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### *Faith Journey*

Growing up in the church, I can say that I believed in Christ for as long as I can remember – thanks be to God! Likewise, I remained highly involved in my church all throughout my childhood, up through high school. During these early years, I began to feel a sense of calling into ministry. I thought for some time that I would like to become a missionary, but I was uncertain. I think the general sense was that I could not imagine doing anything that did not directly serve my Lord in the context of the Church. But after high school, life took a different turn. I fell away from the faith and got heavily into a hedonistic lifestyle. Life was about partying and girls at that point, and having as much fun as possible. This went on for about four years. After Christ got back hold of me, this sense quickly returned. Eventually, my wife and I decided that pursuing a Bible degree would be a logical next step, so I enrolled at Moody Bible Institute. Over the course of 5 years, I was both a full time student and a part time worker at the church, as a youth ministries director. After I graduated, I received the opportunity to go to Westminster Seminary California, where I was both a student and worked as their Student Housing Director. This internal call has developed throughout all these years and only continued to grow. I am thankful that this internal call has been reciprocated by various pastors and mentors, and finally been affirmed by an external call last year as I became a commissioned pastor at Plainfield CRC in October of 2022.

I am thankful to say that my Lord has been with me for as long as I can remember. I love my triune God, am privileged to know the Father and call him such, through the work of Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord, and to be able to say that I am united to him by the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit, who is my Comforter and Advocate as I make my pilgrimage home. My God has made a covenant with me, sealed in my baptism, and I know that I am forgiven of all my sins and will live eternally in his presence. While I am assured of God's promises concerning me, I am by no means perfect. I struggle daily to be a good husband, father, and pastor. I struggle to be faithful to my God in every area of life. And yet, my confidence is not in my own doing or in my own faithfulness, but in God's faithfulness towards me, most especially in Christ! My life is a testimony of this truth. I fail, I sin, I stumble, and yet Christ continues to show me his grace, mercy and love. There is nothing I can do on my own accord, but simply to live a life of gratitude for all he has done. But even my gratitude is imperfect! This is the paradox of my life I suppose. We truly never outgrow the Gospel, but that good news of Christ for me will be the promise I cling to for all my days.

### *Statement of Reason*

In my early twenties, I worked as a youth leader at my church's youth group. After my wife and I were married and we started attending what was her church at the time, I began to lead the college and young adults ministry. After about 2 years of this, I got a job working at a PCA church as the youth ministries director prior to seminary from 2015-2018. During seminary, I interned at various PCA, OPC and CRC churches, doing pulpit supply, and am now a commissioned pastor in the CRC. During this time, I have only grown more and more affirmed in my call and gifting by the Holy Spirit, particularly in the gifting of preaching and teaching. And yet that has not been without its own testing. During seminary, I doubted my calling into ministry tremendously, as I struggled to keep up with the academic workload, administrative work and leading a family of 6! But my wife continued to

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

encourage me, year after year, and talk me off the ledge of quitting. Likewise, I also received continued encouragement from the churches I was involved in, particularly Orland Park CRC, where I interned for a summer. I'm thankful to now have received a call, and have that internal call finally confirmed through the laying on of hands this past October. As I delve into my first year of pastoral ministry, I am only a blessed man. I cannot think of doing anything else with my life. Thankful for God's continued faithfulness!





*Name:* Charles K. Mutinga

*Current Place of Residence:*

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Scott Theological College

Machakos, Kenya

B.A. in Theology, 2000

Master of Education, 2008

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, Michigan

MA in Ministry Leadership, 2022

Master of Divinity, 2024

*Internships/ Ministry Experience:*

City Church

Grand Rapids, MI

Ministry Intern

2020-2021

African Community

Fellowship CRC

Kentwood, MI

Ministry Intern

2022-2024

*Contact:*

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cmut205@calvinseminary.edu

### *Faith Journey*

I was born into a Christian family with seven siblings. I am married to Eunice and we are blessed with four boys: Samuel, Daniel, Mark, and Joshua. We were brought up in a denomination, African Inland Mission currently African Inland Church started by Western missionaries in 1895. My personal experience goes to 03/01/1981. It was just a moment after taking our night meal. My mother loves singing. All of a sudden she started singing an eschatological song. How terrible it would be for the sinners on the day of judgment when Jesus returns. Following the events of the previous night which made me cry almost the whole night and the teaching of the Sunday school teacher, I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. Though I was young at age ten, this experience is still fresh in my life.

When I encountered Christ in Sunday school, I continued as an active member. Our Sunday school had a curriculum for different ages where the teachers were able to disciple us. Our church had programs tailored for youths whereby we used to meet after service; this was a great resource for spiritual growth. Different topics were addressed for youth teenager needs. The youth leaders arranged vacation bible school for youths. This was done once in a year for a whole week. This was also very instrumental in my Christian growth.

In high school, we had a Christian Union which included youth teenagers who were Christians from different denominations. The Christian union had teachers who were Christians and were the patron(s) of the unions. There was also a curriculum from a joint of evangelical churches which we followed and had teachings on bible doctrines and Christian character. I would witness to others about Christ. This became part of life whether in school or outside school to share about Christ.

After completing my high school, I went to Nairobi-the capital city of Kenya—where I worked in some companies for four years. But all this time I was committed to a local Church, Africa Inland Church Ziواني. I taught Sunday school and sang in the youth choir. But the Holy Spirit was speaking to me from an inner voice I heard in grade four that I should join full time ministry. I shared with my pastors who counseled me and helped me in the process of joining Scott Theological College, now Scott Christian University for a bachelor's degree in Theology. The program took four years. In the first two years, we did general courses including theology, pastoral. Missions and educational courses. Then in my third year, I specialized in Theological education. Immediately after my graduation, I joined church ministry as part-time pastor in Africa Inland Church (A. I. C) and full-time ministry in teaching bible school at diploma level. In the year 2008, I joined a Master's program in Education where I graduated in 2011 to sharpen my skills in teaching and administration since I had already become a principal in one of the Bible schools. I still felt the calling for more training in ministry and God was leading me to a school I loved since early 2000, Calvin Seminary where I trained for Master of Arts in leadership and am currently doing Masters in Divinity. The training continued to nurture me in knowledge, character and skill to serve God in any context God places me. I have grown to love God more and His people of any religion, race or gender. I see the world in a new lens than ever before. The classes and in-context learning have transformed me. I was able to learn and serve in City Life Church where I was posted by the seminary which is a church not within my culture and also at CRC, African community Church. This has shaped my reasoning for ministry.

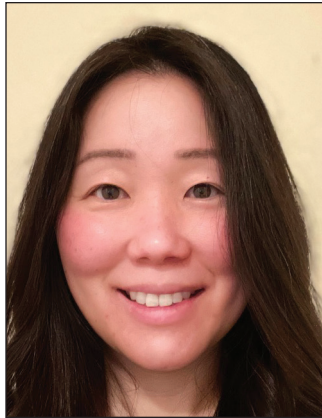
Charles K. Mutinga

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*Statement of Reason*

Following God's call to the building up of the Body of Christ, I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church for pastoral ministry in order to effectively use the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given me. I have the piety to love God and do his work. My ministry potentials are many. However, I will list three of them. First, my teaching abilities will benefit the church of Jesus Christ now and in the years ahead. Second is my pastoral heart. I have been a pastor, and I believe my call to ministry is something I would continue to do in advancing God's Kingdom. Third, I have been the advocate of peace throughout his ministry engagement. I believe that Christ's Good News includes; evangelism, social justice, discipleship, preaching, peace, reconciliation; which I am convinced that God wants me to keep on serving.

Charles K. Mutinga



*Name:* Michelle S. Oh

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Denver, Colorado, USA

*Education:*  
Biola University  
La Mirada, CA  
Bachelor of Arts, 2007  
  
Denver Seminary  
Littleton, CO  
M.Div., 2015  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*  
Korean Christian Church  
Denver, CO, USA  
Middle School Youth Pastor,  
December 2008 - July 2015  
Youth Pastor,  
July 2015-September 2016  
Education Pastor,  
Dec 2021 - current  
  
Church of Philippi  
Hanover, MD, USA  
Education Pastor,  
Dec 2016 - Sep 2021

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### *Faith Journey*

It is the grace of God that I have known him all my life. As a fourth generation Christian, I know that my life has been shaped by the faithfulness of God to my family. My family recently celebrated my grandmother's home-going at 99 years old. She has been a steadfast example of faith to me and I am thankful to have had many examples like her. When I was 6 years old, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior while my family was living in Indonesia. My dad taught at a theological seminary there and both my parents were actively involved in discipleship ministry. Prayer and the Word were central aspects of life during my childhood and the first stories I remember are those from Scripture.

The summer before I entered high school, my family moved from Indonesia to Colorado Springs, CO. That was a pivotal moment for our entire family. My parents tell me that it was key moment of surrender for them, and it was the same for me. I remember thinking, Why would God take us away from our home when ministry and everything else was going so well? When I look back on that summer and that season of loss and transition, I see that that was when Jesus Christ truly became Lord of my life. I had always known of him, and then from age six, known him as Savior, but it wasn't until that summer that I acknowledged him as Lord.

Although I had grown up as a missionary kid, and had always been surrounded by people in ministry, I was reluctant to enter full-time ministry. At the time, I was studying at Biola University for my teaching credential and planned to teach in the public schools. My program required a cross-cultural learning experience, so I signed up for a 7-week trip to China through our student missionary union. It was through that trip that God called me to ministry and began to work in my life to lead me to this point.

Shortly after college graduation, I moved to Denver, CO to work for OMF International and to serve as the middle school youth pastor at Korean Christian Church. Although I had never imagined myself in pastoral ministry, I almost accidentally found myself in the role. For the first ten years of serving in pastoral ministry, I was not sure if it was my actual calling. I knew that I enjoyed pastoral ministry and that many aspects fit my giftings and abilities. Even when I was attending Denver Seminary for my M.Div., I thought that I would eventually end up in another capacity of ministry. However, after graduating from seminary, I accepted a call to be a pastor at a church in Maryland, and that was where I felt confirmed in being a pastor. Since then, I have moved back to Denver, CO and began to pursue ordination. It has been a privilege to serve in ministry and I am so thankful to be part of God's work in building up his body.

### *Statement of Reason*

I am pursuing ordination in the Christian Reformed Church in response to how God has called me to be part of his work in building up the church. After being in pastoral ministry for awhile, I sensed a need for greater accountability and connection to a broader body for resources and support. In conversation with friends who are CRC ordained, I felt a resonance with their experience in the CRC. Having a background in education, I appreciate the CRC's focus on education and the strong focus on equipping believers. I also desire to be part of a broader community for support and accountability, and I see that the CRC seeks to live life in this way. It is the greatest privilege of my life to be able to walk with God's people in seeking his kingdom.

Michelle S. Oh

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*Name:* Rachel Park

*Current Place of Residence:*

Caledonia, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Asia United Theological University  
Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea  
Bachelor of Theology, 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
M.Div., 2025

*Experience:*

Watered Garden Church  
Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea  
Sunday School Director  
February 2012 - February 2013

Seong-ae Church  
Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea  
Youth Director  
February 2013 - January 2015

Yehan Church  
Seoul, Republic of Korea  
Youth Director  
February 2015- August 2016

Habit-Korean CRC  
Rochester Hills, MI, USA  
Sunday School Director  
August 2019 - May 2022

Church of the Servant  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
September 2022 - May 2024

Refugee Resettlement Ministry  
Team of Church of the Servant  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA

### *Faith Journey*

I must first admit that my faith journey has always led me to unexpected and unknown places. I was born and raised in Korea, and coming from a Christian family, God's existence and many Bible stories were very familiar to me from a very young age. But at that time, I didn't seriously accept God as the Lord of my life, rather, I didn't even like church culture and the Christians' values. When I was 16, I experienced an event that would completely change my life. It is something that, even now, I have difficulty explaining. One day, I was suddenly struck with severe abdominal pain and pain in other parts of my body. So I couldn't eat or drink and the pain was so intense that I couldn't sleep. Over the next few days, I was rushed to the emergency room multiple times and underwent various tests, but the doctors could not find any cause and told me there was nothing more they could do for me. On the third night, while my family, who had been taking care of me, stepped out for a moment, I was left alone in the room. Exhausted by the constant pain, I called out to God for the first time. Perhaps it was the first voluntary prayer I can remember. I'm not sure why I decided to pray, but I just did pray. It was certainly the guidance of the Holy Spirit. My prayer soon led me to confess my sins and repent. The Holy Spirit made me realize that, even though I had been pushing God out of my life, God had never left me, and He was with me in that moment of pain. A girl who believed that her life would unfold as she wished, that night, I faintly understood that my life didn't depend on me, but on God. After that prayer, I was able to sleep for the first time in days. When I woke up the next morning, the pain was gone, and I still vividly remember the sunlight coming through the window and the sound of birds singing that morning. It was a moment of everything becoming new. This story might sound a bit strange. It seems strange to me, too. But what is certain is that God made it clear that He had always been with me in my life, especially during that night. From that day on, I began to read the Bible, learn God's word, and genuinely participate in worship and prayer. Gradually, I came to know and learn more about God and his grace and love.

Later, when I was still a girl who liked trends and friends like many teenagers, I met a friend who dreamed of becoming a pianist. Through that friend, I became captivated by the piano and raised the dream of becoming a pianist. From that point, I dedicated myself to studying music with the goal of majoring in piano. However, my family's financial difficulties became a huge obstacle to continuing classical music studies, and a few years later, I had to give up that dream. That was the first vivid experience I had of how life doesn't always go the way we plan.

One day, I happened to see an advertisement for a Mission Class held by the Korean branch of WEC Mission (Worldwide Evangelization for Christ) in a local newspaper so I attended. In the class, I connected with a missionary from WEC Korea. He recommended a theological university based on the vision of world missions, and, feeling an inexplicable pull, I enrolled in that school. I feel that was the unknown place that God had prepared for me, as someone who had dreamed of majoring in piano. I majored in theology there and met my husband, Jake. During my undergraduate years, I began serving in various churches and felt a strong calling to church ministry. I thought that God would continue to lead me to ministry in Korea. But meeting and marrying Jake, who had long dreamed of studying in the U.S., led me to another place—Michigan, which is a beautiful winter wonderland! At that time, I couldn't

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

speak any English, so I thought I wouldn't be able to do anything in the U.S. for a while. But how awesome an expert in planning God is! Jake and I had the opportunity to serve at Hanbit Korean CRC in Detroit, Michigan, which was something we had never expected. There, I met Pastor Christian Oh, the senior pastor of the church at the time. He several times recommended that I consider studying for an MDiv at Calvin Seminary. Although Jake was studying at Calvin, I couldn't imagine myself studying there because, as I mentioned, I didn't speak any English. But I felt that through Pastor Oh, God was guiding me to another adventure. So, I studied English for about a year and began my learning journey at Calvin. The language and cultural barriers felt so overwhelming that my entire journey at Calvin was the most challenging experience of my life. Yet, at the same time, I began to learn what it meant to live, study, and build relationships in a foreign country with a second language, and that learning revealed my weaknesses and vulnerabilities, teaching me that the only thing I could rely on was God.

Through two years of pastoral internship and three years at Calvin, I opened the door to my narrow, closed perspectives and thoughts. I developed a broader understanding of myself, people, cultures, and the world. Most importantly, through many experiences and processes that cannot all be written here, I became convinced that God is leading me into ministry. I don't know where the next place will be, but I know that it will be another unexpected and unknown place, full of challenges, but growth and formation, and exciting and fulfilling experiences.

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because, first and foremost, I have come to deeply appreciate and love the healthy theology, administration, and community of CRCNA that I now belong to through God's plan. As a woman, I agree with the understanding and theology about the ordination of women in ministry, though there are tensions around this issue. (And I believe that the tensions come from a faithful heart.) Ultimately, with the foundation of the CRCNA, I desire to serve the church through the gifts that God has given me. I long to be an instrument in which God's great love, grace, and justice can be shared with those who are suffering from the hunger of the soul, mind, and body, illness, sadness, loneliness, and isolation. I dream of tasting, training, and developing the habits and ways of life in God's Kingdom, and of building a community that reflects and connects God's Kingdom and its life with this world and people.

Cross-Cultural Internship  
July 1 2024 - August 31 2024

*Languages:*

Korean (Native Speaker)  
English (Moderate)

*Contact:*

hpar212@calvinseminary.edu  
(616) 290-7989





Name: Christopher F. Smid

*Current Place of Residence:*

Frankville, Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

Providence Care Hospital  
Kingston, ON, Canada  
Canadian Association for Spiritual  
Care:

1st Basic Unit of CPE  
May 2024 - July 2024

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
M.Div., 2025

University of Waterloo  
Waterloo, ON, Canada  
Bachelor of Liberal Arts, 2012

*Experience:*

Athens, CRC  
Athens, ON, Canada  
Intern Pastor  
October 2023 - May 2024

First CRC  
Kemptonville, ON, Canada  
Youth Pastor  
2022 - Present

Providence Manor  
Kingston, ON, Canada  
Spiritual Health Associate  
October 2024 - Present

*Contact:*

smiddy\_c@yahoo.ca  
(613) 213-4563

*Faith Journey*

As a teenager, growing up on my parent's dairy farm, I always knew something was missing. I vividly remember saying out loud, "there has to be more to life." Although I loved farming and all that it offered, I always struggled because I didn't feel significant around people. In order to fill that void, I entertained sinful habits, self-pity being one of them.

Everything changed in the summer of 2001, when I went to visit my twin brother who was living four hours away with my uncle and aunt, starting his new career. For context, a couple months before, I finally did Profession of Faith at Athens CRC, putting it off over the last couple years because I felt I was not ready. I was filled with questions and hungry to learn more about God. That weekend a couple months later with my brother, I picked up a small book called "Creation Versus Evolution" and read it with great interest. The author helped me to understand the gospel and I accepted Jesus through a small prayer at the conclusion of the book. I felt the gates of Heaven open up and was filled with immense joy and peace. The next day the sky felt bluer, and the Sun seemed brighter. I likened it to being "plugged" into God. Yet the honeymoon did not last. Over time, I struggled with guilt over my sins and those of others. It was a cycle of low periods of guilt and shame followed by high moments of repentance and grace and feeling His presence again. I did a lot of crying out to God and He showed me His love in profound ways through it all. I longed to experience the Love I felt from him that night I gave my heart to Him. Later, I was diagnosed with OCD, possibly similar to the great reformer, Martin Luther, who struggled with what therapists now call scrupulosity.

Through it all, I gained confidence in the forgiveness and Love of Jesus. I realized that nothing could take His sign and seal away from me. I began to meet others who shared their stories and faith which helped me get through my own crises. Further, I learned God was calling me into ministry. This was affirmed through a dear friend and mentor who prayed with and for me. He helped me to hear the voice of God. I soon left the dairy farm and enrolled in Bible college at Tyndale University in Toronto. I loved it. Learning about the Bible, the history of Christianity and all the other courses was fulfilling. The relationships I formed and the opportunities to be part of a homeless ministry in downtown Toronto confirmed and shaped me for ministry later on.

At the same time, I met my future wife, and we married in 2004. Marriage and family have been wonderful, but also painful as the responsibilities of raising a family and walking through difficult times with my spouse has added stress and pressure that exposed more of my weaknesses and dependence on God and others.

Since this time, I have felt called to be in and teach Sunday School, VBS, and share my testimony at small gatherings. Further, through the leadership of my mentor Rick I began to lead small groups myself and have done so for over 20 years. Though these groups have ebbed and flowed, they have really helped me to stay connected, deepen my faith, and be accountable to other Christians.

In 2012, I preached my first sermon on a Sunday morning. I loved it. I have only expanded this to other churches over the years and the affirmation received from so many have affirmed the calling to preach. Further I have had the privilege of officiating many funerals for family and members of the community and this opportunity to be with fellow Christians closing out their journey here on earth, while spiritually supporting their families has been one of the biggest privileges and blessings of my life.

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

Academically, I was eventually able to complete my undergraduate degree in 2012 and through the prompting of my former pastor and church community, I was able to enroll and complete an M.Div degree at Calvin Theological Seminary through distance learning. This has only affirmed my desire to be part of the Reformed faith with its Reformed accent as I find it balances faith and reason really well. Further, the structure of the CRC has many benefits and safeguards that other denominations do not offer.

Through all the ups and downs of academic life, various work opportunities, small groups, mentors, friends, and my family, I have been able to learn a great deal about my own personality and weaknesses. One important element is that I work more productively within a team environment or within an institutional environment, than a sole pastor of a parish church. This only confirmed what I initially dismissed when my spouse said to me, many years ago on Chaplaincy Sunday, “you should be a chaplain.” But this seems to be the path that God has been guiding me toward.

Last year, I had the opportunity to take the first CPE program at Providence Care Hospital in Kingston. Working with an interdisciplinary team was a joy and delight. Later, I was able to secure a position as an Associate Chaplain at a Long-term care home Kingston, ON. In this setting God has allowed His spirit to be used in me to preach, pastor residents, help families through end-of-life issues, and conduct end of life celebrations.

There is much more that can be said, but when I am unfaithful, God is still faithful; He is always speaking, leading, and guiding not only me, but my family and those around me too. I have seen His grace and forgiveness in so many ways, sometimes only in a whisper and other times as loud as a trumpet but, in hindsight, He has never left me or forsaken me, so I am here to serve Him as He pleases.

*Statement of Reason*

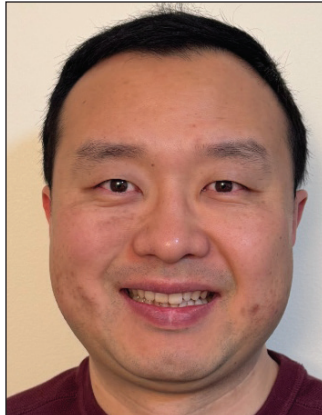
For over 22 years since my initial conversion, I have felt a persistent and profound calling to ministry. This calling has been consistently reinforced by the rewarding experience of guiding others towards a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

I have found immense fulfillment in helping individuals recognize and respond to God’s call in their lives. The privilege of being entrusted with the personal stories, joys, and concerns of others has significantly strengthened my own faith and spiritual maturity.

Having attended various denominations and groups which has only enriched and broadened my experience of the body of Christ, I have found my home within the Christian Reformed family.

Further, I am drawn to the CRC’s robust structure of accountability and commitment to education and the training of its pastors. While acknowledging the church’s evolution and shortcomings, I deeply appreciate its preservation of liturgical heritage, emphasis on catechism, and comprehensive programs that foster fellowship and spiritual growth within the life of each believer.

Finally, I believe my unique gifts are best utilized in institutional chaplaincy, while being endorsed by the CRCNA. Though I am open to being led in any direction God leads me in, I am seeking endorsement and accountability from the CRC as I pursue this specific vocation.



*Name:* Matthew Sun

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Ada, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Master of Divinity, 2023

Southwestern University of Finance and Economics  
Chengdu, China  
Master of Business, 2008

Southwestern University of Finance and Economics  
Chengdu, China  
Bachelor of Business, 2003

*Experience:*

Ada CRC  
Ada, MI, USA  
Church Planting  
Feb 2024 - Dec 2024

Heritage CRC  
Byron Center, MI  
Ministry Intern  
Aug 2019 - Jun 2021

*Languages:*

Chinese (Native Speaker)  
English (Proficient)

*Contact:*

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(616) 469-8256

### *Faith Journey*

I came to faith in Jesus Christ in 2003 during my first year of university through the witness of an American international student missionary in China. This encounter led me to join a traditional underground church in China, where I received my first discipleship in a context of secrecy and perseverance. In 2010, I became part of a Chinese Reformed church that openly advocated for the public presence of underground churches. It was during this time that I began engaging in the referral and translation of Christian books, a ministry that deepened my theological understanding and my appreciation for the importance of biblically grounded teaching.

As my faith grew, I sensed a calling to serve in a teaching and pastoral role. In 2017, I was given opportunities to preach, which further confirmed this calling. Seeking formal theological training, I entered Calvin Theological Seminary in 2019 to pursue a Master of Divinity degree. After completing my studies, I began working in church planting ministry at Ada CRC in 2024, where I now serve among the Chinese community.

Throughout my journey, God has placed significant mentors in my life who have shaped my spiritual formation and ministry. During my university years, Pastor Wang Gang, a key leader in the house church movement in Lanzhou, introduced me to short-term urban missions. Through these experiences, I witnessed firsthand the deep hunger for theological education within the Chinese house church movement. After graduation, Pastor Chen Yonghong from BrookTree Church in Chengdu mentored me in preaching and helped me reflect on my spiritual growth. During my time at Calvin Seminary, Pastor Huisman and Pastor Bob from Heritage CRC provided crucial guidance in pulpit ministry and pastoral care. Since beginning my ministry at Ada CRC, Pastor Jacob has met with me almost weekly, offering wisdom and intercessory support as I navigate the challenges and opportunities of church planting.

My wife and I were both born in China under the strict one-child policy, a policy that profoundly shaped the values of our generation. The atheistic education we received in public schools encouraged a utilitarian mindset, making the gospel of grace and self-sacrifice a radical contrast to our cultural upbringing. As a couple, we have faced many challenges, but through God's work in our lives and the support of the church, we have learned to overcome selfish tendencies, seek peace, and serve together in ministry. The arrival of our four daughters has further deepened our reliance on God, leading us to continual self-examination and prayer for their future and calling.

My personal faith journey is intertwined with China's rapid economic development and the spread of the gospel. I have seen how material prosperity alone has not solved the country's deeper spiritual and moral crises. At the same time, I have also witnessed how the gospel brings miraculous transformation to individuals and communities, healing broken relationships and offering true reconciliation. I believe that the power of the gospel transcends cultural and political boundaries even in the most unlikely circumstances.

As I continue my ministry, my hope is that my family can be a channel of God's blessing—a bridge connecting people across cultures and generations, sharing the love and truth of Christ wherever He leads us.

### *Statement of Reason*

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) because I believe God has called me to serve within this denomination, both for my continued training and for the growth of the Chinese-speaking community within the CRC. The CRC's strong biblical and theological foundations provide a vital context for equipping Chinese believers to know God, be shaped by His church, and draw others to Christ.

I also see my calling as serving as a bridge between the church in China and the church in North America, fostering deeper connections for the sake of Christ's kingdom. Through this work, I hope to advance the CRC's influence among Chinese-speaking communities, contributing to the church's mission of global discipleship and outreach. My prayer is that, through ordination, I may continue to grow in faithful service and be further equipped to lead, teach, and plant churches for the glory of God.



*Name:* Jonathan P. Sturrus

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Fremont, Michigan, USA

*Education:*  
Trinity Christian College  
Palos Heights, IL  
B.A., 2019  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2022

*Internships/ Experience:*  
Palos Heights CRC  
Palos Heights, IL  
Youth Ministry Intern  
Spring 2019  
  
Community CRC  
Wyoming, MI  
Ministry Intern  
Fall 2019 - Spring 2021  
  
1st CRC  
Fremont, MI, USA  
Ministry Intern  
April, 2023 - Present

*Contact:*  
(231) 766-1638  
jonsturrus96@gmail.com

*Faith Journey*

I was raised in a Christian home. Close relationships with people that have been wonderful examples of Christ have surrounded me throughout my life. I have found them in my church community and throughout my family, from the immediate to my grandma, aunts and uncles, and cousins. Especially in my immediate family, but also strongly present within others, I witnessed these people not only talking about their faith, but living it out genuinely every day. God has made me witness to deeply-rooted and Christ-like empathy and love, genuinely practiced Christian disciplines, and to an integrity of faith that has been a model and encouragement to me in my personally lived walk with God. I am amazed at and thoroughly grateful for this gift that God has continued to bless me with throughout my life.

As I got older, a curiosity that had always been with me was fervently applied to anything related to Scripture and faith; especially as I went through my undergraduate degree, I was equally challenged by and curious with my teachers and friends about matters of faith. God used this time to deepen and expand my lived faith. As I became more honest with myself and my personal brokenness and felt needs, I better understood the brokenness and felt needs of the world around me. At the same time, I also saw how the faith I had witnessed growing up and had taken part of could address those felt needs in a real way. So, as I was deepening my understanding of God, I began to be passionate about the care for those within and outside of the church, and how specifically Christ might address them. Then, though I did not know where God would eventually lead me, I felt that I was being called to seminary. Following this call certainly required a lot of encouragement from family. At seminary, God enriched my faith even further and slowly grew me into my calling into ministry. I was molded by the many challenging conversations that occurred throughout my time studying there.

I am very grateful for the various friends and mentors that I met who God used to challenge, encourage, and teach my faith in areas it had not been before, but where it desperately needed to be.

Jonathan P. Sturrus

*Statement of Reason*

Raised in the CRC, I have been molded by and value the Reformed accent and the creeds and confessions which it affirms. I have personally experienced and have become convinced that Christ hurts for every pain and can be the mend to every sin and everything broken. That fills me with hope. I seek ordination in the CRC to follow my sense of calling and to be an agent of Christ in the outworking of that hope.

Jonathan P. Sturrus

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*





*Name:* Lorinda R. VanderWerp

*Current Place of Residence:*  
Wyoming, Michigan, USA

*Education:*  
Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Bachelor of Arts, 1990  
  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2024

*Internships/ Experience:*  
Hamilton Christian Reformed  
Church  
Hamilton, MI  
Pastoral Intern  
January 2020 - December 2023  
  
HELP Pregnancy Aid  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Client Volunteer Advocate  
January 2024 - present

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### *Faith Journey*

I was born into a loving Christian family. Both my parents were actively involved in the life of our church – Faith Community Christian Reformed Church (Wykoff, NJ). My parents sacrificially provided the gift of Christian education. I attended Eastern Christian (K-12) and following graduation from high school, I attended Calvin College. When I was in middle school, I was given the opportunity to go to a Christian camp with a good friend, and while I was at camp I became aware of my sin and my need for God’s saving grace. At a young age, I made a public profession of my faith at church. Throughout my education (at home, school, and church), I was surrounded by wonderful Christian teachers. One teacher who was very influential in my faith formation was Ray VanderLaan. Rev. VanderLaan taught with such passion and love for the Lord, it created a desire within me to know God even more.

At the young age of fourteen, I started leading musically in worship. My love for music led me to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Music at Calvin College (now University); however, following graduation, I really struggled as a performance major, since I desired instead to use the musical gifts God had given me for His glory. After engaging in some volunteer worship opportunities in several churches, I received a call to serve musically in a local church. While serving there God shaped and molded me through various pastors and congregational members He placed in my life. God also created a passion for worship planning, as I selected music that fit the theme and direction of the spoken Word of God.

While serving musically, God continued to stir within me a desire to serve in other areas of church life. In addition to the Worship committee, I assisted the Membership and Outreach committee and Nominating committee. God also led me to take on deacon responsibilities and serve as an elder. During my term as an elder, God placed the desire on my heart to become a pastor. I wrestled with His call for the next four years. Even as I agonized over submitting to His call, God continued His work in me. This time it came through some painful experiences where God taught me more about His forgiveness and about His desire for me, as a child forgiven by her Maker, to extend forgiveness.

God opened a door for me to attend a Forgiveness seminar. Following that seminar, it became impossible to stifle what I learned. I asked my pastor if I could lead a Bible study group at our church, delving into the theme of forgiveness. As I led this Bible study group over the next six months, God’s call on my life became clear; I could no longer ignore it or push it away. I looked into attending seminary, but given our financial situation, I didn’t know how this was possible. Knowing that Gideon received answers from God through his bold prayers, I decided to follow his example, praying a bold prayer. I created my own fleece test: “God, if you are indeed calling me to become a pastor, I need You to remove the financial barrier.” The next day, when I went in to sign my annual contract at the church at which I was serving, I told the pastor that I was considering going to seminary. He responded, telling me the church would pay! In addition, within a week, my piano studio doubled in size. Shortly after this, I received a letter from the admissions office at Calvin Theological Seminary indicating that I also received a scholarship. God had responded clearly to my bold prayer.

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

My seven years as a part-time student at Calvin Theological Seminary has been a blessing – learning more about God, myself, and learning from my amazing professors, staff, and colleagues. There have been a number of challenges and closed doors along the way, but through it all, God remains faithful. Over the past seven years, I've had the opportunity to serve at a few churches, which provided the ability to plan worship, use my musical gifts and talents, co-lead in a Torah Club Bible study, engage in planning and leading in my first Passover Seder, and step into the pulpit and preach in several different churches.

In my cross-cultural internship, God led me to serve as a Client Volunteer Advocate at HELP Pregnancy Aid in downtown Grand Rapids. In my work at HELP pregnancy, I welcome clients, listen, assess their needs, and provide help for those that can be met through the generous donations available at the agency, or by making a referral for resources that need to be secured from another organization. Here I am able to tangibly demonstrate the love of God to each client as a valued and treasured child of God, empowering them through a facility that allows me to function as the hands and feet of Jesus.

Lorinda R. VanderWerp

*Statement of Reason*

Having obediently followed God's calling on my life, it would be a privilege to be ordained as a Minister of the Word in His church, and an honor to participate in the life of a community of faith. I look forward to an invitation to share in this life together, being used by God to disciple and shepherd congregants in the faith and encourage them as they take their next steps in their faith journey. I want to be used as a source of His light – "so that the world may know" – , as I serve as an agent of God's reconciling love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Lorinda R. VanderWerp