



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2017

prospective candidates



Name: Patrick Anthony

Place of Birth: Modesto, CA

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

California State University
Stanislaus
B.A., 2005

Theatre Arts
Talbot Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

Contact:

209-289-3989
pastorpatrick@escaloncrc.org

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Patrick Anthony

Statement of Reason

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

Patrick Anthony



Name: Josiah Bokma

Place of Birth: Truro, Nova Scotia

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

Tyndale Seminary
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:
New Hope CRC, Hamilton,
ON, Canada
Oct 2011 - May 2013

International Teams Canada,
Elmira, ON
Oct 2011 - Oct 2012

Languages spoken:
Spanish

Contact:
289-442-5556
josiahbokma@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Josiah Bokma

Statement of Reason

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

Josiah Bokma



Name: Laura de Jong

Place of Birth: St. Catharines, ON

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A.

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

Languages spoken: Dutch

Contact:

616-482-7636
lmdj021@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Laura de Jong

Statement of Reason

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

Laura de Jong



Name: Mark DeVos

Place of Birth: Cambridge, ON

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

Covenant Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

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

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

Languages spoken:

Spanish (not fluent yet)

Contact:

289-880-2699
devos.mark@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Mark DeVos

Statement of Reason

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

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

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

Mark DeVos



Name: Brad Diekema

Place of Birth: Grand Rapids, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Kuyper College
B.S.

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

Contact:

616-570-4771
bsd063@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Brad Diekema

Statement of Reason

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

Brad Diekema



Name: Brian Dunn

Place of Birth: Michigan

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

Grand Rapids Theological
Seminary
2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

Cross Cultural
Nov 2015 - April 2016

Contact:
403-844-5945
dunnski@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

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

Brian Dunn

Statement of Reason

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

Brian Dunn



Name: Richard France-Coe

Place of Birth: Denver, CO

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 2006

Western Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2013

Internships:

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

Brighton Reformed Church,
Rochester, NY
Summer 2011

Contact:

616-352-6382
rwc2@calvin.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Richard France-Coe

Statement of Reason

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

Richard France-Coe



Name: Joshua K. Friend

Place of Birth: Cambridge, ON

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

Continuing education and
Independent Studies
in Preaching

Contact:

587-377-6745
pastorjoshfriend@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Joshua Friend

Statement of Reason

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

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

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

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

Joshua Friend



Name: Cari Fydirchuk

Place of Birth: London,
ON, Canada

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

New Hope Hillside CRC
Pastoral Internship
2015 - present

Contact:
403-981-4805
cf084@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

What I Believe...

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

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

How I Got There/Here...

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Cari Fydirchuk

Statement of Reason

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

Cari Fydirchuk



Name: Ernesto J. Hernandez

Place of Birth: Chihuahua, Mexico

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

Languages spoken:
Spanish, German

Contact:
915-258-1310
ernestojoehdz@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Ernesto J. Hernandez

Statement of Reason

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

Ernesto J. Hernandez



Name: Ryan Hoekstra

Place of Birth: Sioux Center, IA

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

Baruch Senior Ministries
Chaplain
May 2014 - August 2014

CPE Bronson Methodist
Hospital
August 2015 - January 2016

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

Ryan Hoekstra

Statement of Reason

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

Ryan Hoekstra



Name: James Hollendonner

Place of Birth: Oak Lawn, Illinois

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Central College
Judson University
B.A.

Wheaton College Graduate
School Northern Seminary
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

Contact:

708-846-3523
jchpastor@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

James Hollendonner

Statement of Reason

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

James Hollendonner



Name: Jeff Hoos

Place of Birth: Buffalo, Grove, IL

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey

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

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

Jeff Hoos

Statement of Reason

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

Jeff Hoos



Name: Sarah Kim Hoos

Place of Birth: Huntington
Beach, CA

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

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

Western Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

Languages spoken:
Korean

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

Faith Journey

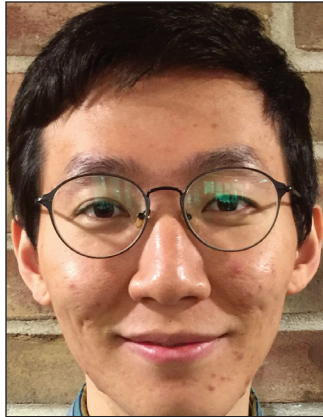
I was blessed to have been born into a God-honoring family with a father who is a CRC minister and planted multiple Korean-American CRC churches in Southern California and in Holland, Michigan. While my personal history is rooted in the ways of the Lord with a ministry-intensive upbringing, I estranged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

Sarah Kim Hoos

Statement of Reason

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

Sarah Kim Hoos



Name: Eunjun Jeong

Place of Birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Internships:

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

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

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

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

Languages spoken:
Korean

Contact:

616-227-8524
eunjunjeong@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Eunjun Jeong

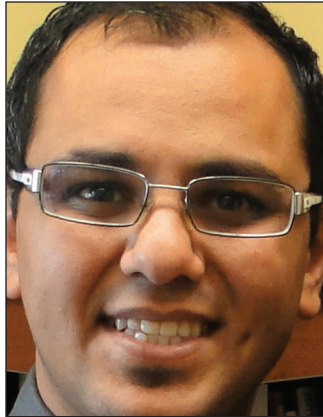
Statement of Reason

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

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

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

Eungjun Jeong



Name: Rafik Kamel

Place of Birth: Egypt

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Redeemer University
B.A., 2006

Covenant Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

Languages spoken:

Arabic

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Rafik Kamel

Statement of Reason

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

Rafik Kamel



Name: George Keulen

Place of Birth: Vancouver, BC

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

Regent College
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

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

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

George Keulen

Statement of Reason

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

George Keulen



Name: Jungseong Kim

Place of Birth: Seoul, Korea

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

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

Internships:

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

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

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

Languages spoken:
Korean

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Jungseong (Samuel) Kim

Statement of Reason

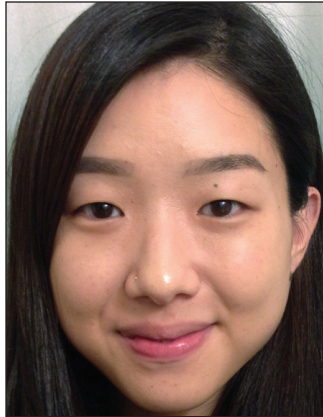
I am seeking Ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because my vision for ministry in the future includes confronting discrimination, seeking justice in Christ and promoting unity in one body of Christ within the congregation. God blessed me when I became a person with a disability by serious motor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

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

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

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

Jungseong (Samuel) Kim



Name: Hannah Ryou Lee

Place of Birth: Grand Rapids, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

Languages spoken:

Korean

Contact:

616-304-9575

hjr071@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Hannah Lee

Statement of Reason

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

Hannah Lee



Name: Hope Lee

Place of Birth: Denver, CO

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Denver
B.A., 2009

Denver Seminary
M.Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Languages spoken: Korean

Contact:

720-940-1059
hopeguan@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Hope Lee

Statement of Reason

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

Statement of Reason (continued)

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

Hope Lee



Name: Michael McGowan

Place of Birth: Pontiac, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

University of South
Carolina Beaufort
B.S., 2012

Fuller Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

Sanctuary CRC, Seattle, WA
September 2015 - June 2016

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

Contact:

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m2mcgowa@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Michael McGowan

Statement of Reason

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

Michael McGowan



Name: Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

Place of Birth: Holland, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 2012

Western Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

Contact:

616-566-7652
kyleschaap89@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

Statement of Reason

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

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap



Name: Cory Nederveld

Place of Birth: Zeeland, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Davenport University
B.A., 2005

Grace Bible College
B.R.E., 2005

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

Contact:

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

Cory Nederveld

Statement of Reason

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

Cory Nederveld



Name: Fikre Norcha

Place of Birth: Ethiopia

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:
Dégagé Ministries
Cross-Cultural Internship
June - August 2015

Woodland CRC
Friendship Ministry
Service Learning
2014-2015

Languages spoken:
Amharic and Guragigna

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Fikre Norcha

Statement of Reason

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

Statement of Reason (continued)

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

Fikre Norcha



Name: Arek O'Connell

Place of Birth: Roseville, CA

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Biola University
B.A., 2011

Western Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

Contact:

616-272-6639
aoconnell@hillsidech.org

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

Arek O'Connell

Statement of Reason

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

Arek O'Connell



Name: Ryan Taylor Pedde

Place of Birth: Edmonton,
AB, Canada

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:
Bethel CRC Edmonton
Associate Pastor
2013 - present

Classis Alberta North
Commissioned Pastor
October 2013

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

Contact:
780-850-2247
rpedde@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Ryan Taylor Pedde

Statement of Reason

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

Ryan Taylor Pedde



Name: Allen Pontarelli

Place of Birth: Grand Haven, MI

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

Contact:
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Faith Journey

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Allen Pontarelli

Statement of Reason

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

Allen Pontarelli



Name: Marg Rekman

Place of Birth: Windsor, ON,
Canada

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
McMaster University
Certificate Occupational
Therapy

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

Timothy Leadership Training –
Romania
Cross-Cultural Internship
June 2015

Languages spoken:
Dutch

Contact:
519-383-0830
mr050@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Marg Rekman

Statement of Reason

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

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

Marg Rekman



Name: Janet Ryzebol

Place of Birth: Orangeville, ON,
Canada

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

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

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Janet Ryzebol

Statement of Reason

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

Janet Ryzebol



Name: Bailey Sarver

Place of Birth: Pella, IA

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College
B.A., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

Calvin Theological Seminary
Facing Your Future
Live in Leader
July 2014

Sunrise Community Church,
Austin TX
June 2015 - August 2015

Calvin College Campus
Ministries Intern
August 2013 - May 2017

Contact:

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bbs073@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Bailey Sarver

Statement of Reason

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

Bailey Sarver



Name: Eunchong Shin

Place of Birth: Seoul, Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Cascade College

Exchange Student, 2008-2009

Korean Christian University

B.S., 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., 2014

Th.M., 2018

Internships:

Liberty University,

Lynchburg, VA

Chaplain Assistant

August 2010 - August 2011

Detroit Vision CRC,

Farmington Hills, MI

Cross-Cultural Internship

June 2011 - May 2013

Community CRC, Wyoming, MI

Cross-Cultural Internship

May 2013 - August 2013

Hope CRC, Ann Arbor, MI

Pastoral Care Internship

September 2013 - August 2014

Contact:

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eunchong Shin

Statement of Reason

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

Eunchong Shin



Name: Mark Van Andel

Place of Birth: Chapel Hill, NC

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.S., 1997

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.A., 2010

Moody Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

Central Detroit Christian
Community Development
Corporation
2009-2010

Hesed Community Church
May 2016 - December 2016

Contact:

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mvandel3@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Mark Van Andel

Statement of Reason

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

Mark Van Andel



Name: Michelle VanDenBerg

Place of Birth: Holland, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 1996

Western Michigan University
B.S., 1998

Western Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

Providence CRC, Holland, MI
September 2011 - May 2015

Crosspoint CRC, Chino, CA
June 2016 - August 2016

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Michelle VanDenBerg

Statement of Reason

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

Michelle VanDenBerg



Name: Greg Vander Horn

Place of Birth: Grand Rapids, MI

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

Coit Community Church
July 2014 - October 2014

Celebration Fellowship Church
June 2016 - June 2017

Contact:

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gvh57@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Greg Vander Horn

Statement of Reason

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

Greg Vander Horn



Name: Nicole Veenkamp

Place of Birth: Simcoe, ON, Canada

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

Redeemer Christian
Reformed Church
Sarnia, ON
October 2015 - Present

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Nicole Veenkamp

Statement of Reason

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

Nicole Veenkamp



Name: Femke Visser-Elenbaas

Place of Birth: Groningen,
The Netherlands (NL)

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

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
J-Term, 2013
EPMC, 2017

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

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

Languages spoken:
Dutch, German

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Femke Visser-Elenbaas

Statement of Reason

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

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

Femke Visser-Elenbaas



Name: Mike Westerveld

Place of Birth: Oak Lawn, IL

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., 2017

Internships:

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

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

Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, MI
September 2016 - May 2017

Contact:

616-826-3393
michael.westerveld@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

Michael Westerveld

Statement of Reason

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

Michael Westerveld



Name: Brian White

Place of Birth: Tulsa, OK

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Tulsa
B.A., 2003

Princeton Theological
Seminary
M.Div., 2006

Princeton Theological
Seminary
Th.M., 2009

Fuller Theological Seminary
Ph.D., 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

Internships:

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

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

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

Contact:

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Brian White

Statement of Reason

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

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

Brian White



Name: Joanna Wigboldy

Place of Birth: Chicago, IL

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
B.A., 2006

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

Internships:

Georgetown CRC,
Hudsonville, MI
September 2007 - June 2008

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

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Joanna Wigboldy

Statement of Reason

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

Joanna Wigboldy



Name: Jianlou Xu

Place of Birth: Henan, China

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

Internships:
Chinese Church of Iowa City
Cross-Cultural Internship
June 10, 2015 - August 10, 2015

Nelson Ave Community Church
Pastoral Care Internship
June 6, 2016 - August 31, 2016

Languages spoken:
Mandarin

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Faith Journey

God Prepared Me:

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

God adopted us:

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

God's calling over the years:

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

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

God's hand equipping:

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Jianlou Xu

Statement of Reason

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

Jianlou Xu



Name: Cody Zuiderveen

Place of Birth: Grand Rapids, MI

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

Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary
M.Div.

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC Certification, 2017

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

Languages spoken:
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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Cody Zuiderveen

Statement of Reason

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

Cody Zuiderveen

