



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2019

prospective candidates



May 6, 2019

Dear Delegates of Synod 2019,

Enclosed in this booklet are descriptions of the candidates being recommended to Synod 2019. For each person there is a photo, a brief biographical sketch, a statement of their faith journey and the stated reason for pursuing candidacy. Each of the candidates has their own unique story and their own unique gifts. They are united in a desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. We trust that these pages (presented via an electronic format) will help the delegates of Synod 2019 become a bit more familiar with each recommended candidate. We should add that besides the 38 individuals presented in this book, there will be four others presented through our supplementary report with information shared only with the advisory committee. For the sake of the security and safety of these four and the persons to whom they minister, the Candidacy Committee has agreed to present them with no digital footprint in an anonymous fashion. Should the advisory committee, or synod itself, wish to share the identity of these four individuals with all synodical delegates, we will ask that synod do so in strict executive session.

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

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

The Candidacy Committee
Rev. David R. Koll, Director of Candidacy

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Name: Joel S. Altena

Place of birth: Grand Rapids,
Michigan

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M-Div., expected May 2019

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

Resurrection Life Church
Cary, NC
Sept 2016 - May 2017

Resonate Global Mission
Volunteer Missionary
Klaipeda, Lithuania
July 2018

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

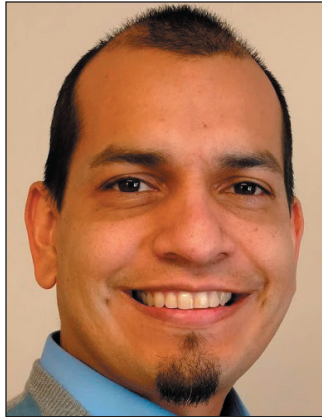
Ministry happens in space. It happens primarily in the sanctuary, but also in the narthex, and in the post-church gathering over coffee, and at dinner tables, in living rooms, on street corners and in the front seat of cars. Ministry happens in all of life's spaces because faith isn't something that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

Joel Altena

Statement of Reason

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

Joel Altena



Name: Israel Alvarado

Place of birth: Mexicali,
Baja California Mexico

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

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

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

Languages spoken:
Spanish, some French

Contact:
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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Israel Alvarado

Statement of Reason

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

Israel Alvarado



Name: Ram S. Aryal

Place of birth: Kathmandu, Nepal

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

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

Calvin Th. Seminary
M. Div., 2017

Internships:

Redeemer PCA, Florence, AL
Aug 2011 - Oct 2012

Thornapple Covenant Church
Sept 2013 - Sept 2015

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

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

Languages spoken:

English, Hindi (Indian),
and Nepali

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

Ram S. Aryal

Statement of Reason

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

Ram S. Aryal



Name: Seth Atsma

Place of birth: Sioux Center, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College

Sioux Center, IA

BA Computer Science, May 2002

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Wedgwood Christian Services

Grand Rapids, MI

Sep - Nov 2018

Providence CRC

Grand Rapids, MI

May - Aug 2019

Contact:

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saa030@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Seth Atsma

Statement of Reason

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

Seth Atsma



Name: Jonathan Bosma

Place of birth: Grand Rapids,
Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA in Economics, May 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Bellevue CRC
Bellevue, WA
Summer 2014

Unity CRC
Prospect Park, NJ
July 2015 - July 2016

Dig at Calvin Theological
Seminary
Grand Rapids, MI
July 2017

Mayfair Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Aug 2017 - June 2018

Contact:

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jkb088@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Jon Bosma

Statement of Reason

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

Jon Bosma



Name: Christopher L. Bouma

Place of birth: South Haven,
Michigan

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

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

Degage Ministries
Grand Rapids, MI
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:
Some Spanish

Contact:
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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chris Bouma

Statement of Reason

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

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

Chris Bouma



Name: Luke Carrig

Place of birth: Dublin, Ireland

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Kuyper College
Grand Rapids, MI
Bachelors of Science, 2016

Calvin Theological Seminary
MDiv, expected May 2019

Internships:

Hope CRC
Grandville, MI
May 2017 to present

Contact:

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lmc048@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Luke Carrig

Statement of Reason

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

Luke Carrig



Name: John Cleveringa

Place of birth: Sioux Center, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Northwestern College
Orange City, IA
Bachelors in Christian Education

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Haven CRC
Zeeland, MI
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Contact:

(616)-890-3642
jwc054@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

John Cleveringa

Statement of Reason

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

John Cleveringa



Name: Jason Douglas Crossen

Place of birth: Oshawa, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

McMaster University
Hamilton, ON
B.Eng., 2004

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Calvin Prison Initiative
Ionia, MI
Sept 2016 - June 2017

Celebration Fellowship
Ionia, MI
June 2017 - June 2019

Agassiz CRC
Agassiz, BC
June 2018 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:

French

Contact:

(616)-334-2149
jdc076@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

Jay Crossen

Statement of Reason

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

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

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

Jay Crossen



Name: Zack DeBruyne

Place of birth: St. Catharines, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Resurrection Church
Ottawa, ON
Aug 2015 - Aug 2016

Encounter Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Sept 2016 - May 2018

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

Cascade Fellowship CRC
Ada, MI
Aug 2018 - June 2019

Contact:

(616) 726-0317
zd047@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Zack DeBruyne

Statement of Reason

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

Zack DeBruyne



Name: Cara DeHaan

Place of birth: Cambridge, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

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

Immanuel CRC
Caledon, ON
Sept 2017 - Aug 2018

Contact:

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clcd008@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

The answer, in short, is Jesus.

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

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

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

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

Cara DeHaan

Statement of Reason

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

Cara DeHaan



Name: Christopher Ganski

Place of birth: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, NJ
MDiv, 2003

Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI
PhD, 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Christopher Ganski

Statement of Reason

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

Christopher Ganski



Name: Daniel J Gregory, Sr.

Place of birth: Lafayette, Louisiana

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Judson University
Elgin, IL

B.A. in Biblical Studies,
April 2005

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Elgin Community Church
Elgin, IL
Sept 2009 - Dec 2009

Fox Valley CRC
Crystal Lake, IL
Jan 2011 - Present

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Daniel Gregory

Statement of Reason

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

Daniel Gregory



Name: Nathan Groenewold

Place of birth: Rock Valley, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, May 2014

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

Ministerio Mies
Lynn, MA
Dec 2016 - Aug 2018

Languages spoken:

Spanish

Contact:

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nathan.groenewold@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

Nathan Groenewold

Statement of Reason

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

Nathan Groenewold



Name: Aaron Gunsaulus

Place of birth: Newton, Iowa

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Northern Iowa
B.A. English, 1995

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Newton CRC
Newton, IA
Nov 2009 – Present

Contact:

(641) 521-3947
ajg019@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Aaron Gunsaulus

Statement of Reason

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

Aaron Gunsaulus



Name: John Kyu Hahn

Place of Birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Internships:

Glory Korean Church
Sacramento, CA
Feb 2011 to March 2012

Davis Korean Church
Davis, CA
May 2012 to Aug 2013

Granite Springs Church
Lincoln, CA
Sept 2013 to present

Languages Spoken:

Korean

Contact:

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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Kyu Hahn

Statement of Reason

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

Kyu Hahn



Name: Cris Harper

Place of birth: Quito, Ecuador

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Samford University
Birmingham, AL
B.A., Communication Studies,
2013

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:
Mosaic Birmingham Church
Birmingham, AL
May 2013 – May 2015

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

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

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

Contact:
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harper.cristopher@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Cris Harper

Statement of Reason

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

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

Cris Harper



Name: Libby Huizenga

Place of birth: Jacksonville, Florida

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, Psychology, 2014

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

Sunrise Community Church
Austin, TX
June - Aug 2016

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

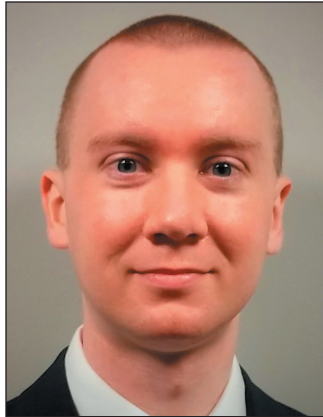
This is the reason for my hope and my calling. I've seen the love of God manifest in my life and also in the church. Though the church is far from perfect, I see limitless hope and I know that the world only grows better through the love and grace of God. Christ is at work in me and in the world, and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

Libby Huizenga

Statement of Reason

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

Libby Huizenga



Name: Mark A Janowski II

Place of birth: LaGrange, Illinois

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

University of Illinois at
Urbana Champaign
Champaign, IL
B.S., Mechanical Engineering,
May 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

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

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

Mark Janowski

Statement of Reason

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

Mark Janowski



Name: Daniel Joo

Place of birth: Los Angeles,
California

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

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

San Jose CRC
San Jose, CA
June - Aug 2017

Languages spoken:
Korean

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

Faith Journey

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

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

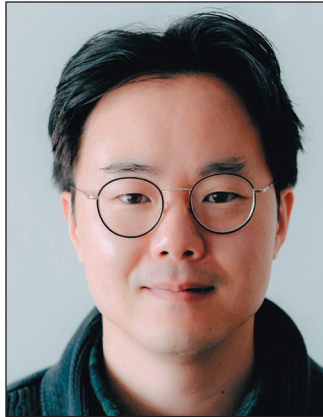
When it came time to apply for seminary, I thought to myself, "Wow, another 4 years of school, I don't know if I'm up for that." But looking back, God worked some major miracles in the past nine years of my life so I just prayed seminary would go by faster than undergrad did. It only seems like yesterday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

Daniel Joo

Statement of Reason

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

Daniel Joo



Name: Seok Won Jung

Place of birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

Tapestry Church
Richmond, BC
Youth Pastor
2015 - current

Languages spoken:

Korean

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

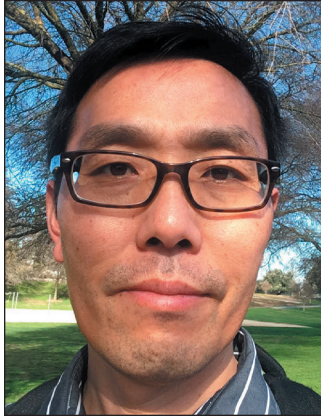
ministry, it led me again and again to go before God to find consolation and comfort. Every time I did, I found assurance of His calling repeatedly to know that I was indeed where God had called me to be. I am looking forward to how God will continue to shape me for the work of ministry in His Church.

Seok Won Jung

Statement of Reason

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

Seok Won Jung



Name: Kiseok Kang

Place of birth: Seoul, South Korea

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Oikos University, CA
M.Div., 2014

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

Languages spoken:

Korean

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

Chapter 1. Water to Wine

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

Chapter 2. Wandering

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

Chapter 3. Repent and Recovery

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4. Immigrant and CRC

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Chapter 5. Expecting

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

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

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

Kiseok Kang

Statement of Reason

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

Kiseok Kang



Name: Aaron Mamuyac

Place of birth: Fresno, California

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Indian River State College
Fort Pierce, Florida
B.A.

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div

Internships:

Sunlight CC
Port Saint Lucie, FL
current

Languages spoken:

English / Tagalog

Contact:

(772)-321-2818
aaron@sunlightcc.org

Faith Journey

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

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

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

Aaron Mamuyac

Statement of Reason

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

Aaron Mamuyac



Name: Timothy J. McHugh

Place of birth: Clifton, New Jersey

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Nyack College

Nyack, NY

B.S., Communications, 2011

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Hahn-In CRC

Wyoming, MI

May 2018 - July 2018

Elevation Church (RCA)

Wyoming, MI

Oct 2016 - Present

Contact:

(973)-985-9307

tjm006@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Tim McHugh

Statement of Reason

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

Tim McHugh



Name: Matthew Mulder

Place of birth: Zeeland, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights IL
B.A. in Music and Theology,
2015

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

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

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew Mulder

Statement of Reason

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

Matthew Mulder



Name: Shawn Richardson

Place of birth: Dayton, Ohio

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
BA, May 2013

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships :

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

Shawn Richardson

Statement of Reason

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

Shawn Richardson



Name: Kyle J. Sandison

Place of birth: Grand Rapids,
Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

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

Bellevue CRC
Bellevue, WA
May 2015 - Aug 2015

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kyle Sandison

Statement of Reason

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

Kyle Sandison



Name: Garrett Saul

Place of birth: Houston, Texas

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

Grand Rapids Theological
Seminary
MDiv., June 2019

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

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Garrett Saul

Statement of Reason

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

Garrett Saul



Name: Terence Schilstra

Place of birth: Smithville, Ontario

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

McMaster Divinity
Hamilton, ON
Hebrew, 2018

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:

The Village Church CRC
Thorold, ON
Sept 2016 - Present

Crosstowne CRC
Milton, ON
May 2018 - Sept 2018

CRC Classis Hamilton
Home Missions
Dec 2018 - June 2019

Contact:

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

My Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Terence Schilstra

Statement of Reason

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

Terence Schilstra



Name: Mitchell Sheahan

Place of birth: Mt. Pleasant, MI

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div. 2019

Internships:

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

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

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

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

Languages spoken:

English, Turkish

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Mitchell Sheahan

Statement of Reason

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

Mitchell Sheahan



Name: Hilary Smith

Place of Birth: Smithers, British Columbia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended

Kings University
Edmonton, AB

BA in Psychology and minor in
business administration, 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div, expected May 2019

Internships:

Trinity CRC
Edmonton, AB
May 2017 - Aug 2017

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

El Paso, TX
Juarez, MX
March 23-31

Contact

587-589-3472
hs097@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hilary Smith

Statement of Reason

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

Hilary Smith



Name: Loretta Stadt

Place of birth: Smithers, British Columbia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

King's University/
University of Victoria
Edmonton, AB / Victoria, BC
B.A

University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB
B. Ed

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

Bethel CRC
Edmonton, AB
Sept 2011 - Dec 2012

Hope CRC
Stony Plain, AB
March 2015 - Aug 2015

Avenue CRC
Edmonton, AB
Jan 2018 - June 2019

Contact:

(780)-455-9359
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Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Loretta Stadt

Statement of Reason

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

Loretta Stadt



Name: Jaleesa Stanford

Place of birth: Luverne, Minnesota

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Dordt College

Sioux Center, IA

BA in Secondary English

Education with endorsements
in Middle Level Language Arts
and Social Studies, 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Gold Avenue Church (CRC)

Grand Rapids, MI

Sept 2016 - current

Contact:

(616)-250-7391

pastor.jaleesa.gold@gmail.com

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

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

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

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

Jaleesa Stanford

Statement of Reason

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

Jaleesa Stanford



Name: Brad Stolman

Place of birth: Royal Oak, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC

Internships:

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Brad Stolman

Statement of Reason

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

Brad Stolman



Name: Kathy Vana

Place of birth: Cadillac, Michigan

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

Central College

Pella, IA

1998

Calvin Theological Seminary

M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Moddersville Reformed Church

Jan - May 2017

Workplace Chaplains

May - Sept 2017

Contact:

(231)-667-4146

klv003@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

Kathy Vana

Statement of Reason

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

Kathy Vana



Name: Klaas Walhout

Place of birth: Silver Spring,
Maryland

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
B.A. in Religion and Philosophy, 2016

Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, NJ
M.Div, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary
EPMC, 2019

Internships:

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

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

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

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Klaas Walhout

Statement of Reason

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

Klaas Walhout



Name: Chad Werkhoven

Place of birth: Pomona, California

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

Internships:

Sunnyside CRC
Sunnyside, WA
Nov 2017 - June 2019

Contact:

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

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

Chad Werkhoven

Statement of Reason

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

Chad Werkhoven



Name: William R. Whitt

Place of birth: Bluefield,
West Virginia

Colleges & Seminaries Attended:

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

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

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

Calvin Theological Seminary
M.Div., expected May 2019

Internships:

Westminster Evangelical
Presbyterian Church
Bluefield, West Virginia
2002-2004

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

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

Contact:

(772)-242-3386
wrr065@calvinseminary.edu

Faith Journey

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

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

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

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

Faith Journey (continued)

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

William R. Whitt

Statement of Reason

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

William R. Whitt