The Ground has been Broken!

With six shovels full of dirt, the construction of the new Jack and Mary DeWitt Learning Center and the renovation of WTS officially began on May 9.

While our present reality includes the storage of thousands of books, the clearing of an entire floor of the library, and the well-ordered chaos of relocating the offices of 40 employees in a month, let’s turn our attention away from today to what the seminary will be in 2019 when the project is completed.

The crown jewel of the campus will be the Jack and Mary DeWitt Learning Center, housing the entire Cook Library collection and providing plenty of collaborative and contemplative learning spaces. The Learning Center will dominate the eastern side of the building, and just outside, further east, will be a large green space where the old Cook Center
for Theological Research stood. Those sitting on the second floor of the new Learning Center will have an unobstructed view of the Hope College campus. A patio on the north side of the building will be a popular gathering spot in temperate weather, and fireplaces inside will provide warmth during the winter months. The entire library collection will be housed in the new building, and there will be plenty of space for the collection to grow.

On the south side of the seminary, a new two story administrative wing will rise, providing a clear entrance to the building. The president’s office, the business office, student services, advancement, communications, and educational technology offices will be housed in the new administrative wing. The entryway will line up with the existing reception desk, and the second floor of the new wing will adjoin the second floor of the atrium. President Brown’s office will be by the front door of the seminary, providing maximum visibility and availability to the community.

Renovated classrooms will dominate the hallway that runs south of the new Learning Center. New windows and floors will be visible throughout the building, and at the western end of the seminary, a newly renovated kitchen and Commons area will make providing meals for guests much more efficient. The Community Kitchen (a soup kitchen that operates daily out of the seminary) will finally have adequate food storage and—at long last—the Commons will be air conditioned.

With this project, every inch of the original seminary building from 1954 will be renovated and made functional for the decades to come.

Not so visible but of vital importance will be improvements to the seminary’s infrastructure, including significant upgrades of the mechanical systems. As a result of the project, the seminary will be much more energy efficient, and the entire building will meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**You, our supporters, have made this all possible!**
Architecturally, the building will be one cohesive piece, all in the same Georgian Colonial style that has dominated the corner of 13th and College Avenue since the mid-1950s.

That’s 2019, and a whole lot of dust is going to fly between now and then. By the time you read this, demolition and construction will have begun, and a new, exciting future for Western will be emerging.
Graduates of Western Theological Seminary

“May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he’ll do it!”

I Thessalonians 5:23-24 (The Message)
Luis Torres-Avila  
M.A.  
Bayamón, Puerto Rico

Michael Tubergen  
M.Div.  
Hudsonville, MI

Michelle VanDenBerg  
M.Div.  
Holland, MI

Karen Vande Bunte  
M.Div.  
Zeeland, MI

Adam Van Der Stoep  
M.Div.  
Ellsworth, MN

David Vander Woude  
M.Div.  
Grand Rapids, MI

Jacob Van Steenwyk  
M.Div. Dec ’16  
Pella, IA

Matthew Veenstra  
M.A.  
Zeeland, MI

Christopher Walker  
M.Div.  
Grand Haven, MI

Matthew Warfield, Jr.  
M.Div.  
Muskegon, MI

Lubna d/o Younas Dewan  
Th.M.  
Mardan, Pakistan

Erin Zoutendam  
Th.M.  
Grand Rapids, MI

The Torres family celebrates with 2017 Distinguished Alum Dr. Samuel Solivan ’76. From L to R: Christian, Gretchen ’17 (GCUPM), Dr. Solivan ’76, and Luis ’17 (MA).

M.Div. graduate Chris Walker is met with jumps of joy from his daughter and son after the Commencement service.

Thank you! A WTS alum told us he saves the annual issue of graduates and regularly prays for each person by name.
The Class of 2017 received their degrees on Monday evening, May 8, in Dimnent Memorial Chapel on the campus of Hope College. Western Theological Seminary awarded 35 Master of Divinity degrees, seven Master of Arts degrees, four Master of Theology degrees, eight Doctor of Ministry degrees, two Certificates in Urban Pastoral Ministry, and one Certificate in Disability and Ministry.

The planned speaker for the evening, Dr. Miroslav Volf, regretfully had to cancel due to a family medical emergency, and on very short notice, Dr. Fred L. Johnson III graciously accepted the seminary’s invitation to give the commencement address. Dr. Johnson is associate professor of history at Hope College and also an M.Div. graduate of WTS. The speech was a resounding success, and we again extend our gratitude to Dr. Johnson for being such a good friend to the seminary.
ALUMNI DAY
May 8, 2017

CLASS of 1967

Don Jansen, Ralph Houston, Arnold VanBeek, Kelvin Krone-meyer, Paul Swets, Calvin Tysen, Ralph Robrahn

NOT PICTURED: David Bach, David Cooper, Dale Crall (MRE), David DeVisser, Vern Eisenberg (MRE), Donald Jiskoot, Wendell Karsen (ThM), David VanDam, Norman VanManen, Ken VanWyk, John Voss, Wesley Westhuis, Moody Yap

ON TO GLORY: Edward Grant, Lester Terlouw, Raymond VanBeek, John Wurpts

CLASS of 1977

Bob Van Voorst, Peter Semeyn, Steve VanderMolen, Bob Hoffman, Howard Moths, Teunisje “Tina” Velthuizen


ON TO GLORY: Rufus Mahimai (ThM)

News

At the spring session of the Classis of Pleasant Prairie in the Synod of the Heartland, Melvin J. Voss ’55 was recognized for his 50 year membership in the Classis and for serving as its stated clerk and treasurer for 27 years, among all of his other work in Classis ministry.

In his retirement, James Brinkhuis ’57 is teaching a small adult Sunday school class. He regrets that living 1400 miles away from Holland prevented him from attending the 60th reunion of his class. He writes, “May God richly bless Western, the staff, and the students.”

Eugene DeHoogh ’57 is grateful for 60 years since graduating from Western. On April 30 he gave the 20th anniversary message for the Holladay Peterson Chapel at Dow Rummel Retirement Village in Sioux Falls, SD, where he was chaplain for 17 years. He and his wife are also looking forward to the 100th anniversary of Valley Springs Reformed Church in Valley Springs, SD, where Gene will be part of a trio singing Psalm 42:1 in Dutch.

Harry Mencarelli ’60 is living at Edison Manor in Grand Rapids, MI and involved in many activities, such as serving as the Christian rest home’s resident artist and on the resident council board. His paintings are scattered throughout the buildings, resident rooms, and apartments. He also does ceramics and craft-making classes. He reports, “Harry is still alive, well and busy as he has ever been!”

In response to Wally Stoepker’s article, “Oh, How Times have Changed!” in the March Commons, Roger Bruggink ’61 writes that he, too, rode a horse during the course of ministry in Appalachia (1961-67). He and his horse, Sugarfoot, visited and delivered supplies to parishioners, especially during winter. Roger and his wife, Adilee, went on to minister to Native Americans in Mescalero, NM in the 1970s. They moved to Oman in the late 80s and helped to found the Al Amana Centre (Centre of Faithfulness), which has become a key player in Christian/Muslim dialogue.

Wendell Karsen ’63 & ’67(ThM) recently published Christianity Under the Microscope: Is the Christian Faith Still Worth Believing in a Postmodern World? The 500 page volume deals with questions such as: Is there a God? What’s so unique about Christianity? What about other
On May 1, Bethany Popkes ’11 began serving as the solo pastor of High Bridge Reformed Church in High Bridge, NJ. She moved across the country from Whidbey Presbyterian Church in Oak Harbor, WA, where she has been the youth and family pastor for 5 ½ years.

Jill Sweet ’12 is celebrating her new role as grandmother to Savannah and Charlotte Sweet, daughters of Ryan Sweet ’11 and his wife, Jaclyn, and grandmother to Delilana Shoup, daughter of Ben Shoup ’12 and Megan Sweet Shoup ’14. Jill is also continuing her pursuit of a D.Min. at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Michelle Gross ’15 will be ordained as Specialized Minister at First Reformed Church in Oostburg, WI on June 25. In August, she will start her call as campus minister at University of Wisconsin–OshKosh with His House Christian Fellowship.

Jacob Parks ’15 and his wife, Becky, announce the arrival of their first child, Graham Benjamin, born on April 6, 2017.

On May 7, Lisa Braunius ’16 was ordained at Fellowship Reformed Church in Holland, MI. She is serving as a chaplain for SouthernCare Hospice in Wyoming, MI.

Laura Miller-Purrenhage ’16 passed her ordination exam and Ecclesiastical Council this last winter and is now seeking a call in the United Church of Christ.

On to glory...

Gerald Dykstra ’49
b. 9/14/1921 Ashkum, IL
d. 3/14/2017 Primghar, IA
U of IL ’43; WTS ’49
Churches served:
(1949-54) Clymer Hill, NY
(1954-60) Oswasco, NY
(1960-68) Mt. Pleasant, Schenectady, NY
(1968-81) American, Primghar, IA
(1981-85) Commanche, Lawton, OK

Harold Dykstra ’52
b. 8/8/1920 Holland, MI
d. 12/14/2016 Chandler, AZ
Hope ’49; WTS ’52
Service to the church:
(1952-53) missionary, Macy, NE
(1953-56) Dulce, NM
Dismissed to the Presbyterian church where he served in Texas & New Mexico.

J. David Muyskens ’59
b. 4/19/1934 Sheldon, IA
d. 4/1/2017 Grand Rapids, MI
Central ’56, WTS ’59, Princeton Theo.
Sem. ’62 (ThM) & ’78 (DMin)
Churches served:
(1959-67) Pottersville, NJ
(1967-75) First, Union City, NJ
(1975-99) First, New Brunswick, NJ

John Zwiers ’60
b. 11/2/1934 Chicago, IL
d. 10/26/2016 Aurora, CO
Calvin ’57; WTS ’60
(1960-81) chaplain, US Army

Thomas James Harris ’61
b. 9/23/1912 Blakely, PA
d. 9/5/2016 Denver, CO
Hope ’58; WTS ’61
Churches served:
(1968-78) Hilliborough, Millstone, NJ
(1978-80) United, Somerville, NJ
(1980-98) Stoney Brook, NY
Other service:
(1961-62) admin asst, BWM, RCA
(1963-68) missionary, Japan

George Brown ’69
b. 12/19/1942 Philadelphia, PA
d. 4/30/2017 Grand Rapids, MI
Central ’65; WTS ’69; PrincetonTS ’71 (ThM); MSU ’89 (PhD)
Service to the church:
(1969-73) Pottersville, NJ
(1971-73) minChrEd, Peapack, Gladstone, NJ
(1973-88) minChrEd, Central, Grand Rapids, MI
(1975-76 & 1983-88) adjunct prof of
Christian Ed, WTS
(1988-2012) prof of Christian Ed, dean of faculty, associate dean, WTS

Norman Hammm ’78
b. 3/12/1952 Troy, NY
d. 12/18/2016 Schenectady, NY
Hope ’74; WTS 78
Churches served:
(1978-83) Glen, NY
(1984-91) Germantown, NY
(2000-07) First, W. Glenville, NY
(2007-10) pulpitt supply, 13 Reformed churches

Mark VandenBosch ’12
b. 2/4/1965 Muskegon, MI
d. 4/17/2017 Grand Haven, MI
Calvin, Valparaiso Law, WMU, WTS ’12
Service to the church:
Addiction counselor, VandenBosch Counseling Services
Exec dir, Recovery Alllies, Grand Rapids

David Randall Gabrielse ’17 (GCUPM)
b. 2/8/1968 Mt. Clemens, MI
d. 4/15/2017 Byron Center, MI
Calvin ’89; MSU ’02 (Masters & PhD in History); WTS Dec ’16 (GCUPM)
Service to the church:
(2004-09) CRC campus min, IowaSU
(2009-2015) urban ministry, Grand Rapids, MI

I thank my God every time I remember you” (Philippians 1:3)

Dr. George Brown, Jr., beloved colleague, friend, mentor and professor, left this earthly life for glory on April 30. A glance at his Facebook page shows an outpouring of posts relaying what effect this man of faith had on generations of students.

Even throughout years of suffering with pulmonary fibrosis, his home and heart were open to any visitors, and he continued to bless others with his wit, wisdom, and pastoral care.

“Well done, good and faithful servant.”
Rev. Dr. Samuel Solivan calls himself Pentecostal and Arminian—not exactly a run-of-the-mill Western graduate! From the moment he was born, this year’s distinguished alum has lived a life full of surprises and God’s miraculous intervention.

When Sam’s mother was only seven months pregnant, she was at the church cleaning around the altar when suddenly she began to go into labor. The pastor and some members of the church helped her to the floor and she gave birth right there. The pastor held the boy in his arms and named him Samuel.

Sam’s parents had moved to East Harlem, NY from Puerto Rico. His father was a quiet military man, and his mother was a devout Christ-follower who took her six sons to church nearly every day. Sam learned a deep love for the church from her.

As a child, Sam was diagnosed with hearing loss and what was then called “mental retardation.” His mother was encouraged to send him to a special school for the deaf, but it was too far away, so he remained in remedial classes at public school.

Doctors attempted four different surgeries to improve his hearing, but the last surgery caused part of his face to become disfigured. He dealt with a lot of bullying, leading his teachers to suggest home school, but his mother insisted he stay in school. “We believe in a healing God,” she said.

He later transferred to a vocational school, and there his guidance counselor told him not to expect much out of life. “Just do your best.”

That same night, Irene’s father asked Sam to join him at an evangelistic meeting the next day. When the evangelist (whom Sam had never met) went forward to speak, he asked, “Is there a Sam Solivan in the room?” Sam nervously stepped forward, and the man said, “The Lord said he will heal your mind and body and teach you Spanish.”

A few years later when Sam graduated from high school, he was drafted into the Air Force. Once he passed training, the military realized he had pre-existing conditions that would prevent him from getting insurance during active duty. They offered him an option: either go to Vietnam without insurance, or receive an honorable discharge as a veteran of the United States.

“I may be [mentally disabled], but I’m no fool!” Dr. Solivan recalls thinking.

He returned home and went to church to thank God for not having to go to war. In normal Pentecostal tradition, Sam began to speak in tongues as he prayed at the front of the church. In the back of the church, someone offered the interpretation: “I permitted this [sickness] in your life to save your life, and now I’m going to heal you. The four years you would have given to the Air Force, you will give to Me to serve Me.”

From that day forward, his hearing began to improve. Over the years, his facial deformation has healed to the point that it is now barely noticeable.

Sam heard about Central Bible College in Springfield, MO from Irene’s pastor and decided to apply. Even though he was at a second grade reading level, his compassionate professors helped him as the Lord healed his mind and body.

He completed his Bachelor of Arts in 1970 and returned to the Pentecostal church where he was raised, this time as the head pastor. He also began work as a community organizer in East Harlem. Traditionally, Pentecostal pastors are not required to attend seminary, so Sam would have been happy not to go—but the Lord had other plans.
In 1973, Sam received a call from Dr. I. John Hesselink of Western Theological Seminary. Dr. Hesselink was working with the Reformed Church in America to recruit Latino leadership in the denomination and wanted Sam to come for an interview to be a student. The sheer unconventionality of the situation told Sam that this was a sign from God. A month later, he and his wife and three young children moved to Holland, MI for the Greek summer course.

“As an Arminian, a Latino, and a Pentecostal, it was somewhat strange, but also amazing and wonderful,” he shares. “There’s been no other community that was so powerful in transforming and equipping me. Western Theological Seminary is the institution that has most marked my life.”

During his time in Holland, Sam was named the city’s Commissioner of Education and Housing for the Human Relations Commission, and he also started the West Michigan Latino Ministers Association. He graduated with the class of 1976, alongside current WTS president Timothy Brown.

“I have kept looking over Western’s shoulders over the years, seeing their efforts to recruit Latino, African Americans, and other minorities,” says Sam. “I’ve been encouraged by that.”

One interaction with Professor John Piet stuck with Sam. “I’m going to speak to you as a Pentecostal,” Dr. Piet said one day to Sam’s surprise. “The Holy Spirit is leading me to tell you this: The Lord is going to open the doors for you to get a Ph.D.”

Dr. Piet was right. The following year, Sam was accepted to Union Theological Seminary in New York City for a one-year research degree, the Master of Sacred Theology. Later, after serving four years as an RCA missionary in Venezuela, he would return to Union for his Ph.D.

Even though Sam came from a Pentecostal background, the WTS faculty certified him to be ordained in the RCA by the Classis of New York. When he and his family returned from Venezuela, he served as lead pastor of Bethel Reformed Church in New Jersey and later Old First Reformed Church in Brooklyn. Eventually, Dr. Solivan transferred to the Assemblies of God, the world’s largest Pentecostal denomination. He moved to Boston and taught Christian theology at Andover Newton Theological School.

Harvard Medical School invited him to be the theologian on a team studying medicine and spirituality. Eventually the study became a required course, and he was asked to be an adjunct faculty member.

In 1999, the Lord called Dr. Solivan to Puerto Rico. He was invited to serve as vice president of religious affairs at InterAmerican University, the largest bi-lingual evangelical protestant university in the world. He still serves there as a tenured professor of theology, and he helped to found their Ph.D. program. He has also served for nine years at the Theological Seminary of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Solivan helped to found the Eurasian Theological Seminary in Moscow, the European Leadership Academy in Malaga, Spain, and spent eleven years as part of the international faculty for the Haggai Institute with locations in Maui and Singapore.

The Haggai Institute trains professionals and executives from all over the world in evangelism and leadership. Students have included supreme court justices, lawyers, engineers, and even princesses.

“These are the kinds of things that keep me busy,” Dr. Solivan laughs.

He and Irene run the ecumenical Center for Theological Reflection in Puerto Rico, which meets monthly to pray and discuss theology with others. Also, for the last 14 years Dr. Solivan has led a radio program on theological reflection called “Thinking out Loud” with fellow theologians.

The Solivans have four grown children who live in the U.S.: three daughters and one son.

Before going off to Bible college, Dr. Solivan recalls his father (who barely ever spoke about spiritual matters) telling him, “Do it with excellence, because the Lord requires excellence.”

After a challenging childhood but a deep faithfulness to God and community, Dr. Solivan’s life has certainly been marked by excellence and a grateful spirit.
What’s in an apostrophe?

Have you seen the greeting card that says “Let’s eat Grandma” and “Let’s eat, Grandma,” with the headline “Punctuation Saves Lives”?

Similarly, there was a fine point of punctuation at play in the title “Writer’s Workshop” that made all the difference in the event Western recently was a part of. We consciously chose to call this a “writer’s workshop” instead of a “writers’ workshop.” The difference is that we wanted the emphasis to be singular instead of plural.

A unique aspect of the conference was that participants had the opportunity to sign up for one-on-one sessions with each of the presenters. I had a big grin on my face when I saw Western students, alumni, and friends spending individual time with Barbara Brown Taylor, *NY Times* best-selling author and member of the “Time 100” list of most influential people in the world. Others were able to meet Rachelle Gardner, a top literary agent, or Dwight Baker, president of Baker Publishing Group, or any of the several industry leaders that were a part of the conference. I felt institutional pride in seeing Stephanie Smith, an editor at Zondervan Publishing and a current Western student, as one of the presenters.

Western’s James I. Cook Endowment in Christianity and Literature helped sponsor the event. I remember well conversations with Dr. Cook and how he always made me feel like the most important person in the room. I trust the participants in this recent workshop felt the same way when they interacted with the writers and publishers who gathered in Holland for a few days in mid-May.
The Rev. Dawn Boelkins Retires

After more than twenty years of teaching biblical languages at Western Theological Seminary, Associate Professor Dawn Boelkins is retiring at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. To say that she will be missed only scratches the surface of what her gifts and presence have meant to students, colleagues, staff, and administration.

The ordination liturgy for Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the RCA charges those being ordained to “attend to reading, prayer, study, preaching, and teaching,” and to “not neglect the gift that is in you.” Since her ordination to that office in 1987, Dawn has devoted herself to living out every aspect of that charge. A graduate of both Western’s M.Div. and D.Min. degree programs, Dawn has played an integral part in the work and culture of Western Theological Seminary, teaching Hebrew and Greek in both the on-campus and distance learning programs. Her students laud her for her creativity and compassion, crediting her with opening God’s Word to them in unexpected and invaluable ways.

Dawn’s own sense of calling and satisfaction in her teaching is glimpsed in her response to a question about what it’s like to teach required language courses: “Generally, students approach the biblical languages with some trepidation. I beckon them past their uncertainties into the humbling, exhilarating, and spiritually rewarding discipline of biblical translation and interpretation.” One of her greatest joys, she says, is seeing the “lights go on” for her students in this regard. She also highlights the rich sense of collegiality she has experienced in participating in the Hebrew program, which has undergone many innovative changes during her years on the teaching team.

When asked to reflect on what has given her the most joy in her time at WTS, Dawn identifies her role in the committee that redesigned Mulder Chapel. The practical and theological joined hands in a powerful way for her on this committee. The end result, she says, was “an opportunity to see the Word made flesh” in a wonderful way.

You will be deeply missed, Dawn! Thank you for tending so faithfully both to your own gifts and to the gifts of your students. May God bless you richly in the coming years as you have indeed blessed us.

—Dr. Carol Bechtel

In their words...

In Hebrew class I loved when you would gather us in a circle to have a “lovely little theological discussion.” You always created a safe and holy space for us to share our perceptions and ideas about what we were learning. Thank you for offering yourself and your gifts of language, teaching, music, worship, and creativity to the church, the seminary, and to students like me who are now ready to take all we have learned and go out to share God’s blessing to those we encounter along the way.

—Michelle VanDenBerg

As one who struggled with Greek, your care and skill opened the door to the beauty of the language, and how it can help reveal God’s character to us.

—Chris Walker

in Hebrew class, you named me Rav Chesed—steadfast loving kindness. As an attribute of God, it is used again and again in scripture, and each mention of it brings to light the depths of not only who God is, but helps me realize more fully who I am in God. What a gift! I will truly cherish it the rest of my life.

—Amy Klanderman

At faculty meetings I often saw you as a model, showing us how to ask honest and probing questions while holding to your convictions, even if you were the only one to vote a certain direction. I loved it when you were willing to be the only “no” or “yes” vote!

—Dr. J. Todd Billings

I will never look again at Greek or Hebrew with the fear and frustration I had living within me when I walked into my first class with you. I am an improved student of the Word because you showed me how to research to understand the narrative in light of God’s redemptive plan, and not just to get the language right.

—Josh Westhouse

Teaching on the Hebrew team has been one of the greatest joys of my life and has lent such meaning and purpose to my work. Thank you for giving yourself to the team for so many years, for laughing with us at all our mistakes (and sharing yours so we could both laugh and learn from them). Thank you for being not just a delightful colleague, but a dear friend.

—Rev. Travis West
Hispanic Ministries Programs

On May 4, Rev. Joseph Ocasio arrived in Holland to begin his role as director of Hispanic ministry programs for WTS. Rev. Ocasio comes to us from Phoenixville, PA, where he served as director of admissions for the University of Valley Forge. Along with managing the institution’s enrollment, Joseph participated in developing diversity strategies to promote cultural engagement among faculty, staff, and students.

Previously, Rev. Ocasio launched the Hispanic Leadership Center at Southeastern University in Lakeland, FL. In that capacity, he organized student leaders to develop many campus events promoting cultural connections, and he built bridges with Latino/a churches to provide a pathway toward completing an associate of ministry degree entirely in Spanish for Hispanic pastors and leaders.

While in Florida, Rev. Ocasio was the pastor of John 3:16 Christian Church, a bilingual church in Lakeland. He is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God serving within the Spanish language districts.

Joseph and his wife of 27 years, Myra, are proud parents of four children and have three grandchildren. Whenever possible, Joseph enjoys playing golf, road biking, martial arts and hiking. Rev. Ocasio earned a bachelor of science degree in church leadership and an MA in ministerial leadership from Southeastern University. He also has an MBA from the University of South Florida with a specialization in management and marketing. Currently, he is in his second year pursuing a doctorate of education in educational leadership from Gwynedd Mercy University.

Western’s strategic plan calls us to “participate in Latino/a theological education.” Led by Rev. Ocasio, our first initiative contextualizes our current Graduate Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry (GCUPM) into a program specifically aimed at preparing and empowering Hispanic women and men to lead the church in mission.

This certificate is comprised of 24 credit hours, including courses in biblical studies, church history, theology, leadership, urban ministry, and the ecclesial concerns of the Hispanic Church.

This summer Western will launch two simultaneous GCUPM cohorts. One will commence in June with nearly 30 Pentecostal pastors and leaders.

One cohort is launching in partnership with the Reformed Church in America’s Classis of the Americas. The GCUPM will provide the necessary professional, personal, spiritual and academic preparation for individuals seeking an appointment as Commissioned Pastor of the RCA. The educational and formation experiences this program provides will incorporate the ten competencies for ministries championed by the Commissioned Pastors Advisory Team (CPAT) and the Pastoral Formation Coordinating Committee (PFCC).

The seminary community is enthused about these new developments and looks forward to sharing news of other aspects of the Hispanic Ministries Programs in future issues.
the United States. In addition to her work at Western, Dr. Latini served as the George C. Weinman chair of pastoral theology and ministry at Luther Seminary.

“Under Dr. Latini’s leadership, United Lutheran Seminary has a bright future—their gain is Western Theological Seminary’s loss,” says President Brown. “Theresa is a great scholar, dedicated teacher, and student advocate, and she has served our school well.”

Gordon Govens will join the faculty in academic year 2017-2018 as the seminary’s sixth faculty fellow. A graduate of Swarthmore College, Fordham University School of Law, and Princeton Theological Seminary (MDiv, MTh), Gordon is currently completing his doctoral dissertation at Princeton on the history of Christianity. He comes to us with a distinguished career in law and business and with the highest recommendations of his faculty mentors. He has expertise in church history, especially the Reformation period and the thought of John Calvin. The seminary community looks forward to his arrival.

On April 17, Lannette Zylman-TenHave joined the staff of Western Theological Seminary as executive assistant to the president and to the business office. Lannette brings 15+ years of experience working as executive assistant to the provost at Hope College. She also coordinated Hope’s commencement and convocation ceremonies. With her gifts and experience in academic administration, Lannette is well prepared to keep the work of the President’s Office operating smoothly. Lannette and her husband, Bill, are longtime residents of Holland and are members of Christ Memorial Church, where Lannette accompanies the 200-voice choir. She also volunteers with KidsHopeUSA and enjoys playing golf.

In August 2016 GlossaHouse published Biblical Hebrew: an interactive approach, a Hebrew textbook by Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Travis West. It takes the uniquely interactive method for teaching Hebrew that professors Tom Boogaart, Travis West, Pam Bush, and Dawn Boelkins have developed—with the help of numerous students—over the last eleven years and makes it available to a wider audience of students and professors. See glossahouse.com/haarets. To take a look inside the textbook (and perhaps learn a bit of Hebrew yourself!), see its Amazon page.

CORRECTION: In the March Commons under a picture of a group in Oman we identified “retired RCA missionary Gary North.” This should have said Gary Brown. Please accept our apologies.

WTS Alumni Study Tour of Israel: Nov. 3-16, 2017. This trip has been opened up to all (not just alumni). For more information, go to: journey.westernsem.edu/events/ or contact Rev. Steve VanderMolen at 616-392-8555, x113. Registration deadline July 31.

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With Gratitude
The WTS - Newbigin House Partnership

I still remember visiting Western Theological Seminary in 2010 on an exploratory trip for Newbigin House of Studies, an educational initiative that had emerged from City Church San Francisco. There was a palpable sense of excitement about a unique relationship between a respected seminary and an important city church. The prospects grew as President Tim Brown secured a significant grant to help fund the partnership. In the Fall of 2011 our partnership was launched in San Francisco in an inaugural event featuring NT Wright. Our first class of graduates from the WTS-Newbigin Distance Learning Master of Divinity program walked last May.

The partnership was designed to train church planters in city settings, and we’re happy to report that we have graduates (and students) planting or serving in Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Boulder, San Francisco, and beyond (even Bangkok!). In the years we’ve been together, nearly 40 students benefitted from a challenging missional curriculum, with yearly intensives in San Francisco.

The formal partnership, however, has come to an end. While the cost of ongoing funding for an endeavor like this exceeds our capacity, we’ve also learned many things from each other. Newbigin House, led by my good friend Dr. Scot Sherman, discerned that they can serve the church best through a “Newbigin Year” program, making their offerings more broadly accessible. And WTS changed much during its time in partnership. I moved from San Francisco and joined Western’s faculty at the same time as some excellent new colleagues with expertise in mission, justice, disability, and more. Western isn’t the same seminary it was in 2010, and our curriculum and ethos have been changed not only by the influence of these new professors but also by our partnership with the Newbigin House of Studies.

The net gains are huge, and the work goes on as students continue their learning within this unique curriculum. WTS will grant advanced standing with credit to applicants who have completed a new ministry discernment program at NHS called the Newbigin Year. Current WTS students may also take NHS courses for credit toward their WTS programs.

We give thanks for all this partnership has meant.

—Dr. Chuck DeGroat
Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling
Senior Fellow of the Newbigin House of Studies
If you do a “Google Image” search on Philippians 2:3, surely George’s kind face should be the image that appears before you. What is Philippians 2:3? “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

I came to Western Theological Seminary in 1995 to teach preaching, having never taught a course before. There is a world of difference between the pulpit and the classroom, and George Brown was the coach who lovingly and patiently showed me how to inhabit a whole new world. I will forever be in his debt.

All of us at Western Theological Seminary feel his loss deeply and are left to say, “Good night sweet prince: And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

Grace and Peace,