What a decade!

With the turning of the calendar to 2020, we look back at the highlights from the last ten years. There is much to celebrate!

The renovation of the John R. Mulder Chapel, 2011

Originally constructed in 1954, the chapel was in great need of restoration after 57 years. President Timothy Brown initiated the campaign to restore the sacred space, and a dedicated committee put much theological thought and planning into the renovation. The result, according to architect James VanderMolen, was “an ongoing dialogue between the old and the new in which both had something beautiful to say.”

In the years since, the form of the new chapel has encouraged us to look for God in the central things: pulpit, table, and font. There we focus on Word and Sacrament, surrounded by the gifts of music, creation, and community.
Faculty Fellows Program

To help prepare leaders for diverse congregations, Western created the Faculty Fellows program in 2009. Racial-ethnic scholars are invited to teach at the seminary part-time while finishing their doctoral studies.

In the last decade, six scholars have been fellows at the seminary, teaching classes in topics such as modern black theology, multi-cultural ministry, theology and social movements, pastoral care and counseling, and justice/liberation.

Several fellows stayed additional years as visiting professors. Dr. Kantzer Komline joined the faculty, and Dr. Castillo Portugal continues to serve as an adjunct professor.

The Bast Preaching Initiatives

In late 2013, WTS received a $500,000 grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., to strengthen the quality of our preaching program.

Under the leadership of Rev. Lindsay Small, the Bast Preaching Initiatives allowed the seminary to build skills and enthusiasm for preaching in college students, seminary students, and pastors.

The grant also sponsored a resident preaching program, bringing preachers to campus as a mentoring resource to students. The impact of the grant lives on in our annual Bast Preaching Festival, held in November.

Hispanic Ministry Program

After envisioning a strategic initiative in 2014 to increase cultural diversity and competency by participating in Latino/a theological education, the seminary pressed forward immediately.

2014 Partnered with Instituto Biblico Ebenezer, providing classroom space for the biblical training school for Latino/a church leaders.
2016 Dr. Alvin Padilla hired as Vice President of Academic Affairs; he lays groundwork for Hispanic Ministry Program (HMP).
2017 Rev. Joseph Ocasio hired to direct the HMP. Due to growth, two support staff members were added in 2018 and 2019.
2017 Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry contextualized to prepare and empower Hispanic women and men to lead the church. Over 100 students have taken part so far.
2018 Doctor of Ministry made available to a cohort of Portuguese-speaking students in Brazil, partnering with Filadelfia University.
2019 A cohort of Spanish-speaking students began their D.Min. studies in the Dominican Republic. More cohorts are planned for future years.

A new public voice of WTS began in 2015 with the launching of The LuxCast, the seminary’s first videocast/podcast. See theluxcast.org
Great strides in disability and ministry

In 2013, Dr. Ben Conner, an experienced ministry practitioner in the field of theology and disability, joined the faculty of WTS. One of the attractions for Ben was the existence of the Friendship House. Through Dr. Conner’s work, WTS became a leader in the field of disability and ministry by the end of the decade. Dr. Conner was named director of the newly formed Center for Disability and Ministry in the fall of 2019.

Highlights:

2013 *Ministry and Margins* course created, the first among many new courses to teach students how people with disabilities interact with Scripture and how the church can do a better job of including them in the life of faith.

2014 First director of The Friendship House hired to expand its influence and integration into the seminary community.

2015 Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry (GCDM) created; first 10 students enroll in the Fall of 2016. The GCDM helps church and lay leaders recognize, appreciate, and incorporate the gifts and perspectives of people with disabilities in various ministry settings.

2016 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability hosted for the first time, welcoming 160 attendees from around the country. It was also hosted in 2019 and will be again in 2020.

2016 Henry Luce Foundation Grant of $425,000 awarded for “Enabling Theological Education: Preparing the Next Generation of Christian Leaders—Presence, Intention, and Dimension for Ministry to, with, and by People with Disabilities,” spearheaded by Dr. Conner.

2018 The original six Friends graduated from Friendship House, having undergone huge growth in independence and living skills, allowing them to live on their own.

2018 Two Henri Nouwen Doctoral Fellows joined the faculty for two years as they finish their dissertations on an aspect of disability studies and contribute to the seminar’s work on disability and ministry.

2019 The first symposium on disability and ministry held, with lectures by Dr. John Swinton, founder of the Aberdeen University’s Centre for Spirituality, Health, and Disability.

2019 The Center for Disability and Ministry created at WTS.
Increasing Enrollment

Enrollment increased 40% in the last decade! This is attributed to our array of new programs, certificates, and a revised theme-based Doctor of Ministry program.

New President, 2019

The decade ended with the retirement of Dr. Timothy Brown and the inauguration of Dr. Felix Theonugraha as the 12th president of Western Theological Seminary.

Student borrowing dropped 38%

Thanks to financial support from Lilly Endowment, Inc. from 2013-19, Western was able to engage the issues of student debt and financial literacy (both personal and corporate). The seminary introduced new curriculum, created resources, and adjusted financial aid procedures in efforts to increase student understanding of finance and to reduce borrowing.

Generous donors make “Our New Day” capital campaign successful, 2018

Over $16M was donated to WTS, allowing major renovations and the completion of the Jack and Mary DeWitt Learning Center and the Dick and Ethie Haworth Leadership Center. An additional $10M in endowment gifts was pledged. Thank you!
I remember back in 2015 sitting in the WTS Admissions office telling the director at that time, Mark Poppen, that the reason I was applying was because I wanted to learn, but “I don’t really need seminary to change me.”

Well… I’ll admit it. Five years later, I am not the same person who had that conversation with Mark. I am a healthier leader, I’m more curious, and I am so thankful for the experience of attending Western.

As part of the distance learning Master of Divinity program, students are required to go to campus for a week in the spring and fall, which is called intensives. The first intensive week was a seminary-altering experience for many of us.

Rev. Dr. Chad Pierce was our Greek professor (I contend that God knew I would not have made it through Greek without Chad). During that intensive we translated sentence after sentence together, which led to a handful of us meeting over Zoom to continue that practice online. We logged in at 9 p.m. every Thursday the rest of the year and did the same thing when we took Hebrew and needed support from each other to learn that language. We studied together, lamented the load, and through it all, life-long relationships formed. One of us lost a mother during that time, so we were able to provide love and care, even via distance, through this practice. Any initial doubt I may have had about the effectiveness of an education delivered mostly online dissolved.

Another requirement of the M.Div. program is to go on an intercultural immersion trip. I chose to engage in a trip to the Borderlands—the U.S./Mexico border between Douglas, AZ and Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico.

Our hosts at Frontera de Cristo led us on a journey to taste and see what life on the border is like for border patrol and for migrants desperate to get to the USA for safety and opportunity. We learned of the ways ministries were working to save lives of migrants who had tried to get across the border but had been deported, and of others who were thinking of ways to provide jobs and opportunities to stay in Mexico and live good lives there.

Each morning when I enjoy a cup of coffee in my kitchen, I recall that trip and the coffee roasting cooperative that Frontera de Cristo started (justcoffee.org). When I purchase from them, I know I am supporting much more than just coffee! I may not be called to work at the border, but I can do my part to help those who are. The trip taught me how interconnected we all are and how much we need each other.

As this five-year distance learning journey winds down, there are many reasons I am grateful for the decision I made to enter seminary. Professors challenged me to own what I believe to be true. I learned from fellow students on the online discussion boards, and I even tried on some new ways of thinking in the process. They were all pretty gracious with me as I explored my faith and the reasons I have for believing what I believe. The real gift is that I now have relationships from coast to coast that will last a lifetime. And beyond all of that, I have a deepened love for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Chris Godfredsen serves on the Synod of the Heartland staff as the East/West Sioux Classis Leader. He is a pastor to pastors and a catalyst for strengthening and starting churches. He is a Faithwalking Foundations facilitator, works with pastor networks, and assists pastoral search teams to ensure that congregations and pastors find the best fit in times of pastoral transition. He says he feels called to the work that he does, resourcing RCA churches in NW Iowa, but also trusts that God knows what is in store for roles like the one he fills in the RCA in the months and years to come.

Chris Godfredsen to campus, October, 2017.

Chris takes part in the Senior Blessing, May 2018.
Like many of her peers, WTS alumna Katie Alley ’19 had non-traditional ministry in mind when she started seminary. A recent article from Christianity Today cites a survey of 5,000+ seminary students in which almost 40% intend to serve in contexts outside the local church.

Katie had taken a job with a non-profit right out of college, but soon discovered it was not the right fit. She decided to return to the classroom to explore the deep love she had for God and the church.

Western’s emphasis on formation, experiential learning, and internships set it apart from other seminaries. She felt it would be a good place to learn while trying on different hats to see what type of ministry might best fit her gifts.

During her first year, Katie interned with a community development non-profit. Although she learned a lot, she decided to try hospital chaplaincy the next year, hoping it would suit her better. However, her second internship at Holland Hospital didn’t feel quite right either. Although she was gaining confidence in her work, she didn’t particularly enjoy it.

Meanwhile, she had begun taking a preaching class and leading chapel—and she realized that felt most natural, even though the thought of pastoral ministry intimidated her. Not having grown up with female pastors, she hadn’t considered becoming a pastor until now.

Faculty members like Travis West and Kyle Small recognized Katie’s gifts of pastoral leadership and encouraged her to find confidence in herself and push through questions she still had. Pam Bush of the Formation for Ministry office came alongside Katie and helped her explore what intimidated her even as she continued developing her talents. Being an in-residence student gave her access to a group of classmates who were praying and rooting for her.

“At the beginning of seminary it felt like all my classmates knew what they wanted to do and were really confident,” Katie says. “I learned along the way that everyone was equally scared. Yet, it never felt like competition. We all wanted each other to be successful and discover what we were meant to do.”

After her second year of seminary and with the support of the community behind her, Katie felt ready to give pastoral ministry a try. She spent the summer at Second Reformed Church of Pella, IA under the direction of Pastors Steve & Sophie Mathonnet-VanderWell. There she got to learn, visit congregants, and see what it would be like to be on a team of pastors.

While the experience confirmed that she didn’t want to be a solo pastor, she knew she wanted to continue preaching—and when she found out the church’s youth minister took a different call, the opportunity opened to come back full-time after graduation.

As Katie settles into her calling, she realizes that the process of trying different things helped her feel more confident when she finally landed. She appreciates the formation for ministry process at WTS that allowed her to find the best fit for her gifts of ministry and then develop those abilities.

Having a team around to encourage, disciple, and speak truth to Katie was important in seminary and continues to be so. In addition to her ministry team at Second Reformed, she keeps in touch with professors and classmates, many of whom are also in their first calls.

Just like her path to pastoral ministry was unexpected, she knows that the work of ministry will be full of twists and turns.

“Some days are filled with trying to write a sermon that’s not coming; some days I’m visiting people,” she says. “I don’t know what new challenge each day will bring, but as my classmates and I start out, I’m really grateful we have a support system to cheer each other on.”
News

Stan Hagemeyer ‘65, former interim professor at WTS, recently published Courage to Care - You Can Help Others who are Suffering. The book grew out of two decades of interviewing professional and volunteer caregivers, as well as people who endured great suffering. It provides training for care teams and practical tools to build confidence and competence in serving those who are suffering. Dozens of stories illustrate the concepts and make the book accessible to most readers.

Robert E. Dahl ’70 has published his third book of poetry in collaboration with his daughter Rachel Dahl entitled, Comedy and Tragedy - and what’s in between: Musings, Vignettes, Poems III. Rachel formatted the book and added original watercolors. Chris McKinley-Dahl, an award-winning mixed-media sculptor and Bob’s wife, contributed photos of her sculptures.

Robert Van Voorst ’77 has edited a special issue on “Current Trends in New Testament Study” for the peer-reviewed electronic journal, Religions. It can be accessed online at mdpi.com/books/pdfview/book/1949

David Landegent ’82 recently published Coming to Terms: Throwing Light on Words Used in the Church's Debate over Same-Sex Behaviors. The book includes over 60 essays looking at words such as grace, judgment, binary, celibacy, fear, genetics, and more. David has participated in denominational discussions on these matters and currently serves on the RCA’s General Synod Council. He never hides his conservative viewpoint, but he has appreciated the discussions and has tried to be a good listener. He hopes that both sides of this polarizing issue might understand each other better.

Rev. Landegent has served as pastor in Primghar, IA, Fulton, IL, Holland, MI, and currently in Volga, SD. He has been a weekly columnist in The Sunday School Guide since 1985 and its editor since 2002. He has also written A Year in Colossians: A 365-Day Devotional Commentary.

On December 13, 2019 Brian N. Smilde ’99 graduated with a Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Deerfield, IL. Brian is the senior pastor of Immanuel Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI.

In June of 2019, Mark Waterstone ’14 accepted the call to be the lead pastor of Rose Park Reformed Church in Holland, MI. In November, the Waterstone family also welcomed home their second child, Winn Julia.

On March 8, Katlyn DeVries ’19 was ordained to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament in the RCA at North Holland Reformed Church in Holland, MI. Katlyn works at Western Theological Seminary as the Program Assistant to the Girod Chair, “cultivating pastor-theologians in the Reformed tradition.” She also tutors in the WTS Writing Studio.

On January 2, Todd Eckstein ’19 became the lead pastor of Southern Heights Church of Kalamazoo, MI. He reports that he and his family love it!

On to glory...

We are sad to report that our oldest living alum, Wallace Stoepker ’46, has passed away. Wally wrote an engaging article in the March 2017 issue of The Commons about his first years in ministry. That April he delighted a large audience at The President’s Club dinner as he told many more stories. He was a spirited, optimistic man. He was even scheduled to preach the month the Lord called him home. We will miss you, Wally!

Wallace Stoepker ’46
b. 6/21/1921 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 12/13/2019 Kalamazoo, MI
Hope ’43; WTS ’46
(1946-49) Clymer Hill, Clymer, NY
(1949-55) Ferry Memorial, Montague, MI
(1955-64) Aberdeen, Grand Rapids, MI
(1964-70) Brooklyn, Cleveland, OH
(1970-77) Greenwood, Kalamazoo, MI
(1977-87) Maranatha, Wainfleet, Ontario, CAN

Thomas Zylstra ’55
b. 11/7/1925 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 11/16/2019 Jenison, MI
Bob Jones U ’51; WTS ’55
(1955-57) Doon, IA
(1957-62) Faith, Waterloo, IA
(1962-70) Christian Park, Indianapolis, IN
(1970-78) Aberdeen, Grand Rapids, MI
(1980-85) Garden Grove Project, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CAN
(1987-92) Letcher-Loomis UCC, Loormsnt, SD

William Nelson ’56
b. 7/8/1928 Chicago, IL
d. 11/25/2019 Orlando, FL
Bob Jones U ’50; WTS ’56 (ThB)
(1956-58) Canoevia, MI
(1958-66) Gano, Chicago, IL
(1966-78) Hope, Lincoln, NE
(1978-81) SkyLake Park, Orlando, FL

Gordon Timmerman ’66
b. 6/22/1926 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 11/1/2019 Marco Island, FL
Hope ’50; UMich ’58 (MA); WTS ’66
(1966-69) assoc dir, field svc, Board of Ed, RCA
(1969-81) sec, Regional Services, RCA
(1981-85) assoc field sec, Synod of Mid-America

John Veldman ’90
b. 4/4/1936
d. 1/12/2020 Holland, MI
WTS ’90
(1990-?) Westwood, Muskegon, MI

Jonathan Loper ’97
b. 11/29/1961 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 1/28/2020 Kalamazoo, MI
GVSU ’85; WTS ’97
(2003-19) Greenwood, Kalamazoo, MI

Have you written a new book?
The seminary would be pleased to include your book in our library collection. Please send two copies to Dr. Dan Flores, Cook Library, Western Theological Seminary, 101 E. 13th St., Holland, MI 49423.

Sign up to receive Alumni News via email!
send your request to:
advancement@westernsem.edu

The WTS Alumni News is sent out three times a year, and special announcements are emailed as needed.

The honor of the oldest living alum now falls to Ellsworth TenClay ’50 of Zeeland, MI, and the second oldest is Silvio Scorza ’53 of Orange City, IA.

Alumni/ae Day: May 11, 2020
Contact: Tamara Buikema 616-392-8555, x109 or tamara@westernsem.edu


1:30pm Presentation by Commencement Speaker Dr. Tom Boogaart, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, WTS

PLEASE NOTE: There is no Alumni/ae Dinner this year.

7:30pm Class of 2020 Commencement held in Dimnent Chapel, Hope College
No tickets are needed to attend; doors open at 6:45pm.

On to glory...
Thank you!

Dear Friends,

After working at Western for several years, I gave in to a long-standing desire to take a few classes from our amazing professors. Currently, I’m taking “Systematic Theology,” where we are exploring the big questions: Who is God? What is the Trinity? How am I saved? What is the Word of God? I am so encouraged by this class. Fellow students clearly love the Lord and are growing in knowledge for the sake of the church. My professor, Dr. J. Todd Billings, teaches us that theology is much more than head knowledge and must lead to how we live out our faith.

I wish it were possible to spend time with each of you to share what I’ve witnessed at WTS. Our courses and professors make a difference. You make a difference, too. Through your financial support, you are making it possible for me and other students to increase our knowledge and love of God through deep study of Reformed/Evangelical theology. You are also contributing to the future of the church when you give to WTS.

If you’ve given already this year, thank you! If you haven’t, please do! We rely on one third of our budget from individuals, churches, alumni, and foundations to keep WTS strong. Every single gift matters and helps secure the future of the church by keeping tuition affordable for the future leaders of our churches.

Will you give this year?

Yours in Christ,

Andy Bast
Director of Development

A special thankyou for these gifts:

Received in fiscal year 2019-20 (as of 2/4/20):

- A gift in memory of: George Brown, Jr.
  - Bud Hoffman
  - Eleanor Hoffman
  - George Kooinga
  - Ruth Lenderink
- 4 gifts in memory of: Donald Brinks
- 16 gifts in memory of: Ken Cox
- 24 gifts in memory of: Stanley Rock
- 18 gifts in memory of: Wallace Stoepker
- A gift in honor of: Tim Meendering
  - Steve Pierce
  - Lannette Zylman-TenHave
- 3 gifts in honor of: Felix Theonugraha

Thank you for honoring your loved one with donations to further the work of Western Theological Seminary.

Generous Living

President’s Club co-chairs Steve and Mienieke Thomas have been supporters of Western Theological Seminary for over 20 years. Their family owns Consumers Concrete, and as life-long members of the Reformed Church in America, they have always allocated room in their budget for giving to the seminary.

Steve served two stints on the Board of WTS during Dennis Voskuil’s presidency and Timothy Brown’s. During that time, the couple got to know and love the staff, faculty, and students.

Years ago, Steve and his brothers set up a scholarship in memory of their grandfather. Each year, Steve and Mienieke met the student recipient at the annual scholarship luncheon. Realizing how much the scholarship meant to students both personally and financially, they decided to set up a second scholarship in their own names as well.

“We’ve been personally blessed, so we like to pay it forward to the next generation,” Mienieke shares.

“As the saying goes, we’re ‘blessed to be a blessing’,” Steve agrees. “We think it’s important to give back and to help advance ministry throughout the world.”

Steve and Mienieke also participated in the recent “Our New Day” campaign for Western, which included renovating parts of the old building and constructing a new library. Mienieke was thrilled to be present for the dedication celebration, and both are excited for students to have such beautiful, modern spaces as they’re taught and then sent out for ministry to an ever-changing world.
There are many significant things I could write about Marvin Hoff, who was president of WTS from 1985–1994. The seminary built its beautiful “Red Brick” student housing on 13th and 14th Streets during his presidency. He strongly supported women in ministry and found positions for several women on the faculty. He created the Bast Preaching Initiatives, put the lovely Van Daalen organ in the chapel, and significantly expanded our west entrance on 13th Street. But I want to tell a personal story from those days. My wife Gretchen and I were married in the summer of 1985. As many of you know, there were unusual circumstances surrounding our wedding. A month before our wedding, 24-year-old Gretchen, who was in great health, suffered a massive stroke. As a result, our wedding plans changed significantly. Instead of hosting a large crowd, we were married in front of just our families. Our rehearsal dinner became our reception. Our two-week honeymoon became two nights at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. Then I had to take Gretchen back to the hospital, because her doctors had only given her a weekend pass.

I don’t remember exactly, but know I had reserved a “normal” room at the luxurious Amway hotel. When we checked in, we were given a suite in the hotel’s tower. I knew I hadn’t reserved that, but I wasn’t about to argue. When we got up to the room, which I believe was on the 22nd floor, there was a bottle of champagne waiting in a bucket of ice. I know I didn’t order that. On Sunday, when we checked out, I was told our bill had been paid.

There were so many things on my mind at that tumultuous time, I didn’t think much about our unknown benefactor and more or less forgot about it for 30 years. But then a couple of years ago WTS was hosting one of our President’s Club dinners, and on that particular night Marvin came up from the Chicago area. I wanted to catch up with him and arranged for our seats to be together. At one point during dinner, he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said, “How did you enjoy that suite on your honeymoon?”

I nearly dropped my fork.

“Did you do that?” I asked incredulously.

He smiled. Of course he had. He was the president taking care of one of his students during a tough time.

That’s the Marvin Hoff I remember. He could be a lot of things, even coming off sometimes as hard-charging and brusque. But he could also show great tenderness, generosity, and compassion, like he did for me and Gretchen and many, many others.

Thank you, President Hoff.
Assistant Professor of Church History and Theology Han-luen Kantzer Komline has received the prestigious Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise. Awarded to the top 10 promising theologians throughout the world, this is a truly significant accomplishment. In receiving this award, Dr. Kantzer Komline joins the ranks of our own Dr. Todd Billings, who was a recipient in 2009 (previously called the Templeton Award for Theological Promise).

A new book by Professor of Pastoral Care and Christian Spirituality Chuck DeGroat takes a close look at narcissism, not only in ministry leaders but also in church systems. Dr. DeGroat offers compassion and hope for those affected by narcissism’s destructive power and imparts wise counsel for churches looking to heal from its systemic effects.

Dr. DeGroat also offers hope for narcissists themselves—by the long, slow road of genuine recovery, possible only through repentance and trust in the humble gospel of Jesus.

Korean editions are now available for two books by Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology J. Todd Billings: Union with Christ and Rejoicing in Lament. A Spanish edition of The Word of God for the People of God became available in December. This book has been a textbook at Wheaton, Biola and several other schools, so Dr. Billings is honored to see it in Spanish. He also is under contract for another book to be translated into Mandarin.

Nouwen Fellow Sarah Barton has been recruited back to Duke University, where she will begin a dual appointment in July as an assistant professor in the Duke School of Medicine and Duke Divinity School. Dr. Barton will teach and research in both schools, while returning to clinical work in pediatric occupational therapy.

Since arriving in 2018, Dr. Barton has greatly contributed to the WTS community by helping students get the accessibility support they need, facilitating an accessibility audit of the seminary, opening up opportunities for mental health and suicide prevention training, and teaching a range of meaningful courses.

The Calvin Institute for Christian Worship has awarded Professor of Preaching and Worship Arts Ron Rienstra a Vital Worship Grant to support his sabbatical book project. Selected as one of 15 teacher-scholar grant recipients, Dr. Rienstra is writing a book for pastors, worship leaders, students, and congregants that explores the deep patterns in worship and in its constituent parts. The book of brief essays will be written in conversation with pastors from a range of congregational contexts.

Meet our faculty and staff!

J. Todd Billings:
- Mar 31 – panel discussion on “Theology of Suffering” at 11am chapel, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

Jim Brownson:
- Mar 15, 22, 29, and Apr 5 – Adult Ed. at 9:40am discussing Answering Tough Questions (forthcoming from Eerdmans), Hope Church, Holland, MI

Ben Conner:
- May 18-21 – Host and Panelist, Institute on Theology and Disability, Holland, MI

Chuck DeGroat:
- Apr 18 – Staff and Leader’s Retreat, Discovery Christian Church, Denver, CO
- Apr 24-26 – Hope Presbyterian Men’s Retreat, Montreal, NC

Kristen Johnson:
- Mar 28 – giving the Areopagus Lecture, Iowa State University, Ames, IA

Han-luen Kantzer Komline:
- Apr 22 – “Reconsidering Reconsiderations,” The Imbetsi Family St. Augustine Fellow Public Lecture at Villanova University, Villanova, PA

Suzanne McDonald:
- May 9 – “Dealing Faithfully with Dementia” seminar, Granite Springs Church, Lincoln, CA
- May 10 – preaching, Granite Springs Church, Lincoln, CA
- May 17 – preaching (morning), and 7:00pm “Dealing Faithfully with Dementia,” Palo Alto CRC, Palo Alto, CA

Jeff Munroe:
- Mar 22 – preaching, Trinity Reformed Church, Orange City, IA
- Apr 19 – “Reading Buechner,” Adult Ed., Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
- May 3 – preaching, Second Reformed Church, Pella, IA

Keith Reynolds:
- Apr 19 – preaching, New Community, Holland, MI (meets inside Harbor Lights Middle School)

Kyle Small:
- Mar 15 – preaching, Jamestown Reformed Church, Jamestown, MI

Felix Theonugraha:
- Apr 3 – Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, IL
- Apr 12 – preaching, Hopewell Reformed Church, Hopewell Junction, NY
- Apr 19 – preaching, Holland Reformed Church, Holland, NE
- Apr 26 – Williston Park Taiwanese Church, Long Island, NY
- May 24 – Camp Geneva, Holland, MI
- Aug 2 – Central Park Chapel, Holland, MI

Travis West:
- Mar 15 – “The Bands of Adam,” 9am adult ed., Beechwood Church, Holland, MI
WTS Alumnus becomes Archbishop

On March 1, The Most Reverend Dr. Stephen Kaziimba became the 9th Archbishop of the Church of Uganda at Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala, Uganda. More than 3,000 people attended the colorful ceremony, including the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni.

Dr. Kaziimba is a two-time graduate of Western Theological Seminary, having earned a Master of Divinity degree in 2003 and a Doctor of Ministry degree in 2007.

At the invitation of Dr. Kaziimba, President Felix Theonugraha traveled to Uganda to join in the celebration, along with his wife, Esther, Dr. David Komline, and Andy Bast. There they reunited with several WTS alumni, learned about their important work, and visited Uganda Christian University to explore opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and mutual learning.

Upcoming Events:

**Annual Osterhaven Lectures**
- March 16 “Is the Good Samaritan Good? Listening to the Parable’s Later Witnesses” with Dr. Emerson Powery, Professor of Biblical Studies & (former) Coordinator of Ethnic and Area Studies at Messiah College.
  - Public lectures at 10:45am and 7:00pm in Mulder Chapel.

**Institute on Theology and Disability**
- May 18-21 at WTS and Hope College - bringing together academics, theologians, practitioners, and others to explore the inclusive intersections of faith and disabilities. Register at: faithanddisability.org/institute/ (early bird rates before April 15)
  - May 18 - “Community Day” Cost to attend this day only (on the theme of Mental Health) is $75, including lunch and a full day of networking, education, and workshops with plenary addresses from Dr. John Swinton and Dr. Monica Coleman.

WTS Awarded $1 Million Grant to Work with Congregations

Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded the seminary a one million dollar grant to fund Churches in Mission, a five-year project that aims to learn with and from congregations as they discern God’s movement in their neighborhoods.

Churches in Mission will extend the work of the Formation for Ministry office and will be led by Shari Oosting and Dr. Kyle Small. The seminary will deploy the grant to invite two cohorts of up to 15 churches each to discover the needs in their community, to clarify congregational mission, and to determine how to join the ongoing work of God in their neighborhoods.

Project Director Shari Oosting recognizes the timeliness of this opportunity, “The context of Christian ministry in the U.S. is changing quickly, and we’re thrilled to dedicate the next five years to listening, discerning, and celebrating local mission projects.”

In Dr. Kyle Small’s role as the project’s Director of Research and Learning, he will work with congregations and with WTS to integrate the project into the seminary’s teaching and learning, especially as it relates to forming leaders in ministry.

Save the Date!
**NOVEMBER 16, 2020**
**Bast Preaching Festival with Dr. Fleming Rutledge**

Fleming Rutledge is an Episcopal priest, author, theologian, and preacher and one of the first women ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church. She is widely known for teaching other preachers, particularly in the intersection of biblical theology with contemporary culture, current events and politics, literature, music and art.
A Note from

PRESIDENT FELIX THEONUGRAHA

Great is Thy faithfulness,
O God my Father.
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.

My daughter, Nora, just turned 11 in February. She noted to me that she’s not one to make a big deal out of her birthday (her parents would disagree!) because she does not like to be reminded of how young she is. Regardless of how one feels about birthdays, special dates allow us to look back and reflect on the progress we have made, and perhaps more importantly, to see the hands of God’s faithfulness at work in ways that are not as readily apparent.

As you read through this issue of The Commons, God’s faithfulness is readily apparent. He has been good to Western Theological Seminary! Indeed, great is His faithfulness to us!

But as I read through this issue, one additional item becomes readily apparent: God has blessed us with many dear friends, supporters, and donors who have made it possible for our seminary to form women and men for faithful Christian ministry. We train students to be pastors, missionaries, social workers, chaplains, non-profit leaders, among many other vocations, and we would not be able to do so without your support. Thank you for your unceasing prayers and warm-hearted generosity.

Please know of my deep gratitude to each and every one of you. I hope to meet you or to reconnect with you in the near future!

Blessings,

President

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