Orientation this year was held outside. It concluded with the faculty and staff praying over the students.

Off to a Great Start!

A global pandemic is altering the way we work, but it is not deterring us from our mission. We are over two months into the 2020-21 school year with good news to report. Here are several highlights:

1. We welcomed 104 new students to WTS this fall. There are 354 students in various programs at WTS following God’s call on their lives:
   - 109 Master of Divinity
   - 29 Master of Arts
   - 81 Doctor of Ministry
   - 109 Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry
   - 8 Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry
   - 1 Graduate Program for Christian Educators
   - 17 non-degree-seeking and auditors

   Due to the global pandemic, we were unable to accept any international students into our Master of Theology program, so it was suspended for a year.

2. Our inaugural Friendship House Fellows (FHF) program has begun. The FHF is a 6-year program for individuals with intellectual impairments who want to explore their ministry gifts within the supportive environment of a community of Christian co-learners.

   The Friendship House is the residential housing option where seminary students live in community with young adults with intellectual impairments. This year 11 students live in apartment pods with four Friend residents and three Friendship House Fellows.

   The three Fellows, Megan Kidulas, Ben Bush, and Kurtis Cunningham, are beginning their FHF program with Hebrew class, taking part in chapel, and participating in the life of the community.

3. The Doctor of Ministry program kicked off the year with two cohorts meeting in person, one online, and another one (in Spanish) held in

In-Residence classes are looking a bit different as students must be masked and spread out 6 feet apart. Those who cannot attend in person participate virtually.

Shown here are students in Dr. Chuck DeGroat’s Pastor as Person class.
Orlando, FL in October. They are:

- “Disability and Ministry: Imagining More Faithful and Inclusive Congregational Ministries” with Dr. Ben Conner (9 students)
- “In Step with the Spirit: Leading Global Christian Movements” with Dr. Alvin Padilla (11 students)
- “Deepening Soul Care and Spiritual Transformation for Mission” with Dr. Chuck DeGroat (13 students)
- “The Latino Pastor-Theologian: Towards Effective Pastoral Leadership” with Dr. Alvin Padilla & Dr. David Escobar Arcay (12 students)

Three new cohorts are being offered for 2021 (one in Spanish). See westernsem.edu/dmin for details.

4. We welcomed Dr. Winn Collier to the faculty of WTS in August. He is directing the Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination (see pages 8-9).

5. 37 churches and ministries are participating in our Teaching Church program, mentoring 44 M.Div. students around the United States. Mentoring training is conducted online.

6. The Admissions department is taking creative approaches to reach prospective students. Each Thursday, Admissions offers a Zoom call featuring various professors or programs. They also use Zoom to offer a “Virtual Visit Day” for interested students, and they represent Western in online grad school fairs. In an era when travel, in-person grad fairs, conferences, and visits to campus are not possible, the Admissions Team is delighted that these efforts have generated more leads for the first six weeks of the semester than in 2019 (137 vs. 118).

7. We launched our first Connection Week, September 13-21, in which we celebrated the people and ministries that flow back and forth between the seminary and the front lines of the local church. WTS sent churches a resource kit with video devotionals, a sermon by President Theonugraha, and other useful media. Fifty churches participated by sharing prayer requests with us, offering prayers for the seminary during worship time, showing videos, or inviting WTS personnel to take part in their service or adult education. Several pastors had a role in virtual and on-campus chapel services at the seminary that week.

   Connection Week will be an annual event, and participating churches will receive a 25% first-year tuition discount to give to a prospective student in their congregation.

   All in all, a great launch to academic year 2020-2021!

First Impressions

It has been a wonderful start to my first semester at Western! I have enjoyed the engaging coursework, rich discussion with faculty and fellow students, and connection in the life of the WTS community, particularly through weekly chapel. I can perceive a deepening of my faith as I read, write, reflect, and grow week in and week out. I am grateful for this vibrant, grace-filled community and the opportunity to join its witness to God’s presence in the world.

Jennifer Pavelkaz
Cincinnati, OH

Being a student in the GCPM program of this prestigious seminary has been a blessing. It’s expanding my theological knowledge and impacting my life and ministry. The ability to receive classes online and the opportunity to interact with professors and other students is wonderful. I’m looking forward to growing in God’s purpose for my life. I’m so thankful to be part of Western Theological Seminary.

Eliu Martinez
Portage, IN

As I was finishing up my degree in theology at Dordt University, I began to consider seminary. Western’s emphasis on formation of the whole person, developing pastor-theologians, the personable staff and faculty, and the beautiful campus in the heart of Holland drew me here. Between class lectures, assigned readings, and interactions with classmates, these first two months have been an engaging learning environment. I am grateful to be here and look forward to the learning and growth still to come!

Anna Christians
Sioux Center, IA

My wife Francis and I are so pleased to be here at Western. We planned this 5 years ago and finally made it. We have been blessed since we arrived with the people we have met, the studies and learning, and our teaching church. We are looking forward to growing in relationship with people and continuing our journey on God’s path.

Peter Wilkinson
Temecula, CA
Pastoring through a Pandemic

Meeting a moment in history with innovation, finding blessings

Since March, the entire world has been in a state of flux as the Coronavirus pandemic has ravaged physical bodies, economies, and our mental and spiritual health. On top of that, our nation is coping with natural disasters and a cultural/political moment fraught with division and polarization. Eight months into the crisis, we wanted to know how pastors are holding up, and what God is doing in this moment.

A few of our alumni and friends were pastoring churches in hard-hit areas at the start of the pandemic. The first major COVID-19 outbreak in the United States was in Kirkland, WA in a nursing home very close to the church led by Rev. Dan Claus ’14. “At the classis meeting in early March, we all decided to shut down for two weeks, thinking we were being aggressive,” he recalls. “By the time two weeks were up, the country was shut down.”

Across the country in Queens, NY, Rev. Thomas Goodhart ’02 says one of the hardest parts was hearing the constant ambulance sirens in March and April. “We only lost one member to COVID,” he shares. “We have had others who came down with the illness. Every person in my congregation knows someone who has died. Some of us know multiple people.”

Revs. Ellen ’19 and Aric Balk ’19 had just received their first call to Parkway Community Church on Long Island three months before the shutdown. Before the Balks even had time to get to know their congregation, they were transitioning everything online and leading through a major crisis. “Any time there is new leadership, there’s added anxiety and fear of change; that’s just a reality,” Rev. Ellen says, “but this year, everything had to change drastically, and not by choice.”

“At the height of the pandemic here, local hospitals were having to bring in refrigerator trucks to store bodies because the morgues could not keep up,” Rev. Aric says. “We were seeing videos on the news of mass graves being dug less than 20 miles from us.”

On top of the pandemic, some areas were also hit by natural disasters. The church Rev. Alissa Davis ’15 leads in Midland, MI became emergency housing for people displaced by a devastating flood caused by heavy rains and two failed dams in May.

Pastor Brett Dood (in blue) and members of Calvary Reformed Church distributed food to frontline workers in Ripon, CA.
“We had people hauling soggy possessions out of houses, making hundreds of meals, and picking up groceries to deliver to people without power or kitchens,” she recalls. “For a moment, COVID-19 wasn’t much on our minds.”

In Ripon, CA, distance-learning M.Div. students Pastor Brett Dood and Pastor Phil Krygsheld had to make difficult decisions around whether it would be safer for Calvary Reformed Church to worship inside or outside because the air quality was the worst in the world due to smoke from wildfires.

Despite all these challenges and more, pastors are meeting this moment with innovation and even seeing some unexpected blessings come out of it.

WTS board member Rev. Cora Taitt says that an elder at her church in the Bronx told her the church is more connected than it’s ever been before. In addition to services on Zoom and a weekly prayer meeting by conference call, the congregation has a Saturday prayer/conversation time that Rev. Taitt says “has been almost like a support group.” She encourages her racially diverse congregation to be open and honest about their feelings surrounding recent racial tensions and other issues.

“This is a good time to be the church,” she contends. “We’re called to be peacemakers, we have hope—we can offer that.”

Rev. Ben Aguilera ’15 is the pastor of BLVD Church, a two-year-old church plant in Holland, MI that has seen its leadership team step up in new and inspiring ways. They now have 85 people in online discipleship groups, and the church has rallied around practical needs in their community, serving over 3,000 meals with Holland Public Schools and partnering with a local organization to provide PPE kits to immigrant families working as essential workers in the fields and factories.

Many pastors have noted that Zoom and other online platforms are reaching a larger audience than they had ever reached prior to the pandemic. At Rev. Claus’s church, randomly assigned Zoom break-out rooms have helped people connect to those in the church they had not met before. Rev. Goodhart in Queens is seeing his elderly parishioners embrace new technologies to stay connected.

Pastors who have held outdoor services found neighbors willing to stop and observe or ask questions, allowing them to engage their neighborhoods in a new way.

Pastors Dood and Krygsheld in California decided early on they wanted this moment to be one of radical generosity. They purchased around 1,500 meals from struggling local restaurants and distributed them to families in their city, adding about $40,000 to the local economy. Their good deed even got picked up by “Good Day Sacramento.” Then they put together a grant program with other local pastors and non-profits to provide small businesses with up to $5,000 to keep their doors open.

“People started calling us the giving church,” says Pastor Dood. “If we weren’t going through this wild time, God wouldn’t have been able to do these things that have borne a lot of fruit.”

So what practices have kept these pastors grounded?
and sane? Observing a regular Sabbath, taking long walks with or without a canine companion, rhythms of daily prayer and time in the Word, sharing burdens with others in ministry, and receiving encouragement from supportive congregants are all themes carrying them through.

“When someone takes time to acknowledge that we’re all a little out of our depth and doing our very best, it has lifted my spirits a lot,” Rev. Davis notes.

“Many of our classes at seminary taught us to sit with challenges, to listen well, and to be okay with not having an answer,” recalls Rev. Aric. “All of those things have been important in this season.”

Overall, these pastors are remembering that God is faithful and has carried his church through difficulties in the past.

When the pandemic hit, Pastors Dood and Krygsheld were in the middle of their first distance-learning course—Systematic Theology II with Dr. J. Todd Billings.

“There’s so much focus on the Holy Spirit in that course, and there were so many times during the craziness of the pandemic that we would have us depending on our own strength, our own ideas,” shares Pastor Dood, “but the Holy Spirit is really leading and guiding us. It was very comforting to know that God was ministering to us providentially in this season.”

“I’m grateful to Western for giving me a theological foundation to recognize God’s activity in the church and to lean into that,” expresses Rev. Claus.

Please pray for pastors you know during this season—for endurance, for wisdom, for moments of rest, for boldness and courage to proclaim the Gospel to a hurting world, and for the Holy Spirit to continue to grow and guide them. And if you know a pastor personally, please thank them and let them know you see their hard work in this season...it means the world to them!
Oxford University Press has published *The Common School Awakening: Religion and the Transatlantic Roots of American Public Education* by Associate Professor of Church History David Komline. The book explores how Christianity played a defining role in systematizing and professionalizing American education.

In September, Hannah Stevens joined WTS to coordinate the Churches in Mission grant. Hannah is a 2019 M.Div. graduate of the seminary and will draw on her experiences in congregational ministry, project management, and curriculum development in her new position. The Churches in Mission team will accompany congregations on a journey of listening, gratitude, discovery, discernment, and engagement in local mission (see sidebar).

Professor of Ethics and Theology David Stubbs announces the publication of *Table and Temple: The Christian Eucharist and Its Jewish Roots*. This book encourages Christians to think more deeply about how we come together at the Lord’s Table, specifically its ancient roots in Jewish temple practices and services of worship. It will change how you think about and practice the Eucharist.

Drawing on his experience as a professor, husband, and father living with incurable cancer, Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology J. Todd Billings offers a personal yet deeply theological account of the gospel’s expansive hope in his latest book, *The End of the Christian Life: How Embracing Our Mortality Frees Us to Truly Live*. Whether we are young or old, reeling from loss or clinging to prosperity, in a season of joy or lament, this book challenges us to receive mortal limits as a gift and opportunity to give ourselves over to the Lord of life. Look for a podcast launched in conjunction with the book release at jtoddbillings.com/podcast/.

Drawing on the material in the book, Dr. Billings wrote an article for the October 2020 issue of *Christianity Today*, entitled, “Good News: Tomorrow We Die.”

Director of the Hispanic Ministry Program Joseph Ocasio has coordinated a new partnership between Western Theological Seminary and the ECHAM Universidad Teológica in Puerto Rico to provide students a path to earning a Master of Arts degree online. ECHAM stands for Educando Creyentes Hacemos Ministros (Educating Believers We Make Ministers). This program will provide students from Puerto Rico with resources for thoughtful and competent Christian leadership in a wide range of ministry settings.

A significant factor leading to the success of the Hispanic Ministry Program at WTS has been the energy, creativity and leadership of Joseph since his arrival in May of 2017. After prayerful consideration, Joseph completed his time as director on October 30 and will be pursuing other ministerial opportunities and business ventures. The seminary community is grateful for his years of service.

**News from WTS**

Professor of Pastoral Care and Christian Spirituality Chuck DeGroat took part in Calvin University’s *Lectures at 3* series this fall, offering “Narcissism Comes to Church,” now available on the calvin.edu website. On September 10, he conducted a webinar for the Sojourn Network entitled, “From Shame to Wholeheartedness: Wrestling with Demons, Longing for Oneness in Christ,” and was a speaker for their virtual Better Together Conference October 13-14.

May we walk alongside you?

The Churches in Mission application process has begun!

Churches in Mission is a five-year project funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., that aims to learn with and from congregations as they discern God’s movement in their neighborhoods.

Participating congregations will spend time listening to their neighbors, rediscovering their context, celebrating the work of the Holy Spirit, and clarifying their local mission engagement. Our desire is to journey with churches towards greater health and local impact.

If, in the midst of the 2020 upheaval, you sense God is inviting you to reimagine beyond what was, this cohort could be for you. Teams from any Christian denomination in the U.S. can be considered for acceptance to the first cohort by submitting an application online by January 6, 2021. Priority will be given to congregations who have noticed a significant and pressing change in their community.

If your church team is accepted to the cohort, you will enter a 15-month collaborative learning journey beginning in April 2021. You will build an internal listening, learning, and leadership team, participate in three multi-day virtual training events, receive monthly coaching, and build relationships with fellow ministry leaders. If paying attention to your neighborhood energizes you for locally transformative mission, we would love to have a conversation with you.

To apply, go to westernsem.edu/churches-in-mission
direct questions to Hannah.stevens@westernsem.edu

Grant Coordinator: Hannah Stevens
Project Director: Shari Oosting
Research and Learning Director: Dr. Kyle Small

**J. Todd Billings** offers a personal yet deeply theological account of the gospel’s expansive hope in his latest book, *The End of the Christian Life: How Embracing Our Mortality Frees Us to Truly Live*. Whether we are young or old, reeling from loss or clinging to prosperity, in a season of joy or lament, this book challenges us to receive mortal limits as a gift and opportunity to give ourselves over to the Lord of life. Look for a podcast launched in conjunction with the book release at jtoddbillings.com/podcast/.

Drawing on the material in the book, Dr. Billings wrote an article for the October 2020 issue of *Christianity Today*, entitled, “Good News: Tomorrow We Die.”
A group of faculty and staff from WTS wrote The Gift of Waiting, the featured Advent series for the Oct-Nov-Dec Words of Hope devotional. Waiting is an uncomfortable experience, and it has certainly become more painful during this year of a worldwide pandemic. The writers invite you to think about waiting in a new way. Access it online at woh.org/devotional/

During the fall of 2019, former Nouwen Fellow Sarah Barton conducted an accessibility audit of WTS. 60 participants among in-residence and distance-learning students, alumni, staff, and faculty gave feedback regarding how accessible WTS is for those with disabilities. While the audit identified many strengths, it also noted areas for growth. We have been able to attend to some of these areas immediately.

First, Assistant Professor of Church and Community Theology Carlos Thompson is taking on the role of Student Accessibility Coordinator, where he will support student disability and accessibility needs.

Second, we have purchased screen and book readers, high contrast keyboards, magnification technology with text to voice capacity, and large monitors.

Third, we are trying out services for professors to caption their videos in our online learning platform.

In line with Universal Design in Learning principles, all of the services, hardware, software and tools not only make our physical and online learning environment more accessible to people with disabilities, they make them more accessible for all learners.

Webinars:

Western Theological Seminary has made several webinars over the last few months in response to current events:

Wholeheartedness in Isolation
- Dr. Chuck DeGroat and Dr. Jon Brown discuss wholeheartedness during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic
- vimeo.com/426346207

Race and The Church: A Christian Response to the Death of George Floyd
- with Dr. Felix Theonugrha, Rev. Cora Taitt, Keith Reynolds, Dr. Suzanne McDonald, and Dr. Travis West
- vimeo.com/428198150

Orthopathos and the Reformed Identity: A conversation with Dr. Sam Solivan
- Dr. Sam Solivan, Dr. Alvin Padilla, and Dr. Dan Flores discuss differences in theological labels and how we can learn from each other.
- vimeo.com/472335360

Pastoring in an Age of Polarization
- with Dr. Kristen Deede Johnson, Dr. Fred Johnson III, Dr. Chuck DeGroat, and Dr. Winn Collier
- vimeo.com/473413349

New Scholarships & Grant

The Samuel Williams Scholarship for Scholars of Color.
This full-tuition scholarship goes to a student of color who will enroll full time in the in-residence Master of Divinity program. The student must have a commitment to advance justice and reconciliation and be committed to ministry. The scholarship is named after Samuel Williams, one of the first two African-American graduates of WTS (1951) and the recipient of the distinguished alumnus award in 2000. Over a 39 year ministry spanning the Jim Crow South, urban poverty in California, rural Illinois, and the Dutch community of Holland, MI, Sam was a faithful, caring, courageous witness to the power of Christ to transform lives.

The Elsie Wen-Hua Shih Law Award for Excellence in Female Leadership.
This full-tuition scholarship goes to a female student who will enroll full time in the in-residence Master of Divinity program. The student must be dedicated to advancing the leadership of women in all areas of church and mission and be committed to ministry. The scholarship is named after Elsie Wen-Hua Shih Law, the first female student to graduate from Western Theological Seminary (1963). She was a gifted Christian teacher, academic dean, pastor’s spouse, and a dedicated registered nurse.

The Boerigter Grant
covers both tuition and living expenses for one year and is available for an in-residence M.Div. student. The recipient must feel called to be a pastor in the Reformed tradition. A student of color will receive priority. The grant is named after George Boerigter, a 1966 graduate of the seminary who spent several years as a pastor bringing his business savvy to ministry, and then went into business, bringing his ministerial skills to his work in the marketplace, most notably at his company, SoundOff Signal. George and his wife, Sibilla, are committed to the concept of lifelong ministry, whatever context in which they find themselves.

Festschrift
/ˈfes(t)ˌʃrɪft/

n. a collection of writings published in honor of a scholar

When General Synod Professors of Theology retire, the RCA publishes a festschrift in their honor, compiling original contributions from colleagues, former students, and friends into a single volume.

We are in the process of coordinating a festschrift for President Emeritus Timothy Brown. We invite you to become a sponsor of this volume by contributing $50 toward its publication. Your name will be listed in the initial pages as a sponsor, and we will send you a copy of the completed festschrift.

To make your donation and reserve your book:
1. Send a check to WTS with “Tim Brown Fest” in the memo line
2. Make a gift online at westernsem.edu/give/give-now (include “Tim Brown Fest” in the comment section)

Questions? email Andy Bast at andy@westernsem.edu
Eugene H. Peterson might be best known for his award-winning paraphrase of the Bible, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, but he was also a prolific writer of over 30 books, a Presbyterian pastor for 29 years, and a professor of spiritual theology for six years. Eugene Peterson had an immense influence across generational and denominational boundaries.

After Rev. Peterson died in 2018, his family sought to find a suitable site to steward the Peterson papers and archives and to promote his pastoral theology for future scholarship, the health of pastors, and the Church’s renewed imagination. Earlier this year, Western Theological Seminary was chosen to be that site.

According to his son, Rev. Eric Peterson, “WTS is the school that Eugene exclusively recommended to prospective students preparing to serve the church.” In 2010 Eugene said this: “It is everything I think a seminary needs to be—theologically focused, faculty accessible, personally relational, and God honoring. I never fail to feel at home there with its professors and students.”

Eugene Peterson’s relationship with the seminary goes back decades, beginning in the 1980’s when he taught at a Young Life Institute on campus. His friendship with WTS deepened in 1998 when Dr. Timothy Brown invited him to campus as the keynote speaker for the Henry Bast Festival of Preaching. In 2008 he returned to speak at Dr. Brown’s presidential inauguration and in 2014 he led the Bast Festival again.

The newly formed Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination will house Eugene Peterson’s papers within the library archive collection in the Dewitt Learning Commons of Western. The collection will include diaries, thousands of letters, sermons, book manuscripts, Regent College teaching material, and extensive documentation related to the translation of *The Message*.

The Peterson Center will be a hub where people can contemplate questions that shaped Eugene’s Christian imagination over a lifetime, such as: *Why is an animated, Spirit-infused imagination essential if we are to persevere in living our faith amid the grit and beauty of ordinary life?*

Through small, relational cohorts, fellowships, theological reflection, retreats, pilgrimages, public conversations, and artistic collaborations, the Peterson Center will provide space and opportunity to ponder these questions with humility, friendship, and generosity in order to embolden the Church’s hopeful, faithful presence in the world.

“My hope is that these intentional spaces will help a diverse array of Christians cultivate the joyful, creative and steadfast character that the world and church so desperately need,” says Dr. Winn Collier, the newly appointed director of the center.
Winn Collier is the authorized biographer of Eugene Peterson, a long-time pastor, and the author of numerous books. With his deep roots in pastoral ministry, his intimate knowledge of Eugene Peterson's life and ministry, and his own writing and research, Winn holds the right combination of gifts, callings, and expertise to bring this center to life. He joined the WTS community in August as Director of the Eugene Peterson Center and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Christian Imagination.

The relationship between the two men began 16 years ago when Winn realized he and Eugene Peterson shared the same publisher, so he twisted his editor's arm to give him Dr. Peterson's address. He wrote him a letter, and they began to correspond. Winn was so determined to meet Eugene in person that when he learned of a spiritual renewal weekend Dr. Peterson was co-leading with his son in Juneau, Alaska, he flew over 4000 miles for the opportunity to have breakfast with him.

"Over huevos rancheros and coffee, I grilled him mercilessly," Winn says with a grin. "In the years that followed, he became my pastor, writing letters from Montana."

Their friendship led to Winn being chosen to write the authorized biography of Eugene's life entitled, A Burning in My Bones, due to come out next March (see sidebar).

Winn has been a pastor for 25 years and was the founding pastor of All Souls in Charlottesville, VA for 12 years. He had every intention of retiring from All Souls, which he describes as "a beautiful community of faithful, honest friends."

"It was a hard decision to leave, but there were so many signals that this was something God was doing—and the Holy Spirit opened up possibilities so quickly. It certainly seemed to my wife, Miska, and me that this was a clear invitation from God," says Winn. "It's exciting and makes me wonder what God has in store here."

The Peterson archives will be installed at the seminary in early 2021. Later next year, two D.Min. cohorts will be offered through the Center, one exploring pastoral imagination and the other centered on writing. Due to the pandemic, the timing for other gatherings and public offerings remains in flux. Stay tuned!
On to glory...

Abraham de Vries ’53
b. 12/21/1926 Maurice, IA
d. 4/20/2020 Canton, MI
Hope ’50; WTS ’53
(1953-57) Riverside Park, Hammond, IN
(1957-62) Randolph, WI
(1962-70) Perseverance Presbyterian, Milwaukee, WI
(1970-74) Knox Presb, Minneapolis, MN
(1974-76) First, Kingston, NY
(1976-84) First, Muskegon, MI
(1988-91) Riverside Comm, Cleveland, OH

James Van Roekel ’53
b. 11/10/1929 Hull, IA
d. 10/21/2020 Orange City, IA
Central ’48; WTS ’53
(1953-56) Newton Zion, Erie, IL
(1957-62) Wichert, St. Anne, IL
(1962-67) Trinity, Kalamazoo, MI
(1967-70) Church in the Valley, Rowland Heights, CA
(1970-78) Trinity, Waupun, WI
(1978-87) Community, Clearwater, FL
(1987-91) assoc, Third, Pella, IA
(1999-2000) int, Bethany, Des Moines, IA

Donald Lenderink ’54
b. 11/14/1929 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 7/26/2020 Orange City, IA
Hope ’51; WTS ’54
(1954-56) chaplain, USNavy
(1956-89) reserve chaplain, USNavy
(1956-62) Second, Little Falls, NJ
(1962-86) Trinity, Orange City, IA
(1986-94) Brooklyn, Cleveland, OH

Kenneth Vermeer ’57
b. 12/29/1928 Sioux Center, IA
d. 2/27/2020 Buena Park, CA
NCW’51; Hope ’54; WTS ’57
(1957-59) chaplain, US Army, San Antonio, TX
(1959-62) Castro Valley, CA
(1962-69) Calvary, New Berlin, WI
(1969-72) Valley Community Drive-in, San Dimas, CA
(1972-77) Faith, Norwalk, CA
(1978-81) Morningside, Sioux City, IA
(1981-83) hospital chaplain
(1989-92) dir, Christian Travel Club

Richard Rhem ’60
b. 2/1/1935 Kalamazoo, MI
d. 2/23/2020 Orange City, IA
Hope ’57; WTS ’60 & ’65 (ThM); LeidenU ’68 (Dr)
(1960-64) First, Spring Lake, MI
(1964-67) First, Midland Park, NJ
(1971-2004) Christ Comm, Spring Lake, MI

William Burke ’64
b. 8/24/1939 New York, NY
d. 4/26/2020 Cortland, NY
CityColl NY ’61; WTS ’64; St.JohnsU ’73 (MA)
(1964-74) missionary, Taichung, Taiwan
(1975-77) Bethel, Passaic, NJ
(1977-81) Minisink, Montague, NJ
(1981-94) Christ Comm (Chinese), Farmington Hills, MI

Daryl Vetter ’65
b. 9/9/1939 Canistota, SD
d. 10/20/2020 Holland, MI
Augustana Coll ’61; WTS ’65
(1965-72) First, Sodus, NY
(1972-86) Faith Comm, Detroit, MI
(1986-95) Rose Park, Holland, MI
(1995-ret) Lakelands, Vicksburg, MI

Ralph Houston ’67
b. 10/10/1941 Holland, MI
d. 5/22/2020 Holland, MI
Hope ’63; WTS ’67
(1967-68) Doster, Plainwell, MI
(1968-77) Forreston, IL
(1979-92) dir, Holland, MI City Mission
(1993-94) Fennville, MI

K.C. Daniel ’70
Two men died in India, no further details known

Ronald Vande Bunte ’73 (WTS-NBTS)
b. 12/19/1944 Detroit, MI
d. 3/24/2020 Fredericksburg, VA
UMich ’66; WTS-NBTS ’73
(1973-80) First, College Point, NY
Other Reformed churches served: Freehold, NJ, Brooklyn, NY
Alexandria Bay, NY
Suydam Street, New Brunswick, NJ

Jay Lindell ’97
b. 11/5/1959 Aurora, IL
d. 7/8/2020 Holland, MI
Hope ’81; WTS ’97
(1981-84) Young Life, Grand Rapids, MI
(1984-91) area dir, YL, South Bend, IN
(1991-2016) area dir, YL, Holland, MI
(1993-2018) adjunct prof youth ministry, Hope College, Holland, MI
(2017-19) exec pas, Christ Memorial, Holland, MI

In July the seminary received word that one of our D.Min. students had passed away due to COVID-19. In the last 10 years, Bishop H. Javier Patón Osco (1969-2020) led the Bolivian Church of God of Prophecy through unprecedented growth, well into 350 local congregations. He was the pastor of six churches in Bolivia.

This past May, the seminary community was saddened to learn of the death of Roger Rietberg (1922-2020). Roger had a long relationship with the seminary, beginning in the 1950s when he directed the Men’s Choir and taught as an adjunct professor. After a 36-year career teaching music at Hope College, he retired in 1990 but continued to play the organ for chapel services at Western. Here he is pictured playing in 2004.

News

Wendell Karsen ’63 has published From Advent to Ascension: A Journey with Jesus. The book follows the 33-year sojourn of Christ’s life on this earth and includes charts, illustrations, hymns, and articles to shed light on the background and meaning of the readings. It is available on Amazon or directly from Wendell.

In June, Terry DeYoung ’87 received the 2020 Henri J. M. Nouwen Award, presented by the Religion and Spirituality Interest Network of the American Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. His life and work reflect a distinguished level of commitment to ministry that values people with developmental disabilities and their lives of faith. Terry is the Coordinator for Disability Concerns for the RCA.

Armando C. Arellano ’95 earned a D.Min. degree at Ashland Theological Seminary in December of 2017.

Dorothy Yoder Nyce ’97 (DMin) recently self-published Decades of Feminist Writing, which is divided into biblical, historical, and theological sections. Contact her at dyod-nyce@bmtn.net for a copy.

Jamie Schmeling ’05 is serving as pastor of the Terry Community Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and the Hope American Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Fallon, MT. Jamie, her husband, Evan Cameron, and their two kids live in Miles City.

David Van Opstall ’08 was installed as Lead Pastor of Formation and Teaching at Christ Memorial Church, Holland, MI on September 13.

Cory Van Sloten ’13 and Steve DeHaan ’14, both chaplains in the Iowa Army National Guard, are deploying together with their respective units to support NATO’s ongoing Kosovo Force mission in the Republic of Kosovo. Mobilization began in September. Kosovo is the Iowa National Guard’s partner country as part of the National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

On Sept 28, Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP) appointed Ben Aguilera ’15 as Interim Executive Director. Ben joined the board of directors in December of 2018 and has been instrumental in helping LAUP empower Latinos in the Holland community.

Words of Hope will publish the fourth devotional series by Amy Clemens ’15 in January 2021. Amy has written her first book, Walking when You’d Rather Fly, and continues to blog a daily devotional at asipoblog.wordpress.com.

On August 26, Sarah Juist ’15 became the pastor of Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Jenison, MI.

Beth Carroll ’16 was installed as Associate Pastor of Hope Church, Holland, MI on September 27.

This year Lorie Jonkman ’18 and her husband, Dan, moved from Jenison, MI to Rotterdam, NY where Lorie was installed as Minister of Word and Sacrament at the Second Reformed Church (known as Cobblestone Church) on August 16.

Brigette Kemink ’19 was ordained on September 20 at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven, MI.

Clement Vanderpuye ’19 (ThM) has been accepted and will be starting his work on a Ph.D. in Theology at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana.
Dear Friends,

What a year!

I’m equally amazed and grateful for you. You supported Western Theological Seminary both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic became a pervasive reality in our lives. As you’ll see in the following pages, your giving accounted for 37% of the seminary’s operating revenue. You will also see that revenue outpaced spending. This is remarkable and reflects significant cuts we had to make as well as the generosity of our donors.

Our financial model relies significantly on yearly gifts. Unlike a college or university, student tuition is less than a quarter of the actual cost of attending seminary. You stand with us, believing that if God is calling someone to pursue ministry, money should not stand in the way. I continue to be amazed at your generosity and care for the future of the church. The calling of a pastor is not easy and your gifts help WTS deliver the best possible education.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected each of us in different ways. It seems unbelievable, but in the midst of the pandemic WTS has the largest enrollment in our history at 354 students. God is preparing a new generation of leaders to rise to the significant ministry challenges of our hurting and broken world.

I hope you are encouraged by the impact your giving has had. As you might imagine, recently we’ve spent significant amounts on COVID-related expenses to keep students, faculty, and staff protected, and we will ask for your help with this. I hope you will decide again to support the mission and ministry of WTS, so that future leaders of the church may prepare to enter their gospel callings in the best possible environment at the least possible price.

Thank you and God bless you,

Andy Bast
Director of Development

Programs Offered:

- Graduate Program for Christian Educators
- Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry
- Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry
- Master of Arts
- Master of Divinity (in-residence and distance learning)
- Dual Track Master of Divinity - Master of Social Work
- Master of Theology
- Doctor of Ministry

Last fiscal year’s student count 2019-20

122
Master of Divinity
(23 graduated)

39
Master of Arts
(15 graduated)

4
Master of Theology
(3 graduated)

46
Doctor of Ministry
(6 graduated)

102
Graduate & Certificate Programs
(15 graduated)

21
Non-degree
How you help our students:

Direct Student Support from Donors:
- 23 people contributed directly to the tuition of 18 students, averaging $2,248 per student
- 13 RCA & CRC Classes supported 38 students, averaging $2,244 per student
- 37 churches supported 45 students, averaging $2,889 per student
- 6 organizations (corporations, schools & foundations) gave to 6 students, averaging $3,106 per student

Support through Estate planning:

Unrestricted:
- Donald Drenth
- Cherita Koetje
- Dorothy Schleich

Toward new scholarships:
- William and Karen VerHulst

103 students received scholarships
- Many thanks to those who contributed to scholarship funds this year!

New scholarship/grant established:
- William and Karen VerHulst Scholarship
- George Boerigter (Class of 1966) Grant

Thank you for all you do to make seminary affordable for ministry leaders!

Special Gifts

Thank you to those who designated a gift to Western Theological Seminary as a way to honor the memory of your loved one or to show appreciation to someone significant in your life or work.

In memory of:
- Kenneth Cox, 16 gifts ($4,765)
- Ardith Fikse, 9 gifts ($1,175)
- Stanley Rock, 24 gifts ($2,000)
- Wallace Stoepker, 20 gifts ($4,105)

......totaling $12,045

In honor of:
- Dirk Scholten & Raymond VanZoeren
- Tim Meendering
- Lannette Zylman-TenHave
- Steve Pierce
- Felix & Esther Theonugraha

......totaling $3,960

1,051 donors to WTS
$100 most common gift
27 1st time givers
179 givers for 10+ years

Rev. Jenna Barber earned her M.Div. from WTS in 2015 and now serves as the associate pastor at Pillar Church in Holland, MI.

One of the reasons Jenna chose Western over other schools was the emphasis on whole person formation—both intellectually in the classroom and practically through internships and on-site ministry experiences.

“The church is in a unique time, the world is in a unique time, and pastors and church leaders have to be healthy—mentally and spiritually,” she says.

Jenna hopes to see Western continue to prepare healthy leaders for the Church’s future, and that is why she faithfully gives to the Seminary Fund.

“I also give to Western because I am grateful for the education and experiences I received as a student,” she shares. Her relationships with faculty and her peer group were especially formative, and she still maintains those relationships today.

“I was given gifts and resources through the financial support of other people,” she says. Just as she was blessed by others, she wants current students not to feel financially burdened while they offer their life in service to Christ and his Church.
2019-20 Cost of Attendance:
• $472 per credit hour
• Yearly tuition for Master of Divinity:
  • $15,104 In-Residence
• Actual cost of educating one In-Residence M.Div. student per year: $35,000

Your gifts reduce what students pay.

Educational Debt, Class of 2020:
• 23 M.Div. and 15 M.A. graduates
• 66% incurred no seminary debt!
• Average seminary debt among 13 borrowers: $30,570
• 53% with no educational debt at all

You are making a difference!
The Class of 2020
Here is where our M.Div. and M.A. graduates are serving:

**MASTER OF DIVINITY**

Ryan Anderson  
Youth Director  
Second Byron Christian Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI

Patrick Bloemendaal  
RCA Missionary, Latin America  
Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf, Mandeville, Jamaica

Kyle Boer  
Therapist  
Ottagan Addictions Recovery, Holland, MI

James Bosscher  
Family Therapist  
Eagle Village (Youth Residential Home), Hersey, MI

Kristin Brouwer  
Family Ministry Director  
Trinity Reformed Church, Orange City, IA

Winfred Burns II  
Pastoral Resident  
Tabernacle Community, Grand Rapids, MI

Kurt Bush  
Campus Pastor, Hospers Campus  
Trinity Reformed Church, Orange City, IA

Chris Godfredsen  
Classis Leader  
East-West Sioux Classis, Synod of the Heartland, Orange City, IA

Ryan Hall  
Pastor of Discipleship  
Tulare Reformed Church, Tulare, CA

Josh Harrington  
Director of Youth Ministry  
Vriesland Reformed Church, Zeeland, MI

Catherine Brooks Harris  
Associate Youth Director  
Sammmamish Presbyterian Church, Sammmamish, WA

Tim Huizenga  
Associate Pastor, Highland Campus  
Faith Church, Dyer, IN

Rachel Klompmaker  
Church Planting Resident  
Fearless Network, Third Coast Community Church (part of Ridge Point Church), Holland, MI

Heather Kramer  
Pastor  
Johnstown Reformed Church, Schenectady, NY

Eleazar Lopez  
Chaplain Resident  
Michigan Medicine, Ann Arbor, MI

Wayne Otten  
Senior Pastor  
Unity Reformed Church, Kentwood, MI

Jennifer Rozema  
Director of Discipleship and Congregational Care  
Faith Christian Reformed Church, Holland, MI

Trey Tirpak  
Further studies

Jennifer VanCleve  
PRN (on call) Chaplain  
University of Nebraska Medical Ctr, Omaha, NE (while in search process)

Jeremy VanGenderen  
Pastor  
Trinity Reformed Church, Cedar Rapids, IA

Aaron Westhouse  
Church Planting Resident  
Fearless Network, Third Coast Community Church (part of Ridge Point Church), Holland, MI

Linnea Scobey  
English Teacher  
Pacifica Christian High School, Los Angeles, CA

Maybin Sialuse  
Continuing studies in Basel, Switzerland

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Gretchen Avila-Torres  
Administrative Assistant for ThM and HMP, International Student Assistant, Receptionist  
Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

Jonathan Boothe  
In search process

Beth Cooke  
In search process

Thiago Dantas  
RCA Missionary, Latin America  
Church Planting along the Amazon River, Brazil

Lia Dantas  
RCA Missionary, Latin America  
Church Planting along the Amazon River, Brazil

Eric Frisch  
Account Relations Specialist for Acceptd!, Columbus, OH

Rebecca Hobby Neely  
In search process

Katy Johnson  
Content and Strategy  
World Renew, Grand Rapids, MI

Joshua Reeves  
In search process

Nicole Saint-Victor  
Director of Multicultural Engagement  
Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, IL

Sara Sanchez-Timmer  
English Teacher  
Holland Christian High School, Holland, MI

Amanda Stienstra  
Licensing Specialist  
D.A. Blodgett-St. John’s, Grand Rapids, MI

To all those supporting WTS:  
Thank you for forming these future leaders!
On behalf of the students you supported, “Thank you!” to these churches:

**GRANT FUND CHURCHES**
These churches supported specific students directly.

- Redemption Church
  - Gilbert, AZ
- Tulare Community Church
  - Tulare, CA
- Trinity Reformed Church
  - Allison, IA
- Meredith Drive Reformed Church
  - Des Moines, IA
- Bethel Reformed Church
  - Lester, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Maurice, IA
- Trinity Reformed Church
  - Orange City, IA
- Heartland Reformed Church
  - Pella, IA
- Bethel Christian Reformed Church
  - Lansing, IL
- Emmanuel Reformed Church
  - Morrison, IL
- Calvary Reformed Church
  - Orland Park, IL
- Faith Reformed Church
  - Dyer, IN
- Corinth Reformed Church
  - Byron Center, MI
- First Presbyterian Church
  - Grand Haven, MI
- Fifth Reformed Church
  - Grand Rapids, MI
- Westminster Presbyterian Church
  - Grand Rapids, MI
- First Reformed Church
  - Grandville, MI
- Engedi Church
  - Holland, MI
- Fellowship Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Pillar Church
  - Holland, MI
- Harbor Churches
  - Hudsonville, MI
- Bethany Reformed Church
  - Kalamazoo, MI
- Threads Church
  - Kalamazoo, MI
- Calvin CRC of Muskegon
  - Muskegon, MI
- Community Reformed Church
  - Zeeland, MI
- Second Reformed Church
  - Zeeland, MI
- Vriesland Reformed Church
  - Zeeland, MI
- Grove Reformed Church
  - North Bergen, NJ
- Bronxville Reformed Church
  - Bronxville, NY
- Reformed Church of Canajoharie
  - Canajoharie, NY
- Reformed Church of Newtown
  - Elmhurst, NY
- Church on the Hill
  - Flushing, NY

**SEMINARY FUND CHURCHES**
These churches gave to the operating expenses of the seminary.

- Faith Community Church
  - Littleton, CO
- Alton Reformed Church
  - Alton, IA
- Immanuel Reformed Church
  - Belmond, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Buffalo Center, IA
- Christ’s Family Church
  - Davenport, IA
- Meredith Drive Reformed Church
  - Des Moines, IA
- Hope Reformed Church
  - George, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Hopers, IA
- Newkirk Reformed Church
  - Hopers, IA
- American Reformed Church
  - Hull, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Hull, IA
- Bethel Reformed Church
  - Lester, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Melvin, IA
- American Reformed Church
  - Orange City, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Orange City, IA
- Free Grace Reformed Church
  - Orange City, IA
- Trinity Reformed Church
  - Orange City, IA
- Otley Reformed Church
  - Otley, IA
- Second Reformed Church
  - Pella, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Rock Rapids, IA
- Carmel Reformed Church
  - Rock Valley, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Sanborn, IA
- Central Reformed Church
  - Sioux Center, IA
- First Reformed Church
  - Sioux Center, IA
- Westview Church
  - Waukee, IA
- Twin Falls Reformed Church
  - Twin Falls, ID
- Spring Valley Reformed Church
  - Fulton, IL
- Elim Reformed Church
  - Kings, IL
- Ebenezer Reformed Church
  - Morrison, IL
- Calvary Reformed Church
  - Orland Park, IL
- Raritan Reformed Church
  - Kirtland, IL
- First Reformed Church of Wichert
  - Saint Anne, IL
- First Reformed Church
  - South Holland, IL
- Bethel Reformed Church
  - Sterling, IL
- Faith Reformed Church
  - Dyer, IN
- Crossroads Reformed Church
  - Overland Park, KS
- Prairie View Reformed Church
  - Prairie View, KS
- Community Reformed Church
  - Charlevoix, KS

- Community Church of Douglas
  - Douglas, MI
- Second Reformed Church
  - Grand Haven, MI
- Standale Reformed Church
  - Grand Rapids, MI
- Thornapple Community Church
  - Grand Rapids, MI
- Hamilton Reformed Church
  - Hamilton, MI
- Beechwood Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Christ Memorial Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Fellowship Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- First Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Hope Church
  - Holland, MI
- North Holland Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Pillar Church
  - Holland, MI
- Third Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Harbor Churches
  - Hudsonville, MI
- Rosewood Reformed Church
  - Jenison, MI
- North Park Reformed Church
  - Kalamazoo, MI
- Second Reformed Church
  - Kalamazoo, MI
- Hope Reformed Church
  - Muskegon, MI
- Unity Reformed Church
  - Norton Shores, MI
- First Reformed Church
  - Portage, MI
- Vriesland Reformed Church
  - Zeeland, MI
- Hollandale Reformed Church
  - Hollandale, MN
- Reformed Church of Steen
  - Steen, MN
- American Reformed Church
  - Worthington, MN
- Pella Reformed Church
  - Adams, NE
- Westwood Community Church
  - Omaha, NE
- Reformed Church of Closter
  - Closter, NJ
- Colts Neck Reformed Church
  - Colts Neck, NJ
- Fair Lawn Community Church
  - Fair Lawn, NJ
- Second Reformed Church
  - Hackensack, NJ
- Community Church of Harrington Park
  - Harrington Park, NJ
- First Reformed Church
  - Hasbrouck Heights, NJ
- Community Reformed Church
  - Ho Ho Kus, NJ
- First Reformed Church
  - Lincoln Park, NJ
- Pompton Reformed Church
  - Pompton Lakes, NJ
- Middlebush Reformed Church
  - Somerset, NJ
- Pequannock Reformed Church
  - Wayne, NJ
- Preakness Reformed Church
  - Wayne, NJ
- Wyckoff Reformed Church
  - Wyckoff, NJ
- The First Church in Albany
  - Albany, NY
- First Reformed Church
  - Athens, NY
- Bronxville Reformed Church
  - Bronxville, NY
- Flatlands Reformed Church
  - Brooklyn, NY
- Abbe Reformed Church
  - Clymer, NY
- Clymer Hill Reformed Church
  - Clymer, NY
- Unionville Reformed Church
  - Delmar, NY
- Onesquethaw Reformed Church
  - Feura Bush, NY
- Church on the Hill
  - Flushing, NY
- Heiderberg Reformed Church
  - Holland, MI
- Hopewell Reformed Church
  - Hopewell Junction, NY
- Johnstown Reformed Church
  - Johnstown, NY
- Church of the Comforter
  - Kingsport, TN
- Pitcher Hill Community Church
  - North Syracuse, NY
- Lisa’s Kill Reformed Church
  - Schenectady, NY
- Bacon Hill Reformed Church
  - Schuyerville, NY
- Faith Reformed Church
  - Slate Hill, NY
- Long Island Taiwan Church
  - Williston Park, NY
- First Reformed Church
  - Wyanack, NY
- Crescent Place Reformed Church
  - Yorkers, NY
- New Hope Reformed Church
  - Powell, OH
- Westdale Reformed Church
  - Hanover, Ontario, Canada
- Addisville Reformed Church
  - Richboro, PA
- Zion Reformed Church
  - Amherst, SD
- Chancellor Reformed Church
  - Chancellor, SD
- Second Reformed Church
  - Lennox, SD
- First Reformed Church
  - Platte, SD
- Emmanuel Reformed Church
  - Springfield, SD
- St. Thomas Reformed Church
  - St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
- First Reformed Church
  - Lynden, WA
- First Reformed Church
  - Baldwin, WI
- Emmanuel Community Church
  - Clinton, WI
- First Reformed Church
  - Oostburg, WI
- First Reformed Church
  - Ostrander, WI
- First Reformed Church
  - Waupun, WI
- New Hope Community Church
  - Wausau, WI

- Givers for 30+ years in a row!
By the time you receive this, the 2020 presidential election will be in the rearview mirror. This election has been described as the most polarized and most consequential election in our history. David French noted, “There is not a single important cultural, religious, political or social force that is pulling Americans together more than it is pulling apart.”

Yet this statement should not apply to us, Christians. Ephesians 4 reminds us that as Christians, we are to “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” We do this, because “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

For some, the result of this year’s election is a source of joy. For others, it is a source of lament. Allow me to encourage all of us to remember that our ultimate citizenship is not here on earth but in the heavenly Kingdom. Our trust is in Jesus Christ. He alone reigns, and one day, we will join together as people from every nation, tribe, people, and language to worship Him. We belong to God.

As we pick up the pieces after a divisive election, let me encourage you to be ambassadors of reconciliation. This world needs Christians who share the good news of the Gospel and the love of our humble Savior more than ever.

Blessings,

Dr. Felix Theonugraha
President