Hands On

Each summer students from Western Theological Seminary travel across the country and world to step into roles such as pastors, teachers, youth workers, hospital chaplains, mission coordinators, worship leaders, and camp directors, to name a few. Students experience growth they never anticipated...

Ralph G. Beidler
Faith Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Twelve weeks serving as a ministry intern at Faith Community Church (FCC) in Littleton, Colorado gave me the opportunity to meet some amazing people. I lived with Stan Harwood, an 80 year old man who had lost his wife to cancer just last winter, and we had many discussions about life, death, love, and loss. Stan is an amazingly energetic Christian who makes it a point to share Christ every chance he can. He has planted a number of churches in his lifetime and is presently looking to put together a planting team for yet another church near his neighborhood—yes, at 89!

There are many stories I would like to share of those souls I was able to touch and be touched by, but there are also a few I never got the chance to know. The week I arrived in Littleton, I witnessed the funeral of a young college student (Josh) who had lost his life huffing...that is, breathing in the fumes of an aerosol spray can. He was found in his apartment dead for two days with a plastic bag over his head. I was never able to meet Josh. How I wish someone had shared their faith with this young man; his life might have been different.

My focus for the internship was preaching and worship planning. I preached four times during the summer as part of their “Who is Responsible for My Discipleship?” series. The FCC leadership believes the job of the church is not to create programs but to create disciples. I spent many hours in small groups and in one-on-one conversations with leaders of FCC and leaders within the Rocky Mountain Chassis. I was able to hear and witness what the Holy Spirit has been doing in Colorado.

With five weeks left in my stay, Pastor Jeff Allen took a two week vacation. The first Monday he was gone I was asked to take communion to an elderly lady who had been fighting cancer for seventeen years...one week later this dear lady, Pat Anderson, died. I was given the remarkable privilege of taking final communion to Pat and then getting the chance to minister to her family. I witnessed the counseling, funeral preparation, funeral and burial of Mrs. Anderson...something I never expected to happen within my internship’s preaching and worship planning focus.

The entire time I was in Colorado I was reminded how important my family and friends are to me as a man, as a husband and father, and as a Christian. I also learned that when separated from all those important people in my life, God is an excellent crutch. I learned to lean more fully into God for joy, happiness, courage and strength, because He is my refuge. I will continue to follow God’s lead because that is where I learn and grow. I challenge all of you to take your discipleship seriously, and to grow together more fully into the likeness of Christ. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long, Psalm 25:5.
Malawi, the “warm heart of Africa,” is one of the poorest countries in the world. Donors from overseas are fighting poverty, building water wells, and working hard to restrict the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and cholera.

Christian churches have a strong presence in the nation, as about 80% of Malawians profess to be Christians. The RCA and CRC have formed partnerships to strengthen the communities and provide training opportunities. For my internship I decided to join their Saving Orphans Ministry (SOM) to organize food and clothing delivery to rural villages and to support Child-based Care Centers, Kid’s Clubs, and Bible Camps.

I was told, “You think now that you are going to help the impoverished and the suffering, but what you will receive from them will be a greater gift to you.” My summer turned out to be even more transformational than my entire first year at seminary.

“People are people wherever you go,” but I found our cultures to be massively different! I saw kids living in mud huts with grass roofs, carrying water from the community well on their heads, wearing their only clothing which was tattered and dirty, and eating porridge our agency provided, sometimes their only meal of the day.

Throughout my time I was stunned by two things: how quickly I grew attached to the youth and how much I felt God’s presence and guidance in my preaching. The more time I spent with people outside of church, the more I got to know their struggles, cares, and worries. Those needs would spring up in my preaching as I tied in the promises of God to their daily lives. Sharing God’s Word ignited a fire and excitement in my heart.

These kids swarmed out of their homes to wave at us. They came alive with excitement showing us bricks they had molded to build their new meeting space, which would shade them from the blistering sun or drenching rain. They crowded around and grabbed our hands to join them in soccer with their ball made of plastic bags and string. They were transfixed and exuberant when we produced soap bubbles, something they’d never seen before.

Bible Camps were very special to them. Most kids arrived an hour early, after walking up to five miles to the ball field. They had heard we offered food, fellowship, dramatic acting (a favorite pastime), and the Word of God through songs and stories. Nearly 1,300 children showed up each day. Can you picture hundreds of kids sitting in the grass under a big tree, straining to hear about Jonah and the whale?

Being with masses of kids learning about our great big God is exciting, but I cherish the one-on-one experiences. The first profound moment in my fledging pastoral career was visiting our driver’s brother in the hospital. A car had fallen on 17-year-old Roderick at the service station where he worked. He was in shock with head injuries and a busted jaw. I touched his forehead, held his hand, looked up at the parents and family circling the bed, and hoped the right words would come. When they did, I felt the awesome responsibility of the pastoral role.
I preached a sermon with Glenn Frazier, pastor to the Church of the Pacific, at the native church in Hanalei, where they read the Scripture and sang all the hymns in Hawaiian—a lot of o’s and a’s mixed with strange breaths and interesting gutturals! I also experienced Hawaiian culture by attending a local funeral and wedding.

Like Joseph and the “coat of many colors,” Kaua’i is draped with a coat of many cultures—each shade and hue highlighted by different ethnic groups, island locations, and rich heritages infusing the island in mysterious beauty. Whether Filipino, Korean, Japanese, or Marshalese, all of the cultures include feasting. Who can pass up freshly caught octopus sautéed with seafood in ginger and tantalizing spices? Never before in my life had I felt more alive than on the island of Kaua’i—and my heart has opened more to a sense of call in the area of both youth ministry and preaching.

As vibrant as the African sunshine is the laughter of its children. The second moment came a few days later as I sat by the hymns in Hawai’i—a lot of o’s and a’s mixed with strange breaths and interesting gutturals! I also experienced Hawaiian culture by attending a local funeral and wedding.

The view in Paradise initially makes visitors forget about life’s problems, yet living in “Paradise” for ten weeks let me peel off layers and see what lies behind closed doors, closed eyes, and needing hearts. Hawaii is beautiful to be sure, yet struggle, pain, and sin is real—and people here are just as in need of Christ’s love as ever.

The kids excitedly show off the molded bricks they made for their new Kids Club building.

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is the laughter of its children.

The second moment came a few days later as I sat by myself in the office. A small girl with a book bag entered, crossed the room, crawled up in my lap, and laid her head on my chest. I was astounded. What to do? I asked her to show me her books and heard her struggle with HIV/AIDS. She was searching for love and safety, much the same as I have done when entering a church to rest my head on our Father’s knee.

We are called to love one another, God provides the opportunities in ways we can’t anticipate. It is for us to respond. I have come to see mission as the gladness of God. Being part of such an important mission was, indeed, a gift to me.
Presidential
October

Rev. Jonathon Brown, Pastor of First Reformed Church, Oak Harbor, Washington, anoints his father with oil while friends and members of the seminary community lay hands on the new president.


Dr. Leanne Van Dyk, Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs at WTS, gave an exposition of Ephesians 4:11-13. Dr. Gregg Mast, President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, led the audience in the profession of faith.

Carol Wagner, Moderator of the WTS Board of Trustees, administers the oath of office to Dr. Timothy Brown.
Dr. Timothy L. Brown gives his inaugural sermon, “Prophesy, Mortal, Prophesy.”

Offering prayers for the life of the Church and the world, for the RCA, for the students, faculty, and staff of WTS, and for President Brown: Rev. Canon Captain Titus Baraka, Dr. Carol Bechtel, Megan Hodgin, Dr. I. John Hesselink, and Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

Dustyn Keepers, M.Div. student at WTS, recites Psalm 1 in Hebrew (along with Dr. Tom Hoogast, Professor of Old Testament at WTS).

Dr. Dennis Voskuijl, tenth president of Western Theological Seminary, symbolically bestows the eleventh president with the presidential medallion.

Dr. Eugene Peterson, pastor, professor, poet, and author, charges the seminary community to uphold their new president.
God has given Western an important role enhancing the ministry of people strategically placed around the world to make a real impact for Christ. The Master of Theology program brings gifted pastors and church leaders from places like Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Korea, Japan and Malaysia to the U.S. for a year of post-graduate study at WTS—an opportunity most would not have in their home countries.


Rev. Mary Nabakooza teaches Biblical Studies at the Anglican Uganda Martyrs Seminary in Namugongo. The blood of Uganda’s martyrs became the seed of the church, and today 85% of Ugandans are Christian. What a powerful context in which to teach the next generation of pastors!

Rev. Milly Erema teaches Hebrew, Greek and Children’s Education at Uganda Christian University. She and her husband have a vision to establish a Christian primary school, high school, church, medical clinic, and social service center in the remote village of Rituza where there is no Christian witness. RCA and CRC supporters in Holland, MI are helping turn that vision into reality.

Rev. Titus Baraka directed a program promoting reconciliation in war-torn areas in Northern Uganda and the Sudan—dangerous work meeting with military leaders of opposing groups. He is also the radio minister for “Words of Hope” in Uganda. He recently established a counseling center close to Uganda Christian University to provide counseling for students, their families, and the community. In October Rev. Stephen Kaziminga was consecrated as the Bishop of the Mityana Diocese with 5,000 people present, including the president of the country! Previously the Provost of the Mukono Cathedral, he now is responsible for 500 churches, 400 schools, 12 clinics and 100 pastors.

Rev. Samuel Wasswa is the Provost of a Diocese near Mukono. As such, he is the Bishop’s direct assistant and is responsible for the administration of clinics and hundreds of churches and schools.

Rev. Latimer Muwanguzi serves as the campus minister at an Anglican church to provide counseling for students, their families, and the community. We had a mini-Th.M. reunion with Milly, Stephen, Latimer and Samuel. All expressed deep gratitude for the welcome, education and support they received at the seminary. They stressed how important their experience at Western had been in their development as pastoral leaders in Uganda.

Many wounds are yet to be healed in Uganda after the chaos of the Obote era (1966-1986), interrupted by the horrors of the Idi Amin regime (1971-1979), and the most recent terrors inflicted by “The Lord’s Army”. Uganda is home to many different ethnic groups and forty different languages. Although the Museveni government (since 1986) has restored some normalcy and stability, massive corruption and rigged elections still plague the political process.

In theory, Uganda should be a prosperous country with its substantial natural resources. However, due to corruption and poor management, the country is heavily in debt and the people are very poor. Uganda is saddled with 236,000 refugees due to conflicts in neighboring countries. AIDS has also devastated the country.

Currently 12% of the population, Muslims are becoming aggressive in their efforts to attract new converts. Among Christians, the Roman Catholic Church has the largest number of adherents (42%), followed by the Anglican Church of Uganda (36%).

This is the context in which Ugandan Christians in general and our graduates in particular witness and work. They are shining as beacons of hope in a needy land.

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**Winter-Spring 2009**

**Confessing Christ Today: The Belhar Confession**
An Online Learning Course beginning January 18, 2009

**The Future Shape of Ministry Conference**
February 13-14 “Only God is Able” Disability Conference - March 9-10

**Leadership and Family Systems Conference**
March 12-13

**Transformational Leadership and Congregational Development Seminar**
March 20

**Women in Leadership Conference**
April 27-28

**Annual Youth Leaders Conference**
with Kenda Dean on May 8-9

**Practices, Traditions, and Congregational Transformation**
with Diana Butler-Bass on May 29

journey.westernsem.edu 1-800-392-8554, x167

**Journey:** A Center for the Church’s Learning at Western Theological Seminary

Thanks for your commitment to life-long learning!

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**Special Gifts to Western Theological Seminary**
Gifts made between May 14 - October 23, 2008

**In Memory of:**
- Oliver (Don) Droppers
- Carl & Ruth Droppers
- Emily Mauw
- Judy Estell
- Siemara Harper
- June Rees
- Richard & Lavinia Wiestra
- Elton & Edith Eningenburg
- Paul & Lois Kles
- Jason Verbrugge
- Jim & Marcia Verbrugge
- Hazel Vugtveem
- Stanley & Joan Vugtveem
- James Underwood
- Mary Ellen Sheets
- Tom & Sue TenKeevee

**In Honor of:**
- Timothy & Nancy Brown
- Glenn & Jane Low
- N. Sydney Heersma
- Mary D. Hahn
- Vernon & Carol Hoffman's 50th Anniversary
- Melanie & Dorothy Boersma
- Dennis Voskuil
- Richard & Marilyn Cook
- Mark Rich & Cynthia Holder
- Rich

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**NOVEMBER 2008**

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Welcome!

Theresa Hamm
Administrative Assistant to the Distance Learning Master of Divinity Program

Theresa has over 20 years experience in administrative assistance, and for the past several years she worked out of her home trading stocks and futures contracts online.

As a part-time Administrative Assistant to the Distance Learning M.Div. Program, she provides support for all aspects of the program and staff.

Ron Riensstra
Voting Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship

Ron is a 1992 graduate of Calvin College and has spent the last 15 years in logistics, automotive finance, and banking.

Mike will travel the country to raise funds and advance the seminary’s mission among churches and individuals. Friends and supporters of the seminary in parts of west Michigan, central Iowa, Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, Kansas, Indiana, and SE Chicago will have a chance to meet him in person.

Mike LeFebre
Associate Director of Advancement

Mike has served as an interim pastor, worship leader and consultant in local churches. We welcome Ron for the academic year 2008-2009.

Journey.

tion events and giving administrative residence hall.

Calling.

ron team for the new ning and design project and an interior connection to WTS.

Ann her first con- House gave Lee come Ron for the academic year consultations in local churches. We wel- preacher, worship leader and con-ultant in local churches. We wel- come Ron for the academic year 2008-2009.

Calls to the Class of 2008

Master of Divinity graduates:

Jennifer Bendellus — Clinical Pastoral Educa- tion, Vasser Brothers Hospital, Poughkeeps- sie, NY
Ryan Boes — Co-pastor, Rolling Aces Christian Reformed Church, Mason City, IA
Matt Bosch — in candidacy process
Ben Brooks — Church Planter, Rocky Mountain Church, Colorado Springs, CO
Jill Caratini — Specialized Ministry, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, Alpharetta, GA
Kate Davelaar — Chaplain, Hope College, Hol- land, MI
Dan Devries — Leaders for the Harvest, Synod of the Heartland, Maurice, IA
Eric Dlpzn — Campus Minister, First Presby- terian Church, Colorado Springs, CO
Jamie Dykstra — Pastor, Delaware Reformed Church, Lebanon, PA
Ruth Fitzgerald — in search process
Will Forrythe — Church Plant, Rocky Mountain Campus, Colorado Springs
Shawn Gerbers — in search process
Steve Hayes — Pastor, Calvary Reformed Church, Southgate, MI
Miriam Ippel — Bonner Foundation, Princeton, NJ
Lynne Kammeraad — Minister under Contract, New Community Fourth Church, Holland, MI
Larry Karow — Pastor, Highland United Methodist Church, Fort Thomas, KY
Jerena Keys — United Church of Christ, Big Rapids, MI
Kate Kooyman — Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Grand Rapids, MI
Michael Merry — Pastor, New Life Community Church, Milwaukee, WI
Dan Michael — in search process
Mark Milkamp — Pastor, Open Hearts Community Church, Wyoming, MI

Dara Nykamp — Director of Teaching Alignment, Ridge Point Community Church, Holland, MI
Scott Nyp — Pastor, Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles, Alexandria Bay, NY
Bill Pekich — in search process
Rick Peterson — Specialized Ministry
Courtney Porter — Women of the Church of God National Office, Markelville, IN
Becky Pratt — in search process
Nick Pyle — Pastor, Christ’s Community Church, Fisher, IN
Mark Reynoso — Pastor of Emerging Ministries and Discipleship, Peace Reformed Church, Eagan, MN
Jason Semans — Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship, Maplewood Reformed Church, Hol- land, MI
Tim Slater — Pastor, First Reformed Church, Baldwin, WI
Tanner Smith — Pastor, First Reformed Church, Sioux Center, IA
Chad Strabbing — Education and Youth Direc- tor, Refloboth Reformed Church, McBain, MI
Aaron VanDerveen — Specialized Ministry, Classis of Muskegon, MI
Josh Vandye — Church Coordinator, Good Samaritan Ministries, Holland, MI
Heather VanLeeuwen — Staff Mentor, ATLAS — City on the Hill Ministries, Zeeland, MI
Matt vanManen — Master of Social Work Program, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI
Steve Waterstone — Pastor, First Reformed Church, South Holland, IL
Wei, Jing — Master of Theology program, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ
Travis West — Master of Theology program, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

Josh Wierenga — Real Life Fellowship, Holland, MI
Tim Wilson — Pastor of Outreach and Disciple- ship, Vriesland Reformed Church, Zeeland, MI
Paul Ytteroo — Associate Pastor, First Presby- terian Church, Flint, MI
Debra Yurk — Pastor of Congregational Life, Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA

Master of Theology graduates:

Raymond Addo — U.S., unknown
Ekpenyong Akpanika — Moderator-Minister-in-charge, The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Kukwa Parish, Abia, Nigeria
Robert Belgau — Pastor in the Lutheran Church of India
Dereje Gutema Gache — U.S., unknown
John Mundi — Ph.D. study, Concordia Theolog- ical Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Anna Sharma — Minister for congregations in Fyzabad, Siparia Road, and Rousillac in Trinidad

Doctor of Ministry graduates:

Apollos Handman — Instructor of pastoral train- ing college, Joos, Plateau State, Nigeria
Mark Poppen — Admissions Director, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI
Karl Van Harn — Pastor of Congregational Life, Ridgewood CRC, Jenison, MI

Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry graduates:

Judy Tiemeyer — Master of Divinity program, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

Transformed for Ministry

A new president, the stock market, Brett Favre playing for the NY Jets... Sometimes change is good, sometimes not so much, and sometimes it just is. Change happens, but in the Reformed tradition, we call it transformation.

Every day students at Western are being transformed as they prepare to be pastors and leaders. Faith is strength- ened, skills are sharpened, and calls to Christian ministry are clarified. As students go through this process, we can walk alongside them as partners in ministry. Most of them could not even be in seminary were it not for the prayers and financial gifts of others.

There is no greater joy than responding to God’s call to serve. I pray you will respond generously this fall by serving with your financial support. A gift to Western multiplies in many ways and transforms the lives of stu- dents, as well as your own.

Feel free to contact me or a member of the advance- ment team to learn about more ways you can transform lives through your support. ken@westernsemin.edu or (616) 392-8555, x111.

Ken Neevel
Vice President of Advancement & Communications

A footnote - by now many of you know we said goodbye earlier this fall to Associate Director Laura DeVries as she began a new career with Kids Hope USA. We will miss Laura because she is a friend and she was an important and integral member of the advancement team, but we wish her well in her new calling. Laura’s departure means we welcome Mike LeFebre to the WTS Advance- ment staff. We are excited to have Mike on our team. When you have the opportunity to meet Mike personally, please welcome him to the Western family.

Jennifer Bendellus — Clinical Pastoral Educa- tion, Vasser Brothers Hospital, Poughkeeps- sie, NY
Ryan Boes — Co-pastor, Rolling Aces Christian Reformed Church, Mason City, IA
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An Invitation
westernsem.edu

your spot at the luncheons and/or banquet, call LuAnne VanSlooten at 616-392-8555, x109 or email luanne@westernsem.edu. An invitation packet will arrive in the mail in April. For questions or to reserve

With some help from others, Vern has assembled a rather diverse and impressive group under the umbrella of the Micah Center. More than 30 people are involved, notably a significant core of WTS students and graduates. This ecumenical initiative involves two meetings each month: The first

meeting features a speaker on a social justice topic; at the second meeting participants divide up into four interest groups—such as universal health care, immigration, and hunger/poverty—and meet separately to work on their particular issue. The emphasis is on action.

WTS folk include Vern Hoffman ’59 and George Brown ’69, Kate Koosman ’08 (leading the immigration interest group), Phil ’07 & Becky ’08 Pratt, Patricia Simmons (student), and Cory Mitchell (student). Susan Kingma ’05, Joyce Zaagman ’06, and Jodi Betten Rice ’96 have also attended meetings earlier this year.

Peter TeWinkle ’02 is the pastor and is also involved. David Dethmers ’73 of the RCA mission staff leads another of the interest groups, and there are Hope Reformed Church members as well as people from the Grand Rapids community involved. Two Calvin College professors attend also.

The energy at the meetings is very high. This is a Spirit-movement, indeed! The mission of the Micah Center is to develop Christians who respond to God’s call to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. (Micah 6:8)

News
On August 1 David VanderLeest ’81 became the pastor of the Reformed Church of Stout, Stout, IA. David previously served as pastor of Bethel Reformed Church in Leota, MN since 1997.

David A. Van Dyke ’92 is serving as pastor of the House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, MN. Recently he was elected to serve as Co-Moderator of The Covenant Network of Presbyterians as well as to the Board of Trustees of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Aaron Anderson ’03 accepted a call in September 2007 to be the Lead Pastor at Grace Community Church in Holland, MI. Aaron previously served as pastor at Delaware Reformed Church in Lennox, SD.

Lalrosemi Songate ’05 (Th.M.) is living in Churchandpur, Manipur, India. He is in his second term as General Director, Evangelical Congregational Church of India.

Jong Pil Yoo ’06 (Th.M.) is in the Ph.D program at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. He also serves the Korean church in Fort Wayne as pastor of the youth group.

Heun Kyu Joo ’06 (Th.M.) is studying at the University of Toronto toward a Ph.D in Old Testament.

Lin, Chang Hua ’06 (Th.M.) is working on his dissertation for the Ph.D program at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Josh ’06 and Heather ’08 Van Leeuwen welcomed a son, Josiah John, born into their family June 22, 2008. Josh serves as a pastor at North Holland Reformed Church in Holland, MI. Heather graduated with an MSW from Grand Valley State in April and from WTS with an MDiv in May 2008. She

works for ATLAS (Attaining Truth, Love, and Self-Control) at City on a Hill Ministries in Zeeland, MI.

Gemechis Mosa ’07 (Th.M.) is training as a Chaplain Resident at Iowa Health, Des Moines, IA. When the residency ends next February, he intends to work toward being a certified chaplain for the ELCA.

Abraham Nikhata ’07 (Th.M.) is serving two congregations in Ndola, Zambia. He began his appointment as Moderator of the Copperbelt Presbytery on November 15, 2008.

Won Taek-jin ’07 (Th.M.) is studying for a Master of Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. His church home is Korean Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI where he serves as piano accompanist and advises for renewing worship services.

Miriam Ippel Barnes ’08 married Eric Barnes on June 28 and has moved to Princeton, NJ. While Eric finishes his seminary degree, Miriam is working for Bonner Foundation in Princeton. Her search for ordained ministry will begin this winter.

An Invitation
Classes of ’99, and ’04: Please come for your Alumni/ae Day reunion on May 11, 2009. Luncheons will be offered for $10/person for the 25th, 40th, and 50th reunion classes. There will be a special event in the afternoon followed by the Alumni/ae Banquet at 5:00 in the Maas Center of Hope College ($20/person). Please hold that

date and make plans to come. An invitation packet will arrive in the mail in April. For questions or to reserve your spot at the luncheons and/or banquet, call LuAnne VanSlooten at 616-392-8555, x109 or email luanne@westernsem.edu.

November 2008, Vol. 12, No. 1
Editor: Carls Plumer Art Direction: RCA Production Services
Editorial Council: Dr. Timothy Brown, Dr. George Brown, Dr. Matt Flodin, Rev. Dawn Boekeins, Ken Neevel
The Commons is published three times a year for alumni/ae and friends of Western Theological Seminary by the Office of Advancement and Communications, Ken Neevel, vice president, 101 E. 13th Street, Holland, Michigan 49423. 1-800-392-8524 or 616-392-8555; fax 616-392-7717. Reproduction in whole or in part by permission only.

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