The Class of 2015 stands to state their promises.

139th Commencement

The seminary’s second-largest graduating class received their degrees on Monday evening, May 11, in Dimnent Memorial Chapel on the campus of Hope College. Western Theological Seminary awarded 42 Master of Divinity degrees, five Master of Arts degrees, three Master of Theology degrees, three Doctor of Ministry degrees, and three Graduate Certificates in Urban Pastoral Ministry.

Prominent church historian Dr. Justo L. González was the commencement speaker. He spoke to the graduates about the Ascension of Christ, emphasizing Christ’s absence and Christ’s victory. He stressed that there is love in Christ’s absence, allowing us to steward creation and God’s people with the help of the Holy Spirit. “The victory,” he said, “is that Christ is seated with God where we will join Him someday. Like a mother teaching her child to walk, who is waiting around the corner for him, Christ is absent from us, allowing us to learn to walk towards him until the day he will finally embrace us.”
Graduates of Western Theological Seminary

Annastasia Bonczyk  
M.Div.  
Fremont, MI

Jenna Brandsen  
M.Div.  
Holland, MI

William Brooks  
M.Div.  
Amityville, NY

Allison Card  
M.Div.  
Sheboygan, WI

Amy Clemens  
M.A.  
Kalamazoo, MI

Paige Convis  
M.Div.  
Flushing, MI

Ryan Donahoe  
M.Div.  
Spokane, WA

Annastasia Bonczyk  
M.Div.  
Fremont, MI

Jenna Brandsen  
M.Div.  
Holland, MI

William Brooks  
M.Div.  
Amityville, NY

Allison Card  
M.Div.  
Sheboygan, WI

Amy Clemens  
M.A.  
Kalamazoo, MI

Paige Convis  
M.Div.  
Flushing, MI

“Class verse:"

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

John 3:30 NSRV

Dr. Fred Johnson III  
M.Div.  
Cape Charles, VA

Sarah Juist  
M.Div. Dec '14  
Fulton, IL

Wendy Kolakowski  
M.Div.  
Plano, TX

Bryan Kunz  
M.Div.  
Oskaloosa, IA

Adam Lorenz  
M.Div.  
Cedar Falls, IA

Zachary Lysdahl  
M.Div.  
Rockford, MI

Nicholas Dorland  
M.Div. Dec '14  
Rochester, NY

Rev. Travis Else  
D.Min.  
Sioux Center, IA

Jill English  
M.A.  
Grand Haven, MI

Peter Pinkowski  
M.Div.  
Schererville, IN

Albert Plat  
M.Div.  
Athabasca, Alberta, Canada

Lori Pollitz  
M.Div.  
Mason, MI

Phillip Quinn  
M.Div.  
Cedarville, MI

Ronald Radcliffe  
M.Div.  
Mt. Prospect, IL

Sergio Reyes  
GCUPM  
Federal District, Mexico
On May 12, the day after graduating, M.Div. recipient Benito (Ben) Aguilera was ordained at Christ Memorial Church in Holland, MI, where he has accepted a position as Pastor of Community and Global Missions.

Ben grew up in Southern California and didn’t become a Christian until high school. His first church was a non-denominational charismatic congregation where he learned about the Holy Spirit, gifts and strong leadership. There he developed a deep passion for sharing the gospel. When Ben got to his first chapel service at Northwestern College in Iowa, he was in for a culture shock.

“It was interesting, it was different, it was new,” he says. “I began to see the beauty in liturgy, in the tradition that the RCA has, but I also saw some of the challenges that the RCA faces, for example—diversity.”

Ben has dedicated his studies and his ministry to understanding and appreciating different cultures outside and within the church and learning to meet people where they are. He is passionate about sharing the gospel with the un-churched and with those on the fringes of society.

“I always tell people I’m from the best of both worlds,” he says. “I’m from a charismatic background but also have this strong biblical foundation that I love in the RCA. It challenges me. It challenges the way I think; it challenges the way I walk with God, and I think it’s really important that I always have those two be a part of my life and my ministry.”

Ben has been working as the director of community development at Christ Memorial, where his job has been to maintain relationships with 20+ non-profits and ministries in Holland. One of his goals is to get the church out of the pews and into the community.

Ben and his wife Hannah will be staying in Holland for the foreseeable future, but they are open to the Lord’s direction. Ben has a heart for urban ministry and hopes someday to become a church planter.
Our Loss, but a Gain to the Wider Church
Dr. Leanne Van Dyk will be Columbia Theological Seminary’s Next President

Dr. Leanne Van Dyk, academic dean and vice president for academic affairs, has been chosen by Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA as their next president. The seminary is part of the Presbyterian Church (USA), has a faculty of 30, five degree programs, and 350 students.

“Columbia’s great gain is Western’s deep loss,” says WTS President Timothy Brown. “Leanne has given our school boundless energy and lavish joy as she has guided our academic well-being with remarkable wisdom. We all wish she wasn’t leaving but clearly understand why Columbia has chosen her.”

With degrees in music and early childhood education, Leanne’s career began as an elementary school teacher in DeMotte, IN and Kalamazoo, MI. Although she enjoyed what she was doing, she began to sense a strong call to ministry.

“At that time women were not welcomed into ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, but I was convinced that I was obeying a call from God,” she says.

She earned an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. at Princeton Theological Seminary before going on to teach at San Francisco Theological Seminary. During that time she grew as a teacher and theologian, and in 1998 former academic dean Jim Brownson invited her to join the faculty at WTS.

Dr. Van Dyk first taught Reformed theology and then moved into administrative roles such as dean of the faculty (2002-05), academic dean (2005-15), and finally the vice president of academic affairs (2006-15).

From chairing ten different faculty search committees to heading up the Faculty Fellow program that invites diverse scholars into Western’s community, to encouraging individual growth among staff, students, and faculty, Dr. Van Dyk has impacted many aspects of the seminary’s life and identity. She also improved the distance learning program and began a new Master of Arts degree.

According to fellow theologian Dr. David Stubbs, “Leanne was a key catalyst in bringing the emphasis on sacraments and worship to WTS. She helped bring the ‘Introduction to Theology and Worship’ course into the curriculum and spearheaded a volume on the intersection of theology of worship, A More Profound Alleluia. The fact that WTS is now a seminary known for its worship, for a beautiful new chapel, and for having two liturgical theologians on the faculty is in no small part due to Leanne’s impact.”

Dr. Van Dyk’s last day at Western was May 13, and Dr. James Brownson has been named interim academic dean while a careful search is made for Leanne’s replacement.

“I will miss Western deeply,” says Leanne. “I will miss our daily chapel services, especially Friday morning communion. I will miss laughing with my colleagues and sharing the ups and downs of life. There is a lot I will miss!”

“We are mighty proud of Dr. Leanne Van Dyk,” says President Brown, “and we pledge to her our abiding love and continuing prayers.”

In their words...

“We are so proud of you, Dr. Leanne Van Dyk! You are going to be missed by IBE! We are so grateful for your hard work in favor of our Latino community here in Holland. Thank you for your support and belief in our ministry.”

—Gretchen Torres
Instituto Biblico Ebenezer, Holland, MI

“You are a theological powerhouse, academic rock star, and a minister who moves in this world with much grace. Reading your essay on Reformed theology and feminist theory was the first time I reconciled both of these identities in myself as a first year student at WTS. How grateful I am to have studied under you.”

—Jessica Kast-Keat ’11
Associate Pastor, West End Collegiate Church, NY, NY

“Dr. Leanne Van Dyk is a great scholar who taught me to think theologically as a student at Western Theological Seminary.”

—Eddy Aleman ’04
Director of Strategic Leadership Development & Hispanic Ministries, RCA

“Dr. Van Dyk has had an extraordinary impact upon Western Theological Seminary—modeling a welcoming, engaged presence, yet also retaining the backbone necessary for an academic dean. For me in particular, she has done a wonderful job as a supervisor and mentor. I am so grateful for her service to WTS.”

—J. Todd Billings
Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology, WTS, Holland, MI

“Congratulations to my dear friend and esteemed colleague. It is a good day for theological education and my denomination, the PCUSA. Leanne will be missed tremendously.”

—Theresa Latini
Professor of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care, WTS, Holland, MI

“Columbia is getting a treasure and a gifted leader. We deeply lament your leaving, but send you with love. Blessings on this new chapter in your life, Leanne!”

—Travis West, ’08, ’09 (ThM)
Instructor of Biblical Hebrew, WTS, Holland, MI
CLASS of 1955

John Tien, Thomas Zylstra, Gordon DePree, Melvin Voss, John Nyitray, Sr.

NOT PICTURED: Paul Alderink, Robert Bos, Donald Brandt, William Carlough, Jr., Harold Cupery, Donald DeYoung, Herman Dragt, Howard Hanko, Donald Hoffman, Connie Keunen, Harold Korver, Earl Kragt, Paul Meyerink, Richard Parramore, Wayne Tripp, Cornelius VanHeest, Kenneth VanWyk, David Wilson, Charles Wissink

ON TO GLORY: Donald Blom, Darrell Franken, Robert Henninges, Albert Moss, James Parsons, M. Paul VanderWoude, Garret Wilterdink

CLASS of 1965

Gerald Phelan, Stanley Hagemeyer, Calvin Rynbrandt, Thomas Bruno, John VanMantgem, Daryl Vetter


ON TO GLORY: Donald Baker, Donald Boyce, Paul DeMaagd, Charlotte Heinen (MRE), Stanley Lin (ThM), Marvin Schultz, Delmar Thiesse, Paul VanDeHoef, A. Charles VanderBeek

CLASS of 1975

Lyle VanderBroek, Arie Blok, Thomas Boogaart, Jack Doorlag, Thomas Welscott


ON TO GLORY: David Breen, Albert DeVoogd, Jr. (ThM), Thomas Hoogendoorn, Rick VanHaltwisch
Richard Madsen ‘53 writes that the Madsen clan gathered in Durham, NC in March to celebrate his 90th birthday, his daughter’s 61st, and to witness the baptism of Jackson Smith Madsen, his fourth great-grandchild.

J. David Muyskens ’59 served six years as the International Coordinator for International Outreach of Contemplative Outreach, an organization based out of Butler, NJ that focuses on practicing centering prayer. David has been a spiritual director since 1991.

Harry Mencarelli ’60 is using his time wisely at Christian Rest Home in Grand Rapids, becoming the resident artist and producing such works as “Jesus Among Patients” and “The Birds,” based on the hymn, “His Eye is on the Sparrow.” He also leads prayers and devotions for the residents and is very involved as a member of the resident council board. His wife, Joyce, lives nearby in Edison Manor.

Merwin “Mike” Van Doornik ’60 continues to play the organ at area churches as well as at Freedom Village in Holland, where he has lived for the last ten years.

Charles Stickley ’64 recently celebrated 50 years of service being supervisor and contract pastor at the Port Ewen Church of Port Ewen, NY. He is presently serving his classes as pulpito supply, with future plans for traveling and spending time with family. Charles retired from Hurley Reformed Church in Hurley, NY in 2006, after serving for 33 years. The church honored him by forming a columbarium called “Stickley Gardens” for the interment of ashes of church and community members. The youth group placed two marble benches for his years of service.

On June 30, Dirk J. Kramer ’76 will retire as pastor of the Drayton Reformed Church after 27 years of ministry. He and his wife, Jean, will continue to live in the Drayton, Ontario area of Canada.

Remarkably, since graduating in 1979, Mark J. Bergsma ’79 has been pastor of the same church, Unity Reformed of southeast Grand Rapids. In the last 36 years he has also been involved in police and hospital chaplaincy, TV broadcasting, and coaching in the community.

This year concludes a ten year project in Zambia as 45 Vineyard churches are released to become their own national entity—the Association of Vineyard Churches in Zambia. During the last year Stephen Van Dop ’85 has been coaching area and regional leaders as well as the emerging national director for these churches.

Since 2009 Kris Abbey ’98 has been a chaplain with Hospice of Lansing in Lansing, MI.

On March 1, 2015 Bruce D. Mulder ’99 became the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Ionia, MI.

Eddy Aleman ’04 has been appointed as the Director of Strategic Leadership Development and Hispanic Ministries for the Reformed Church in America.

In May, Travis Else ’07 earned his Doctor of Ministry degree at WTS. His project was, “Idolatry, The Powers, and Cultural Formation.” He is currently serving as Team Lead at First Reformed Church in Sioux Center, IA.

Andrew Kadzban ’12 is now the pastor of Wyckoff Reformed Church in Wyckoff, NJ after the April 30 retirement of Senior Pastor Jim O’Connell ’81. Andy has been the associate pastor since October of 2012.

On October 12, 2014 Cory Van Sleton ’13 was ordained as a Minister of the Word at Lebanon Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, IA, where he serves as pastor. On May 1, 2015 he was appointed Chaplain (CPT) in the Iowa Army National Guard.

Dan De Graff ’14 and his wife, Christie, announce the birth of their first daughter, Addison Grace, on April 20, 2015. Dan is pastor of Corsica CRC and Grace Reformed Church in Corsica, SD.

Benito Aguiler ’15 was ordained on May 12 at Christ Memorial Church in Holland, where he serves as the Pastor of Community and Global Missions.

Robert Schuller ’50
b. 9/16/1926 Chicago, IL
d. 4/2/2015 Artesia, CA
Hope ’47; WTS ’50
Reformed churches served:
(1950-55) Ivanhoe, Chicago, IL
(1955-2006) Crystal Cathedral,
Garden Grove, CA

William H. Curtis ’51
b. 11/30/1921 Ballston Spa, NY
d. 4/6/2015 Kalamazoo, MI
Hope ’48; WTS ’51
Churches served:
(1951-60) First Presbyterian,
Cadillac, MI
(1960-85) First Presbyterian,
Hastings, MI

Gordon Alderink, ’53
b. 6/28/1927 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 3/31/2015 Holland, MI
Hope ’50; WTS ’53 and ’78 (ThM)
Reformed churches served:
(1953-57) Olivet, Muskegon, MI
(1957-62) Spring Valley, Fulton, IL
(1965-69) Archer, IA
(1969-80) Fennville, MI
(1981-90) Marbletown, Stone Ridge, NY

Roger Hendricks ’53
b. 6/26/1925 Grand Rapids, MI
d. 3/17/2015 Lansing, MI
Hope ’50; WTS ’53
Reformed churches served:
(1953-57) Falmouth and
Maddersville, MI
(1957-69) Redeemer, Royal Oak, MI
(1969-85) First, Decatur, MI
(1985-89) Sp Int, Great Lakes
Regional Synod
(1989-98) First, Portage, MI
Other service: (1964-70) Chaplain, USAF
Reserve

Herman Dragt ’55
b. 3/30/1926 Chicago, IL
d. 1/29/2015 Williamsport, IN
Elmhurst ’53; WTS ’55
Reformed churches served:
(1955-58) First, Monroe, SD
(1958-63) Trinity, Fulton, IL
(1963-68) Riverside Park,
Hammond, IN
(1968-77) Community,
Lafayette, IN
(1977-86) Emmanuel, Clinton, WI
(1986-91) Elm, Kings, IL

Nevin Webster ’57
b. 11/10/1931 Youngstown, OH
d. 11/20/2014 Lincoln Park, MI
Hope ’54; WTS ’57
Reformed churches served:
(1959-66) Second, Coxsackie, NY
(1966-72) First, Hawthorne, NJ
(1972-76) First, Denver, CO
(1987-91) Grace, Allen Park, MI
Other service: (1957-59) Chaplain, U.S. Army

Victor Ebert ’64
b. 1/23/1931 Waupun, WI
d. 2/9/2015 Northfield, MN
Fon du Lac Coll ’50; U of WI ’58 (BS)
& ’59 (MS); WTS ’64
Reformed churches served:
(1964-68) Twin Lakes,
Kalamazoo, MI
(1968-70) First, Ontario, Canada
(1970-86) Calvary, New Berlin, WI
Other service: (1986-7) RCA Chaplain, Mayo
Foundation Hospital, Rochester, MN

Erwin “Erv” Voogd ’61
b. 9/22/1936 Buffalo Center, IA
d. 4/24/2015 Coeur d’Alene, ID
Hope ’58; WTS ’61
Reformed churches served:
(1961-64) Hope, Spencer, IA
(1964-69) Rochester, MN
(1969-70) Bethany, Des Moines, IA
(1970-77) Hope Haven,
Rock Valley, IA
(1977-81) First, Maurice, IA
(1981-87) Elkader, IA
(1987-90) First, Mitchell, SD
(1992-98) Int Pastor, Clay County
First, Everly, IA

Robert Vande Vord ’89
b. 10/30/1956 Detroit, MI
d. 4/30/2015 Kalamazoo, MI
WTS ’89
Reformed churches served:
(1989-95) Assoc, Third,
Kalamazoo, MI
(1995-97) First, Hesperos, IA
(1998-?) Silver Creek, MN
“God has a way of guiding us that we don’t fully understand until we look back on it,” says Dr. Dennis Voskuil, recipient of Western’s 2015 Distinguished Alum Award. In 1962, severing a tendon on his finger sidelined Dennis from the University of Wisconsin football team and changed the direction of his life. By the next season he knew he wouldn’t make the starting team, so, although he loved the game, he ended his football career and focused more intently on his studies. This led him eventually to Western Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. program at Harvard University.

Dennis came from a high energy, highly competitive family, where “my father’s top four priorities were faith, family, sports, and academics—and at times the order got skewed,” he says. His parents, siblings, and their spouses all became teachers in one way or another and were so immersed in the humanities that “when I became a parent, I didn’t even know how to raise children who would be interested in science!”

Living in a rural community in northwest Wisconsin, Dennis was greatly influenced by his parents, grandparents, and the people around him showing how important faith was to them. As a very shy second-grader, his mother had to sit with him in Sunday school, and yet his grandfather noted that Dennis showed more interest in Christianity than most seven year olds. “Dennis,” he asked one day, “Why don’t you become a pastor?”

Indeed, Dennis saw himself as someone who would eventually serve the church, but as a college student he prepared to become an American history teacher. However, one day late in his senior year as he was scraping dirty dishes at his job in the university’s Student Union, he realized it just didn’t seem important enough. He couldn’t spend his time writing about American history without any connection to Christian faith.

By that time he was married to Betty, the sparkling, energetic girl who had burst into his life in fifth grade, promptly out-spelling him in a school spelling bee (“I didn’t like that,” he says). By seventh grade they were a couple, and right before their senior year of college they got married.

When Dennis told Betty he wanted to go to seminary, she was very supportive. They moved to Holland and she immediately got a job teaching home economics. Dennis began WTS in 1966 as a student in the very first summer Greek class, taught by Dr. Richard Oudersluys. After his first year in seminary, an internship at Midland Reformed Church with Rev. Gary Wilterdink gave Dennis real life lessons in preaching and pastoral work. For the next two years of seminary, he assisted at Central Reformed Church in Muskegon.

At the encouragement of the WTS faculty, Dennis headed to Harvard and earned his Ph.D. in the study of religion. However, after graduating in 1974, he was unable to find an open teaching position at a college or university. Again, God guided him as he came very close to accepting a chaplain position at the elite Exeter Academy boarding school in New Hampshire. Instead, at the recommendation of Dr. Gene Osterhaven, Dennis interviewed with Trinity Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, MI.

“They were skeptical of me!” he says. “I was a 30 year old with a Ph.D. who had never been out of school!” Yet, they offered him the position. When he, Betty, and their children arrived in Kalamazoo, the first thing Dennis did was to find out where the church team was playing softball that night. He grabbed his mitt, drove to the field, and said, “Hi, I’m your new pastor, do you have enough...”
At a Glance

...and soon the church realized what a down-to-earth guy he was.

At Trinity, Dennis came to realize that his personal faith commitment and giving his life to others meant far more than a Harvard education. In the first few months, he performed 12 funerals—a blessing in disguise, giving him the chance to get to know so many families. He poured himself into the ministry, calling on everyone, and soon the congregation began to thrive.

“They nurtured me and cared for me,” he reflects. “They taught me so much about faith and the church.” Three years later when he had to announce he was taking a teaching position at Hope College, he broke down in tears because it was so painful to leave them.

Yet teaching was in his blood. He joined the Religion Department at Hope in 1977, and “I took to it like a pig to mud!” he says. He savored every moment. When he arrived, he had no lectures prepared and had to work until 2 or 3 in the morning to keep up with teaching two new classes every semester. Still, he loved everything about it—the students, the community, even the workload. He was happy and had no desire to leave.

After being at Hope eight years, Dennis was chosen as a final candidate to lead Western Theological Seminary. Betty was serving at the denomination and believed the seminary needed him. He was torn but couldn’t bring himself to leave the job he loved. He withdrew his candidacy.

During the next nine years, two especially formative things happened. First, he took over as interim pastor for two years at Third Reformed Church during a difficult time for the congregation, getting his “feet back in it.” There he realized how important training pastors and working directly with church leadership was. Second, he was a candidate for the presidency of Hope, and through the interview process, led by Max DePree, he learned he had gifts for institutional leadership.

When the chance rose again in 1994 to become president of Western, he accepted. Making the transition was very difficult for him, but the students welcomed him. The first week they pulled pranks every night, filling his office with all the plants from the building, then every toilet roll they could find, then balloons, and finally an inadvertently dead goldfish (a story for another time!). Dennis loves it when students feel trusting enough to give him a hard time.

Dennis quickly realized he was called to be there. “I didn’t come with any plan, but I came with convictions of who we should be,” he says. “We are evangelical, Reformed and ecumenical. We start with the core of the gospel, centered in Jesus Christ.”

Long-time colleague Jim Brownson says that Dennis functioned as a theological anchor for the school, with his pastoral presence releasing an enormous amount of creative energy for productive work. He led by encouraging and supporting the people around him.

Dennis is very proud of the institution, the people, and what has developed. “But it’s only by God’s grace!” he is quick to point out. “You can love people, hope and pray that community happens, but you can’t engineer it.”

Betty helped him every step of the way, blessing the seminary with her gift of hospitality. At Hope College she had hosted parties in their home for every class Dennis taught. At the seminary she threw several Christmas parties each year, and every student was invited to their home multiple times. The Voskuils infused the seminary with their love and care.

In 2008, Dennis stepped down from the presidency in order to return to teaching as the Marvin and Jerene DeWitt Professor of Church History for the six years that followed. He retired in June of 2014 and continues to teach courses on Christian history as an adjunct professor. In the fall of 2015, Dennis will make another transition, this time to head the A.C. Van Raalte Institute at Hope College, which is dedicated to historical research with an emphasis on Dutch American history.

His love of history continues. “I think real life is so exciting and history so rich, I can’t imagine devoting my life to anything else!”

by Carla Capotosto
Assoc. Director of Communications, WTS, 1999-
The Way it Was

In the last issue of The Commons I asked our alumni for some help, and you responded. In addition to telling me lots of wonderful stories, several people shared vintage photographs. Some are reproduced on these pages.

I asked for help understanding the surprising ethnic diversity of the class of 1951 and the history of women students enrolling at WTS, especially those spouses who took classes in the 1930s.

Don Vandenberg from the class of 1952 was very helpful. I had wondered about Antonio Moncada, and learned that Antonio had been born in Italy, educated in Tripoli, Libya, and spent the majority of his ministerial career in Canada.

Don also told me about Chun Young Chang, who was Korean and had been tortured as a prisoner during World War II. Don said Chun Young Chang was a man characterized by intense devotion and returned to Korea after his time at WTS.

I also wondered about Duke Richardson and Sam Williams, the first two African-American students in WTS’s history. Sam was the winner of our distinguished alumni award in 2000 and was a product of the RCA school in Brewton, AL. After attending Central College, Sam came to WTS and then returned to Brewton for many years. He eventually served a number of RCA churches until his retirement in 1990. Duke Richardson was remembered by Don (and several others I heard from) as a barber from Texas who offered free haircuts to his classmates. Duke served one church in south Chicago before leaving the RCA and returning to Texas for other opportunities.
The enrollment of the seminary swelled in the years following the Second World War. The class of 1948 had five graduates; three years later the class of 1951 had 25 graduates. That's a 500% increase in three years! With the increased numbers, Western had a moment in the early 1950s when its enrollment was much more diverse. But that moment did not continue. WTS reverted to being a mono-cultural seminary. After Sam and Duke in 1951, the next African-American student graduated in 1972.

Although Western is much more diverse today, we still struggle to reflect all the faces of Christ's church. The Bible is not vague on this issue, and WTS is committed to fully living into the kingdom vision of Revelation 7:9 of a vast multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.

Another area of interest to me is the education of women at WTS. Those of you who visit the seminary regularly know we have a sort of “Hall of Fame” that features the picture of every student who has graduated since 1866. (I'd like to see a Big Ten school do that!) The pictures are all of white men until 1951 and of all men until 1963. But we've learned an interesting fact—in the 1930s at the height of the Great Depression, female spouses of students were enrolled into classes. They didn't just audit the classes, either; they received grades.

I heard from Marilyn Vander Kooi, whose mother, Helene Kolenbrander, took classes alongside her husband William in the 1937-38 school year. Marilyn wrote: “Mother was extremely pleased to have been able to attend seminary classes . . . My siblings and I believe attending Western gave her the confidence to lead numerous women's groups and Bible studies, as well as always teach Sunday School and Catechism in the churches they served. So although we don’t know why an Iowa farm girl was allowed to take classes or how this was paid for, we do know the benefit it had in our parents’ ministry. Maybe there is some kind of lesson here in why we give our resources and why we do things with sometimes no apparent return.”

Like Marilyn and her siblings, I don’t know why the seminary did that then. Tuition in those days was free, so it doesn’t seem like a revenue generator. We don’t know why, but we praise God for the results.

**Back to the present...**

**Meet our Students!**

...at their Summer Internship placements:

- **Julia Brown**, Christian Health Care Center, Wyckoff, NJ
- **Bryant Brozik**, Resurrection Reformed Church, Flint, MI
- **Laura Claus**, Orchard Hill Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Gerry DeBoer**, Centerpoint/FCA, Kalamazoo, MI
- **Paige Douglas**, Clinical Pastoral Education, Minneapolis, MN
- **Audrey Edewaard**, Second Reformed Church, Zeeland, MI
- **Jeff Hoos**, Escape Ministries, Holland, MI
- **Jeffery Hubers**, Real Life Fellowship, Holland, MI
- **Fred Johnson**, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity, Holland, MI
- **Michelle Keller**, Vanguard Ministries, Kalamazoo, MI
- **Steven Mann**, Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, MI
- **Noah McClaren**, Oak Harbor Reformed Church, Oak Harbor, MI
- **Brendan McClanahan**, Clinical Pastoral Education, Pine Rest Hospital, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Kyle Meyeraad-Schaap**, Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Grace Miguel**, Trinity Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Matt Postmus**, Clinical Pastoral Education, Pine Rest Hospital, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Anna Kort Radcliffe**, Pillar Church, Holland, MI
- **Jennifer Ryden**, Faith Christian Reformed Church, Holland, MI
- **Karen VandeBunte**, Theresa Presbyterian Church, Thousand Islands, NY
Friends, I am so pleased to tell you of a wonderful blessing that has come to Western Theological Seminary through a relationship with Latino pastors in the Holland area. I call it a “wonderful blessing” because we long to be a seminary with greater racial/ethnic diversity, but that does not happen simply because we want it to happen. The Lord has to open doors, and that is precisely what is happening before our very eyes.

Last October we began collaborating with The Instituto Bíblico Ebenezer (IBE) of Holland, giving them use of the seminary facilities each Monday night for their educational program for Latino pastors.

Since then, we have enjoyed sharing several meals and events together. Although IBE classes are taught by their own instructors, in January Old Testament Professor Tom Boogaart took part in the IBE’s “Tabernacle Night” in which students made replicas of the tabernacle as outlined in Exodus. We are hoping for many more shared learning experiences.

On May 11, we welcomed to campus Dr. Justo González, a prolific author and one of the most influential voices in theological education the last 40 years. In addition to being our Commencement speaker and giving the Alumni/ae address that afternoon, he was pleased to share lunch with a room full of local Latino pastors and leaders eager for his input.

Pray with me, please, for the ministries of these local pastors and for the future ministries of our recent graduates as they seek to find that particular place where God wants them to live out their call.