At their February meeting, the WTS Board of Trustees unanimously voted to appoint Dr. Felix Theonugraha as the seminary’s 12th president. He will begin his work at Western on July 1.

Dr. Theonugraha is an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America who currently serves as Vice President for Student Life and University Services at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois.

Carol Van Andel and Kris DePree, co-chairs of the Presidential Search Committee, state, “On behalf of the Presidential Search Committee and the Board of Trustees of Western Theological Seminary, we welcome Felix with open arms as our next president. His faithful commitment to the Reformed Church in America and his penchant for leading with a servant’s heart make him uniquely qualified to extend our beloved school’s rich legacy and propel us all into a new and dynamic era.”

A pastor’s son who first felt a call to ministry at age nine, Felix Theonugraha was born in Indonesia to Chinese Christian parents. The family originally had a Chinese last name, but changed it to the Indonesian “Theonugraha” (meaning “God’s Grace” and pronounced theo-new-GRA-ha). When Felix was 12, his father accepted a call to pastor a Mandarin-speaking Reformed Church in America congregation in Central California, and they immigrated to the United States.

Dr. Theonugraha was first drawn to the RCA because of how his family was accepted and supported, especially during a difficult season of ministry in his father’s life. “I saw how the denomination came around him in such beautiful ways,” he recalls.

“As an egalitarian,” he says, “I’m also drawn to the RCA’s stance on women in ministry.” At Trinity, Dr. Theonugraha co-chaired a task force on gender equity and also worked on the university’s racial reconciliation team. “I’ve lived in many places where I’ve been seen as an outsider,” he explains. “As a result, I’m mindful of the tendency for human beings, even Christian communities, to exclude. But I have also seen firsthand the way that people, especially Christian communities, can also embrace ‘the other’ with the love of God.”

Dr. Theonugraha majored in Psychology and English at the University of California, Berkeley, and then attended seminary at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School while under the care of the Central California Classis. He completed his Ph.D. at Trinity in Educational Studies and met his wife Esther there—she was also a master’s student and is now completing a Ph.D. They are the parents of a son and daughter, ages 12 and 10.

Dr. Theonugraha began working at Trinity International University as Associate Dean of Students in 2006, then became the Dean of Students, then Vice President for Spiritual Life and University Ministries, and finally Vice President for Student Life and University Services. In his current role he leads the enrollment team, athletics department, alumni office, and student life division.

Prior to ordination in the RCA, Dr. Theonugraha came to WTS to take classes in the summer of 2004 with then Academic Dean Leanne Van Dyk and President Timothy Brown. He also took the class “Pastor as Person” in 2006 and even got to play basketball with Dr. Dennis Voskuil.

“I learned the depth of Reformed theology with Dr. Van Dyk, the beauty of Reformed worship with President Brown, and the emphasis on pastoral formation that was and continues to be a strength of WTS today,” he shares.

Dr. Theonugraha's personal experience, as well as his professional role as a talented administrator, make him uniquely qualified to lead WTS into the rapidly changing and diversifying world of theological education.

“WTS has an incredible history,” Dr. Theonugraha says. “My prayer is that I can extend and deepen that history so WTS continues to be a place that prepares women and men who are called by God to lead the church in mission, and do so in a way that is mindful and responsive to our time and place in God’s story—such as the increasing ethnic diversity in our country and the growth of the church in the Global South and East.”

Dr. Theonugraha is excited to start his journey at Western and will certainly draw upon his past experience. However, above all, he says he will draw upon the call of Jesus to shepherd and serve the institution to continue its mission, participating in God’s ongoing redemptive work in the world.
On the first day of Hebrew class at Western Theological Seminary, something happened in me. As we stood there surrounded by stuffed animals, learning the words for them in Hebrew, I had the keen sense that I was not there by accident. For five years I had been teaching Latin as a spoken language and had applied to attend Western on a whim. It quickly became clear that God had bigger plans for me, and soon I knew I wanted to teach high school Hebrew in addition to Latin.

The Hebrew language and scriptures worked their way into my heart the way rain seeps into the soil. I found myself humming morning prayers in Hebrew while brushing my teeth and singing Psalms in Hebrew when I was feeling overwhelmed. Internalizing the language and thought patterns of the people of the Old Testament revealed things about the heart and character of God and drew me nearer to God. In class we not only read portions of Scripture but also acted out the narratives, feeling them in our mouths and bodies as well as our minds and hearts and gaining new insights into those stories.

Of course, no school I knew of had any intention of teaching Hebrew, let alone the way I was learning it. But one day I spoke with my Hebrew teacher and advisor, Dr. Travis West (Moshe), and learned that a Bible teacher at Holland Christian High School wanted to start a Hebrew class there. He envisioned partnering with Western and having a seminary intern help teach the class. It sounded too good to be true. Sometimes God has a way of ordering things beyond our wildest imaginings, which, unbeknownst to us, God has been preparing us for all along.

I am now halfway through my first year co-teaching a high school Hebrew class at Holland Christian with Keith Blystra. Having lived in Israel for five years, Blystra knows Hebrew well, and the class is highly immersive. In the fall we brought students to WTS once a week to make use of the school’s props and materials. On an ordinary afternoon, you might see Hebrew students wearing bear heads and eating plastic fruit or creating a storm with blue fabric and beanie baby fish. You might hear students in sailor hats enacting parts of the Jonah story or singing and dancing to “This is the Day” in Hebrew, followed by a theological discussion on the holy name of God or what it means for God to be slow to anger and turn from calamity.

Holland Christian sophomore Austin Becksvoort told me, “I have been able to see another layer of complexity to the Bible that is not visible in an English translation. Learning the language it was originally written in opens up gateways in the Bible. A lot of subtle word choices and connections are missed when reading a translation.”

Another student, Kathryn Honeck, said, “I never knew how poetic God’s word is. Just knowing a few Hebrew words seems to bring me closer to God and give me an even better understanding of who he is.” Other students have enjoyed “just learning and being in the language,” and the way “we laugh every single day in Hebrew.”

The class has been a gift to everyone involved. I am immensely grateful for the ways Western is forming and preparing me to live into this calling, and I am grateful for the opportunity to further develop my own proficiency while sharing what I’ve learned with these students and watching them grow in knowledge and wonder.

Sharing my Passion for Language by M.Div. Junior Linnea Scobey

Bible teacher Keith Blystra and Linnea teach Hebrew together.
Why would a guy in his mid-40s, who already has the highest degree in his field and a solid profession in school administration, be surfing the Western Theological Seminary website? It seemed as though I was being called by the *Hound of Heaven*.\(^1\) While one or two knocks are subtle, “That Voice [was] round me like a bursting sea... I am he whom Thou seekest!”\(^2\)

As a kid growing up in the Interlaken Reformed Church, seminary was not on my radar. I knew I was called to teach and to devote myself to education. Yet, in recent years I had been conflicted about my calling. Stumbling upon the interconnectedness between minister and administer, I realized an “administrator” in purest form is one who is called (“ad”) to serve (“minister”). In the public sector, discipleship in executive leadership is not overtly practiced, but I was in need of continued study, prayer, and skill development to lead with a heart of Christ.

What seemed to be just “poking around” on the seminary website led to me realize the intricate relationship between ministry and school leadership. I became a student in the fall of 2017, seeking an M.Div. through Western's distance learning program (I live in Palmyra, NY).

Whether through prayer, discussion, learning covenant, or my personal life, the idea of call is persistent. Why am I in seminary? For what reason am I knocking myself out studying and interning on top of my regular workload? How does this fit in my life? My call has certainly been challenged.

From my young adult leadership experiences at Camp Fowler (RCA), to my role as a school superintendent and now as a student at Western, God is changing me, refining me for a future in ministry as a servant leader, caring for others as they stumble and walk on a journey with Christ.

Although it is not yet clear how God will use me once I have completed a degree at Western, my studies and interactions with amazing professors and students have put me on a trajectory to be a more faithful servant. In the short-term, I am being shaped in ways that reflect how “the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.”\(^3\) Psalm 33 blends the act of singing in praise to God with the reminder that God has formed all hearts and rules over all. The Psalmist reminds me to put my hope in the Lord.

---

2 Ibid.
3 Ps. 33:5 (NRSV).
On January 24-26, WTS participated as the “featured seminary” during the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s annual Symposium on Worship. Nearly 40 faculty, students, staff, and alumni participated in the Symposium. Many took part in worship services organized by Professor of Preaching and Worship Arts Ron Rienstra. Several faculty members led workshops, provided one-on-one counseling, or served as panelists.

A team of students, staff, and faculty presented the dramatic enactment of Jonah, which was originally performed as Dr. Tom Boogaart’s “Last Performance” upon his retirement in December of 2018.

The Symposium brings more than 1200 participants from over 30 countries to Grand Rapids to learn about worship, preaching, and ministry.

To find out more, visit worship.calvin.edu/symposium.

“The Artful Reading of Scripture in Worship” with Jackson and Hannah Barker Nickolay.

Dr. Han-luen Kantzer Komline

Dr. Ben Conner
Habakkuk 3:17-19 - The God of Joy in the Midst of Our Troubles

Members of the WTS community presented one of the first plenary worship sessions of the conference. Friendship House graduates Megan Dalman and Seth Vander Broek assisted Dr. Sue Rozeboom with the opening gestures, while staff, faculty and students read and enacted the scripture passage. M.Div. student Emily Ulmer read a prayer of lament following each section of Habakkuk.
Holiness Abounding

I zoomed in 400% on the above picture of Dedication Day so I could see who was in it. I never imagined doing so would make me cry, but it did.

The tears welled up because of the stories of the people in the picture. On the top rung, in the middle of our excited students, is a friend bearing two kinds of cancer. Not far from her is another friend who has lost two sons. No one should have one kind of cancer, let alone two. No one should lose one son, let alone two. But there they are, standing and smiling, making the party complete by being there, and it made me cry.

One of the young men from the Friendship House is not far from them. And there’s a student from Taiwan, another from Canada, and still another from Honduras shoulder to shoulder with a couple of students from Grand Rapids. The beauty of that choked me up, too.

You can’t miss Academic Dean Alvin Padilla in the middle of the photo, along with several of our faculty. Not far from Alvin is Vern Sterk—WTS alum, missionary, professor—who lives now in a wheelchair after a bike accident. Across the way is Gordon Laman, another WTS alum and missionary, who lives with such quiet dignity despite profound challenges to his eyesight. What good and faithful men Vern and Gordon are. On the other side I see two women I adore, both of whom are widows, and more tears came as I thought about the deft grace of their lives. Towards the back is a former board member who came from New Jersey just for the dedication, and not far from him is an alum who has been recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. And then there’s Mary DeWitt, whose dear husband Jack died before this project was completed.

“There are no ordinary people,” C.S. Lewis said in The Weight of Glory. “Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.” I see holiness abounding in this picture. Our new space has been sanctified by the sacred stories of those who blessed us with their presence on December 6. The new learning center is wonderful, and students love it. But no matter how beautiful, it’s just steel and wood and glass until holy people inhabit it. Thank God for the great cloud of witnesses that surround our students every day in that space.
The Clarifying Gift of Slowness

I left on July 21 for 33 days of walking the Camino de Santiago, one day for every year of Christ’s life. I teach leadership and spiritual formation, so I organized this part of my sabbatical around expectations I have of my students: grow deeper in Christ and clearer in vocation. (It is risky to live into the discipleship we ask of our students!)

The 1100-year-old Camino de Santiago is a pilgrimage across the north of Spain that has received millions of pilgrims, including St. Francis of Assisi and Theresa of Avila. It welcomes 2000 people a day during the busy months of summer, and I became one of those.

I began the walk like most American pilgrims—fast. In the first five days, I completed eight days of my plan. Yet, there is no reward for arriving in Santiago early (my departure date and ticket home were already set). Indeed, there is punishment for haste: by day five this novice pilgrim had blisters on both heels. The left heel became infected, and a visit to the doctor prompted me to slow down. Veteran pilgrims remind the novice: God is a 2-mile-an-hour God.

I was being invited in to the slowness of God, into seeing the revelation of Christ in all creation, and into letting go of my questions and embracing silence.

After a week of walking, what I noticed shifted. I had spent days looking at the horizon covered in vineyards, wheat fields, and sunflowers; it was breathtaking. One morning I shifted my gaze downward and noticed two snails hanging from a rosebush. Suddenly I saw snails everywhere, dozens below my feet slowly crossing the Camino. How many had I missed? The snail became the Camino mascot, as God revealed that life in Christ is slow, not fast.

One day I was standing in a park on the edge of a town as morning light came up over the mountains. In front of me wheat fields, vines and branches, and shepherd’s pastures collided. I thought of bread and wine and of the good shepherd. I rejoiced at the I Am’s around me. As I filled my water pack at the fountain, I remembered baptism. The life of Christ unfolds sacramentally on the Camino.

Not every pilgrim is there for religious reasons. Even so, Jesus calls pilgrims to himself, and should a pilgrim desire to see him, Christ is made known. As Augustine wrote, “Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?”

Most pilgrims enter the Camino with a situation, a burning question, or a plan. I arrived in Spain consumed with questions about work, marriage, and spirituality—determined not to return home with unresolved questions. I had 33 days and 500 miles to demand that God show up and solve my problems.

I was alone most of each day. I began to forget some of my questions and grow irritated with others. I wasn’t sure what to make of it but was finally releasing the worry, anxiety, and frustration hidden beneath my questions. At one point I walked for more than an hour without a single thought (a completely new sensation for me). I felt the Lord saying, “Let those arrogant, controlling questions go.” I was reminded of Moses in Exodus: “Be not afraid; the Lord will fight for you. You need only keep silent.”

Pilgrims are commonly asked, “Why Camino for you?” The answers vary from adventure to challenge to vocational clarity. Few mention Jesus or faith. Whatever I answered early on became dust, and by day 10 I had yet to understand what the Camino was for me. I just kept walking.

By the end of the 33 days, the Camino had moved deep into my soul. I had released my control and questions and moved from merit to mercy, anxiety to gratitude, and from angry to awed. This pilgrimage remains alive in me.

Not everyone needs to walk the Camino. The lessons I learned are available if we choose to notice what is right in front of us. The Camino was an invitation to wake up and see what is most important in life: following Christ and living with him each day. We are all walking somewhere, and Christ is seeking us.

To read more about Kyle’s journey, visit his blog, pilgrimshome.blogspot.com
The Trailblazers
10 year reunion of first distance-learning grads

When Ruth Fitzgerald did a Google search for “distance learning” the week of Christmas 2002, Western Theological Seminary came up on her computer screen. The program hadn’t even begun, but she was interested and made an appointment to meet the director.

Dan DeVries was living in NW Iowa, and the only seminary nearby was North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls. He tried a couple of classes—a 65 mile drive—but he dreaded the thought of winter. Besides, he’d have to take more classes through MFCA to get ordained. The summer of 2003 he went to General Synod and learned that WTS was rolling out a distance learning M.Div. “That’s it!” he said.

Larry Karow considered going to Calvin, but they pointed him in the direction of Western’s new DL M.Div. “I wouldn’t have gone to seminary if it hadn’t been for distance learning,” Scott Nyp says. “I didn’t want to uproot my family.” The pastor of the church where Scott was serving knew about the new M.Div because he served on Western’s Board. He encouraged Scott to apply.

These four became part of Western’s first entering class of distance-learning students. Fourteen students enrolled, and eventually nine would graduate in May of 2008.

The program began online in November 2003 using message boards. The students introduced themselves over the internet, so by the time January intensives rolled around, they were eager to meet face-to-face. The year included 2-week on-campus intensives in January and May.

“Those first intensives were heavily scheduled,” explains Ruth. “We had breakfast, lunch, and many times dinner together, and then we had homework for the next day.”

Yet, the unexpected happened. The unchartered territory of an “online community” became common ground where a cohort of students bonded together into friendships that continue to this day.
On to glory...

**Warren Burgess ’52**
- b. 12/16/1927 Grand Rapids, MI
- d. 2/19/2019 Grand Rapids, MI
- Hope ’51; WTS ’52
- (1952-57) Forest Home, Muskegon, MI
- (1957-61) missionary, Classis Illinois
- (1961-64) Garfield Park, Grand Rapids, MI
- (1964-71) Haven, Hamilton, MI
- (1971-85) Faith, Traverse City, MI
- (1985-96) pas. visit., Faith, Traverse City, MI
- Also served as:
  - (1992-93) VP & Pres, General Synod

**John Staal ’54**
- b. 5/6/1926 Grand Rapids, MI
- d. 12/29/2019 Bradenton, FL
- Hope ’51; WTS ’54
- (1954-57) First, Slayton, MN
- (1957-64) Otley, IA
- (1964-67) Peace, St. Paul, MN
- (1967-68) Second, Marion, NY
- (1968-70) Trinity, Sidney, IA
- (1970-74) Immanuel, Belmont, IA
- (1974-78) Huron Valley, Rockwood, MI
- (1978-79) hosp. chaplain, Detroit, MI
- (1980-90) hosp. chaplain, Muskegon, MI

**Duane Tellinghusen ’54**
- b. 3/17/1926 Willow Lake, SD
- d. 1/14/2019 Artesia, CA
- Hope ’51; WTS ’54
- (1954-57) Baileyville, IL
- (1957-65) Fellowship, Lombard, IL
- (1965-87) Buena Park, CA

**Cornelius VanHeest ’55**
- b. 9/22/1931 Catskill, NY
- d. 11/23/2018 Holland, MI
- Hope ’52; WTS ’55 & ’72 (MCE)
- (1955-58) Randall Comm & Fultonville, NY
- (1958-68) Lisha’s Kill, Schenectady, NY
- (1968-71) Faith, Portage, MI
- (1971-77) Central Park, Holland, MI
- (1977-82) Hope, Sheboygan, WI
- (1982-90) Aberdeen, Grand Rapids, MI
- (1990-91) int., Rockford, MI
- (1992-94) Forest Grove, Hudsonville, MI
- (1994-95) Southridge, Portage, MI
- (1995-94) Open Door, Dorr, MI
- (1995-94) Peace, Zeeland, MI
- (1995-97) turn-around church consultant, Central Park, Holland, MI
- (1996-98) min sr adults, Fellowship, Muskegon, MI
- (2000-) Central Park, Holland, MI

**Sandra Ellfring ’80**
- b. 1/15/1941 Holland, MI
- d. 12/2/2018 Kalamazoo, MI
- WMU ’66 (BA) ’71 (MA); WTS ’80
- (1974-76) dir Chd Ed, Bethany, Kalamazoo, MI
- (1980-95 & 97-98) chaplain, Bronson Methodist Hosp, Kalamazoo, MI
- (1995-2013) pas. visit., United Methodist, Kalamazoo, MI

**Rebekah Pratt ’08**
- b. 7/29/1982 Philadelphia, PA
- d. 2/19/2019 Stanton, NJ
- Hope ’04; MSU ’08 (MSW); WTS ’08
- (2009-2019) co-pastor, Stanton, MI

**John Mondi ’08 (Th.M)**
- b. 11/25/33 Le Mars, IA
- Hope ’53; WTS ’55 & ’72 (MCE)
- (1955-58) Randall Comm & Fultonville, NY
- (1958-68) Lisha’s Kill, Schenectady, NY
- (1968-71) Faith, Portage, MI
- (1971-77) Central Park, Holland, MI
- (1977-82) Hope, Sheboygan, WI
- (1982-90) Aberdeen, Grand Rapids, MI
- (1990-91) int., Rockford, MI
- (1992-94) Forest Grove, Hudsonville, MI
- (1994-95) Southridge, Portage, MI
- (1995-94) Open Door, Dorr, MI
- (1995-94) Peace, Zeeland, MI
- (1995-97) turn-around church consultant, Central Park, Holland, MI
- (1996-98) min sr adults, Fellowship, Muskegon, MI
- (2000-) Central Park, Holland, MI

**Frank Love ’65**
- b. 12/14/33 Arkansas City, KS
- d. 4/27/18 Cheney, WA
- Hope ’61; WTS ’65
- (1965-69) Mescalero, NM
- (1969-71) Macy, NB

**Gerald E. Bates ’64 (ThM)**
- retired (or between jobs) after 30 years of service as a missionary in central Africa and 14 years as bishop of the Free Methodist Church USA. He served in Africa as the rector of Hope Africa University (Burundi, 2013-2015) and remains chair of the Board of Friends of Hope Africa University Inc., a charity raising funds to assist the university.

**Curry Pikkaart ’74** released his third book, *A Nation Under God: Reflections from Jeremiah*. For information or to order visit pastorcurry.com.

**Craig Wagner ’75** is a chaplain at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines, IA, and has been there for 13 years. He is the dedicated chaplain at Blank Children’s Hospital and loves what he does and where he’s doing it.

**Ruth McCarty ’82** is retired United Church of Christ clergy living in an independent retirement community. In February of 2017 she celebrated 35 years of ordained ministry. She has been a parish and interim minister, executive director of the Connecticut UCC Conference Spiritual Renewal Center, certified spiritual director, Sage-ing Circle facilitator and leader, hospital chaplain, and developer and chaplain of the Pastoral Care Department at Pilgrim Manor Retirement Community.

**Martyn Van Essen ’88** is now the chaplain at Tollandale Village in Barrie, Ontario, Canada. Tollandale Village is a non-denominational Christian community of 400+ self-reliant seniors.

**Last year Doster Community Reformed Church of Plainwell, MI welcomed Rick Christy ’92 as their new pastor.**

**After serving Powell River Reformed Church in British Columbia since 2014, David Zomer ’95 accepted the call to be senior pastor at Bethany Reformed of Kalamazoo, MI. Dave is a fourth generation member of Bethany, and growing up in the church implanted a deep love for the church and its mission in the Edison neighborhood. Dave and his wife, Villo, have been ministering there over a year now.**

**Christie Daraso ’07 (ThM)** is the registrar of ECWA International College of Technology, Nigeria, and the director of Transformational Education Network, discipling to the 3rd generation, www.ten3.org, transformingafrica4god.simiplese.com. They train people of different faiths in computer technology while integrating the Bible, and many people have come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the only Christian college in Jos that accommodates Muslims.

**John Mondi ’08 (Th.M)** is thousands of miles from Kenya and the pastoral life he lived as a youth. He is now pastor of African Community Fellowship CRC, a growing congregation in Kentwood, MI that is home to scores of immigrants and refugees from across Africa.

**Laura Osborne ’09** is working with International Campus Ministry at WMU and as a Family Minister at Third CRC in Kalamazoo, MI. She has three school age daughters.

**After a yearlong residency in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at the Sioux Falls Veterans Affairs Medical Center Sarah Hoogendoorn ’11 became a full-time chaplain at the VA center.** In May of 2018 she was officially ordained as a minister of the Word—the first woman to be ordained in Classis lakota of the CRC. Sarah is now in the process of becoming a certified educator for CPE students.

On June 21, 2018, Stephen ’13 & Olga Shaffer ’13 welcomed Joanna Grace into their family. On September 13, Stephen began a new position as pastor of Bethel Reformed Church in Brantford, Ontario, Canada.

**Asaph Senoga Wasswa ’14 (ThM)** is the finance minister for Mityana Diocese, Uganda, East Africa. The diocese consists of 516 congregations, and Asaph coordinates and guides financial matters.

On August 1, 2018, Jeffrey Hubers ’16 became the senior minister at First Congregational Church of St. Joseph, MI. Carl Hubers ’16 (MA) is Program Coordinator for the Sustainability Minor at the University of Notre Dame.

On December 2, 2018, Tierra Marshall ’18 was ordained as a campus pastor at South Harbor Church in Byron Center, MI.
On March 4, Annie Valkema joined the WTS Development team as associate director. Annie comes to us from Hope College, where she worked in Development for the last 12 years. Prior to that she was a major gifts officer for her alma mater, Houghton College in Houghton, NY, where she graduated with a degree in writing and communications. She is looking forward to meeting the supporters of Western.

Professor of Pastoral Care and Christian Spirituality Chuck DeGroat has facilitated a partnership with the Potter’s Inn Soul Care Institute in Colorado to offer a Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry - Soul Care. Through this partnership, students can embark on a two year journey of a group of peers meeting once every four months (six times). Each retreat is filled with wisdom from experienced teachers, time to recover stillness, and encouragement from spiritual directors and peers. For more information, see: westernsem.edu/academics/degrees/gcpm-soulcare/

Pickwick Press has published Church at Church: Jean-Jacques von Allmen’s Liturgical Ecclesiology by Professor of Preaching and Worship Arts Ron Rienstra. In this book, Dr. Rienstra introduces the reader to Jean-Jacques von Allmen, a Swiss Reformed pastor and professor who is among the most admired liturgical theologians of the 20th century.

On April 29, Daniel Flores will become the director of Cook Library and an assistant professor at WTS. Dr. Flores has worked in academic libraries for over 20 years and holds various degrees, such as a Ph.D., M.Div., M.A., and a M.S. in Library and Information Science. He teaches information literacy, church history and biblical studies. He is ordained in the United Methodist Church and has been a military chaplain for the Texas State Guard. He is moving here from Texas with his wife, Thelma.

RCA and CRC seek to improve financial health for pastors

On January 16-18, groups from Western Theological Seminary, the Reformed Church in America, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church in America met in Indianapolis for the “Gathering First Fruits National Summit on the Economics of Ministry,” sponsored by Lilly Endowment, Inc. Since 2013, 67 seminaries and 120 denominations and other organizations have been working on projects to address complex financial challenges faced by pastors and seminary students. More than 700 people attended the summit, giving them the opportunity to exchange ideas and share what they have learned.
Students Experience Intercultural Immersion in Brazil

Led by Director of Hispanic Ministry Programs Joseph Ocasio, a group of 10 seminary students traveled to Brazil in January to experience ministry in another cultural context. The group was hosted by the Presbyterian Church of Manaus, whose ministry reaches many indigenous people living along the Amazon River. They have planted 125+ churches, established three medical boats, and serve thousands on their campuses in the city of Manaus.

WTS students experienced the powerful work of the Holy Spirit as they served and ministered in eight villages during a 5-day medical trip by boat. The WTS team preached in eight services, led vacation Bible schools, participated in women’s ministerial meetings, and shared their testimonies in evangelism teams.

The thing that struck me at every service is that the family of God transcends barriers such as language, culture, and race. This opened up much of the New Testament to me, such as Paul writing to the Roman church that he wanted to see the church so that they both could be “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.” (Romans 1:12) This is what trips like this offer – opportunities for the universal church to be mutually encouraged.

— M.Div. student Mark Immink

Save the dates:

Annual Osterhaven Lectures
• April 15-16 with Professor John Swinton of the Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

The Summer Institute on Theology and Disability
• May 20-23 at WTS and Hope College - bringing together academics, theologians, practitioners, and others to explore the inclusive intersections of faith and disabilities.

Register at: faithanddisability.org/2019-summer-institute/

A special thankyou for these gifts:

In memory of I. John Hesselink:
Connie Boersma
Marguerite DeHaan
Judith R. Estell
Eugene & Mary Heideman
Richard Kruizenga
Ralph & Margene Paarlberg
Daniel & Catherine Rink
Joyce Rink
Robert & Mary Alice Ritsema
Dorothy Sherburne
Vernon & Carla Sterk
Third Reformed Church
William & Sarah Unzicker
Glenn & Jacquelyn VanWieren
Received in 2018:
In memory of Edwin Mulder:
31 gifts
In memory of Evert Fikse:
11 gifts
In memory of Mary Lou Koop:
19 gifts
In memory of Mildred VanderBeek:
13 gifts
Thank you for honoring your loved one with donations furthering the work of Western Theological Seminary.
A Note from
PRESIDENT TIMOTHY BROWN

From the moment I heard that the Presidential Search Committee was going to recommend Dr. Felix Theonugraha to succeed me as president of Western Theological Seminary, I was excited. Not only was Felix one of my former students, his father was a former student of mine as well! I know Felix and his family well and feel a great peace about our school’s future under his leadership.

I told our board of trustees that Felix’s candidacy was as simple for me as “A-B-C.”

A – He affirms the great Reformed tradition of our school.
B – He believes deeply and personally and is a true follower of Jesus Christ.
C – He cares deeply about people.

Many of you know that I had spinal fusion back surgery in early February and was slowed down in the weeks immediately following my surgery. (Everything went well and the back pain that plagued me for the past several months has disappeared.) Felix called me one Sunday afternoon as I was convalescing. He wasn’t calling to ask me questions about the seminary. He was simply making a pastoral call, across the miles. After talking for a while, he asked if he could pray for me, and we had a wonderful few minutes together in the Lord.

WTS owes a great debt of gratitude to Carol Van Andel and Kris DePree, along with the other members of our search committee. They have made a choice that I believe is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our future is bright!

Timothy Brown