A Message from Calvin Theological Seminary President Jul Medenblik

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Testament, a publication for members of our newly-formed Presidents’ Legacy Society.

In this issue, you’ll hear from Professor John Cooper about why we chose Testament as the name of your Legacy newsletter. You’ll meet Dewey and Wilma Veenstra, who have joined you and so many others as members of the Presidents’ Legacy Society. You’ll also hear from Henry Doorn, Presidents’ Legacy Society member and Executive Director of Barnabas Foundation, who spoke at our recent inaugural Legacy luncheon event.

You belong to a special group of faithful people, dedicated to bearing “fruit that will last” for future generations by including Calvin Theological Seminary in their Wills or Estate Plans (or with any other Planned Gifts).

By the grace of God, I look forward to working with you to build on the foundation others have laid in strengthening Calvin Theological Seminary’s ability to produce great preachers and leaders who serve the Church which serves God’s mission in this world.

That foundation has been laid, in part, through the lasting legacies of our past presidents over 136 years: Geert Egbert Boer, Louis Berkhof, Samuel Volbeda, Rienk Kuijer, John Kromminga, James De Jong, and Neal Plantinga.

Looking ahead, in partnership with loyal supporters like you, Calvin Theological Seminary will continue to send out students who are both theologically prepared and practically equipped to communicate the good news of the Gospel.

In His service with you,

Julius Medenblik
President, Calvin Theological Seminary
When President Medenblik invited suggestions for the title of this newsletter, Testament came to mind. Its meaning richly highlights key connections between God’s mission, Calvin Seminary, and our faithful support community.

Testament first of all reminds us of the Old and New Testaments, God’s Word in Scripture. Testamentum is Latin for covenant. When Jeremiah and Hebrews refer to the new covenant, and when Jesus proclaims in the Gospels that the Lord’s Supper is the new covenant in his blood, the Latin Bible reads novum testamentum—new testament. So the English term for the two parts of the Bible—the Old and New Testament—also points to God’s covenant of redemption as the central message of the Bible. The Old Testament tells of God’s promise to redeem his people and his creation, and the New Testament proclaims its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Testament expresses that Good News in one word. Because God’s covenant is central in Scripture, it is basic to the Reformed faith and thus to the mission of Calvin Seminary.

Testament is also related to the Latin root for testify and testimony—witnessing the truth, perhaps in court. All of our lives as Christians ought to testify to the truth of the Gospel of God’s grace for his glory. Our testimony carries on the testimony of the Old and New Testaments to God’s testament (covenant) in Jesus Christ. Calvin Seminary exists to nurture this testimony. Testament is a rich and comprehensive term.

Finally, testament also means a will, a last will and testament. A will is not just a way of avoiding probate and dissension. It is a testimony. It not only distributes our property but can also say why. We want to be faithful witnesses and stewards even after we depart this life to be with Christ. That is how my wife Sylvia and I think of our will. I know that many other Calvin Seminary supporters do too. I hope you also agree that Testament is a good title for this newsletter.

Finding “Enough” in God

When it comes to our financial lives, the Bible offers much wisdom to help us focus our thoughts and enjoyment on God. Here are just a few biblical principles to encourage you in your journey:

Seek wise counsel
When Solomon was given a choice between wealth and wisdom, he chose wisdom. Why? Because wealth is temporary and uncertain, while godly wisdom is eternal and provides a solid road map for life. That is why the Bible counsels us in Proverbs 15:22 to surround ourselves with diverse perspectives as we make important decisions. Proverbs 19:20 builds on the principle that we will be successful and wise “in the end” when we seek the advice of other believers.

Trust in God
It is fairly easy to feel we are trusting God with our future when things are going well. But what do we do when our retirement funds take a hit, or a loved one is very ill, or a long-time friend offends us? Suddenly, our ability to truly trust God is tested. But when our hearts are at peace with God and anchored in His Word, according to Psalm 112:6-9, we will have no fear of bad news, and will live a life of honor and blessing that will provide a lasting encouragement to others.

Practice generosity
One of the most challenging questions Christians face as they plan their financial futures is “how much is enough?” While the answer to that question will legitimately differ among believers, it is an important question to resolve. In doing so, we can fulfill the vision of 2 Corinthians 8:13-15, using our “plenty” to supply the needs of others. As author Randy Alcorn has pointed out, God prospers us not to raise our standard of living, but rather our standard of giving.
“Several years ago we were approached by Calvin Theological Seminary to fund a scholarship to support a seminarian in need of tuition assistance. While contemplating this, we thought about the sizeable debt incurred by a hopeful seminarian upon completion of college even before seminary and that most likely many will have a family to support as well; a daunting responsibility.

“We reconsidered our lives that began with little debt but with modest monetary resources and how hard we worked to make ends meet with three children. This involved more than one job and our days began early, finishing late six days a week and continuing for many years. Nonetheless we were indeed blessed. God provided for our needs abundantly and granted us health and work. To God we give all glory.

“With this in mind, we determined that our help with a seminarian’s tuition would greatly decrease their financial burden while providing them more time to dedicate to their studies; devoting themselves fully to their formation for ministry. We believe it is crucial that our children and grandchildren receive the same rich blessings as we have; sound, biblical, engaging preaching by meaningful church leaders, and a place where they can again renew themselves and be filled with God’s grace and love.

“What better way to show our gratitude to God for his faithfulness and at the same time leave a legacy for future generations? We intend to follow through with this practice of supporting young people dedicated to becoming effective preachers faithful to Scripture.

“Recently, we requested that our children continue supporting our scholarship at Calvin Seminary after our passing. To accomplish this we reconstructed some estate planning by rolling our 401K-retirement plan into a charitable gift fund. From this our gift will continue for scholarships to Calvin Theological Seminary for those wishing to enter the ministry.”

By Dewey and Wilma Veenstra, Pella, Iowa

Recommended Resource

**Enough: Discovering Joy through Simplicity and Generosity**

*By Pastor Adam Hamilton*

*Enough* lays out the keys to experiencing contentment, overcoming fear, and discovering joy through simplicity and generosity. Author Adam Hamilton uses scripture references to point out our need to refocus on God, and our need to see that our brokenness and emptiness will never be cured by buying, owning, and possessing.

Although the book is clearly written with a spiritual emphasis, it is also decidedly practical. For example, if a reader wants to take action and change their relationship with “stuff,” Hamilton offers “5 Steps for Simplifying Your Life.” Other practical helps include a “Contentment Prayer,” “6 Steps to Overcoming Financial Crises” as well as a worksheet to help readers apply the concepts in the book to their own budgets.
Henry Doorn Commends Legacy Society Members

Your planned gift to the seminary says a lot about your commitment and support of Calvin Theological Seminary. I want to commend you for stepping forward and acknowledging your bequest gift to the seminary for several reasons.

First, it is encouraging to the seminary leadership. It gives them energy to go about their task. It affirms the calling God has given them to train pastors to lead God’s people.

Second, it allows the seminary to say “thank you” and express their appreciation to you for your support. If you never step forward, they can never say “thank you.” Sometimes as donors I think we underestimate this.

Third, you are setting an example for others to follow. I think principally of two groups. For other individuals, you are saying to them that you believe in the mission of Calvin Theological Seminary and feel strongly about ensuring its future ministry. For family members, you say a lot to your children and grandchildren when you allocate a portion of the assets God has entrusted to you to the seminary.

Excerpt of Barnabas Foundation Executive Director Henry Doorn’s remarks to Presidents’ Legacy Society members at inaugural luncheon.