The IMPACT Report
2013-2014

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Thank you for taking the time to open and read this annual report from Calvin Theological Seminary—on your tablet, smart phone or computer screen.

I hope that you read this report because you want to see and hear how God has been at work at and through Calvin Seminary. You want to be encouraged that your investment of time, talent and treasure is being stewarded well and making an impact for the Church and the Kingdom of God. Those are just a few of the reasons why we developed this report and we look forward to hearing from you after you engage this annual update.

I want to begin by noting that you are an important ministry partner in the work God calls us to do at the Seminary, so we want to recap for you some of the good and God-glorifying stories of this past year. Your prayers and support made these stories possible so let’s with joy in my heart that I write THANK YOU boldly and big.

But I also write boldly to invite your continued prayers for the stories we are yet to write at Calvin Seminary. Last fall our faculty and Board of Trustees reflected together about the future facing the Seminary, both its challenges and opportunities.

Some of the challenges that we listed won’t surprise you. Many local churches are in decline and in need of renewal. We have the challenge to better prepare our students for worldwide cultural changes that can overwhelm and confuse: Understanding what it takes to be a successful pastor in today’s churches where expectations and needs don’t match the pastor’s position description that once seemed stable and universal is a significant task.

If such challenges tempt us to hit the pause button because of their complexity and weightiness, the opportunities before us do just the opposite.

There’s a worldwide resurgence of interest and following in the theological heritage of John Calvin whose world-and-life perspective of reformed theology opens up life’s meaning in the broad spectrum-light of Scripture. Just ask our Chinese students who are so eager to spread the good news of the Gospel for all of life to their homeland and fellow citizens. Twenty-first century technology adds new and better tools to our “toolbox” for building educational community and extending it beyond our building. Students are longing for an education that forms the heart as well as the mind and they look to their teachers for encouragement and example. They want to “taste and see” a formation for ministry that abides in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ as well as the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, there are compelling opportunities for our strategic discernment. But as we discern and decide, we will remain faithful to core values that have grounded Calvin Seminary for 139 years. Our shared understanding of God’s Word as articulated in the reformed confessions will nourish all our teaching and formation. And in whatever we do, our work together must serve the church. That’s our calling and our cause—to be formed by and serve the church, God’s agent of hope for the world.

So I thank you once again for helping us write the stories of 2014. We hope and pray you will continue to journey with us as new stories are added to the legacy of Calvin Seminary.

Jul Medenblik
President
Joella Ranaivoson

We stood in the crowded sanctuary in a sea of men clad in blue jeans and blue-collared shirts. It was the end of a roughly service in a church on the grounds of Angola Prison, the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

The man standing before me told me and my two classmates, “I’ve been in here longer than y’all been alive.”

He was a sixty-or-so-year-old man whose smile reminded me of my uncle; whose sparse gray hair and barely-wrinkled face didn’t betray his age. Prison keeps the men’s faces youthful, even as it ages them in other ways.

“I used to be so angry, such an angry man,” he said, telling of how men—like him—

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I confess Christ as Lord of my life and all creation. He is my redeemer, he is perfect love—but looking in these brothers’ eyes, I knew I didn’t know or love or long for Jesus and his kingdom the way they do.

The same grace that covers my sins covers the sins of these brothers at Angola.

When I started seminary, I did not expect to go to visit Angola Prison. Frankly, I didn’t know I was coming to seminary at all. In fact, it seems as if everyone around me knew I was coming to seminary before I did; I knew what you would call a “reluctant seminarian.” But as a dear mentor from Calvin College, Dale Cooper, would say often, quoting Walter Brueggeman, “God’s other name is Surprise.” Indeed.

God is at work, friends—at Calvin Seminary, and at Angola Prison; in Michigan, and in Louisiana.

Grant Hofman

After months of fundraising and leadership trainings, I was finally sitting on a British Airways flight just outside Sierra Leone. My nerves were beginning to set in.

The reality hit that I was entering a place I’d only ever read about in books—and in a few news articles about the Ebola virus that had started to spread here.

I looked out the window to glimpse lush forests through the clouds. A rainbow was breaking boldy above the clouds—the symbol of God’s covenant faithfulness. And in that moment God gave me deep-seated peace, a profound assurance that just as he faithfully delivered Noah’s family out of the Flood, he would faithfully see me through this ministry experience.

But by the second week after my arrival, my nerves were setting in again. This time I was sitting in the hard wooden pew of the Christian Reformed Church in the city of Kabala. I was preparing to preach to a group of people I hardly knew who could not understand this strange American man’s accent.

As we began singing praises to God, a young woman in the back of the church suddenly hit the floor, shaking violently, shrieking and slithering like a serpent.

At the airport, we slept in the Jeeps for a few hours. After five weeks in Sierra Leone, I was tight back where I had started: sitting on a British Airways flight, a bundle of sadness, nerves, and uncertainty, hoping for God’s faithful deliverance. And praise God, I returned home safely and at peace!

On the fourth day, I received phenomenal news: I didn’t have Ebola; I had parasites! This may have been the one and only time I praise God for parasites.

Now that God has restored me to full health, I look back and recognize that during my time in Sierra Leone, and even in my experiences of pain and fear, God was incredibly faithful. His timing was perfect.
It takes a church, a congregation to raise up a child, and that is what Madison Square Church did. I placed myself under mentors. Pastor David Beelen gave books such as, The Joys of Calvinism and The Good News We Almost Forgot. People at Madison guided me into truth, the Bible, God’s plan for my life, and eventually into Calvin Theological Seminary.

The Holy Spirit has continued to strengthen me while also healing Linda as well as our children. We are all being reconciled and recreated into the image of Christ.

The process of transformation has not been easy, but I hope you join me in celebrating and giving praise to the almighty provider God, who watches over me and you so that not a hair can fall from our heads without His will.

Several months ago, I began working for Celebration Fellowship Church as a commissioned pastor at Ionia State Prison. God is using me there to touch prisoners with the hope of the gospel. As a Calvin Seminary intern I can only say, “God, I love this job. And as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

I thank and praise God for the donors who have the foresight and love to enable the students at Calvin Seminary to continue embracing Christ's commission to carry His message to an increasingly sinful and broken world.

Steve Agler

Six years ago, I was living on the streets of Grand Rapids, Michigan, homeless and eating out of dumpsters. You read that right: Homeless and eating out of dumpsters. Some of you are wondering, How does someone end up living like that?

Trouble started early. As a child I was sexually abused. By the time I was fourteen, my father, my brother, and I — “the three Amigos” — did a lot of drinking and bar fighting.

But God blessed me with a good academic mind that I eventually used to earn a master’s degree in chemistry. After that, I earned a doctor of chiropractic and other degrees. Still, I continued dealing drugs and fighting for fun.

It was during this time that the Holy Spirit first spoke to me, providing the grace and reconciliation. He made me give my life to Christ ten years ago in the Cass County Jail. To borrow the words of a Reformed pastor, “I was lost and now I see.”

As I lay in a bunk in torn, soilied clothes, holding a toothbrush, some men prayed over me. It was the lowest and loneliest moment of my life. It was that night that Christ came to me, providing the comfort only he has.

I stopped giving Christ lip-service and gave him my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. I grabbed ahold of the altar of grace and have not let go. Seeking the face of God, he came to me with unlimited grace and reconciliation. He made me his child.
Inspired by annual visits to Angola Prison in Louisiana and motivated by Michigan inmates’ requests, Calvin Seminary offered its first seminary class inside Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, MI, in the fall of 2011.

The classes that Calvin Seminary provides are ways of developing leadership in the prisons. The fact that the church has grown…is God’s work, but the seminary classes have created places for the leadership to develop. That’s really important.”
—John Rottman, Professor of Preaching. Rottman has taught two classes inside Handlon.

By the numbers
7 faculty members with ties to Calvin Seminary and Calvin College have taught at Handlon.

Average enrollment in classes at Handlon is 19 students.

Since 2008, an inmate-initiated church has met near Handlon in Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility, also located in Ionia, Michigan.

In 2011, Calvin Seminary graduate Andy Hanson was called to pastor the church at Bellamy Creek and help foster a second congregation in the same prison.

7 inmates inmates were on the initial steering committee for a third church in Handlon Prison.

Today, 70-plus attend worship weekly—with multiple recent baptisms.

300-plus members have come through Celebration Fellowship Church in the past several years. Most are now reestablishing their lives in the West Michigan area, aided by a sister organization called Celebration Fellowship Reentry.

God goes before us into prisons. I’m reminded of this every time I visit an inmate. Before entering the visiting room, a corrections officer searches me and typically tells me to take off my shoes and socks. At first, I found this ritual annoying. One hot summer day, the corrections officer said to me, “Remove your sandals.” And suddenly, the words ringing in my head were those of God to Moses, “Remove your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Like Moses at the burning bush in the wilderness, here I was standing on the threshold of a modern wilderness where the presence of God was already burning and renewing. God is the real Agent of Renewal in prisons.”
—David Rylaarsdam, Professor of Historical Theology, Calvin Seminary

Calvin Seminary and Handlon Correctional Facility, Ionia, MI

SEMINARY BEHIND BARS

9 seminary classes have been offered at Handlon to-date
- Pastoral Care as Dying and Rising with Christ
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation
- Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions
- Bible Survey
- Ethics and the Christian Life
- How to Read the Bible
- I & II Thessalonians
- Psychology and Pastoral Care
- Issues in Early Christian Spirituality
WHY WE GIVE

It was at one of the meetings of the Calvin Theological Seminary Donor Council on which I (Mark) learned about the seminary's new distance learning program. I was impressed that this program was able to provide the very same high quality seminary education in distance format as residential, validated in part by its model of accountability that requires students to physically spend time at the seminary twice per year during intensives weeks. One of the goals of this online program is to help students maintain their relationships where they are currently living or serving and ultimately work to spread the gospel in their area. One story that stood out to me was of a student living in Singapore who was interested in studying at Calvin Seminary through the distance learning program. This student was able to afford the tuition but was unable to pay the transportation costs for the required visits to Calvin Seminary twice per year. I returned home and told my wife about this need. Both of us agreed that we wanted to bridge this funding gap by establishing a distance learning travel scholarship for students in such a situation. We worked with the seminary staff to define the scholarship to meet our objectives—a student that wanted to attend seminary but couldn't afford it, with no plans of living in the United States.

We truly appreciate the teaching, training, and mentoring the seminary offers its students and we didn't want travel costs to stand in the way of a student being able to pursue their call to ministry education. For us, it is an exciting way to help those who share our love and belief in Jesus Christ, knowing they will spread that love within their communities across the globe. It is our hope that scholarships like ours will inspire other donor partners to join us. May God use this growing web of gifts to encourage students from around the world to study at Calvin Seminary so they can better serve the world God so loves.

For students around the world
Mark and Kris Huizenga

MEET THE HUIZENGA’S

Mark earned his Bachelor's Degree from Calvin College in Business Administration and then a Master's Degree in Management from Aquinas College. In addition to being Mayor of the City of Walker, MI, Mark owns a successful consulting practice which focuses on process improvement and strategic planning for physician practices and hospitals throughout the United States. Kris received her medical assisting degree from Davenport College and went on to work as a certified medical assistant for 8 years before choosing to focus her time and talent as a stay-at-home Mom. She also serves at Grandville Calvin Christian Schools and LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, their family church. Both Mark and Kris are Grand Rapids, MI natives, now making their home in South Walker, along with their three children: Elaina, Olivia, and Blake.

Seated back row, from left: Elaina, Mark, Kris Front row, Blake and Olivia, Family dog is Jade

ENDOWING THE FUTURE

CALVIN SEMINARY INVESTMENTS

FY 2014 Operating Expenses

- Instruction: 32%
- Institutional Support: 6%
- Public Service: 6%
- Employee Benefits: 10%
- Academic Support: 16%
- Plant Administration: 18%
- Student Services: 12%
- Student Financial Assistance: 17%

FY 2014 Operating Revenue

- Tuition: 33%
- Ministry Shares: 11%
- Gifts and Grants: 37%
- Estate Gifts: 1%
- Release from Restrictions: 1%
- Miscellaneous Revenues: 17%

$45,000,000
$40,000,000
$35,000,000
$30,000,000
$25,000,000
$20,000,000
$15,000,000
$10,000,000
$5,000,000
$0

HIGHLIGHTS

2014

COMMENCEMENT

Degrees At-a-glance
M.Div. 26  Professional M.A.s 6
Th.M. 35  Ph.D 2
M.T.S. 8

On May 24, 2014, Calvin Theological Seminary awarded 77 advanced degrees to 75 students. Graduates hailed from nine of the 20 countries represented within the seminary’s student body.

President Jul Medenblik encouraged graduates to be “Centered on Christ,” following John the Baptist’s testimony in John 3:22-30. “Mission is not—or should not be—a one-way enterprise,” he said. “It is not just a matter of Christians telling, giving, teaching; and others hearing, receiving, learning. When Christians tell, they must also hear, when they give, they must also receive; when they teach, they must also learn.”

In addition to his epic treatises on church history and theology, Gonzalez has written more than 100 academic books and 1,300 journal articles. He is married to Dr. Catherine Gunsalus, an ordained pastor or theologian. Gonzalez, who authored the two-volume Story of Christianity and the three-volume History of Christian Thought, addressed the sweeping shifts taking place in Christendom and their impact on Christian ministry and mission today:

“The church I served in Brazil had no money, yet by God’s grace that little church planted three new churches,” he recalled. “One of my dreams is that Calvin Seminary will become more and more mission-focused, so that it’s known not just as a good academic seminary, but also produces pastors who plant churches and renew churches.”

Ron Nydam

In his ministry, and throughout his 16 years of teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, Ronald J. Nydam was a mentor and model for confronting and managing the messiest parts of life. As a professor of pastoral care and pastoral counseling, he advocated for unflinching honesty, good grief, and mustering the courage to do the sloggin’, difficult work of reconciliation with ourselves, with others and above all with God.

“I’ll be teaching online from the Rockies, but I’ll miss smelling the breath and hearing the heartbeat of the students,” he said, anticipating his retirement. “I love this place. I will grieve deeply when I leave it. The seminary is becoming what I always hoped it would be—not so much a critic of the church, but a servant of the church.”

LEGACY GARDEN

The Veenstra Legacy Garden is a welcoming space that leads to the front door of the Seminary. It also provides a special place for friends and donors to ponder the legacy of Calvin Seminary while enjoying the patio that incorporates the Calvin Seal with commemorative bricks of past and present friends of Calvin Seminary. We are grateful to the past and present friends of Calvin Seminary while enjoying the welcoming space that leads to the front door of the Seminary. It also serves as a place for friends and donors to ponder the legacy of Calvin Seminary while enjoying the patio that incorporates the Calvin Seal with commemorative bricks of past and present friends of Calvin Seminary. We are grateful to the past and present friends of Calvin Seminary while enjoying the welcoming space that leads to the front door of the Seminary.

The Gonzalez’s came to Grand Rapids for Justo to teach one of the courses in the Seminary’s Hispanic Ministry Certificate Program at the seminary. As a trailblazer in her own right, Catherine Gonzalez was invited to meet with female seminarians, pastors, and denominational leaders for a candid conversation about navigating life as a female pastor or theologian.

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RETIREEMENTS

Carl Bosma

After almost 25 years in the classroom at Calvin Theological Seminary, Carl J. Bosma set aside his daily teaching duties as an associate professor of Old Testament studies last summer, 2014. But he remains vigorously engaged in the life of the church—and the theological formation of students—through his ongoing leadership at Calvin Seminary’s Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal. Bosma’s passion for making disciples is evident to anyone he engages, and it serves him well as a champion of church planting and renewal at the seminary.

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To women called into theological education or ministry, unpacking the call takes patience and creativity, Gonzalez said. “It takes a while first of all to understand [your call,] and second to figure out how to live it out given the options available to you.”

Her reflections on a life of scholarship and ministry encouraged audience members to live into their calls as they, too, “make their way” for the sake of the church.
CELEBRATING New Scholarships in 2014

Anonymous Canadian Scholarship
Arnold, Elva, and Doris Bakker Fund for Evangelism Education
Rev. Paul E. and Margery Bakker Appreciation Scholarship
William and Gertrude (Tenckinck) De Mots Scholarship
Patricia S. Duthler Merit Scholarship in Preaching
Martin and Ruthanne Dykstra Scholarship
Dr. Donald and Martheen Griffioen Urban Ministry Scholarship
Mark and Kristine Huizenga Distance Learning Travel Award
Knoor Family Scholarship
Harold and Julia Kraker Scholarship
John and Claire Kromminga Family Scholarship
Toledo Hanmi Korean Church Award
Vander Haag’s Family Presidential Scholarship
Dr. Henry Zwaanstra Scholarship
Calvin Seminary is deeply grateful for all the scholarship support that blesses our students. Their words say it best...

As I embraced this final year at CTS, while glancing in the rearview mirror as if it were, the gracefulness of the Body of Christ has never been so apparent than the poignant showering of blessings we have received through your participation in this ministry." — Robert Hoekstra

I thank you so much for your donation. It helps me greatly in continuing my studies. As an international student, I have no means to earn money other than maintenance work at school, which I am also very grateful for. But even with the work that the Seminary provides, it would be impossible to make ends meet without the scholarship. Pray for me that I someday can also become like you, giving freely of the love that we have received from the Lord our God." — Lynn Song

It is truly a blessing to have your support as our family begins our adventure here in Grand Rapids and as we seek God’s leading in this chapter of our lives. Your support has allowed us to take this step and I pray that God may multiply your gift as He uses it to bless the churches and ministries that I hope to be involved with once I complete Seminary." — Brian Schouten

When I received the award phone call, I wept. You have blessed me more than words can express. I truly do not know how we (my husband and I) would have made this education possible without you.

In essence, the news of this scholarship confirmed to me a thousand times over that God has called me to this work."
— Jordan Kathleen Humm

I hope an MDiv degree will help open doors to places I have not been yet. Receiving support, encouragement, prayers and financial provision is what enables and empowers me to take this leap of faith and to make it through each day. Thank you for being a part of this miraculous journey."
— Emily Colledge

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Back Row, Left to Right:

Front Row, Left to Right:
S. Jansma Jr., A. Vander Leek, M. Kuperus, J. Dykhuis, C. Walters, H. Vander Laan, T. Ouwinga

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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www.calvinseminary.edu