

CTS Mission Statement

As a learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.

Dear Classis of Region 4,

As members of the Board of Trustees (Pastor Mark Verbruggen & Brian Verheul) and the Seminary's Ambassador for Canada, Pastor Shawn Brix, we are pleased to provide you with the Fall 2023 update from Calvin Theological Seminary.

Please know that we are each available to assist you in any way that we can to make connections to the seminary or to provide further information. As the seminary gets ready to begin a new academic year, we ask that you keep the Faculty, Staff and Students in prayer.

Thank you for your continued interest in and faithful commitment to the seminary. We remain very grateful!

Sincerely,

*Pastor Shawn Brix
Pastor Mark Verbruggen
Brian Verheul*

Fall 2023 Ministry Highlights

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has worked on your behalf to faithfully prepare leaders who can nurture disciples and serve the church. Calvin Seminary is a vital and hospitable learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition. Our desire is not just to train pastors but also to form church leaders who can cultivate communities of disciples for Jesus Christ.

- Dr. Gabriela Tijerina-Pike has been affirmed by Synod 2023 as the new Director of Latino Ministries (DLM). Because of her education and training, she will also serve as an Associate Professor of New Testament. The Latino Ministry Program 2.0 is an online Spanish-language certificate program that can lead to a Master of Arts in Leadership Formation program while embodying values of hospitality, excellence and accessibility. If you have a person or church that wants to know more, please contact Dr. Tijerina-Pike at gabriela@calvinseminary.edu.
- Dr. Daniel (Danny) Daley was also affirmed to his calling to CTS by Synod 2023. He takes up service as Assistant Professor of New Testament. His areas of recent interest and writing are in the areas of the Gospel of Matthew, the Beatitudes and Discipleship. Individuals and churches are invited to get to know Dr. Daley and his email address is ddal231@calvinseminary.edu.
- In May of 2023, the CTS Board of Trustees conducted a tenure interview with Dr. Matthew (Matt) Tuininga (Associate Professor of Christian Ethics and the History of Christianity). We are glad to announce that Dr. Tuininga sustained that interview and we are glad for his ongoing work as a fully-tenured professor at Calvin Theological Seminary.

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- In May, the Board approved the following Board Officer and Executive Committee positions – Mr. Dave Morren (Board Chair), Rev. Scott Greenway (Board Vice Chair), Ms. Susan Keesen (Board Secretary), Dr. Charles Veenstra (Chair of Academic Affairs Committee), Mr. Hessel Kielstra (Chair of Development and Finance), and Rev. Robert Drenten (Chair of Student Affairs Committee).
- The Board did approve the beginning of a faculty search in the area of Theology as we were advised of the upcoming retirement (in two years) of Dr. Mary VandenBerg. If you have persons you wish to nominate, please contact Ms. Karen DeYoung who serves as the CTS Director of Human Resources. She can be reached at kdyoung@calvinseminary.edu.
- Calvin Theological Seminary's new Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MCMHC) is launching this fall (2023). The professional and theologically grounded degree offers coursework in religious and theological foundations, clinical counseling, and clinical practice. Graduates from the program might consider using their knowledge and gifts serving as a clinical mental health therapist, a clinical mental health counselor, an addiction counselor, a behavior counselor, or in other mental health roles. The program director for this program is Dr. Danjuma Gibson. He provided the following summary of this program - The goal is "to train students who will be competent and skilled in the ethical integration of Christian faith, spirituality, and counseling in a way that promotes healing and shalom in the lives of individuals and communities." If you would like to know more about this program, you can contact Dr. Gibson at dgg085@calvinseminary.edu.
- For the upcoming academic year, Dr. Yudha Thianto (Professor of the History of Christianity) was placed in the position of Chief Academic Officer. He will serve in a distributed leadership structure for the Academic Office that seeks to help students make even better connections with professors and their program directors. Many of you may know Dr. Thianto's recent book [An Explorer's Guide to John Calvin](#).
- Calvin Seminary received a renewed grant from the Grace & Mercy Foundation to continue the Public Reading of Scripture (PRS) series for students, faculty and staff. The Academic Office opened a half-hour in the schedule on Tuesdays at noon. From noon-12:30pm on Tuesdays the Seminary community gathers to hear readings from Genesis, Matthew, and the Psalms, and then enjoy a meal together. This has been well attended (35-50 each time) and well received. These events (and others for students such as Town Halls and Chapels) are live streamed so that distance students and others can participate. This year, we will follow a plan presented by the Institute for Bible Reading to work through Luke/Acts in this coming year. The goal of this spiritual practice is to:
 - Build community among students, faculty, and staff,
 - Create space for spiritual formation of students, staff, and faculty,

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- Provide experience with PRS for students who can then implement PRS in congregations, ministries, and non-profit organizations, and
- Provide experience, training, and coaching for student leaders on the leadership team
- The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP), led by Director Scott Hoezee, received an additional grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to bring the total near to \$1.5 million for the Compelling Preaching Initiative. The Lilly Endowment grant will provide CEP with resources to explore how to “tune-up tried and true and to build new skills sets” in preaching and to develop resources for pastors to help them surmount communication challenges that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. The additional grant will help support our ministry in the Latino/a ministry for resources in Spanish.
- During the Fall 2023 semester, CTS will launch a competency based education (CBTE) program called Empower. The Empower program offers students the opportunity to earn a certificate or Master of Arts in Christian Leadership degree by demonstrating competence in program outcomes. This approach is designed to make ministry training more collaborative, flexible, integrated, accessible, and integrated. During our pilot phase, enrollment is initially limited to students participating through contextualized partnerships with Grand Valley State University Campus Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI) and Sunlight Community Church (Port St. Lucie, FL). Students work with a CTS faculty mentor and two partner mentors to complete learning experiences that develop competence - head, hands, and heart - for ministry. Our partners provide contextualized learning experiences, localized mentoring, and regular and substantive student support. If interested in learning more about CBTE as well as our new Life-Long Learning initiative, please contact Dr. Aaron Einfeld at ame084@calvinseminary.edu.
- Finally, we want to make sure you are aware of our appreciation for ongoing support through our denominational ministry shares. We know that the foundation of support that comes from the CRCNA is key. At the same time, we would like you to prayerfully consider how churches and individuals can step into an increasing gap due to the decline of ministry shares. For example, for FYE 2023, ministry shares were to come in at \$1.73 million (US) and for FYE 2024, ministry shares we were asked to plan for is \$1.39 million (US) which is a gap of \$340,000. Thank you for your consideration!

We invite your prayers for the Board, faculty, staff and students and thank you for your ministry of prayer, support and encouragement! We are glad that we are C.T.S. – Called To Serve!