

VISION

The Comprehensive Plan and Calvin's Mission

The original Comprehensive Plan set forth the guiding vision of “a Christian community that celebrates cultural diversity and is shaped by the biblical vision of the kingdom of God, a kingdom formed ‘. . .from every tribe and language and people and nation’” (Revelation 5:9, 10). It called upon Calvin to play a “prophetic role. . . in bearing witness to that kingdom.” As the authors wrote:

We envision a kingdom community in which cultural diversity is seen as normal; a Christian “family” that transcends ethnic, cultural, racial, and class boundaries: a communion of saints in which “each member should consider it his duty to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members” (Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism); a community in which Reformed Christians from all of these groups see Calvin as their college. It is the biblical vision of Pentecost rather than the vision of Babel (p. 5).

Subsequent college documents make clear that Calvin embraces this vision of Reformed multicultural community as integral to its institutional purpose. The Expanded Statement of Mission, for example, commits the college to “[strive] for ethnic diversity; while also acknowledging its own ethnic roots,” and it

bases this commitment squarely on Calvin's expanding role in a global Christian community:

The goal of an ethnically diverse community recognizes that the Christian community transcends cultural and geographical boundaries and we live in a world community. Moreover, a multicultural community will assist in the educational goals of understanding different cultures and promoting understanding between people (p. 35).

In 1993 the faculty endorsed a definition of an academic multicultural community in a document developed by the Multicultural Affairs Committee that emphasizes both the opportunities and the obligations implied by this vision. The document in question notes that the College's Mission Statement commits members of the Calvin community to "seek to be agents of renewal in the academy, church, and society," a mission that calls for "vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lifelong Christian service" and for "substantial and challenging art and scholarship," but that also calls upon us "to perform all our tasks as a caring and diverse educational community."

This understanding of mission, the document continues, echoing the Comprehensive Plan, is clearly related to the increasingly focused efforts of the college to become a "genuinely multicultural Christian academic community." To be such a community is to affirm the worth of all human beings and to affirm the value and significance of the human cultures and communities that have developed over the centuries; it is to affirm a biblical vision of the Kingdom of God, in which people from "every tribe and language and people and nation" are gathered, purchased by Christ's sacrifice (Revelation 5:9). It is also to acknowledge how far short all human communities are from this Kingdom ideal, and to acknowledge the extent to which racism and other sins have contributed, and continue to contribute, to this failure within our own academic community.

As the current Strategic Plan acknowledges, it is not enough simply to celebrate the "rich diversity of God's people," both locally and internationally. It is also necessary to address "the tensions that arise with diversity, especially while combating racism and transforming the campus into a more just and inclu-

sive place for persons of color” (p. 3). Our pursuit of racial justice and reconciliation must be informed both by a Pentecost vision of community and also by an honest reckoning of where, how, and why we fail to act in accordance with that vision. As Justo Gonzalez declared in his convocation address launching Calvin's 1996-1997 Multicultural Year:

The multicultural vision is sweet, but there is also a bitter side to it. . . [It] involves much more than bringing in a bit of color and folklore into our classrooms and our worship services: it also involves radical changes in the way we understand ourselves and in the way we conduct our business.¹

The ultimate goal, as Gonzalez suggests, is “a working together or synergism of saints who own their respective traditions” (p. 6). The immediate challenge is to create an environment in which this can become a living reality within the framework of a shared Reformed commitment.

A Biblical Model: Justice and Transformation

Working toward a multicultural Kingdom of God is not simply a high-minded ideal; it is a dictate of biblical justice. If Christ came to “proclaim justice to the nations” (Matt. 12:18, quoting Is. 42:1), then those who have been reconciled to God in Christ do not have the luxury of remaining neutral when it comes to pursuing reconciliation with one another. As Reformed theologian Russel Botman has pointed out, with reference to post-apartheid South Africa, the call to discipleship does not allow for any artificial separation between orthodoxy and orthopraxis.² The New Testament vision of Pentecost and the new Jerusalem is set against the prophet Amos's warning against a piety that fails to “let justice roll on like a river, righteousness

¹ “For the Healing of the Nations: The Book of Revelation and Our Multicultural Calling,” in Thomas Thompson, ed., *The One in the Many*, p. 6.

² “‘Dutch’ and Reformed and ‘Black’ and Reformed in South Africa: A Tale of Two Traditions on the Move to Unity and Responsibility,” in Ronald Wells, ed., *Keeping Faith: Embracing the Tensions in Christian Higher Education* (Eerdmans, 1996), p. 92.

like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24). Shalom, as Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued, “is an ethical community that. . . is wounded when justice is absent.” It is “both God's cause in the world and our human calling.”³

If Christians, including Reformed Christians, have a compelling biblical-theological warrant for seeking justice and celebrating multicultural community, why does our practice so often fall short of what we profess? And what is the relationship between a specifically Reformed identity and the identity every believer shares as a “new creation” in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)?

In a paper presented at the concluding symposium for the Multicultural Year,⁴ Professor Tom Thompson reflects on the extent to which even sincere Christians can become witting or unwitting carriers of racism. He concludes that “if we in the Christian church are ungraceful about affirming others because we stumble over distinctions of race, ethnicity, or culture, then it is quite possible that we have too tight of a grip on our own lives, a false (i.e., insecure) image of ourselves, which we may have to learn to ungrasp” (p. 23). In response, he suggests that multicultural encounters should be seen as “an imperative of basic Christian discipleship,” rooted in the life of Christ, “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the very nature of a servant...” (Philippians 2:6-7).

Self-emptying or ungrasping ourselves as imitators of Christ is risky, suggests Thompson, because it threatens to call into question cherished personal identities. Our personal identities may include the baggage of cultural superiority; or, conversely, they may be scarred and fragile because of racism or other forms of injustice. Yet as Matthew 10:39 reminds us, “If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for Me, you will save it” (Living New Testament). It is this posture—and the risk it entails—that undergird the cross-cultural engagement we require of our students in the core curriculum, and it is no less

³ Until Justice and Peace Embrace (Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 71, 72.

⁴ “Ungrasping Ourselves: A Kenotic Model of Multicultural Encounter,” in Thomas Thompson, ed., *The One in the Many*, pp. 9-24.

essential for members of the college's faculty, administration, and staff.

This same “ungrasping” may suggest a prescription for institutional identity as well. What is the core of our institutional identity? In what ways might we be attempting to maintain too tight a grip on that identity, a grip that threatens to obscure our identity in Christ?

An answer to the first question can be found in the Expanded Statement of Mission, which declares that our “identity as a Reformed Christian educational institution. . . means that our approach to education is set within a tradition of biblical interpretation, worship, and Christian practice expressed in the creeds of the Reformed-Presbyterian churches having their roots in the Protestant Reformation” (p. 14). Many college documents, including the Expanded Statement of Mission, describe the contours of the robust confessional vision that draws sustenance from this tradition—the familiar redemptive-historical pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and fulfillment that frames the Reformed community's self-understanding and its terms of engagement with society and culture.

An answer to the second question calls for careful discernment and may provide fertile ground for disagreement among people who all share the same passionate commitment to Calvin's mission and to a vision of multicultural community. As President Byker reminded us in his inaugural address, there are some tensions that we need to embrace. What must be emphasized, in any case, is that the call to “ungrasp” an inherited institutional identity is by no means a call to compromise, let alone abandon, the Reformed character of Calvin College. Nor is it a call to create some undifferentiated, common-denominator identity unconnected to the lived experience of community members. Rather, it is a call to grapple honestly with the risks that may be entailed in attempting to distinguish between negotiable cultural expressions and the non-negotiable core identity in Christ testified to in the historic confessions—in the willingness, as the Expanded Statement of Mission puts it, to “live as the visible embodiment of [God's] covenant promises. . . [manifesting] the universal scope of divine love” (p. 17). It is a call to discernment and a posture of imitation, a posture that grows out of a spirit of

humility rather than of cultural superiority, whatever its source. The confessions themselves can point us toward such discernment and reexamination. As the Expanded Statement of Mission notes:

At their best, confessions provide a community of faith with a prophetic voice that the world can hear. Used appropriately, they are guides in a continuing common effort of reexamining the scriptures to hear God's call. . . . The confessing community forms the principal witness to the awakening reign of God, and provides a vision of spiritual liberation that also requires liberation from injustice and bondage (pp. 15, 18).

An expanded vision for the Comprehensive Plan takes into account the entire scope of the biblical drama. It affirms the values and strengths of inherited traditions but also bears witness to a holy impatience for change and renewal. It expresses the recognition that no single ethnic group or theological position within Christianity represents the last word on God's will for human community. It suggests a posture of encounter, both personal and institutional, that is modeled after Christ's self-emptying, and it insists that fidelity to our confessional identity not only allows for but positively demands a continuing reexamination of our cultural identity. This biblical and confessional foundation establishes the context and also underscores the need for a critical analysis that can make us more sensitive to subtle, structural forms of racism that, if left unaddressed, will continue to distort the college's vision and impede progress toward genuine multicultural community. To be sure, race is by no means the only factor that needs to be considered in shaping Calvin's institutional priorities, even where multicultural identity is concerned, and it would be a mistake to reduce the complexities of race to a simple dialectic between "whites" and "persons of color." Nevertheless, an informed sensitivity to racial dynamics, particularly within our immediate North American context, can help lend focus and direction to the pursuit of Christian community in other cross-cultural and interpersonal arenas as well.

A Critical Analysis of Racism

Over the last several years the Christian Reformed Church in North America, using a model developed by Crossroads Ministries (Chicago), has undertaken an anti-racist analysis of its agencies and has invited the college to do the same. In response, Calvin assembled the Calvin Anti-Racism Team, or CART. This team has engaged in extensive analysis and has shared its insights with the Calvin community in workshops, training sessions, and other venues.

CART's anti-racist approach focuses primarily on North American history and experience; it does not address all of the global challenges and opportunities that a multicultural vision entails. As such, it is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, nor is it intended to foreclose continued discussion, or even debate, about specific prescriptions or points of emphasis. Two of the broad themes of this anti-racist analysis, however, have immediate relevance for the commitment to multicultural community articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. One is the complex legacy of the college's peculiar ethnic heritage and its relationship to a pluralistic American culture. The other is the no less complex relationship between race and institutional power, particularly the ways in which structural and systemic forces can operate, often independent of conscious attitudes or intent, to marginalize or denigrate persons from other ethnic groups, particularly persons of color, in a community historically defined and largely controlled by a single (white) ethnic group.

Immigrant Ethnicity and American Society

From the very start, matters of ethnicity and Christian witness in a pluralistic culture have been at the forefront of the college's identity and mission. Calvin College's commitment to a normative vision for learning and living based on Reformed Christian principles was deeply bound up in practice with the Dutch-American ethnicity of its founders, and these two considerations historically sustained each other. Like many other communities of European immigrants in the United States and Canada, the Christian Reformed Dutch sought to fashion an ethno-religious subculture in which they could practice their

faith, teach their children, and promote their common welfare according to their own convictions. *Onze school for onze kinderen* (our school for our children) was the operating description of both the college and the Christian day schools that they established.

The original purpose of the college was to provide Christian Reformed young people with a liberal arts education based on a Reformed Christian worldview and to equip them for Christian service. Although the college's officers certainly practiced religious exclusion in their hiring practices and in the way they privileged certain bodies of thought, these actions were not overtly exclusionary on the basis of race. They expressed the supporting community's determination to sustain its religious principles and outlook and to protect itself from being absorbed and co-opted by the American society and state. Calvin College did "welcome the stranger" on the rare occasions that one entered its gates. Even before the college received its degree-granting authority, one entry in a college document from 1918 noted that the College enrolled a "Navajo man and a Russian Jew."

Despite its founders' ambivalence toward American society and values, Calvin College was an American institution, and as such it bore the stamp of the supporting community's experience of the larger historic racial dynamics at play in the United States. While the Civil War may have ended slavery as an institution, both law and custom continued to impose forms of economic, social, and political subjugation on African Americans. The same was true for Native Americans, for most Hispanics, and for Asians, who first arrived as labor conscripts. Although European immigrants, including the Dutch, also endured economic hardships and frequently experienced ethnic prejudice, they nevertheless went to the head of the line for factory jobs. They also benefited from the expanding American systems of public education and health care, and from the modernization of urban infrastructure, from which persons of color long remained excluded. Whether they were aware of it or not, the early builders of the Christian Reformed Church and Calvin College benefited from this racial differentiation, and in the process they inherited a national legacy of white privilege and the subjugation of people of color.

Against this background it is hardly surprising that, by the 1920s, groups such as the Christian Reformed Dutch found themselves wrestling with conflicting impulses to sustain their separate community identity while at the same time encouraging their children to prosper and become good citizens in their adopted country. And ever since the Second World War, these communities have been confronted with powerful new forces for national integration. Under postwar leaders who were inspired by an expansive vision for Reformed witness in this changing environment, both Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church gradually altered their missions. Both set aside an implicit agenda of ethnic separatism and increasingly sought to include people from the wider North American society and beyond who were attracted to their Reformed Christian message and mission. With this opening to an American mainstream that was itself becoming steadily more diverse, an exclusive focus on the Dutch Christian Reformed community appeared increasingly uncharitable and impractical. There were many other evangelical Christians, college officers came to realize, who might benefit from a Reformed Christian college education. Moreover, opportunities for expanded partnerships with Reformed believers around the globe became increasingly numerous and compelling.

The college and the denomination had been tied to the life of a particular ethnic subculture for so long, however, that the process of inclusion and re-forming the lines of community remained slow and fraught with tension. As late as 1970, the Calvin student body was still almost exclusively white and 90 percent Christian Reformed. Yet both the college and the denomination, responding to the challenge of the civil rights movement and the new opportunities opened up by globalization, came to see the inclusion of people of color as a gospel mandate. Since the 1970s the college has responded with a variety of initiatives in recruiting, community action, and on-campus programming. However, while Calvin has had considerable success in appealing to a wider spectrum of white evangelicals, progress toward becoming a more inclusive and multicultural institution for people of color has remained modest and halting. The college's ethnic and denominational legacy has had enduring effects on its structures and ethos, even if these are now more

residual and implicit than they were just a generation ago. The campus climate still works to limit ready entry by persons of color and to alienate and marginalize many of those who do accept the invitation to teach, work, or enroll here.

Race, Institutional Power, and Multicultural Community

Racism has often been associated primarily with personal prejudice and bigotry—destructive attitudes and behavior by members of one race toward those of another. This is certainly an important dimension of the problem. Racism involves much more than this, however. At its profoundest and most consequential level, it takes the form of a systemic and institutionalized misuse of power.

The concept of institutional racism calls attention to the dynamics by which institutions that, in theory, exist to serve and represent everyone in a society equally and equitably—governmental agencies, business enterprises, educational systems, cultural organizations, and so on—may, in practice, function in ways that benefit some and oppress or exploit others. In the past, discriminatory practices were often conscious, deliberate, and direct: legislated segregation, exclusionary policies in employment, and the denial of voting rights, to mention only a few examples. Today, such discrimination is more likely to be unconscious and indirect, a product of structural forces and relationships more than of intentional policy. But the effects of past policies linger in these structural relationships. A tradition of substandard education, for example, may result in a lack of educational qualifications needed for many present-day occupations, thus denying access to job opportunities and reinforcing continued economic and social inequality even in the absence of any conscious policy of discrimination. It is these differential, structurally determined discriminatory effects, more than deliberate actions, that constitute the misuse of power associated with institutional racism.

This misuse of power operates in three essential ways. First, it serves to disempower and control the persons against whom it is directed. Second, it serves to allocate power and privilege to a dominant racial group by fostering systems and structures that serve the economic, cultural, and psychological interests of that

group. Third, and perhaps most insidiously, institutionalized racism carries the potential to imprison both dominant and minority groups at a deep psychological and spiritual level. It implants notions of superiority and prerogative in the hearts and minds of white people, while it tempts persons of color to engage in self-destructive attitudes and behavior. It reminds us that, as the Apostle Paul put it, followers of Christ wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the deeply embedded evil that can infuse this world's institutions.

The power of systemic racism arises from the fact that it consigns us all, regardless of race, to roles we do not choose, and no one can fully escape its effects. None of us can undo the fact that the United States, from its colonial origins through its founding, favored white settlers and allowed the subjugation, enslavement, and exploitation of persons of color. Over the decades, to be sure, much has changed. People of color have resisted, discriminatory laws have been removed, and the nation's noblest democratic and Christian ideals have been invoked to construct a hopeful image of what America could become. Yet America's racist legacy continues to haunt us and to shape our daily relationships in ways of which we may be largely unaware.

So how and where does this legacy manifest itself at Calvin College today? On one level it can be seen in the extent to which people of color at Calvin still perceive their status to be essentially that of tolerated guests in an institution that has not historically encouraged their participation. Even many white students and employees who are not Dutch and/or Christian Reformed have reported that they have felt like guests in someone else's institution. It is therefore understandable that for persons of color, whether from North America or abroad, the reminders of difference are virtually constant, for unlike their white counterparts, they cannot easily "blend in" to a crowd of overwhelmingly Euro-American faces. Whether or not they are subjected to overt harassment, persons of color must wear their difference at all times. The ongoing sense of being "unusual" is a particular burden for Calvin's students of color. Going to class, working on campus, and hanging out in the dorms become acts of diplomacy, occasions that require the wearing of one's public

face. Calvin College does not feel like home for these students, for it has not been designed with them in mind.

On another level, existing programs designed to promote racial inclusivity, affirmative action, and multiculturalism have confined themselves largely if not exclusively to first-order effects of racism. They have aimed at changing policies to make them more inclusive and welcoming to persons of color, or at trying to recruit more faculty, staff and students of color. However laudable and necessary such efforts may be in themselves, they do not systematically address the deeper structures of the institution—leadership, governance, constituency, and accountability—and have not sought to achieve more deep-seated change.

That these multicultural initiatives have not yet altered fundamental structures of the college is evident from a survey of leadership and decision-making structures. While several persons of color now serve on the Board of Trustees, and while several persons of color hold or have held lower-level leadership positions such as department chair or program director, all executive-level positions at Calvin College continue to be held by white people. Currently, every member of the President's Cabinet is white, every member of the Professional Status Committee is white, and all “middle-management” positions, which report directly to the president or a vice president, are held by white people—this despite the stipulation in the original Comprehensive Plan “that two criteria for hiring new vice presidents and other supervisory personnel be, first, a commitment to the development of a multicultural Calvin community and, second, significant experience with ethnic minority people” (p. 14).

Similarly, the College has only limited accountability to external communities of color, even those within the Christian Reformed Church itself. Although there are more and more people of color in the denomination, the congregations to which they most frequently belong have rarely had a close relationship with the college. Calvin faculty and administrators tend to join churches that sizeable numbers of Calvin faculty and administrators already attend, not churches whose membership includes larger numbers of persons of color. When Calvin groups are sent out, they tend to go to larger white Christian Reformed churches;

only occasionally do they visit small reservation churches or Asian, African-American, and Spanish-speaking churches in large urban areas. Though this may be understandable from many perspectives, the practical effect is that people of color and their churches often remain on the periphery of Calvin's institutional vision, and the college feels little pressure to attend to those who are not a central focus of its efforts. Conversely, young people from these churches feel little pressure to attend Calvin in significant numbers. Instead, they come one by one, and they have few collective accountability advocates outside the college to leverage their concerns.

As a result, and without deliberate intent, the college continues to participate in the second form of racist power—granting privilege to white people because of leadership, structures of governance, constituency, and accountability. Even though the college's decision makers may be persons of goodwill who abhor racism, they have few if any collegial checks and balances to challenge customary patterns of catering to whites. Calvin may not consciously intend to exclude persons of color—indeed, it may intend quite the opposite—but it remains designed primarily for the middle-class white student and professor. More often than not, white people's lifestyles, cultural expressions, outlooks, values, learning habits, teaching styles, and assumptions about what is normal and regular continue to prevail in dormitories, classrooms, offices, and worship services.

On a still deeper level, the relative absence of persons of color in positions of authority and responsibility on campus serves, by default, to convey the impression that white people have more natural ability for these roles. The scarcity of people of color in campus life at Calvin can subtly reinforce the sinful notion that white people must be smarter and better equipped to dominate the “knowledge industry,” the learned professions, and society more generally. A relative neglect of intellectual and artistic achievements outside Europe and North America, and of the role of people of color in shaping our own civilization and professing our common faith, reinforces the notion that white people are the producers of the “best and brightest” of our cultural expressions. By setting the intellectual, cultural, and worship tone of the campus overwhelmingly in a white mode, Calvin

helps to perpetuate the notion that the white, Euro-American way of life should indeed be normative for all.

Moreover, the college has not avoided a stereotype that persons of color tend to be less able and that they therefore require extra help. The Comprehensive Plan, for example, coupled calls for greater diversity with a pledge to maintain academic excellence and not to lower standards—as if these goals were implicitly or potentially in tension. To the extent that “we” treat persons of color as special guests within “our” institution, Calvin perpetuates the racist formula that “we” have much to offer “them,” but “they” have little to offer “us.” Such implications have not been lost on communities of color in West Michigan, congregations of color within the Christian Reformed Church, and other potential constituents of color across North America and beyond.

The cumulative effect of these institutional habits of mind is to suggest to students and faculty of color that they are fundamentally disadvantaged and voiceless. For their part, people of color perceive strong pressures to assimilate into a predominantly white campus culture, to sacrifice personal identity and racial pride for the sake of companionship and getting along. By providing few faculty and staff of color to serve as role models, Calvin reinforces in students of color the racist notion that academic and vocational achievement is rare and unusual for people like them.

Anti-Racism, Reconciliation, and the Way Forward

The foregoing brief illustrations of ways in which the college's structures and climate may work to foster white privilege and marginalize people of color suggest just how deep and daunting the problem of racial injustice and alienation can be. In a society as prone to individualism as our own, it is very difficult to face that fact. Members of the majority culture, in particular, are tempted to claim that they harbor no racist attitudes; if confronted with actions that reveal these attitudes deep within them, they want to believe that personal repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation can make everything right. The truth, however, is that the principalities and powers still hold us,

as individuals and as an institution, within societal and cultural structures that are charged with racism. So what can be done? Is this a counsel for despair, an invitation to cynicism?

Not at all. Although it would be illusory to believe that we will ever be totally free, until the day of Jesus Christ, from the racist principalities and powers at work in the world, there are positive things that we can do to combat racism. Remembering that racism includes the misuse of power in relationships, we can work to transform the power relationships that abet racism in our own institutional home. We can work toward making Calvin College an anti-racist institution. The more we commit ourselves to the goal of racial reconciliation and shalom, the more determined our anti-racism efforts will likely be. And the more determined these efforts are, the more effective we are likely to become in achieving our larger vision of a community that is both authentically Reformed and authentically multicultural.

In this context, the language of anti-racism may sound excessively militant or negative to some ears. It may smack of ideological compulsion and conformist responses. That is not the intent. Certainly, it is not enough to focus on simply attacking and resisting racism, however defined. Reconciliation and renewal are what we seek, and there is no single formula for achieving that goal. However, careful reflection suggests that *anti-racist* can be a useful and, indeed, positive term. It alerts us that progress toward the ultimate end—a genuinely multicultural Christian community—requires more than eloquent rhetoric and good intentions. It also requires combating deeply engrained impediments to interracial justice, reconciliation, and partnership. The use of anti-racist terminology is not a mere matter of putting on the rhetorical berets and bandoleers of political correctness. It arises out of a sober recognition of what Abraham Kuyper called the “antithesis,” the radical gap between the Kingdom of God and the powers of this world. The Reformed tradition has long recognized that sin and brokenness are more than just a matter of the individual heart; they infect the entire created order, including human institutions and relationships. An analysis that emphasizes the structural and institutional nature of racism, therefore, resonates naturally with Reformed convictions about reality. Like Calvin's founders, who claimed that

“neutrality was frowned upon,” we are convinced that there is no benignly neutral, “non-racialist” ground on which to stand, least of all in America. Racism runs too deep to allow us the luxury of simply refusing to give it credence. Because it is woven into the basic structures of our lives, it requires us to take an intentional anti-racist stand in response. Because it takes such a variety of forms, it requires us to consider, and indeed welcome, a variety of strategies for implementing that response.

Members of CART have reported that whenever they took a break from engaging in their initial training and orientation and checked in with each other's thoughts and feelings, the white members of the team felt discouraged. However, their colleagues of color—African Americans, in this case—felt encouraged and hopeful. The first step toward overcoming racism, they pointed out, was gaining the proper perspective and seeing the problem's true depth and power. Now we are seeing the world more on the same terms, they assured the white members.

That would be scant comfort if it did not also provide realistic hope for change and practical tools for effecting change. The hopeful fact is that Calvin College does indeed have resources for effecting change, and a positive trend of change is already underway. This community does have the capacity to develop an anti-racist and multicultural identity, and it can make racial equality and partnership a central feature of campus life. Faculty, staff, and students of the college can learn and embrace the basic elements of an anti-racist analysis and orientation. Calvin can subject its deep structures to a thorough search for policies and practices that support racism, and it can change those structures to reflect its professed commitments to racial justice, reconciliation, and partnership.

The college has come to recognize, for example, that while faculty requirements are one of the essential ways through which Calvin defines and implements its core confessional identity, these requirements may place a disproportionate burden on some faculty members of color because of the lingering effects of historical and institutional structures of racism. Accordingly, Calvin recently amended the faculty handbook to include race as a factor in decisions to grant exceptions to the faculty Christian school requirement, recognizing that making a judgment in such cases

involves a balancing of individual and institutional needs and goals and is best made on a case-by-case basis. In recent years, to cite another example, the college has begun working to develop new accountability relationships with a number of targeted congregations, including mixed-race and international Christian Reformed churches as well as predominantly African-American and Latino congregations with other denominational or non-denominational affiliations. If a sense of trust and mutual interest can be developed with these churches, and if they can become a steady and reliable source of students, they will gain influence with college leaders and can more readily demand accountability from them.

Such changes will not happen quickly or easily. They will demand intentional commitments and concrete initiatives, both individual and institutional. Institutions tend to stay the course and provide continuity, and they do not change quickly. Yet it would be difficult to find an institution more resolutely committed than Calvin College to governing all that it does by a firm sense of mission and biblical-theological moorings. Inspired by a biblical model that invites us to reaffirm the college's mission and to hold fast to our confessional identity, while at the same time enjoining us to embrace the discerning task of "ungrasping ourselves," with all the reorientation that this may require, we have both an opportunity and an obligation to focus our collective energies on the effort to make Calvin College a Reformed academic community that is genuinely anti-racist, reconciling, and restoring.

