

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FORUM

SPRING 2004

*Jesus
prayed,
"They are not of the world,
even as I am not of it.
As you sent me into the world,
I have sent
them into
the world." John 17:16,18*

**Ministry in
Cultural Context**

FORUM

Providing Theological Leadership
for the Church

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*Scripture references are from the
New International Version.*

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Editorial Committee: Eugene Schemper, Editor;
Mariano Avila, John Bolt, Duane Kelderman,
Kathy Smith

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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
3475 MAINWAY, LCD STN 1
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email: forum@calvinseminary.edu



from the president

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In a recent issue of *The New York Review of Books* I came upon the following ad from the “Personals” section:

A Delicate Beauty. Captivating, head-turning, petite, slim, successful artist and writer. Compelling combination intelligence/sensuality. Fun, funny, and talented. Known for clever, silly rhymes, gracious entertaining, caring heart, beautiful hands. Passionate and radiant widow. Lots of style and flair. Entrepreneurial, philanthropic, high-profile ...

Of course, the Lord only knows whether the caring heart and beautiful hands belong to an empty self starved for attention, or to a grandiose self overstuffed with it, or (think about it) both. All I know is that I have quoted only half the ad.

And that pastoral care of this sister might take a little thought.

Paul counsels believers who have been raised with Christ to “clothe yourselves with humility” (Col. 3:12), and I want to know his audience. Who is Paul talking to? Or put matters like this: To whom do we preach this gracious imperative? To major players or minor ones? To those who strut or to those who cower? To men or to women?

Two weeks ago I walked through a township outside Stellenbosch, South Africa, and visited the shacks of Christians whose whole family lived under a single, leaky 6x10 sheet of corrugated iron. Who would know how to translate Paul’s counsel to humility into that context?

Maybe the Christian looks to Jesus, who spoke quite differently to those who piled burdens on others than he did to those who had to carry them. Perhaps the Christian will sometimes assist the burdened to offload not pride, malice, and greed so much as despair, fear, and the terrible sense that they are less a person than a shadow of a person.

Following Colossians 3:10, Calvin left a place for *knowledge* in the renewed image of God. We are “renewed in knowledge according to the image of the Creator.” Given that God’s knowledge is always discerning, dynamic, adaptive through changing contexts including appalling ones, it might not be too much to say that one of the most enduring and resourceful signs of God’s image shining through the church is that her ministry adapts to personal and cultural circumstances. The name of such knowledge is wisdom, which is a kind of knack for knowing, among other things, how to bring the universal gospel of grace to *these* people, at *this* time, so that they will believe it and be saved.

In this issue of the *Forum*, good colleagues address the questions that surround contextual ministry. With them, you will see that the good answers are usually not the easy ones.

Grace and peace.

Neal Plantinga

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Holy Restlessness of Contextual Ministry

All Ministry Is Culturally Contextual

Teaching at Calvin Seminary is an invigorating and unsettling privilege. Every class of twenty or more students I've taught has included people who speak at least three (and usually more) different native languages. Each class has students from rural, suburban, and urban homes. Each class includes Boomers, Busters, and now Gen Xers. The different perspectives that walk in the door for each class period mean that every day is one of discovery.

This diversity is, of course, a mirror of our larger society. Within ten miles of where I write this, Christian worship services are conducted each Sunday in well over a dozen languages, perhaps a dozen distinct styles, by more than eighty distinguishable cultural groups (taking into account ethnicity, language, socio-economic class, and generational identity). And this locally impressive display of diversity is only a fraction of what those of you reading this in Los Angeles, Vancouver, Jos, or Manila experience every day.

If handled deftly, this diversity is a gift. It offers endlessly interesting perspectives and insights (and, of course, foods!). And it reminds us that every single human being ever born—and every church—is shaped by larger cultural patterns. Indeed, every

church lives in a particular habitat, with distinctive sensibilities about appropriate dress, language, music, art, and exactly when a worship service has gotten to be a bit long.

In the seminary classroom, this diversity can be unsettling because it means that no one, including the professor, can get away with false universal statements. Assertions like “all cutting edge music is played by praise bands” or “three-point sermons should be used in every culture” do not fare well! Teaching and learning in a diverse community challenges the naive assumption that particular forms of ministry are somehow immune to cultural influences, or somehow stand above culture.

The entire history of Christianity features the push and pull of both reflecting and contesting cultural influence.

by John D.
Witvliet
Professor of Worship



Anxiety and the Importance of Historical Perspective

This unsettling feeling is also common in other ministry settings. The subject of contextualized ministry often evokes anxiety. It suggests that nothing is sure and certain. Many of us who work in congregations do so because we were inspired by or are adept at a particular form of ministry. When that form

is challenged, it is natural to feel a little queasy. One congregation twenty years ago let go of its organists in favor of a culturally contextual praise band. Now its praise band leaders are being pushed out by a new generation that wants more mystery and silence in worship. In both cases, what was believed to be universal turned out to be transient.

Whenever this queasiness sets in, it is instructive to remember that the contextualization or inculturation of the gospel has been going on for 2,000 years, and that this history has much to teach us. In the New Testament period, the Corinthian church was arguably the most challenged in its struggles with how to properly engage culture. One way of thinking of Paul's writings to the Corinthians is as advice about how to manage the tension between

Holy Restlessness

▶ local cultural practices and the gospel.

Inculturation continued throughout the early church. When Christians started praying in Latin, their written prayers became shorter and more orderly. When the Greeks started using oil in their baths, so did Christians at baptism. In the medieval period, the feudal political system led theologians like Anselm to explain the Christian faith using terms and images from that political world. In fact, Calvin Seminary historian Richard Muller calls Anselm's writings on the atonement a "perfect example of successful contextualization" (*The Study of Theology*, 209).

The history of Christian missions gives us even more poignant examples. In seventeenth-century China, the Catholic church was polarized because of the desire of Jesuit missionaries to worship in Chinese. In nineteenth-century Bali, Dutch Reformed pastors traded in their black robes for white ones, because of the associations of the black color. Twentieth-century missionaries in many places faced especially complex worship wars when they suggested that indigenous song should replace traditional (North American) hymns that had been taught by previous generations of missionaries.

Indeed, the entire history of Christianity features the push and pull of both reflecting and contesting cultural influence. Sometimes the church erred by refusing to engage culture; in other periods, it was nearly swallowed up by it.

This history challenges us to be alert to subtle (and often not-so-subtle) ways that culture is changing—and changing us. Discerning cultural analysis and concern for relevant ministry should be top priorities for both church councils and seminary faculties.

The Gospel Transcends, Challenges, Crosses, and Transforms Cultures

While many discussions of culture stop with the message "Be relevant," the New Testament, and Jesus' life in particular,

offer a more complex message. True, Jesus became "fully contextualized" in a particular time, place, and culture. But Jesus also challenged culture, throwing the money changers out of the temple. Jesus also crossed cultural boundaries, speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus transcends cultures, embodying a gospel that has a remarkable record of crossing vast cultural divides. And Jesus' message also transforms culture. It never lets a culture stay where it is, but rather pushes toward more compassion, more justice, and more humility than any culture would ever recommend on its own.

Discerning cultural analysis and concern for relevant ministry should be top priorities for both church councils and seminary faculties.

The challenge of life in Christ's Body is to be Christ-like in our dealing with culture. This approach is explained in an especially helpful and succinct way in the Lutheran World Federation's Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (for the complete document, visit www.calvin.edu/worship/theology/index.htm). This brief document challenges each congregation to worship and witness in a way that

- expresses the transcultural character of the gospel,
- is contextually embodied,
- is eager for cross-cultural learning and encounters, and
- is counter-cultural in prophetic words and actions.

The document is helpful because it calls each of us to give attention to each of these four dimensions of the gospel. To those of us who have pursued cultural relevance with just about all our attention and energy, it calls us to dwell with the transcultural

dimensions of the faith and determine which parts of our culture we should resist. To those of us inclined to make universal pronouncements, the document calls us to see the contextual nature of our own formulations and to learn from formulations from other cultural contexts that may challenge, complement, or enrich our understanding. To those of us with few if any contacts with people unlike ourselves, it invites us to the risky and rewarding prospects of forming cross-cultural friendships. The document challenges every leader, every congregation, and every denomination not only to develop their area of strength, but also to work on their area of weakness.

Holy Restlessness

But if the topic of contextualization is itself unsettling, this fourfold approach doesn't help. It only reminds us that the teeter-totter of engaging-while-resisting culture never comes to a stop this side of heaven. We are left in a state of restlessness.

Of course this feeling is nothing new to missionaries. Lesslie Newbigin, the noted Anglican missionary to South India, summed up one period of his ministry in this way: "I have found it harder here than anywhere else to discern the right path. Yet I have no doubt that we are moving forward, and that in this realm as in many others we are being led through tension and difficulty to deeper obedience." Likewise, in an appreciation of Vincent Donovan (a noted Catholic missionary to Tanzania), Lamin Sanneh describes the missionary life as "one of unexpected challenge, of fundamental stocktaking, and of an uncompromising reappraisal of settled practice, received wisdom, and accepted custom."

Indeed, missional Christianity lives in a question-asking, restless state—a kind of holy restlessness that comes from loving people and loving the gospel at the same time. Whenever this restlessness fades, whenever the question-asking stops, whenever practices are perpetuated just

because “we’ve always done it that way” or just because “it’s on the cutting edge of ministry”—then it’s time to worry!

Doxology

While the topic of contextual ministry may leave us in a state of restlessness, it also provides a window into some of the most beautiful dimensions of the gospel.

For one, we discover again that in Christ, we have an identity that is even deeper than culture. As N. T. Wright asserts: “The gospel itself stands against all attempts to define ourselves as Catholic or Protestant, Orthodox or Methodist, Anglican or Baptist, still less by national, cultural, or geographical subdivisions of those labels. Our definition must be that we are in Christ; the praxis that goes with that is love for one another and the loving announcement of Jesus Christ to the whole world.” Praise God that “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

For another, we discover how many practices transcend culture. Honest, com-

Missional Christianity lives in a question-asking, restless state — a kind of holy restlessness that comes from loving people and loving the gospel at the same time.

mon prayer in Jesus’ name, faithful preaching of particular scriptural texts, and Christ-centered celebrations of the Lord’s Supper and baptism are worthy goals for worship in any congregation in any culture. There is perhaps nothing quite as moving as participating in a Lord’s Supper service in which you don’t understand a word, but also don’t have to, because of common faith in the gospel of Christ.

This helps us see that questions about culture challenge not only false universal claims, but also unchallenged relativism. They point us in the direction of articulating transcultural values and looking for creative, adaptive ways of embodying those

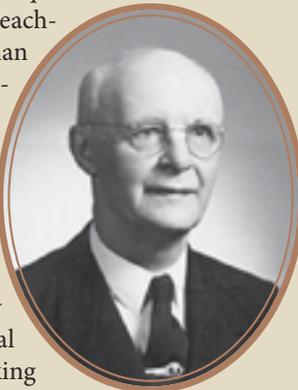
values in particular times and places.

Finally, the topic of culture points us to our future in Christ. As Richard Mouw explains in his memorable exposition of Isaiah 60: “When the end of history arrives, there is something to be gathered in. Diverse cultural riches will be brought into the Heavenly City. That which has been parceled out in human history must now be collected for the glory of the Creator.” It is this glorious vision that motivates our ministry today. Mouw concludes: “The Christian community [now] ought to function as a model of, a pointer to, what life will be like in the Eternal City of God. The church must be, here and now, a place into which the peoples of the earth are being gathered for new life.”

Ultimately, the topic of culture and contextualized ministry leads not to despair, but to hope. It leads to us consider things far greater than we would ever imagine on our own. And it reminds us that the source of our confidence in ministry does not rely on any culture-bound form, but rather on the sturdy fact that the church belongs to Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Some things are always true ...

At the Preaching and Culture seminar (see p. 13), Brian Bosscher made the excellent point that young people today demand *authenticity* and *spiritual passion* in their preacher. Suddenly Professor Kelderman disappeared from the podium only to return two minutes later, out of breath, with a quotation from Samuel Volbeda, who taught preaching at CTS from 1926-1952. Kelderman explained that he found this quotation in an old yellow set of Volbeda’s class notes which were given to him by Tony Hoekema, his former parishioner. People at the conference were surprised and moved at the high value this seminary professor placed upon authenticity and spiritual passion. In this lecture Volbeda, talking about sermon *application*, said,



Samuel Volbeda

On being able to apply, there are three qualifications: (1) No one can apply truth homiletically who is not endowed with a well-developed sense of reality. A visionary, an abstractionist, a stargazer, a doctrinaire, may be able to expound: apply he cannot... (2) the preacher should have a fairly complete acquaintance with the times in which he lives ... (3) and, lastly, he should have an experiential knowledge of the categorical imperative, the celestial beauty, the moral goodness, the spiritual sweetness of the truth of divine revelation as laid down in Holy Scriptures. As possessing this sympathetic knowledge of living truth through mystical experience of “the life of God” (Eph 4:18), he must really apply the truth dispensed to his own heart, not merely by mental representation, but by an act of living faith.... His own glory of soul and spiritual response to the truth in hand will naturally suffuse the sermon with a warmth that kindles fires in the bosom of others and proves congenial to all that have spiritual affinities with God, with Christ, with the spiritually minded preacher, and with the living Word of God. A minister’s fitness in homiletical respect is tested out right here.

Faculty Interview

Preparing Students for Ministry in Cultural Context



Forum Editor **Lugene Schemper** and **Kathy Smith**, CTS Director of Continuing Education, interviewed four CTS faculty members who have had extensive cross-cultural experience. Old Testament Professor **Carl Bosma** emigrated from the Netherlands to the U.S. as a young boy and was a church planter in Brazil for fourteen years. New Testament Professor **Mariano Avila** has lived most of his life in Mexico and worked with organizations in ministry throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Missions Professor **Pieter Tuit** emigrated from the Netherlands to Canada at age eighteen and has served churches in the American South, Australia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Dean of Students **Richard Sytsma** grew up in Japan as the son of missionary parents, and subsequently served in Tokyo for thirty-two years as part of a cross-cultural missionary team.

LS: In this issue of the *Forum* we are addressing the idea that although the gospel is trans-cultural, all Christian ministers serve within a certain cultural context. That context affects how they preach, teach the gospel, and do the work of ministry. North America is increasingly diverse, and we ought to be discerning about this as we train students for ministry. How have your cross-cultural experiences shaped your theological thinking and your approach to ministry?

CB: In Brazil I learned that theology happens in a global context. Many of the theological categories I learned in seminary did not fit the questions I faced as a young pastor in Brazil. I had not been prepared, for example, to encounter a culture with such a focus on the spirit world. We were clueless about that, and consequently asked the wrong questions and did the wrong things.

RS: I had much the same experience in Japan. The Japanese think a lot about the spirit world. I've seen situations where

people were afflicted by something beyond that which fit my theological categories, but I learned that the preaching of the gospel was the answer to it.

CB: In fact, a Japanese friend helped me understand what was going on in Brazil. Ironically, Reformed theology teaches about the kingdom of God, but doesn't give a good sense of the reality of spiritual powers in opposition to that kingdom. In a culture where spiritism is very strong, you know that you are dealing with these powers. We have been so influenced by the Enlightenment and secular society that we deny the reality of these powers.

PT: An awareness of this reality also affects your preaching. Without denying anything of the importance of preaching the cross and the atonement, the gospel also speaks to the victory of Christ over the powers.

MA: I would like to mention another topic: evangelism. Evangelism in the United

States is often focused on individuals, but an awareness of the dynamics of other cultures opens up broader possibilities. In Mexico if you start working with the children, you can get to the rest of the family, or at least the mother. If you can get the mother to come to Christ, then you have an open door to the rest of the family.

PT: It was the same way in Indonesia; you could not expect just a few families in a village to convert—you had to work with the whole village. There men were the leaders, so it was very important to begin with the village elders. If they accepted the gospel, then the whole village would follow.

MA: A professor can't say, "This is the way you must do evangelism." It is better to have people reflect on their own cultural situation, and then offer them the biblical tools to do their work.

PT: I see the value of my cross-cultural experience this way: You

don't lose what you were, but instead, you become more than what you once were. I've found that to be a helpful way to deal with crossing cultural boundaries and speaking with people about their own culture. But lately I have been thinking more about what is common between cultures, and the many things in ministry that can transfer.

LS: Can you give me an example?

PT: One thing is the importance of being relational, rather than programmatic. I will never forget what one Filipino pastor said to our group of missionaries: "You will not be remembered for all the programs you brought, but for what you were to us in your relationships." This is now my third year at Calvin Seminary and I find the same thing to be true here. I try to be relational in my ministry as an instructor.

KS: How does that work out in your teaching?

PT: Students have asked whether my teaching approach has been influenced by my exposure to other cultures and people. I know that students from different cultures have different ways of conducting a discussion, some of which seem inefficient in our culture, and I do allow time for that. It also influences the assignments I give to students. I try to find what is common, understand the differences, and then ask how I can help students so that the cultural differences don't become hindrances to them as they learn.

MA: You've got to get beyond the parochialism of your own culture—thinking that your own way of doing things is always the best. I try to facilitate interaction between students so that they may share their perspectives. Not all of them are willing to do it. Some are willing to talk in the classroom, but others come after class and ask questions. They have different ways of expressing themselves.

LS: Do cultural differences influence how one reads Scripture?

MA: Different cultures bring different questions and concerns to Scripture. I was just telling a class that in Mexico North American missionaries have at times come

Mariano Avila:

Different cultures bring different questions and concerns to Scripture.



with great concerns about teaching the inspiration of Scripture or the proper place of women in the church. These are not big issues in Latin American culture. We don't have problems believing in the Bible as the Word of God. Latin American culture is a matriarchal society and women really are the heads of families. Eighty percent of the members of our churches are women and they are in natural positions of leadership. But there are other things that Scripture speaks to, such as the exploitation of workers and the plight of two million homeless children living on the streets of Mexico City. People from other countries have their own questions and difficulties. Our work is to help them find answers to their questions in the Scriptures.

LS: Most of our students are being trained for a North American context. Why are these issues of cross-cultural ministry important for them?

PT: Questions that previously were faced by missionaries in different cultures are being faced more and more by people in North America. For example, my wife has been involved with some Bosnian refugees

Pieter Tuit:

We have to prepare our North American students for a missionary way of life.



with Muslim backgrounds. She took three children to a vacation Bible school. The craft for the day was making a cross which they could take home. On the way home, she noticed that the children were nervous, so she asked if they would get in trouble for bringing home a cross. One of the girls said, "I think my mother will kill me if I bring a cross home." This is a question of contextualization. Of course the cross is a good thing, but you have to be sensitive to the implications of what you are doing. This is a common question that missionaries face all over the world. Now questions like this are being faced right here. We have to prepare our North American students for a missionary way of life.

MA: In Latin America making a cross would be unthinkable in an evangelical church because of its association with Roman Catholicism. Many Protestant churches in the U.S. have been promoting the movie *The Passion of the Christ* as an evangelistic tool. This movie opened last week in Mexico City and I have received many e-mails from pastors there who question this practice. They think it promotes certain superstitious and idolatrous aspects of Latin American Roman Catholicism. Those realities have some bearing on how we view Roman Catholicism in its different cultural contexts, both here and in Latin America.

KS: Do you agree with the claim that "All ministry is cross-cultural"?

PT: Yes, but it's possible to emphasize the differences so much that you don't get beyond them. Here I find J. H. Bavinck very helpful. He sees each person "in relation to God," and there we share things in common: We're all sinners, all fallen, all under judgment, and in need of God's grace. To see that first of all is very important, and then you can deal with the differences.

LS: So repentance is still necessary for everyone, but it may be necessary to present that need for repentance differently in different cultural contexts?

PT: Yes. Our colleague Ron Nydam tells students that today's young people grow up in a culture in which

Interview

▶ their primary felt need is not a release from guilt, but a need to belong (see article on p. 9). How we deal with the questions of guilt and belonging in our culture is a missionary question. As I look back at my own seminary training I realize that it could never prepare me for all the things I would face. But our question here is, How can the seminary prepare students so that they have the theological and pastoral resources to deal with these questions? We can't give them all the answers, but we can give them a toolbox to find those answers.

KS: What would be in the toolbox?

PT: To begin with, an understanding of themselves and an understanding that there are other cultural contexts that they must discern and interpret in order to present the gospel. In addition to learning how to present the gospel, I give my students a very simple assignment for theological reflection. They spend four hours walking down Division Avenue in Grand Rapids, going all the way from Fulton Street to 44th Street. In five miles they cross communities of people, shops and restaurants from various cultures: Anglo, African American, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. Granted, this is not Los Angeles or Chicago, but for many students this experience has great impact and shows them that there is a different world out there. Teaching should not just be information, it should also be formation; that assignment is one that I hope is important in that formation.

CB: We must not identify Christianity with any one culture. In Brazil I saw missionaries impose North American evangelicalism on the Brazilians. They took American songs and translated them into Portuguese and also brought the North American praise and worship movement to Brazil, basically denying the value of indigenous Brazilian music for use in churches.

LS: Many congregations find themselves in neighborhoods with diverse cultural groups to whom they want to open their doors. How can they reach out to culturally diverse neighbors? Is a culturally diverse church possible?

PT: A few Bosnian immigrants have been attending my own congregation. For me

Carl Bosma:

We must not identify Christianity with any one culture.



the question is “In the future what would be better—to have another church full of Bosnian Christians, or to incorporate the Bosnian Christians into our local church?” I am not sure yet what the answer is, but I know what I would like to see. Scripture talks about congregations where God’s people from all backgrounds come together and worship. From a pragmatic view, I could accept separate congregations. But I know the excitement that new Christians from different backgrounds can bring to an existing congregation and I don’t want to miss out on that. Doing evangelism is primarily about walking the streets and meeting people and building relationships. I’m not impressed with big programs. What I like to see are people with missionary eyes and hearts, who are willing to connect with their neighbors and learn about them, and in the context of those relationships present the gospel.

RS: In Japan we used the term “incarnational ministry” to describe what you’re talking about—to live with the people to whom you are ministering. That means living with Japanese people the way that they live. In some North American contexts

it means living near people in neighborhoods where churches are located, rather than moving to the suburbs.

MA: I think it’s important to recognize that if you learn to respect other cultures, you will not expect them to become exactly like you. Sometimes the best model for a time may be for a church to form two congregations having services together once every two months, but not becoming totally integrated. There are no pat answers here.

RS: If you want a multi-ethnic congregation you also have to incorporate some diversity in the leadership. At my son’s congregation in Haledon, New Jersey, they are working on a rebirth of the old First Paterson CRC and are reaching out to different ethnic groups—Kenyans, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians. One of the leaders currently being trained is a dedicated Nigerian Christian. His presence communicates to members of that congregation that they are all part of this in a new way.

KS: Even in the CTS community we face many of these multicultural issues. What are we doing about them right here?

RS: Right now approximately one-fourth of our students are from outside North America. Most are Asian, from Korea, Japan, China, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia; but we also have students from Brazil, Romania, Kenya, Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda, Poland, and the Netherlands. We have a wonderful opportunity to learn from them as we prepare students for cross-cultural ministry.

MA: We already have an orientation for international students to adapt to this culture. I think we need some orientation to other cultures for the North American students.

RS: Right now the Student Senate is proposing a “covenant week” at the beginning of each academic year to do a reverse orientation for North Americans toward the international community. We need to hear what international students see in us, and how they view our North American values in contrast to their own. We hope this will be a regular part of the formation of students for future ministry.

Richard Sytsma:

If you want a multi-ethnic congregation you also have to incorporate some diversity in the leadership.



Relating "Cross-Culturally" to Generation Y

As the years go by I realize that it's more of a stretch for me and other members of my generation to understand the succeeding generation. As a parent and as one who teaches future pastors I keep wondering about how young people experience God. If we don't understand the experiences and questions of our children, we will offer them answers that are less than helpful. I think it may be wise to think that in many ways we relate to them "cross-culturally" because their experience and development has been so different from ours.

Because of societal changes associated with different patterns of work, changes in family structure, and the realities of life in the twenty-first century, we are raising children whose perceptions of reality are different from how we, their elders, see things. Many have grown up more alone and with less connection to others than members of the previous generation. The result is that their ability to form and experience relationships—and their ideas about relationships—are very different from ours. Given the differences in their life experience, they are different people and, accordingly, they hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ differently than we, their elders, do.

Now, how does this difference play theologically? How do young people today experience God? My answer is this: most often, not the way that we do! For most of us well into adulthood, our Christian faith has a lot to do with relief from guilt. We take great comfort in the heartfelt knowledge that our sins are forgiven. We are relieved that God remembers them no more, our guilt is gone, and we are "adopted as heirs" into God's kingdom. We know that it cost God the highest price a parent can pay: the

life of his child. But God paid it. So a heavy burden (the burden of failure to make the grade) is lifted from us onto the cross. In our baptism we are delivered from the waters of judgment; in the Lord's Supper we experience the death of God's Son as a ransom paid for our sins. We are restored to goodness and can experience peace with God and ourselves.

But for many young people of Generation Y, guilt is not felt to be a problem. Experiencing guilt is a developmental step forward that many youth have yet to make. Let me explain. First, guilt is not a problem because, for the most part, feelings of guilt are not present. To experience guilt demands that you put yourself before a certain set of standards—the Ten Commandments, for example. You interact with a code of behavior and values about living that you believe with all your heart. When you behave in ways that violate those standards (e.g., when you lie to a friend or cheat on a test or cross the line with someone sexually) you feel guilty of sin, as you yourself have defined it. Atonement (narrowly defined as forgiveness for sin) matters, because atonement spells RELIEF. However, if such standards are never internalized, never written on your heart because no one

by Ron
Nydam
Professor of
Pastoral Care



has been around to do the writing, feelings of guilt may not be present. If you do only "what is right in your own eyes," as Old Testament Israel in Judges 25, and if you have never been close enough to another person (such as a parent) to have taken into your heart that person's beliefs and values, then feelings of guilt may not be there.

Many young people today don't feel guilty; they feel empty. The primary spiritual struggle for many young people is not the heart-rending suffering of someone like Martin Luther who searched for justification before a God who demanded justice and punishment for sin. The primary spiritual struggle of Generation Y is about mattering: mattering to someone else, to oneself, and ultimately, to God. If you feel empty, you may think that you don't matter very much. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is a question that cuts deeper into the hearts of youth today than the words "Your sins are forgiven; go and sin no more." The cross may be just as much about abandonment, about losing your mom or dad, as it is about being delivered from judgment because of your iniquities. Praise and worship songs today speak of closeness to God much more than forgiveness. Few praise and worship services set aside time for confession. The Ten Commandments have dropped off the radar screens of many worship planners. The focus is on a close, loving, intimate relationship with Jesus and a heartfelt connection to God. "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord," "I Want to See You," "Shine, Jesus, shine ... shine on me." Those songs aren't about forgiveness; they're about mattering.

That's why guilt, when it is experienced, is an achievement for

*Many young people
today don't feel guilty;
they feel empty.*

Generation Y ▶ many young people. It demonstrates that they have internalized Christian values sufficiently to sense the effect of their behavior on others. In this we see the beginnings of the ability to trust and experience empathy, as well as a foundation for meaningful relationships, including a fuller relationship with God. But getting youth today to a place where they honestly feel guilty is a challenge. This is the unfinished business of parenting. The task of being a mother and a father includes the development of conscience in the hearts of their children. Guilt properly experienced is a good and necessary thing. It leads us to turn away from sinful behavior and toward a forgiving, loving God. It means that parents, others, and God have been close enough long enough for God's law to be written on our hearts.

If, as I suggest, the spiritual struggle of members of Generation Y is not so much with guilt as it is with emptiness, then how do they appropriate the gospel? How do young people “get” God? How do our youth receive the Holy Spirit? The answer to this question is hinted at in the Greek word *pleroma* (fullness), used by Jesus in John 10:10. Here he tells his disciples why he gave up the splendor of the fellowship of heaven and why he emptied himself ultimately on the cross at Calvary: so that we here on earth could enjoy *pleroma*, the fullness of life in abundance. Living a life chuck-full of meaning. Remember the five loaves and two fishes that fed five thousand in Mark 6, as well as the twelve baskets of food left over? That sign of abundance indicated that the kingdom of God had come. This is the gospel for today's youth—life filled with meaning. Jesus is experienced

The gospel message that resonates in the hearts of Generation Y is more about abundance than about atonement.

not so much as our savior from sin (though he is indeed), but as our friend in time of need (which indeed he also is). That's *pleroma!* It's not so much about what Jesus takes away; it's more about what he gives.

The time and care required to raise children brings on the formation of conscience. But that time and care are in short supply these days. This is why churches that are growing in North America today are churches where the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented as the news that God loves us and we matter and belong to him. This is the language of a loving parent and it touches the hearts of youth today. The gospel for today is the good news of relationships. It is about the God who forgives us *and* who values us! The gospel message that resonates in the hearts of Generation Y is more about abundance than about atonement. The welcome good news is more about mat-

We can't just describe Christianity, we have to be Christianity.

tering to someone than about forgiveness. The idea of a connection with God strikes more deeply than the offer of freedom from guilt. When the gospel takes on the flesh and bones of others, including the Jesus of years ago, our young people perk up to take interest in a living, loving God.

What does this mean for preachers, teachers, and leaders in today's church? I suggest it means we must be aware that in a certain sense we are presenting the gospel “cross-culturally” to members of Generation Y. It may be that the only way to break through to them is to take a more relational path than we have previously. There is a new expectation of more warmth from all of us in church leadership. Many youth are struggling not so much with leaving their parents as with losing their parents. The truth is that parenting today has often been “farmed out”—to daycare providers, teachers, pastors, youth leaders, and so on. We may not feel that it's fair, but it's a reality, and it places new demands on a pastor or teacher. It's not efficient; it takes time to get to know young people personally. But the new deal in church work with youth is about care, community, connecting, and being prayed for, as well as the concepts, truths, knowledge, and instruction. This is what we might call *relational learning*. We are challenged to incarnate the Lord who loves us: we can't just *describe* Christianity, we have to *be* Christianity.

The next generation of youth belongs to God. God has a grip on them. God's Spirit is moving, even helping them to walk on water (even if they do sink a little as they walk). As that happens maybe they will teach *us* a little about the power of community as they experience the living God in the care of one of us.

Cross-Cultural Issues in Church Planting

What comes to mind when someone mentions “cross-cultural ministry”? Most people immediately think of ministry involving racial or ethnic diversity. This is, of course, one important type of cross-cultural ministry. However, church planters face many other issues that are also cross-cultural, such as differences between generations and differences in learning and leadership styles. Each of these issues presents unique challenges for pastors and church leaders in today’s growing and changing churches.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

In today’s demographically changing world, seminary graduates will certainly encounter people who are different from themselves. Few strongholds of monoculturalism remain in the United States or in “cultural mosaic” Canada. Places like Sioux City, Iowa, are now home to hundreds of Southeast Asians and Hispanics.

Locations in the Southwest, like El Paso, Texas, have high non-Anglo populations. Jeff Dykema, pastor of Sunshine Christian Reformed Church in El Paso, finds that his ministry has changed during his fifteen years in this border community. With a population that is 75 percent Hispanic, El Paso presents its own brand of challenges for Dykema, as it does for other U.S. pastors along the U.S.-Mexico border. When Dykema first moved to El Paso from western Michigan, he was anything but sensitive to other cultures, and at that time many Hispanics in his community were rejecting their language and culture. Today, however, they take pride in being Hispanic and encourage their children to be bilingual. Billboards throughout the city reflect that change in attitude. As a pastor, Dykema has had to adjust to Spanish-language hymns and simultaneous transla-

tion in worship. Sunday school classes for adults are held in English and in Spanish. Dykema says, “We try to provide a home for those whose first language is Spanish while ministering to a majority membership of English speakers, both Anglos and second- and third-generation Hispanics.”

Stan Workman has noted similar changes in his years as pastor of Oasis CRC in Orlando, Florida, one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S. This congregation has changed from ministering primarily to “snowbirds” who spend winters in Florida to seeking more permanent growth from year-round residents. Orlando is a very migratory community: people come to the area to work at Disney and other industries and then move on. Although Workman pastors what some folks call an “established” church, he finds his congregation in constant flux with the changes in the employment needs of this tourist city. Workman has also seen many changes in the community that require him to be more multicultural in his approach to ministry. On a recent Sunday, at least one-third of the congregation was Hispanic, with several African American members also. Oasis CRC has become more like a church plant as it has begun reaching out to members of a demographically changing community.



by Gary Teja
Hispanic Ministry and Southeast
U.S. Team Leader, Christian
Reformed Home Missions; Program
Director, M.A. in Missions/New
Church Development, Calvin
Theological Seminary

Workman also mentors a group of future church leaders, four of whom are Hispanic. Two are students at Reformed Theological Seminary. One hopes to plant a second-generation ministry in Miami. Another is the son of a Pentecostal pastor who, through Workman’s mentoring, has embraced the Reformed tradition and is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in New Church Development program at Reformed Bible College (a degree offered in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary and Christian Reformed Home Missions). Another student is from Grace and Peace Fellowship CRC in Chicago, where Pedro Aviles serves as pastor. All represent a growing trend in the demographics of leadership development in the CRC.

Another growing trend, even among congregations that remain predominantly monocultural, is sharing facilities with congregations of other cultures. This may require some adjustment on the part of both the host congregation and the guest congregation. Sometimes conflicts arise over seemingly innocuous issues like odors. The aromas of food in the church kitchen that are appealing to one group may not be appealing to the other.

Given the racial and ethnic issues facing churches today, here are a few simple suggestions for enfolding new members and helping them to thrive:

- If your congregation is multiethnic, try to incorporate people from the different ethnic groups on your council. This will help your church make

In addition to racial and ethnic and generational issues, church planters and new pastors need to understand different learning styles.

Church Planting

▶ decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of all members. Greeters and worship teams should also reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of your church.

- Consider using two languages in worship through simultaneous translation or by offering back-to-back services in different languages.
- Pursue a racially and ethnically diverse church staff that has a broader understanding of the different cultural dynamics at play in the life of your congregation.
- As you minister to youth of differing cultural backgrounds, recognize that some of them may be in the middle of transforming their own cultural identities and have specific needs during this transitional phase.

Generational Issues

Some church plants focus on a particular generational group, such as the Gen-Xers or the newer NetGeneration (techies), or second-generation Hispanics, or first-generation Koreans. In all of these cases, as the church begins to attract people from a different generational group, issues of empowerment come into play. Who makes the decisions? Who controls the purse strings? What will worship be like? Can a ministry with a specific mission focus “be all things to all people,” or will it be wiser to plant daughter churches to meet the needs of these additional groups?

While many established churches face the daily challenge of ministering to multigenerational congregations, many church planters face challenges that are unique to the particular generation they serve. Consider, for example, the ministry of campus pastor Charles Kim, who works with students at UCLA in Los Angeles. On this campus religion is considered to be a personal and private matter and public displays of faith are regarded as inappropriate. Many students define success as the achievement of individual excellence and the opportunity for personal choice which excellence brings—an attitude that flies in the face of traditional

The church planting pastor needs to understand leadership as a reciprocal relationship between the pastor and the congregation.

character virtues such as serving one’s neighbor. Bill Van Groningen, Director of Ministry Development for Christian Reformed Home Missions and former Director of Campus Ministries, says that for many of today’s university students, “meaning is horizontal. The vertical has been lost. Either nothing is worth dying for or ideologies are killing fields; you have the two extremes.” The pastor who wishes to reach university youth needs to understand this ethos, learning to dialogue in a world of pluralism and tolerance while still maintaining a focus on the exclusive Good News of Christ.

Learning Styles

In addition to racial and ethnic and generational issues, church planters and new pastors need to understand different learning styles. Not everyone learns the same way, so the preaching of the Word may need to be supplemented with additional ways of communicating so that the message is understood. Our firm belief in “the hearing of the Word” must be accompanied by the realization that some people learn through seeing, while others learn through moving, or doing, or touching. People have “multiple intelligences” and consequently

We are being blended into a new CRC, a new family of God with deep roots and many branches.

process information in different ways. The adept church planter or pastor who takes these multiple intelligences into account may need to bring object lessons to the pulpit, use PowerPoint or printed outlines and other visuals, or employ other techniques that will speak to the varied members of a congregation.

Leadership Styles

Because leadership styles also vary, some congregations deal with power struggles, often between the pastor and the elders or other leaders. In some churches, pastors err by asserting their own vision and failing to collaborate with the council. In others, as in many Hispanic congregations, the pastor is seen as a *cacique* (chieftain) or a *caudillo* (bossman); and an attempt to give the council more authority may cause the pastor to be seen as weak and unworthy of being followed. Yet if the pastor insists on being the strong leader, not only will the congregation fail to develop other leaders, but the church may not survive long once this pastor moves on.

The church planting pastor, therefore, needs to understand leadership as a reciprocal relationship between the pastor and the congregation. Organizations like the Alban Institute offer good resources for pastors as they learn to understand the church as a system and offer positive and constructive leadership. Likewise, having clear expectations and evaluation processes for all staff—both paid and volunteer—will offset the dangers of an overbearing council or an autocratic pastor.

The task of the church planter or pastor is not an easy one, yet God continues to call men and women to ministry and will reward faithfulness to that call. Through its church planters, the Christian Reformed Church has been enriched in its encounters with different cultures. We are being blended into a new CRC, a new family of God with deep roots and many branches. May we as a denomination be ready to respond to this diversity of cultures in ways that honor God and announce the coming of his kingdom.

Preaching and Culture

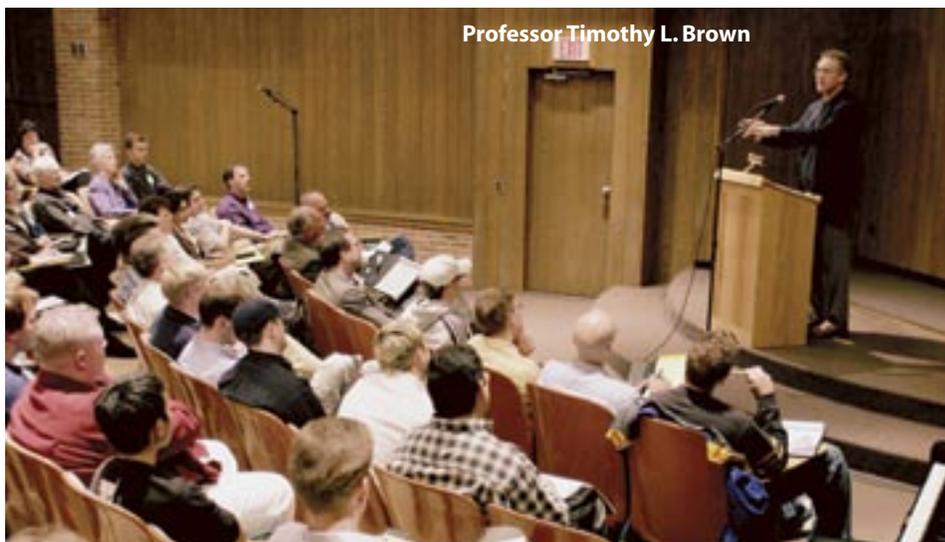
"They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. . . . As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

—John 17:16, 18

This prayer of Jesus, found on the cover of this issue of the *Forum*, is also found on the syllabus cover of a new course at CTS entitled "Preaching and Culture." The course considers major factors in North American culture that impact preaching—things like relativism, addiction, mass-media, advertising, and a pervasively therapeutic milieu, and suggests ways to make our preaching more effective in our current cultural context.

Students taking the "Preaching and Culture" course appreciate the impact of the course not only on their preaching but also on themselves. Seminarian Ryan Faber says, "Preachers should have the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other. I don't know that this course will change my preaching as much as change the preacher. As a result, I think I will be a more sensitive preacher—sensitive to the culture in which I preach and the society in which my audience lives and works. I hope the result is gospel preaching that is relevant, engaging, and practical."

Many pastors share Ryan's desire to be culturally sensitive preachers, as was shown by the large number who came to class on April 20, 2004. On that day the class expanded to 160 persons when it hosted a continuing education seminar on the topic of "Preaching and Culture." Pastors came from all around Michigan, as well as from Indiana and Ontario, to learn about and discuss this topic. Timothy L. Brown, Henry Bast Professor of Preaching at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, gave a lecture entitled "On Not Being 'Tedious to Listen to—and Disagreeable to Believe': Listening to the Listener When We Preach." In quoting the words of St. Augustine and other figures from church history, Brown noted that the issue of culture's influence on the church has been around for two thousand years.



Professor Timothy L. Brown

He encouraged preachers to be cultural anthropologists who are aware of twenty-first-century conditions like the loss of Christian memory, the shrinking global community, and the impact of a post-literate society.

After lunch Brown was joined by Brian Bosscher of Sunshine Community Christian Reformed Church and former Director of Youth Unlimited and Derrick-Lewis Nobel of New Hope Baptist Church in Grand Rapids for a panel discussion. The panel was moderated by CTS Professor of Preaching Duane Kelderman, who also teaches the course.

Bosscher asserted that, contrary to what many think, young people today are sick of being entertained and really are interested in the text of Scripture. They are eager for sermons that get into the text, and they look for preachers who are authentic—who believe what they preach: "They listen to your heart more than your head." Nobel spoke of the challenge of addressing the great variety of people, people ranging "from judges to junkies" in his predominantly African-American congregation. However, he reminded listeners that "people from all walks of life are hurting," and



Brian Bosscher and Derrick-Lewis Nobel

Scripture "speaks to our common human experience." Brown added that one major quality necessary for good cross-cultural preaching is to be interested in people and care about them. "The best preachers are those who get to go to nursing homes and talk to people in narthexes." Those preachers are also the ones who need to be self-aware—who need to "find the places of their pain, go there, and be healed" in order to preach effectively.

Pastors who attended the seminar found it to be very helpful. Several remarked about the great dynamics between the presenters and the relevance of the seminar. One, a Roman Catholic priest, said that "the humanity of the whole assembly was palpable and vibrant, as were the speakers." All went away with renewed enthusiasm for bringing the gospel into a world that desperately needs to hear it.

Symposium Looks at Worship Through Wide-Angle Lens

The most prominent continuing education event sponsored by CTS through the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship is the annual Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts, which brought 1,600 people to campus in January 2004. During the three-day event, conferees heard preaching by CTS President Plantinga and Craig Barnes of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, plenary sessions by Northern Baptist Seminary's Robert Webber and Asbury Theological Seminary's Christine Pohl, and a host of workshops on music, visual arts, preaching, theology, pastoral care, architecture, technology, drama, and dance by presenters from around the world. New this year was a series of pastors' panel discussions that covered topics from rural ministry to leading through change to evangelism and worship. Day-long seminars focused on theology of worship with David Peterson from Oak Hill Theological School in London, on preaching by Cleophas LaRue of Princeton Theological Seminary, and on worship and technology with Calvin College's Quentin Schultze.



More than 265 members of the CTS community registered for the symposium, which intersected with several seminary courses. Presenters and panelists at the conference included a number of CTS faculty (Carl Bosma, Emily Brink, Duane Kelderman, Arie Leder, Ron Nydam, Neal Plantinga, and John Witvliet), students (Steven Koster, Paul Ryan, and Anne Zaki), and staff (Betsy Steele Halstead, Kathy Smith), as well as many CTS alums such as Ken Baker, Roy Berkenbosch, Tim Blackmon, Joel Boot, Joyce Borger, Mary-

Lee Bouma, Jerry Buwalda, Moses Chung, Tim Douma, Scott Hoezee, Mary Hulst, David Kromminga, Greg Llerena, Christian Oh, Sue Rozeboom, Trevor Rubingh, Jeffrey Sajdak, Everett Vander Horst, Howard Vanderwell, Len Vander Zee, Leanne Van Dyk, and Duane Visser. A large group of alumni gathered for a late-afternoon reception in the student center to get reacquainted with one another and with their seminary.

Conference directors Emily Brink and John Witvliet said that "one of our main goals for the conference is to encourage a culture of ongoing learning. We hope that all of us will leave encouraged by what God is doing in congregations in North America and beyond, and with different and better questions to ask about our own worship practices—questions that focus our attention on worship's deepest purpose. We hope that the conference helps to answer down-to-earth, practical questions, but also gives all of us the opportunity to look at the gospel, the church, and the world through wide-angle lenses."

Prominent Speakers Visit CTS

Without actually planning it, the CTS Continuing Education office has had a series of on-campus events that you might call "Speakers Whose Last Names Begin with B." They weren't B-grade speakers, however. Students would certainly give these presenters straight A's for their interesting presentations.

We began the year on January 10 with a fascinating seminar on "Theology and the Arts: Why They Need Each Other in the Church Today" by **Jeremy Begbie** of St. Andrews University, Scotland, and Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Through a combination of projected images, stimulating lecturing, and moving piano performance, Begbie made a case for pastors and theologians needing to understand how the arts can provide "rich resources to discover and articulate Christian faith," and for musicians and artists "to be more theologically alert than perhaps ever before."

On March 2, **Richard Blackburn** of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center led a



Richard Blackburn

seminar on "Leadership in Anxious Times: A Family Systems Perspective for Church Leaders." More than 150 leaders gathered at the Prince Conference Center to learn about the rising levels of anxiety in and around the church today and the role that self-differentiated leadership can play in calming such anxiety. Blackburn's presentation was packed with information and very helpful to many leaders. One pastor who attended said, "This topic is so relevant to our church



John Bell

at this time. It reminds us that we are individuals and families who comprise churches, who cannot avoid anxiety but can benefit from it—acknowledging and learning how to regulate it and use it for healing."

On March 15 we welcomed **John Bell** of the Iona Community in Scotland to CTS. Bell spoke to a seminary class on the importance of the psalms—especially the psalms of lament. "We'll never be able to sing 'Hallelujah!' until we can sing

“Pointers for Preaching”

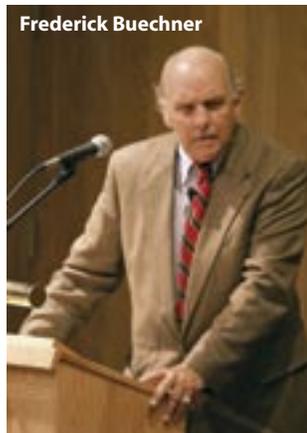
“**P**ointers for Preaching” is what Frederick Buechner called the advice he gave to 175 pastors, professors, and seminarians at CTS on April 22, 2004. Since we had read and discussed his book *Peculiar Treasures* as the spring Book of the Quarter, Buechner agreed to make a special appearance at the seminary just prior to Calvin College’s Festival of Faith and Writing, at which he served as a keynote speaker.

Buechner reminisced about his time as a weekly preacher at the Exeter Prep School. He remembered preaching to students who were hostile or indifferent, but who listened in spite of themselves. They wouldn’t allow him to be sentimental, fuzzy, or simplistic. There he learned that a preacher has to be

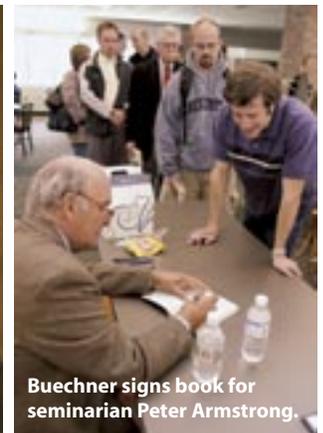
“a credible witness—someone people can believe, someone who tells the truth in his or her own true voice.”

Here are a few more of his “pointers for preachers”:

- Preach about things that really matter.
- Listen to your life. Pay attention to moments when unexpected tears come to your eyes.
- Speak out of your own story, because your story is *their* story, and it’s the Bible’s story.
- Some preachers know too many answers and too few questions. Remember that the gospel is a mystery.



Frederick Buechner



Buechner signs book for seminarian Peter Armstrong.

- “Speak what you feel, not what you ought to say.” (from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*)
- Use your imagination!

Distinguished Alumni Awards 2004

The President and Board of Trustees are delighted to announce the second annual recipients of the Seminary’s Distinguished Alumni Award:

Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven

Andrew Kuyvenhoven, an ordained minister in the CRC, is a 1957 graduate of CTS and has also studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, the Calvin Academy of Kampen, and The Free University of Amsterdam. He has served as a loved and acclaimed pastor and preacher in five congregations (First,



Lethbridge, AB; First, Hamilton, ON; Wallaceburg, ON; Clarkson, Mississauga, ON; and Waterdown, ON). While serving as theological editor with CRC Publications from 1971-1976 and as editor of *The Banner* from 1979-1989, his “church” became the hearts and minds of thousands of additional congregants. Author or editor of eleven books and study guides, Rev. Kuyvenhoven’s unique blend of piety, intellect, honesty, humor, and wisdom has strengthened the church of Jesus Christ and brought credit to Calvin Theological Seminary.

Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen

Bastiaan Van Elderen, an ordained minister in the CRC, is a 1952 graduate of CTS. Deeply connected in the international world



of biblical scholarship and archeology, Dr. Van Elderen has been a Fulbright Lecturer, Professor, and Director at various centers of scholarship in the Middle East and in Europe, particularly in Amman, Jordan, and at The Free University, Amsterdam. From 1959-1984, he taught New Testament at CTS and did so with distinction, combining wide-ranging knowledge and love of Scripture with respect for students and a determination to make them thrive. He has strengthened the church of Jesus Christ and brought credit to Calvin Theological Seminary.

Prominent Speakers (continued)

“How long?” declared Bell. Later he led the entire community in singing and in thinking about “The Integrity of Diversity” in worship and in today’s world. “Different songs will speak to different people at different times. Music in God’s house will at times speak to us in ways we like and at times not relate so well. Within the church we have to develop a tolerance so that, over time, everyone is nourished,” Bell said.

In April the “B’s” really came out: **Timothy Brown** of Western Theological Seminary led a seminar on “Preaching and Culture,” and

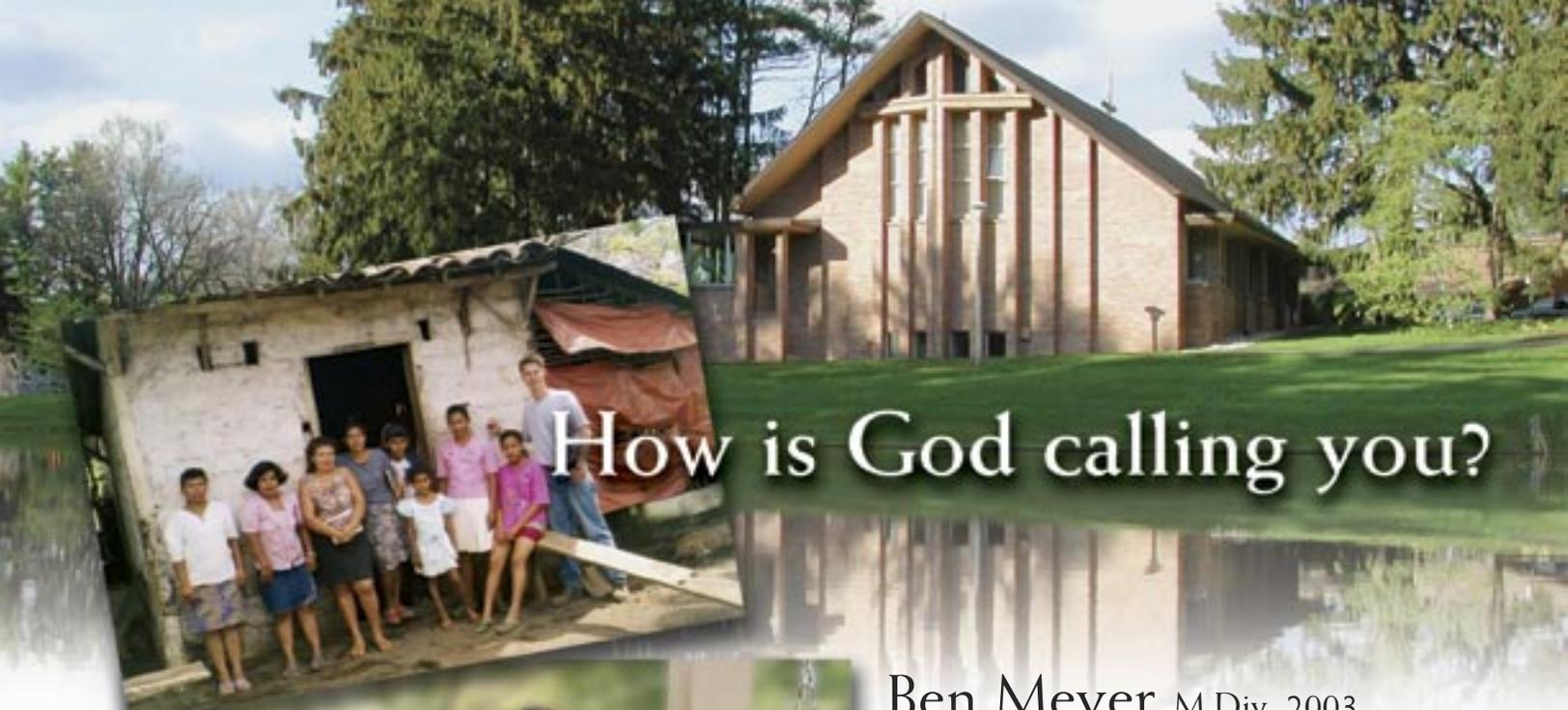
we were thrilled to have **Frederick Buechner** speak to us on the spring book of the quarter, his *Peculiar Treasures* (see related articles on pages 13 and 15).

On April 29 **Kwame Bediako** of Ghana gave a reprise of the Stone Lectures he had given earlier at Princeton Theological Seminary on the topic of “Christianity, Islam, and the Kingdom of God.”

Actually, all of our guest speakers this year haven’t had names starting with B. We heard a series of inspiring lectures on “Growing Churches in Global Cities” by retired Profes-

sor of Missions **Roger Greenway** during our March Mission Emphasis Week. And in May **Jung Suk Rhee** of Fuller Theological Seminary will speak about “Reclaiming *Adiaphora* in Postmodern Times”—honoring diversity both culturally and theologically today. All of these speakers enrich our ability to give students a classical theological education for contemporary ministry in a global context.

Many of these presentations are available for listening online in the Lecture Archive at www.calvinseminary.edu. Audiotapes can be ordered by emailing semit@calvinseminary.edu.



How is God calling you?

Ben Meyer, M.Div. 2003
Calvin Theological Seminary

"It started with a short-term missionary assignment to Nicaragua. Amy taught high school and I worked with the CRC there. Soon we knew God was calling us to missionary service. Four years later, with three beautiful children, a thorough preparation for ministry from Calvin Seminary, and God's call to cross-cultural missions, we're ready to serve. We can't wait!"

Ben and Amy Meyer and their children Grace, John and Luke are working with Christian Reformed World Missions in Mexico.

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