

The Ralph & Cheryl Schregardus Friendship House: 2 years later

"It was difficult at first because I had never associated with someone with a disability before."

"I learned it was OK to ask questions, and now I love coming home to Friendship House because the Friend residents are always so happy to see me."

"We have tons of inside jokes and laugh all the time."

"We have a great deal of respect for each other."

"We have much more in common that I ever would have known!"

Since The Ralph & Cheryl Schregardus Friendship House opened two years ago, seminary students have been surprised how easy and fun it is to live with a person with a cognitive disability. It also comes with some particular challenges.

"Don't walk into this experience planning on getting it right the first time based on classwork and studies. Every person is unique and capable of teaching you a lot about yourself."

Western Seminary's program is the first of its kind in the country using an intentional living arrangement to connect students with individuals with disabilities. Three students and one cognitively-



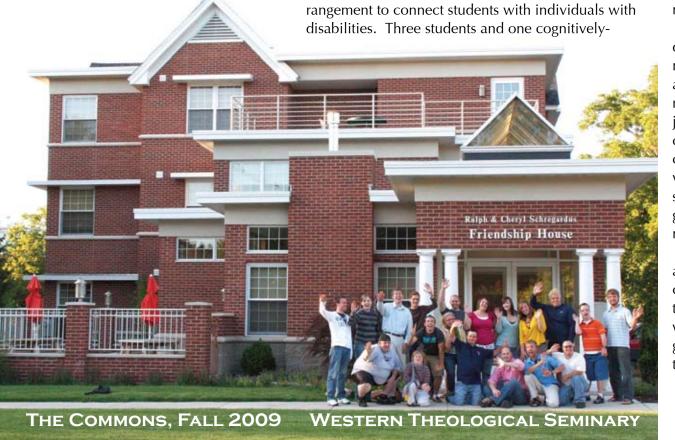
Suite-mates Kallie Walker, Stephanie Kirkham, Amanda Kragt, and Amber Taylor

impaired young adult live in each apartment suite. There are six suites in Friendship House, one common recreational room on the ground floor, a classroom, and a residential director.

The seminary students go about their business of normal seminary activities, and the Friend residents have part time jobs, go to special on-site classes offered by the county, or participate in volunteer activities. The suite-mates come and go and interact just like roommates anywhere.

The Friend residents are a part of the WTS community, often attending chapel or simply walking down the halls greeting people and chatting up the students.

(cont.)



Friendship House, cont.

Research has shown that most religious communities don't understand the barriers that exist in the church for people with disabilities. Fear, ignorance, patronization, and prejudice prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating in church life.

Western's Friendship House is raising awareness and educating seminary students so they are prepared to provide appropriate spiritual care to individuals with all kinds of needs once they graduate.

Andrew Spidahl M.Div. Middler

Through Friendship house I've discovered a treasure in life and relationship that most people don't take the time to find. I would not



have sought out these friends on my own -- it took a place already set up and people who cared to say, "Hey, check this out."

I now feel very comfortable approaching a person with disabilities, knowing I'll find their heart of hospitality is wide and their capacity for fun is primed!



Friend resident Megan Dalman participates in a community-based instruction class at Friendship House.

Many of the students had little or no experience interacting with people with disabilities prior to living at Friendship House. Now their eyes have been opened to the needs, challenges, and abilities of those with disabilities, and many hope to continue this learning through their years in seminary and beyond.

Some students have had prior experience, yet say, "Knowing or even being related to people with disabilities cannot compare to what it's like to be a friend living with that person."

The personal growth also holds true for the six young adults with cognitive impairments living at Friendship House. Their special education teachers have tracked substantial improvements in

areas such as employment, community participation, home living skills, and educational advances.

As one parent commented, "We are just so thankful for this opportunity

for our son. What a joy it has been to watch him grow in independence and love of life. Friendship House is a special place and we are thrilled to be a part of it."

"It's a great place to live," says Friend resident Rob Sterken. "There should be more in the world!"

And if Dr. Matt Floding, Dean of Students, gets his wish, there will be. "The key is getting core groups of families to form strategic alliances with institutions. This model can be replicated in seminaries and colleges all across America!"

Special thanks to Lisa Kooy for her case study and to Dr. Jane Finn, Amy Palmer, and Jared Graybiel for their research on Friendship House.

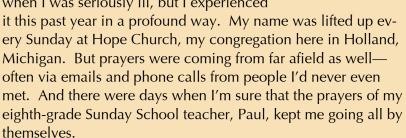
What I Learned as General Synod President

by Dr. Carol Bechtel

Professor of Old Testament

Maybe it would be better to ask, "What *didn't* I learn as General Synod President?" I learned *so much!* But I'm a teacher, so I will try to stay within the limits of the lesson plan.

First, I learned what it feels like to ride the wave of people's prayers. I had already gotten a sense of this several years ago when I was seriously ill, but I experienced



Second, I learned how gratifying it is to see former students serving so faithfully all across the church. There were



times when I wanted to cluck like a mother hen over her chicks—but then I realized that I could take only a limited amount of credit for the splendid pastors and teachers they have become. So instead of clucking, I settled for singing the doxology.

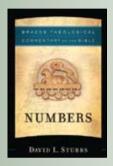
Lastly (though the list could really go on and on), I was reminded of something I first learned at classis exams back when I myself was a student at Western Seminary. It's that most of the time, even when people in the RCA disagree, they do so out of a shared sense of love and commitment to Jesus Christ. For instance, when people in our denomination disagree over this or that biblical interpretation, they do so because they care very deeply about honoring God's Word.

That, I think, is one of the things that holds us—and will continue to hold us—together.



News from Western Theological Seminary

Professor of Reformed Theology Leanne Van Dyk was elected a General Synod Professor of Theology at the General Synod of the RCA this past June.



Professor of Ethics and Theology **David Stubbs** recently published *Numbers* as part of the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible series. The book focuses on who the people of God are to be, their failure to live up to God's vision, and God's faithfulness in spite of that failure. Ellen Davis of Duke Divinity School says, "Stubbs has opened up the riches of a book that was effectively closed to the church, making it accessible and even indispensable for our journey with God."

Associate Professor of Reformed Theology **J.Todd Billings** received his Templeton Award for Theological Promise at the University of Heidelberg in Germany in May.

"I had a great experience spending the week with scholars from around the world—from Europe, Africa, Asia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It was illuminating to hear feedback from this international group of scholars after my lecture."

Christianity Today declared Dr. Billing's Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ to be among the "top 5 books on Calvin" in their July 2009 issue.

Dr. Billings is on leave this semester teaching with his wife Rachel as RCA missionaries at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary and Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology.



The Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation has gifted Western Theological Seminary with a planning grant to explore the challenges and opportunities of **Hispanic Theological Education**. The planning team is directed by Rev. Pablo Canche and includes RCA missionaries Vern and Carla Sterk and current student Jose Macias. In addition, people from the wider community are giving input, such as Drs. Justo Gonzalez, Jose Daniel Montanez, Kent Van Til, and Edwin Hernandez, as well as Pastors Angel Ortiz, Lorenzo Miguel, and Andy Fiero.



In July we welcomed **Eric Williams** to the seminary as Western's first Faculty Fellow, made possible by a specific donation to the seminary for this purpose. He is teaching theology and homiletics at WTS and continuing to work on his dissertation during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Some of his research interests are urban ministry and evangelism, Black sacred rhetoric, and African-American political theologies. Professor Williams has

served congregations in Illinois, New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, and the United Kingdom. Upon completing his studies, Eric wants to work bi-vocationally as a parish minister and Christian theologian within the academy.

Faculty Speaking Engagements

Dr. Robert Van Voorst

Nov 8: "Islam and Christianity" at Christ Memorial, Holland

Dec 6, 13: Discussion of N.T. Wright's Surprised by Hope at Grace Episcopal, Holland

Feb 21, 28: "The challenges of religious pluralism and ecumenism" at Fifth Reformed, Grand Rapids

Dr. Chris Kaiser

Nov 8, 15, 22: "Three Models of Intelligent Design" at Hope Church, Holland

Prof. Ron Rienstra

Nov 14-15: "Worship Principles and Practicals" at Bethel Reformed, Sheboygen, WI

Feb 14, 21: "Blessing and Intercession: The Cell Biology of Prayer" at Olivet Reformed, Olivet, MI

Mar 6-7: "Watch Your Figures: Naming Sin, Salvation, and the Kingdom Imaginatively and Biblically" at *Worship Alive!* conference, United Church, Rogers Park, IL

Dr. George Brown

Jan. 17 & 22: Belhar Confession at Fifth Reformed, Grand Rapids

2009-2010 Journey Learning Opportunities

Nov 12-13: Re-Ignite Re-Imagine Small Group
Ministry with Greg Ogden

Nov 16: Engage in Community: Engage in the World with Shane Claiborne

Mar 4-5: Jeremiah: A Practice of Counter-Imagination with Walter Brueggemann

Mar 16-17: United to the Living Christ: The Dynamic Reality of Salvation in the Reformed Tradition--Osterhaven Lecture with Todd Billings

April 19-21: 1 3 5 Gathering

April 29-30: Relational Youth Ministry with Andy Root of Luther Seminary

June TBA: Children and Worship

journey@westernsem.edu 1-800-392-8554, x167

Thank you for your commitment to life-long learning!

"Mountaintop View"

Chad DeJager



People come to the Rocky Mountains for plenty of reasons. The pioneers of the Wild West

came here for gold, silver and open space. Currently many go west for the scenery, the parks, the architecture or the history. You might be surprised to learn that few people you meet in Colorado are originally from Colorado. Most are transplants from the Midwest or one of the coasts. For some reason unknown to me, the ominous mountains attract all kinds of people; people with an unquenchable desire for adventure, a passion for simplicity and a love of nature.

We had our reasons too. In mid-June my wife Kimberly and I drove across the plains and stopped in the foothills of the mountains. We came here to fulfill a seminary requirement for a ministry experience, and most of all we came here for the gorgeous hiking and biking.

Looking at the mountains in rear view and reflecting over the experience it is clear that we got a ministry experience, all the hiking and biking we could have wanted, and hopefully the credit for the internship. We also re-

ceived something we never anticipated: a call for our lives.

At the conclusion of the spring semester I had sat in President Brown's office looking forward to an exciting summer, and he said something to me that I blew off as just another well-intended nicety. "Chad," he said, "Do you know what I want for you?" "No, What's that, Tim?" I replied, having no

idea what he might say. "I want you to be a pastor." I didn't tell him then, but I wanted that too; I just didn't know why or where.

The work was fairly typical of most summer internships. There were preaching and teaching assignments, there were consistory, classis, and staff meetings, and there were the extras. I stood by hospital beds, celebrated Stan's (our host for the summer) 90th birthday, planned a memorial service, visited parishioners, and met every available pastor in the Rocky Mountain Classis. In all of it, the complexi-



After giving their time to landscape and do other needed services, church volunteers gather around the grateful homeowner.

ties and challenges of church life kept unraveling. Church ministry became more complicated and messy every day. Every unique pastor worked in a complex context with a loaded history of challenges, victories and transitions. These men and women of the cloth opened their histories to me and demonstrated a love for the church that I could only admire. They served the church as if it were the actual bride of Jesus Christ. They didn't have every answer, but they had hearts for God and God's people.

Those honest conversations with pastors, parishioners and sojourners made clear the huge challenges and possibilities before all of us. The summer internship experience has been the most challenging and helpful part of my seminary experience thus far. Somewhere along the way I found a call, in the face of ominous challenges, among the mountains of Colorado, to be a pastor leading people to faithfully follow Christ and transform their world.



WESTIERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"A Mentor's Blessing"

Patricia Simmons

This past summer my internship in Rochester, NY blessed me in so many ways. Rochester's beauty includes its city, surrounding area, and its people. It is also my hometown—my children, grandchildren, mother, sibling, other



family members and friends reside there. Many saw me leave Rochester as God was doing a work in my life and got to see me return ten years later, a new creation, pastoring and preaching the Word of God. What a great blessing to have my mother, family, and friends see me preach for the first time and to come and receive prayer at the altar. My internship was a cup of joy, sprinkled with unexpected challenges and topped with amazing gifts from God—truly a Psalm 23 experience!

Brighton Reformed Church was a gift in itself. They con-

Russell F. Pater

b. Philadelphia, PA 9/3/30 d. Rochester, NY 8/3/09 Central '52; NBTS '55 UnionTS '56 (MRE) Reformed Churches served: 1956-75 First, Wynantskill, NY 1975-95 Brighton, Rochester, NY Other service to the church: 1974 vice pres, Part. Synod Albany 1974-75 stated clerk, PSA



seminary grad 1955

The Rev. Russell Pater was Brighton Reformed Church's ninth minister. His qualities of compassion, organization, dedication and untiring faithful effort were

exceptional. Rev Pater's efforts in local mission were exemplary, including his service as first chairman of a committee to establish a Hispanic Church within the Rochester Classis and his efforts to establish a Taiwanese Ministry within Brighton Reformed. Rev. Pater retired in 1995 but remained an active, serving member of the congregation until he passed away this year.

firmed my calling to pastor and preach. They also allowed me to share in their pain and loss as their beautiful, loved saints—Art Teamerson, Lily Wang (a member's niece), and my mentor, Rev. Russell Pater—went home to be with the Lord.

From the moment I was accepted to become the summer intern pastor of Brighton Reformed Church, Reverend Pater made me feel welcome. He phoned to confirm the internship and introduce himself, asking me to keep in touch and call if I had any questions. He advocated for my needs prior to my arrival in Rochester, and met me as soon as I arrived. He discussed my job description and listened to my vision for the summer and then attended the consistory meeting where he supported my

plans for ministry. He took me looking for a summer apartment and helped to remedy some other issues, and he shared with me the business administration of a senior pastor. In July after he was admitted to the hospital, he continued to commend my work and encourage me

What a gift to share the wisdom and last days of a mentor who served his church for over 34 years (the last 14 "retired" but still serving). During each hospital visit Rev. Pater would pray for me. I will never forget



the day it became certain that Rev. Pater would soon be going home to be with the Lord. His lovely wife and two daughters were there as Rev. Pater quietly observed all that was said. I asked if I could read John 14, one of his favorite passages. While reading I glanced at him, and to my surprise his blue eyes were glued upon me, seeming to pierce through my heart. At that very moment I felt God's presence as Rev. Pater was listening and looking to me to see Christ, to receive God's Word and peace to go home. The Word of God was embodied—made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). He then prayed a blessing for my ministry, passing on the pastoral mantel, I believe. Rev. Russell Pater's love for Christ, humble mannerism and spunk for life taught me what it means to be a true servant and pastoral leader.

I am so thankful that Dr. Matt Floding and Western Seminary helped make this experience possible. I will be eternally grateful to God, Rev. Pater, his family and friends, and all of Brighton Reformed Church for the gift of this summer internship and my mentor. God bless you, Rev. Pater –R.I.P.!



Ken Neevel

Flood: noun or verb?

On June 19, flood was a noun. Flood (noun) – An unusually abundant flow of water.

As a result of record rainfall, we were left with over 3 feet of standing water in the Garden Level of the DeWitt Theological Center. Furniture and computers were floating, books and papers were ruined, walls gave way, and our spirits were very damp indeed.

As I write this in September, flood is a verb. Flood (verb) – to supply abundantly or to excess.

The outpouring of God's grace through people and congregations alike has been remarkable. What began as a flood of water has become a flood of grace!

We received hundreds of financial gifts totaling thousands of dollars to help with our cleanup and restoration efforts. With those gifts came notes, cards, and letters of prayer and encouragement. Several of you even offered to come from near and far to personally assist with clean-up or repair! I can't begin to tell you how much every note, call, and gift has meant to everyone in the Western Seminary family.

I am pleased to report that as you read this, the Garden Level has been restored to its original condition, we have taken significant steps to prevent this from happening again, and we have added a rider to our insurance policy for just such an occasion. (Please note: the lack of coverage was not the fault of our agent or provider. As a cost-saving measure, we had previously chosen not to include such a rider.) And as it turns out, the costs of the clean-up, repairs, and restoration are expected to be almost the same as the amount of special gifts received. God is truly amazing!

On behalf of each student, faculty and staff member here at Western, thank you for all of your special gifts and prayers in this time of need. And as we look ahead to the coming year, I pray you will continue to flood us (as a verb!) with support for our ongoing needs as you are able.

Ken Neevel

Vice President of Advancement & Communications









On June 22 we welcomed **Dana Daniels** to the seminary staff as an Associate Director of Advancement. Dana replaced Bruce Wierks, who retired on June 30. Dana and her husband, Jim (WTS class of '02), served churches in Iowa for 7 years before relocating to Michigan last year to plant a church in Laketown Township.

A graduate of Northwestern College, Dana also completed several semesters of study at WTS. Her

education and work experience provide a great foundation as she builds relationships with current and potential donors in Michigan and Iowa. Dana will work diligently with the Advancement staff to raise significant funds to support the work and mission of Western Theological Seminary.

News

Lubbert Van Dellen '51 continues to serve as chaplain at the Leesburg Nursing Home in Leesburg, FL He has finished but not published, *From Alaska to the Heavens*.

After 41 years of ministry, **James Stralow** '68 retired on August 31, 2009 from Forreston Reformed Church in Forreston, IL.

Kathy Blaske '78 has joined the pastoral care team at Christian Health Care Center, Wyckoff, NJ. She is the Long Term Care Chaplain with primary care given to residential seniors and to two adult day service groups.

Vernon McNear '83 was certified as an ACPE Supervisor by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education on March 31, 2009 in Richmond, VA. On June 8 he

initiated a new Clinical Pastoral Education Program at St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington, WV, to which he brings an appreciation of Appalachian culture, his own emphasis on Celtic Spirituality, and the use of the Enneagram as a tool for self care and growth.

Covenant Community Church in Muskegon, MI celebrated **Mark Bush** '84 being their pastor for 25 years at a special church picnic on July 5, 2009. The church presented him with a hand made fly rod, letting him know how proud and honored they feel to have him as their pastor and Minister of the Word.

Jonathan Brown '03 and his wife, Kristyn, continue serving First Reformed Church in Oak Harbor, WA. They have two daughters now, Lydia Hope (1/28/6) and Tabitha Joy (1/30/8).

on to Glory...

Henry Vander Schaaf '45 b. Maurice, IA 5/18/18 d. Zeeland, MI 6/23/09 Central '42, WTS '45 Reformed Churches served: 1945-51 First, Sibley, IA

1951-57 Prairie View, KS 1957-67 Steen, MN

1967-82 First, Buffalo Center, IA

John Maassen '49

AlumLine

b. Beaverdam, MI 5/3/20 d. Venice, FL 8/10/09 Hope '42, WTS '49 Reformed Churches served: 1949-51 Palmyra, NY 1951-55 Fourth, Kalamazoo, MI 1955-61 Zion, Grandville, MI 1961-65 Hingham, WI 1965-70 Calvary, Des Moines, IA 1985-93 Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA

Other service to the church:
1963-64 pres, Part. Synod Chicago
1970-85 field sec, PSC

Alvin Hospers '54 b. Hull, IA 10/9/27

d. Grand Haven, MI 7/23/09 Central '51, WTS '54 Reformed Churches served: 1954-59 Pultneyville, Williamson, NY 1959-64 Bethel, Brandon, WI 1964-71 Central, Oskaloosa, IA 1971-91 Second, Grand Haven, MI 1991-92 (interim) Conklin, MI 1993-99 (min.vis.) Eighth, Wyoming, MI

Gerald Osland '58

b. Cresco, IA 3/28/32 d. Rochester, MN 9/3/09 Central '55, WTS '58 Reformed Churches served: 1958-62 Montclair, Denver, CO 1962-71 Pleasant Valley, Holland, IA 1971-92 First, Sanborn, IA 1992-97 First, Bristow, IA

An Invitation

Classes of 60, '70, and '85: Please come to your Alumni/ae Day reunion on May 10, 2010. Luncheons will be offered for \$10/person for the 25th, 40th, and 50th reunion classes. A special event in the afternoon will be followed by the Alumni/ae Banquet at 5:00 in the Maas Center of Hope College (\$20/person). Please hold the date. An invitation packet will arrive in the mail in April. For questions or to reserve your spot at the luncheons and/or banquet, call LuAnne VanSlooten at 616-392-8555, x109 or email luanne@westernsem.edu.

Class of 2009

Master of Divinity graduates:

Bob Abel—Associate Pastor, Bethany Reformed, Sheboygan, WI

Sara Appleyard—Full-time work in business

Ann Bilbrew—Associate Pastor, Living Springs Community Church, Glenwood, IL

Andrew Bossardet—Pastor, Glen Lake Community Reformed, Glen Arbor, MI

Bill Flavin—Pastor, Trinity Community Church, Brown Deer, WI

Peter Gillotte—Inner city ministry & college teacher, Kansas City, MO

Lance Davids—Teacher, Chicago Christian H.S. and Youth Pastor, Faith Reformed, Dyer, IL

Kenita Harris—Full-time work in business

Agshin Jafarov—Missions

Barry Lang—Pastor, Bethel Reformed, Leota, MN

Ryan & Sophie Landt—Co-pastors, Aberdeen Reformed, Grand Rapids, MI

David Mayer—Associate Pastor, Haven Reformed, Kalamazoo, MI

Amy Nyland—Associate Pastor, Alto Reformed, Alto, WI

Rebecca McDonnell—Hospice Chaplain, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Laura Osborne—Associate Pastor, First Congregational, Mattawan, MI

Terika Raak—Resident Director, Friendship House, WTS, Holland, MI

Marcus Roskamp—Pastor, Pella Reformed, Adams, NE

Brittney Salverda—Clinical Pastoral Education, Hamilton, Ontario

Brett Spalding—First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Traverse City, MI

James Tol-full-time work in business

Wes Tillett—Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian, Lafayette, IN

Tracy VanOpstall—Pastor, Rose Park Reformed, Holland, MI

Joel VanderWal—Associate Pastor of Youth Ministries, Northminster Presbyterian, Peoria, IL

David Veldt—Chaplain of Consumer Care, Hope Network, Grand Rapids, MI

Chris Zeller—Pastor of Student Ministries, First Reformed, Zeeland, MI

Master of Theology graduates:

Thaweesak Chatmontree—Minister, Presbyterian Church, Thailand

Wasihun Gutema—Ethiopia

Lee, Bu Sang—graduate studies in Old Testament, Gordon Conwell Seminary

Travis West—Hebrew Instructor, Western Theological Seminary

Demissew Kassaye—Ethiopia

Doctor of Ministry graduate:

Scott Christiansen—Senior Pastor, Westwood Church, Omaha, NE

Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry graduates:

Patricia Simmons—Master of Divinity program, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

Jeffery Hough—Pastor, Angel Community Church, Muskegon, MI and Master of Divinity program, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

In Search Process as of 10/1/09

Ann Conklin Ryan Ende Kari Fast Brad Gray Ed Hawkins Neal Karsten Dustyn Keepers Katie Sewell Mike Weaver Kevin Yurk

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Note from President 7im Brown

As I reflect on my first year as president of Western Theological Seminary, these words

from Psalm 103 are always near the tip of my tongue: Bless the Lord Oh my soul, and all that is within me bless God's holy name!

Little did I realize when I accepted the presidency that the stock market would plunge, WTS would suffer two floods (February in the library and June in the DeWitt Center), and I would need to trim our operational budget by more than \$500,000, making very painful cuts to our life together.

Yet through it all God has been faithful! Even with staff and faculty reductions, a salary freeze, and budget decreases in all areas, I watch with marked gratitude as the faculty, staff and students of WTS eagerly fulfill our mission statement faithfully and fruitfully with fewer resources.

As a new academic year is under way, we have another remarkable group of students eager to learn and to grow up into the fullness of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, the in-residence class is large and very gifted, but what is a surprise to me is that the distance learning class will likely be, for the first time ever, almost as large as the in-residence class.

I know there will be challenges this year, but I have learned and now live in confidence that God will be faithful. Bless the Lord Oh my soul, and all that is within me bless God's holy name!

Tim Brown

November 2009, Vol. 13, No. 1 Editor and Graphic Designer: Carla Plumert Editorial Council: Dr. Timothy Brown, Dr. George Brown, Dr. Matt Floding, Rev. Dawn Boelkins, Ken Neevel. *The Commons* is published three times a year for alumni/ae and friends of Western Theological Seminary by the Office of Advancement and Communications, Ken Neevel, vice president, 101 E. 13th Street, Holland, MI 49423. 616-392-8555; fax 616-392-7717. Reproduction in whole or in part by permission only. advancement@westernsem.edu

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