

Newsletter December 2021



Matt Lundberg
Director

Advent greetings from the deVries Institute for Global Faculty Development!

As Calvin University's newest [center or institute](#), the de Vries Institute (or dVI, as we affectionately call it) works to expand the capacity of faculty members—at Calvin and elsewhere—to connect the Christian faith to their work as scholars in meaningful, authentic, and transformative ways. As I think about this mission, a word that frequently comes to my mind is *synergy*. We believe that the commitments involved in Christian faith (beliefs, habits, practices, attitudes) are not only consistent with a life of learning, but they deepen and enhance that learning. And we believe that robust learning about the world and everything in it can be a way of deepening the life of faith, providing additional resources for Christians to bring into the world as service of God and neighbor. This synergy doesn't always happen easily—there are hard questions, stumbling blocks, and moments of apparent disconnect that need to be pondered carefully.

But, committed to the psalmist's line that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (24:1), we believe that steady commitment to a wise integration of Christian faith and academic work makes possible a striking and compelling *dance* (another word that frequently comes to my mind) between learning, life, and faith in the triune God.

Theologically, we often undergird this project by pointing to God's work as creator, as with the line above from the psalmist. Because God is Creator, we can approach all areas of learning with the confidence that faith will enrich and be enriched by our academic work. During the Advent and Christmas seasons, however, we are reminded of another key warrant—the incarnation. The triune God not only created the world, but entered uniquely into human reality in the world through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, as part of the divine project of reclaiming creation as God's own kingdom. This is yet another reason for us to lean into our work of learning in the confidence that it is a deeply *Christian* task—investigating the world that God created, loves, and redeems in the most unlikely yet powerful way.

May you experience the presence of Christ during this holy season.

Announcing a New Post-Doctoral Program

Calvin University is happy to announce the de Vries Postdoctoral Teaching Fellows program. This program will provide an opportunity for newly minted Ph.D.s across various academic disciplines to gain vital teaching experience and participate in an intentional professional development sequence focused on undergraduate instruction and scholarship. This opportunity will give sustained attention to questions of connecting Christian faith commitments to every aspect of academic work. [Read more.](#)

The 2021 Abraham Kuyper Prize

On December 15, Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary enthusiastically awarded the 2021 Abraham Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life to Rachael Denhollander. In her work as an attorney, advocate for abuse victims, and educator, Denhollander exemplifies the important task of bringing Christian faith into public life.

In her address during the award ceremony, Denhollander emphasized that the theological beliefs affirmed by Christians should make us the *most* equipped to serve justice. One of the tragedies of the contemporary moment, she noted, is that so many Christian voices proclaim "Just preach the Gospel" in a way that implies that God has little to say about matters of justice, such as sexual abuse and sexual assault. Denhollander stated that the Christian understanding of the beauty and goodness of God should make Christians deeply attuned to the depths of evil in the world. And it should motivate us to *do* something about it, including reforming our institutions, policies, and laws so that they better serve survivors of abuse and better resemble the justice of God.

For more information about the award, [click here.](#)

Kuyper Conference

The annual Kuyper Prize is one of the two main initiatives directed by Calvin University related to the legacy of Abraham Kuyper. The other is the annual Kuyper Conference. The [2022 conference](#) is scheduled for April 5-7 at the Prince Conference Center on the campus of Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. This year's theme is: "Tongues, Tribes, and Nations: Global Christianity and Reformed Public Theology." This conference is held in conjunction with the [Henry Symposium on Religion and Public Life](#), also at the Prince Conference Center, scheduled for April 7-9.

The Kuyper prize and conference are made possible due to a generous gift from the late Rimmer and Ruth de Vries.



Rachael Denhollander
Recipient of 2021 Kuyper Prize



reflecting faith
Resources for Christians in the Academy.

To enrich academic work, including faith-infused teaching and learning in the classroom, one of the dVI team's primary projects is [Reflecting Faith](#), a platform of short faculty development courses that can be taken by individual faculty member or groups of faculty from institutions. We have drawn from experts around the world to create a series of focused online learning experiences that provide professional development for faculty who want to deepen their grasp of how thoughtful Christian faith can inform and guide their work in the academy. In the early stages of this program, participants from 20 countries around the world have enrolled in courses.

Currently we offer courses on the following topics:

- Engaging Responsibly with Scripture
- Educating for Shalom
- Hospitality to the Stranger
- The World as God's Creation
- Faith and Pedagogy

Four new courses are under development during the early months of 2022, with the plan to offer them for the first time in the summer of 2022:

- Authentic Community and Higher Education
- Humanity in God's Image (*imago Dei*)
- Sin and its Corruptive Effects
- Faith and Online Pedagogy

These courses have been on pause during the second half of 2021. DVI team member [Laurie Lemmen](#) has been working to install the [Reflecting Faith](#) courses in a new learning management system that will make participant access much easier. We also eagerly await a brand new informational and access website (constructed by [Kmotion Design](#)) for [Reflecting Faith](#) that will replace the existing site in early 2022.

Faith and Learning Fellows

One of the key reasons for the founding of the de Vries Institute was to invest in newer faculty members as they develop as Christian scholars and teachers. The Faith & Learning Fellows program provides teaching release time to participants at key junctures of their early years at Calvin University (typically in their 2nd and 4th years) to enable sustained reflection on the relationship between faith and learning in their work. Through a cohort program involving reading, reflection, writing, mentorship, and guided conversation, participants are supported and challenged as they develop as faculty members at Calvin.

During the fall of 2021, a cohort of 2nd year F&L Fellows and a cohort of 4th year F&L Fellows spent significant time in independent study on the relationship between Christian commitments and the work they do in their disciplines. They also met regularly for conversation and shared study with a "companion scholar" drawn from more senior faculty at Calvin. And they met as cohorts with dVI director Matt Lundberg for discussion of key readings related to faith and learning.



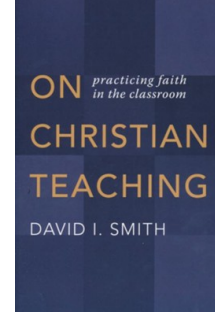
David Smith's Award-Winning Book



How does faith inform *teaching*—not just *what* we teach, but *how* we teach it? This is a question that [David Smith](#) explores in his book [On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom](#). Prof. Smith serves as director of the [Kuyper Institute](#) for Christian Teaching and Learning and coordinator for the [de Vries Institute](#) for Global Faculty Development at Calvin.

Smith's book was recently named the 2021 winner of the prestigious [Lilly Fellows Book Award](#), a signal that the book is changing the shape of the conversation about faith and academic life.

This past spring the de Vries Institute asked Prof. Jennifer Holberg, chair of Calvin University's English department (and co-director of Calvin's [Center for Faith and Writing](#)), to lead an interdisciplinary faculty reading group that explored the book and its overarching questions together. [Read more](#) about what this group learned together.



Faith and Team Science Project

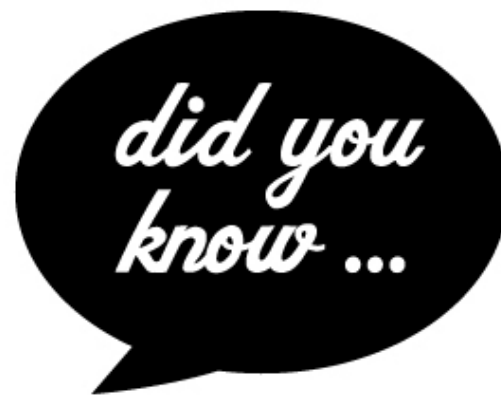
It's simple: faith changes people in the way that they act, think, and live. This is important even for Christians in the thick of scholarly pursuits such as science. The conversation surrounding faith and science doesn't have to be divisive. In fact, Calvin University biochemistry professor Rachael Baker has found that faith is a tool that can make a better scientist and enrich the classroom and laboratory. [Read more](#)



This fall, the de Vries Institute sponsored an interdisciplinary faculty reading group on the award-winning book [Becoming Beholders: Cultivating Sacramental Imagination and Actions in College Classrooms](#), edited by Karen Eifler and Thomas Landy. This collection draws from a Catholic perspective to inquire how students can be encouraged to glimpse God in the world through the range of academic disciplines.

Calvin faculty from a variety of disciplines such as world languages, theology, business, nursing, education, engineering gathered weekly to consider the book's arguments, think about how it might inform their work, and relate the book's perspective to the Reformed point of view that energizes Calvin.

This coming winter and spring, dVI is sponsoring a reading group for Calvin faculty led by Religion professor Clair Mesick on the award-winning book [Reading White Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope](#) by Esau McCauley.



The Scientific Vocation & Christian Discipleship Faculty Seminar

In his decades of teaching geology at Calvin University, Ralph Stearley noticed that many people assume that there is some kind of deep conflict between faith and science, an attitude that plays out in different ways. In graduate programs in the natural sciences, there are Christian professors who are sympathetic to their Christian students, professors who don't care or worry about relating faith to science, and even some professors who are overtly hostile towards practicing Christians. Tragically, antagonism towards Christian scientists is found in faith communities as well as scientific ones. Faithful scientists are caught in the middle of suspicion and hostility from both sides.

For Stearley, who retired from full-time teaching in 2019 but remains actively engaged in research and teaching, the key to addressing this challenge at Calvin begins with faculty members and equipping them with key resources in Reformed theology. Stearley is in the midst of leading a year-long seminar called "The Scientific Vocation and Christian Discipleship" for faculty members mainly in the natural sciences at Calvin University. A grant from the [Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity Evangelical University](#) helped to fund the planning of the program, and the [de Vries Institute](#) at Calvin is funding the seminar itself. [Read more.](#)



Prof. Ralph Stearley



Contact us

Have a question? Contact dvi@calvin.edu.



DE VRIES INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
an institute of Calvin University