



**DR. WILLIAM SPOELHOF**  
**DECEMBER 8, 1909 – DECEMBER 3, 2008**



grateful  
to our ancestors...

... faithful  
to our heirs

Dr. William Spoelhof, a faithful member of the Calvin College community for eight decades, has passed away.

Spoelhof was president of Calvin from 1951 to 1976, but his association with the college first began in the fall of 1927 when he journeyed from his hometown of Paterson, N.J., to begin his studies at Calvin.

He graduated from Calvin in 1931, taught as a professor of history and political science from 1946 to 1951, and then was called at the age of 42 to become president of his alma mater.

After retiring from Calvin in 1976, he remained a visible figure on campus, maintaining regular office hours, conversing with students, socializing with faculty members and enjoying a variety of campus activities, including varsity sports.

His tenure as president was marked by the college's move from its location on Franklin Street in Grand Rapids to the current Knollcrest campus.

Once college and church officials made the decision to purchase what at the time was known as the Knollcrest Farm for the then-princely sum of \$400,000, the quartet of Spoelhof, Henry DeWit, vice president for business and finance; John Vanden Berg, vice president for academic affairs; and Syd Youngsma, assistant to the president for college development, raised money for and oversaw construction of new buildings, recruited faculty, expanded programs and, building on the foundations laid by previous faculty and administrations, put into place the framework for Calvin's current place on the higher-education landscape as one of the country's best Christian colleges.

Spoelhof was always quick to credit this team with whom he worked for the successful change in campus locations and for the expansion of the college's curriculum,



William Spoelhof circa 1965, a few years after the college move to the Knollcrest campus had begun



William Spoelhof came to Calvin College in 1927 from Paterson, N.J. At the time the college had 324 students, some in the four-year program, others in the two- or three-year teacher-training programs.



On June 22, 1956, Daniel DeVries, secretary of the Calvin College board of trustees, signs the option to buy Knollcrest Farm from J.C. Miller, seated to the right of DeVries. Watching are Sydney Youngsma and Henry DeWit. Both would be instrumental in helping William Spoelhof build the new campus.

faculty and student body.

Of those three close colleagues Spoelhof once said: “Calvin College would not have been the same if I did not have Henry DeWit, whom I had to talk into office, John Vanden Berg and Syd Youngsma as my colleagues. We were more than just staff members. We were dear friends. We knew each other well. And one can’t say which person should receive the credit for successes, for ours was a united effort.”

Their relationship at Calvin, Spoelhof said, was marked by a trust in each other and a faithfulness to God’s promise and leading.

Current Calvin President Gaylen Byker was a student at Calvin when Spoelhof was president and became a close friend of Spoelhof’s since assuming the presidency in 1995. He said faithfulness was a hallmark of Spoelhof’s life and legacy, noting that one of Spoelhof’s favorite songs was a Dutch hymn whose title is translated as *Faith Cannot Do Too Much Expecting*.

“He was a consummate scholar, leader, manager and Christian role model,” Byker said. “His involvement very much shaped the college we know today as a leader in



In 1971 sophomore (and future Calvin College president) Gaylen Byker photographed President Spoelhof at his desk, and the president returned the favor.

Christian liberal arts education. He was thrust into the presidency and performed with great integrity and effectiveness for a quarter of a century. On a personal level I will miss his friendship, his wisdom and his counsel a great deal.”

Former Calvin President Anthony Diekema (1976-1995) agrees. “President Spoelhof was a gentleman, a scholar and a statesman,” he said. “Christian statesmanship was a hallmark of his leadership in higher education. He was a giant of a man on whose shoulders, by the grace of God, I was privileged to stand.”

Diekema noted, too, Spoelhof’s playful side. “He was a man of good humor and quick wit, and this was often revealed through his love for word games,” he said. “He was a master of the pun, both as detector of unintended ones and often as creator of those intended.”

In a 1999 interview with *Spark*, the magazine for alumni and friends of Calvin College, Spoelhof reflected on his role in the life of the college. He spoke about his love for Calvin students, saying: “I like very much to meet students and enjoy talking with them. I like to find out what their goals in life are, what courses they’re taking, what difficulties they have.”

He also spoke about his love for his fellow emeriti, with whom he had coffee daily at 10 a.m. in a place affectionately called “The Emeritorium.”

“We seldom leave before we’ve learned something new and different,” he said. “I mean, sometimes it’s just plain trivia; sometimes it’s a deep philosophical or theological thought; sometimes it’s just plain jokes. But usually there are gales of



Presidents Anthony Diekema, William Spoelhof and Gaylen Byker attended the dedication of Calvin’s Crossing, the pedestrian overpass, in 2002.



A fellow student at Calvin was Angeline Nydam, but the two did not meet until several years later while both taught at Kalamazoo Christian School. They married and raised three children.



As he was completing his doctoral program at the University of Michigan during World War II, William Spoelhof joined the Office of Strategic Services, 1942–1945, and also the U.S. Navy, 1943–1946.

laughter that come out of that room, and kids walking by look in to see what's going on. I usually sit in the corner. I can keep an eye on who's going into the library and who's coming out.”

He also spoke in that *Spark* interview about his wife, Ange (who died in 1994).

“Her death stunned me,” he said. “I don't think I've quite been the same person since. Ours was a very, very happy and successful marriage, and my apartment is loaded with memories of my wife.”

While Spoelhof's association with Calvin stretched over 80 years, he also spent some interesting years away from the college.

During World War II he worked in the Netherlands for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a military intelligence agency that covered all aspects of intelligence: military, social, economic, political and more. First he was assigned to the research and analysis branch of the OSS in Washington, D.C., then became a naval officer and thereafter was ordered to London, arriving there a few days before D-Day, later serving in Europe.

After the war he started teaching at Calvin in 1946, becoming president in 1951, albeit reluctantly.

“I was kind of one of the young turks at that particular time,” he recalled in that 1999 *Spark* article. “I was not present at the meeting of the faculty—I guess I had a consistory meeting at the church that night—when President Schultze announced his resignation because of ill health. At the next faculty meeting we decided that the search committee would be comprised of faculty members. I happened to be one of those appointed.”

When the committee met to adopt a job description it also discussed the successor, and Spoelhof's name emerged. He said that he wished to withdraw his name from consideration, but others said that if he did so other people in the group also

eligible for the presidency might follow suit. So he agreed to allow his name to stand.

Becoming president, he said, was a difficult situation.

“The faculty members were either my former teachers or my compatriots, and that presented difficulties. Moreover, there was a tremendous need for reorganization, to deal with all of the students coming in, to find enough faculty members to meet larger enrollments, to deal with the big information revolution that hit us at that particular time. The new science was just being introduced.”

The development of the new Knollcrest campus will always be a significant legacy for Spoelhof, but interestingly when he reflected on the work undertaken by the college in the 1960s and 1970s to build Knollcrest, he reflected not so much on buildings, but rather on programs.

“We talked about the curriculum that was going to



William and Angeline Spoelhof with children Pete, Elsa and Bob (from left) in a family portrait circa 1956



Members of the Emeritorium on William Spoelhof's 95th birthday with President Byker in DeWit Manor



Daily walks around the campus ensured that President Spoelhof was current on construction projects and allowed him to meet many of the students.

be taught in that building,” he said. “For example, when discussing the Science Building we said, ‘Look, we’ve never had astronomy before. We’ve never had geology before.’ They had been considered too expensive and dangerous. But they belong in our curriculum. So we had to answer the questions: What is the relationship of laboratory to the formal teaching? How essential is it? What is its place? After we put this together in one simple folder for each building, we’d hand it to our architect Bill Fyfe and say, ‘Now wrap the building around this.’ That’s the way the campus was developed.”

That development continues today as Calvin’s campus has blossomed into a 400-acre jewel at the corner of Burton Street and the East Beltline in Grand Rapids. And among the first buildings visitors encounter as they enter the campus from Burton Street is the William Spoelhof College Center.

It’s but one of several lasting legacies to a man who put an indelible mark on the Calvin campus, joining such things as the Spoelhof Chair (an endowed chair that spans the college’s academic disciplines) and the William Spoelhof Planned Giving Society at Calvin, which helps others assure Calvin’s future.

Many will miss William Spoelhof, president emeritus of Calvin College, but his impact will be felt for generations to come.



## Memorial Service

Organ Prelude

Norma deWaal Malefyt, *Organist*

Welcome

Gaylen Byker, *College president*

Opening Prayer

Clarence Vos, *Professor of religion and theology emeritus*

Hymn of Praise: "Praise the Savior, Now and Ever"

*Psalter Hymnal 400.1,3,4*

1 Praise the Sav - ior now and ev - er; praise him, all be -  
3 Sin's bonds sev - ered, we're de - liv - ered; Christ has crushed the  
4 For his fa - vor, praise for - ev - er un - to God the

neath the skies; self de - ny - ing, suf - fering, dy - ing,  
ser - pent's head. Death no lon - ger is the stron - ger;  
Fa - ther sing. Praise the Sav - ior, praise him ev - er,

on the cross a sac - ri - fice. Vic - tory gain - ing,  
hell it - self is cap - tive led. Christ has ris - en  
Son of God, our Lord and King. Praise the Spir - it;

life ob - tain - ing, now in glo - ry he doth rise!  
from death's pris - on; o'er the tomb he light has shed.  
through Christ's mer - it he doth us sal - va - tion bring.

The William Spoelhof We Remember

My Teacher, My Professor, My President

George Harper

*Professor of English emeritus*

My Leader, Our Friend

John Vanden Berg

*Vice president for academic administration emeritus*

Anthem: *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place*, Brahms

Calvin Alumni Choir

Pearl Shankuan, *Professor of music*

The William Spoelhof We Remember

My Mentor

Abram Van Engen, *Calvin alumnus class of 2003*

Our Friend

Larry and Mary Jo Louters

*Professor of chemistry and Department of education*

Scripture Reading: Psalm 40.1-5

Jared Rispens, *Student senate president*

Meditation: "Grateful to Our Ancestors"

John Primus

*Professor of religion and theology emeritus*

Litany of Thanks and Rededication:

Claudia Beversluis, *College provost*

Leader: Blessed are those who fear the Lord,  
who find great delight in God's commandments.

People: **Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.**

Leader: It is well with those who are generous and give freely,  
who conduct their affairs with justice.

People: **The righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered forever.**

Leader: The righteous flourish like a palm tree;  
they flourish in the courts of our God.

People: **The righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered forever.**

Leader: The righteous still bear fruit in old age,  
they proclaim that the Lord is true.

People: **The righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered forever.**

Leader: Gracious God, the strength of your people,  
we remember and give thanks for your servant William Spoelhof.  
We remember and give thanks for a life well lived.

People: **For his lively mind and generous spirit,  
his courtly bearing and infectious wit;  
for his way with words and his way with people,  
his respect for creation and regard for fellow creatures—**

Leader: for these and all the blessings you gave us in William Spoelhof

People: **we bless and give you thanks, gracious God.**

Leader: We remember and give thanks for a calling faithfully pursued.

People: **For his selfless stewardship of intellect and ambition,  
his strength of purpose and powers of discernment;  
for his breadth of vision and courage to serve by leading,  
his patient nurturing of faith-formed learning on a country knoll—**

Leader: for these and all the blessings you gave us in William Spoelhof

People: **we bless and give you thanks, gracious God.**

Leader: We remember and give thanks for a cause fruitfully served.

People: **For keeping covenant with the church he loved,  
for keeping faith with the traditions that shaped him,  
for finding and pursuing renewal in the ever-changing world  
around him,  
for molding future Kingdom-builders through example  
and encouragement—**

Leader: for these and all the blessings you gave us in William Spoelhof

People: **we bless and give you thanks, gracious God.**

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good;

People: **God's love endures forever.**

Leader: Give thanks to the God of gods;

People: **God's love endures forever.**

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords;

People: **God's love endures forever.**

Leader: The righteous still bear fruit in old age,  
they proclaim that the Lord is true.

People: **The righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered forever.**

All: **Praise the Lord. Alleluia!**

Hymn of Trust: "In Christ Alone"



1 In Christ a - lone my hope is found, he is my light, my  
2 In Christ a - lone!— who took on flesh, full-ness of God in  
3 There in the ground his bo - dy lay, light of the world by  
4 No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of



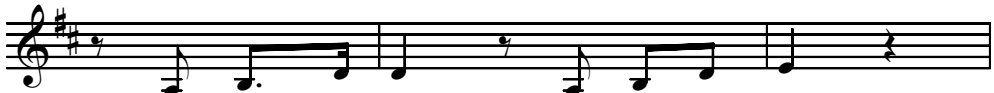
strength, my song; this cor - ner - stone, this sol - id ground,  
help - less babe! This gift of love and right - eous - ness,  
dark - ness slain: then burst - ing forth in glor - ious day  
Christ in me; from life's first cry to fi - nal breath,



firm through the fier - cest drought and storm. What heights of love,  
scorned by the ones he came to save; till on that cross  
up from the grave he rose a - gain! And as he stands  
Je - sus com - mands my des - ti - ny. No power of hell,



what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when striv - ings cease!  
as Je - sus died, the wrath of God was sat - is - fied  
in vic - to - ry sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
no hu - man plan, can ev - er pluck me from his hand;



My com - for - ter, my all - in - all,  
for ev - ery sin on him was laid:  
for I am his and he is mine—  
till he re - turns or calls me home,



here in the love of Christ I stand.  
here in the death of Christ I live.  
bought with the prec - ious blood of Christ.  
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Meditation: "Faithful to Our Heirs"

Dale Cooper, *College chaplain emeritus*

Hymn: "Faith Cannot Do Too Much Expecting"

1 Faith can-not do too much ex-pect-ing. The words of Je-sus all come true.  
2 This hope will light-en eve-ry sor-row. March for-ward, com-rades, heads up high.

Friends of-fer on-ly weak pro-tec-tion. Je-sus the Friend will see us through.  
All those who march toward God's to-mor-row find moun-tains flat and o-ceans dry.

What lim-it to the love he gave us? All power ex-ists for him to use.  
We'll make it through the jour-ney's dan-gers. We'll make it to the rest God planned.

Since Love de-sires and plans to save us, how can om-ni-po-tence re-fuse?  
You'd nev-er know we once were stran-gers to see us in our fa-ther-land.

*Text: Hieronymus van Alphen (1746-1803); tr. Stanley Wiersma  
Tune: Genevan Psalter, 1551; harm. Claude Goudimel, 1564*

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GENEVAN 98/118

God's Promise to Our College Community: I Cor 15.54-57

Anthony Diekema  
*College president emeritus*

Hymn: "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

*Psalter Hymnal 568.1,2,3*

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heaven, to  
 2 Come, Al - mighty to de - liv - er, let us all thy  
 3 Fin - ish, then, thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down; fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy  
 life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -  
 let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

faith - ful mer - cies crown. Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion,  
 more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing,  
 ly re - stored in thee: changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry,

pure, un - bound - ed love thou art; vis - it us with  
 serve thee with thy hosts a - bove, pray and praise thee  
 till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our

thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.  
 with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.  
 crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

God's Charge and Blessing: I Cor. 15.8, Eph. 3.20-21

Clarence Vos

Organ Postlude



## **William Spoelhof Society**

As a vehicle to recognize and thank those who have made a planned gift to the college (included Calvin College in their estate plans or made a gift of real estate, life insurance, IRA or a charitable gift annuity), the William Spoelhof Society has become invaluable. Every year, those who have made planned gifts receive member newsletters and attend an event at which they see Calvin's impact in the world today and the legacy in which they are investing.

The society's name came as the result of a contest initiated by Calvin's development office. "We received input from faculty, staff, emeriti and board of trustees members," said Sally Vander Ploeg, director of planned and major gifts. It turned out that naming the society for the former president seemed a natural fit. "His longevity with the college and his vision for building the college tie in with the kinds of gifts associated with the society. People are making gifts that lay the foundation for the college, and that was the focus of his work with the college for so many years."

The William Spoelhof Society was formed in 2001. The society's adopted identity, "Grateful to our ancestors, faithful to our heirs," first appeared on a banner created by Calvin professor of art emeritus Edgar Boevé that was commissioned for President Spoelhof's 90th birthday in 1999.

*grateful to our ancestors...  
...faithful to our heirs*

## The William Spoelhof Chair Recipients

C. Stephen Evans, Ph.D.  
1994–1996  
(Philosophy)

Janel M. Curry, Ph.D.  
1996–1997  
(Geography and  
Environmental Studies)

Helen M. Sterk, Ph.D.  
1997–1999  
(Communication Arts  
and Sciences)

Daniel H. Bays, Ph.D.  
2000–2002  
(History – Asian Studies)

Gerald K. Van Kooten, Ph.D.  
2002–2003  
(Geology)

Jim M. Ault Jr., Ph.D.  
2003–2004  
(Sociology –  
Documentary Film)

Gerald K. Van Kooten, Ph.D.  
2004–2005  
(Geology)

Scott M. Thomas, Ph.D.  
2005–2006  
(Economics –  
International Relations)

Douglas L. Koopman, Ph.D.  
2007–2008  
(Political Science)

Youngkhill Lee, Ph.D.  
2008–2009  
(Recreation)

## The William Spoelhof Teacher-Scholar-in-Residence Chair

When Stanley '52 and Harriet van Reken endowed Calvin College's first academic chair in 1994, they expressed a keen interest in creating a resource for Calvin that would attract exceptional teacher-scholars to the institution while honoring the college's faithfulness to its Reformed Christian roots. It came as no surprise, then, that they also wanted to name the chair in honor of the former Calvin president whose legacy was characterized by that same vision.

The goal of the William Spoelhof Teacher-Scholar-in-Residence Chair has been to bring gifted faculty to Calvin whose presence will enrich the ethos of the college. Its success is stunning; more than half of the teacher-scholars who were brought to the college by the Spoelhof Chair have stayed at Calvin upon completion of their tenure as chair holder.



## **Angeline Nydam Spoelhof Memorial Scholarship**

Throughout her life, Angeline Nydam Spoelhof served the causes of Christian education in her community, church and alma mater. In addition to her career as Christian school teacher, Angeline Spoelhof provided faithful support to her husband, William Spoelhof, during his years as president of Calvin College. In honor of her life and work, Spoelhof family and friends established a scholarship in Angeline Nydam Spoelhof's name.

This scholarship is awarded to a junior or senior student who is pursuing a program in education, has demonstrated active involvement in volunteer activities and plans to teach at the elementary or secondary level.



## Grateful to Our Ancestors, Faithful to Our Heirs

The design expresses  
the ever-expanding  
generations  
through time.

The sun is central  
as the center of  
spiritual and  
intellectual wisdom.

The Old Testament  
reference is:  
Malachi 4:2:  
"But for you who  
revere my name, the  
sun of righteousness  
will rise with  
healing in its wings."

The New Testament  
reference is:  
John 12:46:  
"I have come into  
the world as light,  
so that no one who  
believes in me  
should stay  
in darkness."

The word "faithful"  
emanates from the  
sun as the source  
of spiritual and  
intellectual wisdom.

The color purple  
is the color of royalty.  
It is used to  
represent the  
children of the King.  
The gold color  
refers to our  
divine calling.

Edgar Boevé,  
*Professor  
of art emeritus*



### Edgar G. Boevé (American)

*William Spoelhof 90th Birthday Memorial Banner, 1999*

applied wool banner

Gift of Edgar G. Boevé to Dr. Spoelhof on his 90th Birthday, 2006.4.1



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