

Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

These words from the twenty-seventh Psalm have provided great assurance, hope, and strength for the seminary as it has relied on God's faithful love in these fragile economic times. We have often been reminded of God's care through the thoughts, prayers, and gifts of those who hold the seminary's mission deep in their hearts and lives. As the global and national economies have trembled we have confessed again and again that God is our strength, and a very present help in trouble, our light and our salvation. We are deeply blessed and are profoundly grateful for all God has done through those who support us and our mission.

Steady Enrollment and Budget

The seminary is delighted to report that our enrollment has held steady at approximately two hundred students in our degree programs. Our doctor of ministry program that focuses on metro-urban ministry accepted its largest class of seventeen students in the fall of 2008. This interest in urban ministry and the seminary's unique ability to equip ministers for more faithful and prophetic service has inspired us to begin exploration of expanding our D.Min. programs. The budget of the seminary, which depends on the three legs of tuition, gifts, and endowment support, was balanced after the first two quarters of our fiscal year (July-December, 2008). What is remarkable about this fact is that our gifts from supporters actually increased during a very significant economic downturn. However, with the fall of the markets, the endowment income will certainly decrease for this coming year, increasing pressure to depend on the other two legs of support. It is our hope and expectation that through continued strong fiscal management, restraint, and an increased emphasis on fundraising and recruitment, the seminary will weather these temporary storms and be far stronger for the experience.

Strategic Planning

The seminary spent all of 2008 involved in a strategic planning process. This year-long conversation with faculty, board, supporters, denominational partners, alumni, and students produced a plan that identifies ten strategic directions that will guide our development over the next decade. While this strategic plan, like any other, is an organic document, and thus will change in response to God's work and challenges in the world, it does provide a road map for the commitment of our resources and growth. Over the past thirty years, New Brunswick Theological Seminary has changed from a dominantly white, male, RCA, residential student body, to one that is now equally male and female, represents more than two dozen denominations, and is dominantly second career and commuting students. We have learned that our unique locations in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in the heart of Rutgers University, and on the St. John's University campus in Queens, New York, have enabled us to gather a richly diverse community of faith and learning. The preface to the plan and its first strategic direction provides an inspiring glimpse of our broad and deep mission: "Grounded in the hope that is ours because God's reign has already begun on earth, the seminary community humbly commits itself to these strategic directions: 1. Our commitment to forming new generations of healthy, spirit-filled, biblically grounded, theologically wise leaders will invigorate congregations, ministries, and communities toward greater faithfulness to God and neighbor." The tenth strategic direction, which has been a significant focus of the seminary for the past three years, reads: "Our commitment to con-

front racism in the seminary, church, and society will equip our graduates for ministries that foster racial justice, equality, and reconciliation.”

This strategic direction, which flowed out of a three-year intentional process that reflected on our diversity, was the cause of very difficult but enormously rewarding conversations. The action plan that fleshes out the strategic direction calls the seminary to become an anti-racist institution that seeks to incarnate God’s inclusive love and justice. There are some who have asked why a community that is already so diverse needs such a plan. In a real sense our diversity has come to us as a “providential accident” from our longstanding commitment to make theological education more accessible. As our student body became filled with more part-time, second career, commuting students, it also became richly ethnically and denominationally diverse. Our deepening commitment to acknowledge the painful results of racism, privileges, and power for some and disadvantages and impotence for others, has moved us to fully embrace a new vision: that in this time between God’s promise of full unity and justice and its fulfillment, we need interim steps and plans that heal the wounds of the past as we help live into a more fully just and inclusive community.

The strategic planning process inspired the seminary to rearticulate its purpose as found in its constitution and bylaws. The new purpose statement, found within the context of the first page of our constitution, is found at the end of this report as a recommendation to General Synod.

Belhar Confession

The strategic planning process and our deepening commitment to become an anti-racist institution has inspired the faculty and board of trustees to offer a commendation to the General Synod in this historic gathering where the Belhar Confession will be considered as the fourth confession of the Reformed Church in America.

The Board of Trustees and faculty of New Brunswick Theological Seminary commend the Belhar Confession to the General Synod and urge its adoption. Our desire for the RCA to adopt the Belhar Confession is based in our experience as a community empowered by the gospel as expressed in the confession’s focus on reconciliation, justice, and unity.

As a multicultural and multiethnic community, the seminary both educates for ministries and strives to be a community reflective of the gospel of reconciliation. Within the curriculum, our emphasis on public theology grounds our teaching and learning in the evangelical claim and assurance of God’s justice and peace for all peoples. Gathered with persons of differing experiences and perspectives, we strive to give expression to our unity in Jesus Christ. We know this to be a sometimes painful, often joyous, and always promising work made possible by the sovereign Lord whom we serve, and the reign of which his coming and presence is the Advent.

Utilization of our Property in Service of our Mission

For the past decade, the seminary has been exploring how we could use our greatest asset, the seven and half acres we own in the heart of Rutgers University, to enhance our mission. If one would review our reports to the General Synod over the past decade, one would discover at least two or three ideas that were seriously explored and finally discarded. In April of 2008, the board of trustees directed the president to create a new committee to respond to the articulated interest of Rutgers University to buy or lease all or a part of our campus. As one would expect, such an overture has prompted the seminary to deeply con-

sider our needs and our visions, as well as confirming our faithful stewardship of all of the gifts God and the past have given us.

Reformed Church Center

Almost a decade ago, under the leadership of Dr. John Coakley, the seminary established the Center for Reformed Church Studies, which changed its name a few years ago to the Reformed Church Center. Dr. Barbara Fillette, recently retired senior pastor of the North and Southhampton Reformed Church in Churchville, Pennsylvania, and one of our graduates, was named part-time director of the center a year ago. The very active program attempts to nurture the RCA students at NBTS and to serve as a place and community that reflects theologically on the critical issues facing the Reformed Church and the Reformed world. This past year has witnessed a number of day-long and briefer programs and included significant conversations about what it means to be missional and Reformed with General Synod president Carol Bechtel, a day committed to Christian and Jewish dialogue, and a full day with RCA minister and missionary Michael Bos focused on Christian-Muslim relationships.

Nomination of President Mast

The board of trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary nominates Dr. Gregg A. Mast, our president, to become a General Synod professor of theology. According to the provisions of the *Book of Church Order*, a professor needs to be employed by one of the two seminaries for at least three years (completed by Dr. Mast on December 31, 2008), before this nomination can be made. In addition to holding the office of President of the Seminary, Dr. Mast is also the John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology, and as such, continues to teach as he is able in the seminary curriculum. This nomination is not only an affirmation of Dr. Mast and his service to the seminary and the RCA over the years, but also a clear sign of the seminary's continuing deep commitment to the RCA and its educational mission. New Brunswick Theological Seminary is the oldest of the educational institutions in the RCA, founded in 1784, and the only one of the five located in the three eastern synods. With both pride and affection, we offer the following recommendation to the synod:

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Gregg A. Mast has faithfully served as a minister of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America for the past thirty-three years; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has served as president and the John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology of New Brunswick Theological Seminary for the past three and one-half years; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has served as congregational pastor in the RCA for twenty-two of his thirty-three years of ordained ministry, and has served as the minister of social witness and worship and the director of Ministry Services in the RCA; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has served in a multitude of elected positions in the RCA, including president of the General Synod in 1999-2000;

THEREFORE, it is fitting and proper that the board of trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary nominates the Rev. Dr. Gregg A. Mast to the office of Professor of Theology of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

R-75

To elect the Rev. Dr. Gregg A. Mast, Ph.D., president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology, to the office of General Synod Professor of Theology. (ADOPTED)

In addition, the purpose statement embedded in the first page of the Constitution and Bylaws is recommended to the General Synod for action:

R-76

To adopt the following revision of the Constitution and Bylaws of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Article II, effective July 1, 2009 (additions underlined; deletions stricken out):

**New Brunswick Theological Seminary
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this corporation shall be The New Brunswick Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, herein after referred to as the Corporation.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

~~New Brunswick Theological Seminary is a teaching institution of the Reformed Church in America, called by God to be a servant of the whole church of Jesus Christ.~~

~~The Seminary's mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus in our time and place by enabling persons to translate their calling and gifts into faithful Christian ministry.~~

Called in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, New Brunswick Theological Seminary participates in God's own laboring to fulfill God's reign on earth.

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and centered in its trust of God's sovereignty and grace, the Seminary is an inter-cultural, ecumenical school of Christian faith, learning, and scholarship committed to its metro-urban and global contexts.

Our mission is to educate persons and strengthen communities for transformational, public ministries in church and society. We fulfill this mission through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.

ARTICLE III

Membership

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, or its successor by any merger or consolidation, shall be the sole member of the Corporation for all purposes of the corporate statutes of New Jersey. The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, acting in accordance with the governing law, shall exercise all rights granted to members by the laws of New Jersey.

ARTICLE IV

Function

- Sec. 1** The General Synod, as the sole member of the Corporation, reserves to itself the responsibility of developing, enacting, publishing, reviewing, and amending the standards for the preparation of candidates for the office of Ministry of Word and Sacrament within the Reformed Church in America.
- Sec. 2** The General Synod entrusts to the Board of Trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary all authority and power necessary for the proper oversight and direction of the Seminary, as well as the control of its finances, securities, and property.
- Sec. 3** The Board of Trustees shall assume responsibility for providing the Seminary with such property and buildings; faculty, administration, and staff; library and information resources; equipment and supplies as are necessary for the effective accomplishment of the Seminary's mission. (ADOPTED)

Report of Western Theological Seminary

The mission statement of Western Theological Seminary (WTS) guides its life together: "The purpose of Western Theological Seminary is to prepare Christians called by God to lead the church in mission. Western Theological Seminary is an evangelical and ecumenical community of faith and learning in the Reformed tradition that serves the church of Jesus Christ. In covenant with the Reformed Church in America, Western equips men and women for Christ-centered, biblically based, theologically integrated, culturally sensitive, mission-oriented Christian leadership." The extraordinary rate of cultural change fronting the communities in which almost every RCA congregation is located requires WTS to be at the same time innovative and constant. Western's mission statement provides the direction for that innovation and constancy.

UPDATE ON THE LIFE AND WITNESS OF WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Enrollment

Overall enrollment has continued to remain strong following a decade of steady growth. During the 2008-2009 academic year a total of 230 students were enrolled, the majority of

which were candidates of the master of divinity degree, while the remaining students were enrolled in the master of theology and doctor of ministry programs. It will remain a continuing challenge for WTS director of admissions Mark Poppen to attract and retain qualified and dedicated students for degree programs.

Financial Support in a Difficult Economic Context

The annual budget has kept pace with the growth in enrollment and programs since the early 1990s. The budget for the 2008-2009 academic year was approximately \$6.5 million. In an effort to keep tuition from spiraling out of control, the advancement office, led by vice president of advancement and communications Ken Neevel, has sought increased support from individuals, congregations, and corporations. While WTS is exceedingly grateful for the generosity of its supporters, reaching budget goals will be daunting as the United States and world economies continue to struggle through the current economic slowdown.

Distance Learning Master of Divinity Program

In May 2009, the second cohort of Western's distance learning master of divinity program will graduate during commencement exercises. The distance learning M.Div. program earned full approval in February 2009 from the seminary's accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools. This is a strong affirmation of the quality of this degree program. Established as a response to the expressed needs of the church for a delivery system of theological education which would not require students to relocate to West Michigan, the distance learning program has grown to fifty-seven students who receive online instruction and who attend two two-week face-to-face intensive educational experiences during each academic year. This creative hybrid distance learning program, led by director Dr. Meri MacLeod, has been exceedingly well received by its students. Moreover, the faculty who teach in this program have creatively adjusted to unique pedagogical and technological demands. All those involved are to be commended for their flexibility and dedication to this remarkable program which has become a model for other theological schools.

Certificate for Urban Ministry Program

Under the leadership of Dr. Cynthia Holder Rich, a certificate program for urban pastoral ministry was established three years ago. Today twenty-one students, most of whom are leaders of African-American congregations, are enrolled in this program. Western has become the seminary of a growing and grateful new constituency. Several of the certificate students have enrolled in the master of divinity program.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity Initiatives

WTS is continuing, as well, in its efforts to expand theological education to Latino students, including the possibilities of some Spanish-language learning events. Assistance in this new challenge is being sought through the resources of a planning grant. The seminary hopes to begin with an initiative that serves the western Michigan region of Latino pastors who have expressed an interest in receiving support for their ministries through theological education.

WTS will also welcome a racial-ethnic faculty person in the fall of 2009. Eric Williams will be the first Faculty Fellow, an initiative designed to move toward a racially diverse faculty by a one-year contract faculty appointment.

New Pedagogy for Hebrew Learning

Under the direction of professor Thomas Boogaart, Western is creating a new approach to teaching Hebrew that seeks to develop learning by heart. The seminary is developing materials, practices, and classroom techniques that encourage deeper, more embodied learning:

students hearing and responding to the sound of Hebrew; students seeing, tasting, and touching items from the biblical world; students observing the enactment of biblical stories; students imitating what they hear; students memorizing passages, songs, and prayers; students learning vocabulary through word pictures.

This approach is multisensory and encourages a total physical response to the language. Students learn Hebrew in the same way that they learned their first language as children. They first experience the language, and then they learn to read and write.

This approach is based in part on some of the most effective teachers of language today: among others, Randall Buth (*Living Biblical Hebrew*), Harris Winitz (*The Learnables*), Stephan Krashen (*Natural Approach*), and James Asher (*Total Physical Response*). It is Western's hope that students will learn the prayers, stories, and songs by heart and will carry them into whatever ministry they find themselves.

Leadership Support

Over this past year Western Theological Seminary has invested itself in a research project focusing on how ministers in the RCA function as leaders in their first five years of ministry. Assisted by Hope College's Frost Center, as well as an outside researcher, the project involves telephone interviews with all those who have graduated from Western, New Brunswick, and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency over the last five years. These general interviews were followed up by more focused interviews with selected persons to give a fuller and more complete picture of how graduates are moving into leadership. Although all the data is not yet complete, preliminary results appear to be most interesting and instructive.

This research will assist both WTS and the RCA to think in a much more focused and informed way about preparing ministerial candidates for entry into leadership, not only during seminary, but also throughout the first five years of ministry. It is recognized that some aspects of leadership can be taught in seminary, but other aspects must be learned "on the job," when the reality and complexity of leadership becomes known experientially. Western is working together with leaders from the RCA to use the results of this research, not only to improve its curriculum, but also to assist the RCA in designing continuing education opportunities, and other support strategies for ministers in their first five years of service in the RCA.

Celebrating Faculty Accomplishments

Since the 2008 General Synod the following books have been published by WTS faculty members: Carol M. Bechtel, *Touching the Altar: The Old Testament for Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Stubbs, *Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009); Cynthia Holder Rich, ed., *The Fifohazana: Madagascar's Indigenous Christian Movement* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008); and Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). In addition, many faculty members have published articles, book reviews, and chapters in books on topics including sacraments, preaching, mission, the Reformed tradition, and more.

Western is proud to announce a particular honor for its faculty. J. Todd Billings, associate professor of Reformed theology, was named a 2009 Templeton Award for Theological Promise winner. Given to only twelve scholars from around the world each year, this prestigious award recognizes, in the words of BBC News, "the most promising young theologians in the world." on the basis of their publications. This significant recognition for Dr. Billings was welcomed with great celebration at the seminary.

Introduction and Nomination to the Office of General Synod Professor of Theology

The Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk joined the faculty of Western Theological Seminary in 1998, as associate professor of Reformed theology. Since that time, she has distinguished herself with a long and effective ministry of teaching, publication, and service to the church of Jesus Christ. Since 2005 she also has served the seminary as academic dean and vice president for academic affairs. In 2008 Dr. Van Dyk transferred her membership and ordination credentials from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to the RCA, and has expressed a desire to deepen her service to the Reformed Church in America through the office of General Synod Professor of Theology. The board of trustees at Western Theological Seminary wholeheartedly affirms that desire, and with gratitude to God, is pleased to nominate her to the office of General Synod Professor of Theology, in accordance with the *Book of Church Order* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 3:

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk has shown herself to be a highly effective teacher in preparing candidates for ministry, over eleven years of service at Western Theological Seminary, as well as through courses taught in the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk has also shown herself to be a teacher of the church, with a substantial ministry of scholarly publications, more widely accessible publications, and other forms of teaching ministry within the church; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk is passionate and articulate in her commitment to a vital and contemporary expression of Reformed theology, preserving the heart and breadth of the tradition in fresh ways that are faithful to Scripture and the church's mission; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk has exercised very significant leadership within Western Theological Seminary, both as a teacher and as academic dean and vice president for academic affairs;

THEREFORE, it is fitting and proper that the board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary nominates the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk to the office of General Synod Professor of Theology of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

R-77

**To elect the Rev. Dr. Leanne Van Dyk, professor of Reformed theology and vice president for academic affairs at Western Theological Seminary, to the office of General Synod Professor of Theology.
(ADOPTED)**

Retirement of the Rev. Dr. Vernon and Carla Sterk

This year marks the retirement of Dr. Vernon Sterk as associate professor of missiology and evangelism at Western Theological Seminary. Dr. Sterk was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1943. He received his B.A. from Hope College in 1964, and his M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary in 1968. After graduation from Western, Vern and his wife, Carla, began a long and extremely fruitful career as missionaries in Chiapas, Mexico. During this time of service as a missionary, Vern began his studies at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission in 1975-1976, continued to work on his degree during each home assignment, and eventually received his Ph.D. in intercultural studies from Fuller in 1992.

From the very beginning of their ministry, Dr. Sterk has always worked closely in partnership with Carla. Their service in Chiapas is full of noteworthy achievements which will not be chronicled here, since this focus is on Vern's service at the seminary. Western Theological Seminary first asked Dr. Sterk, together with Carla, to teach an evening course at the seminary in 1983. In 1997, when the translation of the first Tzotzil Bible was completed, the seminary asked Vern and Carla to be teachers in residence for one semester, to assist the seminary by teaching courses in missiology and evangelism. This relationship continued over the next eight years: one semester the Sterks would be teaching in residence at Western; the remainder of their time was spent in Chiapas, continuing their work there. Vern and Carla also assisted Western Seminary throughout this period by leading intercultural immersion trips for WTS students each January in Chiapas. Finally, in 2005, the Sterks' full-time work in Chiapas came to its conclusion, and the seminary invited Dr. Sterk to a full-time appointment as associate professor of missiology and evangelism. During this time the Sterks continued to complete several part-time assignments and teach courses in Chiapas. Their appointment at the seminary will end in July 2009, with Vern's retirement from full-time service.

Vern and Carla's contributions to Western Seminary throughout this partnership have been very significant. They have brought a wealth of experience in cross-cultural ministries to Western, and have helped to equip a whole generation of students, both for global mission and for cross-cultural mission and evangelism in the U.S. as well. They have taught various courses in the seminary's master of theology program, and served as warm and pastoral advisors and mentors to many students at Western who come from different cultural settings. Their passion for the gospel; their deep concern for the poor, the downtrodden, and the forgotten; as well as their commitment to spreading the good news has been infectious within the seminary. Moreover, in the last several years, they have assisted the seminary in establishing a focused concentration within the M.Div. curriculum in intercultural mission. This new concentration holds the promise of continuing Western's long tradition of preparing its graduates to follow Jesus Christ in mission, both in this country and throughout the world.

While Vern is retiring from full-time service to the seminary, it is the seminary's hope that Vern and Carla will continue participating in the life of the seminary through teaching courses as adjunct professors, as time and opportunity become available.

It is therefore with gratitude to God that the trustees of Western Theological Seminary offer the following resolution for adoption by the 2009 General Synod:

R-78

BE IT RESOLVED that the two hundred third regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in June 2009 at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to Western Theological Seminary and to the Reformed Church in America by the Rev. Dr. Vernon Sterk and his wife, Carla, whose gifts of teaching, scholarship, and ministry have blessed the lives of students, colleagues, and congregations, and empowering the Reformed Church in America to deepen its longstanding commitment to the world-wide, cross-cultural mission of the gospel; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the two hundred third regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, on behalf of the Reformed Church in America, expresses to Vern and

Carla Sterk its gratitude, admiration, and affection, and offers its prayers for years of health, love, and joy in continuing service to Christ and Christ's church. (ADOPTED)

Petitions for Substitution of a Period of Supervised Ministry for a Portion of the Twenty-Four Month Requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry

The board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary approved the petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a nine month period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-four month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Jill Carattini.

The board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary approved the petition from North Grand Rapids Classis to substitute an eighteen month period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-four month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Nate Pyle.

The board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary approved the petition from the Classis of Minnesota to substitute a twelve month period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-four month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Marcus Roskamp.

The board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary approved the petition from the Classis of Zeeland to substitute a twelve month period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-four month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Christopher Zeller.

Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

General Synod exercises oversight of ministerial formation and the standards for preparation for ministry through its two seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA).

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency of the Reformed Church in America possesses a deep commitment to developing faithful, educated, and evangelical Reformed leaders. Its purpose is the preparation of men and women for the ministries of Christ and his church, most specifically those called to minister of Word and sacrament.

The MFCA board of trustees has the following as its mission statement.

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency is to strengthen the ministry of Word and sacrament in the RCA by overseeing and awarding the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to RCA candidates graduating from non-RCA seminaries or pursuing an approved alternate route.

The MFCA will accomplish this mission by:

- Ensuring that the RCA Standards for Preparation for Ministry are upheld in the oversight of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry and periodically reviewing the standards and the process by which they are applied.
- Evaluating progress of candidates and confirming their continuation in the

process through the Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC) and Approved Alternate Route (AAR) committees.

- Providing graduate level courses designed to meet the standards for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.
- Collaborating with and providing counsel to congregations and classes in the care and nurture of candidates for the ministry who are seeking the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the MFCA.
- Interpreting and advocating for the work of the MFCA to the larger church.

The board is in the process of adopting policy governance with the goal of clarifying its role with the minister for candidate care and certification as well as creating efficient processes for its own operation. The global policy statement, executive limitations, and management delegation statements have been designed to implement the mission statement of the agency.

Board Members

The new definition and role of the agency formulated in 2007 resulted in a new configuration for the board. The board consists of nine members; five of the nine will be drawn from the certification committees. The board will continue to be the agent awarding the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to candidates completing the requirements of the AAR and RCSC programs.

The current board members for the MFCA are Ms. Anne Bawinkel, Rev. Dwight Bailey, Rev. Dr. James Brownson, Rev. Ann Callender, Ms. Marjorie Giles, Rev. Dr. Renee House, Dr. Brad Lewis, Mr. Bart Strong, and Rev. David Theonugraha. The board is grateful to Anne Bawinkel for her service over the past three years; she has decided to end her service on the board after one term.

The Theological Education Assessment

The agency continues to rely heavily on the theological education assessment for its operation. The pressures to not only freeze, but perhaps significantly decrease assessments, could jeopardize the viability of the agency. The MFCA board of trustees believes that denominational support of the agency and the two RCA seminaries remains important to the successful implementation of Our Call and providing future leadership. A clearly defined mandate for funding theological education is considered crucial and thus the MFCA board of trustees offers the following recommendation:

R-79

To appoint a task force consisting of three members nominated by the General Synod Council, two members nominated by the New Brunswick Theological Seminary board of trustees, two members nominated by the Western Theological Seminary board of trustees, and two members nominated by the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency board of trustees. Their mandate is to evaluate the size of the current theological education assessment and the formula for dividing it with report back to the ~~2010~~ next meeting of the General Synod. Expenses for members are to be covered by their respective constituents. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reasons:

1. Currently the theological education assessment is a percentage of the GSC assessment budget, which is not considered a rational basis for setting the amount.

2. Good stewardship of the resources should identify clear goals toward which the funds are allocated along with clear rationales, which do not currently exist.

Distance Learning Courses

The agency has continued to provide distance courses to its candidates, allowing them to meet the requirements of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry in a means that is flexible and accessible. During the spring of 2009 four courses ran simultaneously: “RCA History and Missions (DL)” taught by the Rev. Dr. Daniel Meeter, “RCA Polity (DL)” taught by the Rev. Dr. Cornelius Kors, “Seminar on Pastoral Formation” taught by the Rev. Dr. Jaco Hamman, and “Summary of Christian Doctrine – Credo” taught by the Rev. Dr. Paul Fries. These courses have been well received by candidates, allowing them to complete program requirements from their own locations and at less cost.

Regional Candidate Care Coordinator

In cooperation with the general secretary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary, the MFCA has initiated a pilot project for enhancing candidate care. This project targets a group of classes and has a part-time staff member available as a resource person. The classes identified for this pilot project are: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pleasant Prairie, Central Iowa, East Sioux, West Sioux, Dakota, Central Plains, Rocky Mountains, and Southwest.

Rev. Bruce Laverman was contracted to lead this project. Laverman did extensive survey work of the classes and offered a two-day training event in Phoenix, Arizona, where resources and best practices for candidate care were shared. The project also gave rise to a new website where numerous resources for supervising and mentoring candidates will be available to each classis.

Financial Hardship Policy for Candidates

Seminary students and candidates in the MFCA program have not escaped the difficult financial times. A number of candidates have had to withdraw from seminary and slow down the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process due to financial hardship. The costs of the MFCA program for most candidates are \$4,500 to \$6,500 over and above the costs incurred by students at the RCA seminaries in order to complete the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the MFCA.

The MFCA board of trustees has recognized this extra burden for its candidates and has asked the General Synod Council (GSC) and the minister for candidate care and certification to come up with ways to offer financial assistance to candidates who are experiencing hardship. The GSC has promised to give this consideration over the next year and it is the hope of the board that new funds can be identified and raised to assist MFCA candidates. The minister for candidate care and certification has reviewed all the MFCA budgets and was able to cut back on some programs and services in such a way that some of the theological education assessment money can be directed back to the students in helping them pay for various fees for the 2009 and 2010 budget years.

Candidates who can demonstrate need will be offered relief from a portion of their enrollment fees, personality-vocational assessment fees, and summer intensive course fees.

Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The board of trustees awarded eighteen Certificates of Fitness for Ministry, fourteen through the RCSC process and four through the AAR process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC)

Bleeker, Kraig	Classis of West Sioux	Fuller
Bratt, Jessica Lynne	Classis of Brooklyn	Princeton
Holtrop, Robert Jay	Classis of East Sioux	Sioux Falls
Kooiman, Scott D.	Classis of Southwest	Fuller
Labbé, Kenneth Paul	Classis of Canadian Prairies	Canadian
Lewis, Nyla Ann	Classis of Minnesota	Bethel
Mulder, Brent Jeremy	Classis of West Sioux	Princeton
O'Brien, Terrence P.	Classis of New York	Union
Pettit, David Paul	Classis of Mid-Hudson	New York
Sgarlat-Fels, Susan Lee	Classis of New York	Union
Theonugraha, Felix	Classis of Central California	Trinity Evangelical
Van Noord, Jared Henry	Classis of Illiana	Trinity Evangelical
Van Ravenswaay, Patrick	Classis of West Sioux	Sioux Falls
Wolters, Steven Lee	Classis of Muskegon	Reformed

Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

Cox, Susan Lynn	Classis of Schenectady	Western
Gaviria, Alberto Salazar	Classis of Ontario	Miami International
Trudeau, Paul Jeanard	Classis of Central California	Reformed
Vagle, Dawn Ellen	Classis of Holland	Fuller

Changes to the Bylaws

At the General Synod of 2007 in Pella, Iowa, the bylaws for the newly constituted Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) were approved on an interim basis (*MGS 2007*, R-58, pp. 218-224). The understanding was that the MFCA board would present final changes to the bylaws to the General Synod in order to make them more permanent and no longer be considered "interim." Although the board predicts there will be minimal changes recommended, it decided to wait on the results of a study on governance models before submitting more permanent bylaws. It will continue to use the existing interim bylaws approved by the 2007 General Synod until it is ready to submit final revisions to the General Synod for adoption. The board is confident that the changes will be presented at the 2010 General Synod.

Report of Central College

Ninety-three years ago the Reformed Church in America (RCA) assumed denominational support of Central College in Pella, Iowa. Central is a residential liberal arts college dedicated to helping students discover and develop their greatest potential. Guided by its ecumenical Christian tradition, the college community engages in vigorous, open inquiry in pursuit of academic excellence. Central's covenant relationship has grown with the RCA into a mutually beneficial and meaningful bond. Central is privileged to share this annual report with the General Synod of the RCA.

Letter from Pastoral Trustees

We are ministers in the Reformed Church in America and members of the Central College board of trustees. We know Central College. We value the strong educational foundation that Central provides its graduates. Students have the opportunity to grow in knowledge, broaden horizons, and deepen their faith through experiences at Central.

Central graduates are leaders in business, education, and ministry. They are the hope for our future. It is reassuring to know that Central is teaching these future leaders about service and stewardship, as well as providing academic excellence in specific major areas.

We believe in the quality of a Central College education and celebrate Central's covenant with the Reformed Church in America.

Blessings,

Rev. Jhonny Alicea-Báez, Director of RCA Global Mission, Temecula, California
 Rev. Jonathan Brown, Pastor, First Reformed Church, Oak Harbor, Washington
 Rev. Kevin Korver, Pastor, Third Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa
 Rev. Sophie Mathonnet-VanderWell, Pastor, Second Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa
 Rev. Charles Morris, Pastor, Fort Washington Collegiate Church, New York, New York
 Rev. John Schmidt, Pastor, Second Reformed Church, Zeeland, Michigan

RCA Initiatives

At the 2004 General Synod there was a recommendation (*MGS 2004*, R-19, p. 119) passed to affirm the three RCA colleges in their mission and ministry, to encourage every RCA congregation to regularly pray for and support the colleges with students and financial support, and to review the historic covenant between the colleges and the RCA. With the recommendation came this charge: the General Synod Council, in dialogue with the colleges, should explore specific means to strengthen the relationship between the RCA and the colleges. As a result of annual meetings held on the college campuses and in the RCA offices in Grand Rapids in support of R-19, Central has committed to the following to strengthen its relationship with the RCA:

- Provide a \$5,000 annual RCA Classis Scholarship to one freshman student in each of the forty-five RCA classes to attend Central. Students are recommended by their pastor and must demonstrate need and be a member of the RCA. The scholarships are renewable for up to four years. An application is available at www.central.edu/go/rca.
- The annual RCA Heritage Award of \$1,500 to \$2,100 is given to students of the RCA, to children of alumni, or to students with a sibling currently attending Central.

- Kristin Sullivan '03 continues as coordinator of RCA Relations. She works closely with congregations and pastors to increase RCA enrollment, to encourage prayer support from individual churches, and to develop a program of more intentional interaction.
- "Mission: Central," a publication which details the Christian environment at Central, was created to be given to congregations, pastors, and prospective students. To receive a copy send your name and address to sullivank@central.edu.
- Keep up to date with faith life at Central at www.central.edu/faith or visit www.central.edu/development/churchgiving.cfm.
- Central again hosted the biannual meeting of Central Iowa Classis. Members of the classis were invited to meet, learn, dine, and conduct business on Central's beautiful campus.
- Strengthen collaborative efforts of all three colleges affiliated with the Reformed Church in America.

Admission and Enrollment

Freshmen enrollment for the 2008 fall semester included 405 new freshmen, which was the ninth time in ten years that Central has had an incoming class totaling over four hundred. Total enrollment was 1,558. Central enrolled fifty-one transfers in 2008 (compared to twenty-eight in 2007). The RCA-affiliated student population represented 8.15 percent of the freshmen class and 10 percent of the student body.

Faculty

During the 2008-2009 academic year, Central faculty members demonstrated extraordinary achievements in teaching and scholarship. Professional activities included the publishing of books and articles in professional journals. Faculty members also presented at regional and national workshops, were featured artists at exhibits and concerts, and were recognized by public leaders and national organizations for contributions to education and humankind. Below are examples.

- **Terence J. Kleven** (religion) presented a paper at the 42nd annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, D. C., which was held November 22 through 25, 2008. The title of the paper was: "Averroës' Defense of Religion in *Kitab al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-A dilla fi 'Aqa'id al-Milla* (*The Book of the Unveiling of the Methods of Proofs in the Teachings of Religion*)," and it was part of a panel on classical texts.
- Central's **Dick Bowzer** (exercise science) received the Division III Assistant Coach of the Year Award at the American Football Coaches Association's convention in Nashville, Tennessee, January 12.
- **Jon Witt's** (sociology) latest offering to the sociology scene is an amazing new style of textbook, SOC, published last fall by McGraw-Hill. "McGraw-Hill does seem quite pleased with the initial response from the text. Already over fifty colleges and universities from Hawaii to Florida have ordered it for their courses," said Witt.

Spiritual Life

Spiritual Life is an integral part of the overall educational environment at Central. Below are a few of the many activities within the Christian community that have occurred this year.

- Central is pleased to announce that the Rev. Chad Pierce has accepted a position as

instructor of religion. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Calvin College, a master's degree in New Testament backgrounds from Jerusalem University College, and a master of divinity degree from Western Theological Seminary. He is near completion of a doctorate in New Testament and early Judaism from the University of Durham in the United Kingdom.

- A group of eighty-eight students along with members of local RCA congregations, traveled to Reynosa, Mexico, over Christmas break for the ninth year in a row. Reynosa is an area of repeat ministry for Central students with the purpose of building and continuing to build a community.
- For spring break 2009 Campus Ministries teams traveled to New Orleans to help in the rebuilding efforts; to Albany, Georgia, with Habitat for Humanity to participate in a building project; and to New York and New Jersey on a praise team delegation to lead worship and to serve at nine RCA churches and organizations.
- Campus Ministries continues to offer a program called Lust Free Living, which has seen a surge in small-group growth.

Students Doing Interesting Things

“Students Doing Interesting Things,” a feature of the campus newsletter *CampusTown*, tells of ways Central students respond to Central's mission of educating the whole person:

- Central Students contributed to Pella's annual CROP Hunger Walk on October 12. Over 650 students donated their meals on October 8, raising \$5,338.20.
- Twenty-seven students participated in the Central College Student Support Services' service trip to Kansas City, Missouri. Students worked at Hope Faith Ministries homeless shelter.
- An intersections class (freshmen experience) taught by Mark Mills (mathematics) collected five-cent redeemable cans and donated the money to Care and Aid for Southern Sudan.

Conclusion

Central College is proud of its covenant with the Reformed Church in America to “infuse and deepen a superior education in the liberal arts with a mature understanding of the sources and resources of the Christian heritage, maintaining a friendly appreciation for the reformed tradition and its implications for faith and learning.” As we strive to teach our future leaders to leave Central empowered to make an impact on this world, we continue to enlist the support of our community. The prayers, gifts, and support of the individual churches of the Reformed Church in America do not just enable us in part to uphold this covenant, they are vital to the heart and mission of Central College. Central is truly blessed to be part of the RCA family.

Report of Hope College

The Hope College community takes seriously its covenantal relationship with the Reformed Church in America. There is a real desire to strengthen this relationship for the mutual benefit of the church and the college, but a vibrant relationship will not happen without an intentional commitment. The Hope community pledges anew its commitment to this covenant by intentionally providing an exceptional educational experience in a caring Christian environment.

This has been and continues to be an extraordinarily challenging year due to the extreme volatility and decline of the economy, which has affected higher education in unprecedented ways. Hope College is not immune to these challenges, and the economic downturn has necessitated caution and restraint in almost every aspect of the college's operation. It has prompted the smallest tuition increase in modern history (2.9 percent—primarily for increased institutional financial aid for students) and a freeze on all salaries, which was graciously accepted by college employees. Fortunately, there continues to be enthusiastic interest in a Hope College education. Applications for the 2009-2010 academic year are running slightly ahead of last year's record pace. The college anticipates receiving 3,000 applications for 800 freshman spots.

Despite the economy, the college continues to be buoyed by the outstanding achievements of students, faculty, and staff. Their academic and co-curricular achievements as well their exceptional service, given so freely to so many organizations and individuals in the greater Holland area and indeed throughout the world, are heartwarming. Hope has earned a top-ten ranking for small colleges and universities on the 2008 list of top Peace Corps volunteer producing colleges and universities. Hope students are unselfish with their time and abilities to make ours a better world. The president never goes home at night worried about how Hope students will embarrass themselves or the college; rather, he wonders how they will next make the college proud of their many achievements!

So what are the anchors of Hope College that make it attractive to so many students and their parents?

THE MISSION *that guides Hope*

The mission of Hope College is to educate students for lives of leadership and service in a global society through academic and co-curricular programs of recognized excellence in the liberal arts and in the context of the historic Christian faith.

THE VISION *that motivates Hope*

- To pursue truth so as to renew the mind, enrich the disciplines, and transform the culture.
- To inspire passion for knowledge that grows into understanding and bears fruit in wisdom.
- To be an exceptional undergraduate liberal arts college that provides excellent professional and pre-professional programs.
- To be a leading Christian college, ecumenical in character and rooted in the Reformed tradition.
- To enhance education through residential community and superior co-curricular programs.
- To embrace and nurture racial, ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity.
- To promote faithful leadership and grateful service as manifestations of Christian commitment.
- To engage in mutually beneficial relationships with area communities, academic organizations, the Reformed Church in America, and other partners throughout the world.
- To provide human, physical, and financial resources commensurate with outstanding programs.

THE CORE VALUES *that shape Hope*

- To offer rigorous academic programs.
- To contribute to the body of knowledge in the academic disciplines.
- To nurture vibrant Christian faith.
- To be a caring community.
- To foster development of the whole person—intellectually, spiritually, socially, physically.
- To be wise stewards of resources.

THE QUALITIES *that distinguish Hope*

- Academic excellence and deep Christian faith joined together to strengthen each other in a supportive and welcoming community.
- Masterful teaching coupled with rigorous faculty scholarship.
- National leadership in collaborative faculty/student research and creative activity. Hope is consistently awarded more National Science Foundation grants for undergraduate research than any other liberal arts college in the country and was ranked fourth in the nation behind the University of Michigan, Stanford, and MIT for undergraduate research and creative activity in the initial ranking by *U.S. News & World Report*.
- Recognition in the arts and humanities. Hope is the only liberal arts college in the country with national accreditations in art, dance, music, and theatre. To complement departmental events, Hope sponsors diverse nationally recognized cultural programs like the Jack Ridl Visiting Writers Series, Hope Summer Repertory Theatre, and the Great Performance Series.
- Unique Christian character. Hope provides many spiritual growth opportunities including a widely acclaimed chapel program and an interdisciplinary capstone senior seminar.
- Nationally recognized undergraduate library. Hope received the Excellence in Academic Libraries Award (college division) from the Association of College and Research Libraries.
- Award-winning student activities and intercollegiate athletic programs. Hope has continually received student activities programming recognition and has won 80 percent of the All-Sports Awards in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association in the last quarter of a century.
- Attractive lakeshore location with a downtown campus and an unusually harmonious town-gown relationship with the Holland community.

THE VIRTUES *that mark conversation at Hope*

- Humility to listen.
- Hospitality to welcome.
- Patience to understand.
- Courage to challenge.
- Honesty to speak the truth in love.

GRADUATES *anchored in Hope*

Hope graduates are educated to think about life's most important issues with clarity, wisdom, and a deep understanding of the foundational commitments of the historic

Christian faith. They are prepared to communicate effectively, bridging boundaries that divide human communities. They are agents of hope who live faithfully into their vocations. Hope graduates make a difference in the world.

Hope aspires to provide the best undergraduate experience in the whole world. It is this extraordinary package—student development on the intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical dimensions—that makes Hope stand tall relative to other institutions. Thanks are extended to the denomination for partnering with Hope in this noble endeavor.

Report of Northwestern College

QUICK FACTS ABOUT NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE, 2008-2009

Enrollment Statistics

Full Time	1,184
Part Time	41
Total Enrollment	1,225

Freshman Class Profile

Average ACT Score:	24.4
Average high school GPA:	3.54

Academic Programs

Degrees awarded in 2008	270
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Top 10 Majors

Business	247
Elementary Education	142
Biology	117
Psychology	70
Religion	66
Kinesiology	65
English	55
Communications	50
Spanish	49
Nursing	47

Student Profile

Gender

Men	484
Women	741

Diversity

Caucasian	1,147	93.6%
Hispanic	18	1.4%
Asian-American	11	0.9%
African-American	8	0.6%
Native American	1	0.08%
International	39	3.2%

Denominations

RCA	329
Other Reformed	141
Other Protestant	626
Lutheran	116
Non-denominational	116
Evangelical Free	102
Baptist	86
Methodist/Wesleyan	77
Roman Catholic	54
Other	30

State

Iowa	666
Minnesota	149
South Dakota	82
Nebraska	79
California	39

STUDENT STORIES

Since 1882, Northwestern College has been integrating faith and learning in an effort to develop students who trust, love, and worship God, engage ideas, connect knowledge and experience, and respond to God's call. The best way to learn about Northwestern is to discover how its students are growing as a result of their many campus experiences. The following student stories are shared with that goal in mind.

Dramatic Growth

Benjamin Bees is a theatre major from Yucca Valley, California.

He and sixty other Northwestern students were in the cast of Terror Texts, which was performed by invitation at the Region V Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) at the University of Kansas in January. The musical, created by theatre professor Jeff Barker; is scripted verbatim from 2 Kings 2 and 6, 2 Samuel 6, Judges 3, Joshua 7, and Judges 19–21. Terror Texts caught the attention of the Associated Press in November and led to coverage by Fox News, USA Today, the Chicago Tribune, the Boston Herald, and a host of other news media.

I played the Master of Ceremonies and Phineas in *Terror Texts*. The sporadic nature of the different stories in the show made it difficult to create and maintain a thorough line of character development. Developing a strong, deep character is difficult when there are multiple characters that can be portrayed a variety of ways.

During the last dress rehearsal, however, I had an accident—I fell off the front of the stage and fractured my left leg. Before I'd gotten back from the emergency room, the technical director and set designer had already put together a means for me to push and pull myself about the stage: a wheelchair decked out with saw blades, chains, and blood stains. I was still in the show but I was restricted to sitting down. This actually helped with characterization. By the time we arrived in Kansas for KCACTF, I had a solid direction for the character and a few quirks and mannerisms that went along with him. Playing that role at KCACTF was one of the highlights of my college career, simply for the amazing response the entire production received from everyone there.

Performing verbatim from the Bible is quite the pressure cooker. I learned so many things in the embodiment of the “script” that I never would have learned from reading the passages alone. It brought a lot of new questions about God’s dealings with his people that weighed heavily at different times throughout the process. Overall, the work I had the privilege to be a part of on *Terror Texts* afforded me a new appreciation for the Old Testament.

Given So Much

Laura Elder is a social work major from Orange City, Iowa.

Every other Christmas break since 2004, sociology professor Scott Monsma has led a group of students on a study trip in the Middle Eastern country of Oman, engaging in a dialogue about Islam, Arab culture, and Omani culture. Their successful experiences have led to the formation of a full semester-long study abroad program in Oman, which will launch in 2009-2010. Laura Elder was among the thirteen students on this year’s Christmas break trip.

Oman was a jolt. Before we left, our group talked about how modern Oman was, and I understood that. However, before we left I missed the second part—Oman is not Western. I was expecting a modern nation like I was used to in the U.S., Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, and Canada. People’s lifestyles were so different—clothes, time, housing, food, expectations out of life—but they were so welcoming and hospitable.

I had never been around more Muslims than Christians before. And I had never experienced more openness and hospitality. People would share their food not just with us but with anyone who came to their door. In a desert culture, hospitality keeps people alive. They did not have nearly as much to share as we did, but they gave me more than I have ever been given.

Even though they could speak no English and we no Arabic, they gave us halwa (date paste), date pudding, date jello, coffee, and henna tattoos. They were living like Christians should, yet they were Muslim. I admired their commitment to their faith. Their whole day was centered around their faith—prayer five times a day dictated how life was lived. Prayer consumed their life like it should ours.

Northwestern provides a safe place to question, learn, and grow. Going to Oman was no different. We were really able to integrate faith and learning, which is something NWC aims to do.

OTHER COLLEGE NEWS

Northwestern Receives National Award for Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service named Northwestern to the 2008 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Northwestern, honored for the third consecutive year, is among 635 colleges and universities recognized. Only fourteen are from Iowa.

Last year, more than 725 Northwestern students were engaged in forms of community service, such as cleaning at The Bridge, a transitional housing facility; tutoring school-children; working at area soup kitchens and homeless shelters; and assisting in cleanup and rebuilding for tornado victims in Parkersburg, Iowa, and hurricane victims in the Gulf Coast. In addition, another 315 students were involved in academic service-learning, putting classroom knowledge into practice by helping area agencies and businesses. All told, Northwestern estimates its students engaged in more than 14,500 hours of service in 2007-2008.

The Community Service Honor Roll is the highest federal recognition a school can achieve for its commitment to service-learning and civic engagement. Honorees for the award were chosen based on a series of selection factors, including scope and innovativeness of service projects, percentage of student participation in service activities, incentives for service, and the extent to which the school offers academic service-learning courses.

Northwestern Team of Computer Science Majors Participate in International Competition in Sweden

When the world finals of the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest got under way in Stockholm, Sweden, in April, students from MIT, Moscow State University, Oxford, Stanford, and the University of Melbourne were joined by three Northwestern College computer science majors. The team of John Calsbeek, Ben Kester, and Curt Van Wyk was one of one hundred from six continents selected out of seven thousand squads that participated in regional competitions. The Northwestern team qualified for the world finals after solving all nine problems in a November regional contest.

Strategic Planning Underway

In fall 2007, Northwestern's board of trustees approved a new strategic plan, "Transforming Learning." To help ensure the plan becomes reality, a twelve-member Strategic Planning Committee composed of faculty, administration, staff, and student representatives has been meeting since December.

The committee seeks for strategic planning to be something that happens on an ongoing basis. Toward that end, the committee is updating the plan, reviewing progress on initiatives, monitoring current trends, issuing biannual reports, and making recommendations to the president.

Day of Learning in Community

For the second year in a row, Northwestern canceled classes and closed offices so students, faculty, staff, and members of the community could experience a Day of Learning in Community. This year's event, held April 1, focused on creation care. Keynote presentations by J. Matthew Sleeth, author of *Serve God, Save the Planet*, and student-, employee- and alumni-led workshops focused on ways to better care for God's created world.