A More Inclusive Calvin

One of the things I value most about Calvin College is the breadth and depth of its educational vision. As the college vision statement puts it, “We welcome all who are compelled by God’s work of renewal to join us in the formative pursuits of lifelong learning, teaching, scholarship, worship, and service.” For the past 15 years, part of this commitment has been the From Every Nation document. Concerned with a history of perhaps unintentional racial and cultural exclusion, the FEN document seeks to promote racial and cultural reconciliation by actively working toward a diverse community. These goals of reconciliation and restoration are laudable goals, and ones I’m glad we continue to work on. But we need to work toward these goals not just with individuals from different races and cultures, but also with respect to those who have been harmed or marginalized on the basis of disability. The positive vision of shalom from Revelation 7:9, described as “the ultimate goal of FEN,” is incomplete if it excludes those with disabilities and learning differences.

This past year I’ve been thinking about how we structure our communities while writing a Calvin short, Disability and Inclusive Communities. Sometimes our communities aren’t inclusive because we don’t have a broad-enough vision. Churches, for instance, can be exclusionary because they think only of ministry to those with disabilities, rather than those with disabilities as being part of the community that can do the ministering. This way of thinking impoverishes the church. And something similar, I’m afraid, is true of Calvin.

The college’s current Ready for Life Academy is a step on the way to our vision of shalom. According to Amber Gilliland, RFLA instructor at Calvin, the goal of this program is “to have a place for students with disability to have the opportunity to go to college (in their own capacity) like many of their peers from high school.” But in its current instantiation, RFLA students aren’t fully part of our community. They’re not officially Calvin college students. As such, they’re prohibited from living on campus, from having student employment, from participating in college commencement with their friends and peers.

Just as the church is worse off when it sees disability ministry simply as an outreach rather than a part of the internal working of the body of Christ, so too the Calvin community is worse off when we don’t fully integrate the RFLA students. If we really seek to “welcome all who are compelled by God’s work of renewal” as a college, then the RFLA students should be given an equal opportunity to be a part of Calvin’s community and vision in the same way the Calvin Prison Initiative students are. The whole community will be better when we’re more inclusive.

Kevin Timpe (Philosophy), on behalf of Jim Rooks, dean of education

“Faith and Democracy in America” Conference

How should we understand the connection between Christian faith and American liberalism? Some say it is a necessarily antagonistic relationship, others that it is a fruitful partnership that has been orchestrated by God himself, and still others that it is a relationship in tension, bearing both good and bad fruit. Our current cultural season seems especially fraught with difficulty and division with regard
to how to think about our most important identities, loyalties, and duties. With this in mind, the Henry Institute is hosting the “Faith and Democracy in America: Christianity and Liberalism Rightly Understood” conference on December 6–7, 2018. The conference will feature two plenary speakers: Notre Dame political philosopher and Why Liberalism Failed author Patrick Deneen, and Calvin philosopher James K. A. Smith, author of the Cultural Liturgies series. Five panels will be included in the event comprised of invited speakers from various perspectives within a specific sector of society.

From the Faculty Activity Reports


Be sure to [fill out](#) your Faculty Activity Reports regularly. If you have questions, see the [FAQ page](#).

**Coming Up on Campus** (Check the campus calendar for a full list of events)

**Monday, December 3**
- Chapel. Matt Postma. Advent. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- SLC blood drive. 12:00 noon. Chapel Undercroft

**Tuesday, December 4**
- Chapel. Taizé with Karen Saupe and Stacey Wieland. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- SLC blood drive. 12:00 noon. Chapel Undercroft
- Faculty Senate meeting. 4:30 p.m., Hoogenboom 280

**Wednesday, December 5**
- Chapel. Jazz prayers with jazz combo. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- SLC blood drive. 12:00 noon. Chapel Undercroft

**Thursday, December 6**
- Chapel. *Messiah* Sing-Along. 10:00 a.m., CFAC
- Calvin Environmental Assessment Program (CEAP) lecture and poster session. Henry Kingma, “Calvin’s Waste Stream: Past, Present, and Potential.” 3:30 p.m., SB 010

**Friday, December 7**
- Chapel. Wind ensemble. 10:00 a.m., Chapel