



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

William J. ...

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,



Dr. William Spoelhof, a member of the Calvin College community for 80 years, passed away on August 1, 2024.



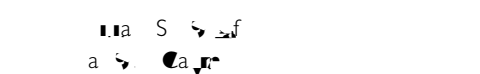
A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



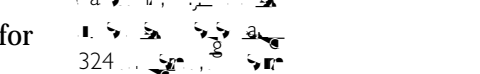
A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



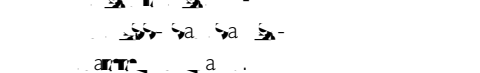
A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.

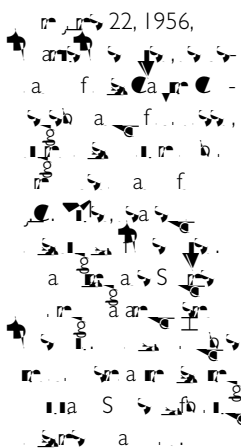


A view of the Knollcrest campus, showing the large building and surrounding trees.



faculty and student body.

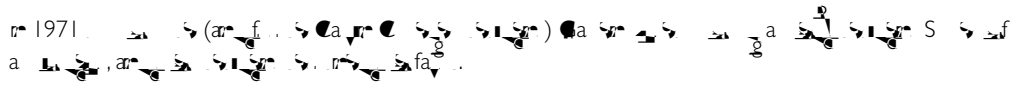
Of those three close colleagues Spoelhof once said: “Calvin College would not have been the same if I did not have Henry DeWit, whom I had to talk into office, John Vanden Berg and Syd Youngsma as my colleagues. We were more than just staff members. We were dear friends. We knew each other well. And 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



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

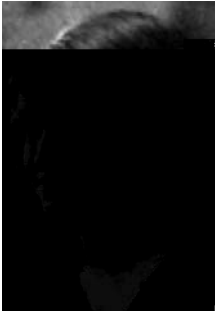
Anthony Diekema (1976-1995) agrees.

“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,



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

Ca... a...
a... b...
a... r...
a... a...
a... a...
S... T...
a... a...
L... L...



a... a...
a... a...
f... a...
S... f...
S... 1942 1945,
a... a... S... a...
1943 1946.

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

Becoming president, he said, was a difficult situation.

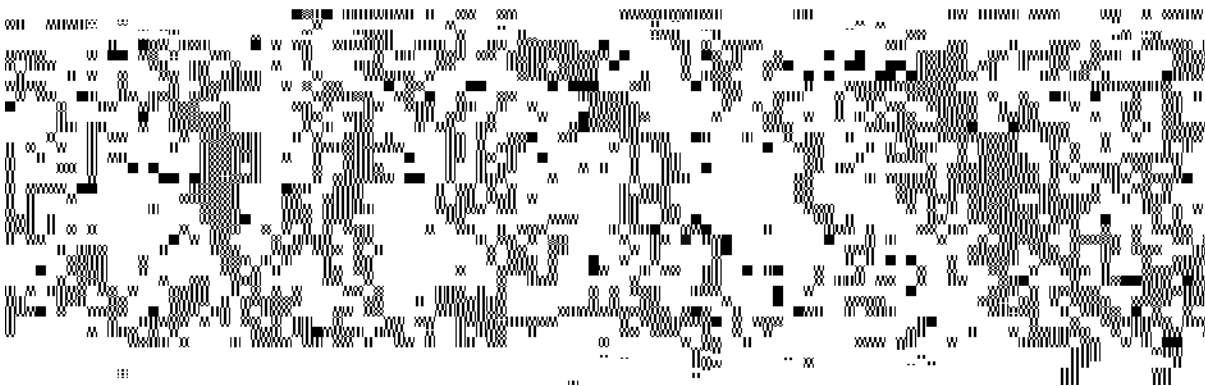
“The faculty members were either my former teachers or my compatriots, and that presented difficulties. Moreover, there was a tremendous need for reorganization, to deal with all of the students coming in, to find enough faculty members to meet larger enrollments, to deal with the big information revolution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

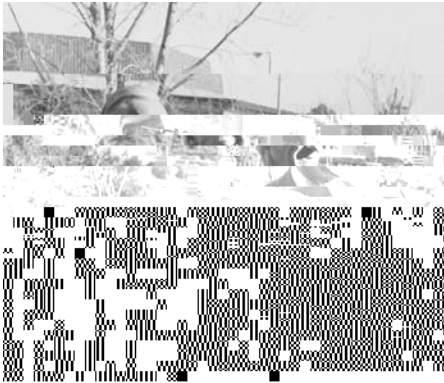
The development of the new Knollcrest campus will always be a significant legacy for Spoelhof, but interestingly when he reflected on the work undertaken by the college in the 1960s and 1970s to build Knollcrest, he reflected not so much on buildings, but rather on programs.

“We talked about the curriculum that was going to

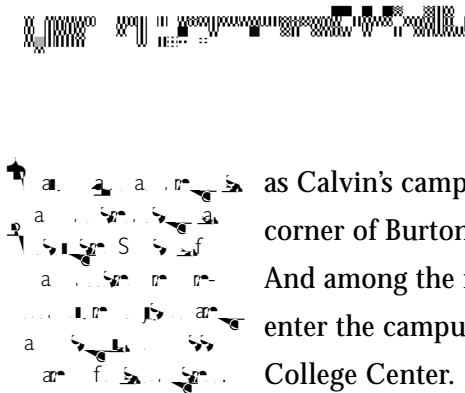


Sp... a 1956





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.

Memo rial Se ervice

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

The image shows a musical score for an organ and voices. It consists of ten staves. The top staff is a single-line organ part with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. It begins with a common rest and contains several measures of music, including quarter and eighth notes. The remaining nine staves are for voices, each with a double-line staff and a soprano clef. These staves are mostly blank, with some faint markings and a few notes visible, suggesting a vocal entry or accompaniment. The overall appearance is that of a printed musical score, possibly from a church bulletin or program.

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: **E en in da kne light da n fo the ight,**
fo tho e ho a e g acio and com a ionate and ighteo .

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

People: **The ighteo ill ne e be mo ed;**
the ill be emembe ed fo e e .

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

People: **The ighteo ill ne e be mo ed;**
the ill be emembe ed fo e e .

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

People: **The ighteo ill ne e be mo ed;**
the ill be emembe ed fo e e .

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: **Fo hi li el mind and gene o i it,**
hi co tl bea ing and infectio it;
fo hi a ith o d and hi a ith eo le,
hi e ect fo c eation and ega d fo fello c eat e

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

People: **e ble and gi e o thank , g acio God.**

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

People: **Fo hi el e te a d hi of intellect and ambition,**
hi t ength of o e and o e of di ce nment;
fo hi b eadth of i ion and co age to e e b leading,
hi atient n t ing of faith-fo med lea ning on a co nt knoll

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

People: **e ble and gi e o thank , g acio God.**

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

People: **Fo kee ing co enant ith the ch ch he lo ed,**
fo kee ing faith ith the t adition that ha ed him,
fo fnding and ing ene al in the e e -changing o ld
a o nd him,
fo molding f t e Kingdom-b ilde th o gh e am le
and enco agement

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

People: **e ble and gi e o thank , g acio God.**

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

People: **God' lo e end e fo e e .**

Leader: Give thanks to the God of gods;

People: **God' lo e end e fo e e .**

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords;

People: **God' lo e end e fo e e .**

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

People: **The ighteo ill ne e be mo ed;**
the ill be emembe ed fo e e .

All: **P ai e the Lo d. Allel ia!**

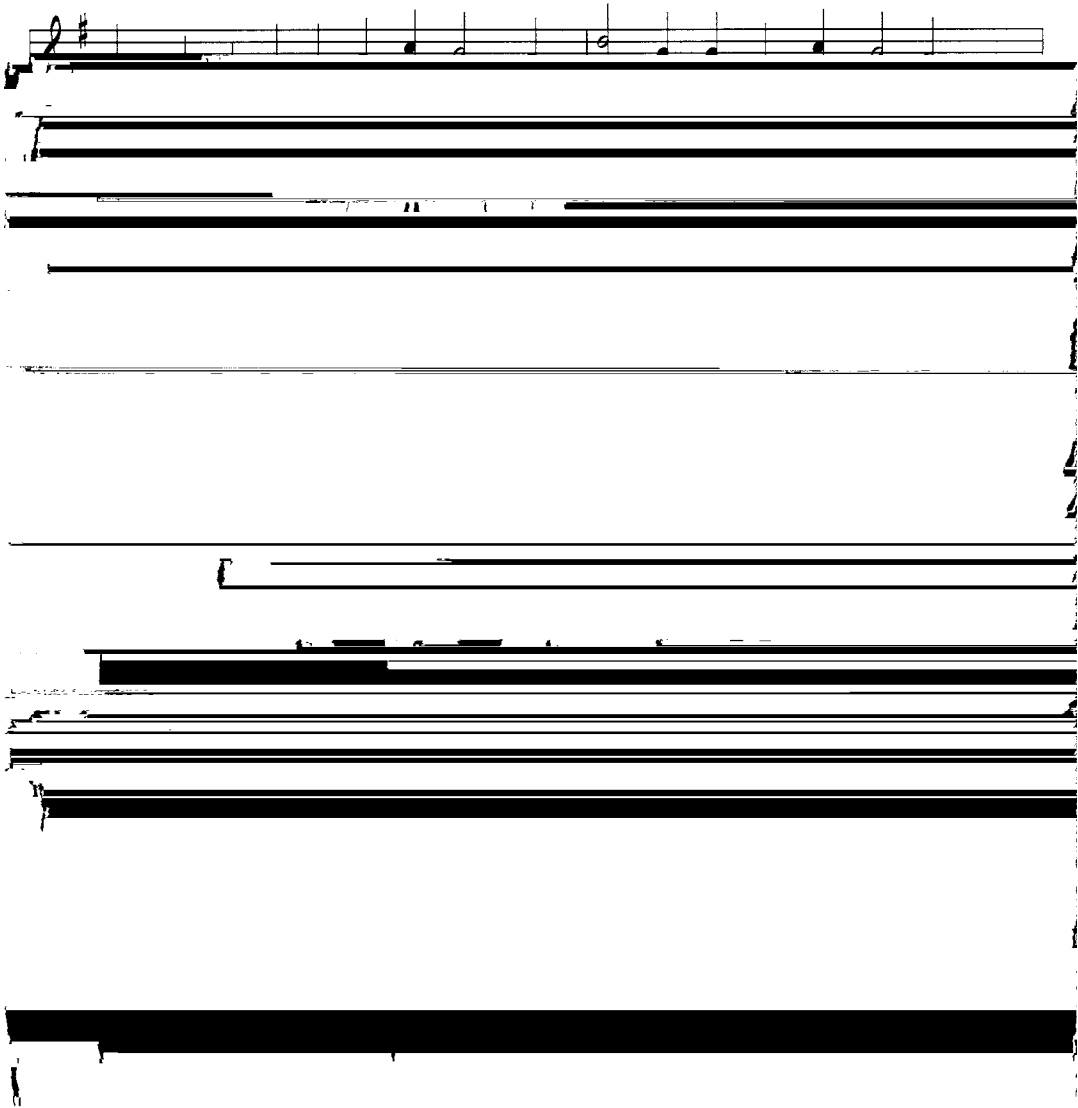
Hymn of Trust: "In Christ Alone"

/ ' (

Meditation: "Faithful to Our Heirs"

Dale Cooper, *College chaplain emeritus*

Hymn: "Faith Cannot Do Too Much Expecting"



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

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling". It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment is written in a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are as follows:

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

The score includes a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and several empty staves below, suggesting a full page of music.

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

Clarence Vos

Organ Postlude

The William Spoelhof Chair Recipients



The William S oelhof Teache -Schola -in-Re idence Chai

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

Grateful to
Our Ancestors,
Faithful to
Our Heirs

T
a
n
k
y
o
u
f
o
r
a
n
n
o
u
n
c
e
l
l
i
n
g
m
e
m
o
r
y
o
f
o
u
r
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
s
a
n
d
f
o
r
b
e
i
n
g
f
a
i
t
h
f
u
l
t
o
o
u
r
h
e
i
r
s
.

T
h
e
r
e
i
s
a
n
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
a
n
d
a
h
e
i
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
.

T
h
e
r
e
i
s
a
n
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
a
n
d
a
h
e
i
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
.

T
h
e
r
e
i
s
a
n
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
a
n
d
a
h
e
i
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
.

T
h
e
r
e
i
s
a
n
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
a
n
d
a
h
e
i
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
.

T
h
e
r
e
i
s
a
n
a
n
c
e
s
t
o
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
a
n
d
a
h
e
i
r
f
o
r
e
v
e
r
y
o
n
e
.

Professor
of art emeritus

Edgar G. Boevé (American)

William Spoelhof 90th Birthday Memorial Banner, 1999

© Edgar G. Boevé. All rights reserved. S. Spoelhof 90th Birthday, 2006.4.1

CALVIN
College

