

A. C. VAN RAALTE INSTITUTE

# Annual Report

January – December 2024

Hope College  
Holland, Michigan



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**Annual Report**  
January-December 2024

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*Hope College*  
*Holland, Michigan*

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A. C. Van Raalte Institute, Hope College  
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Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center  
9 East 10th Street  
Holland, MI 49423

PO Box 9000  
Holland, MI 49423

616.395.7678  
vanraalte@hope.edu



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Donald A. Luidens  
Director  
Editor-in-Chief and Publisher

JoHannah M. Smith  
Project Editor  
Office Manager

Jacob E. Nyenhuis  
Director Emeritus  
Editor-in-Chief and Publisher Emeritus



# **Annual Report**

## 2024

# Contents

Mission Statement	1
A Message from the Director Donald A. Luidens	3
Reports	
Senior Research Fellows	
Robert P. Swierenga	7
Paul Heusinkveld	9
Henk Aay	13
Donald A. Luidens	16
Nella Kennedy	19
Donald J. Bruggink	21
Jacob E. Nyenhuis	24
Dennis N. Voskuil	27
Emeritus	
Earl Wm. (“Bill”) Kennedy	29
Honorary Research Fellows	
George Harinck	32
Judy Parr	33
Donald Sinnema	35
Jan J. Boersema, with Anthonia Boersema Bremmer	36
James C. Kennedy	38
Publications and Presentations, 2024	40
Publications by Research Fellows and Associates of the Van Raalte Institute, 1994-2024	42
Visiting Research Fellows Series	47
Van Raalte Institute Staff 2024	49
Applications Invited, Visiting Research Fellows, 2025-26	50

## ***Mission Statement of the A. C. Van Raalte Institute at Hope College***

*The Van Raalte Institute of Hope College honors the memory and vision of the Reverend Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte, the founder of Holland, Michigan, by engaging in and promoting the study of his life and legacy, exploring the history of the West Michigan community, and publishing, through the Van Raalte Press, scholarly work on Dutch-American relations and Dutch immigration and heritage in North America and around the globe.*

The Van Raalte Institute is a department of Hope College. Hence, its mission relates directly to and supports the mission of Hope College, an undergraduate liberal arts institution offering academic programs in the context of the historic Christian faith.

The institute derives its vision from a letter dated November 27, 1846, by A. C. Van Raalte, written shortly after his party landed in New York. Heading west, he declared, “I hope that a large colony can be established here in America which will focus its work on the Kingdom of God.” His vision also extended far beyond the boundaries of Holland, Michigan, to other colonies and to immigrants throughout the United States. The bold Christian vision that he had for the church, for education, and for the community continues to have an impact on the “colony” that he founded on February 9, 1847, and on the college that he helped to establish fifteen years later.

The institute carries out its educational mission not only through research and publication but also through the sponsorship of lectures and presentations by its members and visiting research fellows. Through liaison with scholars and educational and cultural institutions in the Netherlands and other countries, the institute seeks to promote an understanding of the history of this community. From time to time, the institute will host visiting scholars from these countries to enable them to engage in research in our local archives and to provide a broader perspective to our own endeavors.



**Rev. Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte (1811-1876)**

This image comes from Van Raalte's portrait that hangs in the Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center at Hope College, painted in 1896 by Joseph Warner of Holland and restored by Kenneth B. Katz of Conservation and Museum Services in Detroit, with funding from Hope College trustee, the late Peter H. Huizenga.

## A Message from the Director

During a recent Advent service, my congregation sang the Christina Georgina Rossetti carol, “In the Bleak Midwinter.” With snow swirling outside the sanctuary, it seemed an appropriate hymn to herald the Christmas season. At times, I am convinced that the principal reason A. C. Van Raalte settled in overcast Holland, Michigan, rather than sunny Waupun, Wisconsin, was that the “bleak midwinter” of West Michigan reminded him of his homeland’s climate.

I could not help but think of my friends and colleagues at the VRI when my fellow carolers and I came to the final verse of Rossetti’s hymn asking “What can I give him?” The carol answers that a shepherd would give a tangible gift (a lamb), but that a “wise man” (or woman) would present a more nebulous offering. They “would do [their] part.” With the wisdom of age and experience, my VRI colleagues have been “doing their part” now for three decades, and their part continues to be a significant one.

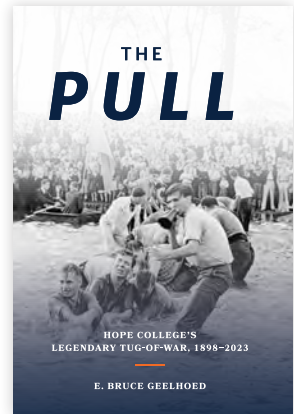
The Van Raalte Press published three books in 2024, in addition to the 2023 annual report.

Henk Aay’s *American Eyes on the Netherlands: Film, Public Diplomacy, and Dutch Identity, 1943-74. Including a Survey of Dutch Visual Media in America, 1649-2021* is a comprehensive record of the Dutch government’s efforts (beginning during World War II while the government was in exile in London) to shape American understanding of the Netherlands. Part political outreach and part touristic appeal, this campaign was notable for its deliberate projection of a positive and inviting “Dutch identity.” Fun fact: Holland, Michigan, was one of three centers (the others being New York City and San Francisco) for the distribution of this Dutch diplomatic effort.





*The Pull: Hope College's Legendary Tug-of-War, 1898-2023*, by Hope graduate ('70) and visiting research fellow, E. Bruce Geelhoed, is a vibrant and thorough history of this renowned tradition at Hope College. Augmented by archival photographs of past Pulls, this volume captures the passion and excitement of Hope's annual event. All future accounts of the Pull will draw on this wide-ranging record.



Every two years, the Van Raalte Press publishes the proceedings of the AADAS (Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies) conference. This year's volume, *E Pluribus Unum: The Weaving and Unraveling of a Singular "Dutch American" Identity in North America*, was edited by Donald Luidens, Henk Aay, and Michael Douma. It brings together an eclectic collection of historic essays describing numerous aspects of the Dutch American experience.

In 2023 Jack and Lee Nyenhuis were recognized for their decades of service to Hope College and the Van Raalte Institute with a renaming of our building the "Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center." In commemoration of that recognition, VRI supporter Larry Kieft commissioned a formal portrait of Jack and Lee to be hung in our entranceway. The portrait was executed by renowned local portraitist Larry Blovits. On Monday, April 29, 2024, the VRI celebrated the unveiling of that portrait, which now proudly greets all those who come to the Theil-Nyenhuis building.

Robert P. Swierenga's definitive biography of the founder of

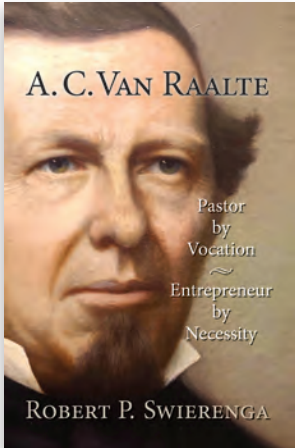


Holland, Michigan, and cofounder of Hope College, *A. C. Van Raalte: Pastor by Vocation, Entrepreneur by Necessity* (Van Raalte Press, 2023), was recognized in September by the Historical Society of Michigan. It was designated the year's outstanding book in the "Private Printing" category that covers noncommercial, nonuniversity publications. This is a distinct honor for

<sup>1</sup>For a poignant account of the writing of this hymn, see John M. Mulder and E. Morgan Roberts, *28 Carols to Sing at Christmas* (Cascade Books, 2015), 64–67.

<sup>2</sup>Larry Blovits has amassed a national reputation for excellence in painting oil and pastel portraits and landscapes and for teaching. Receiving numerous awards and honors in national shows since 1962, Larry has also achieved signature status in many prestigious national art organizations around the country. New York City's Pastel Society of America bestowed the honor of "Master Pastelist" on Larry in 1996. He has also painted the portraits of Hope College presidents Gordon J. Van Wylen, John H. Jacobson, and James E. Bultman

Bob and the forth such award the HSM has granted to Van Raalte Press publications, including Swierenga's *Holland, Michigan* (2014); Jacob E. Nyenhuis *et alii*, *Hope College at 150* (2019); and Jan Peter Verhave, *A Constant State of Emergency* (2020).



We, the fellows of the Van Raalte Institute, will continue to “do our part” in the coming year. At last count, there were sixteen volumes in the Van Raalte Press queue in various stages of production. They will keep us focused, even during this bleak midwinter as “frosty wind [makes] moan.”

This report comes with best wishes from the Van Raalte Institute to each of you, our larger VRI family, that you too may find a meaningful part to contribute to our lives together. And please do drop by the Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center sometime to share in our 11:00 a.m. weekday “coffee hour/seminar.” And if you give me a day’s warning, I will see that there are pastries to welcome you as well.

Cordially  
**Donald A. Luidens**  
Director/Editor-in-Chief

# *Reports*

## Senior Research Fellows



## Robert P. *Swierenga*

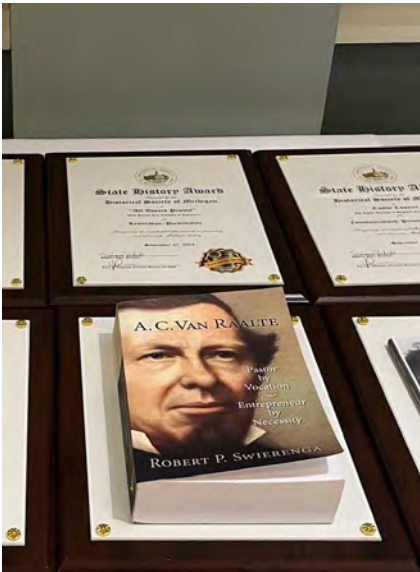
This year had several high points, most notably a State History Award from the Historical Society of Michigan for my *A. C. Van Raalte: Pastor by Vocation, Entrepreneur by Necessity* (Van Raalte Press, 2023). This book was reviewed positively by Douglas J. Kuiper in *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 57 (April 2024), 169–74, and James A. De Jong in *Calvin Theological Journal* 59 (Nov. 2024), 440–44. The award was presented in person at the State History Awards banquet held at the Silver Beach Center in St. Joseph, Michigan. This was a repeat of the same award in 2014 for *Holland Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City*, 3 vols. (Van Raalte Press; Eerdmans, 2014).

Another highlight was a film interview that was screened at the annual dinner of the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area before eight hundred people. I was also interviewed by a Netherlands film crew for a public television broadcast on immigration to the United States in the twentieth century. On November 22, I led a busload of students from Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan, on a tour of historic monuments and churches in Holland and Zeeland and the Graafschap Heritage Center at Graafschap Christian Reformed Church.

I continue to research and write a comprehensive history of the city of Zeeland and serve on the board of the Zeeland Historical Society.



*Historical Society of Michigan awards banquet*



*Book awards table*



*Riding the carousel at Silver Beach Center*



## *Paul Heusinkveld*

My work in 2024 focused on research and documentation of stories of missionaries, in particular, those related to the RCA's Arabian Mission and secondly of all missionaries of the RCA and CRC. My two primary motives are to ensure these stories are preserved through publication and that they will inspire others to dedicate their lives to similar service as a means of reconciliation and to build a more peaceful world.

The majority of my work has been on the biography of my father, Maurice Heusinkveld, MD, a member of the RCA's Arabian Mission. The book covers the history of the early Heusinkvelds, beginning in 1710 in the Netherlands, and details the events and circumstances that eventually inspired Maurice to become a missionary. A considerable portion of the book's content comes from my time as a missionary child and hearing the stories my father told me. The majority of the book's content, however, is based on research at the Hope College Archives and Special Collections; professional correspondence and letters to and from my parents; documents held at the RCA archives in New Brunswick, New Jersey; books written about the Arabian Mission; interviews with members of the Arabian Mission; and online resources. The timeline of the book continues until 1961, at which time, I left the mission field to attend boarding school in India. My father and family's

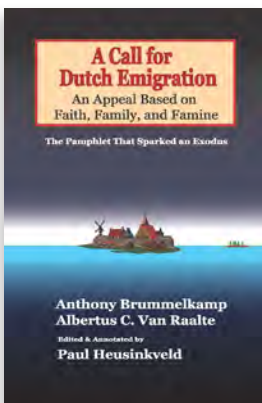


story subsequent to 1961 will be the subject future books.

In the process of working on my father's biography, I realized a critical component was to understand the motives that drove my ancestors to immigrate to America. This necessitated research regarding the mass immigration movement to North America from the Netherlands during the nineteenth century. Here, I discovered an English translation of a seminal pamphlet written (in 1846) by Anthony Brummelkamp and A. C. Van Raalte that encouraged immigration to North America.

The pamphlet may have played a role in my own ancestors' decision to emigrate but was likely a prominent factor in the emigration decision of thousands of other Netherlanders. Consequently, it sheds light on the broader topic of why the Dutch emigrated in the first place. I therefore annotated a booklet about the pamphlet, titled *A Call for Dutch Emigration*; it includes both a copy of the original Dutch pamphlet and an English translation. I also added background material, footnotes, pictures, maps, a bibliography, and an index to make the document easier to read. It will be a valuable resource for future academic research.

I continue to be interested in republishing rare documents associated with the RCA (particularly of the RCA's Arabian Mission) and CRC. These unique, hard-to-find books are available only in a few library and archive collections; they are virtually inaccessible to the vast majority of people, especially to anyone living outside of the United States. Also, many of these rare documents are too fragile for public access, so my intent is to make them available for study by academics as well as the general public.



During the initial phase of this project, I scanned and digitized seven books within the topics of academic interest specified by the VRI mission statement. Subsequently, I utilized OCR (optical character recognition) technology and software to transform them into editable text, which enables reconfiguring the format and layout of the books. The updated

format enabled my adding annotations, such as footnotes, photographs, and maps to enhance the reading and educational experience. I also added indices to facilitate future research.

I continue to prepare Harvey Staal's translation of the Arabic Bible for publication. The penultimate draft includes pictures, footnotes, maps, appendices, and an index. This rare Bible (only one copy exists, kept at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai) was written in AD 867 and provides unique insights into Christianity. Staal's translation, printed in a small publishing run in 1984, is virtually unavailable and in a format that is difficult to read. I met with all six of Harvey Staal's children on August 27 to discuss the republication of his book, clarifying my objectives and how I would add additional related material to make the book more readable and that the additional content would add historical and cultural context to this rare document. After my presentation, all the Staal children heartily supported my proposal.

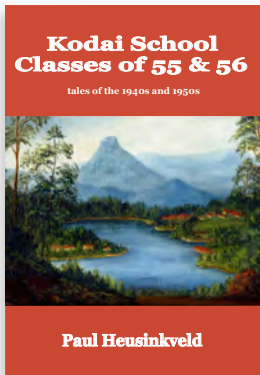
I am working with Bob Swierenga to republish *For Food and Faith, Dutch Immigration to Western Michigan, 1846-1960*, originally published twenty-five years ago and, of which, there are very few copies in circulation. Those few copies are in extremely poor condition and unusable by the general public. Thus, the book is largely out of circulation, and a new printing is needed. I scanned the book, OCR'd the scans, made many corrections, and reformatted the book. The new layout is significantly different from the original, with updated pictures and a revised bibliography. The revised book will be a valuable resource for research into Dutch American history and culture.

I also published two books about life in a missionary boarding school in Kodaikanal, South India, and the return of my classmates there for a reunion.





This is the story of my high school class returning to the missionary boarding school where I was a student from 1961 to 1968 for a class reunion in February 2024.



This is the story of the classes of 1955 and 1956, their childhood in India, and their attending Kodai School, focusing on the harsh years during World War II and how they and their families coped with those traumatic times.

I continue to assist my VRI colleagues in technical areas such as scanning, OCR, document layout, and reformatting (of note, I receive more advice from them than I give).



The atlas project, “Mapping Dutch North America,” took more of my time in 2024; this will be the new normal for the next few years. My work on this project was facilitated in 2024 by a successful grant application for \$7,000 from Calvin University’s GEO Department, Vermeer Research Fund. The proceeds are used to pay part of the salary of Calvin’s GIS specialist Nellie Anderson for her technical and database work on the atlas. For the first time, Nellie and I are working on the Dutch Canadian section of the atlas, collaborating with Canada’s National Statistical Agency (StatCan) to gain access to data in the Canadian censuses down to the smallest tract level. This has proven to be far more challenging than for the US censuses. Nellie consulted with staff at StatCan via Teams and learned how to more easily extract the Dutch data at all levels. In general, there is a greater variety of Dutch data in the Canadian census than in the US census. The Canadian 2021 census, for example, includes Dutch-born, Dutch and Frisian (!) mother tongue, language spoken at home and work, Reformed religion, and ancestry/ethnicity. We are now finally mapping these data at national, regional, and urban scales; they show the rapid historical and geographic changes in such Dutch markers from the 1940s to the 1960s. Data on geographical (provincial, municipal) origins of Dutch immigrants to Canada—and the US—in the modern period remain as lacunae.

### **AADAS conference at Hope College (June 26-28, 2025)**

In my annual report last year, I wrote that, as president of AADAS, I was tasked with the organization of its biennial conference at Hope College in 2025. That assignment touched me practically every day in 2024, from facilities to programming to publicity. The major pieces are now all in place: research papers and memoirs about post-WWII Dutch immigration to North America; premiere showing of the film *Old Heart*; Rosemary Sloot’s art exhibit, *Immigrant*, at the Kruizenga Art Museum; and the banquet talk by Tom Bijvoet, editor of *Dutch, the Magazine*. Readers of this annual report are warmly invited to attend. Conference updates and online registration will be available by April 1, 2025, at [dutch-americans.org](http://dutch-americans.org).

## Creation care

For most of my academic career, environmental studies courses made up about half of my teaching load. At Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, creation care has more recently become part of our vision statement, and I serve on a committee with that name to make this commitment real. Creation care has really taken wing this past year in worship, with environmental hymns and the season of creation (September) in the liturgical year; in our building and grounds, with plans for church rooftop solar and native plants; and in outreach and education, with a creation fair, including EV rides, reading groups, and plant-based food recipes. I am thrilled to see these initiatives begin to take hold.



Henk and Christine's family at the celebration of the publication of *American Eyes*



## *Don Luidens*

Before I “retired,” I would hear retirees say, “I don’t know when I had time to work!” They seemed to imply that in retirement they were busier than when they were employed full time. I now know whereof they spoke. The past year has been an active one for my wife Peg and me. Between the VRI, travel interludes, grandchildren’s athletics, and political campaigning, the pace has been exhilarating.

In my roles as director and editor-in-chief of the Van Raalte Institute, I have marshalled several books toward completion. Working with authors Rich Sytsma, Jim Boelkins, Gordon Laman, Paul Heusinkveld, and Kent Fry has been extremely rewarding. I look forward to the publication of their respective volumes in the coming years.

As always, it has been a distinct pleasure to work with my colleagues at the VRI. Everyone has been engaged in significant research, and I have had the delight of cheering them on from the sidelines. Books on the history of Zeeland; the history of Western Theological Seminary; the art, architecture, and history of Hope College’s Dimnent Chapel; more missionary memoirs; and the demographic transitions of Dutch immigrants to North America are indicative of the variety of projects underway among my colleagues.

Together with senior research fellow Henk Aay and former

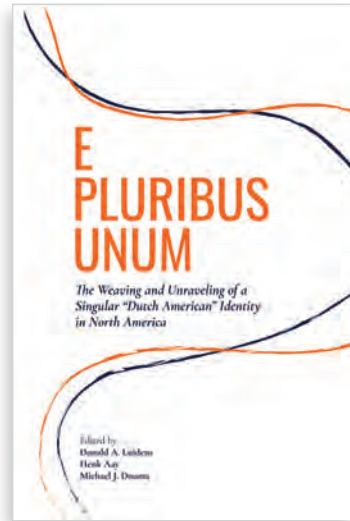
visiting research fellow Michael Douma, I edited *E Pluribus Unum: The Weaving and Unraveling of a Singular “Dutch American” Identity in North America* (Van Raalte Press, 2024).

This volume brings together a dozen papers presented at the 2023 AADAS conference. As the subtitle suggests, these papers recount the effort to forge (and then reforge) a unifying “Dutch” identity among immigrants who came from decidedly different contexts in the Netherlands.

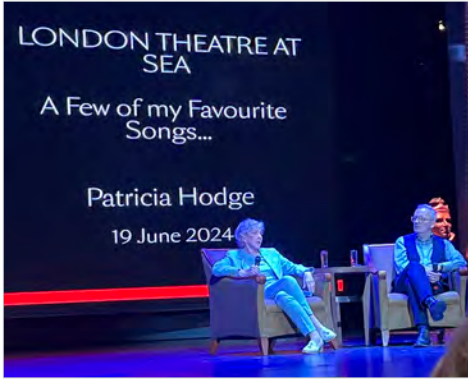
I was delighted to participate in the publication of the essays of my childhood friend Lew Scudder. As a Reformed Church missionary to the Middle East, Lew wrote monthly newsletters that were brilliant, insightful, and incisive. These essays have been collected and annotated by John Hubers in *MorningLand Meditations* (Wit & Intellect, 2024). Together with Lew’s widow, Nancy G. Scudder, I wrote the introductory essay: “Lewis Rousseau Scudder III: A Brief Biography.” It was a privilege to contribute to this volume.

It has also been my pleasure to represent the VRI as a member of the Dutch American Historical Commission. This commission brings together representatives from Hope College, Calvin University and Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, the Zeeland Historical Society, and the Dutch Reformed Translation Society to foster interest in and research about the Dutch American immigrant community. For the third year, I served as treasurer of the DAHC.

A highlight of our family travels was a Road Scholar seminar focused on the history of Western theatre. During a weeklong crossing of the Atlantic, we were given a series of lectures on the history of theatre from Greco-Roman days to the twenty-first century. To complement the lectures, the resident cast on the RMS *Queen Mary 2* was from the *British Olivier Awards* show (the equivalent of the *British Academy Awards*).







Interview of Patricia Hodge aboard the *Queen Mary 2*, crossing the Atlantic Ocean



London theatre venue

Their musical productions and on-stage interviews nicely augmented the more scholarly lectures, all of which prepared us for four plays and musicals in London. A standout among these was the performance of Agatha Christie’s gem, *Witness for the Prosecution*. It was performed in the former chambers of the City Council of London, a marvelous setting.

Our grandchildren (15, 13, 11, and 9) are all involved in athletics, so many weekends are spent on the road to either Columbus, Ohio, or Peoria, Illinois, to share in their exploits. To say that Grandma and Grandpa are proud is an understatement. We have given new meaning to the term, “Helicopter Grandparents.” I am now the one asking, “When did I have time to work?” I would not have it any other way.



Peg and Jack, a basketball champion



Anna, a volleyball standout



A spring trip to Cocoa Beach, FL, netted shells and crabs, as well as watching four rocket launches from Cape Canaveral.



## *Nella Kennedy*

The year 1929 does not seem as far away as it once did when I began my research and writing on Dimnent Chapel. It was the year Dimnent Chapel was completed, and now, planning for a grand one hundredth anniversary is on the horizon. The project has been enjoyable albeit very time consuming. President Dimnent had full control over the chapel's design, execution, and purpose. Since he was a man who liked to make decisions himself, without much consultation of various aspects, the boxes in the Hope College archives are thinner than those of other presidents. Therefore, the material presence of the chapel itself has had to yield the major part of the thought processes and intent of its designer.



In the Rose Window in Dimnent Chapel: Abraham setting off from Ur to the Promised Land



My manuscript is virtually finished, but the scores of photographs collected, interspersed in the text and stored on the computer, need to be checked for quality. So there is still enough work to be done. The other half of this project is the Dimnent biography, which has been researched and written by Judy Parr. As editor of both volumes, I have oversight of Judy's work, which can stand on its own. There will be very little overlap between her part and mine.

I have also begun a Dutch-language *praatgroep* (talking group) with several interested local folks who want to become more fluent in Dutch. Some are native speakers, and others have learned Dutch through various media. We meet in the conference room at the Van Raalte Institute about once a month and spend our time perusing news items and discussing Dutch life, history, and customs, all interspersed with games. The aim is to learn to converse together.



## *Donald J. Bruggink*

After my focus on editing and publishing the *Canons of Dort: God's Freedom, Justice, and Persistence*, by Eugene P. Heideman (Van Raalte Press, 2023), there was brought forth to me the possibility of preparing yet another partially completed manuscript by yet another deceased author. Over half of this potential book exists now but in outline form only. The quality of the half that is written demands publication, but again, as in the case of Heideman's *Canons*, there are several iterations of various portions of the "completed" manuscript. The search for an author for the still-to-be-written portion is in process.

A considerable amount of my time in 2024 was spent responding to requests from fellow scholars for information and help, some of which were of great personal satisfaction. One such request was from Adam Clark who had requested permission from Eerdmans to digitize *Christ and Architecture* (1965). It was gratifying to learn that this book, authored fifty years ago by Carl H. Droppers and myself, was found to be sufficiently noteworthy to merit making a digital version freely available. Permission was granted.

Appreciation for this book also came at a distance from Martin Duarte, an architect, who described himself as a “missionary kid to the country of Uruguay,” who was seeking to obtain a copy.

*Christ and Architecture*—a half century old—now finds itself in an even older bit of American church history, namely, when, if you were not Church of England, you were not a church at all, just a meeting house. Through the good offices of Donald C. Dahmann, PhD, the archives of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House of Alexandria, Virginia, now includes a copy of *Christ and Architecture*.

Dr. Bruggink,

My name is Nicholas Coleman. I am an architect and an elder in the United Reformed Churches. A few years ago, I inherited a copy of your work *Christ and Architecture* from the estate of my grandfather Robert Schuller. He was a great lover of the RCA, Hope [College], and architecture. I am who I am because of his influence.

I have spent the better part of my career looking for helpful resources on great church architecture and have always come up short. That was, until I came into possession of your book. The reason for this short note is to thank you for it, to thank you for your scholarship, to thank you for your continued commitment to Christ and his Church (and yes, her church buildings as well). Truly, there is no other volume that is so well designed, collated, argued, and curated as the one that you and Carl Droppers put together so many years ago. I hope to continue to learn from it, lean on it, and refer it out over the years to come.

Thank you, Sir.

Kindly,

Nicholas S. Coleman, AIA NCARB

Having celebrated my ninety-fifth birthday in 2024, I am now begrudgingly giving consideration to writing a memoir. *Tools for Understanding*, edited by James Hart Brumm (Eerdmans, 2008), is a Festschrift containing a summary of my career. Omitted, was what I consider to be not only a major personal achievement in chairing the construction of the Cook Center for Theological Research (i.e., library) but also a failure, in terms of its destruction. My intention is not to publish the result but to provide a written record of the building's history for the archives. It is my intention to put my successes and failures in writing and then test my memory against the written record in reports and documents to the extent that they are available. Hopefully, the task can be accomplished this year, in 2025.



Fiftieth birthday



Donald J. Bruggink (l) and Carl H. Droppers, ca. 1965



## *Jacob E. Nyenhuis*

In last year's annual report, I reported that much of my time in 2024 would be devoted to preparing for our move to the Farmstead, Resthaven's new senior living facility.

That indeed was the case, for we moved from a condo with a lot of storage space to a two-bedroom apartment with limited storage space. The second bedroom has been converted into a library/study, using six built-in bookcases from our condo, but I still had to dispose of 60 percent of our library—a very challenging task for a lifelong bibliophile. Nonetheless, it was accomplished.

The Farmstead has been built on East 24th Street, adjacent to the 160-acre Van Raalte Farm, which property had been purchased by Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte in July and November 1847. In 1983 the city of Holland acquired it from a descendant of Van Raalte's son Ben. We



moved into our apartment in the Oaks, one of two three-story buildings, on August 26 and spent much of the succeeding months getting settled. I am pleased to report that we are very happy in our new setting. The Farmstead is home to quite a few former Hope faculty members and administrators, including Jim and Martie Bultman and Nancy and Phil Miller. There are also quite a few Hope alumni/ae living here. Our evening meal in the clubhouse dining room provides opportunity not only to dine with them but also to get acquainted with many other residents, some of whom are new to Holland.

Don Luidens has acknowledged in his director's report the gift from Larry Kieft in response to the renaming of the Theil Research Center in honor of Lee and me. Larry Kieft has been a generous supporter of Hope College over the years, and we all are grateful to him for adding the Van Raalte Institute to his list of recipients. Lee and I deeply appreciate his desire to recognize us by commissioning the portrait by Larry Blovits, with whom I worked on the commissions for the portraits of presidents Jacobson and Bultman. We are humbled to see that fine portrait every time we come to the institute for coffee time and to work.

On June 17, we were present at the installation of a new sculpture by Murray Dewart, *Blue Gilead*, in front of the DeWitt Center. The sculpture was donated by Mr. Dewart, and we were happy to fund its installation. Dewart's *Pulse of the Morning II* was installed in the Nyenhuis Sculpture Garden at the Kruizenga Art Museum in July 2017.



*Left to right:* Larry Kieft, Lee and Jack Nyenhuis, and artist Larry Blovits

In the course of the year, as in the past, I reviewed several manuscripts for the Van Raalte Press prior to their publication,

providing back-up to our outstanding project editor JoHannah Smith. No matter how carefully one edits a manuscript, an occasional error may remain, so it helps to have an extra pair of eyes reviewing a book one last time before publication. I have also spent considerable time organizing my VRI files for the archives. I currently have a dozen banker's boxes catalogued and ready to be transferred to the Hope College Archives, but I expect to double that number by the end of 2025.

My ongoing personal projects include completion of a Nyenhuis family history and writing a memoir, but almost no work was done on either project in 2024 for reasons stated above. I intend to devote a certain amount of time each month to both projects, since the approach of my ninetieth birthday reminds me that time is limited.

My public service in 2024 was limited to membership on the Dutch American Heritage Day Committee. I have likewise continued as an emeritus member of the Managing Committee of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. I also maintain connections between and among Hope College retirees through regular updates on fellow retirees.

I am very grateful to be able to remain as an active retired member of the institute, with my own office and the opportunity to participate in many of the daily coffee times. The collegiality of our institute staff is exceptional, and it is a privilege to be included among them.



Celebrating the installation of *Blue Gilead* are (l-r): Jack and Lee Nyenhuis, sculptor Murry Dewart, and Kruizenga Art Museum curator Charles Mason





## *Dennis Voskuil*

The lion's share of my research in 2024 was devoted to my proposed book on the history of Western Theological Seminary. To date, I have completed the chapters related to the period in the late nineteenth century when the infant institution was known as the Theological Department of Hope College.

The first graduating class of Hope College consisted of eight male students, seven of whom petitioned the General Synod of the Reformed Church at their June 1866 meeting to take appropriate measures to allow them to pursue theological studies at their alma mater. The synod tentatively approved the request until 1877 when the college experienced a financial crisis and cut off funding for the Theological Department, arguing, in part, that students from the West could attend New Brunswick Seminary, a venerable institution that had been training RCA pastors for more than a century.

The suspension of theological education in Holland triggered an outcry from members of the RCA in the Midwest, so much so that, in 1884, theological training at Hope College was restored and legally and financially separated from the college as the Western Theological Seminary.



Recently, my research and writing have centered on the history of Western Seminary in the twentieth century.

My study of the history of Western Seminary has led to several invitations to deliver public presentations on the topic. In the last year, I have given lectures at Pillar Church for the Holland Area Historical Society and at Hope Reformed Church in Holland.

It continues to be a great privilege to be a senior research fellow at the Van Raalte Institute, a wonderful community of scholars and friends.



## *Earl Wm. (“Bill”) Kennedy*

### **Emeritus**

One of the remaining perquisites of being retired (“emeritus”) as a (very) senior research fellow at the institute is sharing in the daily hour-long “table talks” at 11:00 a.m. on weekdays. The subjects vary widely, from the sublime to the ridiculous, one might almost say, and vary also depending on who is present. Besides coffee, there are regular clusters of grapes to be consumed, as well as less healthful sweets.

My remaining “obligations” during the past year have included translation work of manuscript letters from Dutch to English and genealogical research for (potential) friends of the institute. I have also done both light and deep editing on several occasions of works slated for publication by the Van Raalte Press.

In addition to this, my 2023 AADAS presentation-cum-article was published toward the end of 2024 by the Van Raalte Press in the multi-author *E Pluribus Unum*. It was a piece that represented my reflections on the increasing interest in ancestor hunting by Dutch (and other) Americans, based on my near lifelong addiction to genealogy/ family history.

In this regard, I continue to enter the results of my researches on my own and my wife’s ancestors (and cousins) on the procrustean bed of

Ancestry.com, ostensibly for posterity but actually for anyone, family or not, who might benefit or care.

I remain a member of the board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, unofficially representing the Reformed Church in America on that body that seeks to disseminate “classics” of Dutch Reformed theology and piety, especially from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Finally, my wife and I have made three excursions to the old country during the past calendar year just to keep up with our family there and to refresh our knowledge of the rapidly shifting Dutch culture and language. Incidentally, this activity was far less enervating than the wrenching experience of downsizing from condo to flat living late last spring—just “Stages on life’s way.”

<sup>1</sup>With acknowledgment to Soren Kierkegaard. I might also have referenced Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, with me situated between the sixth and the seventh ages of the seven ages of man in the “All the world’s stage” speech.

# Honorary **Research Fellows**

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## George Harnick

In 2024 I finished my work as lead editor of the papers from the 2018 Scholte conference held in Pella, Iowa: *Vision, Conflict, and Controversy: H. P. Scholte, Founder of Pella, Iowa* (Van Raalte Press, 2025). I am also one of the editors of the multivolume translation project “Abraham Kuyper’s *Lectures in Dogmatics*.”

With the upcoming celebration of a century and a half of Calvin Seminary in mind, I am working on my book on academic Dutch American relations 1870-1930, focusing on Theological School Kampen, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Princeton Theological Seminary, Theological School in Grand Rapids, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

I am also member of a small team of American and Dutch historians that meets online on a monthly basis, called the “Working Group Commemoration 2028,” marking the quatercentenary (400th anniversary) of the Reformed Church in America.



## *Judy Parr*

This past year, in 2024, I continued to revise my working draft of the biography of Edward D. Dimment. The biography will be one of a pair of books, the other being a book by Nella Kennedy about the Dimment Memorial Chapel. More extensive editing of my book awaits results of a current draft review by Nella, lead author of the Dimment Chapel project.

During the summer, as a way to deal with the grief of the death of my husband in 2021, I read letters I had written to my family more than a half century ago, reviving memories of my life as a graduate student at the Ohio State University from June 1967 to December 1970. Because my mother carefully saved each of the typed letters comprising a diary, I am able to relive this time of political unrest (especially in May 1970), newly gained personal independence, making new friends, attending various churches, the ups and downs of courtship, and of pursuing studies toward MA and PhD degrees in English literature. First, I scanned the letters electronically in the Van Wylen Library. Then, I edited them and am now condensing the diary entries to focus on my social, intellectual, and spiritual growth, revealing the cultural milieu of a graduate student living in a dormitory at a big-ten university in the late 1960s.

Later in the year, on November 13, in the company of Van Raalte Institute colleagues and their spouses, I enjoyed hearing the ambassador of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United States, Birgitta Tazelaar, speak at the Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville. I appreciated her reflections on the importance of maintaining alliances.

Throughout the year, I enjoyed informative and entertaining conversations over coffee and sweets around the table with colleagues in the conference room of the Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center.

### **Excerpts from personal letters to parents, April 29, 1970**

“It’s now 12:40 a.m. . . . and the campus seems rather quiet. I have a slight headache. There was a violent demonstration or rather series of demonstrations today. . . . On the corner of 11th and Neil . . . students tried to barricade the street by closing to traffic the gate to the university. Police came. Students gathered, and police shot tear gas to disperse them. The crowd reassembled on the Oval and harassed the Administration building. . . .

“After class I went to Denney Hall for office hours. At about 4:40 p.m. one of my officemates came from the English Department main office and asked me to help her clear out everyone from the fifth floor because the whole building had to be evacuated. The office had received word that police were going to tear gas the students around the Administration Building and Denney Hall so that the office workers and officials at the Administration Building could go home.

“I was curious to find out what tear gas smelled like and curious about the crowd so I stayed outside near the front of Denney Hall. One guy wearing a helmet saying “strike” carried a stick and told a girl how happy he was to clobber a cop this morning. Then the police dragged a student out of the Administration Building the back way, which I was nearest to. . . . The crowds yelled “they got one” and stormed after the police car which made its way fast through the crowd. The student who was happy about clobbering the cop tried to stand in the way of the moving car and almost got hit. He threw his stick at the paddy wagon, and cursed. The mob shifted. The tear gas was thrown, and the crowds ran, and ran I [*sic*] ahead of them so I wouldn’t get trampled. . . . I went to Jones Tower to the top and saw fireworks-like light and then the tear gas came, and tears ran down; my eyes stung.”



## Don Sinnema

I continue to work at the VRI one day a week, doing research on my projects.

I have just completed editing a collection of my articles, both previously published and new articles, on the Synod of Dordt (1618-19) and the Canons of Dordt. This volume will be published by Reformation Heritage Books in 2025. Five of these articles were published in Portuguese this past year, under the title *A História de Dordt*.

An article of mine was published in honor of Erik de Boer, titled “Johannes Bogerman’s First Draft of Chapter One of the Canons of Dordt,” in the volume *Gevarieerde Oogst* (2024).

I have also been at work updating various chapters of my dissertation on the Synod of Dordt. As a general editor of a series of volumes that will publish all the documents of the Synod of Dordt, I am also working on vol. 3, which includes the early drafts and related documents that went into the drafting of the Canons of Dordt.

### **Excerpt from “Johannes Bogerman’s First Draft of Chapter One of the Canons of Dordt,” 124.**

“Bogerman’s first draft was simply a one-page document, with only four articles on the Reformed view of predestination. . . . When compared with the final version of the Canons of Dordt, Bogerman’s first draft is strikingly similar. Sixty percent of the text of his first draft is found in Articles I.1, 6, 7, and 8 of the final version. As for the definition of election . . . 74 percent of the text of Art. I.7 of the final Canons is found already in Bogerman’s first draft. . . . It is apparent that Johannes Bogerman, in his role as president of the Synod of Dordt, exercised a paramount influence on the composition and character of the Canons of Dordt, and this is evident already in his very first fragmentary draft of chapter 1.”





## *Jan Boersema, with Anthonia Boersema-Bremmer*

The year 2024 was a real VRI year for us and with a surprising additional role . . . for missionaries. We spent almost the entire year, in between our other tasks, working on our book, *Wij Brachten de Wildernis tot Bloei* (We brought the wilderness to bloom). In the autumn, we traveled to Holland, Michigan, for a second time that year for several weeks to really finish this book. We succeeded. The text went to the publisher (Atlas-Contact in Amsterdam) shortly before Christmas and has now been edited. Once the proofs are in, we will start thinking more concretely about promotion of the book. Pieter Stokvis and George Harinck have already agreed to write reviews.

Having finished the writing process, we were finally free to start thinking about a ground-floor home, an apartment. These are extremely scarce in our area, but in mid-December, we suddenly received an offer that seemed very suitable. We responded promptly and were indeed able to buy the apartment just before Christmas. It is located just across the border from Leiden and Oegstgeest, about three hundred meters from our current house, and is part of the former Mission House of the Reformed Church.

Dutch people who went to work in missions (like Don Luidens' and Paul Heusinkveld's parents) used to be trained there. In 2002 it was renovated, and twelve apartments were created. The attached photo shows our new home in Oegstgeest, a ground-floor apartment.



One notable event of the past year was the establishment of a special chair for Christian Ecological Thinking at the Theological University of Utrecht. This is the first chair in this field in the Netherlands. The chair is named after Martine Vonk (1974-2019), one of my PhD students and a pioneer in the field of religion and sustainability. She was an incredibly inspiring person. I have been closely involved in the plans to get this chair off the ground, and I am serving as chairman of the curatorium. David Onnekink, an historian who specializes in missionaries' views on their natural environment, has been appointed chair holder. He took office last September and delivered his inaugural address.



Anthonia and I are both active in our PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) congregation, and Anthonia continues her work as a language buddy. My work as a confidential counselor ended in the spring, allowing me to spend more time in the writing and editing of the Easter Island conference proceedings. Related to the theme of our “America” book, I wrote one academic article; it is recorded in the publications section of this booklet.



## *James C. Kennedy*

I am currently engaged in many different activities. I am the dean of community engaged learning for all of Utrecht University, as well as a distinguished professor in that field. I am also engaged in helping direct a European Erasmus+ grant to address polarization through education. This academic year, I oversaw an MA course, now required, that teaches students, teachers, and stakeholders in civil society and government to address complex issues. I also participate in conferences and networks to strengthen this new form of education at the university level. I systematically teach classes, for instance, in summer schools, instructing civil servants about Dutch history to increase their awareness of their responsibility to society.

The other half of my time, I continue to serve as a professor of modern Dutch history and am now chair of political history in the humanities faculty of Utrecht University. That involves both administration and teaching, including my yearly history of the Netherlands course. This has also allowed me to do some historical writing:

- A chapter on historical church-state relations in an edition on religion and local administration (*Religie en locale bestuur*) to appear in March 2025
- A chapter on the persistence of Dutch civil society for the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs (appearing in March 2025)
- A chapter on drug policy and euthanasia in the Netherlands, which appears in the newest edition of *Discovering the Dutch*
- A chapter on the shifting role of Christianity in Europe's industrial revolution in *Entangling Web: The Fractious Story of Christianity in Europe. The Global Story of Christianity*, ed. Alec Ryrie and Mark A. Lamport (Cascade, 2024)
- A chapter on Dutch mourning culture since the 1970s in a popular book dedicated to the theme "Hoe besta je na?"

I am spending most of my research time trying to write a new twentieth-century history of the Netherlands and revise my *Concise History of the Netherlands* (2017) for Cambridge University Press

I also engage in other public activities, continuing to write fortnightly a column for the Dutch daily *Trouw*, as well as participating in numerous radio and television programs. Beyond this, I speak regularly for Dutch publics on their own history and that of the United States. These speaking engagements included giving the keynote speech marking seventy-five years of the Fulbright program in the Netherlands. In the past year, I have also served as an external member of the Hague-based *Raad voor de Leefgeving en Infrastructuur* (Council on the environment and infrastructure), helping them prepare a report on how to counteract systemic failures in key policy-making areas.

# Publications

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- Heusinkveld, Paul. *Returning to Kodai School*. Mindscapes Press, 2024.  
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# Presentations

- Aay, Henk. Lecture. "American Eyes on the Netherlands." Calvin University. Sponsored by the GEO Dept. and the Frederik Meijer Chair in Dutch Language and Culture, November 22, 2024.
- Heusinkveld, Paul. Lecture on *Elephant Baseball* (Eerdmans, 2017). A description of my life as a missionary child and, in particular, the years I spent at a missionary boarding school in Kodaikanal, South India. Holland Home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 7, 2024.
- . Lecture. "The Middle East in Transition." Hope Academy of Senior Professionals (HASP), Holland, Michigan, October 7, 2024.
- . Lecture on *Elephant Baseball*. Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, October 15, 2024.
- Swierenga, Robert P. State History Award from the Historical Society of Michigan in the Books: Private Printing category. *A. C. Van Raalte: Pastor by Vocation, Entrepreneur by Necessity*. Van Raalte Press, 2023.
- . "Dauntless Domine: Van Raalte's Struggles in the Holland Colony." Calvin University CALL program, May 16, 2024.
- . "A. C. Van Raalte: Reluctant Seceder." Calvin University CALL program, May 24, 2024.
- . "Van Raalte's Contributions to the Founding of Holland." Holland Home's Breton Ridge Campus, June 20, 2024.
- . "Van Raalte's Life and Contributions." Harderwyk CRC Luncheon Series, Oct. 21, 2024.
- . Interview by phone. "Rise of Christian Nationalism in the US," by Elian Yahye. *Nederlands Dagblad* (daily newspaper), Sept. 10, 2024.
- . Film interview of Robert P. Swierenga family foundation for "Celebration of Philanthropy: Rooted in Community." Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, Sept. 12, 2024.
- . "Dutch Immigrants in Western Michigan," by Femke Veltman and film crew. Netherlands Public Television podcast, Nov. 5, 2024.
- Voskuil, Dennis. Lecture. "The Controversial Origins of Western Theological Seminary." Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, October 2024.
- . Lecture. "The Early History of Western Theological Seminary." Hope Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan, May 2024.

Publications  
**by Senior and Visiting  
Research Fellows**  
and Other Associates of  
the Van Raalte Institute,  
1994-2024

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(\*AADAS publications)



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# VRI Visiting Research Fellows Lecture Series

***Dutch American Identity Politics: The Use of History by Dutch Immigrants*** (2003)  
Hans Krabbendam, Roosevelt Study Center, the Netherlands

***The Rain of God: Reformed Church in America Growth and Decline in Historical Perspective*** (2004)  
Lynn M. Japinga, Hope College

***Dutch Entrepreneurship: Spirit or Ideology?*** (2004)  
Hans Niemantsverdriet, Amsterdam

***Reassessing 1857: Overlooked Considerations Concerning the Birth of the Christian Reformed Church*** (2006)  
James A. De Jong, Calvin Theological Seminary

***Disease and Death among the Early Settlers in Holland, Michigan*** (2006)  
J. P. Verhave, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

***Growing Up Dutch American: Cultural Identity and the Formative Years of Older Dutch Americans*** (2007)  
Peter Ester, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

***The Dutch Equation in the RCA Freemasonry Controversy, 1865-1885*** (2008)  
Harry Boonstra, Calvin College and Seminary

***“We live presently under a waning moon”***: Nicholas Martin Steffens as Leader of the Reformed Church in America in the West in Years of Transition (1878-1895) (2008)  
George Harinck, VU University Amsterdam

***Preachers, Pews, and Pupils: Commemorating the Past in Twentieth-Century Dutch America*** (2008)  
David Zwart, Dordt College

***“Pope of the Classis”?*** The Leadership of Albertus C. Van Raalte in Dutch and American Classes (2009)  
Leon van den Broeke, VU University Amsterdam

***Dutch Americans and the Rise of Heritage Studies*** (2010)  
Michael Douma, Florida State University

***Hope: The Legacy of Van Raalte*** (2011)  
Rein Nauta, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

***Documentary Films of the Netherlands Shown in the United States, 1942-1973: Viewership, Representativeness, and Visual Rhetoric*** (2013)  
Henk Aay, Calvin College

***Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America*** (2015)  
Eugene Heideman, RCA staff member, retired

***“We Made the Wilderness to Blossom”***: Nineteenth-Century Dutch Immigrants and the Natural World (2015)  
Henk Aay, Calvin College, and Jan Boersema, Leiden University, NL

***Seeds of Hope, Seeds of Hate: A Love Story (Begins)* (2016)**

Don Luidens, Hope College

***A Japanese and a Dutchman in Science: Stories of a Dramatic Disaster* (2017)**

Jan Peter Verhave, Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL

***Plugging in the Electric Church: Robert Schuller, the Crystal Cathedral and Entrepreneurial Evangelicalism* (2018)**

Mark Mulder, Calvin College

***Eleanor Calverley, First Doctor to Kuwait: Celebrating 100 Years of Kuwait-American Friendship* (2018)**

Paul Heusinkveld, Honorary Research Fellow

***Paterson, New Jersey: Dutch Immigration's Largest Afterthought (1846-1950)* (2019)**

Robert Schoone-Jongen, Calvin University

***The Pull at Hope College: Then and Now, 1898-2018* (2019)**

Bruce Geelhoed, Ball State University

***Patriots and Internationalists: Dutch American Religion and Global Consciousness in the Late 19th Century* (2019)**

Andrew Klumpp, Southern Methodist University

***The History of Divorce in the Reformed Church in America* (2022)\***

Lynn M. Japinga, Hope College

***Robert H. Schuller and Church Growth Christianity* (2022)**

Mark T. Mulder, Calvin University

***Edward D. Dimment and His Memorial Chapel* (2022)**

Judy Tanis Parr, Honorary Research Fellow

***The Origins of the Hope-Calvin Men's Basketball Rivalry* (2023)**

Chad Carlson, Hope College

***The Holland Area's First Entrepreneurs: Who They Were, What They Did, and Why They Were Successful* (2023)**

Steven VanderVeen, Hope College

\*Videos links of lectures since 2022 are posted at [hope.edu/vri](http://hope.edu/vri)

# Van Raalte Institute Staff

(2024)

## **Henk Aay**

*Senior Research Fellow (2013)*  
BA (Hons.) Wilfrid Laurier University  
MA Clark University  
PhD Clark University

## **Jan J. Boersema**

*Visiting Research Fellow (2014, 2015)*  
*Honorary Research Fellow (2019)*  
BS Groningen University  
MA Groningen University  
PhD Groningen University

## **Donald J. Bruggink**

*Senior Research Fellow (2003)*  
BA Central College  
BD Western Theological Seminary  
PhD University of Edinburgh  
DD (honorary) Central College

## **George Harinck**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2009)*  
BA Leiden University  
MA Leiden University  
PhD Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
[or Free University]

## **Paul Heusinkveld**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2018)*  
*Senior Research Fellow (2021)*  
BA Hope College  
MA studies University of Arizona

## **Earl Wm. Kennedy**

*Senior Research Fellow (2003)*  
*Senior Research Fellow Emeritus (2022)*  
AB Occidental College  
BD Fuller Theological Seminary  
ThM Princeton Theological Seminary  
ThD Princeton Theological Seminary

## **James C. Kennedy**

*Research Fellow (1997-2005)*  
*Honorary Research Fellow (2010)*  
BSFS Georgetown University  
MACS Calvin College  
PhD University of Iowa

## **Nella Kennedy**

*Senior Research Fellow, Official Translator (2010)*  
AB Northwestern College  
MA University of Iowa  
PhD studies University of Iowa

## **Hans Krabbendam**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2009)*  
MA Leiden University

MA Kent State University  
PhD Leiden University

## **Donald A. Luidens**

*Senior Research Fellow (2016)*  
*Director (2019)*  
*Editor, Missionary Memoirs Series (2021)*  
*Editor-in-Chief, Van Raalte Press (2023)*  
BA Hope College  
MDiv Princeton Theological Seminary  
MA, Rutgers University  
PhD Rutgers University

## **Jacob E. Nyenhuis**

*Editor-in-Chief, Van Raalte Press (2007)*  
*Director Emeritus (Director, 2002-15;*  
*Interim Director, 2017-19)*  
*Senior Research Fellow (2001-2)*  
*Provost Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Classics*  
*(1975-2001)*  
AB Calvin College  
AM Stanford University  
PhD Stanford University  
LittD (honorary) Hope College

## **Judy Parr**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2022)*  
BA Hope College  
MA Ohio State University  
PhD Ohio State University

## **Donald Sinnema**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2023)*  
BA Dordt University  
MPhil Institute for Christian Studies  
PhD University of St. Michael's College,  
Toronto

## **JoHannah Smith**

*Project Editor and Office Manager (2010)*  
AB Hope College  
MA studies University of Houston; Grand  
Valley State University

## **Robert P. Swierenga**

*A. C. Van Raalte Research Professor and Adjunct*  
*Professor of History (1996)*  
BA Calvin College  
MA University of Iowa  
PhD University of Iowa

## **Jan Peter Verhave**

*Honorary Research Fellow (2009)*  
BS VU University Amsterdam  
MA VU University Amsterdam  
PhD University of Nijmegen

## **Dennis N. Voskuil**

*Senior Research Fellow (2014)*  
*Director (2015-17)*  
*Interim Hope College President (2017-19)*  
BS (Hons.) University of Wisconsin  
BD Western Theological Seminary  
PhD Harvard University



# Applications Invited **Visiting Research Fellows**

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*for Academic Year 2025-2026*

The Van Raalte Institute at Hope College invites applications from qualified scholars for a fellowship offered through the Visiting Research Fellows Program. Up to two fellowships per academic year will be awarded, each for not more than ten weeks in duration and with a stipend of up to \$3,000.

The Netherland-America Foundation Visiting Research Fellowship was established by a grant in 2006 from the Netherland-America Foundation. The goal of this fellowship is to promote international linkage between the Netherlands and the United States in order to enhance mutual understanding and respect.

**Criteria for Selection:** Proposals for support must demonstrate that the proposed research fits the mission statement of the institute, that the scholar is qualified to conduct such research, and that the resources of the institute and of the Hope College Archives and Special Collections are essential to the conduct of that research. A current curriculum vitae should be submitted with the application. The NAF Fellowship is intended solely for respected scholars from the Netherlands.

**Application Process and Deadline:** Information about expectations, arrangements, and the application process may be obtained from our website at [www.hope.edu/vri](http://www.hope.edu/vri).