

## Making a Defense

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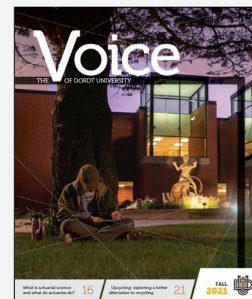
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### Our Mission

As an institution of higher education committed to a Reformed Christian perspective, Dordt University equips students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.

### On the Cover

Fall was long and glorious on Dordt's campus this year. Early evenings offered striking settings for studying or simply enjoying light's magic as it reflected from windows and off sculptures.



# MAKING A DEFENSE

I have served for nearly a decade as president of Dordt University. One question I've been asked often is about Dordt's identity as "the Defenders."

It's a name that we have begun to use more often, from referring to our alumni base as "Defender Nation" to establishing our place athletically as "Defender Athletics."

Where did the name "Defender" come from? The story goes that when Dordt started a basketball team and needed a name, then-president Rev. B.J. Haan and his family decided on "Defenders" one night at the dinner table. It was to signal that Dordt was to be a "Defender of the Christian faith."



Since Dordt has a rich history of grounding our activities firmly in the Word of God, this vague provenance has bothered me—until this summer when in my personal devotions I paused and pondered 1 Peter 3:15: "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

It seems to me that this passage offers a good foundation for Dordt's use of "Defender," and it's timely, too. The Reformed tradition, which is our unwavering institutional commitment, has many strong attributes, but evangelism and apologetics aren't normally "top of mind" for us—which I believe needs to be righted.

1 Peter 3:15 helps us affirm the preeminence of Christ and spurs us on to a life of holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. It also moves us to take up both the Old Testament calling to be a witness for God (Isaiah

43:10) and the New Testament charge from Christ to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). And it challenges us to live in ways that are peculiar in our contemporary context—that is, if we don't live in ways that cause people to ask about our hope, perhaps we're conforming too much to the patterns of this world (Romans 12:1-2). The passage calls us to hope—and to live in ways that make that hope evident to non-believers who cross our paths in the everyday lives we're called to by Christ. Particularly now, the admonition to be people of "gentleness and respect" is a needed commodity in a culture bent upon cancellation, animosity, and lack of manners. It also offers grace—since this letter was written by Peter, the disciple who denied even knowing Christ while warming himself in Pilate's courtyard. Thus, if we're not perfect in our "defense" the first time, we shouldn't be discouraged—we should redouble our efforts to press on for the future.

Since coming to Dordt 25 years ago, I've been inspired by the depth of thought and the biblical intentionality with which we carry out our work. We're a principled people who take seriously the Founders Vision to ground everything we do biblically and deeply.

I can't rewrite history to now suggest that the choice of "Defenders" so many years ago was built upon this wonderful passage from Peter's letter. However, during the rest of my presidency, when I'm asked the "Why Defenders?" question, I'll give this hopeful response. Maybe you will, too.

DR. ERIK HOEKSTRA, PRESIDENT