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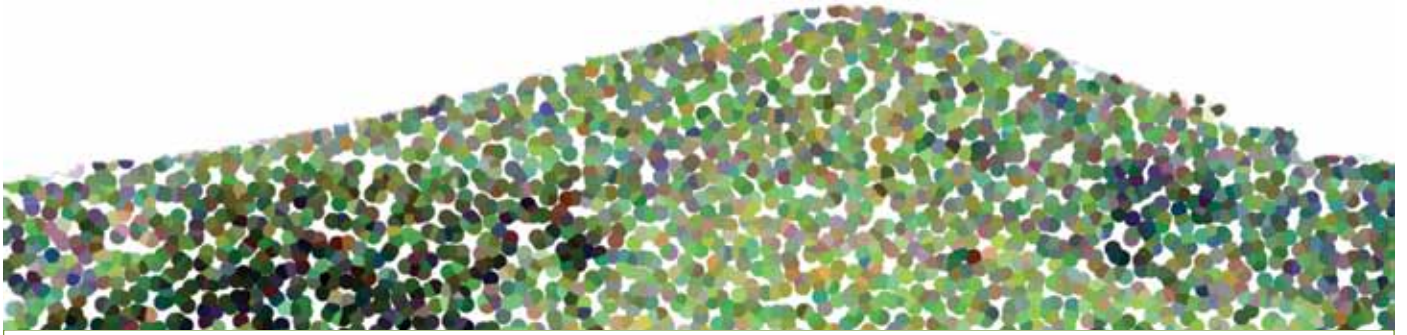
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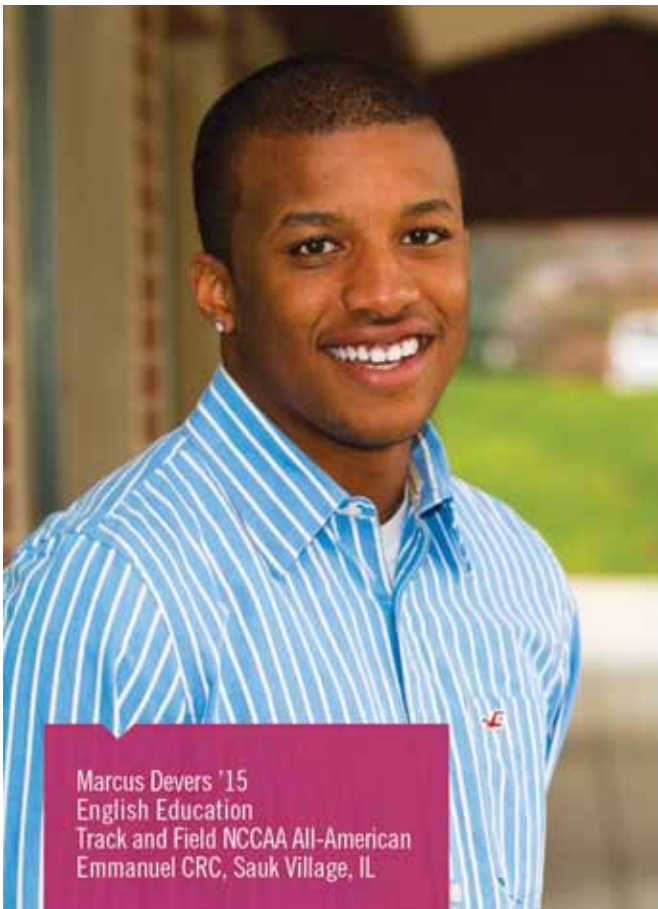


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Cover: Sandro Botticelli, detail of *Annunciation*, 1489-90
Tempera on panel, 59 x 613/8 in. (150 x 156 cm)
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
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Living with a Foot in Each World

FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS I'VE BEEN BLESSED to work in two very different worlds: the denomination (as an editor) and my local congregation (as a pastor). In the past, as a full-time pastor, it was easy to lose sight of all we do together as churches through our denomination. And it's a *lot*. More recently, as a full-time editor at Faith Alive, I was in daily contact with denominational work, but did not always see how that connected with congregational life. So having a foot in both worlds is a real privilege, especially because I have such a great team of coworkers in each.

In a much more profound and significant way, the old priest Zechariah (Luke 1) needs to learn to live in two worlds as well: the world as it presents itself here below and the world above (the kingdom of heaven) that is poised to reassert its presence big-time on this planet.

The angel Gabriel's sudden appearance startles Zechariah. While heaven teems with angels, down here few had been seen for centuries. And when Gabriel announces that he and Elizabeth shall have a son—and *what* a son!—Zechariah doesn't buy it. He's so used to living only in this world, where angels don't show up even in temples, where seniors don't have babies even though they've prayed for them all their lives, and where a downtrodden remnant of God's people muddle through routines and rituals as they've been told but without real hope of significant change from their routine existence.

When the heavenly realm joyously begins to invade his space, Zechariah freezes like a startled deer.

So when the heavenly realm joyously begins to invade his space, Zechariah freezes like a startled deer. Life in ancient Jerusalem never taught him how to deal with real-life realities that are run of the mill in that heavenly kingdom.

Zechariah *faithfully* goes through the motions dictated by the old age of shadows: the temple service. But his inability to believe the angel's good news betrays his deeper *faithlessness*. He's unprepared for what will happen shortly, though in heaven everything has been readying itself since time immemorial for the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4). And now it has

come. The angel chorus, the Shekinah (God-revelation) in Bethlehem's fields, the "voice in the wilderness," and Immanuel—all ready to roll.

Never again will we need to live in just one world—nor may we, for we now see no one from an earthly point of view (2 Cor. 5:16). The brief glimpses of glory once caught by priests behind the curtain are now transformed into a daily revelation of God with us through a Spirit that indwells us always and everywhere.

It's not good for us to adopt just one perspective. But worse—much worse—would be living as if heaven's best had not come to tent among us (John 1:14), full of grace and truth. Let's never get tired of reminding ourselves and each other, with the eye of faith, to see that kingdom of God, right here, right now. Let's let our Christmas celebration remind us to keep our eyes open throughout Anno Domini 2013 for heaven's daily presence in our earthly lives. ■



Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta.

Bob De Moor Editor

Judy Hardy Associate Editor

Gayla R. Postma News Editor

Henry Hess Editor,
Together Doing More

Kristy Quist Tuned In Editor

Karen DeVries Copy Editor

Joyce Kane Editorial Assistant

Dean R. Heetderks Art Director

Pete Euwema Graphic Design

Frank Gutbrod Graphic Design

Contact Us

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560

Address Changes and Subscriptions
800-777-7270 or visit our website at
www.thebanner.org

Classified Advertising
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Display Advertising
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Editorial
616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News
613-330-3145 news@thebanner.org

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Wake Up and Pay Attention

RECENTLY I stumbled across a television program set in Northern Ireland—a mystery program called “Single-Handed.” I’m a sucker for mysteries. But I was less captivated by the story line than I was by the landscape Detective Jack Driscoll drove through every day to do his sleuthing: a landscape of winding roads through barren hills, dramatic skies filled with dark clouds that opened up to sudden flashes of sunlight, and ocean waves that crashed along the shore as birds hovered overhead looking for elusive fish. I was mesmerized.

Why, I asked myself, was I so struck by this scene—particularly by the sky? I think it was because that sky was so spacious, such an incredibly large and dynamic canopy over what seemed to be a closed-in and introspective world.

Jack and the residents of this beautiful and terrible landscape seemed not to notice the sky. Instead their eyes were trained on the road of life in front of them. Jack never brought his car to a

screaming halt to stare in wonder at the sky or even to really see the people inhabiting his world: the distressed woman hanging her laundry out despite the cold and biting wind, the man trying to find his footing as he herds his sheep on a rocky slope, the children running into the old school at the sound of the bell, or the man arguing with his wife by the front door. He and the other residents were focused, as am I most of the time, on the immediate concerns of life—making a living, sustaining relationships, fulfilling obligations.

But I am in the midst of Advent, that season in the church year that calls me to a larger perspective. The readings and the ritual say to me, “Wake up! Pay attention! See, God is doing a new thing, even now, even today, hidden in the midst of everyday life. Do you see it?”

It is almost the winter solstice, and darkness comes early to my part of the world. Sunlight and clouds are hidden from view, but I am reminded that wonderful things also grow in the dark: seeds and babies, compassion and reconcilia-

tion, healing and hope, challenge and fortitude. And if I’m aware of this, my heart becomes larger, more open, like the sky, knowing that I am encompassed by and part of a dynamic and powerful love that enfolds the world.

I’m abiding in the hope of Advent even though I am deeply affected by the strife in the world and the brokenness of the human family. I’m painfully aware that all of creation waits for redemption. But Advent reminds me of the expanse of mercy in which we live, a saving grace that is here among us and for which we wait with joyful longing. Do you see it? ■



Joyce Kane is editorial assistant for *The Banner*.

“[Our story] is a chronicle of yearning for the inbreaking of God’s living face into . . . personal history and into the history of . . . imperfect times. It is the eschatological yearning, echoing the prophet Isaiah’s cry, ‘O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.’”

— JONATHAN MONTALDO



Muzak

THE BANNER

As if in a box store, some of God's people hear the music but don't really hear it.



IT'S SUNDAY MORNING.

Shoppers in department stores, shopping malls, cruise ships, and airports, along with countless callers on hold, are gently, often subconsciously, immersed in elevator music shipped in by the Muzak Holdings Corporation of Fort Mill, S.C., a company best known for distributing instrumental arrangements of popular music. Muzak, also called elevator music, incorporates relaxed, simple melodies that have been found to have a psychological effect: it tends to make people slow down and browse longer. It makes them listen and linger. They hear the music, yet don't hear it.

Meanwhile, in churches across North America, about 15 or 20 minutes before the worship service starts, a musician begins to play devotional music. This musician might be an organist—someone who is trained to unlock the mysteries of thumb pistons and toe studs and is a magician with his or her feet—or it might be a pianist who chooses a minor-key selection with a Picardian third or who plays variations on a theme. In either case, these musicians (who frequently volunteer their services in church) have studied

and practiced for years in order to develop their musical skills.

These musicians are using their gifts and talents in church to praise the Lord. The music they are playing is designed to guide the congregation into worship and prepare people's hearts for the opening of God's Word. The selections they play are chosen with care, often to complement the pastor's forthcoming message.

Sadly, though, in some churches, instead of listening to the music, people use this time to talk, to share information with friends about their children and grandchildren, their illnesses, or other items of interest.

In the meantime, the musicians play.

As if in a box store, some of God's people hear the music but don't really hear it. So they miss out on the significance of a particular softly-played musical phrase or the deliberate slowing down of another. And all that talking interferes with those who *do* want to listen to the music but are prevented from doing so because of the chatter.

This is not good.

Instead, let's honor the gifts and talents of the dedicated church musicians who guide us into worship. They will be heartened and encouraged when members of the congregation listen to their devotional offerings and allow themselves to be shaped by their ministry of music.

If we talk before the service, might we practice congregational whispering? ■



Frank DeVries is the author of two short novels and has published many hymns and songs for children. He attends Gateway Christian Reformed

Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

LE



Who Are the Vulnerable?

I appreciate Kate Kooyman's concern for "the vulnerable" ("Can We Talk First?" October 2012) or the humans in need she mentions several times in her discussion with Edward Gabrielse. However, I'm curious to know how she feels about the *most* vulnerable among us: the unborn children the Obama administration has shown little or no concern for. The official Democratic Party platform calls for abortion on demand and opposes "any and all" efforts to restrict abortions. Their official language also states that the party "strongly and unequivocally supports *Roe v. Wade*," the 1973 Supreme Court decision effectively legalizing most abortions.

Kate's argument for supporting the Obama administration because she believes they do more to protect the vulnerable from a life of poverty ignores the larger injustice [of] preventing life at all. Like Kate, I too hope to vote for a candidate who does not forget the vulnerable.

—Joel Feekes
Oklahoma City, Okla.

The political dialogue in the October Banner ("Can We Talk First?") spoke of jobs, capitalism, and entitlements. Discussion about the vulnerable was about the poor. We live in a country that aborts over 1 million truly vulnerable lives a year.

TTERS

They did not volunteer to be aborted. We have a president and a political party that claim to believe that abortion should be safe, legal, and rare. To date, they have given us only the first two goals. Until the CRC attacks this issue head on from both the pulpit and *The Banner*, our denomination will, at best, lead from behind.

—Gary J. Tenpas
Menomonee Falls, Wisc.

I noticed that neither Edward Gabrielse nor Kate Kooyman discussed the “life” issue in their article (“Can We Talk First?”). For me the very first criterion when I choose a candidate is whether he or she is pro-life or pro-abortion.

—Jim Kuipers
Newaygo, Mich.

I appreciate the thoughts expressed by the authors (“Can We Talk First?”) but feel they missed the point. The Bible is emphatic about the fact that God’s desire was to have Israel serve and worship him as the supreme King of kings. Whenever they disobeyed God, he permitted heathen nations to take them captive.

God is undoubtedly concerned about the worldwide economy and social issues. However, I feel the article would have been more relevant to the Christian community if it had addressed which candidate would do the best job of orchestrating a nation that glorifies and praises the Supreme Ruler of the universe.

—Harv Brouwer
Grand Rapids, Mich.

What Would Jesus Do?

Kathy Vandergrift’s comment “Silence is also a political choice” (“FAQs,” September 2012) says much about our church today. By our silence we are choosing to be politically impotent in a world that is teeming with poor and powerless people,

the very people about whom Jesus had so much to say.

Our ministers rarely say anything about our wars and other oppression. They, and we in the congregation, never seem even to pray about war, except for our own soldiers. What about the innocent victims? And what about the causes of war, which certainly include domination and oppression?

I’ve asked a couple of ministers, with little result, to please be more prophetic in these troubled times. To the extent that they and we do not at least speak out, we are rapidly losing our Reformed (and reforming) potential.

Could we still renew our Reformed potential (in the tradition of John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper)? Jesus spoke out vehemently on the issue of the powerful and powerless. What would he have us do?

—Ron Vander Kooi
Arvada, Col.

Introverts

Mr. Selles’s brand of introversion strikes me as a bit extreme (“Negotiating Coffee Time,” September 2012). But there are degrees in everything, and you can just as well be an introvert with a score of 17 (mine) as with a score of 71. Not everything he writes about introversion need apply to you, and you don’t need to worry about being weird because you are more socially inclined than he is.

Still, it might be worthwhile for congregations to offer their members the opportunity to take the MBTI [Myers Briggs Type Indicator] inventory. I remember feeling that the results validated my differences tremendously.

—Michèle Gyselinck
Montreal, Quebec

Adam and Eve

Like a refreshing rain on a drought-stressed land your article lifted my spirit (“Did

Adam and Eve Really Exist?” August 2012). Thank you, Bernard Van Ee, for so simply and concisely articulating and reinforcing the very foundation of God’s Word.

When we meddle with Genesis, we also meddle with the entire gospel. As a denomination let us never waver in stressing the historicity of Genesis.

—Ray Dykstra
Listowel, Ontario

I appreciate the stand Bernard Van Ee takes (“Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?”). Science is an excellent tool to discover how awesome our God’s creation is, but science today seems limited because many scientists do not accept the existence of a Creator. Even some Christian scientists who accept the existence of a Creator seem to have a difficult time believing that the Creator can work outside the laws that he created. This can result in ignoring or marginalizing much of God’s supernatural work in the Bible, including the miraculous redemptive work and story of our Lord Jesus Christ. If God’s miraculous intervention in his history is removed from the Bible, God’s story in his Word is incomplete.

—Dick Van Eck
Yorba Linda, California

Lament

I greatly appreciated Professor Wolterstorff’s article (“The Art of Lament,” August 2012). He and I share a common experience in the loss of a son. A faith that incorporates grief is certainly stronger and richer than a faith that sings only praise songs.

—Harvey R. Heerspink
Jenison, Mich.

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NEWS

NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

For correspondents' email addresses, see www.thebanner.org.

Gayla R. Postma News Editor
Email: gpostma@crana.org

Jeff Arnold
Classes Kalamazoo, Lake Erie
734-790-0843

Sarah J. Boonstra
Classes Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone
303-247-0697

Anita Brinkman
Classes Chatham, Huron
519-354-9126

Gregory Chandler
Classes Georgetown, Grandville
616-392-8434

Shashi DeHaan
Classes Arizona, Red Mesa
623-418-6705

Monica deRegt
Classes Hamilton, Niagara, Toronto
905-385-6697

Callie Feyen
Classes Atlantic NE, Hackensack, Hudson
240-422-1171

Janet A. Greidanus
Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/
Saskatchewan
780-484-3370

Melissa Holtrop
Classes Central Plains, Chicago South,
Northern Illinois
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Jonathan J. Kim
Classes Pacific Hammi
626-616-0411

Daina Kraai
Classes Muskegon, Northern Michigan
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Noah Kruis
Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids
North
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Kate Padilla
Classes Iakota, Heartland, Northcentral Iowa
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Ryan Struyk
Classes Grand Rapids South, Thornapple
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Roxanne Van Farowe
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Brenda Visser
Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte
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Heidi Wicker
Classes California South, Central California,
Greater L.A.
209-599-3799

Tracey Yan
Classes B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East
604-420-3030

Louis Tamminga
In Memoriam articles
616-949-4539

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Holland Church Celebrates Christmas Around the World

Church members gather at Faith Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., in December to celebrate Christmas with customs from their countries of origin with an event called Christmas Around the World. In the past, these have included Chile, Burma, Honduras, India, Argentina, and Micronesia.

Prayers and songs are offered in different languages. Dramas and acting out the Christmas story according to various customs are part of the celebration. Last year, a crowd of people marched around the church singing a song in Spanish (Villancico para pedir posada) asking for a room at the inn. Half of the crowd gathered on one side of the door with a guitar player; with voices joined in harmony, they asked if there



Members of Faith CRC celebrate Christmas Around the world.

DAINA KRAAI

was any room for them at the inn. On the other side of the door, the rest responded in song that there was not, until finally the crowd reached a door where they entered in with joy.

The event is organized by Enrique Gomez, pastor of Hispanic

ministries at Faith, and his wife, Febe. "Since Faith CRC is becoming more diverse, we have been looking for opportunities to fellowship with one another," said Febe. "We just want to celebrate the fact that among the diversity, there is still unity in Christ." —Daina Kraai

Personalized Advent Calendars Remind British Columbia Teens of Jesus

The youth at Willoughby Christian Reformed Church find photos of themselves on the pockets of their Advent calendars.

The personalized calendars were the inspiration of youth group leader Stephanie Roukema last year. "I had the idea to do this for my small group," she said. "I shared the idea with my fellow youth leaders, and we got a little more ambitious and decided to include our entire youth group."

The youth leaders make the calendars. "Aside from the excitement of chocolate," said Roukema, "the goal was for the kids to not only be reminded of Advent each day in December, but also that they are a part of a youth group that celebrates Jesus Christ together. The pictures on each door were meant to appreciate each individual's unique personality and contributions to our group."



Young adults at Willoughby CRC with their Advent calendars last year, (back l-r): Stephanie Roukema, Jonathan Vanderheyden, Ryan Roukema, James Farenhorst; (front l-r): Sonya VanHove, Benjamin Bouwman, Karen Breedveld, Melissa Nierop.

—Jenny deGroot



Volunteers at First CRC wrap hundreds of gifts for others each Christmas season.

Wrapping Up Happiness for Christmas

Not all kids experience the joy of finding brightly wrapped gifts under the tree at Christmas. But for nearly 30 years, members of First Christian Reformed Church, Artesia, Calif., have worked to make that sight a reality for more and more kids.

Volunteers from the church wrap purchased or donated toys for those in need. In December, 30 to 40 people come together to wrap as many as 650 gifts, usually in two to three hours.

"All ages participate, and it is a great night for fellowship," said Shylia Boersma, coordinator of the event.

The Artesia-Cerritos Community Christmas Program provides toys to low-income families. Through toy drives and cash donations, every child is guaranteed a gift.

"It is a way to impress on younger church members that many families cannot even afford to buy toys for their children at Christmas time," said Boersma.

—Heidi Wicker

Christmas Dinner for Lacombe

A Christmas Day dinner put on by members of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, draws as many as 150 community members together to share a meal.

Cora Hoekstra, one of the main organizers, said, "It's a really good way to spend a day as a community. The people who come are very appreciative of having a place to go. They all come desiring community."

The dinner is prepared the day before by one group from the church and is served by another group. Members of the church also bake goodies and decorate the room to create a festive atmosphere. Hoekstra said, "What a fabulous thing to be a part of a community that can do this and wants to do this!"

The traditional turkey dinner is served free of charge. Jeanne Ebens, another organizer, said, "For lots of people Christmas can be a lonely time whether they have money to cook a Christmas dinner or not, and this dinner offers the opportunity to fellowship together."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay



Travis Ebens drains 50 pounds of potatoes for last year's Lacombe Christmas dinner.

Denver Indian Center Offers New Look at Christmas



A Christmas pageant at the Christian Indian Center.

SARAH BOONSTRA

In early December, when Native Americans and non-Native Americans gather to share a Christmas pageant, there is no singing of "Silent Night" or passing of a candle. Instead they share the story of Christ's birth in their own way.

"We asked, 'What if missionaries told us [Native Americans] about Christ and then just left it at that? How would we share that

with our own people?'" said Richard Silversmith, elder of the Christian Indian Center (CIC), a Christian Reformed ministry in Denver. "The answer would be through song, dance, and chants."

So the center seeks to communicate the story of Christ's birth using Navajo and southwest Indian influences.

"We took out the Western worldview and the dualistic world-

view and made it more so the physical and spiritual are one," Silversmith said.

"We wanted our audience to know it's OK to worship Jesus culturally," said Silversmith. He believes that some youth, who had previously felt confused living in two worlds, felt relevant participating. "They found out that they can be a Christian and a Native American," he said. —Sarah Boonstra

NEWS

Calvin College Faces Financial Challenge

Calvin College, which is owned by the Christian Reformed Church, will spend the next five years tightening its financial belt to ward off what could otherwise turn into a debt crisis in 2017.

That's the year the Grand Rapids, Mich., college will face close to \$9 million in annual principal and interest payments on a \$116 million debt taken on in 2007.

The new college president, Michael Le Roy, underscored that there is no current crisis; this year's revenues will meet expenses. "But we can't stick our heads in the sand and operate as usual," he told *The Banner*. So the college is embarking immediately on plans

that will allow it to redirect about 10 percent of its spending over the next four to five years to meet the challenge.

"We are setting criteria for all services to be prioritized," Le Roy said. He refused to speculate on where cuts might be made, saying he didn't want to circumnavigate the review process that will start at the department level all the way up through the board of trustees. "We know we cannot just pass the cost on to students and families," he said. "We know we need to reduce expenses to meet longer-term goals."

Le Roy noted that investment returns have been flat or even negative for much of higher edu-

cation in recent years. "We were involved in higher-risk investments like hedge funds," he said. The investments also included some risky real estate deals.

Recently the college's board of trustees approved hiring a fiduciary investments advisor to review and implement a new investment policy with lower risk and a different diversification strategy.

At the same time, the board also is looking at long-term strategic planning.

"It's really about what kind of institution Calvin wants to become," Le Roy said. "One of the challenges of being Reformed is believing in the value of all things. But the college doesn't have the capacity to do all things. We have to decide what we're going to focus on and be realistic about what we can't do."

Whatever the outcome of the belt-tightening and the strategic plans, Le Roy said he is committed to being open and transparent both within and outside the college.

"We're in this together," he said—"faculty, staff, students, and the denomination." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

Write for *The Banner!*

The Banner is seeking two news writers, one in eastern Canada, and one in the region encompassing Montana, Utah, and Colorado. If you like to write and have a passion for telling stories of how God is at work in the Christian Reformed churches in your area, we'd like to hear from you. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Email expressions of interest to news editor Gayla Postma at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a résumé or letter outlining your news writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

Ontario Choir Sings on Canada's Parliament Hill

Canada's House of Commons was the scene of a unique concert in October.

Southern Ontario's Momentum Choir, a talented group of more than 50 singers with developmental disabilities, performed for Members of Parliament in Ottawa, Ontario.

The choir's executive and artistic director, Mendelt Hoekstra, was delighted at this opportunity for the Niagara-based choir, which he founded in 2007 with just eight members. Hoekstra is a member of Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario. He said, "Momentum's motto is *belong. believe. inspire*. This experience has given us another opportunity to prove this to be true. It has raised the stature of our choir to another level!"

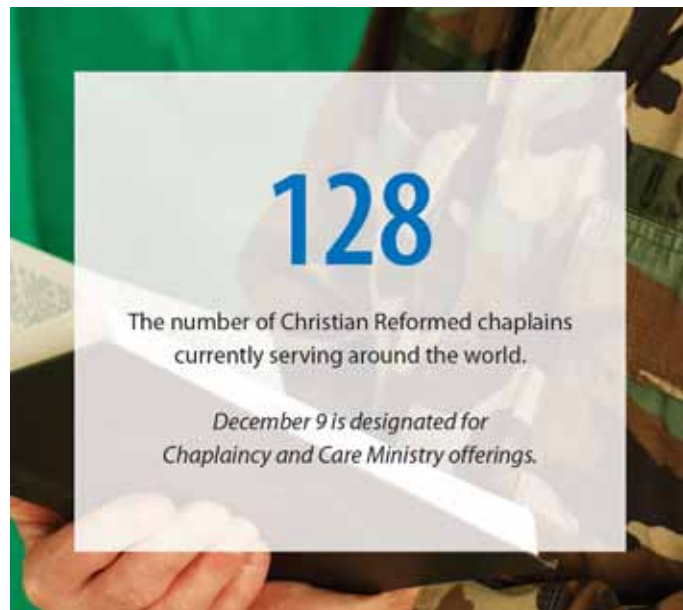
The invitation to perform in Ottawa was extended by St. Catharines Member of Parliament Rick Dykstra, who had heard about the choir's increasing popularity in the region. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Monica deRegt



JOANNE McDONALD

Momentum performs in the rotunda at Centre Block, House of Commons, in Ottawa.





Korean-American Church Focuses on Family Mission

For six years, Rev. Jae Kun Lee and Lord's Love Mission Christian Reformed Church in Bellflower (Calif.) have been working to help Korean-American couples to know God's design for the family and to commit their lives for his purpose.

Lee said, "In today's world, Satan's strategy is to destroy the families, even our Christian families. Family is a small church and church is a big family. If the family

Participants in Lord's Love Mission CRC's family mission seminar.

breaks down, the church will automatically break down too."

He calls people to be family keepers, family watchmen, and family missionaries because "there are still many family members in Christian families who are not saved. They should be our immediate target group."

Over three days, participants learn that God's biggest interest is salvation for all family members. That is why they call it the Family Mission, rather than a family ministry. —Jonathan Kim

Michael Le Roy Installed as Calvin College President

In a service marked by stately hymns, liturgical dance, and words of calling and encouragement, Dr. Michael Le Roy was inaugurated as the tenth president of Calvin College.

Le Roy spoke about Jesus' parable regarding those who build their house on the rock, describing the college as a house of learning built on the rock of God's Word, under construction and renovation since 1876.



Dr. Michael Le Roy

Le Roy also spoke of storm clouds on the horizon, of economic realities forcing significant changes, of a culture that is not helping the next generation be rooted or wise, of neuroscience discoveries challenging long-standing best practices in teaching.

"Storms will come; waters will rise. That is not just a forecast but a certainty," he said. "I believe in our mission. I hope that future generations of historians will say, yes, rain fell and floods came, but the house did not fall because it was founded and built on the rock."

Calvin College is the official college of the Christian Reformed Church, located in Grand Rapids, Mich. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma



inSpirit Christian Reformed Church

Church Plant Blooms During First Three Years

When Tom Bouma walked into inSpirit Christian Reformed Church for the first time two years ago, he knew something was different.

Bouma had been away from the church for several years until a friend recommended he try inSpirit, a young church plant in Byron Center, Mich.

"It doesn't matter what you wear or who you are," he said. "You feel like part of the family there. It's my second home."

Bouma isn't alone. Over inSpirit's three-year history, attendance has grown from 185 to over 300. The facility space has doubled, and the church welcomes up to 30 visitors each week.

Joy Dornbos, a member of the inSpirit leadership team, said success comes from building relationships.

"The key is trying to involve everyone in a small group," she said. "You experience the good times and the bad times. You're there to support each other."

Simplicity is key, said Randy Ledebauer, pastor of inSpirit, "We have a simple strategy: gather, grow, go."

—Ryan Struyk

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Martin Zylstra

1921 – 2012

Rev. Martin Zylstra was part of the tradition of pastors who assumed responsibility for the entire congregational program. Soft-spoken and gentle in his ways and a promoter of Christian education and missions, he died on October 2 as a result of Parkinson's disease.

Zylstra was stationed in Hawaii for the U.S. Army in 1942. Following his discharge he attended Calvin Theological Seminary and entered the gospel ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1952.

Zylstra served congregations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, California, and South Dakota.

He is remembered for the faithfulness and dedication with which he performed his pastoral duties. His congregations loved him in return. Throughout his ministry, Zylstra promoted missions and evangelism. Woodworking and gardening were favorite hobbies.

Zylstra was predeceased by his wife, Carol, and one daughter. He is survived by seven children and their spouses, 17 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga
Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.



Joal with his parents, Paulene and Don Kamps.

Alberta Man Receives Western Canadian Music Award

Joal Kamps, of Calgary, Alberta, won the Western Canadian Music Association's Contemporary Christian/Gospel Album of the Year award for his latest album, *Sojourner*.

Born and raised in the Christian Reformed Church, Kamps refers to himself as a "musician." Through his music, he strives to proclaim the love, grace, and hope found in Jesus Christ.

The 29-year-old guitarist, singer, and songwriter, whose music is described as Rocky Mountain folk-pop, did not expect the award. "I was completely surprised by it," he said, "Prior to this time I had really been questioning and even doubting whether or not music and ministry was my calling. Those doubts, however, have all subsided now." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Janet A. Greidanus

Pastor-Church Relations Celebrates 30 Years

For 30 years, the mission of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) has remained the same: helping CRC pastors and their parishioners thrive together.

In 1982, when synod approved the formation of the ministry, it did so with a dual mandate. The office and its director, Rev. Louis Tamminga, would provide education, consultation, and intervention services.

But within a short time, the consultation and intervention piece of the office's support system became dominant, creating a scenario that at times made the ministry's role misunderstood.

"Some pastors didn't want to see us coming," said Norm Thomasma, who began working with PCR in 2002 before becoming the office's director in 2008. "If PCR was coming, it meant trouble."

If a pastor was separated from the congregation, it was often assumed that the fault lay with the pastor alone. Congregants tended to "vote with their feet," Thomasma said.

It is now increasingly recognized that the abilities and health of not only pastors, but also of lay leaders and congregations as a whole, must receive appropriate attention and care.

"The glue that holds congregations together now is, in many places, a different glue than it used to be," Thomasma said. Denominational loyalty, doctrinal specificity, and a particular culture no longer function the way they used to.

"We're doing needed work, but sometimes separations have



GAVLA R. POSTMA

been so painful, and by the time we get there it's often late in the process," Thomasma said. "So we have to try to get to churches more quickly and assist them in creating a healthy environment for ministry."

—Jeff Arnold

Pastor-Church Relations director Norm Thomasma.

British Columbia Boy's Actions Save Grandfather

Evan Raap, age 7, became a hero to his family and his community when he recently dialed 911 after his grandfather George Epp experienced a medical emergency.

Evan, who attends Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church with his family in Chilliwack, British Columbia, was riding with his grandfather when Epp suddenly pulled the vehicle over and passed out. Evan knew something wasn't right.

"I went in the front of the car, got his phone, and dialed 911. I was worried," Evan explained. He even had the presence of mind to direct emergency personnel to their location based on nearby street signs, allowing officers to arrive within minutes.

Evan's mother, Melissa Raap, explained the most amazing part of the story of her father and her son, the part left out by the public media. "God's hand was so evident that day. Evan was not supposed to be with my dad early that morning," she said. "We know that God put Evan in that car with my dad. It's so amazing how he used Evan in such a special way that day."

Evan has now been recruited by the local police detachment to share his story and bring awareness to the importance of teaching kids how to use cell phones, and how and when to call 911 for help.

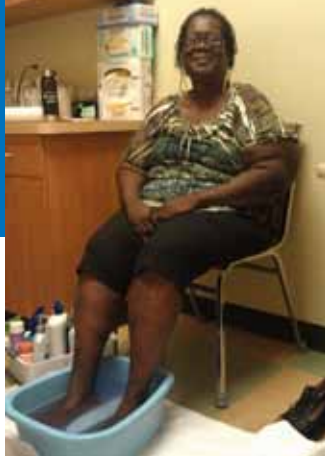
George Epp, who attends New Life CRC in Abbotsford, spent about 10 days in hospital undergoing tests. Doctors believe a seizure may have led to a back injury while he was driving.

—Tracey Yan



MELISSA RAAP

Evan Raap and his grandfather George Epp.



Betty Ann Smith soaks her feet at the foot-washing ministry.

Florida Woman Washes Neighbors' Feet

"Who would like to have their feet washed?" Barb Leunk calls cheerfully into the waiting room of a medical clinic for people with low incomes.

She said that she often gets quizzical looks, but once people try out her free service, they are always pleased.

Leunk is a registered nurse and a member of Bradenton (Florida) Christian Reformed Church.

She spends three hours each week on the service. She trims nails, gives diabetic treatments, soaks feet in bath beads, educates people about foot care, and distributes socks and antifungal creams. Members of the church have generously donated the supplies she needs to run the service, Leunk said.

"I look forward to every week I go, because I realize how important it is for us to be together," Leunk said.

Leunk often discusses spiritual and emotional matters with clients: "It's amazing—people are so open when you're at their feet."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Roxanne Van Farowe

CRC/RCA Classes Meet Together in Arizona

In a historic joint session, Classis Arizona (a regional group of Christian Reformed churches) and Classis Southwest (of the Reformed Church in America) met together in Arizona in September.

The two groups have been working together on a church multiplication initiative in Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz., one of four pilot Kingdom Enterprise Zones funded by the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation.

Now they have combined their church development teams as well.

Derek Van Dalen, stated clerk of Classis Arizona, said, "We are not trying to be together just for the sake of being together, but we want to become more focused on the mission of God."

The meeting included a panel discussion with church planters from both denominations.



Delegates pray over Jose Rayas, pastor of Valley Ridge Community Church, El Paso, Tex.

—Shashi DeHaan

Highlights from 2012 Fall Classis Meetings

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to classis, a regional grouping of churches. Delegates at those meetings review and make decisions about their shared ministries and practice mutual accountability for their congregations' individual ministries. Here are the highlights of the most recent classis meetings:

Several people were **welcomed into ministry**, including seminary graduates Glenn Adams, Nick Bierma, Joel Bootsma, David Bosscher, Aminah Bradford, Jon Bushnell, Wesley Collins, Julie De Graaf, Michael DeWitt, John Eigege, Shaun Furniss, Matthew Haan, Nicholas Hopkins, Hyo-nam Kim, Joseph Kim, Simon Ko, Braden Kok, Petr Kornilov, Ken Kruihof, Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, Roelof Peereboom, Kory Plockmeyer, Katrina Schaafsma, Aaron Thompson, Kelly VanderWoude, Thyra VanKeeken, Brian VanSoelen, and John Wildeboer.

Transferred in from other denominations were Sung Chil Choe, Joseph Hyun, Alison Jones, Tae Kim, Cheon Seon Lee, and Edward Yoon.

Layne Kilbreath and Tim Van Zalen were **readmitted to CRC ministry**. Charles Geschiere, Hyuksoo Kwon, Katrina Schaafsma, and Ellen Van Tongeren were **loaned** to other denominations.

Brad Close, EJ DeWaard, David Heilman, Kevin Jordan, Vinh Paul Le, Michael Miedema, Kasey VanderVeen, and John Wilczewski were **released from their congregations**.

Daniel Buis, Kevin Heeres, Brian Kim, Hendry Lie, Roy Palavacini, Leonard Siregar, John Suk, Hugo Venegas, and Milton Villanueva were **released from CRC ministry**.

Robert Lyzenga, Pieter Pereboom, Xavier Suarez, and George Rowaan were **deposed**.

New ministries were approved in Edmonton, Alberta; Montreal, Quebec; Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Washington, D.C.

Faith in Action Vietnamese CRC, Vancouver, British Columbia; Iglesia Hispanic ministry in Salem, Oreg.; Heartland CRC, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Parchment (Mich.) CRC; and Good News Community CRC, Atlanta, Ga., were **closed**. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Banner news correspondents

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Does Spiritual ‘High’ Explain Megachurch Success?

A University of Washington study posits that worship services at megachurches can trigger feelings of transcendence and changes in brain chemistry—a spiritual “high” that keeps congregants coming back for more.

“That’s why we say it’s like a drug,” said James Wellman, an associate professor of



Southeast Christian Church, a Louisville, Ky., megachurch, holds services like this one during Christmas time.

American religion who coauthored the study “God is like a drug’: Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American Megachurches.”

The authors theorize that the spiritual high experienced by those who attend megachurch services is an “oxytocin cocktail.” Megachurches create this high through their unique style of worship, the authors wrote. “The upbeat modern music, cameras that scan the audience and project smiling, dancing, singing, or crying worshipers on large

screens, and an extremely charismatic leader whose sermons touch individuals on an emotional level . . . serve to create these strong, positive emotional experiences.”

The pastor functions as an “energy star” who engages the congregation through an accessible, informal, and emotional sermon. Rather than being analytical or theological, the message “just feels right” or “just makes sense” for congregants, Wellman said.

Are Ministers and Musicians Allies or Rivals?

Eileen Guenther, the national president of the American Guild of Organists, reveals behind-the-scenes church struggles in her new book *Rivals or a Team? Clergy-Musician Relationships in the Twenty-First Century*.

Guenther told Religion News Service that rivalry is more prevalent than working as a team. “Part of it is lack of understanding of roles. Part of it is control. That’s one of the really big issues.”

Everything has to be done intentionally, with collegiality and spirituality and a view of what we are all about for people to continue to attend church, Guenther said. “People may well attend for a fine sermon and not very good music or vice versa. But what really builds success is when people are working together and the sung word and the spoken word are in partnership.”

Asked whether ministers of music should be members of the churches that pay them, Guenther said it’s better not to. “I don’t think it’s impossible, but it does blur a bit of a boundary in terms of employment,” she said.

—Religion News Service

For more on these stories, please visit thebanner.org.

Minnesota Church Celebrates 125th Anniversary

Bunde Christian Reformed Church recently finished a series of three celebrations commemorating the church’s 125th anniversary.

The central theme for each of the monthly festivities—Faith through the Generations—was a testament to the experience of the rural Minnesota church throughout its history.

In 1887, Bunde CRC opened its doors to 10 families, totaling about 60 people. Worshipers held the first service in a private home before moving to a schoolhouse at the same location where the current church stands.

In keeping with its anniversary theme, congregants remembered the church’s past during the June celebration; in July they turned their attention to the present and in August to future generations.

—Jeff Arnold

British Columbia Woman Receives Prime Minister’s Award

Pat Frouws recently made an unforgettable trip to Canada’s capital, Ottawa, Ontario. She was there to collect a Prime Minister’s Certificate of Excellence in Early Childhood Education, the highest national award in Canada for educators.

Frouws, a member of Nelson Avenue Community Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia, has been executive director of the Simon Fraser University Child-care Society for over eight years. She was nominated for the award by leaders in the SFU community. She



Pat Frouws with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

was recognized for her professionalism, vision, and the strong values that build the foundation children need to make the best possible start in life. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Tracey Yan

FAQs

Church

Q Our pastors spend so much time crafting and delivering sermons. With all the excellent preachers out there, wouldn't it be better stewardship to encourage them to share sermons so they can spend more time in pastoral care, teaching, and visiting?

A Sermons have been shared for years in books and online. Pastors use them for ideas, insights, and illustrations as they create their sermons. You seem to suggest, however, that to save time ministers should simply preach the sermons of others. Unless the author of the sermon is acknowledged, that would be unethical. In addition, both pastor and congregation would quickly tire of such preaching. Congregations expect to hear their pastors' insights on a particular passage, and pastors strive to apply the passage to their own congregations.

If time spent in sermon preparation is used to excuse the neglect of other areas of ministry, the pastor and the council must make adjustments. Reading more and more commentaries does not necessarily produce better sermons.

Councils must also be sensitive to the pastor's many responsibilities. In my last charge, I was given two services off per month. That may not always be possible, but there are other alternatives. For example, a congregation that recently called a seminarian asks him to preach only once a month in the second service. Other evenings the morning sermon is discussed, and sometimes videos on various subjects are used.

Many teens and young adults engage in risky behaviors.

Holding one service each Sunday would be preferable to asking ministers to preach sermons written by others.

—George Vander Weit

George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.

Relationships

Q My 17-year-old daughter admitted that she had smoked pot and been drunk a couple of times. I feel sick about this because I thought I was a good Christian role model. We have talked to her about legal ramifications, but she justifies her behavior by saying, "Everyone does it." As she heads off to college, how can I best approach her about this issue?

A Your daughter is not alone. Many teens and young adults engage in risky social behaviors that involve drugs or alcohol.

It is tempting to take on the responsibility for your daughter's lifestyle choices and at least partly blame yourself. It is also tempting to resolve that you will help her make new and better life choices.

But trying to change your daughter's mind or her behavior at her age is counterproductive. She knows where you stand. It's time to allow her to choose her lifestyle, even though all your parental antennae are on hyper-alert. Resolve to resist the temptation to intervene. It is more helpful to her when you trust that she will give up risky behaviors eventually than to react with fear and trepidation for her future.

You can help her best by continuing to have a close relationship with her. Invite her to activities you both enjoy; ask her about her life as a college student. By all means let her know what you worry about when the time seems right, but do so with respect for her right to disagree.

As you pray for your daughter and her friends, ask God to replace any feelings of fear

and guilt with a trust that lets you stand firm while you wait patiently for your daughter and her friends to grow up into mature adults.

—Judy Cook

Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario.

Morality

Q In a recent sermon our pastor said that a person can be morally tainted by the sins of others. He also said that a person who is tainted need not bear moral responsibility for these sins. I'm not sure I buy this idea that taint and moral responsibility can be neatly separated.

A I believe your pastor is correct—pastors usually are. A man whose great-grandfather owned slaves and treated them badly can be tainted by the actions of his great-grandfather (Ex. 20:5), but this does not mean he is responsible for these actions. Nor would (or should) we say that he is part of a collective that is responsible for slavery because of this connection.

Awareness of the notion of moral taint grew partly out of the feelings of ordinary German citizens following World War II that they were somehow implicated in the events of the Holocaust and perhaps collectively responsible for these events.

Ethicists such as Paul Ricoeur and Kwame Anthony Appiah have worked hard to clarify the notion of taint. Their work clarifies that being tainted is not nearly the same as being responsible or being part of a collective that is responsible.

—Gregory Mellema

Gregory Mellema is a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. ■

BY LEONARD J. VANDER ZEE



GOD'S BELLY BUTTON

MY YOUNGEST CHILD was born very early one November morning. It was not an easy birth, and my wife, Judy, was utterly exhausted. I let her sleep for a couple of hours.

Then, with the first light of dawn, she awoke and immediately wanted to hold her baby, her first son.

We were all alone in a private room. I sat on the edge of the bed while Judy did what all mothers do, whether it's the first baby or the fourth or the sixth. Holding him, she opened up the receiving blanket and examined him from head to foot. She caressed his ears and ran her fingers along his nose and chin. She fingered his chubby arms with their crevices of baby fat. She took off his diaper and examined there too. Yes, it really was a boy! She rubbed her hands over his legs and held up his tiny feet, all scaly and red. She was a mother receiving, preening, and loving her newborn baby.

We don't know what Mary did that morning in the cave-like stable at Bethlehem. Was she cold? Was she afraid? Did she weep with worry about what they were going to do? The Bible tells us just one thing about Mary on the morning of that birth that changed the world: "She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

But like all mothers, she must have done what Judy did. She uncovered her baby as much as she could in that chilly, dank space. She examined him from head to toe, caressed his tiny body, touched his perfect fingers and toes. Perhaps it wasn't so amazing to her or to Joseph, but to me the most amazing sight she laid her eyes on was the stub that protruded from his belly, the freshly-cut, already-withering cord that had sustained his life in her womb—the cord through which he received her nourishment, her very life. When you really think about it, this is the

amazing thing: This child, the long-promised Son of God, has a belly button.

The first chapter of John is his version of the Christmas story, if you can call it that. It's not much of a story. At first glance it seems more like a heavy theological treatise. But if you read it well, it sings.

In the Beginning

It begins—well, it begins in the beginning, in the vast reaches of eternity, where God is all that exists. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1, NRSV).

Already John confronts us with the mystery that stands at the heart of the church's doctrine and worship: the plurality of God, the community of divine persons that is before all things—the Trinity. The splendid, loving isolation of this divine community was not enough. God created a creation that was an extension of the love that is God's very being. "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3-5).

But then, a few verses later, John moves from the splendid far reaches of eternity to the soil of this planet, the flesh and bones of our mortal bodies. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (v. 14).

At Bethlehem the Word, the Logos, the origin and destiny of the whole creation came to us encased in our flesh. *God* comes to us as a baby. God has a belly button.

We all have a belly button. It's either an innie or an outie, but that doesn't matter. What does it tell us? It says that we are part of the human family. An

umbilical cord bound you to your mother, and through it you were nourished. Her blood, her oxygen sustained your life; her antibodies protected you. When you were born, the cord was cut, and you became an independent person. But the belly button reminds you that you are tied to the whole human family. You are not really independent.

The incarnation means that God now has a belly button. He is bound forever to the human race, and that remnant of an umbilicus proves it.

It's crucial to understand that we are talking about *God* here. We're not saying that some part of God, some spark of divinity, came to be with us in Jesus while the real God remained behind. God cannot be parted out like that. The three-personed God, the holy Trinity, is eternally one, and each person interpenetrates the other. As Jesus constantly reiterated, you cannot have the Son without the Father or the Father without the Son, and you can't have either without the Holy Spirit.

God Is Born

So we must truly say that God was born at Bethlehem. As Mary labored, the God-head crowned. And then one of the divine persons was expelled into the chilly night air. God was lifted lovingly by human hands, cleaned, and wrapped in cloths. God was laid at Mary's breast to suck with hunger and contentment. God slept while angels spoke to shepherds in the field. God joined the human race.

Can that be right?

Can we ascribe that kind of weakness, that kind of frailty, that kind of vulnerability to almighty God? The problem is not with God, but with our ideas about God. We think of God's almightiness by our own standards of absolute power and total control. In other words, we think of God—we reduce God, I should say—to our ideas of what power looks »

The goal of our salvation is not to cast off our humanity like a tattered garment, but to come into our full humanity.

like: control, invulnerability, and domination. Real men don't cry, we say. Real gods don't become babies.

There are basically two kinds of religion in the world: the going-up kind and the coming-down kind. The going-up kind is marked by an above-us God who is holy and untouchable. But perhaps by supreme effort and spiritual discipline we can climb up to God.

When you look closely, most every religion in the world is the going-up kind. It's the quest for holiness, climbing up to God by following the rules, going through the rituals, making the pilgrimages here and there. It's all going-up religion. As far as I can tell, there is only one coming-down religion, and that's the one that gathers to celebrate a baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. This is the staggering uniqueness of the Christian faith. This is the good news. The Word became flesh; God became human.

Christmas shows us that God's omnipotence manifests itself precisely in its capacity to let go, to love, to be vulnerable. In creation God showed his power by moving over, by making room for a universe and for a human imagebearer in the universe with a will of its own. God did not create humanity so he could dominate us; he created to let us dominate. He gave us dominion even though we might screw it up. God did not create the world to run it like a despot or control it like a puppeteer; he moved over to make a place beside himself for the world he made. That's the power of God. This is why Paul says, "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:25).

God Is Changed

But there's more. In the incarnation, God is forever changed. At Christmas, God began a new relationship with the

creation. Athanasius, that great theologian of the early church, went so far as to say that since the Son of God was not always incarnate in human flesh, the birth at Bethlehem marks an entirely new era in the life of God. God and humanity are now welded together in Jesus Christ—you can't have one without the other anymore.

When Christ was born at Bethlehem, a new human being appeared. Humanity got a new start. To put it crassly, the gene pool of our fallen humanity was united with the very substance of divinity in Christ. God came to this earth and lived the authentic human life for all people. He died our death under God's judgment and rose again to live forever. Everything that happens to Christ happens to those who are joined to him in faith and baptism.

Some Christians seem to have the impression that Jesus went slumming during his time on earth, and that in his ascension he resumed his place as God, leaving behind that weak and sordid human nature. In fact, the glory and grace of the ascension is precisely that the Lord Jesus took our humanity to God's throne. In the words of Christopher Wordsworth's ascension hymn,

*You have raised our human nature
on the clouds to God's right hand;
there we sit in heavenly places,
there with you in glory stand.*

One way we can describe what salvation means is that we finally become truly human. Irenaeus, one of the great early church fathers, put it this way: "The glory of God is a human being, fully alive." That's what we become in Christ. The goal of our salvation is not to cast off our humanity like a tattered garment, but to come into our full humanity. That's what it means to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the

fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). We become truly human, as he is.

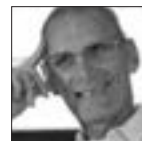
That's where Christ is leading us. That's the astounding miracle of the incarnation we celebrate at Christmas every year. Christ, our brother—belly button and all—is with God. Now nothing can separate us from God's love, for in Jesus Christ, we join in the community of the holy Trinity. And finally, "when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

As Mary pondered that morning, as she fondled and received her newborn baby, she could hardly have imagined all this. But as we ponder the same event this Christmas morning so many centuries later, we begin to touch the fringes of the mystery—the mystery of God's love come down to us; the mystery of the Word made flesh. It all began that night in a stable at Bethlehem, when God became a human being so that we human beings, hopelessly lost in sin, might truly share in the glory of God through our belly-button brother, Jesus Christ.

Charles Wesley captures the awesome truth in a beloved Christmas hymn we will sing:

*Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come,
offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel. ■*

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Leonard J. Vander Zee, an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, is theological editor for Faith Alive Christian Resources. He attends Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Mich.

When Traditions Fail Us

ARE YOU AMONG THOSE BLESSED PEOPLE for whom Christmas is a time of unalloyed joy and fellowship with friends and family, along with deepened gratitude for the wonder of God's gift to us in Bethlehem? If so, feel free to skip this article.

If, on the other hand, the Christmas season has become for you a time of rushing around and tension, of ever-increasing obligation to entertain or to buy gifts or to receive gifts you didn't particularly want, of loud but increasingly secular worship services, of a secret or not-so-secret wish that January would come and it would all be over for another year—then read on. Those of us who are counselors can testify that for many people, the Christmas season brings out the relationship fault lines in families, in friendships, and even in the church. Christmas awakens the pains of loss, of hopes unfulfilled, of dreams never realized. It heightens the awareness that life will never be as it was or as it should be.

Maybe we need to take another look at that manger in Bethlehem. Let's strip it of all the gloss that has been added over the years, of the sentimentality that helps us avoid the harsh reality of an utterly helpless baby, born in a barn to a poor unwed girl far from home, unattended by any midwife. Why on earth would God choose such a messy entry into our world? It defies all human sense of how it should have been. Immanuel? God-with-us? Really?

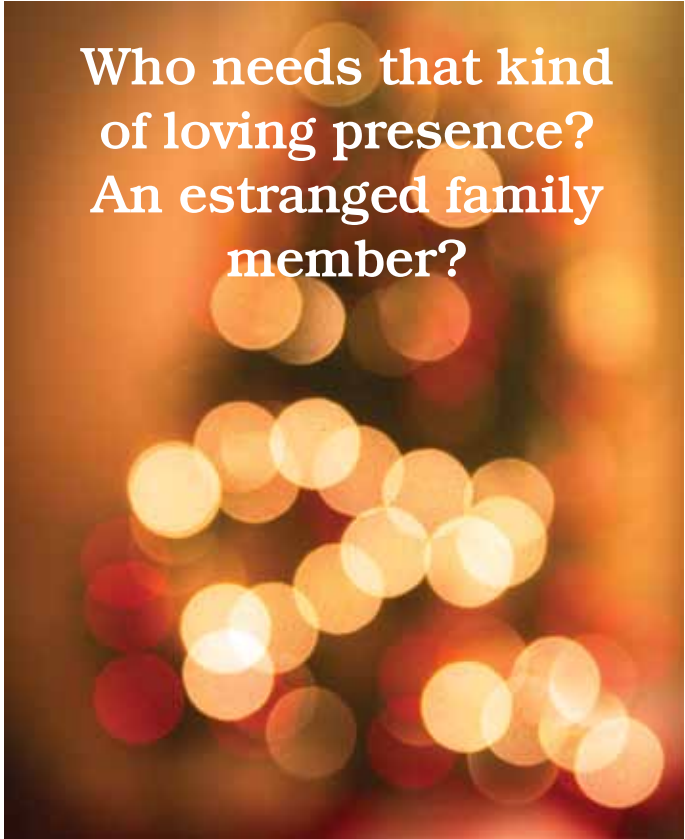
Does that manger picture remind you of anything in the world today? Isn't that harsh birth a reality for many in the refugee camps in Kenya? For many Native women in Canada? In our own North American cities? Of course, you say. Poverty and neglect are everywhere. We contribute what we can and pray things will get better.

But wait. True caring requires *loving presence*. Loving presence is, after all, the essence of the incarnation, of God-with-us.

Caring takes time. It takes living into another's situation. It means anticipating the other's needs and respecting her humanity and dignity. True caring is incarnational—being *with* the other.

So take a look around your own world. Who needs that kind of loving presence? An estranged family member? A parent who is a challenge to be with? A gay son or daughter or the partner you haven't welcomed? Neighbors for whom this is their first Christmas away from their native country, who might not know about God entering this world? A student far from home?

Give the gift of loving presence, and welcome them into your home. Take a day, perhaps with your kids, to volunteer



Who needs that kind of loving presence? An estranged family member?

at your local mission. Giving money is important, but also try to be lovingly present to some of the people there. Receive from them as well as giving them your time and presence.

"All well and good," you say, "But how can I possibly find time for all that in addition to the other things I have to do?"

Perhaps you need to take a look at those "other things." Are they so essential? Do they really contribute to your joy and spiritual health? Most of us need, over the years, to examine the traditions we have built up around Christmas and refine or discard them as they become less meaningful or as the family grows and changes. Some, for example, drop the gift exchange as children get older and spend a few days together, giving each other the gift of time.

God is incarnate in Bethlehem. So let's create traditions that help us live incarnationally. Then our Christmas will be truly blessed. ■



Mary Vander Vennen is a retired psychotherapist living in Toronto, Ontario. She is a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Scarborough, Ontario.

'Tis the Season

It may have been the first time anyone sat down to compose what we call a gospel. He may even have been the one who coined the term. What we don't know is who the author was. But let's call him Mark.

Mark neither titled nor signed his gospel because what he had to say was far more important than what he might have called it or what we might have called him. He is so eager to start that he opens with a sentence fragment, just five words in the original Greek: "Beginning," he declares—not even *the* beginning.

In his rush to announce, he leaves out not only the definite article but almost everything we've come to associate with the Christmas season. There are no angels, no virgin birth, no Mary and Joseph, no Bethlehem, no manger, no heavenly chorus, no shepherds, no magi, no Herod, no genealogy. All the stuff that decorates our mantels and tabletops and trees during this season is missing so that

Mark can concentrate on this new thing that is happening, this new genre he is inventing: gospel.

When there's nothing but the gospel, the "good news" about Jesus is clear: No one, no thing is more important than Jesus. That's the message of those first few words of the gospel we call Mark.

Back then, "good news" was something very specific and very special: the announcement of the birth of royalty—an



emperor, let's say—in a day when the emperor was often called "the savior of mankind." Mark finds a way to put all of Luke 1-3 and much of what we have come to associate with this season into less than one sentence: It's the account of one born to be the Savior of the world!

What you are about to read, Mark says, and what you are about to celebrate during this special month—and always—is the birth of your Savior. Mark is announcing salvation. This is the good news about Jesus. The very name means *God saves!*

No one else does. No one else can. But God will, and Jesus is the proof. See why Mark calls this good news?

He is not just Jesus but Jesus *Christ*. Christ is neither Jesus' last name nor his middle name; Christ is his title. It means "the anointed one." Jesus is anointed, chosen by God. "There is no other name under heaven . . . by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The one given the name by which we must be saved

has come, and therefore we can be saved. There can be no better news. That's the gospel.

A little boy once said to his father, "Daddy, I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and asked, "What does the Bible mean?" The little boy replied proudly, "B. I. B. L. E.: **B**asic **I**nformation **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth!" And he was right.

Mark tells that story in the first few words of his gospel.

At this time of year when we consider what greetings to send, and to whom, let Mark be our guide. 'Tis the season, he'd say, to remind folks of the heart of the story. It's really good news! Jesus, the only one who can save, has been given to us by God himself. ■

👉 [In Mark's gospel], all the stuff that decorates our mantels and tabletops and trees during this season is missing. 🗨️



Rev. Joel Boot is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Finding Truth amid Turbulence in China

The streets are crowded with people walking, shopping, selling, ambling, rushing, standing, wandering.

Sidewalks become eating establishments as people holding bowls of noodles squat. The streets pulse with thick traffic. Even the sky seems crowded by tall buildings and dark clouds.

Everywhere the flood of people threatens to drown out even one's own thoughts. The sensation of being alone, private and separate from others, is rare amid the hustle of Beijing, China.

One middle-aged woman stands alone. She shares her story of slow steps to faith as she treats her American guests to an elaborate tea ceremony. Her tale of letting go of atheism as she studied and sought a greater truth pours from her heart as tea pours into the tiny cups her guests cradle in their hands.

One young Chinese entrepreneur sits alone in a wheelchair. Born paraplegic, against all odds he found and now embraces new life. As he explains all of his businesses to his newfound friends it becomes clear that he is adamant about using every opportunity to be a representative of the truth he's found.

These two are not lost, even in the bustle of a city as crowded as Beijing,



John Terpstra with Abigail, the daughter of ELIC staff working in China.

because they are gripped by news that is so good it transforms.

On my trip to China last spring with the English Language Institute/China, I met these and others who stand apart from the crowd. I saw that kingdom work in China is active, vibrant, and as bustling as the city's streets.

Vivid memories of my trip include Sunday fellowship where expectant crowds waited to get into the services as other crowds filed out. So many faces, so many voices, so much energy—it reminded me of early events in Acts.

With a group of students at a lunch that doubled as conversational English practice, it was evident that teachers had a part to play in those crowds lined up on Sunday mornings. The opportunities for fruitful relationships provided by teaching English are manifold, and it was easy to see that the impact goes beyond the walls of their classrooms.



Tea ceremony

This was reinforced when I visited with some other teachers from the English Language Institute. These teachers were committed, though they made no effort to disguise the difficulties of living and working cross-culturally. They are witnesses to a crowd of transformed lives that seems to be multiplying before their very eyes. The need is great and the opportunities are abundant.

I returned to North America gripped by what I had heard and experienced.

For more information about English Language Institute/ China visit elic.org. ■

—Rev. John Terpstra is the pastor at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Fort Collins, Col.



Witnessing from a wheelchair

Refugee No More: Khay Baccam



Khay Baccam (far left and inset) during a visit to Laos in 2010

Khay Baccam was part of the Tai Dam, a Vietnamese ethnic group who had been an ally of American forces during the Vietnam War and had suffered for its partisanship after the fall of Saigon.

He and many others among the Tai Dam sought refuge following the war. An American diplomat named Arthur Crisfield tried to help. He wrote to 30 U.S. state governors with a plea to help the Tai Dam, who wanted a place where they could live together, not just individually.

When Iowa's then-governor Robert E. Ray read the note, he responded positively because of what he called "the generous spirit of the people of Iowa," offering the Tai Dam a home in his state. Many Christian Reformed

Church congregations participated.

Khay was among those refugees, and his story wasn't all that unusual. Those who had sided with the U.S. were immensely vulnerable when they were left behind in Vietnam—think "killing fields."

Khay and his wife escaped the horrors and found less treacherous—but still difficult—safety in refugee camps, where they waited for months while someone else, somewhere else, decided their future.

As a teenager during the war, Khay had worked the black market with whatever contraband he could secure and sell. And there he was in Sioux Center, Iowa, with his wife and a little girl born in the camps in Thailand.

I told his story many years ago at the request of Adrianna Dokter, who had been working with Khay's family to teach them English. The story, "Chosen for Life," was published in a series in *The Banner*.

In January of this year, Khay Baccam died, having been diagnosed with cancer only two weeks before his death. Just 56 years old, he left his wife, Feuang, and five children.

At his funeral, I thought of another funeral, that of Adrianna Dokter, where I learned that Khay had once asked her why she always carried a Bible. She told him, explaining the saving sacrifice of Christ. That's when things changed for Khay and his family.

In 1994, Khay Baccam was ordained in the CRC as an evangelist—the office now



called commissioned pastor—with support from classes Iakota and Heartland. The Home Missions committees of those classes supervised his work.

At his funeral, more than half the church was filled with Tai Dam—hundreds of mourners from the Twin Cities, from Des Moines, from Sioux City, from the prairies, its cities, its towns and countryside.

Khay had ministered to them through the years, just as his English teacher, Adrianna Dokter, had ministered to him. ■

—James Schaap is a CRC writer and storyteller who lives in Iowa.

Calvin Prof to Map Ethiopia's Geography

Calvin College geography professor Johnathan Bascom will return to Ethiopia in January to help organize the first national conference of Ethiopian geographers.

While there, he also will serve as coordinator and editor for an overall geography text of the country.

A Contemporary Geography of Ethiopia will be the first geography text on that country in 30 years. It will be an electronic book with downloadable data sets, maps, and bibliographic references.

Bascom will do the work through an extension of his 2011-2012 grant from the Fulbright Scholars Program.

As part of his grant, Bascom co-taught and did research with Ethiopian geographers at Bahir Dar University, partnering with them to work on the digital atlas.

In the digital book, Bascom also will be weaving together maps with related narrative content using hyperlinks. The printable, server-accessed text allows for expansion, updates, a data bank, portals to related sites, and color graphics.

"I am not at all surprised that the United States (which administers the Fulbrights) would award another Fulbright to Johnathan because I have seen him on the ground in Ethiopia, having gone this last January when he was there," said Bascom's geography colleague Jason VanHorn.

"I can confirm his deep passion for cultural exchange in the teaching environment and his special ability to work within the bounds of his environment to be a man of renewal empowered by Jesus Christ."

Bascom describes his work in Ethiopia as a type of "educational development."

"In many developing countries of Africa—and certainly in Ethiopia—most education is at a chalkboard, in lecture mode. Students are rote learners," he said.

This method of learning fails to instill the ability to interpret data, Bascom said.

"Faculty members who can use teaching methods that challenge students to think through and solve problems are greatly needed in Ethiopia." ■

—Myrna Anderson, Calvin College

Calvin College geography students look over a world atlas.



Jeffrey Weima

CTS Seminar Tackles 1 Thessalonians

"Sex, Second Coming & Sanctification: Preaching 1 Thessalonians" was the title of a day-long conference this fall jointly sponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary and the Center for Excellence in Preaching.

Some 40 preachers from West Michigan attended the seminar and heard Jeffrey Weima, professor of New Testament at Calvin Seminary, discuss Paul's theologically rich epistle.

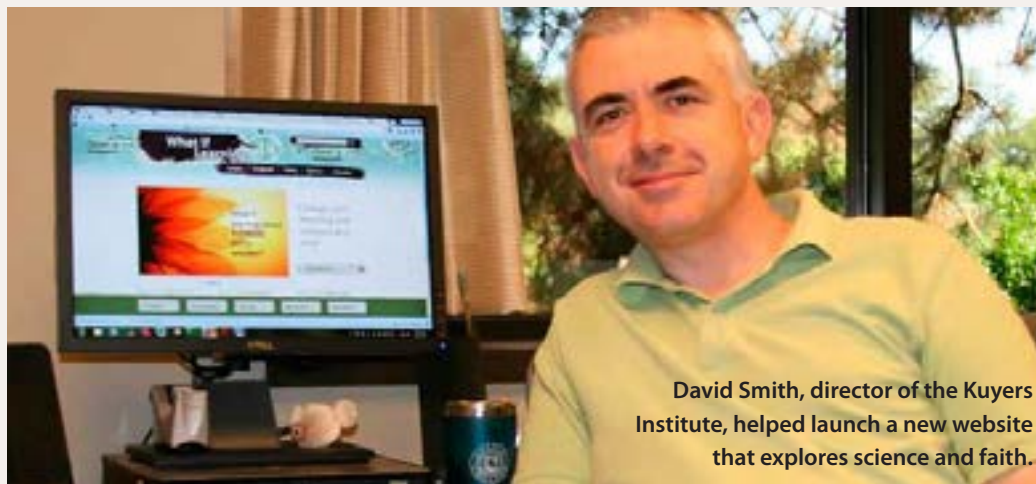
During his sessions at Hillside Community Church in Cutlerville, Mich., Weima introduced pastors to the major topics taken up in 1 Thessalonians: the sanctity of sex, the second coming of Christ, comfort concerning believers who have passed away, models of behavior for church leaders, and more.

The aim of the seminar was to help preachers brush up on the exegetical steps required in moving from the "there and then" of the biblical text to the "here and now" of today.

For each session, Weima first presented a detailed explanation of the biblical text. Then the pastors spent time discussing how that message should be communicated to their congregations. ■

—Calvin Theological Seminary

Institute Introduces Whatiflearning.com



David Smith, director of the Kuyers Institute, helped launch a new website that explores science and faith.

A teacher asks her students to bring flowers to science class and instructs them to count the numbers of sepals, petals, stamens, stigmas, and seeds in each bloom.

She then demonstrates that the numbers the children arrive at invariably correspond to the Fibonacci sequence. This famous number sequence displays unique mathematical properties that make it useful in seeing connections between things, furthering understanding in fields as diverse as astronomy, botany, and even financial markets.

“Is it just an accident,” the teacher asks, “or does it suggest . . . that there is a Creator with a plan and purpose for everything, even something as small as a seed?”

This “lesson in wonder” is one of more than 100 examples of ways teachers can connect their faith with their teaching that are described on a Calvin College website launched this year.

Calvin’s Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning developed and maintains the site, Whatiflearning.com.

Each example leads off with a question: What if a grammar

lesson challenged selfishness? What if success in math depended upon forgiveness? What if history could inspire students to love their city?

“What we think we’ve done is create a fairly revolutionary

new resource that provides concrete ways of showing teachers how to make their teaching more Christian—without having to read the theory first,” said David Smith, director of the Kuyers Institute.

“The website helps teachers ask key questions and make strategic decisions, not only about what to teach but about how to teach,” said Matt Walhout, Calvin’s dean for research and scholarship. “It relates specific topics like language, history, and math to the overarching Christian principles of faith, hope, and love.” ■

—Matt Kucinski,
Calvin College

Sharing the Christmas Story in Brazil

Last year two people who own several dairy-related businesses in northern Brazil ordered 15,000 copies of the Christmas *Cada Dia* to distribute to employees, family, and friends.

But they did not stop at simply distributing copies of the special Advent devotional booklet, published by the Portuguese outreach of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), or the cards it contained. They also organized a special Christmas service for employees and business associates in the area.

More than 2,000 people attended this service to hear Rev. Hernandes Lopes, director of BTGMI’s Portuguese ministry, speak.

After the event Lopes said, “Many responded in faith to God’s Word that day.”

BTGMI’s Portuguese outreach produced and distributed a record 940,000 Christmas devotional booklets throughout Brazil last year. This year’s goal is to reach 1 million.

“My prayer is that those who distribute the Christmas devotional booklets can introduce people to the message of Jesus through God’s Word,” said Lopes. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries
International

A woman shares the contents of *Cada Dia*.



Spotlight on Christmas

Anthony runs a Spotlight English Club for immigrants in a predominantly Muslim area in Europe.

Even though many of the club members are not Christian, they asked him to organize a Christmas party for them.

In Anthony's Spotlight English Club, immigrants from around the world meet each week to practice speaking and learning English.

The group uses materials produced by ReFrame Media, the English outreach arm of Back to God Ministries International, in partnership with religious broadcaster HCJB Global and Words of Hope.

Anthony's party gave him a perfect opportunity to describe the history of Christmas and to tell the story of Jesus.

After enjoying some traditional Christmas food in a room brightly decorated for the holiday, Anthony shared the nativity story with the members of his group.

People of various religious backgrounds gather for Christmas worship.



"I told the story from a real human perspective—how Jesus was born in the most dirty of conditions in Bethlehem . . . [and] how he was rejected by society," says Anthony.

"It generated a lot of discussion. After the party, an elderly Asian gentleman who had been in the country for several years approached me and admitted he had

never heard the Christmas story before," Anthony said.

"So even though the main focus of Spotlight is to help people to practice their English, this opened the door for me to be able to share my faith." ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, BTGMI

Children Joining Circle of Grace

David Orr, pastor of a Mennonite congregation in Nebraska, was very pleased by how easily children learned lessons about staying safe in church and elsewhere through the Circle of Grace program.

Circle of Grace was developed by the Catholic Church in Nebraska in response to the problem of priests abusing minors. Orr's church was one of the first to use it.

"Circle of Grace provides a great age-appropriate resource," says Orr. "It firmly links the protection of children with God's will and provides children and their parents with a common vocabulary for discussing concerns."

Early this fall, the CRC's Safe Church Ministries made Circle of Grace available to congregations expressing interest in a program that teaches both adults and young people the basics on how God's love embraces everyone and how God desires that all of his children remain safe.

"We are so pleased to be able to offer these excellent materials to help prevent abuse, pro-

tect children and youth, and make church a safer place," said Bonnie Nicholas, director of Safe Church Ministries.

Promotional material for the program says that children and youth are encouraged to recognize "that each of us lives within a Circle of Grace that holds our very essence in body, mind, heart, soul, and sexuality."

Children and youth are also "taught to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated."

Circle of Grace can be used by churches in ways that will fit into their own church school programs, said Nicholas. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



New Life in the Desert

Aliu (not his real name) is one of the leaders of a small group of Fulani Christians living in a region in West Africa. Formerly a devout Muslim, Aliu now serves as an evangelist.

His transformation began when he went to a spiritual conference hosted by Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM).

He attended only because he wanted to learn to read. But the conference gave him more than he had imagined.

Although Aliu did not trust the missionaries or like what they said, he could not ignore the feeling that he had heard the truth being spoken. Afterward, he sat in the bush for three days, fasting, thinking, and praying.

When he returned to his village, Aliu told his family that he did not know much about following Jesus, but he couldn't follow Islam anymore.

That decision was difficult for his family and village to hear. To them, being a Fulani meant being a Muslim. They shut him out, beating him and taking away his job of herding cattle. His wife wanted to leave him.

Through it all, his faith remained strong. His witness eventually led several family members, including his wife, to put their trust in Jesus.

CRWM missionaries in the area say that Aliu and his wife are leaders of the Fulani believers in their area. They hold a worship service in their hut every Sunday and a Bible study on Tuesday evenings.

—Sarah Lin,
Christian Reformed World Missions

A Fulani man with his cattle.



Feeding Souls and Families in Cambodia

In the 1980s, Phon Po fled Cambodia with his wife, Hin, and their five children to live as refugees in Thailand.

In 1997, after living in Thailand for 15 years, the family returned to Cambodia. But their struggle was not over. They had no land on which to grow food and no jobs.

To survive, Po and Hin sold ice cream, fish sauce, and porridge, earning between \$1 and \$2 (U.S.) a day, just enough to meet their needs.

No matter how hard they worked, they didn't earn enough to improve their living conditions or send their children to school.

In 2004, Po and his family felt called by God to join New Life Church, one of the churches that World Renew, the Christian Reformed Church's relief and development agency, is working with in Cambodia.

World Renew's goal is to help Christian churches not only to meet people's spiritual needs but also to address the physical and relational needs of those in their community.

Located in Khnung Village in the Cambodian province of Takeo, New Life Church is working to help people improve their lives with the help of several programs.

After joining New Life Church, Po's family decided to participate in some of the training courses offered by the church's Farmer Field School, funded by World Renew through the Foods Resources Bank.

Po and Hin took courses on various agricultural techniques and learned that they could grow vegetables at home even if they didn't own a large plot of land. Po and Hin were very interested in trying what they had learned, and have been gardening at their home ever since.

As a result, the family's living conditions have changed. Instead of having to buy food, the family eats vegetables grown in their own garden.

They also have surplus vegetables to sell. From the sale of this food, the family earns up to \$3 a day in addition to the income from their other business.

They now rent a small plot of land for their farming and have started raising chickens. And they can afford to send their children to school.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, World Renew



Phon Po works in his field.

A Harvest of Hope

For nearly 10 years, many women in West Africa have been meeting together to pool small amounts of their income and invest in each other's small businesses.

But when drought wiped out their crops, it also threatened to wipe out the capital these women had worked so hard to save.

Thanks to food from World Renew (formerly the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee), these women were able to leave their savings untouched and still feed their families.

"In times of disaster, there is always a concern that those with small businesses will deplete their capital," said Hans Helleman, who serves with his wife, Henni, as international relief managers with World Renew in West Africa. "When it comes to providing food for your children, there really is no other choice."

Brenda, a World Renew program manager in West Africa, is familiar with the situations the women face. Some are widows. Others are raising families while their husbands look for work. All want to support their families and send their children to school. The microfinance program was helping them stay solvent.

The women would meet weekly and contribute small amounts of money. As the savings increased, the funds would be matched by a World Renew partner organization,

Brenda (right) works with women in a microfinance program in West Africa.



and group members would begin to take out small loans to purchase supplies or equipment for small business activities.

As a woman's income increased, she would repay the loan and the pool of funds would grow.

But when severe drought struck earlier this year, causing food prices to skyrocket, all that changed. The women needed loans simply to purchase food. Because these loans wouldn't be invested, the women would struggle to repay them, and the entire program would be threatened.

With this in mind, Brenda and the staff of World Renew's partner proposed that the 226 participants in the microfinance program receive two months of food rations, thereby protecting their capital and enabling them to continue with their businesses.

"One lady told us, 'When we get help, we must help others,'" said Henni.

The biggest surprise came in the form of increased interest in the program.

"At the food distributions, many community women came and began to talk to group members," Hans said.

"Soon more women were realizing that they could support their families by the profit of businesses that they ran themselves."

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
World Renew

Editor's note: Some names have been changed or withheld for security reasons.

Give It All You've Got

If an alien from outer space landed in your home town at Christmastime, what would it discover about Christmas? Would it report back to its leader that Christmas was a big birthday party for a baby named Jesus, or would it say that Christ-

mas was a time for people to shop a lot and spend money?

Christmas gifts are part of the way people today celebrate Jesus' birth and the gift of God's love to us. But sometimes we think way more about what we'd like to get than about what we'd

like to give. This Christmas, you can use the gifts you give to show people in your family, your community, and your world that you care about them.



Give to Your Community

Here are three ideas of things you can give to your community. How many others can you think of?

- Baby Jesus didn't have a warm fuzzy blanket when he was born; he was wrapped in strips of cloth. This Christmas, organize a blanket collection at your church. Ask people to donate new blankets, and then give them to a shelter for people who are homeless.
- If you live someplace where it's cold in the winter, collect winter coats, boots, and mittens and give them to an organization to distribute to kids who need them.
- Go through your toys and clothes and donate things you're not using to a thrift store. That gives other people a chance to use them too. It's giving *and* recycling!



Give to Your Family

These three easy-to-make gifts will help you show people in your family how much you love them.

Letter Perfect

You don't have to spend any money to give someone a gift they'll never forget. Find a colorful piece of paper and write a letter on it. If you're writing a letter to your grandpa, for example, tell him how much you love him, what you've learned from him, and why you're glad he's part of your family. Put the letter in a gift box, wrap it up, and add a bow.

Memory Lane

Decorate a small box with markers or scrapbook paper. On small pieces of white paper, write down as many good memories as you can think of about the person you're giving the gift to. (Write each memory on a separate piece of paper.) The more memories you can think of, the better. Need ideas? Think about times when the person made you laugh, or comforted you, or helped you with something. Fold the pieces of paper and put them inside the box. The person you give this gift to will love reading about the special things the two of you have shared.

Get Framed

This is a great gift for anybody you love, especially someone who lives far away. Make a sign that says "I love you" in big letters with a dark wide-tip marker on a piece of white paper. Hold the sign up in front of you and ask an adult to take your picture. Print the picture out, put it in a fun frame, and send it with a Christmas card to someone you love. (To keep it safe in the mail, wrap it in lots of bubble wrap and put it in a sturdy box before you take it to the post office.)



Sandy Swartzentruber

works for Faith Alive and attends Sherman Street Christian Reformed

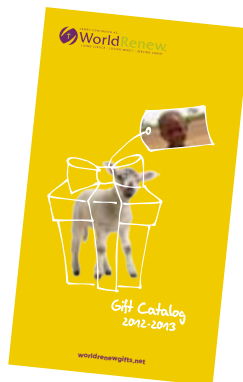
Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



The Most Amazing Gift

"God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life."

—John 3:16, NIV



Give to Your World

Did you know you can give Christmas gifts to families in other countries who are struggling to survive? To learn more, visit worldrenew.net and click on the "What You Can Do" link to look at their 2012 gift catalog. You'll find gifts like these, plus many more:

Chickens, goats, pigs, and sheep

Would you like to get a goat for Christmas? For families who don't have enough to eat, farm animals like goats or chickens could be the best gift ever. Families can eat the meat or eggs or raise baby animals and sell them.

A water filter

Every day, thousands of children around the world die from diseases they get from drinking dirty water. You can give some of those children and their families the gift of clean water—and the gift of life.

A bike

In North America, many people use bikes mostly for fun. But for people who can't afford a car, a bike can help them get to work, go to the market for food, or go to the doctor when they're sick. A bike can change someone's whole life!

Whichever gift you choose, you can keep the giving going by praying all year long for the family who will receive it. To help you remember, write the word PRAY on your family calendar on the 25th day of every month.



Fighting Fair: Strategies for Dealing with Conflict

“WHEN YOU FIGHT, FIGHT FAIR.”

That’s one of my favorite lines to deploy at a wedding service. I say it because I want to publicly acknowledge that conflict in relationships is normal and inevitable. I also say it because I’d like everyone to think about *stewarding* their conflicts—in their own lives and in the lives of their congregations.

Many of us were raised in homes where topics like conflict, sex, and money were not a part of polite conversation. If we *did* talk about them, we joked about them or spoke of them in the context of others’ stories. As a result, many of us are somewhat ill-equipped to know how to deal with them as grown-ups. Healthy conflict is no exception. Few of us have a reservoir of good models to draw from in times of need.

That’s as true of relationships within the church as it is in a marriage. Conflicts in congregations are inevitable. Church members get angry with each other. They experience disappointment. They are hurt by each other or by their pastors.

Wouldn’t it be nice if the church had a reputation for handling conflicts in a Christ-like way? What if the local church were the only place in town where a community took seriously the ways we are prone to hurting each other? What if congregations were intentional and hospitable about providing space for hurts to be spoken and heard? Such places are ripe for forgiveness and reconciliation. I suspect that people would be drawn to a community that practices this kind of truth-telling.

Since conflict is inevitable, here are some practices that can help us fight fair with each other.

Own the pain. We seldom realize that underneath our anger and disappointment is pain. It’s hard for many of us to engage our pain because doing so



acknowledges our vulnerability. Often anger feels like a safer emotion to express. But vulnerability is a powerful place from which to speak of our needs in a relationship, and our needs are easier for others to hear than our anger. Speaking of our needs opens doorways for others to speak of theirs as well. Often we cannot articulate our needs unless we’ve experienced difficulty and pain. For this reason, healthy conflict is an intimate affair that can allow relationships to deepen. Sometimes we avoid conflict because we are afraid of this intimacy.

Avoid avoiding. My grandfather used to say “Let sleeping dogs lie.” In relationships, this is bad advice. Avoiding, delay-

ing, or retreating makes things worse. Hanging on to tension in a relationship is like holding a beach ball underwater: it takes a lot of energy. Eventually that energy is going to come out sideways. Another way of avoiding is blaming. Fixing blame is a lot easier than fixing the relationship. When we blame someone, we are choosing to distance ourselves from that person and from our pain. The antidote for avoidance is caring engagement.

Name the elephant in the room. Most of the time, the elephant of pain, anger, or disappointment is our own. Elephants can be scary, heavy, and unpredictable. They need to be handled with care. Often,

Whenever we apologize, we open large doors through which grace can come in and go out.

however, we euphemize them (perhaps by saying “I was disappointed” when really we were ticked off). Sometimes we joke about them, or we tell ourselves, “It’s not nice for Christians to be angry,” and so minimize the raw truths of our lives. We ought not bear false witness about our pains. Instead we ought to name them for what they are. We may be surprised to find that the elephant was not as big or as scary as we had feared.

Practice non-damaging honesty. “Speak the truth in love,” says Paul. But we ought to name our hurts and angers in a way that does not inflict injury to ourselves or to others. That means discerning whether the relational bridge between us can carry the weight of what we need to say. Speaking the truth in love may mean not saying all of it in one sitting. The best place to start is by using “I” language (“I hurt”; “I am angry”; “I am disappointed”). If we start with “you,” the other person will feel accused and his or her defenses will rise; no one is open when on the defensive. What we say should be our own concern, not someone else’s.

Engage your adversary in a meaningful way. Relationships are more important than issues, and they are worth fighting for. When disagreeing, make sure everyone has emotional safety. Don’t do conflict through email. If the issue is with the pastor, ask for an appointment over coffee or lunch. For some, this may come as a surprise, but after years of pointed emails and hit-and-run comments right after worship, it’s likely the pastor would deeply respect face-to-face disagreement. I have grown the most from parishioners who, instead of just throwing grenades, care enough to make time for dialogue and mutual listening.

Change the goal. In conflict, we often want two things: to be right and to change the other person. Relationships will not deepen unless we surrender these goals. Relationship is a dynamic process in which both parties change; conflict is an important tool for achieving mutual change. Most of our relationships, then, are an act of ongoing negotiation. To insist on being right is to make the goal of conflict scoring points, when what is really needed is deeper understanding. Shifting from certainty to curiosity makes room for mutual learning. Certainty nails things down; curiosity opens them up. When someone hurts us, certainty causes us to assume we know why. That certainty is not helpful when we want to fight fairly. A learning posture challenges our assumptions—and that’s why we generally resist that posture. Starting a conversation with “Can you help me understand?” instead of “Why do you always...?” opens possibilities instead of closing them. Humility, listening, and communicating care are much more fruitful in relationship than being right.

Treat communication as a cross-cultural experience. We shouldn’t presume that our way of seeing and

remembering is the same as another’s. Seeing things differently doesn’t mean either party is wrong. I suspect that many conflicts stem from our difficulty in hearing each other and articulating what’s going on inside us. It’s always wise to repeat in your own words what someone else says, and follow up by asking, “Is this what you mean?” This signals that you are listening and trying to understand the other person’s perspective.

Wherever possible, apologize without offering explanations. Nothing ruins good apologies more than explanations. In order to find resolution, our hurts need articulation and validation. Open-ended apologies help that along. Whenever we apologize, we open large doors through which grace can come in and go out. Apologies can lower the drawbridge of even the most fortified castle for at least a moment. And that moment can change everything.

Guard your soul—not from outer attacks, but from within. Recognize your own part in conflict. Don’t enter into a disagreement with high expectations; you may not hear the apology you’re hoping for. Presume and pray for the best for your adversary. Even if you can’t stand a person, let God redeem those parts you can’t handle while he is redeeming those parts in you. Remember that forgiveness is not forgetting; it is remembering differently. As Lewis Smedes once noted, “It is as if God has said to us, ‘Try forgiveness on one another.’ It worked for me.” ■

Digging Deeper

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- Kador, John. *Effective Apology*. San Francisco: Barrett Koehler, 2009.
- Rosenberg, Marshall. *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life*. Encinitas, Calif.: Puddledancer Press, 2003.
- Saj-Nicole, Joni, and Damon Beyer. *The Right Fight*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.
- Smedes, Lewis B. *The Art of Forgiving*. New York: Random House, 1996.



Marc Nelesen is pastor of Georgetown Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich.

Why Honey Boo Boo Makes Me Wanna Cry



THERE'S A VAST CHASM between how our culture cares for the poor and how people of faith care for the poor.

Society does everything in its power to make them disappear. It corrals them in woefully failing schools, turns its back as they migrate to neglected urban neighborhoods or dilapidated trailers, offers a welfare system that creates dependency and strips people of dignity, and provides an inadequate public defense system that locks them up and throws away the keys, leaving poor families decimated. And if our culture can't dispose of them, it laughs at them.

Enter Honey Boo Boo.

The 7-year-old star of The Learning Channel's reality show and her family seem proud of their plight. Honey's mother and siblings revel in the little girl's antics. Mom feeds Honey hyper-caffeinated "go go juice" to escalate her already outrageous behavior. Honey rubs her bare belly and squeals, "A dollar makes me wanna holler!"

They clearly believe that this is their big moment, their lottery ticket to success. But viewers know they've been snookered.

Our society has sunk to new lows by devouring reality shows that turn the poor

Reality shows turn the poor into our court jesters.

into our court jesters. With "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo," TLC has outdone even Jerry Springer in what one writer has called "poorsploitation."

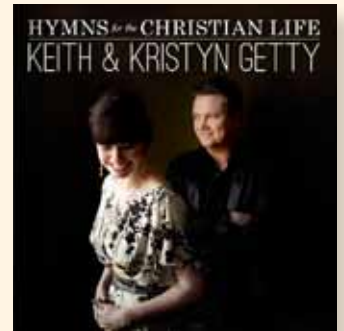
The church cares for the poor differently. We don't pretend they don't exist, because Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you" (Matt. 26:11). We don't ignore them. Instead we meet Jesus' brothers and sisters where they are (Matt. 25:35-40). We don't laugh at them, just as Jesus didn't laugh when he told the story of one of his own wallowing in a pigpen (Luke 15:11-32).

The church and its supporting agencies actually help the poor meet their daily needs, get on their feet, and live with promise (Acts 24:17). Sometimes we have to use tough love (2 Thess. 3:10). As the body of Christ, we welcome the poor into our churches, befriend them, and, yes, learn from them (James 2:1-13). We know that to defend the cause of the poor and needy is what it means to know God (Jer. 22:16).

The church should rise up in outrage at the way our culture treats "the least of these." We must refuse to get the joke when God's children are stuck in the mud. We must weep at the sight. Society must stop hiding the keys for success from the poor. Instead, we must share from our plenty. Or else, God help us. ■



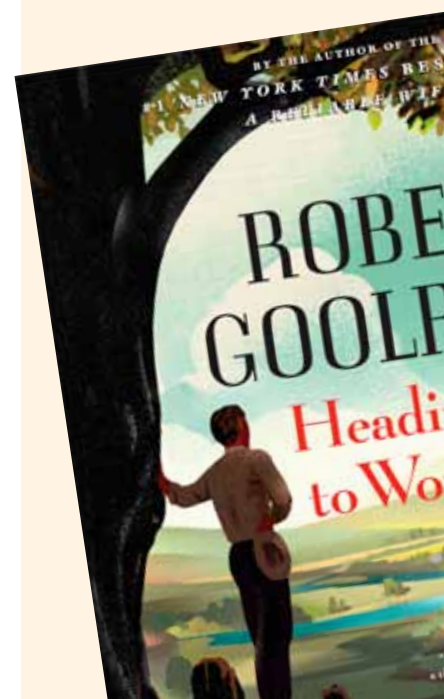
H. David Schuringa is a Christian Reformed minister who serves as the president of Crossroad Bible Institute in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Hymns for the Christian Life

by Keith and Kristyn Getty
reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

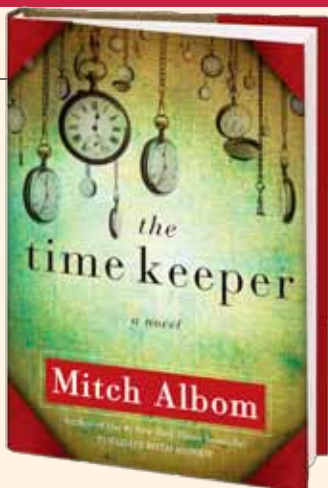
The Gettys' fourth album maps out new territory as it marries the sound of Irish folk music with that of American folk music. Irish reels morph into bluegrass fiddle tunes and back as the influences mix and match to give us an album of carefully crafted tunes and good, solid lyrics. This is not just another Getty collection—even though that would be a good thing. *Hymns for the Christian Life* works both as a collection of hymns that congregations can draw from and as an outstanding album. (Getty Music)



The Time Keeper

by Mitch Albom
reviewed by Jim Romahn

Mitch Albom, author of *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, explores his familiar themes of life, death, and relationships in this novel about the inventor of ways to measure time. He's punished for this "sin" with an eternal life in a cave, listening to people complain about time—not enough, too little, moving too fast, passing too slowly. It's a parable about the value of relationships. (Hyperion)



Holiday Pipes

by John Schwandt
reviewed by Randall Engle

John Schwandt directs the American Organ Institute, the only school in the world that trains pipe organ builders. But Schwandt is equally a world-class performer and improvisator, as this new holiday release illustrates. Using surprising and often comic tune pairings such as "Deck the Halls with Frankincense and Myrrh on a Clear Midnight," Schwandt plays up a storm. The improvisations are as thrilling as they are ingenious. The disc ends with the University of Oklahoma choirs joining Schwandt for *Silent Night*. (Order by emailing aoi@ou.edu)

More

by I. C. Springman
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

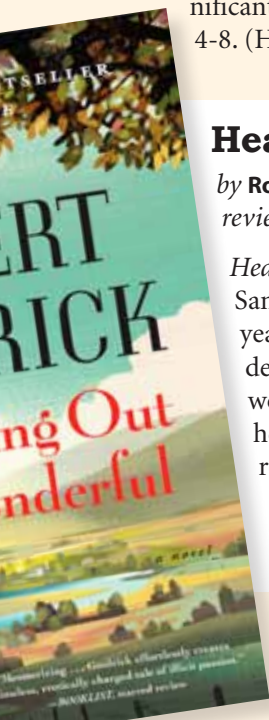


A magpie is forlorn because he owns nothing. When a friendly mouse offers him a shiny marble, the magpie begins a seemingly endless search for more things with which to fill not just one nest, but many nests in the same tree. Soon, one too many things causes the branch on which one nest is resting to snap. The experience teaches the magpie about the value of friends and possessions. Delightful, humorous illustrations enhance the subtle, significant theme of this children's picture book. Ages 4-8. (Houghton Mifflin)

Heading Out to Wonderful

by Robert Goolrick
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Heading Out to Wonderful is the story of Charlie, who wanders into 5-year-old Sam's quiet Virginia town in 1948. Charlie works hard and buys land, but he yearns for something he cannot have: a married woman whose husband is despised in town. Young Sam is witness to it all—the wonderful and then the wonderful turning into something terrible. Based on a story Goolrick once heard, his novel is not for the faint of heart. Yet the narrative is gentle and redemptive even as it is harsh and heartbreaking. (Algonquin)



THE LOWDOWN



It Begins: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, the first of Peter Jackson's three-part film version of the popular Tolkien novel, hits theaters December 14. (Warner Bros.)



Mother Mary: Lee Bennett Hopkins's picture book *Mary's Song* gives children a look at the Christmas story from the loving mother's point of view. (Eerdmans)



More Music: Christmas albums are popping up everywhere—you might like *Christmas: God with Us* by Jeremy Camp (EMI), *JOY* by Steven Curtis Chapman (Provident), or *Christmas* by Francesca Battistelli (Fervent).



Fish Tales: *The Lure* is William J. Vandekopple's second collection of stories centered on "families, fishing, and faith." (Eerdmans)

MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE



Christmas

Narratives

Jesus' Family Stories Help Us Make Sense of Our Own

IT WAS EARLY DECEMBER 2008 when my father died. Although he was 79 years old and suffered from a number of chronic ailments, his passing was no less unexpected. Odd how we can be so surprised by what is inevitable, and yet often take extraordinary gifts of grace completely for granted.

Weeping and Great Mourning

Blind in one eye, Daddy had beaten cancer once already. He had diabetes and walked with a cane. Still, my siblings and I thought he would go on seeing, go on walking, go on living indefinitely. It was my mother who had our attention. A few

months earlier she'd been knocked flat by a massive stroke that stole her adult mind, her strength, and her independence. Gentle soul that he was, Dad quietly slipped away while our eyes were focused elsewhere.

By that point in my adult life I'd already allowed a few holiday celebrations to be ruined by far less cataclysmic events, so I had little hope of getting into the Christmas spirit that year. How Daddy used to love Christmas! When we were little he used to dole out cash so each of us could shop for gifts. He was happier than anyone to watch the joyful, excited revelations of what we'd gotten for one another, all at his expense.

But we weren't children anymore. Our father was gone, our mother no longer in her right mind. Long divided by geographical distance, our family was now also divided by pain and uncertainty. All of us manifested our shock and grief in a variety of ways, from childlike astonishment and helplessness to childish expressions of anger and bitter anguish. Although we were adults, we felt orphaned, and it brought out the worst in some of us.

We were divided on how best to care for our mother, how best to manage or whether to dispose of her assets, what she and our father would have wanted, and which of us should be making the decisions.

All those familiar and unfamiliar names in the lineage of Christ —what were they to me?

My brother Joseph is the youngest of the three boys. A pastor, he often reminds us to live out the Christian values with which our parents brought us up. Joe encourages everyone—family, friends, congregants, and strangers alike—to read at least three Bible chapters daily. At this time of the year, he urges everyone to read what he calls “the Christmas narratives,” the gospel passages that tell the story of Christ’s birth.

Refusing to Be Comforted

That year I ignored my brother when he told me that reading the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke would draw me nearer to God and prepare my heart for the Advent season. Why should I care about reading the Christmas narratives or meditating on Advent at a time like this? I already knew the biblical stories—the annunciation to Mary, Joseph’s dream, Mary and her cousin Elizabeth sharing the wonder of their miraculous pregnancies. And all those familiar and unfamiliar names in the lineage of Christ—what were they to me? How could revisiting Christ’s family stories have any bearing on the loss of intimacy and the rifts between my own family members? That Advent, the bond of unity between my family members was so cold and dead we might as well have buried it in the coffin with our father.

We Saw His Star When It Rose

So I didn’t follow my brother’s prescription for reading chapters 1 and 2 of Matthew and Luke—not until the following year, well after the holidays. When I finally did, I realized two things right away. One was that I didn’t remember them as well as I thought I did. The other was that the genealogies are more interesting than I’d expected them to be. The generations from Abraham to Christ are a long and complex family story with its share of unhappy and shameful moments, villainous characters, and scandalous, even

criminal behavior. Even in God’s family, the stories aren’t all about peace on earth and good will toward men.

But I discovered a strain of grace, a recurring motif of redemption running all through the Christmas narratives and culminating in the birth of the Savior, whose own life in the flesh was filled with tragedies. Matthew and Luke lay a foundation to Christ’s earthly story that compels readers to discover how it’s resolved. The story of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection provides the means for all of us to become a part of his family and share in his triumph over sin, over enmity, over death. Christ’s story—including the worst parts—is what makes our own tragedies bearable.

As for my family, the story of what has happened between December 2008 and December 2012 is nothing short of miraculous. I couldn’t do justice to describing the quiet, gradual change that came about. God is a better writer, and in his ongoing narrative, he used the loss of our father, the brokenness of our mother, and the darkness of that funereal Christmas in 2008 to draw a bunch of self-sufficient, distant, and emotionally divided adults into something not unlike the family we had been when we were all children living under one roof. Each year has gotten better, and I can honestly say that last Christmas was the sweetest and most peaceful I’ve known in years because my family came together in a way I didn’t think possible.

A Ruler Who Will Shepherd My People

We still live in different cities, some of us in different states. Big brother John takes care of Mom’s house and oversees her finances. No one can make her laugh like he does. Joyce, a nurse and hospital administrator, explains Mom’s meds and helps us navigate the health care system on her behalf. Whenever James, our Mr. Fix-It, comes to visit, he brings a truckload of tools. By the time he leaves, the house is

rewired, safety lighting installed, and insulation and plumbing and air-conditioning are in order. Joe knows Mom’s favorite psalms. He reads to her, prays with her, and sometimes brings her to church with him. Janice often brings some savory dish or sweet dessert—something she’s pureed for Mom, who can no longer handle solid food. Jan always brings a whiff of domesticity with her, along with the youngest of Mom’s grandchildren.

That leaves me—the daughter who never married, who didn’t want to settle down in one place. Our mother lives with me now, in my home, under my roof. I make her breakfast in the morning and bathe her and dress her. I make sure she gets exercise and mental stimulation.

Waiting for the Consolation

Sometimes I get tired of answering Mom’s seemingly endless questions. Tired of getting up several times a night to bring her a glass of water or re-tuck her blankets. But I never get tired of getting to know the girl she once was. She has become very childlike in personality. God is teaching me daily to love and better understand the gray-haired little girl I have gained instead of mourning the mother I have lost.

Nor is my father truly lost to us. At times I think perhaps he is present—brought near by the childlike mind of someone who knows how to invoke her loved ones, to manifest them through her own happy memories and imagination. I watch carefully, trying to learn this trick. I think I knew it once, and I am determined to get it back. After all, I do not doubt anymore that God can restore what has been lost to us. It’s what Christ came for. It’s what he does. ■



Jennifer M. Parker is a freelance writer based in Jackson, Miss.

An Unhealthy Dichotomy

Editor's note: This is one of an occasional series of reflections by people on how they live out their Reformed faith in their daily work.

“THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1). Creation itself reveals God’s handiwork as Creator. Scientific formulas and mathematical patterns give evidence to God’s eloquent design as we study his creation more and more deeply. As Christians, we all can agree that God is the Creator, and we are witness to his beautiful design. But when it comes to the *how* of creation, there are conflicting opinions.

As a doctor, I have a strong background and training in the sciences. Raised as a Christian, I was taught that God is the Creator. In my science education, I learned the theories of an old earth, natural selection, and more. At my church I was taught that God created the whole universe as we see it in seven days. Simultaneously, my parents, professors, and teachers often reminded me that we can better understand God and his creation through the gift of science. But whenever the issues of the origins of creation are raised, there seems to be an underlying fear that God is being taken out of the picture.

The more I engaged with these issues, the more confusing they appeared. One could either be a “creationist” who does not believe in evolution or an “evolutionist” who does not believe in a Creator. These two choices left me unsettled. It’s a struggle faced by many young Christians: Either believe in God the Creator, or accept evolution without God. Accepting both old earth/evolutionary theory along with the Creator never seemed like an option. These mixed messages made it difficult to reconcile faith and science.

For one friend, it was impossible. Growing up, he dreamed of becoming a paleontologist, but he never pursued this as a career. He assumed that accepting scientific theory meant rejecting his faith. This unhealthy dichotomy, where God is removed from scientific knowledge, can prevent young Christians from pursuing their vocational calling into the sciences.

In my work, looking at scientific evidence without God doesn’t make sense. Statistically it is improbable that the world came into being as it is by pure chance. Through the years, I have been able to reconcile the apparent conflict between faith and science through careful study, debate, and prayer.

We are called
to love one another
and bring healing
to this broken creation.

Regardless of what conclusions we draw regarding the *how* of creation, we cannot argue the fact that God had a hand in it, no matter how he chose to do it.

As Christians, we all are creationists—we believe God created. Some believe God chose to create the world in seven days; others believe God created it over billions of years, using evolution as a tool. It doesn’t really matter where we fall on this spectrum.

What does matter is how we choose to act based on our decision. No matter what our career may be, we are called to love one another and bring healing to this broken creation. Even though our worldviews may differ based on education, upbringing, or vocation, one thing is clear: God created. So there is no conflict between faith and science. Instead the two forms of revelation—God’s Word and God’s world—complement each other.

At the core, Christians believe that God is the Creator. That’s the message we share with those who have not yet met the Great Architect. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Joel Phillips is a neurology resident at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Mich., and a member of Dearborn Christian Fellowship.

Looking for Beauty

RECENTLY while stopped at an intersection, I observed an elderly couple in a nearby car. The woman was doing one of those last-minute mirror checks: the pursing of lips to ensure that lip color is secure, the purposeful pat of the hair. My own grandmother's maneuver involved swiping her nose with her compact before she was ready. As a child, I noticed that the beige-colored foundation seemed to make no difference at all to her wrinkled old skin. Yet once she'd swiped her nose and given herself one final look in her compact mirror, I felt that she had somehow achieved beauty.

As I sat at the intersection, I was transported to the bedside of Emma.

I knew Emma for only a few days before she died. I was her hospice nurse. The staff described her as a fiercely independent woman who had always dressed impeccably and took great pride in her personal appearance. She had lived a full life. When informed that continuing treatment for her cancer was futile, Emma had opted for hospice care to help her live out her last days with dignity. As I walked into her room, I noted that her curtains were closed against the late-afternoon sun. Despite the dimness, I could see that her room was tastefully decorated. Emma had recently fallen and her face was quite bruised. I instinctively knew not to ask to turn any lights on.

As I became acquainted with Emma, we talked openly and honestly of her impending death. I've learned that keeping secrets and avoiding the truth lose their appeal at the end of life. The day before Emma died, we talked about letting go of past pain. Her pain involved a damaged relationship with her daughter. As we talked, Emma became distracted and her countenance abruptly changed.



I sensed that Emma had caught a glimpse of something. I waited for Emma to speak, as I had also learned that dying people very often see people not visible to the rest of us. Then she smiled brightly and commented on my earrings. I was stunned. In the midst of such a painful conversation, Emma noticed my *earrings*? Not only did she notice them; she actually used some of the final words that she had left on this earth to talk about them.

I began to laugh out loud, which made Emma laugh too. At that moment I realized just how much Emma loved beautiful things. She loved beauty so much that she had to stop and express her find. Emma's ability to admire something she found beautiful—even now in her final days on earth—made a deep impression on me. In fact, this world is full of reminders of God's beauty. It's a gift. Emma's comment reminded me that we're never to stop seeking it, appreciating it, or talking about it.

Later, as we continued our conversation, I learned that Emma was a Chris-

tian who had lost her way. I reminded her of God's beautiful promises to her. I told her that although she may have distanced herself from God, he had never left her. That same day, Emma's daughter arrived from out of state. Before Emma died, her daughter told me, they talked about past hurts and forgave one another. She was with her mother as she took her last breath. When I shared with her Emma's comment about my earrings, her daughter laughed too. "That was mom," she said.

The light turned green and the traffic moved. The lady primping her gray hair was no longer in view. But as I drove away, I felt sure that I had witnessed something beautiful, another gift from above, at a traffic light. ■



Diane Van Ryn is a member of Bradenton (Fla.) Christian Reformed Church.

ADS

Deadlines: Jan. 2013 issue is 12/3/2012; Feb. issue is 1/7/2013. Details online.

Prices: Most ads are \$0.33^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.26^{US} per character applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements. Photos are \$22^{US} extra.

To Advertise: Place your classified ad online at www.thebanner.org/classifieds or email it to classifieds@thebanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. Questions? Call 616-224-0725.

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

CANDIDATE KELLY VANDER WOUDE has accepted the call of the Trinity CRC, Ames, Iowa. On September 11 he was examined by Classis Northcentral Iowa and was admitted to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the CRC. Ordination is scheduled for September 23, 2012.

THOMAS S. BAIRD, pastor serving Fellowship CRC, St Thomas, Ontario has accepted a call to Bethel Community Church, Edmonton, Alberta as their Lead Pastor.

Candidates for the Ministry

QUALIFYING PERSONS who wish to be candidates in 2013 for ordained CRC ministry should request application procedures by December 15, 2012. For further information, please email Karlene Werner at kaw5@calvinseminary.edu or write her at Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

Admitted into the Ministry

At the October 16, 2012 meeting of Classis BCSE candidate **SIMON NICHOLAS BIERMA** was examined and with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies, approved for ordination as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA. Nick was ordained on October 21st as pastor of Kelowna CRC. We thank and praise God for Nick and his fiancée Grace-Emma van Til who were married on October 27th. We trust the Lord will richly bless his ministry at Kelowna CRC, in Classis BCSE and the denomination.

Available for Call

The council of West End Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta is pleased to announce that its Pastor for Congregational Life and Outreach, **REV. KAREN NORRIS**, has completed her Clinical Pastoral Education training and her chaplaincy residency program and

is now available for call as an ordained minister of the Word. We heartily recommend Karen to the churches for their consideration.

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **ALLAN KIRKPATRICK** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

PASTOR VINH PAUL LE After more than 20 years of service, the council of First Christian Reformed Church of New Westminster, British Columbia announces that its Pastor for the Vietnamese Faith in Action Church Ministry, Vinh Paul Le, is now available for call as an ordained minister of the Word. We heartily recommend Pastor Vinh Le to the churches for their consideration in a Vietnamese Ministry. Vinh can be contacted at cuungoilacmat@yahoo.com or phone number is 604-436-4729. Pastor Vinh Le is a citizen of the United States and is required to return to the U.S.

Financial Aid

CLASSICAL STUDENT FUNDING Classis Grand Rapids South invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial assistance for the academic year 2013-2014 to apply for a classical grant. Applications must be received prior to February 15, 2013. For information and application forms, please contact Rev. Paul Sausser by phone at 616-530-9143, or by email at pastorpaul@discoverycrc.com.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HOLLAND will meet in regular session Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 6:00 PM at Pillar CRC, Holland. Agenda items are due by December 7, 2012 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk. Email: louwerse@macatawa.org, FAX: 616-494-6054.

CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND will meet March 2, 2013, at First CRC, Sheldon, Iowa. Agenda materials must be in the hands of the stated clerk by January 11, 2013. Rev. Robert Drenten, SC; 1405 Albany Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041.

CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, January 17, 2013, 4PM, at Second CRC of Allendale. Agenda deadline is December 6.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C

Congregational

Church's 50th Anniversary

WILLOWDALE CRC of Toronto, ON will be celebrating 50 years of God's faithfulness as a congregation with a church Open House, dinner, and a special worship service being planned for the weekend of Saturday and Sunday October 19th & 20th, 2013. If you are a past member and you have special memoirs and/or past pictures that you would like to share with us or if you would just like to find out further information about these events, please email us at fifty@willowdalecrc.com, keep an eye on our website: www.willowdalecrc.com or call the church office at 416-221-7829.

Announcements

JOIN US FOR winter worship services at Farnsworth Hall, 6159 East University Dr., Mesa, AZ. The Maranatha Community CRC meets at 10 AM each Sunday from 12-02-12 thru 4-14-13. Contact Rev. Gary Hutt @ 509-499-4561 for more information.

LAKE ALFRED MINISTRY—CRC/RCA winter ministry. Join us Nov. 11, 2012 thru April 14, 2013. 10:30 AM, 5:50 PM. Located on Rt. 17/92, Lk Alfred, Fl. Close to Winter Haven & Rt. 27. Preaching Nov./Dec. Rev. E. Tamminga; Jan. 2013 Rev. A. Jongmsa; Feb. Dr. J. Nederhood; March-April 14 Dr. G. Kroeze. Phone: 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442.

LOOKING TO ESCAPE the northern cold winter? Consider warm, sunny paradise on the S. W. coast of Florida at Venice. Enjoy warm, friendly welcome at the Reformed Church, 1600 Banyan Dr. (US Highway 41 and Center Rd.) Sunday morning worship, 10:30, 941-493-3075.

Birthdays

90th Birthday

MARGARET EDEMA of Byron Center, MI, celebrates her 90th birthday on Dec 1. Her husband, George, her children Peter (Mary), David (Linda), Mary (Daniel Sytsma) and Ruth (Ken Frederick), along with her grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God for the blessing she is to us. We love you.



ELEANOR BOERSMA ELENBAAS 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, #2024, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, celebrated her 90th birthday on October 30. Her children, grandchildren (11), and great-grandchildren (6) celebrated with a family gathering at The Shack, and praise God for the blessing she has been in their lives.

LLOYD FLIKKEMA 70 Luhn Lane, Gallatin Gateway, Mt 59730 will celebrate his 90th birthday on December 17. His wife, nine children, 20 grandchildren and 26 great grandchildren thank God for the blessing he has been to our family.

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For more information and to submit applications or nominations, visit calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings.

Processing of applications will begin shortly after January 1, 2013.



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80th Birthday

MYRA VAN KUIKEN of 2170 Cornerstone Dr Hudsonville, MI 49426 celebrated her 80th birthday on November 27. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, along with her husband Ron, thank God for her life, love, and godly example. We love you!

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

DE BOER John & Edith (Boerema) 10501 Emilie Lane apt. 3107 Orland Park, IL 60467 celebrate 70 years of marriage on December 14, 2012. Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for this wonderful blessing.

65th Anniversary

DRENTH Bill and Hermina of Kentwood, MI celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on November 12. Their family is so grateful for their example of faithfulness to each other and to God. Bless the Lord, oh my soul!

60th Anniversary

BAKER Rev. Louis and Trudy of 11833 James St. (A12) in Holland, MI. 49424, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 19 along with their children, grandchildren and great grandchild. We thank God for the blessing you have been to your family and to all those you have served.

BUIKEMA William & Clara of 2555 S. Leyden St. Denver, CO 80222-7140 will celebrate 60 Years of marriage November 21. Children Linda (Steve Lucht) Karen (David Velgersdyk) William Jr (Carol DeBoer) Patricia

Buikema 11 Grandchildren, 6 Greatchildren Praise God for his blessings and faithfulness.

DYKEMA Jack & Bernice of 3540 New Holland Hudsonville, MI 49426 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 30, 2012. Congratulations and love from their children Mark (Judy) Dan, Brad, Lisa (Steve) 6 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren.

KNOR Klaas and Diny celebrated their 60th anniversary on October 29, 2012. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren give thanks for their years together. God is so good!



PASMA Arnold and Marjorie (Bouwman) 543 Palm Ave, Ripon CA 95366 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on December 24. Congratulations and love from your children Mike (Barb), Melinda (LeRoy) Costa and Tami (Roger) Auwers, along with your 9 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR OPENING AT OPCRC Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago seeks an energetic, passionate pastor who will champion OPCRC's mission of reaching out with the Good News of Jesus Christ and building up people in their faith. We are seeking a pastor especially gifted in strong biblically-based preaching who will challenge the congregation spiritually and share in the leadership of staff and church ministries. This position is open due to our Pastor retiring in July of 2013. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at Orland Church, visit www.OrlandChurch.com. Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to pastorsearch@oprc.org.

PASTOR Faith Fellowship CRC of Fairview, Alberta, a small congregation in northern Alberta is seeking a pastor to lead our church in following the will of God. Preference will be given to those who have experience working with youth, as well as to those who are interested in developing a men's ministry. For more information or to submit a resume, please email John @ johnylystra@abnorth.com.

LEAD PASTOR First CRC of Bellflower, CA is seeking a full-time pastor for our established church as we strive to reach our diverse community in sunny Southern California. We are searching for a pastor who is passionate about preaching God's word and shepherding his people, and who has strong leadership skills, an enthusiastic attitude, and an ability to relate to all ages. For more information, contact Marv at 562-896-9339 or Bell1SearchCommittee@hotmail.com.

MINISTER OF PREACHING LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, MI seeks a Minister of Preaching with strengths in preaching, leadership, and relational gifts. Led by the Holy Spirit, LaGrave's members seek to worship and serve God in all of life, transforming His world and being transformed to reflect the character of Christ. For a full job description and to apply, please visit our website at www.lagrave.org.

SENIOR PASTOR - Ladner CRC, a mid-size church located in a small bedroom community, 20 km south of Vancouver BC, is seeking a Senior pastor. A vision statement, church profile and job description can be made available to interested applicants. Contact Darrell Renkema at upside@eastlink.ca or 778 855 7365.

PASTOR Good News Fellowship CRC, located in the beautiful city of Winnipeg, Manitoba is seeking a senior pastor. We are a caring, vibrant community church with a relaxed, contemporary worship style. A church profile and vision statement is available for interested applicants. Contact Linda Postma at lpstma@shaw.ca for more details.

FULL-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR Hillside Community Church (Christian Reformed) is searching for our next Youth Director. If interested, send your resume to Kim at kkohlhoff@hillsidech.org. Visit hillsidech.org for a full job description.

SENIOR PASTOR: Modesto Christian Reformed Church, located in central CA is seeking an experienced minister having the gifts and desires to provide spirit directed leadership. MCR is a family oriented church

with a blended style of worship, a growing outreach program and a desire to follow the Lord's leading. Church profile is available upon request. Please direct inquiries to Tom VanGroningen at tv90475@aol.com.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP First CRC of Ripon, CA is seeking a gifted musician who deeply appreciates Reformed theology and can utilize a broad range of musical expressions (both past and present) to be our next full-time Director of Worship. For a full job description and to apply, please visit our website at www.riponfirstcrc.org



CALVARY CRC OF LOWELL MI. a growing and scenic community just 7 minutes east of Grand Rapids is searching for their next Music Coordinator to become a part of our community in creating an excellent worship service. The position is 20 hours a week with flexible scheduling, 4 weeks off per year and a starting salary of \$15,000 per year, which is negotiable depending on education, experience and gifts. We are looking to grow and expand in our creativity and music. Christian hymns and modern Christian music as well as other varieties of Christian worship are appreciated in our church. Check out the job description on our website www.calvarylowell.org Please call if you have questions: 616-514-7591 or 616-897-7060 if you are interested email your resume to: pastor@calvarylowell.org calvarycrc@juno.com

PASTOR: Bethel CRC in Listowel Ontario is seeking a Pastor for approximately 50% position for Pastor of Congregational Care. Responsibilities include pastoral care, some preaching, teaching catechism and related ministry. We are looking for a Pastor that is willing to be involved in a Team Ministry that will help to implement the vision plan recently adopted for the church. We are looking for a candidate who is willing to live in the Listowel area. [Contact the church if you would like a copy of our job description.] Please send enquiries to our Human Resources Committee at officebethelcrg@gmail.com or 519.291.4000.

LEAD PASTOR - Sunshine Community Church (Grand Rapids, MI), a member of the Christian Reformed Church, is seeking a Spirit-filled man to serve our congregation as lead pastor. Candidates must have a sound theological understanding of the Reformed tradition and also be in step with the movement of the Holy Spirit. Those interested in serving the Lord by serving his people at Sunshine Church are asked to submit a resume' and a statement of faith to the search committee via e-mail at humanresources@sunshinechurch.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR The River CRC in Redlands, CA is accepting applications for a 20 hrs/wk Children's Ministries Director. The River seeks a director to lead a team of three children's ministry staff members as they serve 100+ kids each Sunday, 40+ boys in Cadets, and 80+ girls in GEMS. For a full job description or to submit a resume, contact mulder@therivercrc.com.

ADMINISTRATOR OF MINISTRIES The River CRC in Redlands, CA is seeking a full-time Administrator of Ministries to serve the book-keeping, risk management, human resource, and facility management needs of our congregation. For a full job description or to submit a resume, contact frontdesk@therivercrc.com.

PASTOR: Is God calling you to Zillah, WA, Faith Community CRC? We are a faith community living as Christ's representatives in diverse communities across the Yakima Valley, and we seek an experienced pastor willing to help us grow both spiritually and in numbers. If you have the gifts of leadership and outreach, please send your ministry profile to our chairman (Earl Holden) at earlsnoleopard@msn.com

PASTOR AVAILABLE for Interim/Transitional Ministry. Dr. James C. Busscher has been serving congregations within the CRC as a Transitional Pastor for the past 8 years. His transitional ministry at the Lafayette CRC of Indiana has recently been completed. If you are looking for pastoral leadership during your time of vacancy then feel free to contact Pastor Busscher at 616-460-1811 or e-mail him at jcbusscher@gmail.com. References available.

FULL TIME PASTOR Phoenix CRC in Phoenix, AZ is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a young and growing service oriented congregation located in the central Phoenix area. We desire an upbeat pastor who is committed to sound biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth as well as the neighboring community. If interested, or would like to send a resume contact Andy Keizer, search@phoenixcrrc.org, 602-956-5440, website: www.phoenixcrrc.org

VISALIA CRC (CA) is seeking to call a Pastor of Congregational Life to complement our Pastor of Discipleship in a team-oriented staff ministry. We are in prayer for a candidate with giftedness and experience in the areas of pastoral care, adult ministries/small groups, administration, and preaching. If interested contact us at info@visaliacrc.com. Church website - www.visaliacrc.com.

PASTOR: Second Reformed Church is a small church located in Pekin, Illinois. We are looking for an energetic pastor who is passionate in biblical teaching, promoting spiritual growth, and able to relate to people of all ages. We are a compassionate and friendly congregation looking for growth in our membership. SRC seeks to invite all people to follow Jesus Christ, learning and doing together all that God teaches us in the Bible. If interested, please contact search committee co-chairman Tami Oyer by email at oyersons@comcast.net or [309] 925-3135.

PASTOR Calvary CRC in Orange City, a growing community of over 6,000 in Northwest Iowa, is seeking a pastor who will follow Christ's leadership to shepherd us into the next phase of our ministry, is gifted in strong Biblical preaching, desires to nurture our youth, and has a heart for missions. Our new pastor will help us champion our mission to "Glorify God, Equip Believers, and Lead Seekers". Please send your letter of interest in confidence to secretary@calvaryoc.org. Resumes accepted until position filled.

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VANDER KLIPPE Wayne and Shirley of Grand Rapids, MI will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 5, 2012. Their children, 8 grandchildren, and 21 great-grandchildren praise God from whom all blessings flow.

WESTRA Piet & Ann (Talsma), 709-1485 Baseline Rd., Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3L8, (613)228-8074, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Dec. 5, 2012 with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We praise and thank God for His love and faithfulness

WOLTERS Pieter & Ann (nee deKlerk) of Fredericton, NB will celebrate their 60th anniversary on December 27, 2012. Their nine children (Barbara, Nettie, Rick, Ben, Peter, Annie, Sidney, Jennifer and Sheryl) and their spouses, and their many grandchildren and great grandchildren celebrate this occasion and thank God for His guidance, grace and blessings.

50th Anniversary

FABER George and Jo (Greenfield), 948 7th Ave SE, Sioux Center, IA 51250 will celebrate 50 yrs of marriage on Dec 27. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren!

TERPSTRA Jim and Kathy (Nagel) will celebrate their 50th Anniversary on December 21, 2012. Their children and grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness.

Obituaries

BOS Marvin, 80, Waupun, WI. Aug. 31, 2012. Preceded in death by daughter Lynette Kartechner. Survived by Lois, wife of 59 years; son Dan (Pam), daughters, Julane (Jeff) Homan, Marcene (Randy) Bruins, Jayne (John) Groenewold. 15 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren. Still my soul will sing your praise unending. Ten thousand years and then forevermore.

DE JONG Cornelius J (81), Sept. 28, 2012, Ripon, Calif. Preceded in death by his wife, Bertha. Survived by 3 children, Carol (Ron) Kunnen, Glenn (Marilyn) De Jong, Larry (Antine) De Jong, 8 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren, sisters Nell Veenstra and Alice Hilvers.



DYKSTRA Winifred (Hoekstra) 99, of Byron Center, MI went to be with the Lord on September 13, 2012. Loving mother of sons Dennis (Elaine) and Don, cherished grandmother of Jeff (Michelle), Jules (Mike) Schmuker, Laura (Tim) Van Der Heide, and dear great grandmother of Jayson Van Der

Heide and Elena Schmuker, sister Evelyn (Simon) HetJonk and sisters—in-law Portia Hoekstra and Jane Hoekstra. Preceded in death by husband Peter, sisters Marie & Jo and brothers Andy and Jim.

ELDERSVELD Evelyn Mae, aged 88; September 30, 2012; Grand Rapids, MI; She is survived by her children: James and Anne Eldersveld, Susan Eldersveld, David and Lori Eldersveld, and Steven and Lisa Eldersveld; 12 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren; sister, Marian Van Tongeren; and sisters-in-law, Gerry Dice and Edna Wieland. She was preceded in death by her husband, Herman her parents, Leo and Grace Dice, her brothers, Robert and Norman Dice.

FEENSTRA John H., age 98, of Allendale, Michigan, went to be with his Lord on September 1, 2012. John is survived by his wife of 71 years, Joyce (Ykema), his five children, Roger and Grace (Hutt) Feenstra, Janice and Herb Everman, Bernard and Cheryl (Artz) Feenstra, Robert and Loraine (key) Feenstra, David and Margaret (Nagelkirk) Feenstra. He is also survived by 17 grandchildren (1 deceased), and 20 great-grandchildren, and his sisters and brothers-in-law, Lawrence Ykema, of South Dakota, Tony and Wanda Ykema of Arizona, Anita Van Mannen of Iowa, Norman and Evelyn of Minnesota, and Madelyn of Michigan.

FOLKEMA Genevieve (Gen) Elizabeth Vander Ploeg, age 93; Kentwood, MI; She was preceded in death by her husbands: Derrick Vander Ploeg and John Folkema; her parents: George and Elizabeth Zeeff; brothers: Clarence, George, Harold and Melvin Zeeff; and sister, Helen Downs Shepard. She is survived by her brother: Ed Zeeff, of Coldwater, MI; her children: Carol (Jim) Hoffman of Kentwood, MI, Jerry (Linda) Vander Ploeg of Grand Rapids, MI and Mission, TX, and Judy (Maury-deceased) Noyes of Wayne Twp., OH; 13 grandchildren; 22 great grandchildren; and 6 great great grandchildren.

KEESEN Sadie (Ritsema) 94, joined her Lord Oct. 8, 2012. Preceded in death by husband, George, and daughter, Myrna, she is survived by daughter, Susan Keesen (Andrew) Vander Ploeg, grandchildren Peter (Kira) and Jamie, great grandson Andy, sister Bert (Ritsema) Reynolds, brother Gary (Alene) Ritsema, sister-in-law Lillian (Keesen) Swierenga and many nieces and nephews who loved her dearly.

KREDIT Florence (De Jong), 102, of Lynden, Wa., Oct. 7, 2012. Husband: Tim (deceased). Children: Jean (Albert) Van Dalfsen, Clarice (Rev. Barry) Blankers, Harlan (Linda) Kredit, Mavis (Harold) Terpstra, Carolyn (Jim) Wynstra, Rev. Eleanor (Bill) Rietkerk. 82 grand, great, and great-great grandchildren experienced her unconditional love and generous hospitality. She lives on in our hearts and minds.

KUIPER Marie B. age 82, was taken to her heavenly home on October 10, 2012. Although Marie never married, she had many nephews & nieces. She was a life long member of the Racine Christian Reformed Church in Racine, WI. The past 28 years nephew & niece Garry & Gloria Friesema have taken care of her needs. Marie is survived by her brother, Arthur (Helena) Kuiper who live at Josephine Suites, 9901-272nd Place NW, Stanwood, WA 98292. Condolences: 6345 So. Drive, Racine, WI 53406



PLEIMA Albert, age 90 died Oct 16, 2012. 714 West 1st St. Pella, IA 50219. Survived by wife of 64 years, Lenora. Children: Linda Roase, Marcie Brink, Randy Pleima

REINALDA Gerrit J, 90, Of 1950 S. Mountain Ave #4003, Ontario, Ca 91762 went to be with the Lord on October 21, 2012. Gerrit is survived by his wife of 64 years, Anna Mae (Douma); 4 children, Marcia/Preston Bruxvoort, Peter, Greta/Steven Jones & Barbara; 10 grandchildren & 17 great grandchildren; brother, Lee, & sister, Winnie Dehoog. He was predeceased by 3 brothers & 4 sisters.

SCHIPMA Peter B., age 70, of Lockport, IL went to be with the Lord on September 5, 2012. Beloved husband for 50 years to wife, Judith (Westerhof). Loving father of Pete (Roseann), Scott (Jackie), and Lisa (Brian) McCarthy. Cherished Papa of 11 grandchildren.

SNIPPE Albert, 81, of Belwood, Ont. was suddenly called home to be with his Lord on September 26, 2012. Married to his beloved wife Freda for 56 years, and dear father of John & Kathy Snippe, Sylvia & John McLaughlin, Diana & Jamie Van Dyke, Robert Snippe, Deb & Rob Thornton. He is also missed by 16 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. He was comforted by Psalm 121, "I lift my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth".

SUWYN Richard of Artesia CA met his Lord on 10/6/12. Preceded in death by his wife Joan. Survived by son Donald, daughter-in-law Lynda, grandchildren Chasie Suwyn & Kelly Stout, great-grandchildren Jake, Mitchel & Madison.



SLAGTER Ira R. "Ike" age 90, of Orland Park, IL. WWII and Korean War US Army Veteran, Prisoner Of War and Purple Heart recipient. He went to be with his Lord on October 6, 2012. Beloved husband of Evelyn G., nee Zeilstra, for 68 years. Loving father of Ira Jr. (Judy), Robert (Daeng),

Sandra (Rev. Carl Jr.) Kromminga and Sheila (William) Olson. Cherished grandfather of 14. Dearest great-grandfather of 7. Dear brother of Dorothy (the late Arend) Overbeek and the late Sydney (the late Nina) Slagter. Fond brother-in-law of John (Evelyn) Zeilstra and Donald (Verna) Zeilstra. Dear uncle of many nieces and nephews. Former Vice President of Time Inc. Former Executive Director of The Back to God Hour.

SYBESMA Durk, age 91, went to be with his Lord on October 27, 2012. His wife of 56 years, Shirley (Stoepker) survives him. 38 Brussels Ct., Visalia, CA 93277. Children: Faye (Harry) Knol, Charles (Laurie) Sybesma, Arnold (Mary) Sybesma, Jennifer (Gary) Boyd. Nine grandchildren, one great-granddaughter.

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VAN DELLEN Roger was welcomed into Heaven by his Lord and Savior on 10/18/12. He is survived by his loving wife, Nell, his partner for 67 years and children: Joyce, Roger Jr. (celebrating in Heaven), Carolyn (Rev. Timothy) Cartwright, and Dr. Alfred (Gwen) Van Dellen. Condolences can be sent to Nell: 1600 NW Crista Shores Ln, # 501, Silverdale, Washington, 98383. Please send memorial gifts to The Back To God Hour.

VANDER MEULEN Anna (Van Dam): age 92, went to be with the Lord on Sept. 29, 2012 at Bethany Home in Ripon, CA. She was preceded in death by her husband, Gus Vander Meulen in 2001, 3 brothers and 2 sisters. She is survived by her children: Anna Jean Prins (Edwin) Prins, Caroline (Bill) Hoekstra, Pete (Edith) Vander Meulen, Bill (Joyce) Vander Meulen, John (Debby) Vander Meulen, Marlene (Ken) Van Staaveren, Sue (Jasper) Van Vliet, 21 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren, 1 sister, Irene Klein of Az.

VAN ESSEN Oscar, Edgerton, MN died on Sept. 17 at the age of 90. Survived by wife Celia; 5 children; Leon (Liz), Vicki, Owen (Kathy), Beth (John), Darla (Jim) and 8 grandchildren. He is loved and remembered by many.

VAN TIL Ren, aged 80; October 16, 2012; 4997 N. Quail Crest Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He was preceded in death by his brother Arthur. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Maria (Kortenoeven); daughters, Anita and Karl House of Lithia, FL (Rachel, Laura), Judy and Steve Morren (Kate, Samantha, Shannon, and Peter); brother, Alan and Glenn Van Til; in-laws, Adri de Regt, Jaap and Gerda Kortenoeven of The Netherlands.

WIERENGA Janet (DeVries) age 87, of Evergreen Park, IL, on October 11, 2012. Preceded in death March 5, 2012 by her beloved husband of 64 years, Harold, Sr. Loving mother of Harold, Jr. (Cindy), Wayne (Anne) and Jay. Dearest grandmother of 6 and great -grandmother of 3.

ZYLSTRA Rev. Martin G, age 90, went to be with his Lord on Oct. 2, 2012. Preceded in death by his wife Carol (Groenendyk) and daughter Joyce De Kock. Survived by children Jim/Josephine Zylstra, Jeanne/Tim Adama, Sharon De Jong, Lois/Craig Lubben, Dan Zylstra, Russ/Shelley De Kock, Susan/Bill Haagsma. 17 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

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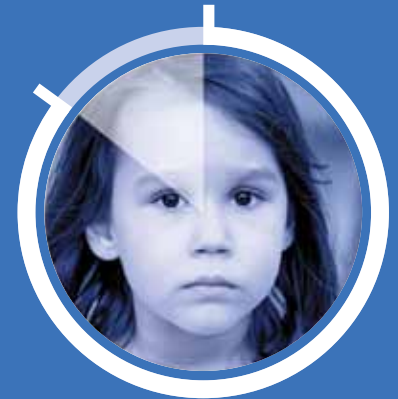
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PRINCIPAL SEARCH West Side Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI (pre-K through 8th grade) invites applications for the position of principal, beginning July, 2013. WSCS has provided excellent Christian education to God's children on the west side of GR for 130 years. More info can be found online at www.wscsgr.org, including the application, the description of the position and the school profile.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Calvin Theological Seminary is seeking a qualified candidate for the Chief Financial and Operating Officer position. A Bachelor's degree in business, communications, accounting or finance is desired, along with 5 or more years in a leadership role. The CFOO will manage the Controller, Human Resources Manager, IT Managers, Facilities Manager and the Director of Financial Aid. If interested, or to recommend someone, please contact: W. L. Waanders, ExecuQuest, Inc., PO Box 6405, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6405; or email to ExecuQuest@aol.com

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR SOUGHT DeMotte Christian School is looking to hire a Director of Development. DMCS is accredited by Christian Schools International, as well as by the state of Indiana, and promotes a Reformed Christian educational perspective. This northwest Indiana community is located 60 miles southeast of Chicago, Illinois. This growing school community of 250 students, which has served its community for 65 years, assists Christian families by providing a Christ-centered education for their children in grades PK 4 through 8th grade. To request an application or gain more information, contact Jim Rozendal, school administrator, at jrozendal@dmchr.org or call 219-987-3721.

PRINCIPAL SEARCH Daystar School in Chicago is seeking a Principal to begin July 2013. Information about Daystar, the position and the application process can be found on our website. www.daystarsearch.com



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Interested candidates are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vitae/resume to:

Arian Nederhoff
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
Fax: (712) 722-6035
E-mail: hr@dordt.edu

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beginning July 1, 2013

- Duties include a combination of academic administration and teaching in one or more areas of the seminary curriculum.
- We especially encourage applications from women and members of ethnic minority groups. Applicants must be committed to the confessions and mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- Processing of applications will begin shortly after January 1, 2013.

For more information and to submit applications or nominations, visit www.calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings



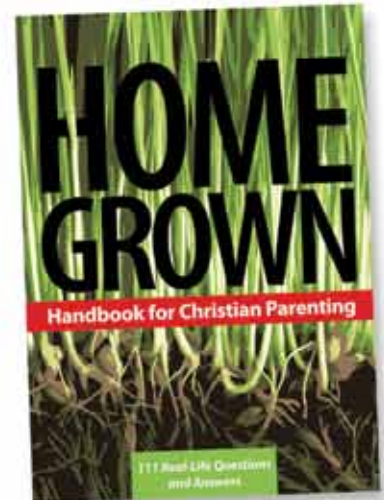
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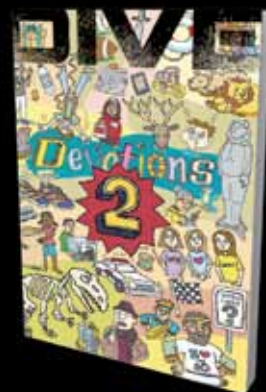
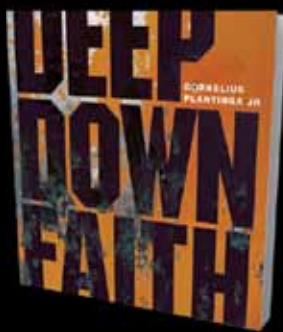


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Holland, Michigan – **Imagine Fellowship's**, Pastor Wayne Coleman leads a congregation where African-American youth are being saved and empowered through the Gospel.

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Belgrade, Montana – **Imagine**, a new ministry built around small group gatherings, focuses on bringing people to Christ.

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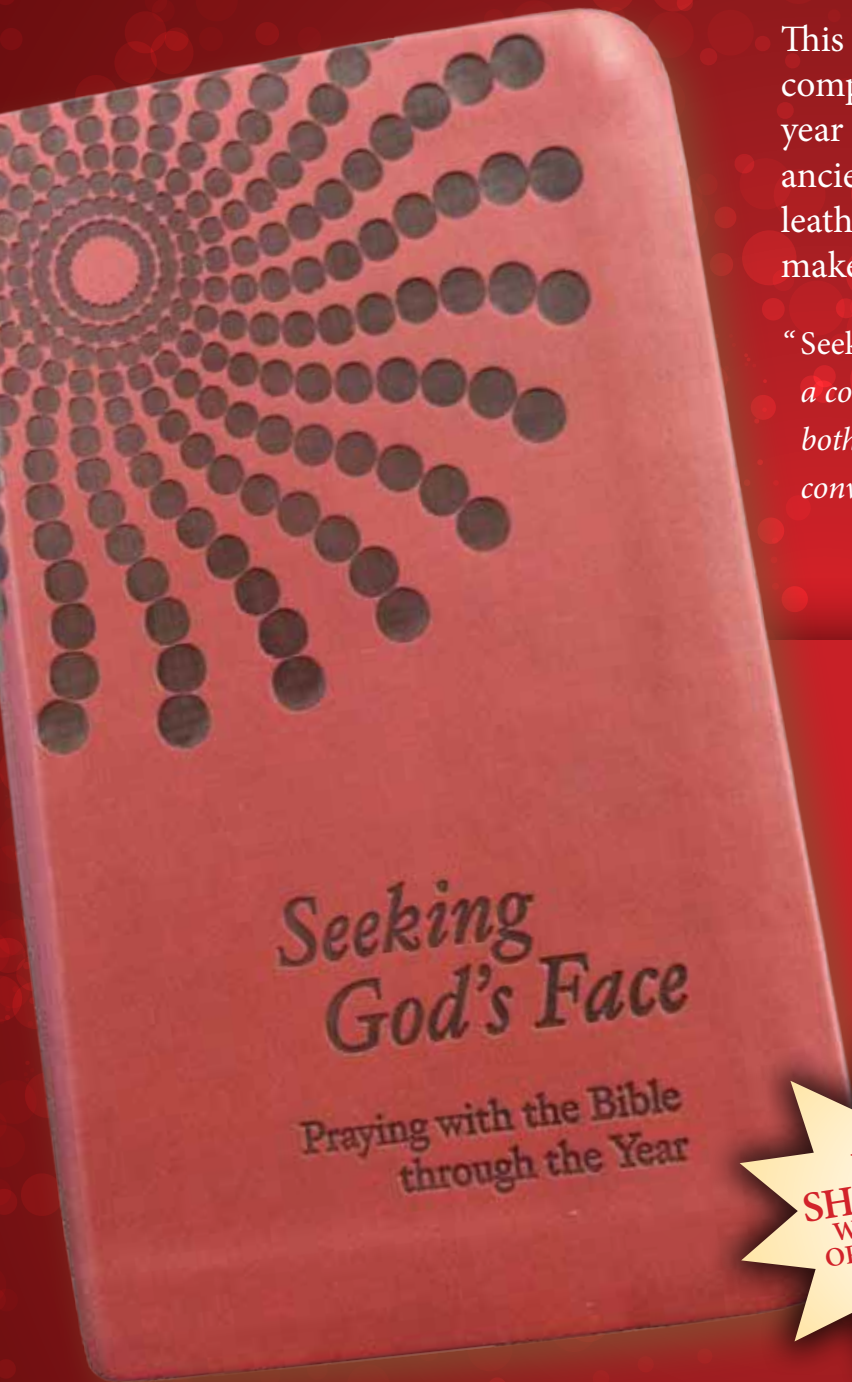
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Punch Lines

What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to editorial@thebanner.org. Thanks!

Six-year-old Angie and her 4-year-old brother, Joel, were sitting in church. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally his big sister had had enough.

"You're not supposed to talk out loud in church," she whispered.

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" asked Joel.

Pointing to the back of the church, Angie said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers."

—Cyndi Boss

One Sunday, while attending the early service at church, which is attended mainly by older Dutch members, I went to use the restroom. A gentleman came in and washed his hands. Then he proceeded to leave, turning out the light in order to save electricity—and leaving me completely in the dark!

—Adrian Elzinga

We started teaching our boys about giving to the church. The older two each had some money in their piggy banks that they wanted to spend, so we talked to them about spending, sharing, and saving. When they took some of their money to give to the church, we explained that

the first offering was for the church budget and the second was for a ministry outside the church.

One afternoon Levi, our 7-year-old, spotted a sign that read "Budget Brake & Muffler."

"Mom, look!" he said. "That's where my money went!"

—Jacky Huberts

After a Palm Sunday service, my dad and I were discussing the children's enthusiasm as they progressed up the aisle waving palm branches.

Me: It would be great if we could get a donkey, cover it with coats and blankets, and have the children lead it as though Jesus were seated on it during his arrival in Jerusalem.

Dad: Sure. Then when they get to the front of church, the pastor could say, "Let us bray."

—Jean Van Dyke

A Sunday school teacher asked the children, as they were on their way to the service, "Who can tell me why we should be quiet in church?"

One bright little girl replied, "Because people are sleeping."

—Edith Vander Veen

My daughter was reading a Bible story about the plagues sent upon Egypt. She explained that the Lord sent so many frogs that there were piles of them on the land.

"What was this called?" she asked, expecting the answer "A miracle."

Four-year-old Chloe immediately responded, "Littering."

—Dave Hollander

The blame game:
Adam blamed Eve.

Eve blamed the snake.

The snake didn't have a leg to stand on.

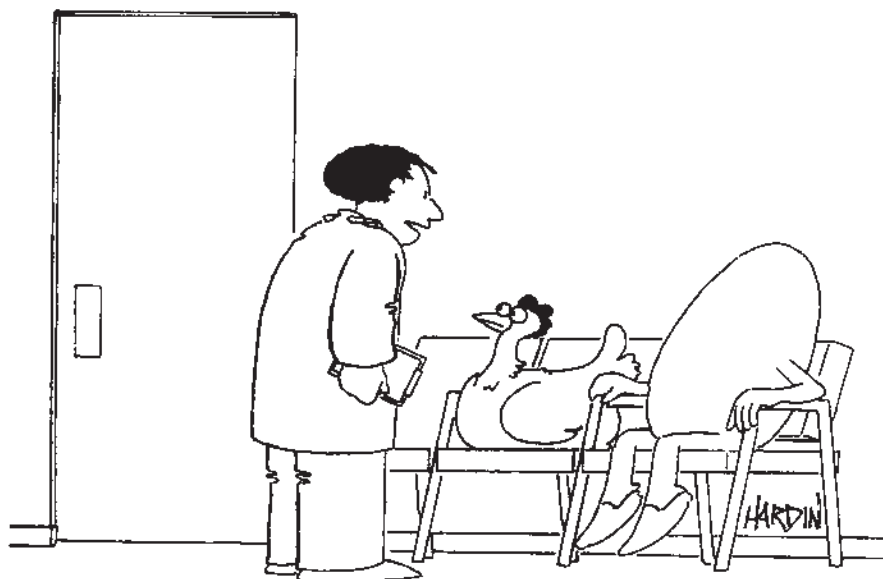
—Hilda Wever

My granddaughter is 2 years old. Her parents have been teaching her to sit still and be quiet in church. During one visit to my house, the two of us sat down to read a book together. She was doing just fine, but was talking a little louder than usual. When I asked her to use her quiet voice, she responded, "Why, Grandma? Me not in church!"

—Diana Leyendekker

The other day my 4-year-old and I were having devotions that included a reading from Revelation 22:5: "They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." My son looked at me quizzically and asked, "Why is God going to make it rain forever?"

—Scott Stark



"Who was first?"



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