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## WHAT'S ONLINE

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- » Book: *Living Under Water*, by Kevin Adams
- » Movie: *Jerry and Marge Go Large*
- » Podcast: *The Bible Binge*

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# Safe Gospel Conversations

Early Christians used the fish symbol as a secret code. When meeting a stranger, one Christian would draw half of the image and wait to see if the stranger would know to draw the other. If they did, they were safe to talk freely about Jesus.

In many parts of our world the threats to Christians are just as real today as they were for the early church. Thankfully Christians today have ways of talking to other believers far beyond what the early church could have imagined.

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# The Great Sin

Have we been shaped by our North American culture, which often celebrates and rewards prideful demeanors and behaviors?



Shiao Chong is editor-in-chief of *The Banner*. He attends Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ont.

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

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Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).

**AS I'VE WRITTEN BEFORE**, I believe our denomination struggles with spiritual pride in its perceived theological superiority (“Revival and Spiritual Pride,” June 2021). In his classic *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis devoted an entire chapter to the sin of pride. He called it “The Great Sin.” Why? “According to Christian teachers,” wrote Lewis, “the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind” (p. 109).

If you think Lewis was exaggerating, consider that many great theologians of the past, from Augustine and Aquinas to Luther and Calvin, considered pride as “the essence and root of sin” (*New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, p. 685). Pride was believed to have caused the angel Lucifer to fall into becoming Satan. Pride in desiring to be like God was the root of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. Historically, Christianity has regarded pride—especially spiritual pride—as one of the greatest sins. And yes, pride, as Lewis suggested, is worse than sexual immorality.

We often think that Sodom’s great sin was homosexual immorality. But God didn’t seem to think so: “Now this is the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen” (Ezek. 16:49-50). God’s emphasis here was clearly on Sodom’s pride—their arrogance and haughtiness—and their lack of compassion for the poor and needy. Homosexual immorality might fall under “detestable things,” but that

accusation is muted at best. God was more worried about pride than about any sexual sin.

As Lewis wrote, “If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual. ... That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither” (pp. 94-5).

Even so, I can’t remember the last time I heard a sermon on pride. Have we lost this historic emphasis? Have we been shaped by our North American culture, which often celebrates and rewards prideful demeanors and behaviors? Yet Scripture says, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).

Of course, we are not talking about healthy pride or self-esteem (see 2 Cor. 5:12; Gal. 6:4), or about being proud of worthy achievements. Sinful pride, according to Lewis, is “competitive by its very nature.” It is always about being better—e.g., more righteous—than someone else. What’s more, sinful pride is self-deceptive (Obad. 3; Jer. 49:16): it deceives us into thinking we are not proud or, worse, gives us false humility. We confess to God we are nothing but still imagine (perhaps subconsciously) that God approves of us and sees us as better than others.

How do we resist sinful pride and acquire true humility? The first step is to recognize that we are all guilty of sinful pride. As Lewis said, “If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed” (p. 114). Let us regain historic Christianity’s emphasis against the sin of pride. **B**



## REPLY ALL

To send letters to the editor, please see our guidelines at [thebanner.org/letters](http://thebanner.org/letters).

### The Rapture

In his article "What's Wrong With The Rapture?" (September 2022), Shiao Chong refutes common teachings on the millennium, rapture, and heaven. I read with appreciation and affirmation what I have believed and taught. I am a retired Reformed Church in America pastor and a Christian Reformed Church member. I worked in a funeral home for 14 years after retirement. Probably none of the people leading any of the nearly 2,500 services, visitations, or burials would agree. Neither pastor nor priest delivered a teaching on God's promise to renew heaven and earth as our eternal home. At my funeral home, every deceased person (was believed to have) gone to heaven. I have heard countless invitations to accept Christ so that "you may go to heaven when you die."

» Rev. Leon Draayer, Ph.D. //  
Mira Loma, Calif.

Thank you, editor and staff, for an outstanding September issue of *The Banner*. What a wonderful combination of inspiring stories, helpful information about denominational matters, relevant feature articles, and another thought-provoking editorial. Lots of good "food" for the mind and the heart. The interpretation of 2 Peter 3:3-13 ("What's Wrong with the Rapture?") was a new and helpful insight for me.

» Henry Admiraal // Grand Rapids, Mich.

### A Polarized Culture

Stacey Weiland's "Covenantal Communication in a Polarized Culture" (May 2022) was enlightening and a call for better communication. ... I do have more of a debate approach, trying to prove my point on an issue. (I) guess that comes from years in education, mostly in science and medicine. ... I have to really fight myself to not be so "right"-seeking and divisive and to listen with loving respect to others' views. Hopefully that will provide opportunities to have meaningful excavations to deeper matters and better relationships in the long run, even if disagreements still exist. We have to meet in the valleys of life where we live most of the time, maintaining our relationships and trusting in the Lord for guidance and discernment in those relationships. We shouldn't just avoid issues that can divide. This was a great article that encouraged this, my first response to a magazine.

» Larry Kopta // Kalamazoo, Mich.

### Church Music

While many of the reasons for retaining old, familiar hymns in our worship services have been explored, one point has been overlooked ("Inclusive Praise and Worship," February 2022). Many of these hymns were critical to the faith formation of older members. We should not deprive them of these hymns at a time when reassurance is most needed.

» Ed Gabrielse // Wheaton, Ill.

### Editorial Reactions

Thank you, Shiao Chong, for your many insightful editorials in *The Banner*. Your May 2022 column ("Presenting and Underlying Problems") was especially impactful and, I believe, a clear, well-founded, and loving call for renewal for Jesus' sake in the denomination we love. I join those praying that we would unify around the primary motivation of being "for Christ." Yours is a much-needed voice in a difficult time. No doubt speaking these truths has not made life easy for you. Thank you for wrestling with and for us.

» Lydia Frens // Holland, Mich.

I appreciated the editorial you wrote in the May edition. You questioned, "But what if we have some serious, unaddressed underlying problems?" I suggest that the underlying problem is that we do not *know* the Bible. Sure, we focus on the Sunday school stories and grace, but when it comes to the Great Commission, we only focus on the first half of Matthew 28:19-20. While the church has been focused on how to attract more members, the second part of the Great Commission has been tossed aside: "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." I wonder what would happen if we focused our attention instead on studying the Bible as it is written, verse by verse. Would we understand God and his Word better, deepening our relationship with him? Jesus said, "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Matt. 12:34). Therefore, as we passionately learn more about what God's Word says, wouldn't we organically spread the good news to others?

» Nicole Strampel // Sarnia, Ont.

Just prior to Synod 2022 I remember a colleague lamenting the divisive cloud looming over synod's conversation around the human sexuality report. They were praying for a third way instead of having to choose "for" or "against," between "yes" or "no," between "right"



## The Plight of a Pastor's Husband

or “wrong.” As I read your editorial (“Orthocardia: Having a Right Heart,” June 2022), I was drawn back to that conversation and blessed by your insight around “right beliefs” and “right behaviors” and a third way around a “right heart.” Once again, you have written with insight, clarity, and grace. As we continue to walk through challenges and celebrations of life, thank you for inviting us to continue our journey as agents of God’s shalom.

» Sid Couperus // Owen Sound, Ont.

Mr. Chong’s most recent editorial, “Beware Loveless Orthodoxy” (July/August 2022), is yet another example of his willingness to remind others of the importance of expressing unconditional love despite the ongoing debate on issues related to church orthodoxy. I am extremely grateful for his openness in addressing the challenges and problems facing the Christian Reformed Church as well as the church at large. I am also thankful that he has helped to expand the platform at *The Banner* to allow others to express thoughts and opinions that might not fit within the traditional orthodoxy or doctrine of the CRC.

» Jim Newhof // Caledonia, Mich.

**I HAVE THE GREAT PLEASURE** of being a pastor’s husband. Though my transition into this role has been seamless, sometimes I can only laugh at the humorous moments that come only with being a pastor’s husband.

“Nontraditional career” is a term sometimes used for people of one gender entering a career predominantly held by another gender. Examples include men going into nursing or women becoming pastors. People who choose nontraditional careers have to face some biases and stereotypes, so support groups can be found on Facebook for seemingly every such career—except for one.

What about the husbands of pastors? Seriously: what about me? I need support. There are pastors’ wives support groups. What is there for husbands?

When someone visits a male pastor at his house, they will compliment his wife on how great her flowers look, but not once has anyone told me how straight my lawnmower lines are. Other wives will bring the pastor’s wife a pie or other baked goods, but no one has ever brought me a 10-pound brisket to smoke. I know I don’t fit the mold, but I am lost. Where do I fit? I know I can’t sing or play the piano like many a pastor’s spouse, but I do have feelings. I just want to be seen.

Let me share with you one example of the real struggle of being a pastor’s husband.

Late last summer, one of the area pastors hosted a cookout at his house for 15 other pastors and their spouses. We arrived fashionably late and entered the house. I walked into the kitchen to drop off the dessert and froze. I literally froze. All the other pastors’ spouses—all women—were in the dining room talking about volunteer opportunities at the local

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Where do I fit?

Christian school. All the pastors were on the deck talking about upcoming classis meetings. I didn’t know where I belonged, and I still don’t. Am I allowed to hang with the pastors even though I am not one, or should I stay with the spouses—the only man in a group of women?

My concern is real, but I also tell this story with tongue in cheek. I truly relish my role as a pastor’s husband. I love watching my wife flourish in her position. I actually enjoy being able to prepare meals for her and hear about her day. But the best part of being a pastor’s husband (or wife) is watching God use our spouses to God’s glory and knowing that we can quietly do the little things to support their works.

But I’m telling you: as a pastor’s husband, the struggle is real! **B**



Gary Vana is a high school teacher. His wife, Kathy, is pastor at Rehoboth Reformed Church in Lucas, Mich.

### As I Was Saying

Find the latest posts from our award-winning blog online at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

- » How Refugees Made Me Fall in Love with My Hometown
- » Synod 2022 Did the Loving Thing
- » Picnics and Potlucks: Celebrating Our Differences



# Caring for the Least of These Through Foster Care

By Callie Feyen

**A**ccording to iFoster, a nonprofit in the U.S. whose mission is to “ensure that every child growing up outside of their biological home has the resources and opportunities they need to become successful, independent adults,” there are almost 440,000 children in foster care on any given day—11,000 in Michigan alone. The Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada reports that 63,000 children in that country are living in foster care.

The need to love and nurture children who are living away from their biological parents is immense and urgent. Eveyln Kruijs, a counselor at an adoption and foster agency in Los Angeles, Calif., writes in an essay in *Reformed Perspective*, “Let us be actively pro-life towards the children who are born.” Michelle Van Dyke, Matt and Marianne Ackerman, and Peter Raap are a part of that work.

Michelle Van Dyke is a foster parent in Grand Rapids, Mich. She attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church, works as a foster parent licensor, and has been fostering as a single woman for 10 years.

“I have always wanted to be a mom and trusted the Lord to lead me in the

right direction,” she said. “I looked into several different options for starting a family but was continually drawn to the world of foster care.” Van Dyke’s first placements were 2- and 3-year-old brothers, and while there were some difficulties, she fell in love with fostering. “Being able to serve as the hands and feet of Christ for little ones in my home is a gift from the Lord.”

For Van Dyke, this concept extends to the birth parents too. “Becoming a foster parent is not limited to caring for a child in your home; it is also dedicated to supporting the success of the reunification process for birth parents,” she explained. “It has been a privilege to come alongside a birth parent while their child is in my house and develop a friendship as they work toward reunifying with their child.”

Matt Ackerman, the campus pastor and director of the Center for Faith and Scholarship at Campus Chapel in Ann Arbor, Mich., agrees. He and his wife, Marianne, are fostering a 6-month-old girl. They felt called toward fostering because they “loved the picture of coming alongside a family that was in need of support and working with them toward reunification.”

“It is an amazing picture of redemption to see broken families brought back

together after healing and restoration have taken place,” Matt Ackerman said. “We know that doesn’t always happen, but we wanted to at least try to be a part of God’s reconciling work in that space.”

The Ackermans didn’t come to foster parenthood easily. The couple suffered many miscarriages, including one at 21 weeks: a son, Timothy, who had only three chambers in his heart. “We had talked about adoption a bit before that, but in our pain it became a more real option,” Ackerman said.

As the Ackermans explored adoption and fostering, Marianne became pregnant again, and today they have a “delightfully spunky” 5-year-old daughter along with the baby they are fostering. In September, much to the Ackermans’ joy and surprise, Marianne gave birth to another baby. “The more the merrier!” Matt Ackerman said.

## Fostering Teens

Peter Raap and his wife, Lois (they happen to be Matt Ackerman’s aunt and uncle), were newlyweds when someone asked them to care for that person’s teenage son. They were living in a tiny two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. Raap was a high school

biology teacher and football coach, and Lois was pursuing her master's degree and a learning disabilities certificate. The teenager was failing his classes and regularly getting into fights, and he had been expelled.

The Raaps took him in, and in six months' time they had a completely different teen on their hands. He was passing classes, he'd made friends in Young Life, and the varsity football coach was interested in having him play.

"Today he is 66 years old, still happily married, retired, and dotes on his children, his grandchildren, and his five great-grandchildren," Peter Raap said.

This was the beginning of over 51 years of foster care, which Raap emphatically said is not a ministry.

"It is a command," he said. "It is the same as what we are to do for the widows and the homeless: love them." Foster care also is not an evangelistic program, Raap said. "We live our lives; they come alongside. They see God at work."

Raap says it's important for foster parents to be themselves and do what they know is best for raising children, but also to keep biological parents in the picture as much as possible. "Show respect for them," he said. "They love their children." Finally, Raap advises foster parents not to be possessive of foster children: "Treat them as though they belong to your best friends."

### **The Church as Support**

There are ways the CRC can help support this important and restorative work. "I think what is most essential for me," Van Dyke said, "is for the church to include and support foster families unconditionally, include them in conversations, and ask them to participate and be involved in the rich life of the church." It has not

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always been easy for her to be a single foster parent and feel supported and included in the church. "No matter what someone else's family looks like, be inclusive, be kind, be a friend," Van Dyke said.


Raap said his family was abandoned by their church once they began participating in what he called "extreme foster care" (the Raaps fostered children with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other severe medical issues). "Our once-busy social calendar all of a sudden went blank," he said. "The telephone just stopped ringing."

Ackerman suggested such support can include babysitting, providing meals, passing along used clothes and other gear, and loving foster kids just as they love other kids in the church. "For us," he said, "one of the biggest challenges with fostering has been the uncertainty. In many cases you don't know how long your placement will be with you or what issues might come up during the placement. Our calling

right now is to provide as much love and care as we can to a foster child while they're with us, and our church communities have the same call."

Van Dyke's foster children attend a private Christian school, and last summer she had them participate in a creative writing activity related to Keys for Kids devotionals: identify the situation, write how they felt and how it was resolved, think about how it might have gone differently, and then find a Bible verse that best fits that situation. "At the end of the summer," Van Dyke said, "we (had) a nice little devotional that is personal to our family."

But one of Van Dyke's favorite things to do is go hiking with the boys. "When we choose places to visit, what we enjoy most are places off the beaten path," she said. This perspective defines her family too, she believes. Like the new trails she and her children forge, her family is beautiful and worth getting to know. "Our family looks different from the standard CRC traditional family," Van Dyke explained. But it is still a family, with love, conflict, and beauty worth sharing.

Those interested in learning more about foster care can visit [nfpaonline.org/foster](http://nfpaonline.org/foster) or [canadianadoption.com/how-to-be-a-foster-parent-in-canada](http://canadianadoption.com/how-to-be-a-foster-parent-in-canada). 



Callie Feyen is a writer living in Ann Arbor, Mich. She attends First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor. She writes news for *The Banner* and is the author of *The Teacher Diaries: Romeo and Juliet* and *Twirl: My Life in Stories, Writing, & Clothes*.

## BIG QUESTIONS

### Faith Formation

#### Is it OK to hop churches when I don't feel I'm growing in faith? Who's responsible for my faith growth?

You (with the Holy Spirit) are responsible for your faith growth. Faith grows by reading and studying Scripture, engaging in faith practices, and being part of a community of faith. The church community is a place where you know and are known by other Christians. It is in community where we worship God shoulder to shoulder with people who are rejoicing and people who grieve, people who are healthy and people with major health issues, people who have traveled broadly and those who need a ride to get across town. These people help us see what it looks like to live life faithfully, and by living life with them we learn more about how God is working in our world.

The word "hop" in your question suggests that changing churches is being done in a cavalier manner. It is hard to build a community when people don't have a commitment to that community. So no, one shouldn't "hop" churches.

If you feel your faith is not growing, ask yourself why. Are you fully engaged in the community? Are you faithful in doing your part by attending worship and taking advantage of what the church and pastoral team have to offer? Are you reaching out to help others?

Unfortunately, churches are not perfect. People sometimes do and say things that are hurtful that make it difficult for you to stay. So sometimes there are good reasons to leave a church. But leaving your church

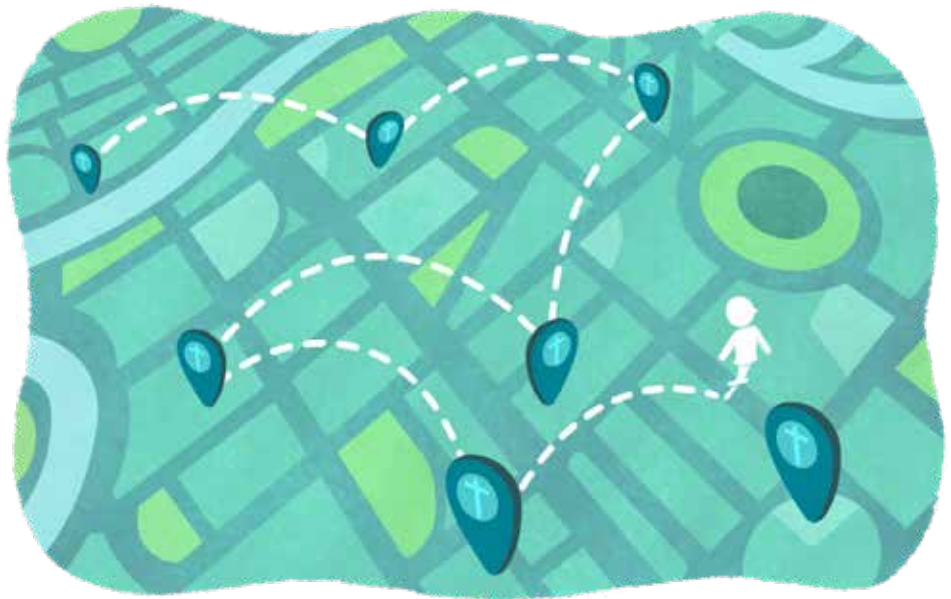


Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

community affects more than just you. It should be done with great care.

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for CRC Faith Formation Ministries. Robert J. Keeley is professor emeritus of education at Calvin University and also taught at Calvin Theological Seminary. Laura and Bob recently retired after 31 years of church ministry at 14th St. CRC in Holland, Mich.

### Relationships

#### What exactly is emotional health, and how can I tell if I am emotionally healthy?

Accepting painful experiences in life is integral to being emotionally healthy. All human beings are flawed and thus prone to hurt others and themselves, both on purpose and unwittingly. But it is healthier to accommodate, talk about, and learn to accept emotionally based "conditions" rather than hide behind pretense while feeling inadequate, worried, ashamed, or helpless. It is always better to accept oneself warts and all, as the saying goes, than to suffer silently behind a facade or cause the suffering of others by lashing out.

Emotional health includes being able to experience a full range of emotions—not just the primary ones of joy, anger, sadness, fear, and guilt, but also the many shades of emotions we feel when we add feelings such as jealousy, happiness, or pride, which

are secondary in strength and impact. Our emotions invite us to examine the "why" of a given situation or experience.

When I am in danger I should feel fear; when an injustice occurs, anger. If instead I feel nothing, then I can conclude that my emotions are being blocked for some reason. Not allowing ourselves to feel something because for some reason we consider that feeling to be wrong robs us of connection and peace. That is unhealthy.

All of us have the capacity at times to misread what we feel. We accept false narratives that lead to paranoid thinking; we descend into self-pity; we prop ourselves up with false pride. We are all prone to lapsing into unhealth. But to be emotionally healthy means to live in the present with hope, confident in the knowledge that God, who knows our weaknesses, loves us anyway, and therefore we may love ourselves too.

Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont.

### Missional Living

#### Is God really at work in my neighborhood?

The short answer: yes. The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood (John 1:14, MSG).

We often quote this verse when pondering this question (especially at Christmas), but centuries before Jesus the Old Testament declared and affirmed God's presence right where we live. God dwells among us, abides with us, and takes up long-term residency in our neighborhoods, as described already in Exodus. And, as it turns out, God dwelling with us is also, at least in part, God's goal for all creation. In Revelation 21:3, we read with joy and anticipation that when the new Jerusalem comes down, God's home will be with us. Simon Carey Holt thus declares in *God Next Door* that we need to begin by naming the neighborhood "as a place of God's presence. ... According to both Old and New Testaments, neighborhoods and neighborly relationships play host to the presence of God" (p. 17).

We see this most fully and tangibly in the incarnation. Jesus embodies God in the neighborhood in the flesh, as one of us, living right next door. Known as Jesus of Nazareth throughout the New Testament, the Christ lived in virtual obscurity in his Nazareth neighborhood for 30 years as an ordinary, everyday neighbor. He was a part of the community, engaged in the normal routines of human life and relationship with and among his village.

The reality of God present and at work in our neighborhoods thus has profound implications for God's people. First, it indicates that we might need to learn again (or for the first time) how to pay attention to signs of God's presence—not just in the church, but in our neighbors and neighborhoods. What would happen if we began to see and seek out God's presence in those who live next door?

Secondly, if God is at work in our neighborhoods, perhaps we should be too. Perhaps all those who bear Jesus' name should learn again (or for the

first time) what it means to be a good neighbor, to live among, to practice flesh-and-blood neighborliness, and in this way to bear witness to the loving God who makes a home among us. I wonder what might happen if we got to know and were known by our neighbors as true neighbors.

Karen Wilk is a Go Local catalyzer with Resonate Global Mission and Forge Canada. She is a pastor of Neighborhood Life (a home church movement) in Edmonton, Alta., where she also enjoys being a wife, mom, and neighbor.

### Ethics

## I've sometimes heard Christians say, "The end doesn't justify the means." Is that really true?

This question usually arises when we consider using undesirable actions or approaches to work toward noble or legitimate ends.

On one hand, we can easily think of examples where the end certainly does not justify just any means. Someone may be rightly and adamantly opposed to abortion, but that does not justify attacking an abortion clinic. Someone may desperately and understandably desire to have a child, but that does not justify having a one-night stand to get pregnant. We might be passionately concerned about a cause for social justice, but that does not justify circulating fake or misleading information in support of that cause.

On the other hand, we can also think of examples where the weight of an important end does appear to justify actions that we would usually avoid or reject. Ordinarily parents try to help their kids avoid experiences of anguish, but sometimes we choose not to intervene because we judge that they will benefit from learning a painful lesson. Ordinarily we think that violence should

be avoided, but we sometimes approve of acts of warfare in defense against significant aggression. Ordinarily we condemn stealing, but we might judge it less harshly if it's an act of genuine desperation intended to feed a starving family.

Some approaches to Christian ethics emphasize principles or rules that we are duty-bound to follow. Others focus on ends or goals that need to be accomplished, with means being secondary in importance. Still others highlight virtues, viewing character and habits as more significant than isolated actions or principles.

In reality, we're usually juggling aspects of all of these considerations as we navigate the moral life as Christians in our fractured, sinful world. We recognize various principles as having a claim on us but sometimes wrestle with tensions between them. We know that even legitimate goals don't allow us to do just anything in pursuit of them. However, on some rare occasions we may sense that the dire importance of an end does require us to use troubling and lamentable means. In those moments of moral complexity, faithful habits of mind and heart will be more important than ever.

Matt Lundberg is the director of the de Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development at Calvin University. He and his family are members of Boston Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org) with "Big Questions" in the subject line.

# How a New Campus Pastor Trained to Reach Gen Z

## NEWS

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**Ryan Farrell (left) discusses findings of the Gen Z research with *Beyond* series host and creator Victoria Sharpe in a Momentum Campus Ministries video.**

As the new chaplain with Ottawa (Ont.) Campus Chaplaincy, Ryan Farrell brings unusual credentials to his service in this joint ministry of the Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Besides his six years of service as a youth pastor for a Baptist congregation, a year's internship in campus ministry with Chaplain Steve Kooy at Momentum Campus Ministries in Kingston, Ont., and seminary training sufficient to be recommended for ordination in the CRC, Farrell also helped supervise and develop a training program for outreach to Generation Z (people between the ages of 5 and 24).

“As a millennial myself,” he said, “I recognize that the new Generation Z is coming into adult life with a very different set of issues than my own generation. Our issues were mainly economic, feeling anger and resentment that the boomer generation was crowding us out of the good jobs and opportunities. With Generation Z, the outlook is more hopelessness and despair (about) the issue of climate change and a planet that has already been spoiled.”

Farrell's internship took place during a year of continuing COVID-19 shutdowns that curtailed many campus activities. But his work on the *Beyond* training program during that disruptive year helped to shape and develop his own idea for campus ministry.

“Victoria Sharpe, the course creator and host, is herself an early member of Gen Z,” Farrell said. “This is a generation that has grown up with high-speed internet, social media, and devices that give them instant access. *Beyond* is an online training program designed to help anyone—ministry staff, volunteers, youth leaders, parents, campus ministries—better understand and connect with this new generation.”

Geneva House, the CRC campus ministry center at Queen's University in Kingston, offers the six-session training course as a free resource on its website, [genevahouse.ca/gen-z](http://genevahouse.ca/gen-z). It was developed with funding from Resonate Global Mission and Classis Quinte (a regional group of Christian Reformed churches) and went online in June 2022. The course covers topics including vocabulary to use with Gen Z, exercising spiritual disciplines, engaging in meaningful relationships, and planning for endurance. Farrell calls it “an investment in Gen Z.”

As CRC campus chaplain in Ottawa, Farrell is supported in part by Classis Eastern Canada and serves within the multifaith office at the University of Ottawa. He was presented as a candidate for CRC ministry by Synod 2022.

—Ron Rupke

## Church Invites Community Guests to Grand Banquet

On an otherwise ordinary Monday in September, ClearView Christian Reformed Church in Oakville, Ont., hosted a banquet for over 250 people for no other reason than “to celebrate that we’re all a part of God’s family, from whatever space you’re coming from,” said Marlene Nirula, a member of the congregation.

Nirula is one of the leaders of the church’s Friendship Ministry, a group where people with and without cognitive disabilities grow in faith together. She came up with the idea for a great banquet after ClearView’s pastor, Phil Reinders, preached in February on Jesus’ story of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24).

Nirula said that as plans developed, organizers asked, “What would it look like for us to come together as a family regardless of our life circumstances and celebrate (that) we are all God’s kids?”

The church invited people from the Friendship Ministry as well as from Indwell, a Christian organization that provides affordable housing; Christian Horizon, an organization that provides residential care for people with developmental disabilities; Community Living, an organization that provides other supports for people with developmental disabilities; and Food for Life, a food security program that is run out of ClearView CRC. About half of the banquet attendees

were people who do not regularly attend ClearView CRC.

Nirula said the church and organizations in the local community raised more than \$30,000 to support the free event at St. Joseph’s Banquet Hall in Oakville, a venue chosen to “really honor people and make it memorable,” Nirula said. A professional photographer took pictures of the guests as they arrived. After a welcome from Nirula and eating together, guests were invited to dance to music played by a band of current and former ClearView members.

Rita Kerkmann attended the event with her daughter, who attends the Friendship Ministry. “Everywhere you looked it was ear-to-ear smiles,” Kerkmann said. “I have never seen a dance floor fill up so quickly after dinner.”

Michael Lazowski is a part of Friendship Ministry. “The banquet was very great,” he said. “I really enjoyed it, and I would really do this again next year.”

ClearView doesn’t currently have plans to repeat the event.

“Acts of joy are serious business in the life of faith,” Reinders said, “and feasts like this are acts of hopeful resistance to all that is broken and wrong in the world—a taste of the life we are made for and meant for.”

— Kristen Parker



Photo by Will VanNielkerk

**ClearView CRC’s banquet guests enjoyed celebrating being part of God’s family.**

## Michigan Church Celebrates 150 Years



**The original Vogel Center log cabin church and adjacent parsonage in 1887 (top) with the Vogel Center CRC building today.**

Vogel Center Christian Reformed Church in McBain, Mich., marked 150 years of ministry in August and welcomed the community to a week’s worth of celebratory activities.

“This is not a celebration of human accomplishment or faithfulness, but of God’s grace, goodness, and faithfulness in our community,” said Pastor Adam Barton.

Events included a team scavenger hunt, a youth night with river kayaking and pizza, a softball game with players from age 8 to 86, a hymn sing, and a presentation of Vogel Center community history. The week concluded with a parade and antique car show with free hot dogs Saturday and worship Sunday morning with Barton preaching from Colossians 2:6-7: “As you began, so continue.”

“One of the things that makes Vogel Center a great community is that for 150 years, the church has always been the central institution and heartbeat of the neighborhood,” Barton said. He said the higher-than-expected attendance for the anniversary events required overflow seating, and community members stayed long after the events were over to connect with one another.

— Sarah DeGraff

## Canadian CRC Members Hear Structure Update, Reflect on Human Sexuality Report

After groups of Canadian churches asked for a listening session with the Christian Reformed Church Canada Corporation board in January 2022, the board decided it wanted at least two more times of sharing and listening with CRC members in Canada. The first of those virtual meetings for Canada-wide conversation took place Sept. 24.

Seventy-seven people participated, including 16 Canada Corporation board members and eight staff of CRC ministries.

Three things were on the agenda:

- » Hear what's happened so far to implement the structure changes approved by Synod 2022. The changes aim to honor the unity of the denomination and allow for country-specific direction and control in order to be in compliance with Canadian charitable law.
- » Review the goals of Our Journey 2025, the denominational ministry plan, and how they connect to ministry in Canada.
- » Provide a listening time to hear what concerns or discussions are being raised in Canadian churches related to the decisions of Synod 2022 regarding the human sexuality report.



**Despite witnessing exhaustion in people serving the church, the transitional executive director in Canada, Al Postma, senses “a real desire to be able to step forward into ministry in effective, life-giving ways.”**

Andy deRuyter, president of the Canada Corporation, presented the structure update. “We’re in a good place, better than ever before,” he said of seeing the cooperation, “(but) there’s still a lot of good work that needs to be done.” A very visible part of the structure change is in the denomination’s top leadership. Synod appointed Zachary King as general secretary, a role that serves the whole denomination as a kind of ecclesiastical officer. “I consider myself to be a shepherd of the CRC,” King told the gathered Canadians. He also focused on partnership and said his goal was to serve the churches well. King’s office, which includes a chief administrative officer (not yet appointed),

reports directly to synod and has two-way relationships with the other denominational entities, including the church’s U.S. and Canadian corporations, which relate to each other through joint ministry agreements.

Al Postma, transitional executive director for the CRC in Canada, sees his role as supporting the rebuilding of trust and trustworthiness, creating a healthy binationality, and setting the foundation to prepare for what’s next. He voiced concern about exhaustion in people within the church across Canada from dealing with COVID, restructuring matters, and recent decisions of synod. “It gets tiring being tired,” Postma said. “But I sense across the denomination a real desire to be able to step forward into ministry in effective life-giving ways. God continues to do his work within the CRC, and I’ve had a chance to see some of that flourish and grow in the last few years as well as hopeful signs of possibilities into the future. That’s not to negate the exhaustion or challenges, but just to hold those in tension and balance.”

The part of the meeting focused on the decisions of Synod 2022 regarding the human sexuality report was led by facilitators trained in *Challenging Conversations*, a tool designed by Pastor Church Resources, and was not in plenary session. Groups were encouraged to share with the Canada Corporation board their written responses to questions such as “What did you think when you heard about Synod’s decisions?” and “What does your church need to move forward in this season?” The board said it will release a summary of the responses at a later date.

Another Canada-wide conversation is planned for Jan. 28.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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## WWII Soldier, CRC Member Finally Laid to Rest



Photo by Chris Meehan

A blustery wind blew as a committal service for Private First Class Donald Hofman began at Winchester Cemetery in Byron Center, Mich., on Oct. 8, more than 70 years after he was lost in battle.

More than 100 people gathered under the cloudy skies, among them Leonard Hofman, former general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church and the younger brother of Donald, who served and died in Europe during World War II.

Also on hand for the service were members of Kelloggsville CRC, where Donald was one of 44 members who fought in the war and one of two who lost their lives. Rev. Ron Fynewever, former pastor at the church, took part in the service.

Using DNA technology and other means, the U.S. military only recently identified Hofman's remains. He had been killed in action at the age of 19 in the mountains near Reipertswiller, France, on Jan. 21, 1945. The family received his repatriated remains Sept. 30 at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Rev. Kathy Smith, Leonard Hofman's daughter and a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, officiated the interment service.

"This day we are putting my Uncle Donald to rest 77 years after he was killed," she said. "We are so grateful to the Army for its work and its commitment to leave no soldier behind."

First Sgt. Tara Gamble of the U.S. Army also spoke, giving further details of events

**Members of the U.S. Army and family of Private First Class Donald Hofman laid his remains to rest Oct. 8.**

**In 1946 Hofman's home church, Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church, recognized his death.**



surrounding Donald's death. During what was called Operation North Wind, his unit was isolated and surrounded by German forces. Only two soldiers escaped from the battle alive.

"Only this June was the Army able to identify the remains we had as those of Donald Hofman," she added. "I've worked closely with Kathy and other family members as we prepared for this day."

Rising from his chair in front of his brother's flag-draped casket, Leonard Hofman, 94, recalled that he and Donald were the closest in age of the eight Hofman siblings and slept in the same bed until other family members grew up and moved out.

The brothers walked together to school, and in winter Donald would fire up the school furnace when they arrived.

"(Donald) was a faithful and energetic person," Leonard said. "When he was drafted into the Army, I went into service for the kingdom and he for the country."

After the committal, uniformed Army representatives conducted military honors, including folding and presenting the flag that covered the coffin, firing rifles, and playing "Taps," which sounded mournfully across the windy cemetery on that October afternoon.

—Chris Meehan

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Col. John J. Hoogland*

1934 -2022

Friendly, approachable, a deep thinker, a gifted writer, and a skilled administrator, John Hoogland served for 30 years as chaplain in the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of colonel. Hoogland, 88, died Sept. 4 at the Michigan Home for Veterans in Grand Rapids, Mich.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Hoogland was ordained in 1959, then entered the U.S. Army. He completed the U.S. Army Chaplain School and graduated from the Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. He served in many places, including Germany, Vietnam, and at the Pentagon, where for four years he was director of personnel for the Army chaplaincy program. Among his awards are the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and the Army Staff Badge.

Hoogland also obtained master's degrees in English (University of Michigan) and journalism (University of Wisconsin) and a doctorate in education from Temple University.

After retiring from the Army, he was associate pastor for Midland Park (N. J.) CRC, then served Seabrook Retirement Community in Tinton Falls, N.J., until 2010.

Predeceased in 2005 by Alma, his wife of 47 years, Hoogland is survived by three children and their spouses, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Ukrainian Refugees Resettling with Help from Iowa Churches

After seeing the devastation of the war in Ukraine, many people have reached out to help, including members of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, in Sioux Center Iowa. Working with Samaritan's Purse, an international relief organization, they began to look for families from Ukraine who wanted to come to the area. Martha Hulshof, a member of Bethel and one of the lead organizers for the church's efforts, also has a sister living in Ukraine. She was able to identify families that wanted to come to America and assist Bethel in trying to help those families.



**Bethel CRC member Martha Hulshof (back row, left) with a reunited family that arrived in Sioux Center on July 14: Misha and Yulia with their sons Ivan, Bohdan, and Misha.**

A core group of six people then began to make arrangements for a family to arrive, purchasing a house and furnishing it with donated goods. Another team of about 10 will help with school arrangements, obtaining driver's licenses, and employment. Bethel's first family arrived on July 14 after being separated when the war first started. Hulshof said they endured a "horrible journey" before being reunited.

Other CRC congregations in Sioux Center are also helping families resettle in the area. Covenant CRC welcomed a family in August. With help from the congregation, team leader Verlyn DeWit said, the family has obtained social security cards and now attends English classes.

Hulshof is grateful that the family that arrived in July is adjusting well to living in Sioux Center. They are taking classes in English and attend services at Bethel CRC. One of the sons played drums in a Bethel praise band, Hulshof said. The siblings are attending the local grade school and high school. Hulshof said the family prays "they can be a blessing and help serve in the church as well. They want to serve God just like we do."

Maranda Heytsi, Hulshof's sister in Ukraine, said she is thankful for all the prayers and support on behalf of the country where her husband is a pastor. She said there is a continued need for prayers and especially a need for food. "There always is a need for support continually," Heytsi said.

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

## Celebrating Latin American Independence Days at a Church Street Party

Recognizing the changing makeup of their neighborhood, the congregation of Lee Street Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich., turned the church's annual bash into a celebration of neighbors' homelands.

Called the Neighborhood BASH because it is a big party, this church-sponsored event has been happening for many years in a formerly mostly Dutch neighborhood that has become more diverse in recent decades.

This year's BASH took place Thursday, Sept. 15, the independence day of five Latin American countries—Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica—and the day before Mexico's Independence Day (Sept. 16). Joel VanDyke, a former missionary to Latin America, is Lee Street's pastor.

"We wanted to raise up our neighbors from Latin America," he said. "This is a very special day for them."

The event featured games, Hispanic food and hot dogs, music, information booths on neighborhood services, and a petting zoo with goats, chickens, and rabbits. On a platform adorned by flags from Latin American nations, several people spoke about their native country's independence days. Some picked up and waved the flag from their homeland. Among those on hand were Rachel and Gary de León, a couple hoping to soon serve as missionaries to refugees in Europe. Looking around at the busy crowd, Rachel, who is originally from Guatemala, said she appreciated BASH's diversity.

"I see the kingdom of God represented here," she said—"all different kinds of people who are all part of God's family."

—Chris Meehan



**On the steps of Lee Street Christian Reformed Church, participants spoke about their Latin American homelands.**

Photo by Chris Meehan

## Samaritan's Carriage Ministry Back on the Road



**The Samaritan's Carriage bus is equipped for five wheelchairs and at least five volunteer companions.**

Samaritan's Carriage, an accessible transportation and excursion service founded by Gary and Eileen Ruiters, has served nine assisted living homes in West Michigan for almost 20 years. The trips halted during the COVID-19 pandemic but resumed at the beginning of April. The Ruiters are members of First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"Samaritan's Carriage is a blessing all around," volunteer driver Jim Van Wingerden said. "The guests are blessed by fellowship and the 'adventure' of an outing outside the confines of their living situation, and the volunteers, mostly retirees, are equally blessed by the simple joy of sharing the gift of time and love."

Modeled after the caring heart of the Good Samaritan in one of Jesus' parables, the ministry, according to its website, provides "Christian caring and fellowship to heal, encourage, and ease loneliness" with its specially equipped bus, which can lift and seat five guests in wheelchairs.

Van Wingerden is one of 74 volunteers who serve on a rotating schedule of six-member teams—one driver and five ride-along companions.

Sara Buchholz, who also attends First CRC, became the ministry's executive director at the end of 2021. She said the volunteers are members of various area churches. They provide the outings free of charge to guests on one designated day per month for each of the nine residences.

—Anita Ensing Beem

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Kenneth Havert*

1933-2022

A pastor in the Christian Reformed Church for almost 60 years, Ken Havert had many gifts that served him well in ministry. He could connect easily with anyone he met, make them feel welcome, and remember names years later. He was blessed with a loud preaching voice, which he also used outside the pulpit, cheering on his children and grandchildren at sporting events. Ken, 89, died Aug. 4.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Ken was ordained in 1958 and then served Newton (Iowa) CRC; Palos Heights (Ill.) CRC; Calvin CRC, Wyckoff, N.J.; Messiah CRC, Hudsonville, Mich; Bethel CRC, Lynden, Wash.; and Faith Community CRC, Wyoming, Mich.

After retirement in 1998, Ken served as interim pastor in San Marcos, Calif., then as visitation minister at Faith Community CRC until 2018. He worked at the Matthyse-Kuiper-DeGraaf funeral home in Grandville, Mich., from 1999 to 2016 and often preached at Grace CRC in Muskegon, Mich., until his final sermon Nov. 12, 2017.

Ken cared selflessly for Shirley, his wife of 53 years, as she lived for 13 years with Alzheimer's disease. She died in 2011. He is survived by two children and their spouses, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Ramon C. Borrego*

1930-2022

Ramon Borrego lived humbly, practiced hospitality, and had a passion for helping those in need, especially new immigrants to the U.S. from South and Central America. He died Aug. 31 at age 92.

Born in Cuba, Ramon graduated from Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary in 1955, then pastored a congregation in Alacranes, Cuba. After Fidel Castro came to power in the late 1950s, many American missionaries left, and Ramon took the leadership role in the CRC's Cuba mission. He served Iglesia Evangelica Reformada of Cuba from 1962-66. After the Borregos themselves left Cuba via Spain, Ramon was invited by Christian Reformed Home Missions (now part of Resonate Global Mission) to start a Spanish-speaking church in Hoboken, N.J. Six years later, the Borregos went to serve as missionaries in Argentina. Returning to the U.S. in 1978, Ramon pastored El Buen Samaritano CRC (The Good Samaritan, now called Sunlight Miami). In 1989 he helped plant Iglesia Buenas Nuevas (Good News) CRC in south Miami. He retired in 1995.

Ramon collected coins and stamps from Cuba, loved old cars, and restored antique furniture, refinishing many treasured pieces.

He is survived by Norma, his wife of 62 years; two children; and three grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## From Our Facebook Page

Wonder what else is going on in Christian Reformed congregations across North America? Many of you send news and pictures to [news@thebanner.org](mailto:news@thebanner.org) that we share online at [Facebook.com/TheBanner](https://www.facebook.com/TheBanner). Here are a few posts from the past several months.

Photo by Steven Zhou



Ladner Christian Reformed Church in Delta, B.C., celebrated several baptisms in August. The new Christians were discipled through gospel and baptism classes by Pastor Nancy Yang, shepherd of Ladner's Mandarin-speaking congregation. Pastor Jason Truell, the church's lead pastor, baptized the new believers on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in a swimming pool at the home of some church members. "It was a wonderful celebration, full of joy, with members of both the English-speaking group and the Mandarin-speaking group joining to witness the baptisms, sing, pray together, and feast on an amazing array of delicious Chinese and Western food," said church member Bev Bandstra.



Members of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church in Langley, B.C., and of Trinity and Hillside CRCs in Abbotsford, B.C., were some of the participants in the seventh annual Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation in May. The walk is an ecumenical event to promote healing from the harm done by colonization and Canada's Indigenous residential school system. The walk included a visit to St. Mary's Residential School in Mission, B.C., where Albert Halsie, an Indigenous Elder, led a tour through the chapel, gymnasium, grounds, and residence of children from kindergarten through second grade.



Bethany Christian Reformed Church in Bloomfield, Ont., hosted a summer "welcome back" weekend in June. Its Saturday market and vendor sale raised funds for World Renew's refugee support program, and on Sunday, June 5, the church hosted a picnic after the morning worship service. The goal was to encourage a return to church after the COVID-19 pandemic affected attendance.



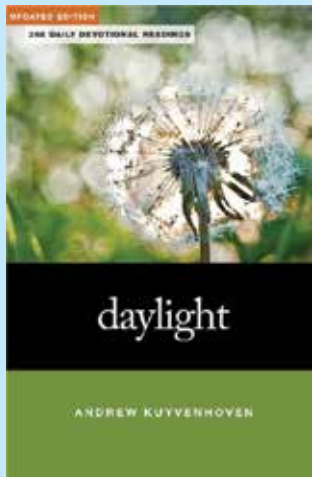
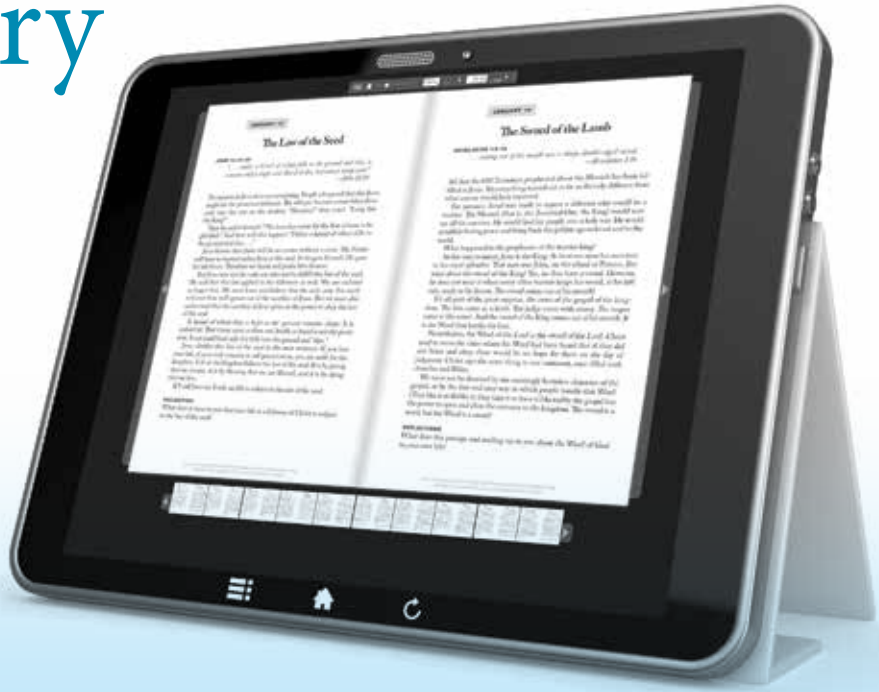
Beckwith Hills Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., officially opened its community playground in August. Building this facility on church property was one of the projects that came out of the congregation's work with the Church Renewal Lab over the past several years. The 800 or so children in the church's neighborhood didn't have a playground within walking distance.

# Free Devotions in the Digital Library

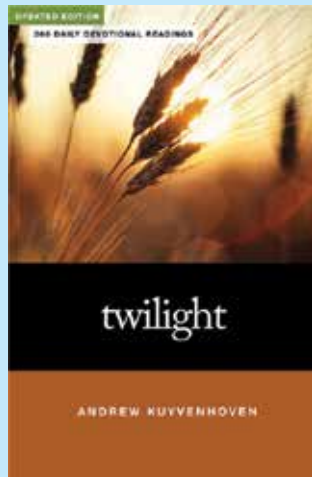
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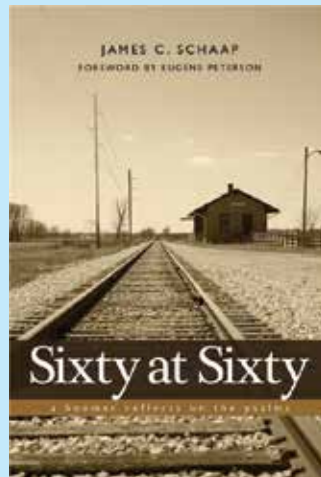
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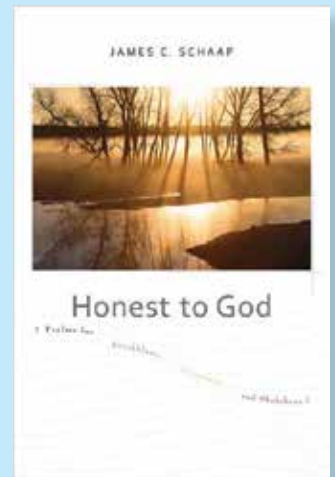
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This updated companion to the bestselling *Daylight* devotional guide leads readers through an entire year of meaningful moments with God. Each month's meditations follow a book of the Bible or a biblical theme.



At his storytelling best, James Schaap presents a collection of 60 devotional readings based on the psalms. Written especially for his fellow "baby boomers," Schaap's meditations are a blessing for anyone looking for the hand of God in everyday life.



In this devotional guide, James C. Schaap delves deeply into the psalms, leaving space for readers to respond by journaling or drawing. *Honest to God* is an inspiring daily faith exercise—and a thoughtful gift for the creative people in your life.



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# Meet Some of the CRC's 'Culture Makers'



Illustration by Erin McKenna Nowak

## How do we influence culture as Christians?

By Brian Clark, ReFrame Ministries, and Lynn Rosendale, Calvin University

**W**hen Josh Larsen graduated from college, he knew that he wanted to write about and critique films.

“At the time,” he said, “my options were limited to the likes of *Movieguide* a

Christian website with a detailed rating system designed to ferret out every last bit of ‘objectionable’ content.”

For Larsen, *Movieguide* and similar sites felt too isolated from mainstream culture. He chose to write for the mainstream press instead.

“I didn’t want to give up the idea that Christians can mine movies for theological resonance, even if the movie itself is largely interested in other things,” Larsen said.

Larsen is hardly alone in feeling this tension. How does one engage with, advance, and contribute to culture in a distinctively Christian way?

On the following pages, three different Christians offer examples of how they are wrestling with that question and adding a Christian perspective to our world’s broader culture.

### On *Think Christian*

After years of writing about films for mainstream audiences, Larsen joined ReFrame Ministries’ English-language program, *Think Christian*, in 2009.

Today, as *Think Christian*’s senior producer, Larsen writes about pop culture from a Christian perspective. He hosts podcasts and “movie club” conversations with fellow movie lovers and edits posts from other *Think Christian* contributors who want to use their writing to help Christians engage pop culture in a meaningful and faith-forming way.

One recent *Think Christian* article takes a scene from the popular Netflix series *Stranger Things* and compares it to Philippians 4:8.

**Facing page: Illustration of the show *Stranger Things*’ main character Max, with the monster Vecna in the background. According to a recent *Think Christian* article about the show, “Max is not portrayed as particularly religious. Yet it is striking that (the song she listens to), filled with the pulsing message of one’s need for some sort of savior, is the most powerful element in the very moment Max attempts to escape (the monster) Vecna.”**



Josh Larsen writes about and discusses films on *Think Christian* movie discussions and blog.

“Though we do not dwell in the fictional Upside Down, our lives encounter their own inevitable darkneses,” author Julia York writes. “It is only when we remain close to Christ, who reminds us of our reality as saved, forgiven people, that we are no longer bound to the power of our depression, sins, shame, or trauma.”

Through *Think Christian*, two or three such articles reach about 40,000 email subscribers each week.

“*Think Christian* feels like a welcome home and a new creative outlet,” Larsen said. “Movies have long been analyzed by particular people through their particular lenses, and film culture has been the richer for it. Surely there’s a place for Christian criticism of this sort as well.”

You can find that sort of place at *ThinkChristian.net*.

### At Calvin University

While preparing for an engineering course called “Sustainability Challenges” at Calvin University, professors Jeremy Van Antwerp and Matthew Kuperus Heun struggled to find a suitable book. They wanted something that would challenge readers not just to understand environmental issues, but to contemplate the moral and ethical issues surrounding sustainability. They decided to fill this gap by writing it themselves.

“We want to make a contribution to the broader conversation about sustainability,” said Heun. “It’s not only Calvin people, or even Christians, who are concerned about sustainability.”

The co-authors describe their new book, *A Framework for Sustainability Thinking: A Student’s Introduction to Global Sustainability Challenges*, as “easy to read, but hard to digest.”

In the book, Van Antwerp and Heun take into account the overlapping domains of sustainability—environmental, economic, and social—and nudge readers to consider their own values in these spheres.

“The book is a critique of the way things have been, a critique of various proposed solutions, and an opportunity to think about how things could be different,” Van Antwerp said.

The book concludes with two compelling chapters suggesting collective and individual actions that can make a difference. These suggestions for change, as the title suggests, offer a framework for thinking about the multifaceted and constantly changing challenges of sustainability.

Heun refers to the book as “the burden of exposure,” a phrase he learned from a pastor who lived in an impoverished township in South Africa. While visiting, Heun and some of his students were asked by the pastor how long they were staying. When they responded, “A few hours,” the pastor replied that while that was not enough time to change anything, they now knew what it was like and how people were living. In other words, they had experienced “the burden of exposure.”

“I believe that is a role for this book,” Heun said. “Readers will have been made aware and have the opportunity to understand sustainability challenges in a new way, to think about their values in a new way, to be encouraged to make a change.”

“As Christians,” he added, “we are familiar with being in despairing situations and lamenting about it. We know this isn’t the way things are supposed to be, so what can we do about it?”

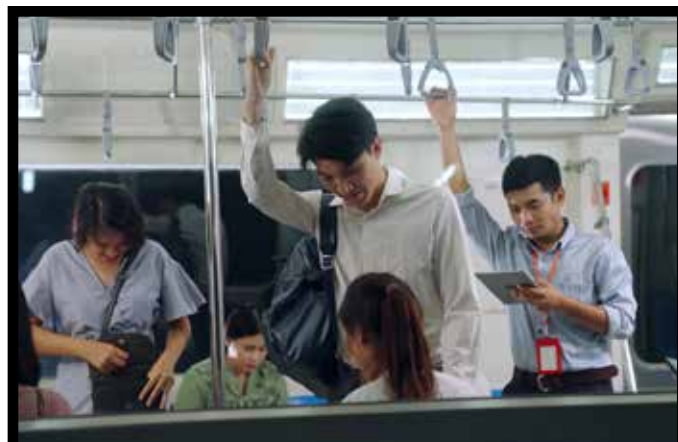
According to Van Antwerp, everything is a tradeoff. “Even if you prefer everything exactly as it is right now, you are making a tradeoff,” he said. “The decision to burn petroleum and petroleum products is implicitly deciding not to save these for future generations.”

The authors hope that readers come away with the realization that the current situation is not the way it has to be—different tradeoffs are possible and could result in positive change.

“There is so much you can do right where you are,” Van Antwerp said. “I’m at Calvin and, as a professor, I teach a lot of students. I want to work on these issues and, hopefully, impact a lot of students, impact culture, and, as Steve Jobs said, ‘make a dent in the universe.’”

### In China

Unlike Larsen, Heun, and Van Antwerp, Yijun grew up in China with little knowledge of the Christian faith. In fact, the first times he read the Bible it was strictly for academic purposes.



Life in China’s largest cities often feels too hectic. Yijun shared his testimony to try to help change that cultural norm.

Yijun’s love of knowledge led to an ambitious career path. Hoping to one day be a high government official in China, Yijun began studies at Peking University, a school often referred to by North Americans as “the Harvard of China.”

But when Yijun was studying for his graduate school entrance exams, the pressure he felt to succeed began to catch up with him. Despite his years of preparation and hours of study, he failed the exam.

“I wanted to kill myself,” Yijun shared. “I felt that there was no more fame, no more money, no more power, no more hope.”


Not long after receiving his failing grade, Yijun took out the Bible he used for studying and began reading it in a different way.

“Words from the Bible entered my heart,” he said. “I realized that three things in it began to attract me deeply: hope, belief, and love of Christ.”

Now many years later, Yijun still remembers the hopeless and suicidal feelings he had in his dorm room, and he wants fellow Chinese speakers to challenge the nation’s academic pressure that pushes many to despair.

Recently, Yijun shared his story with ReFrame’s Chinese ministry partners so they could publish it in a collection of testimonies from Chinese speakers. That book and similar projects will be printed this year to reach other students from Peking University and Chinese speakers around the world.

“I love (China) very much,” Yijun shared, “but I also dare to expose its evils. In 5,000 years of tradition ... we have inherited not only good culture, but evil as well.”

Pray that Yijun’s story, along with others in the new collection, will contribute to a new academic culture in China. 



# Indigenous Reconciliation an Important Part of Christian Witness for Campus Ministry

**THE UNIVERSITY** of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, has been working toward Indigenous reconciliation. Christian Reformed Campus Ministry is supporting and joining that work.

“Since Christians were at the center of much of the harm and genocide toward Indigenous people in Canada, it is critical that we learn the truth, build real relationships with Indigenous people, and do our part in reconciliation,” said Layne Kilbreath, a Resonate Global Mission partner at Calgary Campus Ministry at the University of Calgary.

By now, the story is familiar: In the past, many Indigenous children were forced into residential schools where they were required to conform not only to Western ways of living, but also to Christian beliefs, values, and traditions. Children were dressed in uniforms. Their hair was cut short. They were often given numbers instead of called by their names. They were forbidden to speak their language or practice their customs.

The University of Calgary’s Office of Indigenous Engagement does not want to follow the same path in today’s education.

“The university is not trying to assimilate Indigenous staff and students,” said Kilbreath. “It is exploring how to walk parallel paths together in a good way.”

In fact, “walking parallel paths together in a good way,” or *ii’taa’poh’to’p*, is the department’s motto.

This work is vital for Calgary Campus Ministry as well. Campus ministers share that students often wonder how the Christian faith relates to important challenges and issues in culture and society today, including social justice and reconciliation. Indigenous




Calgary Campus Ministry is joining with the University of Calgary in the work towards Indigenous reconciliation.

reconciliation is one of the important issues that students, faculty, and staff on campus are wrestling with.

By joining in that work, campus ministries are adding a biblical perspective as they engage students, faculty, and staff on an issue they already care about. As Kilbreath explained, students are often not wondering how Jesus’ gospel makes a difference; they are questioning whether the gospel does make a difference. Being part of the discussion about Indigenous reconciliation is an important part of Christian witness.

The work toward reconciliation will take a long time. So far, Kilbreath shared that the campus ministry is listening and learning. Kilbreath has invited and encouraged chaplains from a variety of ministries on campus to attend Indigenous

events and learnings. This academic year, Kilbreath and the other chaplains are hoping to invite Indigenous elders to teach them and their students about Canada’s history with Indigenous people.

“It is important that as our chaplaincy loves (the University of Calgary), we learn to love what she loves,” Kilbreath said. “In this case, that manifests in a desire to learn and tell the real history of the Indigenous people and learn from Indigenous siblings and their ways of knowing, being, and doing.” 

—Cassie Westrate,  
Resonate Global Mission

## The View from Here

# Being a Church of Culture Creators and Consumers

**I HAVE BEEN** a member of the Christian Reformed Church for almost 25 years. As a young Christian who grew up outside of Reformed circles, one thing that immediately struck me about the CRCNA was the different attitude I encountered within this denomination with respect to culture and media. I noticed a posture of discernment that considered both “secular” culture as well as “Christian” or “evangelical” content.

For example, no one in my Pentecostal circles had ever suggested that there might be popular media that communicated Christian themes. Neither had anyone offered a critique of the Christian media that seemed sacrosanct to me. The Reformed teaching that my worldview affected how I consumed or produced media and culture was eye-opening. I thought to myself, “These CRC folks have a pretty good thing going!”

I’m older now, and I have lived in three different countries outside North America. Out of necessity, I have become a student of language and culture. I still think the CRCNA has a pretty good thing going. Our biblical rootedness and our confessional identity provide a solid foundation for producing and evaluating culture and media.

Might this be a time for North Americans to paint a renewed vision of Christ and his lordship on a canvas less sullied by the past?


I’ve noticed, as I’m sure you have, that fewer and fewer people in North America are connected to Christianity. In many places there is little fluency in biblical themes and images. In fact, in several places where we once assumed a sense of Christendom or a widely held set of Christian assumptions, values, and institutional affiliations, that has disappeared.

Many see this as a loss. As Christians, we have lost influence and power. We see empty churches turned into restaurants, museums, and concert halls. Christians in Canada and the U.S. might worry that we could be headed in the direction of countries such as Libya, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq—or even the U.K., France, or Sweden—where people self-identifying as active Christians are now a small minority.

I wonder, though, if this could instead be seen as an opportunity. Might this be a time for North Americans to paint a renewed vision of Christ and his lordship on a canvas less sullied by the past?

The people of our world need to hear the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ now more than ever. The Holy Spirit can work through our legacy of discernment, creativity, and biblical depth in our approach to culture and media. Modern media platforms give Christians great opportunities to influence their culture.

I admit that as I get older my enthusiasm is tempered by reality. Evil is powerful, and media will continue to do harm to our faith, relationships, and self-esteem. Our Christian influence will wax and wane until Christ returns. And yet, I have hope.

I am thankful for Christian Reformed ministries, agencies, and institutions that produce media and teach us how to create and consume it in a way that is faithful to Scripture and our confessions. It seems that this is needed now more than ever. 



Rev. Zachary King is the general secretary of the CRCNA. He is a member of Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at [TheBanner.org](https://TheBanner.org).

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## CRCNA Military Chaplain Retires

**IN 1942**, about six months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Christian Reformed Church in North America hosted its annual synod. During this meeting, delegates officially recognized and named the ministry of chaplaincy in the denomination and declared it to be a “place of grace.” By the time World War II ended in 1945, 26 Calvin Seminary graduates had served as chaplains to armed forces all over the world.

Eighty years later, CRCNA military chaplains still serve all over the world. U.S. Army chaplain Kyu Hahn, for example, recently returned from a 10-month deployment to Poland in which the mission focus and purpose drastically changed when Russia invaded Ukraine. Of more than 150 Christian Reformed chaplains in ministry today, 24 serve in the U.S. or Canadian military.

This year, one of the most significant military chaplains from the CRCNA’s 80 years of ministry to the armed forces, U.S. Coast Guard chief of chaplains Rev. Tom Walcott, retired. Prior to joining the Navy Chaplain Corps in 1994, Walcott served as a missionary in the Dominican Republic and as pastor of Baymeadows Community Church in Jacksonville, Fla.

As a Navy chaplain, Walcott supported the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. Over the years he had assignments that took him from providing pastoral care to recovery teams in New York at Ground Zero after 9/11 to helping with disaster relief in Indonesia as part of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group following the 2004 tsunami. In 2008-09 Walcott served in Iraq as chief of operations for the Religious Leader Engagement Program.

Walcott made his most indelible impact during his multiple tours with the Coast Guard, when he served Coast



Several CRC chaplains joined Chaplain Tom Walcott at his retirement ceremony on April 20, 2022. (From left: Doug Vrieland, Israel Alvarado, Chadd Haan, Chaplaincy director Tim Rietkerk, Hitomi Kornilov, and Tom Walcott.)

Guardsmen, their families, and the chaplains that ministered to them. He was appointed as the 11th Coast Guard chief of chaplains in April of 2018 and served until his retirement this past April.

Throughout his 28 years in the Navy, Walcott often was stationed in communities that had Christian Reformed congregations. He kept close ties with numerous churches, and at his retirement ceremony current and former pastors from Anaheim (Calif.) CRC, Brookfield (Wisc.) CRC, Washington DC CRC, and Ocean View CRC (Norfolk, Va.), came to show their appreciation.

During the ceremony Walcott reminded those gathered that his wife, Jaci, kept everything going at home during his times away. She also helped families of Coast Guardsmen who weren’t being paid during the government shutdown of 2018-2019.

Walcott’s children and grandchildren shared stories about his influence on their lives and his love not only for

them, but also for the Coast Guard. As he and Jaci retire to Grandville, Mich., Walcott will continue serving as a volunteer chaplain in the Coast Guard Auxiliary at Sector Field Office Grand Haven.

“We give thanks to Tom for his many years of service and for the ministry he was able to accomplish,” said Sarah Roelofs, ministry consultant with the CRCNA’s chaplaincy office. “We also ask for your ongoing prayers for chaplains who are continuing to extend the ministry of the CRCNA to those serving in our military. This has been part of our denominational witness for the past 80 years, and we pray for God to continue to protect and guide these men and women as they serve today.”

—Tim Rietkerk,  
CRCNA Chaplaincy

# At the Halfway Point of the Journey

## How many congregations are we engaging?

An engagement is defined as either a substantial interaction (phone conversation, email exchange, coaching session, etc.) or event participation (training, workshop, cohort, etc.).

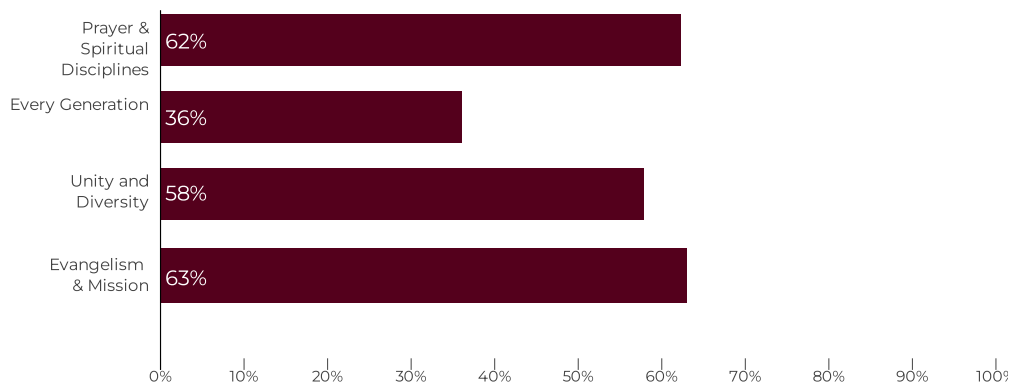
[What gets counted?](#)

6,698  
Engagements

837  
Christian Reformed  
Churches Engaged

82%  
of 1,017  
CRCs Engaged

Percent of total CRCNA churches engaged in each ministry plan area



**IN JULY 2020**, the Christian Reformed Church in North America kicked off a five-year ministry plan known as Our Journey 2025. Through conversations with Christian Reformed congregations, pastors, and leaders across North America, authors of the plan identified four specific goals toward which they believed God was calling the CRCNA to strive before 2025.

“In our conversations, there was great consistency from churches across North America about where they felt gaps existed,” said Syd Hielema, a member of the ministry plan implementation team. “Whether they were an established church on the East Coast of Canada or an emerging church in Southern California,

whether they were English speaking or multiethnic, CRC congregations were longing to grow in their spiritual disciplines, in their practice of listening to the voices of all generations, in their capacity to embrace unity and diversity, and in their ability to share the gospel and live it missionally.”

Based on these four goals—dubbed “milestones”—CRCNA ministries created resources and committed to providing consultation and support to help congregations grow in these areas. Now, halfway through the five-year plan, almost 840 congregations (82%) have interacted with staff on at least one of these four milestones.

“When Our Journey 2025 was conceived, we didn’t anticipate the toll that COVID-19 would take on congregations,” said Hielema. “And yet, as ministries and congregations adapted

to their new reality, their desire and need to grow in these milestone areas became more prominent. As CRCNA ministries, we have taken a congregation-focused posture of listening to what is needed and walking alongside churches to help them grow. I believe this has been successful.”

To learn more and to find resources in each of the four milestone areas, visit [crcna.org/OurJourney](http://crcna.org/OurJourney).

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,  
CRC Communications

## The Farming Warriors

**FOR OVER A CENTURY** in Turkana, Kenya, young men have been raiding their neighbors' cattle. This tradition has been slowly changing thanks to government programs, humanitarian aid, and the work of farmers.

Turkana raiders are called warriors. They had been known to return from raids with thousands of cattle stolen from others. But this tradition also had its costs. Raids resulted not only in the loss of cattle in some communities, but in the loss of human lives on both sides as people fought to take or protect livestock.

In the past decade, through collaborative efforts by the Kenyan government and humanitarian organizations, this tradition of theft and violence has been less prevalent. Working together, the government and humanitarian organizations have implemented initiatives geared toward achieving peace. This has included setting up alternative livelihood projects and conducting disarmament exercises in all conflicting communities. World Renew has been part of the effort.

Since 2013, World Renew has implemented a number of projects in the area, particularly in the Katilu ward. These projects have included livelihood and peacekeeping programs as well as drought responses. Through village savings and loan associations, for example, people with similar skills and interests are brought together to learn new skills for their livelihood and to save for the future.

In the Katilu ward, the Nachacha Young Farmers Village Savings and Loan group has over 50 reformed



In Turkana, Kenya, former cattle raiders are now making a peaceful living as farmers thanks in part to World Renew programs.

warriors. This group has had opportunities to learn new skills that have equipped them to earn a living from farming instead of cattle raiding. The members now farm 50 acres of cultivated land that had previously been a cattle raiding battleground.

Together, these farming warriors have grown a variety of grains and vegetables to sell at a nearby market. From the income they have earned from farming, many of them have been able to help their children achieve their academic dreams.

Unfortunately, in the past year, the region has struggled with the effects of two consecutive failed rainy seasons. With funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Renew provided 1,200 households in the Katilu ward, including the members of the Nachacha Young Farmers group, with food kits containing 50 kilograms of maize flour, 10 kilograms of beans, three liters of cooking oil, and

a half kilogram of salt every month for ten months.

"We are not going back to fighting with our neighbors! We have decided to use this land to make our living," said Benson Nachodo, the Nachacha VSL group chairperson. "We are glad to work with World Renew, who have shown us the way and walked with us in every step. They have taught us farming skills, VSL, and the need to come together to save; they have donated various seeds to us; and now, because of the drought, (they) are giving us relief food."

Praise God for bringing peace to the hearts of the farming warriors.

— Laurisa O'Brien,  
World Renew

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Please direct all inquiries to the chair of the Resonate Director Search Team, Mr. Mark Volkers, [ResonateDirectorSearch@crcna.org](mailto:ResonateDirectorSearch@crcna.org).



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# Marcescence

**IF YOU SPEND MUCH TIME** out in the woods during late fall or winter, you have probably seen a tree with most of its leaves still on the branches even though its neighbors have dropped their foliage. I often see these young trees, usually oaks or beeches, when I am out in the woods enjoying creation. It can be a unique sight. Their dry leaves make a lot of noise when the winter wind blows.

This phenomenon of a tree keeping its withered leaves through autumn and winter is called marcescence. This often happens to immature trees or young parts of old trees. These leaves will hang on throughout the winter, often until early spring growth finally pushes them off. Trees with marcescent leaves lack the enzymes that cut off nutrients from the leaf so they release in the fall when they should.

Mature trees rarely have this issue, and they drop their leaves in the fall as they were designed to do.

These marcescent trees often remind me of some of my struggles as a Christian. Sometimes I hang on to things too long. There are issues I wrestle with or faults I fail to forgive. Sometimes my own failures stick with me. Seeing these trees is a reminder that I need to address the issues I'm facing and seek the grace and forgiveness that God offers.

I need to learn to be like mature trees. I need to forgive those things in myself that I've struggled with. I need to move on from failures and seek resolution. These mature trees remind me of God's grace—but only when I see nearby a young oak hanging onto its leaves. When I see the marcescent oak, it reminds me that my faith needs to continue to grow. It's a reminder of God's design for mature oaks and God's design for us. It's a reminder that I need to drop the things that hold me back.

It's a process we all go through. All of us begin like young oaks, stumbling and struggling. But God designed us to grow. God created us to mature and to strengthen our faith, to become more like Jesus each day.

Be like a mature oak and drop those leaves! **B**



Clayton Lubbers teaches science at Byron Center Christian School and has been teaching for over 25 years. He loves the outdoors and commonly meets and sees God while hunting, fishing, and exploring creation.

# Why Theology Is Such Godly Fun

By Bob DeMoor

**T**he world is a better place because very smart people study medicine. I am glad I am not one of them. Doctors need to be ever so educated in the mind-numbing details of human physiology just to diagnose a rash. But what is so fascinating about theology is that it dares to explore the grandest, deepest mystery of all, one that we know from the get-go lies light-years beyond the boundaries of mere human understanding. Think of an orangutan trying to noodle out a textbook on quantum mechanics.

Christian theology is the disciplined study of our beliefs about God and God's doings with us. Those are shrouded in mystery and in unapproachable light. We can place a human cell under a microscope, poke it, prod it, and literally examine it to death. But God doesn't exactly fit on a specimen slide, and that unapproachable light does not lend itself easily to spectral analysis. So we are privileged to ponder life's grandest marvels through the lens of God's self-revelation in nature and, most fully, through the Bible.

We confess that these sources of knowledge about our Source are completely reliable. What is far less reliable is our interpretation and understanding of what they reveal, as our thousands of conflicting opinions demonstrate. Unlike a Louise Penny novel, we never even come close to fully uncovering this *mysterium tremendum*. Here we behold a true mystery that allows us to always and forever make new and mind-boggling discoveries. This mystery is never solved.

That's what makes theology intriguing: it helps us suss out how our limited understanding of the divine checks out with what God's Word is

actually telling us. To widen our scope, theologians are all in this together: Africans, South Americans, Asians, Europeans, and more, including those who have already joined the church triumphant but who have left us some amazing scribbles. Jesus himself promised his disciples that when the Spirit of truth comes, "he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). The "you" in that sentence is plural. Truth-knowing will come gradually and in community, and not even a Christian saint with a doctorate from Calvin Seminary has a corner on it.

There are many theological questions that are fun to ponder but not particularly useful:

- » Did Adam have a belly button?
- » Did the snake in Eden walk on legs before it deceived the first couple?
- » Will we see Fido in heaven (presuming we end up there)?
- » Can I listen in on what they are saying about me at my funeral?

More importantly, through the centuries, theologians have made amazing discoveries from Scripture that generously enrich our understanding. But we don't have to buy into all their teachings, because no respectable theologian ever fully agrees with any other. That would take the holy fun out of it. Permit me some examples.

## Augustine of Hippo

Augustine, a North African theologian from the fourth century, helps us gather from the Bible how deeply sin has ruined our relationship to God, each other, and the world. Our everyday sinning is symptomatic of a much deeper malady: our spoiled human nature that messes us up from the get-go. Augustine named it "original sin." Happy thought, right? Unless God's Spirit renews us, we're spiritual

train wrecks. Sobering, for sure, but realistic, no? It's crucial to understand that so we'll stop trying to pull ourselves up into heaven by our own spiritual bootstraps—a wasted effort for sure. And it warns us away from a Disney-esque trust in human nature and political utopianism. Essentially, Augustine says, "Dude! Nobody on earth will ever live 'happily ever after' until Jesus returns—deal with it!" Augustine's realism sternly points us to the only hope we have: Jesus. Original sin is like cancer: the one thing worse than knowing you have it is not knowing you have it.

Augustine also distilled from the Bible how human history and current events are all about the cosmic confrontation of God against Satan. To rebel against God's righteous reign, the devil uses every dirty trick in every area of life, including whatever mayhem he can cause on Parliament Hill, in Congress, and in the Kremlin. Augustine identifies the deepest conflicts in the world as spiritual ones that play out in our homes, our schools, and the marketplace. Everywhere it's "the Earthly City" vs. "the City of God."

Augustine did overlook other bits of biblical wisdom. He thought it was OK for the authorities to coerce people into adopting orthodox Christian beliefs. It seemed to work pretty well. When the fiery tongs were given some play, heretics were quite eager to listen to "reason." But Augustine somehow missed that part in Scripture where Paul warns us that spiritual arm-twisting doesn't work and shouldn't work: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12).

## Thomas Aquinas

Let's fast-forward to the Middle Ages and Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas was a 13th-century Italian scholar who observed that reason



and faith are not enemies, but can work together nicely in helping us understand God, ourselves, and our world. Aquinas loved reading the Greek philosopher Aristotle, and he commended classic philosophy and the sciences as worthwhile tools for our understanding and betterment—which ultimately gave us manure spreaders, cellphones, and Romanesque cathedrals.

Aquinas saw creation split into two realms: nature and grace. (We'd say the secular and the sacred.) In the former, reason takes charge: humans can, just by natural reason, know tons of stuff about our world, each other, and how we should relate. Aquinas even dreamed up five "reasonable" ways that would lead any sane person to conclude that God must exist—even without reading the Bible.

These are fun to contemplate, so Google them:

1. *Everything is moved by something else.* Trace that back to the beginning, and there must have been an Unmoved Mover that was not itself moved by anything else.
2. *Everything has a cause.* A chain of causes and effects cannot be infinite, so there had to be a first cause for everything.
3. *There are beings that don't necessarily exist and those that do.* Those that don't can't have been around forever. So far enough back in time, beings that aren't necessary would not have existed and there would have been nothing at all if there was no Necessary Being that existed and brought contingent beings into existence.
4. *Things/beings show various degrees of perfection,* and we can judge which are closer to perfect and which are less so. The only way

What is so fascinating about theology is that it dares to explore the grandest, deepest mystery of all.

we can possibly do that is if there exists a Perfect Being to which we can compare them. (Methinks Mr. Aquinas borrowed this argument from Mr. Plato.)

5. *Everything has a destiny—an ultimate purpose.* Because objects have no brains to guide them, and people have brains sufficiently messed up not to be able to guide them, there must be a super-intelligent Being that is heading everything in the right direction.

(To really mess with your mind, you might want to Google Anselm's ontological proof for God's existence. It's a doozy, even if it doesn't hold water, which maybe it does—sort of.)

Such intriguing deliberations aside, Aquinas admitted that to function properly in the realm of the spiritual and to really get to know God, we need grace. God's Spirit must give us faith, and we need Scripture to clue us in. Reason by itself can't hit home runs in Spiritual Field.

By pointing us to creation's revelation, Aquinas hands us an additional lens through which we can examine our world and communicate effectively with those whose beliefs about God are different from ours. That's a lot more civilized and effective than Augustine's bully tactics. But we Reformed types part company with Aquinas in dividing the world into those separate compartments of "nature" and "grace." We have several gripes:

- » Sin has made our human reason unreliable on its own. We need the glasses of Scripture and Spirit (à la Calvin) to see and think clearly even in this earthly realm. So instead of positing a nature-and-grace dualism, we think of the violent, take-no-prisoners opposition of sin and grace instead.
- » We can't separate the everyday world from the sacred. All of life is sacred: our Mondays belong to God just as much as our Sundays.
- » Aquinas' view that church tradition is right up there with the Bible as a source of knowledge of God and spiritual truth is naive at best, as any good church historian of the Roman Catholic or Christian Reformed churches will gleefully point out.

### The Reformed Theologians

Fast-forward again to the 16th century, when Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and many others protested (hence "Protestants") some practices and teachings of the Roman Catholic church of the time. Their beefs can be partially summarized by five *solas* (Latin for "only"). Two of those (the first two below) the Reformers actually coined themselves. A third was added later by others. The last two in this list were tacked on in the 20th century to summarize other Reformation insights. Where the

church of Rome wanted to create some wiggle room to bolster its own power, the Reformers demurred.

1. *Sola gratia* (only by grace): Salvation is by grace alone and not by works—our good works are not the cause of our salvation but the inevitable effect of it.
2. *Sola fide* (only by faith): We are justified before God not by our own deeds (or lack thereof), but only by our faith in Christ, whose righteousness is imputed to us.
3. *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone): This addition to the list summarizes accurately the Reformation principle that God gives us saving revelation only through the 66 books of the Bible and not through church tradition, CRC synods, or mega-church pastors—even if they are really dynamic.
4. *Solo Christo* (through Christ alone): Jesus is our only mediator and, while those superstar priests and pastors on a good day can lead us to him, Christ alone actually forgives our sins and grants us life everlasting.
5. *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone): Though we might admire the saints of old and learn from them, we Protestants do not worship them or pray to them. We recognize they are/were just “sinner-saints” like the rest of us, though pretty amazing nevertheless. So we’re not shy in admitting that Luther was an anti-Semite and Calvin brewed such bad beer that his neighbors begged him to desist because of the mind-numbing stench it emitted.

### **So Many Others Deserving Honorable Mention**

The cloud of theological witnesses continues well beyond the Reformation. Where to start or stop? They fleshed out more clearly many treasures from Scripture.

- » Abraham Kuyper firmly placed Reformed theology back on track after it had skittered off into

full-blown liberalism. He realized the radical implications of the Lordship of Christ over all of life. Like Augustine, he recognized how universally good and evil were at work in our daily lives, homes, schools, and society. He called it the “antithesis” and showed how, even though it runs through every human heart and soul, God has provided sufficient “common grace” to “arrest the dry rot of sin.” Through God’s Spirit, Christ-followers can truly disciple the nations as per Jesus’ parting words. Great stuff, but don’t get me started on Kuyper’s racist perspectives or his interminable theological meanderings that make my brain unable to absorb what my attention span cannot endure.

- » Herman Ridderbos left us a marvelous blow-by-blow description from the gospels of how Jesus inaugurated his already/not yet kingdom. Ridderbos called systematic theologians back from their often wild and woolly, grandiose ideas to careful, blood-and-guts scholarship that starts with and sticks to Scripture itself—tracing major themes from the Bible without turning them into systematic hamburgers.
- » Desmond Tutu, a South African Anglican theologian, made us see both the gospel’s condemnation of racism as well as the divinely gracious, biblical means of healing for both perpetrators and victims.
- » Our own CRC giants, who stood/stand on the backs of those earlier giants, continue to bless us with theological insight: Louis Berkhof, John Stek, Anthony Hoekema, and more. Most were men. That’s changing rapidly—for the better, says I. The wider the community of theologians, the better our chances of getting it right. Honorable mention goes to those who crafted Report 44 on “The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority” (find it at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org)). That synodical report pulls together many major insights of Christian and Reformed theology into a way to

read the Bible obediently and with deep integrity.

### **An ‘Altar Call’**

So why do I bend your ear like this? To seriously encourage you to ditch that clicker or gaming controller now and again and read some good, solid theology. It’s such a shame that in our tech-filled world we do so little sustained reading, reflecting, and pondering anymore! It’s tons more useful to chew on some of the classics than to read repetitive online rants or get grossed out by social media posts about your cousin’s rash.

Reading theology should never, ever elbow out your personal or communal reading of Scripture itself. But digging in allows you to benefit greatly from the voices of that great “cloud of witnesses” that has come before. When you do, keep your eyes wide open and your spiritual antennae finely tuned: theology and biblical interpretation is, as mentioned, far from infallible. So be smart about whom and what you read, but discover for yourself that Jesus meant it when he promised to lead us into all the truth. It’s taken two centuries and, if Jesus tarries, might take at least two—or 200—more. But when you’re having such holy fun, what’s the rush? Humbly, faithfully enjoy!



Bob De Moor is a retired Christian Reformed pastor living in Edmonton, Alta.

1. Who are your favorite theologians? Why do you like them?
2. Do you think Christians today are reading more, less, or the same amount of theology as before? Why?

**READ MORE ONLINE**

# Manna Economics

I find it fascinating that the reasoning behind the request for aid was drawn from the Old Testament story of heavenly bread—manna.



Rob Braun is a salesman, a freelance writer, and a part-time minister for Princeton (Minn.) Community Church. He is a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Princeton.

**WHEN I'M ASKED** about the Bible's view on economics, I immediately quote the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15: "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: 'The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.'"

The context is Paul gathering money for the church in Jerusalem. He was planning a trip there, so he thought he'd put together some financial aid for the Jerusalem congregations from the churches in the Greek areas he was ministering in. Apparently a severe drought was affecting Israel.

I find it fascinating that the reasoning behind the request for aid was drawn from the Old Testament story of the heavenly bread—manna—God gave to the Israelites to sustain them in the wilderness (Ex. 16). The Israelites were commanded not to gather more manna each day than they needed. If they did, it would rot (except on the Sabbath). In other words, they couldn't hoard the manna or create some sort of manna wealth. They got what they needed each day—no more, no less.

Jesus also speaks about this idea of "manna economics" in Luke 12, where he says, "Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well" (vv. 29-31).

Initially, the early church followed this command by living communally. Acts 2:44-45 tells us, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who

had need" (see also Acts 4:32-5:10). Communal living has continued in the church throughout its history. The monastic movement is one example of this.

Does this mean our goal is to live communally or to practice socialism?

No! People throughout the New Testament owned things privately. But it does mean that we need to see our possessions as first being owned by Christ. We need to see ourselves as stewards of what God has given us (Lev. 25:23). And as good stewards, we must be responsible for and attentive to all we're given in this life, realizing that ultimately we don't own anything at all. It all belongs to God (Luke 12:35-48)!

The bottom line is this: No matter what political or economic climate the church finds itself in, we are told to season this world with this "manna attitude" toward wealth. After all, every Christian is supposed to be a living representative of Christ and his coming kingdom. We are always to be the salt of the earth by living in the way of Jesus. One of the greatest threats to the future of the church is when the church's economic message ceases to be any different from the economics of this world. That's when the salt loses its saltiness and our message is "no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matt. 5:13). Instead, let us live out Christ's message to love our neighbors as ourselves in all times, to all people, and in all places! This is the very definition of manna economics. **B**

1. How do you feel about the current economic situation where you live? Why do you feel this way?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

# Authentic Worship

Worship is so much more complex and nuanced and important and rich! We cannot reduce it to generalizations.



Ruth Ann Schuringa is the worship director at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, Ont. As an endorsed worship coach for CRC Worship Ministries, she has led seminars, workshops, and conferences throughout Ontario. Read more of her writing at [mountainview-crc.org/worship](http://mountainview-crc.org/worship).

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO** a little booklet was published by CRC Publications called “Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture.” This resource, written at the height of the worship conflict in many Christian Reformed churches, continues to speak to us today:

When our hearts are right, we will refuse to be controlled by caricatures of the worship of those with whom we disagree. We will resist labels like “traditional” and “contemporary” when they are used to put down others. ... We will not come to church looking for things with which we disagree in worship (p. 52).

Recently two articles in *The Banner* caused these labels of “traditional” and “contemporary” to be escalated yet again into divisive talk. I wish we were past these old arguments. Worship is so much more complex and nuanced! We cannot reduce it to the generalizations of older hymns against newer songs or youth versus seniors.

There are many modern worship songs written in standard hymn form. Are these to be categorized as contemporary songs or as hymns? There are non-hymns written in the 1970s (e.g., “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” and “Shine, Jesus, Shine”) that we use in worship. Are those “contemporary” simply because they aren’t hymns? Where does “Will You Come and Follow Me,” by John Bell, fit in these two limited categories? What about “In Christ Alone”? Hymn or contemporary? Both? Neither? What about “Father, Let Your Kingdom Come,” by The Porter’s Gate? This was written very recently, making it contemporary in the sense of “now.” Is it then in the “contemporary” group? In what ways is it similar to or unlike “Way Maker” or “Open the Eyes of My Heart”? All of these are more or less “contemporary,” but the forms are so different


that they really can’t all be put into one simple category.

I’m sure you see the point I’m trying to make. The word “hymn” refers to the compositional form of a particular song (syllabic, rhymed, versified), and “contemporary” is a word indicating a time frame. Comparing these categories is like the proverbial apples and oranges comparison.

Could we do better by thinking more imaginatively? Let’s not reduce the work of worship planning to an arbitrary two categories of music. I am grateful for Greg Scheer’s helpful book *Essential Worship: A Handbook for Leaders*, from which I have gleaned these five “spectrums” of categories to use when planning worship music: simple vs. complex, familiar vs. new, formative (head/doctrine) vs. expressive (heart/emotion), pastoral (comfort) vs. prophetic (challenging), and congregational vs. presentational.

We must also consider tone, mood, theme, church season, congregational context, and length of service. Perhaps instead of asking if any song is either “contemporary” or a hymn, why not ask how the song connects with the message and the themes we are exploring together? How does this song help me pray? How does it help me praise? How do all the other parts of worship—images, readings, prayers, sermon—also reveal God to me? How does worship reveal to me ways I can grow in faith? What do we need to sing today? Do we need to lament? Do we need to lean into global worship?

My hope and prayer is that we learn to be open to worshipping God through all that is offered in a service—even the parts we may not like.

*Editor’s Note:* After *The Banner* accepted this article for publication, a version of it later appeared on the Reformed Worship blog. 

# A Cornucopia of Reads for Cozy Days and Starry Nights

Compiled by Lorilee Craker



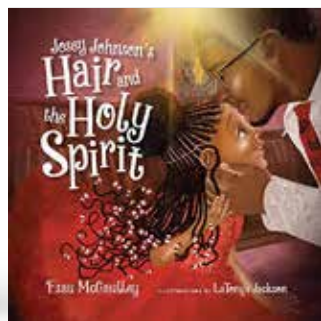
## My Own Lightning

By Lauren Wolk

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this sequel to *Wolf Hollow*, it's 1944, and 12-year-old Annabelle is living under a cloud of tragic events that occurred just months ago in her small western Pennsylvania community of Wolf Hollow. Annabelle had done all she could to shield her friend Toby, a reclusive WWI veteran, from bullying by the new girl, Betty Glengarry, but she had failed.

Forgiveness, restoration, and compassion characterize Annabelle's journey from confusion to healing in this novel for middle school readers. While *Wolf Hollow* portrayed the darkness of the human heart and its tragic consequences—a narrative at times tense and difficult to read—*My Own Lightning* offers glimpses into a world where redemption is always a possibility and joy can be rediscovered after great sorrow. (Dutton Books for Young Readers)



## Josey Johnson's Hair and the Holy Spirit

By Esau McCaulley

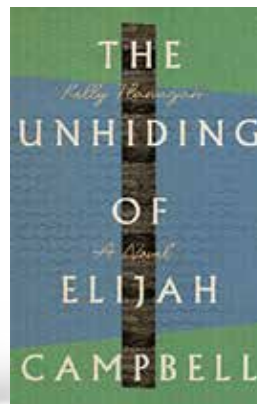
Reviewed by Darrell L. Delaney

Josey Johnson is preparing to sing in the church choir on Pentecost Sunday. Her hair has personality, which means it changes all the time. As her hair gets braided, Josey is told that God didn't make any mistakes when he made her and that she is a work of art.

Josey also learns that Pentecost was the day the Holy Spirit came and brought people together despite their differences. She wears a red dress because it resembles the fiery tongues that landed on each person.

McCaulley makes a complicated concept very accessible to little people.

When I read this to my daughter, she saw herself in the book. She understood in a new way that she is a work of art and that God is still active in this world today. (IVP Kids)



## The Unhiding of Elijah Campbell

By Kelly Flanagan

Reviewed by Cynthia Beach

Elijah Campbell has a problem. He doesn't like to relate to others, not even those he loves. He'd rather fake it and hide. "I ... tried to recover my most reliable way of responding when my walls were about to be breached: a smile so bright no one's scrutiny had ever survived its wattage."

Soon Elijah's smile-weapon no longer works. His wife is unhappy. His editor is unhappy. And Elijah himself is unhappy. If only he'd let his recurring nightmares return him to a wound that needs attention.

This novel is the latest from Formatio, the IVP spiritual formation imprint that includes novels by Sharon Garlough Brown, author of the best-selling *Sensible Shoes*. *The Unhiding of Elijah Campbell* refreshes in its verve and honesty. (IVP Formatio).



## Violeta

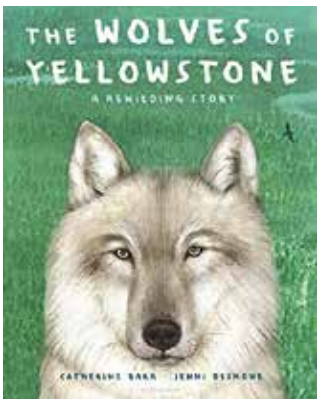
By Isabel Allende

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

This sweeping novel from the great Chilean novelist Isabel Allende, 80, tells the epic story of Violeta Del Valle, a woman whose life spans 100 years, from the Spanish flu pandemic to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Violeta bears Allende's elegant use of language, comparative wholesome-ness (it has no swearing or sex scenes, though characters do not live pristine moral lives), and a plot that carries you along like a rolling river. What's missing here is her trademark magical realism, epitomized in *The House of the Spirits*.

Could Allende's 21st novel be the last from one of the most widely read Spanish-speaking authors of our time? I hope not. (Ballantine Books)



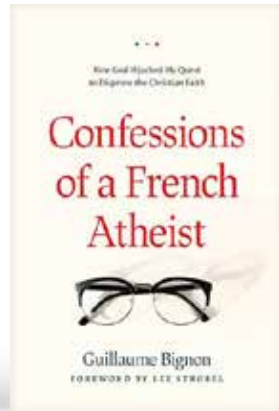
## The Wolves of Yellowstone: A Rewilding Story

*By Catherine Barr, illustrated by Jenni Desmond*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On March 1, 1872, Yellowstone National Park became the world's first national park. Though wolves had roamed freely for hundreds of years in that area, their numbers radically decreased when the United States government supported the people who hunted and killed the animals. In 1926, rangers shot and killed the last wolf in the park.

Catherine Barr's intriguing nonfiction narrative and Jenni Desmond's earthy, spirited artwork combine to give children a glimpse of the devastating impact of that decision and, years later, the concerted effort it took to reverse the consequences. This book gives children the opportunity to learn about how God's amazing creation is intricately woven together and to discover the effort it takes to care for and maintain it. (Bloomsbury Children's Books)



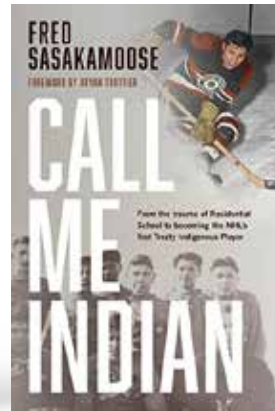
## Confessions of a French Atheist: How God Hijacked My Quest to Disprove the Christian Faith

*By Guillaume Bignon*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

With honesty and vulnerability, Guillaume Bignon dissects his life before and after becoming a Christian. In poignant and searing detail, he relates how "God took this atheistic, hedonistic software engineer who scorned religion, grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, demolished his intellectual objections, changed his heart, forgave his sins, and made him into a philosopher, theologian, and apologist of the Christian faith."

Bignon hoped to accomplish three objectives by writing his memoir: to amuse readers with his personal story, to excite readers' curiosity with his apologetics, and to invite readers to follow Jesus as he himself does today. Bignon's memoir accomplishes all of these objectives. It celebrates the love of God that pursues God's children relentlessly. (Tyndale)



## Call Me Indian: From the Trauma of Residential School to Becoming the NHL's First Treaty Indigenous Player

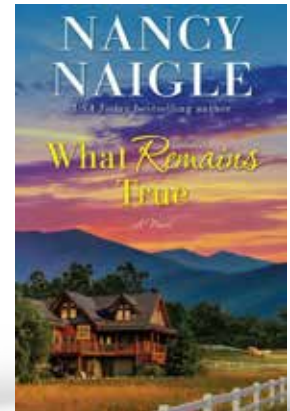
*By Fred Sasakamoose*

Reviewed by Agnes Mastin

Fred Sasakamoose is a residential school survivor and the first Treaty Indigenous player in the NHL. These things are true, but neither fact tells the whole story.

Sasakamoose's autobiography, *Call Me Indian* tracks the life of an inspirational Nehiyaw (Cree) man who became the first First Nations player in the NHL. Sasakamoose's story takes the audience on a roller coaster ride: one moment we are cheering for him, and the next we are flinching when things go very wrong.

Sasakamoose's love for the game and his community is truly an inspiration for anyone who wants a better world. This book is for anyone who loves hockey or Indigenous people, and those who want to read about what real passion and compassion can do. (Penguin Random House Canada)



## What Remains True

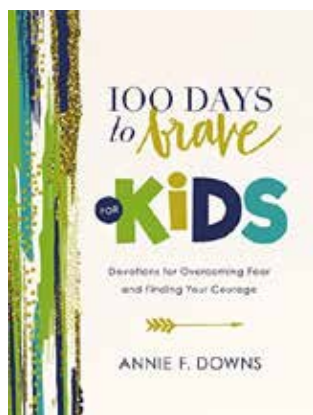
*By Nancy Naigle*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Merry Anna Foster desperately needs a new beginning and serendipitously finds it in the small town of Antler Creek, far away from her frenetic city life, a demanding family business, and an adulterous ex-husband. Merry Anna finds work in a small shop and makes friends with the locals, including Adam Lockwood, the handsome owner of the local feed store and a successful rodeo cowboy who has his career goals charted to precision.

When Adam's former girlfriend shows up at his door with a 5-year-old girl he never knew about and claims he's the father, all bets are off.

Author Nancy Naigle's tender romance novel explores the ways in which people's past decisions and present circumstances don't hinder God's grace from bringing forgiveness, renewal, and a brighter, often totally unexpected future. (WaterBrook)



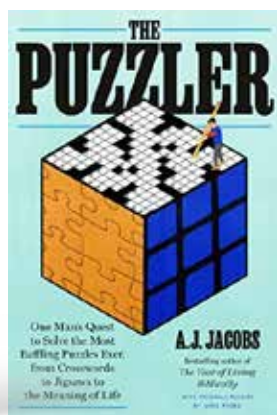
## 100 Days to Brave for Kids: Devotions for Overcoming Fear and Finding Your Courage

By Annie F. Downs

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Annie F. Downs' 100 devotions for children about bravery each include a Scripture passage, a brief meditation, a question for reflection, and space to journal.

With compassion and astute awareness of the issues children face, Downs delves into themes such as nurturing godly dreams for the future and working hard to achieve them, loving and helping others, facing change with hope and perseverance, honoring and caring for the bodies God has given us, and working to bring about God's goodness in the world. Downs' primary focus as she encourages children to set aside fear with God's help and to be brave is to give God honor: "All glory for any bravery we exhibit goes straight to Jesus." Recommended for children ages 8-12. (Zonderkidz)



## The Puzzler: One Man's Quest to Solve the Most Baffling Puzzles Ever, from Crosswords to Jigsaws to the Meaning of Life

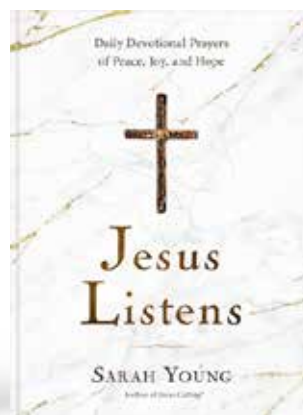
By A.J. Jacobs

Reviewed by Sam Gutierrez

A.J. Jacobs is known for books describing his immersion in yearlong projects. In *The Year of Living Biblically*, for example, he tries to live by all of the biblical commandments. In his latest book, *The Puzzler*, he immerses himself in puzzles.

The first puzzle he tackles is the crossword. Then he wrestles with the Rubik's cube. From there, he explores every kind of puzzle imaginable— anagrams, jigsaws, mazes, ciphers, sudoku, KenKen, riddles, Japanese puzzle boxes, and scavenger hunts, to name a few.

The greatest puzzle of all, though, is the meaning of life, a puzzle Jacobs faces in the book's final chapter. Does he crack the code? Does he unlock the symbols and discover what life is all about? Read the chapter called "Infinite Puzzles" to find out! (Crown)



## Jesus Listens: Daily Devotional Prayers of Peace, Joy, and Hope

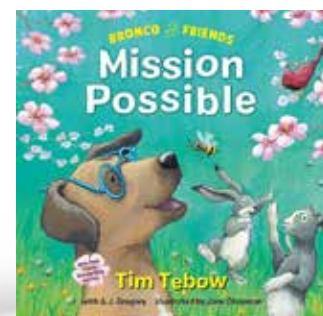
By Sarah Young

Reviewed by Li Ma

Eighteen years after *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young has released *Jesus Listens*, a devotional prayer book written from the perspective of a praying Christian. It reminds us that God listens to all our spoken and unspoken prayers. In this anxious time, it can be immensely comforting and encouraging to know that God listens when we pray. Young's book offers one-page devotional prayers as jumping-off points for personal prayer.

It takes intention and perseverance to develop a life of prayer. This book serves as a primer and a guide. Each daily prayer ends with a few Scripture verses.

Can pre-written prayers be authentic and heartfelt? Yes. The daily prayers in this book are a warm-up exercise for placing oneself in the presence of an active and listening God. (Thomas Nelson).



## Bronco and Friends: Mission Possible

By Tim Tebow and A. J. Gregory, illustrated by Jane Chapman

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen

Bronco is enjoying a rest in the summer sunshine when a bee lands on the tip of his tail. Bronco is terrified, so he runs away, crashing into Alexis the goat and stopping in his tracks. The bee, named Phoebe, is still clinging to Bronco's tail. She asks for help because her family was stolen from the beekeeper who loves and cares for them.

Immediately, Bronco thinks, "Why would I help a bunch of bees I don't even know? ... They've never done anything for me."

The compassionate narrative and cheerful illustrations found in this endearing children's picture book develop the theme of Philippians 2:4 (MEV): "Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (WaterBrook)

## Should Christians Trust Science?

I see science as a gift from God. God created us with the curiosity and intelligence to explore all that he has made.



Deborah B. Haarsma is president of BioLogos ([biologos.org](http://biologos.org)). She and her husband, Loren, are scientists who together wrote the book *Origins* (Faith Alive, 2011). They are members of the Christian Reformed Church.

**DURING THE PANDEMIC**, I started hearing leaders say “just trust the science” on topics such as masks and vaccines. The phrase continues to be used today on issues like climate change. Should Christians trust science?

I’m torn on this. I’m a scientist myself. As an astronomer, I’ve studied galaxies, galaxy clusters, and the expansion of the universe. In my experience scientists are straight shooters and reliable in their area of expertise.

On the other hand, the phrase “trust the science” is problematic. It often is said with a tone of “science shows I’m right, so shut up and trust me.” The smug tone cuts off conversation. When explaining science, we need to be honest about the uncertainties and open to the real concerns people have.

Moreover, “trust” is a big word. The Bible verses I memorized as a child have stuck with me: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6, BSB). Trust is a word we apply to God. I trust God to love me, to be wiser than me, to guide me, to protect me. If we trust science in that way, we have surely turned science into an idol. Science is limited; it cannot replace God.

Many scientists also have problems with “trust the science.” What about “science” are we supposed to trust? The opinions of scientists? The latest public policy initiative? The findings of experiments? Even with experimental findings, scientists know there is always some level of uncertainty and that future research will likely add complications or contradictions. But we also know that findings can be very reliable when they have been confirmed by many scientists with abundant data.

And that’s the key: recognizing what about science is reliable and what is

not. Scientific findings are reliable when they are based on the work of scientists of different nationalities and different worldviews doing different types of experiments. It’s impressive when all these people actually agree on something! I’ve been to many conferences where scientists debate the latest research. If you don’t have rigorous methods and sufficient data, other scientists are quick to point out the weaknesses and argue for alternatives. When scientists do reach a consensus, it is a lot more reliable than one person on YouTube.

There’s another reason that well-established findings should be taken seriously by Christians: science is humans’ best understanding of God’s creation. Scientists are able to reach a consensus because they’ve agreed to use the same reference point: the natural world itself. Scientists are studying the very handiwork of God, from galaxies to weather patterns to the cells in our bodies. What we do with the findings is a different question. Good public policy needs more than science. We need to consider economics, the effects on communities, and other factors. But simply rejecting scientific findings if we don’t like what they say means losing our best window into God’s creation.

I see science as a gift from God. God created us with the curiosity and intelligence to explore all he has made. God calls us to use that knowledge to heal the sick, care for the poor, and care for the planet. As Christians we should be the most discerning and wise people in our use of science. We should not be taken in by the latest anti-science conspiracy theory. Nor should we adopt narratives that turn science into an idol. Instead, we can use what science learns about the natural world to make wise and compassionate choices. So let’s not trust science instead of God. Let’s trust science as a gift from God. **B**



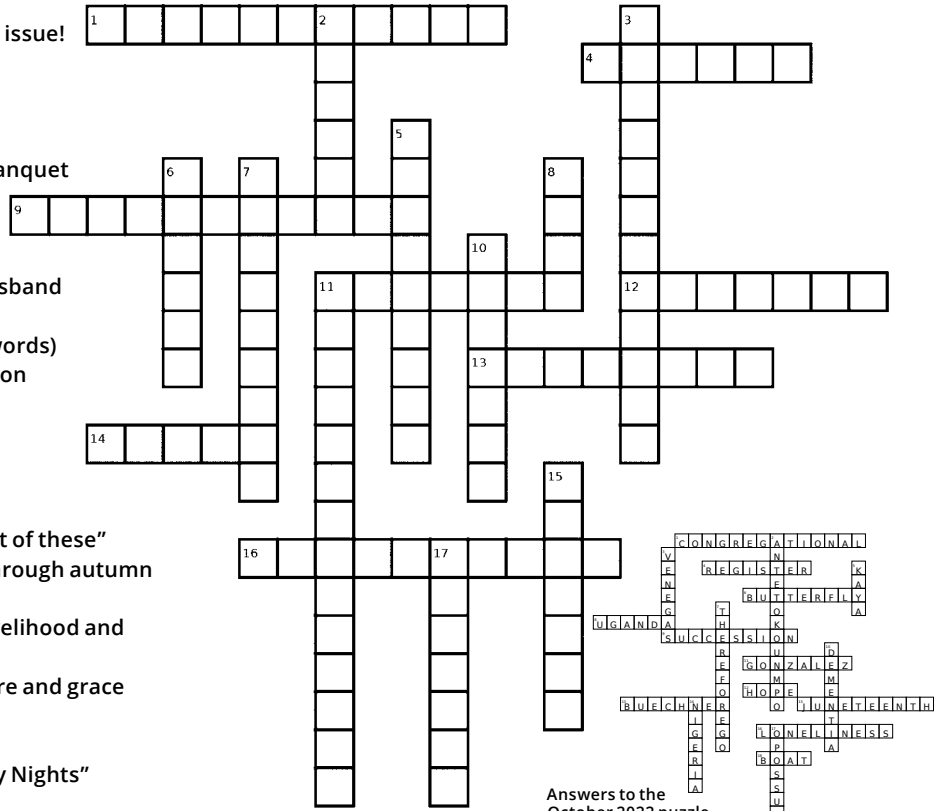
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

**Down**

- 2. Town where a church celebrated 150 years
- 3. The CRC Canada Corporation hosted this
- 5. Church that celebrated God's family with a banquet
- 6. A program to train mentors for Generation Z
- 7. Author of *Josey Johnson's Hair and the Holy Spirit*
- 8. Writer bemoaning the plight of a pastor's husband
- 10. Former U.S. Coast Guard chief of chaplains
- 11. ReFrame's English-language program (two words)
- 15. Humans' best understanding of God's creation
- 17. University working toward Indigenous reconciliation

**Across**

- 1. Author of *Call Me Indian*
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ care is one way to consider "the least of these"
- 9. Term for a tree keeping its withered leaves through autumn and winter
- 11. World Renew has been working here with livelihood and peace programs
- 12. Theologian who saw creation split into nature and grace
- 13. Samaritan's \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. "The Great Sin"
- 16. "A \_\_\_\_\_ of Reads for Cozy Days and Starry Nights"



Answers to the October 2022 puzzle

# Great News!

A simple and tax-wise way to support CRC ministry.

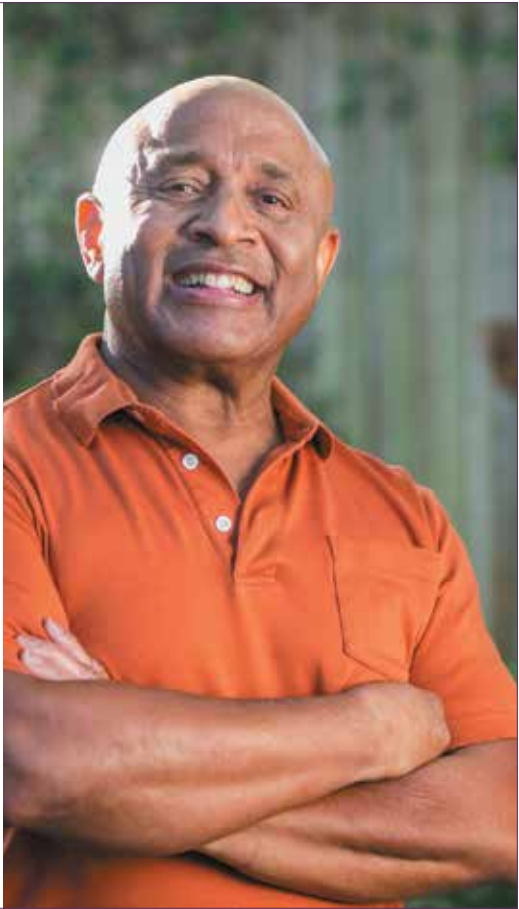
**Benefits to you. . .**

- It is an easy and tax-wise way to make a gift
- Charitable gifts from your IRA can fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)
- You benefit even if you don't itemize deductions on your tax returns since distributions made directly to the CRC and its ministries are not treated as taxable income
- IRA gifts can fulfill any charitable giving pledge you have already made

**IRA Charitable Gift conditions. . .**

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**Congregational Announcements**

**MARANATHA WELCOMES WINTER VISITORS** Maranatha begins its winter season on Dec 4. Please note that we have changed our starting time and location. New time of worship: 10:45 am. New location: Church of the Master, 6659 E University, Mesa, AZ 85205.

**WINTER WORSHIP IN BRADENTON, FL** Bradenton Chapel invites you to join us for Sunday Worship and Wed. Bible Study. Visit our website at [bradentonchapel.com](http://bradentonchapel.com)

**Church Positions Available**

**FULL TIME BI-LINGUAL PASTOR (HOUSTON, TX)** The congregation of Peace Community CRC is seeking a full-time pastor with preference given to a bi-lingual (Spanish) with strong biblical teaching who will provide devoted pastoral care and who will adequately nurture the spiritual growth of the congregation and surrounding community. The church

is located in a western suburb of Houston Texas, approximately five miles from the energy corridor business district. To learn more about us, please visit our website at [www.peacecommunitychurch.org](http://www.peacecommunitychurch.org). Please send all resumes and inquiries to Burt Allen at [burt.allen2016@gmail.com](mailto:burt.allen2016@gmail.com).

**FULL TIME PASTOR** Exeter CRC in Ontario, Canada, is prayerfully seeking the next pastor God has prepared for us. We are an imperfect church looking for an imperfect pastor who will be the perfect fit in our multi-generational congregation. Exeter is a rural community nestled in the Great Lakes basin of southwestern Ontario and located 40 minutes north of London (pop 540,000). If you are interested or intrigued in this position, please contact us in confidence at [pastorsearch@exetercrc.on.ca](mailto:pastorsearch@exetercrc.on.ca). We would love to hear from you!

**FULL TIME PASTOR** Kanawha Christian Reformed Church is a small church in a small community which we believe is a blessed asset to the Lord's Kingdom in our area of Iowa. Our theology is traditional CRC yet is open, affirming and contemporary in spirit. We are seeking a full time Pastor. Interested? Please contact Pastoral Search Comm at [luppenlj@gmail.com](mailto:luppenlj@gmail.com).

**IMMANUEL CRC OF WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY SEEKS PASTOR** full time or bi-vocational to lead our small dynamic small church in the heart of the scenic Hudson Valley. The pastor we are looking for should be devoted to preaching the word of God and be able to walk beside us in our faith journey. Please contact Mike Toth, Secretary of Search Committee at [mi.toth@yahoo.com](mailto:mi.toth@yahoo.com)

**INTERIM ASSOCIATE PASTOR** Bethel CRC Listowel, Ontario is seeking a part time Interim Associate Pastor. Request job description or submit resume to council chair, Bill Los ([cattlemaster@hotmail.com](mailto:cattlemaster@hotmail.com)).

**MOUNT VERNON, WA FIRST CRC - MINISTRY ASSOCIATE PASTOR** We are a growing, family-oriented, multi-generational congregation prayerfully seeking to add to our ministry staff. Whether you are a young pastor looking to gain ministry experience, or a seasoned pastor longing to use your giftings in more focused areas of ministry (eg. preaching, pastoral care, education, etc.) - we would love to hear from you! Please direct your inquiries to Pastor John Knoester at 360-941-5902, or email [jknoes14@hotmail.com](mailto:jknoes14@hotmail.com).

**NEW PASTOR SEARCH** The congregation of Peace Community CRC is seeking a full-time pastor with preference given to a bi-lingual (Spanish) with strong biblical teaching who will provide devoted pastoral care and who will adequately nurture the spiritual growth of the congregation and surrounding community. The church is located in a western suburb of Houston Texas, approximately five miles from the energy corridor business district. To learn more about us, please visit our website at [www.peacecommunitychurch.org](http://www.peacecommunitychurch.org). Please send all resumes and inquiries to Burt Allen at [burt.allen2016@gmail.com](mailto:burt.allen2016@gmail.com).

**PASTOR OF FAITH FORMATION, COVENANT CRC-WINNIPEG** Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba is seeking a full-time Pastor of Faith Formation. We are an established multigenerational congregation and have a vision for an engaged, vibrant community that fosters commitment, love and active service toward God among members of all ages. To help our congregation grow into this vision, we are seeking to add to our ministry team a full-time Pastor of Faith Formation, who will complement and partner with our existing full-time Lead Pastor, and a part-time worship assistant. This role will provide leadership, vision, coordination, and administration for programs and initiatives that support faith formation in participants of all ages. For more information about our church and this position, please visit <https://covenantcrc.ca/> and <https://covenantcrc.ca/jobs/>

**Birthdays**

**BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS**

**HENRIETTA "MICKIE" HEYS KINGMA** of Lynden WA will celebrate her 100th birthday on November 5. She is blessed with 2 children, Judie (Herb) Gilbo, Doug (Karen) Heys, 4 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren. Mickie thanks the Lord for His loving-kindness to her. Cards are welcome at 301 W Homestead Blvd #208, Lynden, WA 98264.

**BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS**

**MARJORIE (HANENBURG) EMERSON** of Montecito, California, celebrated her 90th birthday on September 13, with lots of love and laughter, surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We, her family, are grateful to God for her life of faithfulness and obedience to her Lord.

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**Obituaries**



**DYKHOUSE**, Nelly of Port Lambton, Ontario was translated into glory in her 100th year on September 11, 2022. Preceded in death by husband Harry in 1994. Survived by children Mike (Carol), Gerrit (Cori), Henk (Pam), Clarence (Tina), and Willemiena (Cortney). Oma to 14 grand children and great Oma to 26 great grand children.



**MOLL**, Herman E., age 97 of Denver, CO went home with his Lord and Savior on August 20, 2022. Born May 24, 1925 in Celeryville, Ohio he was the third of 11 siblings. Herman is survived by his 6 children: Lois Wiersum, Lauretta, Edward (Elena), Gary, Leanne (Walter Pierce), and Linda (Samuel Shultis); 19 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren; brothers David (Janice), Lynn, and Keith (Linda), sisters-in-law Phyllis and Joyce, and brother-in-law Rev. Sidney Cooper of Sarnia, Ontario. He was preceded in death by his first wife Esther Shaarda in 1963 and second wife Sylvia Topping in 1997; sisters (Senetta, Janice Cooper, Lois) brothers (Frank-

lin, Kenneth, Donald, Roger) sisters-in-law (Betty, Arlene, Gloria); son-in-law Rev. Karl Wiersum; and three infant triplets. Herman was a member of Hope Fellowship CRC in Denver, CO. His Celebration of Life will be held at Willard CRC in Ohio on November 23, 2022.



**STEENSMA**, James Lewis, age 85, Sept. 27, 2022. Preceded in death by his wife of 62 years, Judith. He is survived by his son, Andrew (Ann), his daughters, Molly Persby, Jennifer (Paul) Steensma Hoag, and Priscilla (Douglas) Higby.

The family will receive visitors noon till 2pm on October 28 at Rochester Christian Reformed Church



**VANDERPLOEG**, Margery - Marge died August 30, 2022. she was preceded in death by her parents Joseph and Helen (Prince) Vanderploeg. She is survived by the positive impacts that she had on her social work clients, co-

workers, students, friends, community and her chosen family: Shelly (Mark) Evenhouse, Steve (Lisa) Timmer, Scott (Julie) Timmer, Larry (Ardis) Timmer, and Shirley Timmer.

**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION**

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: The Banner; 2. Publication No. 0041-300; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2022; 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly except August; 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 11; 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$28.00; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Editor: Shiao Chong, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Managing Editor: Sarah Delia Heth, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407. 10. Owner: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2022.

Each Issue During	Average No. Copies Single Issue Published	No. Copies of
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Preceding 12 Months	Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	67,596	65,690
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	49,620	48,881
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	14,964	14,925
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	0	0
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	64,584	63,806
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	10	2
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	0	0
e. Total Free Distribution	10	2
f. Total Distribution	64,594	63,808
g. Copies Not Distributed	3,002	1,882
h. Total	67,596	65,690
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	99.98%	100%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.

Jane E. Hilbrand, Operations Manager



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Mar 30 - Apr 11 | *Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima*

**ALASKA & DENALI**  
May 20 - Jun 1 | *John & Rachel Witte*

**THE GOSPEL COMES TO ITALY**  
May 22 - Jun 2 | *Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima*

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**VANKUIKEN**, Myra (Schreur), age 89, of Hudsonville, formerly of South Holland, Illinois, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Monday, September 19, 2022. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ronald VanKuiken. She is

survived by her children Kathy & Peter Vink, Dave & Gail, Barb, Jim & Diane, Rob & Heidi, Steve & Jill; 16 grandchildren & spouses, 23 great-grandchildren. Myra, a former nurse and native of Holland, Michigan, attended nursing school in Chicago in the 1950's, where she met her future husband. They wed in 1954 and made South Holland, Illinois, their

home where they raised their family. In 2000, she and her husband retired to Jamestown, Michigan, where her hobbies included cross-stitching, rug-hooking, traveling with her husband, reading, and visiting with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Memorial contributions may be made to Rehoboth Christian School.

### Anniversary

#### ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS

**BUIKEMA**, William & Clara [Bosman] Nov. 21, 2022. 8040 E. Dartmouth Ave.#1 Denver, CO 80231. Children: Linda, Steve Lucht, Karen, David Velgersdyk, William Jr. Deceased Carol, Patricia & Jacci. 11 Grandchildren, 17 Great

Grandchildren. We are thankful to God for his many blessings.

#### ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS



**VOS**, Don and Millie (Van-Howe). With thanks to God, Don and Millie will be celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary on December 6, 2022. Celebrating with them are their children Ken (Cindy) Vos, Karl (Maria) Vos, Deanna (Ed) Wordergem; 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Their family rejoices and gives thanks with them for God's faithfulness and blessings throughout their marriage. Their home address is 1131 S. Prospect Ave Elmhurst, IL 60126. GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS!

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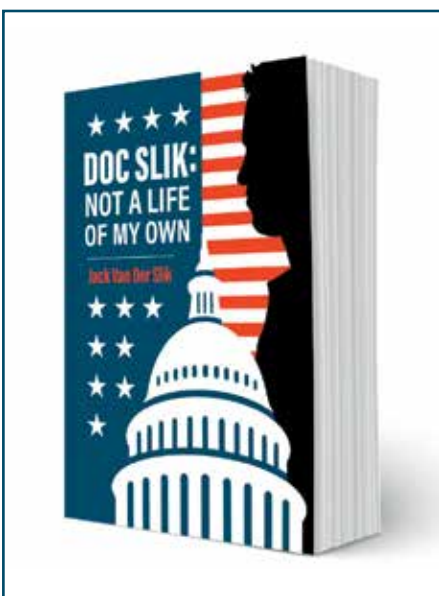
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*Doc Slik* (Jack Van Der Slik) is a colorful memoir from a typical Midwest kid who was nurtured by family, church and Christian schools to become a parent, teacher, professor, author, political commentator and world traveler. God gave Doc Slik a faithful life partner and three adopted children for a zig-zag, up, down and sideways set of life experiences. What is the message? **God's love never fails!!**

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## Kisê-manitow

Kisê-manitow  
means the Creator,  
the Great Spirit.



Parry Stelter is originally from Alexander First Nation, part of Treaty Six Territory. He is a doctoral candidate in contextual leadership with Providence University and Seminary who offers workshops on grief, loss, and intergenerational trauma. He is a member of Hope CRC in Stony Plain, Alta. His website is [wordofhopeministries.ca](http://wordofhopeministries.ca).

**WHEN I WAS GROWING UP**, I never worried about the bills being paid each month. These concerns were beyond my comprehension and concern. As I got a little older, I started to realize the magnitude of all the regular bills that a responsible adult needed to pay.

As I was learning about the early fur trade and the treaties that were made here in Canada between some of the Indigenous people and early settlers, I read a statement made by a Nehiyawak (Cree) Elder. The statement had to do with God the Creator being much more capable of taking care of them than any government with any treaty or agreement. This was a good reminder for me as an adult with responsibilities and a connection to the land.


The Nehiyawak Elder said, “You are telling us all this, (yet) you will never be able to treat us the way we are treated by Manito. Look at this land with its abundance of food for us. You’ll never be able to match that; you will not be able to do this.” As these words were being spoken, as the steady advancement of this new civilization in Canada was being formed, the near-extinction of the buffalo and the beaver was taking shape.

The word “Manitou,” according to the Algonquian religious belief system, refers to a supernatural force connected with humans and spirits. The Plains Cree word for what is referred to as “Manito” in this quotation is *Kisê-manitow*, which means the Creator, the Great Spirit. When I’m referring to what this Cree Elder said, I’m referring to God as the Bible describes him to be.

There are so many variations in the Indigenous languages across North America that it’s virtually impossible to use a “correct” term that satisfies us all. Even within the Cree

language, there are different types of Cree dialects, never mind other language groups such as Algonquian. So even within this column, we all can learn something new about Indigenous people.

Matthew 6:26-27 says, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” Jesus is saying that not only are the birds of the air taken care of, but we are even more important than the birds. God through Jesus takes care of us and provides for us all as humans. He is the Creator and sustainer of us all.

The next time I feel overwhelmed about my bills, I need to take all these words to heart and relax. God through Jesus Christ works through people to help us with what we need, but it is still God who is doing the providing. Whether it was my Indigenous people a few hundred years ago, my parents who have passed on, or myself, we all relied on God to provide in ways that no other person or government ever could. I thank you, Kisê-manitow—God—for being my provider! 

# Aunt Dorothy

I had tears running down my face—not so much from the joke, but from the hilarious way in which she told it.



Rod Hugen is pastor of the Village Church and leader of the Tucson Cluster, a church planting effort in Tucson, Ariz.

**AUNT DOROTHY LOVED ME.** There was no doubt about that. She lived in Pella, Iowa, and I had gone to visit extended family who live there. There were lots of uncles and aunts and cousins to see. We lived far away, in Arizona, and it was rare that we were able to connect with our Iowa relatives. So it was a delight for me to be able to see them all for a couple of days. Aunt Dorothy grabbed me at a cousins' picnic taking place at West Market Park and said, "I want to talk to you about your church plant out there in Tucson, and I want to buy you lunch." I couldn't say no to her even if I'd wanted to.

We agreed to meet at the Windmill Cafe the next day. She arrived early and snagged a table by the window. "Remember, I'm buying," she said, gesturing toward the menu. "You just pick anything you want to eat. It's my treat."

She then pointed at what she said was her favorite: "I'm getting the tuna melt. You should try it, too. You'll like it."

I ordered it on her recommendation. I also noticed it was the least expensive thing on the menu. A widow has to pinch pennies. I loved that she was using some of those coins to buy me lunch.

We chatted for a while. She asked how Mom was doing. We talked about her kids and grandchildren. She shared a couple of jokes. She'd start laughing before she got to the punchline. It's what I always remember about her. I had tears running down my face—not so much from the joke, but from the hilarious way in which she told it. "Say, Rodney, did you hear the one about ..."—and off she'd go. I laughed until my sides ached. She reminisced about the time I was visiting and told her I didn't like fried chicken. Dad wasn't fond of chicken, so I didn't like it simply because he didn't like it. Aunt Dorothy had lied and told me it was

fried duck, not fried chicken, and I had gone home and told Mom that fried duck was delicious. She cackled and snorted at the funny memory. We giggled a lot.

Then she got serious. "Your mother tells me about the church you've started. She's very proud of you. But, Rodney, you didn't go to seminary, and I don't think you should preach if you don't go to seminary. My grandson did it the right way. He graduated from seminary and got a call and was ordained as a minister. That's the way it's supposed to be. I love you, but I don't think it's right what you're doing."

"Well, Aunt Dorothy, I'm not a minister," I replied. "I was ordained as an evangelist and was examined for that role."

"I see," she said. "Well, I didn't know that. Still, my grandson did it correctly, and I just object to you not doing it right. One of your cousins heard you preach a while back and said you were pretty good, but it just seems wrong to me."

What could I do? I sort of apologized and then told her I was sad to have disappointed her.

She patted my hand and said, "Oh, no, you don't disappoint me. I'm very proud of you, too."

She grabbed her purse and pulled out a small white envelope and handed it to me. "I imagine starting a church is hard. Here's a little something to help your church along. It's not much, but it's all I can afford for now."

Inside the envelope was a check for \$15.

She had written it the day before. **B**



# Planning worship?

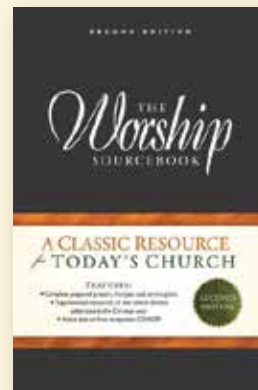
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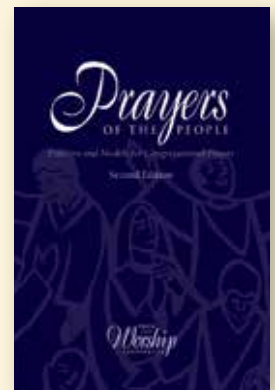
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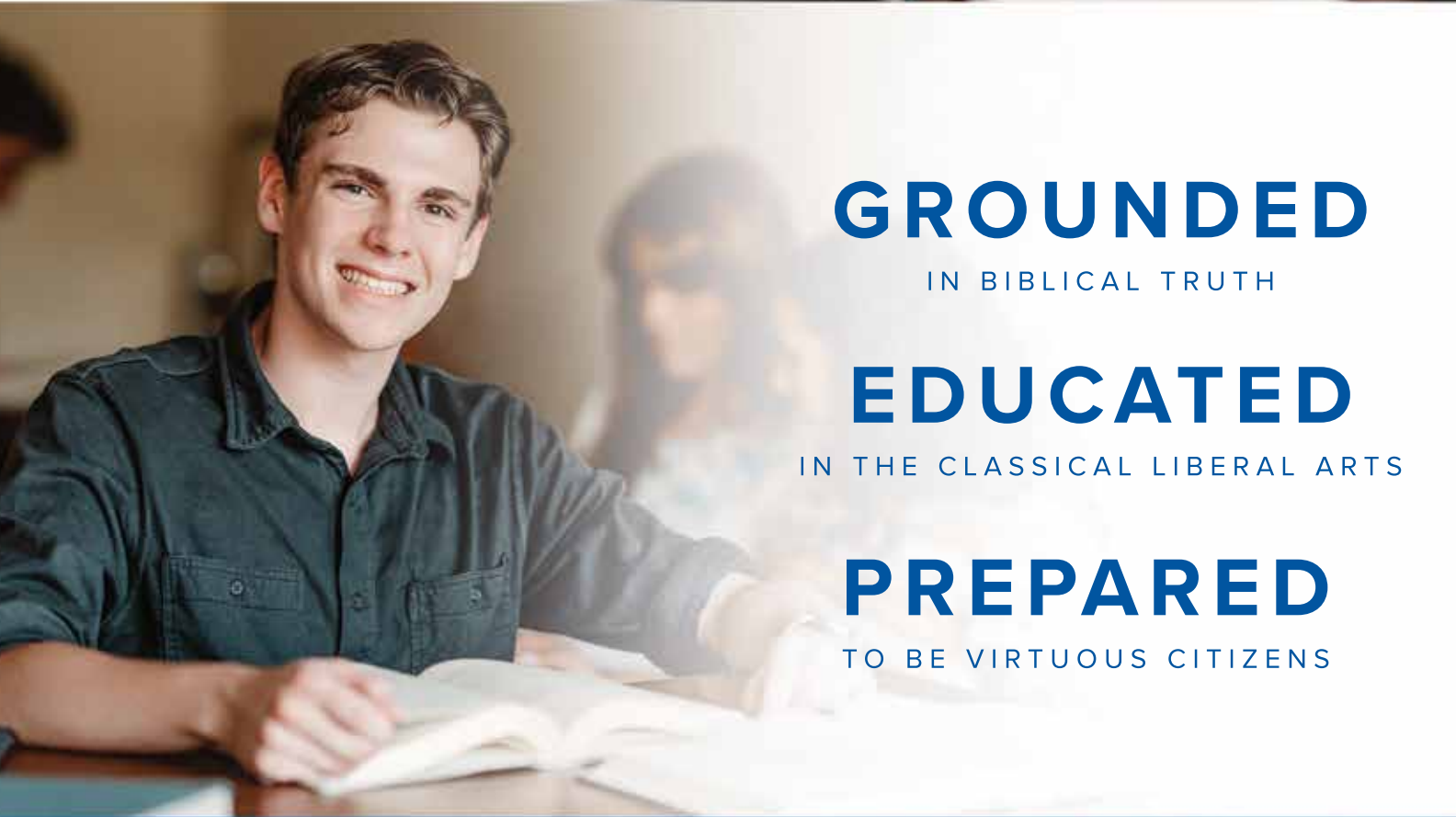


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