

# BANNER

SEPTEMBER 2023

THE BANNER.ORG

A photograph of two men sitting at a table in a bright, modern office or meeting space. One man is seen from the back, wearing a light-colored shirt, while the other, a Black man in a dark t-shirt, is looking towards him. Large windows in the background let in natural light.

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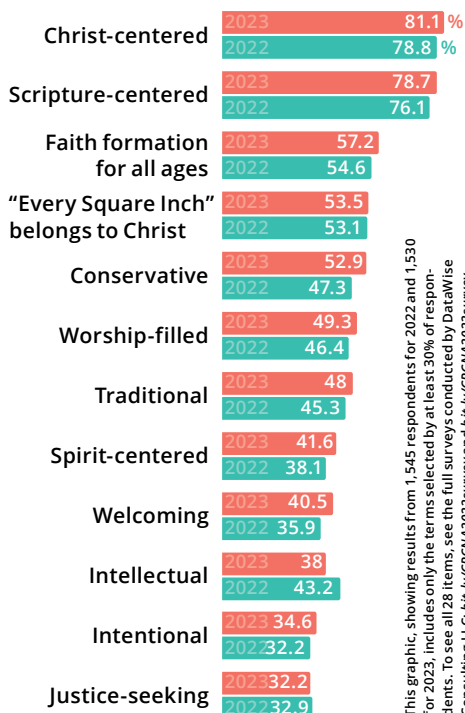
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# BANNER

## BY THE NUMBERS

When given 28 suggestions and the prompt “To me, the term ‘Christian Reformed’ means (check all that apply),” respondents to the 2022 and 2023 denominational surveys selected the following as the top 12 terms reflecting “Christian Reformed.”

### Word Association



This graphic, showing results from 1,545 respondents for 2022 and 1,530 for 2023, includes only the terms selected by at least 30% of respondents. To see all 28 items, see the full surveys conducted by DataWise Consulting LLC: [bit.ly/CRCNA2022survey](http://bit.ly/CRCNA2022survey) and [bit.ly/CRCNA2023survey](http://bit.ly/CRCNA2023survey).

## WHAT’S ONLINE

Looking for more? Here are just a few of the stories you’ll find online at *TheBanner.org*. (Try typing the headlines into the search box.)

- » Church Worldwide: Jewish Studies Program for Christians at Yeshiva University
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*The Banner* is the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. Opinions expressed in *The Banner* are not necessarily those of the editor or the CRCNA.

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**Classified Advertising** 616-224-0725 [classifieds@TheBanner.org](mailto:classifieds@TheBanner.org)

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Published monthly (except August). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: *The Banner*, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: *The Banner*, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8. Copyright 2022, Christian Reformed Church in North America. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 158, No. 8, 2023.

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## Is Love a Salvation Matter?

I am curious as to why Jesus, in this instance, chose to emphasize love, rather than faith or belief, as the key to salvation.



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).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean)에서 보실 수 있습니다.

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

**THE PARABLE OF** the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) continues to challenge me. Luke, the gospel writer, introduces Jesus' telling of the parable with an expert in the law asking, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"—in other words, what must he do to be saved? This seems like a perfect setup for Jesus to teach salvation by faith in him alone. Instead, Jesus replies with another question: "What is written in the Law? ... How do you read it?"

The expert in the Old Testament law answers that we need to love God with our whole being and love our neighbor as ourselves. In the gospels of Mark and Matthew, it is Jesus who says this; in Luke, the expert does, and Jesus affirms the response, saying, "Do this and you will live" (v. 28). In other words, Jesus is saying, you inherit eternal life by loving God and loving your neighbor.

I am curious as to why Jesus, in this instance, chooses to emphasize love, rather than faith or belief, as the key to salvation. Of course, faith and love are not mutually exclusive. But it is surprising, given the perfect setup question on how to be saved, that Jesus does not emphasize believing rightly (faith in him), but rather *loving* rightly.


The expert in the law then tries to find boundaries for love. "Who is my neighbor?" he asks. Perhaps he is thinking of the popular saying "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (Matt. 5:43). He might be trying to determine whom it's OK for him to hate. By replying with the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus essentially says, "Your neighbor is anyone and everyone who needs your mercy and compassion; there are no people you can 'correctly' hate."

Furthermore, by casting the hated, impure, and heretical Samaritan as the hero, the model of loving one's neighbor, Jesus implies that the Samaritan inherited eternal life because he showed mercy. Jesus ends by telling the expert

in the law, "Go and do likewise (as the Samaritan did)."

The shocking implication for Jesus' original Jewish audience is that the revered priest and the Levite, who chose to love and obey God's rules for purity instead of helping the victim on the road, did not inherit eternal life! Is it any surprise that the religious authorities wanted Jesus dead?

Remember that Luke frames this story with a salvation question: What must I do to be saved? Luke, the only gospel writer who includes the parable of the Good Samaritan, hammers home the truth that we must be merciful, just as our heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). Being merciful to our neighbors—and even to our enemies—is a salvation matter for Luke.

Recently I read and was challenged by the great medieval theologian St. Augustine's words: "Whoever ... thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them in such a way that it (i.e., his interpretation) does not build up the double love of God and of our neighbor does not understand (the Scriptures) at all" (*On Christian Teaching*, quoted in *Charitable Writing: Cultivating Virtue Through Our Words*, p. 79). Augustine made the promotion of love for God and neighbor the mark of good biblical interpretation. I am trying to learn to do likewise. 



## REPLY ALL

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

### Curiosity

I'm "curious" if "curiosity" was the intended or unintended theme of the June *Banner* issue. At least three excellent articles mention it as a positive attribute of Christian life—Bryant Russ' "Becoming a Listener"; Brandon Haan's "Culture War-ification of the CRC"; and Sam Gutierrez's "Exploring the Divine Mystery." It's a trait I strove for among my students in 39 years of teaching chemistry, but I was pleasantly surprised to find it multiple times in our church's publication as something we should all strive for as Christians.

» Lou Sytsma // Palos Heights, Ill.

### Good Samaritan

I feel a special fondness for the Good Samaritan story and was pleased to see it highlighted in the June editorial by Shiao Chong. It both stands alone and connects with other teachings of Jesus. It affirms Jesus' teaching about the greatest commandments (Matt. 22:34-40) and tells us that loving one's neighbor means granting mercy to anyone, including anonymous strangers who need our help. It reinforces what Jesus taught about the inadequacy of simply knowing and legalistically complying with the law (Matt. 19:16-22) and shows us that a reviled foreigner who practices a different religion might please God more than an admired member of our own religion. I hope Chong will share the results as he continues "to wrestle with this parable more deeply."

» Frank Barefield // Holland, Mich.

### Identity in Christ

Rev. Darrell Delaney's article "Identity in Christ Is Our Strength" (May 2023) is exactly the kind of write-up Christian Reformed Church members expect to find in their magazine. Such articles serve to remind believers who they are and what they have in their identity with Christ. Too often believers at Sunday worship are led in prayer confessing they still sin by deed or omission. This triggers sin-consciousness rather than joyously singing God's praises in the blessed assurance that, thanks to Calvary, Christ's righteousness is credited to them and God remembers their sins no more.

» Joe A. Serge // St. Oshawa, Ont.

### Helping Refugees

Thank you for the excellent article about waiting times with refugee sponsorship ("Churches in Canada Waiting for Sponsored Refugees' Arrival," May 2023). To reduce waiting times, the Canadian government should increase the number of resettled refugees it accepts each year, as a backlog accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic when immigration numbers decreased. Churches have an important role to play in calling the government to welcome more refugees.

» Ian Van Haren, executive director of Action Réfugiés Montréal // Verdun, Que.

### Cognitive Dissonance

In the article "The Bible and Cognitive Dissonance" (May 2023), Jake Masselink asserts we cannot be certain about religious knowledge. It is even dangerous. Instead, we should be humble, and we should not judge others because only God can judge. Ironically, he is very

certain that we cannot be certain. But Jesus claims he is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). God wants us to know we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). The real question is, are we going to believe the truth claims of human invention, or the truth claims of God's Word?

» Patrick Anthony // Ripon, Calif.

### Mastery or Vulnerability

I write in agreement with editor Shiao Chong's "Mastery or Vulnerability" (May 2023). Robust knowledge of Scripture appears to be energizing the uncivil discourse in society. The devil quotes Scripture to deceive as he did when he tempted Christ in the wilderness. He does the same today. Beware of those quoting Scripture while subverting the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus' sacrifice. Salvation is not predicated on how we impose biblical law on our fellow citizens, especially those of different faith persuasions. Using the Bible as a literal guide for law and punishment could well result in the establishment of a "Christian caliphate" ruled by an iron-Bible fist. I shudder.

» Evan Roelofs // Byron Center, Mich.

### A Third Way

A third way? ("Unity, Not Unanimity, Say Organizers of 'A Third Way,'" April 2023.) In today's world many believe there is no absolute truth. We don't realize how abhorrent sin is to our Holy God. We have whitewashed sin and become desensitized to it. Homosexual acts are unchaste and are sins, as Synod 2022 ruled and Synod 2023 upheld (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Lev. 18:22; 20:13). God's word is a two-edged sword and is not to be compromised or reinterpreted for the sake of inclusivity or unity. There is much sympathy for those who have a heavy burden to bear, but sin is to be resisted, not normalized and accepted. There cannot be a third way. Let us hold fast to the truth.

» Violet Reinsma // Schererville, Ind.



## We Need to Worship in Person

### Calvin Sports

Men's volleyball is a great addition to Calvin's athletic program ("Football Comes to Calvin University," March 2023)—physical skill, quick reflexes, team unity, and interdependence coupled with an appreciation and respect for a worthy opponent. Football, on the other hand, is often a clash of titans leading to physical injury and brain damage. The only benefit I see is a possible financial one for the institution. Many young men will be paying the price in the years to come.

» Tom Posthumus // Sebringville, Ont.

### Heart Knowledge

Thank you for including the Fred Klooster quote "(F)aith involves heart knowledge rather than mere head knowledge" in your April editorial. That quote reaffirms the faith that lives in my 91-year-old head and heart. A blessed Easter to you and all the creative Christian heads and hearts at *The Banner*. God bless you!

» Merle Oosterhoff // Red Deer, Alta.

**TECHNOLOGY CAN BE** a great blessing. Technology can also be misused. For example, the internet has made communicating far easier, but it has also communicated misinformation.

Technology proved a special blessing during the peak of the COVID pandemic. Without online worship services, people in a church family would have been quite isolated from each other. Online services nourished God's people and kept them more connected.

Now the pandemic has eased. It seems timely to reflect on the proper place of online worship in the life of the church. How should God's people employ this technology?

For starters, participating online is better than having no access to worship services. It is a blessing that allows those who are homebound or unable to attend for good reasons to share in the worship of God. It allows people who are homebound or have health concerns to stay connected and spiritually nourished. People on business trips or vacations can take in their church's worship service from afar. And seekers in a church's community might catch services online, sparking interest to come in person.

Still, worship in person remains the ideal. Hebrews 10:24-25 states, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another."

Why does the writer of Hebrews give this exhortation? Why is meeting together so important?

First, along with worship of God, a service includes a horizontal dimension: the communion of saints. Remote worship lacks interaction between brothers and sisters in a church family.

Christian fellowship is powerful. It builds us up in Christ.

Christian fellowship is powerful. It builds us up in Christ.

Second, gathering in person provides a setting in which to serve one another. It's a time to use gifts to enrich the worship gathering, whether as a greeter, technician, musician, Scripture reader, teacher, or something else. At home, people can only spectate.

Third, worship in person is more compelling. Online, the sights and sounds are limited. In-person worship is multisensory and full scale: hearing the sound of singing all around, experiencing the whole worship space, and seeing a preacher present and life-sized.

God calls his people to gather for worship. Remote services should not be a substitute if one is able to come and worship in person. In a world of many virtual connections, Christian fellowship is more vital than ever and essential for the church to have a vibrant future. **B**



Neil Jasperse is a specialized transitional minister currently serving Palos Heights (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church.

### As I Was Saying

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

» A Pray

» Unity Isn't What You Think It Is

» Conquering Invasive Growth in the Garden, Mind, Body, and Spirit



# How Does Belonging Work?

By William Katerberg

**I**n 2021 I wrote a series of articles for *The Banner* on controversies in the Christian Reformed Church. It explored how our conflicts have been characteristically Reformed, but I also emphasized that we've never been just Reformed. Being an immigrant church, becoming American and Canadian, and growing more bourgeois and ethnically diverse also have shaped our conflicts.

What about the other side of the story? What enduring loves have held the CRC together more often than not over the past century and a half? How have religious and cultural characteristics shaped our loves? What has made us feel at home in our congregations and in the CRC across North America, even during family squabbles?

One source of our enduring loves surely is our shared Reformed tradition. But what of it? A way of reading Scripture? A set of doctrines? A commitment to preaching? Liturgy and music? Sunday school and catechism classes? A philosophy of Christian life? Magazines like *The Banner*, *Calvinist Contact*, *Reformed Journal*, and *Outlook*? Christian schools? I wonder if it might be the experience of covenant and the way it connects religion and culture.

## Holding Together

In the immigrant CRC churches in Canada I grew up in in the 1970s and 1980s, simple things helped me know when I was home: peppermints passed around when the sermon began; soup and buns for lunch after church so mum did not have to cook *op zondag* (on Sunday); the Dutch-accented English of the minister; and keeping to ourselves, religiously and ethnically.

Being at home in the CRC was inseparable from life outside of church. The hairdresser, mechanic, butcher, deli owner, and insurance agent typically were Dutch CRC folk—*onze mensen* (our people). *Calvinist Contact*, a magazine started by Dutch immigrants to Canada in the 1940s, also bound us together, as had similar magazines in the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s.

In a mix of Dutch and English, *Calvinist Contact* told stories about Dutch immigrants, Canadian society, and Christianity, all from a Reformed perspective. *Our* stories. The classifieds included personal ads (immigrants looking for romance), job ads (e.g., for Christian school teachers), and notices about marriages, births, and deaths. *The Banner* similarly connected us to the CRC across North America. We saw beyond our

face-to-face communities and envisioned ourselves as part of a continent-wide community and global Reformed tradition. We learned how to be Reformed—not just on Sunday, but every day.

At the heart of this ethno-religious community was our Reformed faith, of course, and notably its emphasis on covenant—God with us as a covenanted community. The CRC helped settle immigrants like my grandparents and parents in the 1940s and 1950s. They soon started going to Calvin College (now University) and Seminary (and Dordt, Trinity Christian, King's, and Redeemer) and serving in the CRC and its schools—my pastor father among them. I remember CRC Sunday school material and the blue *Psalter Hymnal*. I later took a course at Calvin with the professor who wrote our catechism study guide.

It might sound odd, but what also comes to mind for me is funerals. I remember my Opa Visscher's funeral in the church that he helped build. I was 12. And the funeral for two cousins who died in a car accident. I was 23. And three years later, the funeral of my mother, who died in her 50s. It drew people from churches my father had served over three decades.

These funerals packed the churches. The sermons and prayers affirmed our grief and acknowledged the doubts and anger that untimely deaths inspire. They also grounded us in God's promises. The hymns and psalms knitted us together as families and communities, reminding us that the church transcends time. With God's Spirit in us, our singing raised the roofs and carried us upward in hope for a time when the Almighty will make all things new.

We had soup and buns for lunch in church fellowship halls afterwards, with Dutch pastries, strong coffee, and tea. I remember hearing stories that went back to World War II and to the immigration experiences of my parents' and grandparents' generations. We caught up with people we saw only at funerals and weddings. Funerals were a grief and a blessing both.

### **A Shared Culture**

My experiences illustrate the religious and cultural characteristics of the communities, networks, and institutions that made the CRC home for me. I'm not being nostalgic about them. My point is that examples like these explain how faith and belonging "work" in daily life—for good and ill.

The belonging I experienced seemed seamless. The Bible and Reformed doctrines defined our faith, to be sure. But inseparable from our faith life was a shared culture, one where we negotiated being Dutch, Reformed, and Canadian. As a historian, and from talking with my students, I know that people from many backgrounds tell such stories: Scottish Canadian Presbyterians, Italian American Catholics, and Korean American Christian Reformed folk, to name just a few. We're not unique.

Being at home  
in the CRC was  
inseparable  
from life outside  
of church.

We can separate ethnicity and other aspects of culture in our church life from the religious elements, but only in the abstract. Reformed Christians often emphasize how faith transforms cultures, and that's true. But those cultures in turn shape the faith in distinct ways as Christianity grows roots in them. It goes both ways. God made us as creatures of time, place, and soil—and it shows.

The schools that Dutch Canadians built in the 1950s and 1960s were meant to be Christian, not Dutch. As kids, however, we viewed them as Dutch. So too did locals. "Canadians," in this case, meant "not us." They surely found us standoffish, too good for their public schools. Today, those Christian schools are more diverse ethnically, but it took decades and difficult transitions. Some schools didn't survive; others are "not the same," at least for old-timers. The relationships between families and schools likely are more transactional today and less covenantal.

The same is true of our churches. What set us apart and kept us

tight-knit, even when we fought, threatened divorce, and occasionally suffered splits, were the connections between culture and faith and the networks that sustained both. "Tight-knit" also could be claustrophobic, narrow, and haughty. Through it all we were still "our people."

The waning of immigrant experiences and Dutch ethnic identity happened quickly in Canada, over three generations (1950s-1990s). (It took longer in the United States, with its many waves of Dutch immigration between the 1840s and 1950s.) Plus, we had cable TV to help make us into Canadians. The solidarity that held us together—solidarity that also kept others out—no longer does, at least not in the same way.

What happens to belonging, for good and ill, when the cultural context of a religious community evolves, when ethnic identities fade and diversity brings new energy and turbulence? Remember, too, that religious contexts evolve along with the cultural changes.

This article has been about what shapes being at home in a religious community. It's always a cultural and religious stew, much like we find with the Hebrew and then the Jewish, gentile, and Christian communities in the Scriptures. My next two articles, coming in the next two *Banner* issues, will look at what has happened to "belonging" in the CRC in the past 75 years amid ethnocultural and religious changes and will suggest what "belonging" might look like going forward. 



Will Katerberg is a professor of history and the curator of Heritage Hall at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich. He is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids.

## BIG QUESTIONS

### Relationships

#### How do I forgive a spouse for lying to me when I just can't trust him?

Dishonesty is painful, unsettling, and, especially in relationships, violating of trust. Trust is essential for a healthy marriage. Relationships can withstand tremendous amounts of hard truths, but they collapse quickly under the weight of deception. Secrets and lies poison relationships. It is important to uproot any deception so there is transparency for restoring trust back into the relationship.

God's heart is for us to pursue reconciliation and healing. We are told in Matthew 5:24 that making up with a brother should be prioritized even ahead of worship. Jesus spelled out how to deal with someone who sins against us in Matthew 18:15-20. We are told to confront the issue one on one, and if that does not yield positive results, we bring in support to mediate so there is accountability and healthy boundary setting. Ideally there is repentance and restoration, but sometimes our efforts fail. While healing and restoration are the ideal, we do live in a world marked by sin and brokenness.

Your question raises two distinct concerns: forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is freeing yourself from carrying a weight of anger and trusting God to be in charge of justice. While you can and should forgive your husband and release your anger to God, reconciliation works better when there is genuine repentance and a commitment to changing behavior. While ideally forgiveness and restoration go hand in hand, sometimes they do not. Forgiveness should not mean that you let someone continue to hurt you.



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

Each one of us is an image bearer of God and dearly loved. Though we follow Jesus' example of sacrificial love, we are not called to submit to abuse. Commit to praying over your situation to discern your next steps. God promises to give wisdom to all who ask (James 1:5). Seek out the advice of a Christian counselor, as wise guidance can help build a better future (Prov. 15:22). These challenges are difficult, but God is faithful to walk with us through whatever difficulties we might face.

Rev. Deb Koster leads the Christian Reformed Church's family and marriage ministry, FamilyFire.com, at ReFrame Ministries. She and her husband, Steven, worship at Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

### Ethics

#### Why do some Christians who are opposed to abortion allow for abortion after rape? Isn't that a double standard?

The general opposition to abortion flows from the conviction that life is a gift from God, with human life an especially precious gift. This opposition is often underpinned by the conviction that the life and personhood of the new human being begin at conception. The DNA of the person who will hopefully be born, grow up, and flourish is established at that earliest moment. The fact that the fetus cannot do some of the things we associate with human personhood, such as reason, consciously act, and love, doesn't mean we aren't dealing with a person. It means we are considering the earliest and most fragile stage of the development of the person. Often at this point Christians will emphasize the biblical call to protect the vulnerable.

In the context of that call to protect unborn life (as part of a broader ethic of life that should also apply across numerous moral issues to those who are already born), Christians who are opposed to abortion have often acknowledged that abortion might be a permissible choice if the life of the mother is seriously threatened by the pregnancy or if the pregnancy was caused by sexual assault. That prompts your question: Yes, there are agonizing circumstances involved, but isn't the fetus still a human person?

Christian ethics have usually regarded such situations as a tragedy reflecting the ruptured condition of our world. In the case of a woman whose life is threatened by her pregnancy, we have human life pitted painfully against human life. Choosing to prioritize either one of those lives is permissible, but also tragic.

In the case of pregnancies caused by sexual violence, ethicist Gilbert Meilaender observes in his book *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* that there is an analogy with the threatened life of a pregnant woman: "For in this instance, even though the fetus is, of course, formally innocent, its continued existence within the woman may constitute for her an embodiment of the original attack upon her person." (I am not arguing for or against this perspective, just explaining it.)

The Christian Reformed Church has officially approved the hard choice only when the woman's life is threatened. The question, then, is whether you find the analogy to be convincing.

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.

**Missional Living****I have been to places where a person is yelling the gospel to “sinners” walking by. Is street-corner evangelism effective?**

“Effective” is an interesting word. Street preachers might go home and feel good about doing what they thought was right, which likely included “suffering for the Lord,” and therefore assume they were effective. But were they? If their purpose was to draw others to Christ, perhaps not very.

Although I believe the Spirit can work through humanity’s good intentions, no matter how flawed they might be, I don’t know anyone who likes to be yelled at. Our natural reaction to such behavior is to walk away or yell back. In other words, more people are likely to be turned off by shouts from a stranger than drawn in. In fact, such an experience makes it difficult for us to hear, let alone respond positively to what is being said. Why? Because if the means (street evangelism) contradicts the message, the message is not being communicated effectively.

The question we need to ask ourselves about our evangelism, then, is: What words and actions best reflect Christ’s words and actions—ways and means?

I think Christ’s words and actions reflect a God who is much more relational than street-pulpit evangelists, door-hanger tracts, and billboard verses. I think Jesus modeled a posture of listening and loving, coming alongside, and asking questions that invited conversation and personal connection.

In Christ we see a God who humbles himself, a God who delights to sit at our tables, join us at our celebrations, walk with us along the road, and weep with us in the valleys.

And perhaps it all begins with, “Hello! Nice to meet you.” Perhaps it begins with being present to and interested in our neighbors, willing to take the time to get to know them, to learn their story, interests, skills, and experiences, and to share ours. Perhaps it begins with hanging out in all those places mentioned in your question—with your friends and neighbors! As relationships then develop—as there’s no doubt they will—I believe that we’ll discover God already at work in their lives and the Spirit using us to bear witness to the good news, even when we don’t realize it.

The question for all of us, then, becomes: How does my ordinary, everyday life embody a gracious, incarnate, and personal God—or not? How am I showing up authentically, curiously, and graciously to love my neighbors, enjoy and care for all creation, do justice, and walk humbly with our God so that others might come to know God too?

I ask myself that question every day (well, maybe not every day—but I should)!

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.

**Faith Formation****I have almost never heard a CRC pastor include an invitation to commit to Jesus in a sermon. Why?**

There is a reason, and it depends on how different branches of Christianity think about the purpose of sermons. In the Reformed tradition, the primary aim of sermons is not conversion, but teaching doctrine to people in the church. Historically, because pastors were preaching mostly to the converted, the emphasis was on making sure that their congregants did

not make the kind of errors Reformers believed the medieval Catholic church was making—things that triggered the Reformation in the first place. The Christian Reformed Church’s long history of preaching the Heidelberg Catechism, which explains Reformed doctrine, comes out of this concern.

This is in contrast to the more historically recent Pentecostal church, for example, or those in the revivalist tradition, where preaching is viewed as a call to repentance to those who have never believed and to those who might be backsliding into sinful ways. Sermons became reminders of congregants’ need to recommit or to accept Jesus in the first place. Altar calls came out of this kind of preaching.

So, these traditions have significant differences in what they want the sermon to accomplish. It is possible, of course, to educate a congregation about the Bible and about doctrine while including an invitation to commit to Jesus. Scott Hoezee, director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, says that their training strives to do exactly that. Pastors should strive to craft sermons that are “life changing” for both believers and unbelievers. So, while a sermon might not seem like an altar call, Hoezee says, “every sermon needs to preach the gospel and inspire people to want to be part of Jesus’ grand program.”

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries and director of children’s ministries at 14th Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. Robert J. Keeley is a professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.



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.

# New York Church Hosts Low- to No-cost Medical Clinic

## NEWS

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In Goshen, N.Y., community members without health insurance can find health care services at a free or reduced rate by going to an unlikely place: church. Goshen Christian Reformed Church partners with Christ Health Care Ministry to provide an open general care and dental clinic twice a month. The clinic began in February 2020.

Samuel Sutter, pastor of Goshen CRC, said the church provides the clinic with storage and one designated room, and on clinic days it also offers use of the building’s full basement, which typically houses children’s classroom spaces.

Henry Vogel, a Goshen CRC elder and clinic board member, said sharing the space with the clinic seemed a natural fit. “We had just finished our building addition—we have a new kid’s classroom, and we’re handicap accessible for the first time (due to a new elevator). How could we not use the building to help others in need?”

Dr. Juan Goyzueta, another elder at Goshen CRC who served as a board member for CHCM and was a key figure in setting up two other clinics in New York state, runs the Goshen clinic.

The clinic’s executive director, Rev. Gilbert Varela, is a bivocational CRC church planter establishing a Spanish-speaking congregation across the parking lot from Goshen CRC. He greets clients at the clinic and extends a welcome from the church, Sutter said.

Goyzueta said, “I think God used Pastor Sam to mobilize the church to reach out to the community and provide the congregation with an opportunity to serve.”



**At the Goshen, N.Y., clinic, a client supported by his sister receives help to increase range of motion at the shoulder from second-year medical students Elizabeth Garza-Trinh (left) and Chance Haley.**

The Christ Health Care Ministry, a Christ-centered community of health care professionals around New York state, provides some of the volunteers for the Goshen clinic. The ministry connects its three clinics to medication and prescriptions through Dispensary of Hope, another faith-based medical organization. Clients at the clinic can receive 50-100% off the services they receive.

Some of Goshen’s Spanish-speaking clients have accepted the invitation to attend worship services at the church plant. The clinic is “a great instrument for churches that intend to reach people in the most tangible way,” Goyzueta said.

—Sarah DeGraff

## Michigan Woman Supports Illinois-based Bible Distribution

Reading the April *Banner*, Connie VanDyke, a member of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., noticed an ad from Project Bible Runners requesting used Bibles in English. With a master's degree in linguistics, training as a Bible translator, and a habit of buying Bibles in various English translations, VanDyke knew she had several Bibles she could donate. After learning that there was no collection point in West Michigan, she hosted a Bible drive and is now offering her home as an ongoing drop-off zone.

Project Bible Runners' mission is simple: "Gathering and running Bibles to every nation, tribe, and person until every faithful follower of Christ Jesus holds in their hands the Word of God." The service collects English-language Bibles to be sent to Nigeria, Kenya, Liberia, and 17 other countries where English is widely spoken but Bibles number fewer than Christians. The organization will repair Bibles as needed and store them at its headquarters in Neoga, Ill., until a large-enough shipment is ready for a requesting country.

Inspired by Project Bible Runners' vision, VanDyke hosted a used Bible drive at LaGrave. In two weeks she'd collected 334



**A volunteer from Project Bible Runners (left) loads her car with collected Bibles with the help of the building manager for LaGrave CRC.**

Bibles. A Bible Runners representative from Indiana picked them up and delivered them to Neoga, where they were to become part of a shipment of 20,000 Bibles to Kenya.

With the success of the LaGrave collection, VanDyke wondered how many out-of-use Bibles might be available among the hundreds of Christian churches in the Grand Rapids area. After praying, she and her husband, Karl, decided to make a little-used

room in their home a storage site for Project Bible Runners. They encourage Bible drives and arrange for a representative to transport Bibles to Neoga whenever they collect 200 or more.

"There are still many people yearning for a Bible of their own," Van Dyke said.

—Anita Beem

## Chicago-area Churches Worship Together at Unity Service

About 250 people representing 11 congregations of Classis Chicago South attended a service of unity May 21 at Chicago Christian High School in Palos Heights, Ill. The service was organized by a classis racial reconciliation committee formed in February 2021 in response to a request from Pullman Christian Reformed Church on Chicago's South Side.

"We were there for the intention of worshipping together—worshipping in a context of God's intention of making a diverse world and inviting us to live into that and to be candid about the problems that hinder and complicate that," said Gary Foster, pastor of Pullman CRC and one of the event's main speakers.



**In the Chicago Christian High School auditorium, worshippers share communion at a May 21 service to promote racial unity.**

Pullman CRC was originally established in the 1970s as a mission church. "(It) was intentionally planted to build a diverse church, particularly among those who were troubled by the 'white flight' (departure from the city by white residents to suburbs to west and south of Chicago)," Foster said.

About 65 percent of Pullman's members are Black, and about 30 percent are white, said Foster, who has been pastor there for almost 12 years.

"My embrace of our (Reformed) theology is that we live into that (diversity) now. Part of the already-but-not-yet is to live into that moment from Revelation (when every tribe and nation will stand before God)," Foster said.

In its 2021 request to classis, Pullman's council asked Classis Chicago South to establish a multiethnic committee to "humbly analyze (the classis's) history of racism and racist decisions," set up a process "of honest confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation," and consider ways in which racism might still exist in classis's structure and decision making.

At the unity service, Foster and Tim Hoekstra of Suburban Life Community CRC in Darien, Ill., presented messages based on the story of the tower of Babel from Genesis 11.

Participants from several congregations provided music, and worshippers also celebrated communion.

Tim Toeset, a retired CRC pastor who attends Pullman CRC, chairs the racial reconciliation committee. He said the committee intends to host another unity service, but "probably not until next year around Pentecost."

—Greg Chandler

## Ministries In Brief



**Gabe Wang-Herrera (front left) with members of the Philly Pickleball Phenoms.**

### Churches Pick Up Pickleball

Gabriel Wang-Herrera, pastor of By Grace Alone Church, a small Christian Reformed congregation in Philadelphia, Penn., is crazy about pickleball. He helped the church form a team called the Philly Pickleball Phenoms, and the church hosts parking-lot pickleball, which has become popular in the neighborhood.

Lupe Reyes, a member of By Grace Alone and part of the pickleball team, said the church has been a great support to her and her four children since her husband died two years ago. "Pickleball has helped me with my grieving," she said. "I'm so thankful to God for this ministry of our church. Pickleball helps me to stay healthy, too."

Reyes invited someone she met on the pickleball court to meet her pastor. "Pastor Gabe was able to share the gospel with him, and he received Christ," she said. "That was really amazing."

"Pickleball has really opened up doors for me," Wang-Herrera said. "I've been meeting people from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and all ages. You can literally have a 7-year-old and a 77-year-old playing on the court together. Think about the relationships you're building!"

Pickleball, which combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis, is simple to learn. It's the fastest-growing

sport in the United States and has an estimated 1.37 million Canadian players.

Community CRC in Kitchener, Ont., opened its doors to pickleball players last spring as a way to draw people into the church. Anita DeHaan, the church's administrative assistant, said about 35 people showed up for the first few pickleball sessions in May.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



### Cadets Build Accessibility Ramps for Local Businesses

Seeking to earn a Servant Leader Award in Stratford (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church's Calvinist Cadet group, 14-year-old Nathaniel DeWeerd led six other Cadets in building doorway ramps for several local businesses this spring.

Cadets is the boys' club ministry offered in many Christian Reformed churches. Nathaniel was in his final year in the club when he completed the project.

Nathaniel's dad, Jonathan DeWeerd, is the chief building official at the City of Stratford. He knew the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee would be open to partnering to create more ramps to make it easier for people to get over sills or gaps in downtown business doorways.

A local flooring company donated paint, and a lumber company donated the wood to create the ramps.

The Cadet group completed 16 ramps in time for the city's Accessibility Week (May 28-June 3).

—Kristen Parker



### California Church Gets Creative With 'Next Step' Summer Ministry

A 17-foot paper-sculpted tree was the focal point of Rosewood Christian Reformed Church's "Tree Tales" Summer Family Nights in Bellflower, Calif.

Bonny Mulder-Behnia, one of the church's pastors, said the congregation "always looks forward to the stage transformation" for the annual program that Rosewood has run for 21 years.

"We like to wow them," she said, describing Summer Family Nights as "a 'next-step' outreach ministry" for people who attended the church's outreach events at Halloween or Easter or whose children may have attended GEMS or Cadets, the girls and boys faith formation ministries.

"Summer is the time we all get together for a dinner, intergenerational worship, a drama (presentation), and classes for all ages," Mulder-Behnia said. Part of the design is to "offer a menu of classes for the adults so that there are nonthreatening options for seekers as well as an in-depth study for mature believers."

"Tree Tales" used Jeremiah 17:7-8 as its theme verses and presented biblical stories of trees, including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Genesis, the trees of Mamre, where God covenanted with Abraham, and the tree of life in Revelation.

—Alissa Vernon



## Clergy Patrol the Streets of Grand Rapids

A ride-along program of the Grand Rapids (Mich.) Police Department, reintiated in 2021 by Capt. Terry Dixon, matches local clergy with on-duty officers to include the presence of faith leaders in circumstances involving law enforcement.

“We wanted to reach out to local clergy of multiple faiths to do ride-alongs,” said Dixon, a member of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. “Over time, the clergy have a chance to build relationships and offer their unique perspectives to the community.”

To join the program, clergy must undergo a background check and complete a five-hour training. They are then asked to volunteer a minimum of five hours once a month to ride along with a Grand Rapids police officer.

Sean May, youth minister at Seymour CRC in Grand Rapids, is a member of the clergy patrol contingent. He said participating taught him how often officers discuss and assess how

they have handled incidents after they’ve happened.

“They are always discussing how they can best show up to serve the people where they are at. They really want to have a positive impact,” May said.

Steve Pierce, senior minister of Central Reformed Church, is another participant. “I have learned the importance of everyday police work in our communities and how critical it is to build trust and positive interactions between the police and neighborhoods,” he said.

—Chris Meehan



**From left: Capt. Terry Dixon, Pastor Shawn May, Jennifer Franson, Pastor Kyle Pierpont, Pastor Yago Williams, Deputy Chief Kristen Rogers, Pastor Dale Dalman, and Officer Adam Ickes.**

## Portland Pastor Makes Short Film for Outreach

While volunteering with a ministry in Greece in 2022, Pastor Peter Armstrong with his videographer friend Petr Shotropa and behind-the-scenes support Jeremy Evans-Smith produced a teaching documentary around the Acts 17 story of Dionysius and his conversion to Christianity. The 15-minute video, *Paul in Athens*, is available on YouTube from PDX Outreach, a ministry of Parklane Christian Reformed Church, the Portland, Ore., church where Armstrong is pastor.

PDX Outreach ministers to unhoused people and hosts a weekly Bible study for young adults. Armstrong said Shotropa and several friends who are “passionate about the Reformed world-and-life-view and want to share their faith with our city, which is largely pretty secular,” started the group a few years ago.

Parklane CRC premiered *Paul in Athens* with a Q&A session for about 150 people in May. Armstrong said his goal is to show the film at many different churches, starting in the Portland area.

—Dan Veeneman

## Noteworthy

**Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, Mich., and Kalamazoo (Mich.) Christian High School won the Division 3 and Division 4 Michigan High School Athletic Association state championships in girls soccer** in June. Unity coach Randy Heethuis, a member of Fairway Christian Reformed Church in Jenison, Mich., has led his school’s team to 621 wins during his 33-year coaching career, achieving the most wins of any coach in Michigan high school girls soccer history.



**Unity Christian High School, Division 3 State Champions in girls soccer.**



**Kalamazoo Christian High School, Division 4 State Champions in girls soccer.**

Photo by Daniel J Cooke Photography

# Classis Watch: Spring and Summer 2023

Classes (regional assemblies of Christian Reformed churches) meet two or three times a year, taking actions as guided by Church Order. Here are actions from the past several months.

## Ministers of the Word

Candidates **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** (Arts. 6 and 10): Ryan VanderWees and Peter Vos.

Ministers welcomed into ministry in the CRC **from other denominations** (Art. 8): Revs. Jefferey Kempton and Wilson Cunha.

**Ministers released from a congregation** (Art. 17-a): Rev. Brian Kornelis from Bethel CRC in Edgerton, Minn., and Rev. Katherine Hirschberg from Monroe Community Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Ministers retiring** (Art. 18) (**granted emeritus status**): Revs. Edward Jager, Kobie du Pleiss, Stanley Jim, Stephen Tamming, and John Dykhuis (effective Sept. 30).

## Commissioned Pastors

Approved as **commissioned pastors called to specific roles within their classes** (Art. 23): Ben Hoekman (Wisconsin); Jared Yaple (Northern Michigan); S.M.\* and James Reed (Yellowstone); Mark Nagy (Grand Rapids North); Carrie Rodgers (Grand Rapids East); Stephan Human and Peter Carrion (Ontario Southwest); Ralph Mac and Ruben Aguilar (California South); Ryan Nirula (Quinte); and Micah VanDyken (Chicago South).

Jason Botbyl (Grand Rapids East) and Nick In't Hout (California South) were **honorably released** from ministry as commissioned pastors (Art. 24-d).

**Commissioned pastor emeritus status** (Art. 24-e) was granted to Joel Huysen (Grand Rapids East), Chris Meehan (Grand Rapids North), and Bob Grussing (Grand Rapids South, effective Sept. 1).

*\* S.M., welcomed as a commissioned pastor by Classis Yellowstone, is ministering in West Africa. At the request of the stated clerk, only initials are used here to protect the individual.*

## New Ministries and Ministry Changes

*An emerging (unorganized) church does not have its own council and is under the care of the council of a neighboring CRC. An organized church has its own council (Art. 38).*

Iglesia Misionera Renacer in Monterey Park, Calif., **organized**.

Victory Fellowship, a Kinyarwanda congregation meeting within Oakdale Park Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Korean CRC of St. Louis (Mo.), under the care of Trinity CRC in Maryland Heights, Mo., were recognized as **emerging**.

Hope for Life Community Church in Watertown, S.D., and New Street CRC in Burlington, Ont., **disbanded**.

**Mergers:** Emerging congregation Grace Unlimited CRC in Los Angeles, Calif., with its sponsoring church, Los Angeles Community CRC; Bethel CRC with Forest City Community Church, both in London, Ont., to become the East Campus of Forest City's multisite church.

## Other

**An estimated 700 people attended a town hall meeting hosted by Classis Grand Rapids East at Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids on June 29.** The classis executive team planned the meeting, which began with prayer and singing, provided an overview of decisions of Synod 2023, included sharing by Grand Rapids East's delegates to synod, and welcomed questions. The classis must decide how it will respond to instructions from the most recent synod "to guide the (Grand Rapids East member) Neland Avenue CRC congregation and leadership into alignment with the biblical guidelines affirmed by Synod 2022 regarding same-sex sexual relationships." Synod 2023 rejected an appeal by Neland.

At a June 22 meeting, the classis executive team commissioned an *ad hoc* steering committee to explore options. The committee, which is meeting every other week, "intends to work with representatives from all of the Classis GRE congregations as well as collaborate with other congregations who are reaching out to Classis GRE asking similar questions. They will update the classis at our September meeting as to their progress," the executive team reported.

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Harvey Arnold Brink*

1945-2023

“Harvey Brink saw the image of God in everyone he met,” said a friend and former parishioner. “He listened to people’s stories with delight, compassion, and respect, and was passionate about welcoming everyone and their stories into the family of God. He couldn’t talk enough about God’s grace, weaving it into every sermon and prayer. He knew Jesus both as Savior and friend, and his deepest desire was for others to know Jesus in the same way.” Harvey, 78, died May 26.

After graduation from Calvin Theological Seminary and ordination in 1969, Harvey pastored Covenant Hope CRC, Battle Creek, Mich; Faith Christian Fellowship, Walnut Creek, Calif.; Faith CRC, Holland, Mich; Kelsey Creek Church, Bellevue, Wash.; and Connect Church, Pella, Iowa. Then, until 2018, he served as a Specialized Transitional Minister for several congregations. He was also a regional pastor and on the board of World Missions (now part of Resonate Global Mission).

Harvey will be remembered for his speaking and singing voice, his creative first-person presentations of biblical characters, and his dramatic roles with the Calvin College Thespians (now the Calvin Theatre Company).

Harvey is survived by Maxine, his wife of 56 years; three children; their spouses; and four grandsons.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Philip C. Holtrop*

1934-2023

Phil Holtrop achieved success in education, ministry, and cross-cultural understanding. However, his life’s story is really a chronicle of God’s incredible guidance, grace, and restoration in the life of a man whose mother died when he was 5 years old, who was angry at God, and who had many deep questions. His experience that Christ is indeed “the resurrection and the life” became the passion and focus of Phil’s entire life. He died June 12 at age 89.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, he also obtained doctoral degrees from the Free University of Amsterdam and Harvard University. Phil taught high school and at Trinity Christian College. He was ordained in 1971. He pastored North Haledon (N.J.) Christian Reformed Church and then was professor of theology at Calvin from 1977 until 1999. Phil was considered an authority on Christian ethics, the Reformation, and John Calvin.

Between 1992 and 2016, the Holtrops made dozens of teaching and preaching trips to China. Phil encouraged many Chinese students to attend Calvin.

Phil is survived by Marie, his wife of almost 65 years; their four sons; two daughters-in-law; “adopted” couple Rose and Fan; 11 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. H. Michael Lapian*

1962-2023

Michael Lapian, 61, died June 25 after suffering a massive brain hemorrhage while he and his wife, Deibi, were enjoying the mountains in Laconia, N.H.

Born in Indonesia, Michael graduated from seminary in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where he met Deibi. He planted and pastored several churches with the Presbyterian Church in Indonesia and was one of the founders of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Indonesia, established in 1991. Graduates from that school have so far planted more than 120 churches.

The Lapians left Indonesia in 2003 to serve the Indonesian Christian Reformed Fellowship in Dover, N.H., where Michael was still ministering at the time of his death. He was also a leader for South East Asian Pacific Islander East Coast, a ministry of the CRC that supports congregations with believers from various regions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Athletic and competitive, Michael excelled at soccer and volleyball. He loved music and used his gifts of playing guitar and singing to lead worship and to engage everyone in singing at family gatherings.

Michael is survived by Deibi, four children, a son-in-law and daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Retired CRC Pastor Arrested, Confesses to 1975 Pennsylvania Murder

Retired Christian Reformed pastor David Zandstra, 83, was charged in July with criminal homicide, first-, second-, and third-degree murder, and kidnapping of a minor in connection with the 1975 death of 8-year-old Gretchen Harrington in Marple Township, Penn. Authorities said Zandstra, who now lives in Marietta, Ga., confessed to the murder in an interview with police.

Law enforcement announced the arrest July 24. Details were included in a news release from the office of Jack Stollsteimer, district attorney for Delaware County, Penn.

Harrington went missing Aug. 15, 1975, between her home and a summer Bible school program cooperatively led at two Broomall, Penn., churches: Trinity Church Chapel CRC and The Reformed Presbyterian Church, where her father was pastor, the release said.

At the time of the murder, Zandstra was the pastor of Trinity Church Chapel. He is now a retired minister whose credentials were being held by the last church he served, Fairfield (Calif.) CRC.

"In the wake of this shocking news, the Christian Reformed Church in North America would like to extend condolences to the Harrington family," a response published on *crcna.org* said. "We were heartbroken to hear about Gretchen's kidnapping and death back in 1975. We are additionally grieved now to hear that a CRC pastor was responsible for her murder.

"We are grateful that local law enforcement did not stop in their pursuit of answers," the response continued, "and we pray that the truth for Gretchen and any other survivors of abuse or violence



Photo courtesy of Delaware County DA

**David Zandstra**

will continue to come to light." The denomination also encouraged anyone with concerns about a situation of abuse to report it to the appropriate authorities. They also provided a confidential contact for CRCNA safe church staff (877-272-6206 or [safechurchministry@crcna.org](mailto:safechurchministry@crcna.org)).

### 'Generations of Detectives' Worked on Case

"This case has been investigated by generations of detectives, and they all are owed a debt of gratitude for never giving up," the district attorney's news release said. The release also detailed how an unnamed witness, described as having been "best friends with the defendant's daughter," provided evidence in a January interview of sexual misconduct by Zandstra. Confronted with this information, "the defendant admitted to seeing Gretchen walking alone along Lawrence Road on the morning of her disappearance. ... He admitted to offering Gretchen a ride and taking her to a nearby wooded area. The defendant stated that he had parked the car and asked the victim to remove her clothing. When she refused, he struck her in the head with a fist. The victim was bleeding, and he believed her

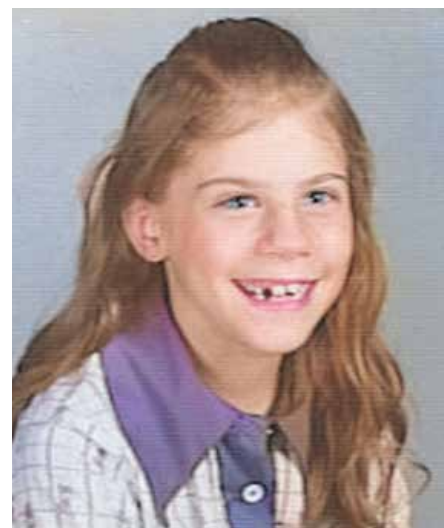


Photo courtesy of Delaware County DA

**Gretchen Harrington**

to be dead. He attempted to cover up her body and left the area."

Stollsteimer was asked at a press conference how that witness came forward, but he declined to provide more details on what led to the arrest.

Zandstra was being held in a Cobb County, Ga., jail, according to the district attorney's news release. He was denied bail.

Pennsylvania authorities were working to have Zandstra extradited for a trial. "We're going to bring him here, try him, convict him, and he will die in jail," Stollsteimer said. "Then he's going to have to find out what the God he professes to believe in holds for people who are this evil to our children."

### Family Grateful for 'Constant Search for Answers'

The district attorney's office also shared a statement from Gretchen Harrington's family. "With (the) announcement of an arrest," it said, "we are extremely hopeful that the person who is responsible for the heinous crime that was committed against our Gretchen will be held accountable. It's difficult to express the emotions that we are feeling as we take



Photo by facebook.com/trinitychurchbroomall

**Trinity CRC in Broomall, Penn., welcomed Thrive staff Katie Roelofs to help lead a service of prayer Sunday, July 30.**

one step closer to justice. ... The abduction and murder of Gretchen has forever altered our family, and we miss her every single day. We are grateful for the continual pursuit of justice by law enforcement, and we want to thank the Pennsylvania State Police for never stopping in their constant search for answers."

Zandstra served five Christian Reformed congregations between 1965 and 2005. Three of those have since closed. The denomination's director of communications and marketing, Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, said she contacted the two remaining churches, Trinity and Fairfield, the day the arrest was announced. She offered to connect the congregations to Amanda Benckhuysen, who was the director of the CRC's Safe Church ministry and now serves churches in the areas of abuse prevention and response with Thrive, the CRC's congregation-focused ministry.

Norman Viss is a commissioned pastor with the CRC currently serving the small congregation of Trinity. One day after the arrest was announced, he said he was only beginning to think about how to process this with his congregation and in Marple Township, where he is active in several community organizations.

"It just feels like there is a shadow of horror over everything," Viss said. He had already talked with two current Trinity members who were in the church in 1975 and with other older members.

Viss began ministry at Trinity 40 years after Harrington's murder but learned about it fairly quickly as he became connected in the community. It was not something that was talked about every day, he said, but it was very much in the background. When the community began to be built up in the 1960s, Viss explained, "people had the idea that this was going to be a safe community to raise their kids." But that idea was shattered by Harrington's death.

Katie Roelofs, a worship specialist with Thrive, traveled to Trinity to help lead a prayer service for the congregation Sunday, July 30.

The stated clerk for Classis Central California, where Zandstra's ministerial credentials are held, heard about the arrest when *The Banner* contacted him July 24. Larry Fryling said that if classis were to act, it should be "based on the current supervising church's recommendation." He said he would work with the current minister of Fairfield CRC and with classis on any necessary action.

## Investigations in Other Jurisdictions

Stollsteimer said the Pennsylvania State Police have an open investigation and encouraged anyone with additional information about Zandstra's activities to contact them. News reports on July 26 indicated police in other places Zandstra lived over the last four decades were reviewing records or cold cases for any potential connection.

Zandstra left Pennsylvania in 1976 and started a church in Dallas, Texas (disbanded in 2004). From 1983 to 1990 he pastored a church in San Diego, Calif., that closed in 2018; he then was at Fairfield until 2005. Before Trinity, Zandstra served Flanders Valley CRC in Flanders, N.J. That church disbanded in 1990.

In 1975 and 1976, *The Banner* published two news briefs submitted by Zandstra about Harrington's disappearance and the finding of her remains. Because they are documents from the time of the initial search and investigation, current *Banner* staff shared them with police.

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor



# A Life of Learning

By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, CRC Communications

It's that time of year again: back to school. Whether your school year starts after Labor Day or somewhere in mid-August, now is the season when elementary, middle, and high school students grab their backpacks and head off to a new year of exciting learning. Many university and college students too are starting a new year or a new program. Even churches often kick off a new year of Sunday school classes in September.

But not all learning happens in our youth. Having a posture that is open to and even actively seeks out learning can open us to new opportunities, no matter our age, and provide us with skills for the changing circumstances of our lives. When we embrace being lifelong learners alongside others, it helps us learn corporately so that our families can adapt, our schools can improve, and our churches can better discern what God is calling them to be a part of.

This is something the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America have seen play out all around the world, and it's why the pooled resources of ministry shares are frequently used to provide training, consultation, and education to congregations and individuals across the globe. Here are a few examples.

#### Helping Churches Thrive

"We are all constantly learning and being disciplined as a whole body of believers," said a member of Living Hope CRC in Sarnia, Ont., who recently participated in a Thriving Essentials course with other members of their church. "We need to be ready to step outside our comfort zones again."

Thriving Essentials ([crcna.org/essentials](http://crcna.org/essentials)) is a four-part course offered via video conference and in person that helps teams of ministry leaders at a congregation gain insight into their church. It can serve as a springboard to deeper conversations about ministry in your local context.

"To date, 800 people from 270 congregations have participated in Thriving Essentials," said Elaine May, curriculum developer for Thriving Essentials and newly appointed congregational renewal leader with Thrive, the CRCNA's congregational support ministry. "They take the course as a team of ministry leaders—pastors, elders, deacons, paid staff, volunteers—from a specific congregation. Their goal is to get on the same page about some of the most fundamental aspects of church, ministry, and leadership."

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A team of ministry leaders from a congregation in Minneapolis, Minn., have group discussions during a Thriving Essentials training.

Because it is hard to plan ministry when people are operating out of different paradigms, the Thriving Essentials course seeks to help groups of ministry leaders develop a shared vocabulary and framework through sessions on four topics: mission, discipleship, discernment, and leadership. Along the way, they also learn valuable lessons about how to apply these four things within their local church and community.

"I have encountered our church mission statement before, and now I realize that it's so generic that any church could use the same statement," said a participant from Heritage CRC in Byron Center, Mich. "How are we unique, and to what unique ministry is God calling this particular group of believers? That is the question with which we need to wrestle over the next year. How we figure that out connects to the areas of discernment and leadership as well."

"I believe that Thriving Essentials helped to open important conversations on how our mission remains in alignment with God's purposes and how we might be equipped to breathe life into that mission through the community of disciples," added someone from Sunrise CRC in McMinnville, Ore. "The continuous process (we learned) of acting, reflecting, and learning together while employing the decisive and discerning mindsets created a dynamic space for ideas to be put forward and the unique talents, gifts, and testimonies of the congregation to be shared."

Participants also noted that this new process helped those who might not consider themselves to be leaders or whom others may not consider to be leaders to participate and share equally.

"It required deep listening to each other as an ongoing process in small groups and as a congregation where all disciples get to participate," said the Sunrise CRC participant. "In short, we've been offered insight into the steps to ignite our mission."

#### Tools for Lifelong Problem Solving

A good school sets up students to be lifelong learners for the good of their communities. But in Nigeria, teachers often are tossed into classrooms with little training—and they're often not sure what it takes to be lifelong learners themselves.

That's why Resonate Global Mission missionaries like Mark Wiersma use Educational Care, a curriculum that equips teachers with best teaching practices. Guided by biblical principles, the training encourages teachers and school

administrators to share the love of Christ both in and outside the classroom.

One school in Nigeria recently asked for Educational Care training for its staff. Wiersma, who works with educators in the country, can't share the name of this school or its staff members for security reasons. The Nigerian government is predominantly Muslim and tends to restrict Christian schools.

But this school's leaders want to make a difference in their community, and Educational Care is equipping them to do that.

"The school is near the outer margin of a city. As a result, public access to pure water is scarce, and attention from local police and armed forces is even more scarce, resulting in higher rates of theft," Wiersma said.

After completing the training session on "Leadership, Purpose, and Value of Your School," the teachers at this school decided to do something about some of the challenges their community was facing.

First, the school hired someone to dig a well on the school grounds and install taps outside of the schoolyard. Now the entire community can get clean, fresh water for free.

Second, wanting to cut down on theft and other crime, the school expanded the purview of its security guards to include homes close to the school.

Finally, the school opened its chapel to the community for worship on Sunday because some members of their community weren't able to afford to travel for church.

Resonate equipped this school to share the love of Christ by meeting needs in the community, and neighbors have noticed. One of the reasons Educational Care is so effective is that after each training session teachers create an action plan using a template for outlining a goal and steps to achieve it. The next time the school faces a problem or challenge in their school or community, then, the teachers and administrators have the tools to solve it.




Educators in Nigeria pray over a well they built for their community as a result of Educational Care training from Resonate Global Mission.

### Here to Support Learning

The Reformed tradition encourages a posture of life-long intentional learning. The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America began as a way to help individuals, congregations, and classes pursue this goal through resources, websites, podcasts, videos, webinars, conferences, training, and more on a host of topics relevant to individual faith walks and the ministry of the church.

Through ministry shares and other support of people within the Christian Reformed Church, these resources are available to all CRC congregations across North America and to ministry leaders around the world.

As a result, men, women, children, and youth all over the world are learning and growing in their faith and their ability to serve their church and community. Because many of these people are learning together, their congregations, schools, and other institutions also are improving. 



## Young Adults and the Church Today

**PASTORS, LAY LEADERS,** denominational staff, and young adults came together May 6 at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, Ont., to discuss young adults and the church today. The idea for this event came out of an email from pastors Elly Sarkany and Dave Scholman of Covenant CRC (St. Catharines, Ont.). They wanted to learn how their church could better engage and support young adults in their community. As Sarkany, the church's worship pastor, explained:

We've been experimenting with different approaches to young adult ministry programming at Covenant and feeling like we aren't getting much traction, so we thought a conversation was in order to really hear from the young adults themselves (about) what is important to them in being part of a faith community. We sought help from ... our regional catalyzer from the CRCNA to see what resources were already available to us from the denomination, and that developed into the conversation we hosted with Classis Niagara. We didn't want it to be a top-down learning opportunity, but rather a session of listening to each other and asking the difficult questions, because none of us has all the answers.

Ron deVries, youth and emerging adult consultant for Thrive, a ministry of the CRCNA, joined the conversation, and out of this one email inquiry came an event where young adults were called in as the experts to share about their lives and their hopes for a reciprocal relationship with the church. The event focused on being in a space of listening to better support our young adult community.

Elana Smit (Mountainview CRC) was one of the panelists. "I found univer-



Ron deVries (left), Dave Scholman (center), and Elly Sarkany (right) organized an event in Classis Niagara focused on listening to young adults in the church.

wasn't really prepared for or expecting," she said. "I think that having conversations about it and bringing concerns forward is important to best support members of the congregation, including young adults. And this was just a way to get involved in that conversation!"

Sarkany said the gathering was "a nicely mixed group of attendees from all age groups and church leadership roles," and she praised the panelists for addressing "a broad spectrum of the varying life stages and experiences of emerging adults."

"One thing that became clear to me through all of this," she said, "is that we need to stop simply asking young people to fill prescribed roles in the church and instead start giving agency

to them to determine not just where, but how they would like to use their gifts to serve. It's a culture change for a lot of our established churches, but it's necessary."

Churches or classes interested in having this type of discussion can reach out to Thrive staff members Ron deVries ([rdevries@crcna.org](mailto:rdevries@crcna.org)) or Becky Jones ([bjones@crcna.org](mailto:bjones@crcna.org)). Churches who would like to talk about young adult ministry can email Dave Scholman at Covenant CRC ([pastordave@covenant-church.ca](mailto:pastordave@covenant-church.ca)).

—Becky Jones,  
Thrive

*Ron deVries,  
Youth and Emerging Adult  
Consultant, CRCNA*

**"Ministry with emerging adults is not easy. So many life transitions have moved what many churches have assumed is a linear faith-formation trajectory to one that has various entry points and shifts. For many of our young adults, navigating these transitions can feel overwhelming. The church needs to be aware of these moments and find ways to walk in faith with our covenant children in their lives."**

## The View From Here

# Seeking Wisdom in Our Lives

**THERE'S MYSTERY** in what makes people wise. Age and experience are certainly part of the equation, but I've noticed many "mature" individuals seem clueless while some 10-year-olds can bestow unexpected gems of insight on their elders. Certainly having a substantial education doesn't hurt, but we've all chuckled from time to time when we've noticed that even learned doctors, lawyers, and (dare I say) ministers struggle to master some basic life skills.

What lies behind wisdom most fundamentally is an orientation to learning. The author of Proverbs writes, "Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning" (9:9). The wise learn from rebuke, or what today we would call criticism (Prov. 19:25). In fact, this passion for learning comes from a desire to be in relationship to God: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Learning about God is the foundation of wisdom.


Last summer I read the book *Forged in Crisis*, by Nancy Koehn. Koehn tells the story of five deeply consequential leaders: Ernest Shackleton, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Rachel Carson. Each of these leaders persevered through near-impossible opposition to bring about fundamental and positive change to our world. Each of these leaders sought out "times of self-conscious learning" that shaped and prepared them for the impact they would have on the world (p. 390). These five leaders found the wisdom they needed because they made intentional space in their lives for ongoing learning.

## Learning about God is the foundation of wisdom.

The kind of learning that leads to wisdom comes in many forms. It can come through reading Scripture as well as insightful books and journals. It can be developed through participating in conferences, listening to podcasts, and even watching TED Talks on YouTube. It can be cultivated at the "school of hard knocks" as we carefully take note of the life lessons we gain through failure (and success). One of the best places to learn is in community—from the feedback of friends, mentors, children, parents, spouses, siblings, coworkers, and supervisors. The wise maximize each of these bandwidths to learn.

One of the most obvious but often neglected ways to learn wisdom is to learn from and about ourselves. We sometimes casually dismiss intentional self-learning as just part of our "therapeutic culture." But a very important theologian once said, "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves" (John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.1). Learning about our deep inner hopes, needs, hurts, and motivations positions us to effectively serve God

and our fellow people. This kind of wise learning requires the Holy Spirit, prayer, and often the help of trained professionals.

The Christian Reformed Church has blessed me because it has prioritized intentional learning and therefore wisdom. I am thankful for the six months of study leave I received while I was a missionary with Resonate. I'm thankful for the sabbaticals we provide for our pastors. I'm thankful for our wonderful Christian schools and their teachers. I'm thankful for our denomination's institutions and agencies, which provide members and leaders opportunities to learn and grow. I hope you will enjoy the stories of intentional learning and the wisdom it is developing in CRC folks. 



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

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# Calvin Program Encourages Love of Learning



Established in 1996, Calvin University's Calvin Academy of Lifelong Learning has provided over 1,900 courses, 288 free lectures, and 120 travel films to as many as 4,400 people a year.

**THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING** new to learn. Whether it's understanding the latest software for your computer or studying Italian for an upcoming trip to Europe, people often find themselves needing to learn something. Acquiring new skills or knowledge can be difficult as we age, but the good news is that committing to a posture of lifelong learning promotes healthy brain function, can be personally fulfilling, and can provide a social network and a sense of belonging.

To help foster community and encourage an enduring love of education, Calvin University created the Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning, a unique program where people of any age can participate in six-week classes on a host of subjects, such as nature, theology, or sociology. No homework is given, and no grades are conferred. The courses are taught simply to expand minds, inform hearts, and create opportunities for connection and engagement.

Established in 1996, the CALL program has provided more than 1,900 courses, 288 free lectures, and 120 Passport to Adventure travel films to as many as 4,400 people a year. And the classes and clubs for everything from birding or memoir writing to knitting or international politics are open to everyone, including alumni and community members.

Community participant Fred Grasman attests to the program's benefits. "For me it was another great season of learning—from ancient Rome to ancient Athens and from Netherlandish art to the music of Mozart," he said. "The professors, each in their own way, are excellent. They dig into very complex subjects in a way that can be understood by an amateur like me and never talk down to their audiences. Through their teaching I have been able to capture some of the areas of study I did not have time for in my undergraduate days and now have come to appreciate. This has been a great joy."

A big part of the CALL program is its travel initiative—the chance to explore different parts of the world with a group. In partnership with the Calvin Alumni Office, CALL has hosted 52 domestic and international trips in the past 12 years. Participants return home with a newfound community, perhaps some foreign language skills for those traveling internationally, and a love of lifelong learning. And while it's not billed as a matchmaking service, every now and then the travel program has led to romance, director Sonja De Jong said. Most recently, during a trip to Greece, a CALL tour leader and widower met another traveler who'd recently lost a spouse, and the two began a dating relationship following the trip.

But it doesn't take a trip to Greece or South Africa to cultivate community or maintain a posture of lifelong learning. Enjoying a play at a local theater, appreciating a new art exhibit, or studying bird habitats at a nearby park with a group of friends can also satisfy curiosity and a need for camaraderie. The CALL program provides these kinds of opportunities and more.

"We believe we have kept our members engaged, satisfied a desire for continued learning, improved mental well-being, and provided opportunities for participants to explore new areas of interest," De Jong said. "Stimulating the mind certainly keeps persons engaged and actually happier. Those who join our lifelong learning program are some of the greatest people to work with because they are so optimistic and want to get the most out of life."

—Calvin University Communications

## Grace and Prayer in Times of Need

**RONOK, A DEVOTED** Christian who lives in Bangladesh, was looking for prayer support as he faced unemployment and financial strain. That request has now reached thousands of believers worldwide.

Because Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country, and because Ronok is the only Christian in his family, he often finds himself under intense pressure to conform to Islamic practices.

“Ronok’s commitment to his Christian faith has even put him at risk of losing his job,” said Emily Vanden Heuvel, ReFrame Ministries’ prayer ministry coordinator.

Ronok desperately needs his job in order to support his ailing father and the other six family members who rely on him for their well-being.

“I need to work. Pray I keep my job, and pray I bring in enough money,” Ronok wrote in a heartfelt message to Vanden Heuvel.

Responding to Ronok’s call for help, Vanden Heuvel assured him that a network of 8,000 individuals would be fervently praying for his protection and guidance.

“Encouragement, uplifting Bible verses, and links to appropriate resources are routinely shared with those, like Ronok, who seek support through prayer requests,” Vanden Heuvel said.

Ronok was overjoyed when he received Vanden Heuvel’s response. “This is my immense pleasure to hear that God has forgiven me, and a lot of believers are praying for me,” he wrote. “It relieves my heavy anxiety and sorrow that I carry. God assures me that he loves and cares for me in all respects! God gives us everything we require accordingly and on time! All glory and praise to him for ever and ever!”

Amid the uncertainty and fear Ronok faces, he finds solace in his faith. Vanden Heuvel reminded him of

“Encouragement, uplifting Bible verses, and links to appropriate resources are routinely shared with those, like Ronok, who seek support through prayer requests,”

Hebrews 4:16, which counsels us to “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

“Ronok’s situation reminds us of the challenges faced by Christians in diverse religious contexts,” Vanden Heuvel said. “His story calls upon believers worldwide to unite in prayer and solidarity.”

If you would like to join ReFrame’s prayer team in praying for people like Ronok around the world, visit [prayer.reframeministries.org](http://prayer.reframeministries.org), where you can also submit a request of your own.

— Brian Clark,  
ReFrame Ministries



Christians from around the world, including those in Bangladesh, take part in ReFrame’s international prayer ministry by submitting requests and praying for others.

## Partnering to Pursue Justice

**FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS**, World Renew has partnered with individuals, families, churches, communities, and organizations around the world to respond to God's call for justice. In recent years, World Renew has been working to give practical tools to North Americans for mobilizing communities to stop injustice at its roots.

In 2022, World Renew partnered with local churches in North America to engage congregations in two important learning opportunities with Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC). Representatives from 10 congregations participated in *Becoming a Community-Focused Church*, a six-month virtual learning opportunity that explored the basic principles of asset-based community development with the goal of equipping congregations to learn from, listen to, and love their neighbors.

In another series, congregations took part in five webinars with North American community leaders about food insecurity and food access disparity.

"I learned so much from this training about how my congregation can address hunger in our own neighborhood and work with other organizations and agencies to access resources," one participant said.

World Renew is also committed to educating youth and young adults about the connection between following Jesus and living out the call to do justice.



Ron VandenBrink of Diaconal Ministries Canada leads a workshop for churches on *Helping Without Harming*, a session co-hosted by World Renew.

In Canada, World Renew partners with The Hub Community Network, a Christian youth organization in Kitchener, Ont., to facilitate learning cohorts in classes such as *Jesus & Justice*, *Systems, Activism & Advocacy*, and *Integrated Justice*.

"We have benefited so much from the experience of the World Renew team as well as their willingness to teach our youth about justice in action and how it is integral to faith in Christ,"

said Adam Cresswell, director of The Hub Community Network. "We have seen the great fruit, with youth going on to bring a commitment to faith and justice into their lives at home as well as leadership roles in churches, schools, teams, and summer camps. We can't wait for what the future holds!"

—Beth deGraff  
and Adele Konyndyk,  
World Renew



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# Amazing Animal Architects

**WHAT KIND OF HOME** do you live in? Is it a house or an apartment building? Architects design different kinds of buildings for people to live and work in that reflect what the building will be used for. Some animals are architects too! They create amazing structures to live and sometimes work in. If you look around, you might see some of these structures in your own neighborhood!

## Beavers

Beavers use tree branches and sticks to build dams in rivers and streams that will create small ponds for them to build their homes in. Those dams can be 10 feet high and 1,600 feet long! The homes beavers build are called lodges, and their entryways are underwater.

## Termites

Termites in Africa and Australia create huge mounds out of soil mixed with their saliva and animal dung. Some termite mounds can reach as high as 20 feet! Termites live in the mounds in colonies with a king, a queen, and millions of other termites.

## Weaver Birds

Weaver birds are songbirds that live in Africa and Asia. These birds craft their nests by weaving grass, leaves, and other plant materials around tree branches. A sociable weaver is a type of weaver bird in southwestern Africa that creates nests with other sociable weavers to make huge bird-nest neighborhoods that can grow to at least 10 feet high!

## Labyrinth Spiders


Labyrinth spiders spin webs that provide not only a place to live, but a built-in food pantry! Labyrinth spiders are found in Europe. Their thick webs are spun near the ground or in bushes and are so thick that they look like white clouds. Labyrinth spiders create an array of tunnels in their webs that lead to the egg sac. What a cool spider maze!

## Bees

Bees create some of the most incredible homes on the planet. A beehive is a group of hexagon-shaped cells, or holes, made of honeycomb and propolis. Propolis is collected by bees from the buds of poplar and cone-bearing trees. An average beehive can house up to 50,000 bees!

## The Greatest Home

It's amazing how God made all of these animals into awesome architects. But the greatest home of all is the home Jesus is preparing for us in heaven!

"My Father's house has many rooms," Jesus said; "if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3). 



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Illustration for  
The Banner by Anita  
Borghigiani



Photo by Andrew Teo/Unsplash

# Leaving Everything to Follow Jesus

By Terence Schilstra

**B**rady is missing teeth from doing crystal meth. He has scars up and down his arms from street fights and from cutting himself.

He started doing drugs at 14. By his early 20s he was living in a flophouse, selling drugs, and stealing stuff in the neighborhood—bikes, tools, and electronics. It was all to gain more respect and fund his drug addiction. He spent eight years of his life gaining respect on the street.

I first met Brady at his lowest point. The first time we talked, he was swaying back and forth, staring off into the distance in a drug-induced stupor. In the weeks that followed, our faith community introduced Brady to a local doctor who connected him to a harm reduction program. Then we helped Brady move into an addiction recovery home.

Brady started attending our gatherings on Sunday evenings at The Table, the church plant I pastor, to join others around a meal, prayer, and God's Word.

Through new friendships with people at The Table, Brady encountered Jesus.

What did it look like for Brady to leave everything and follow Jesus?

Learning to follow Jesus meant giving up eight years of living as a hardened street criminal.

Sure, it began by finding amazing relief and peace in and through Jesus and incrementally discovering new things about life in relationship with God and a Christian community. Yet while he shifted from life on the street to new, healthy patterns, Brady quickly realized it was going to take a lifetime.

"Almost every day of the last eight years was focused on getting credibility on the street," Brady said. "Becoming a Christian meant slowly giving up everything that I had worked for."

I think we all have something we're personally moving toward, our own personal goals and pursuits—until we meet Jesus.

There is a story in the Bible of another man who had his own pursuits upended by Jesus.

When Jesus was starting his earthly ministry, he was looking for a handful of people to join his mission. As

Jesus walked along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

We might assume that Levi was an important person in the region of Galilee. But that was not the case. Levi was a Jew in a Jewish culture, so there's nothing surprising about that. But as a tax collector, he was despised and considered a worthless thug.

Tax collectors such as Levi would often sit at a booth on a busy street corner and charge people taxes on their wages, their land, and their beasts of burden such as donkeys or horses—not to mention the taxes per axle on carts or wagons.

Often these tax collectors would extort money out of their fellow community members by force. Using the services of gangsters to threaten and beat money out of people was not unusual, meaning Levi might have been one of the most hated and despised people in all of Galilee.

However, despite the wider community's dislike, Levi probably gained social status with other "worthless thugs" or



other sinners. We see that when Jesus visits Levi's house, the guests include other "tax collectors and sinners" (Mark 2:15-16).

Levi, like Brady, might have worked his whole life gaining street credibility and position, and he likely made some serious cash in his line of work. Even so, when Jesus calls him this day, Levi surprisingly gets up without hesitation and follows Jesus. Levi doesn't just leave his profitable tax booth. He leaves all his social status.

### **A Change of Heart**

When I was in my late teens, my dream was to get rich and have all the things that often come with wealth. At 19, I left the church. I started a job in the trades and made six figures a year. At 20, I bought my first house and filled it with all the stuff I dreamed of: new furniture, an entertainment center, and electronics. In the garage was a brand-new truck, a four-wheeler, a bike, and more.

Along with the wealth came new social circles, including friends who shared the same lifestyle.

In my late 20s, that trajectory changed when I was in a car crash. My physical injuries kept me in bed for more than a week. In that low place, I began praying to the God I had learned about as a boy. In that season, I became a follower of Jesus.

When I became a follower of Jesus, many of my priorities slowly changed.

I felt God giving me a heart for others, particularly those living in poverty. When I was healthy enough, I found myself driving to a nearby city to meet with homeless people. I had absolutely no idea why I began doing this. In hindsight, I see it was the Holy Spirit animating me toward new kingdom-shaped priorities. It had to be the Spirit,

We all have  
something  
we're personally  
moving toward,  
our own personal  
goals and  
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we meet Jesus.

because until that point my priorities came out of my self-absorption.

Beginning to follow Jesus led me to something better than what I had imagined for myself.

Today, at 40 years old, I serve with my wife, Karen, as church planters in an under-resourced urban context. I'm continuing to learn that giving up everything to follow Jesus includes a gentle pull toward the uncomfortable.

### **Not a Cheap Jesus**

John 6 includes a story in which a huge group of people were following Jesus. It was a loosely organized group truly interested in Jesus' life and teaching. Each person had made a real sacrifice to follow him; they had given up their evenings to listen to him and carved time away from their work to see his miracles. It seemed they really liked this guy Jesus. In fact, John 6 says this group wanted to follow Jesus so desperately that when they found out

that Jesus had taken a little boat trip across a lake, they hustled around the shoreline on foot to catch up with him the next morning.

When they caught up, Jesus invited them to sit, and he began to teach them.

As gulls soared quietly overhead and waves gently lapped the beach, a hush moved over the crowd. Jesus looked at the group and in essence said, "Everyone who follows me and believes in me shall have eternal life."

For all their enthusiasm about Jesus, you would expect the crowd hearing these words to get excited, to declare to Jesus, "We want to follow you! We want this salvation and eternal life!"

Except that isn't what happens.

When Jesus declares that following him and placing one's faith in him is the only way to the Father and abundant life, the people are shocked. They start to grumble and fume. John 6:60 tells us, "On hearing (these words), many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that this gang of followers is grumbling, Jesus asks them, "Does this offend you? ... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them" (John 6:61, 65). With love, Jesus says, "Follow me. Put your life in my hands. I am the way of life. I am the way to the Father." Yet when he says this, his followers throw up their hands and split. John 6:66 says, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." This huge group of people had sacrificed so much to follow Jesus, but now they just say "Forget it" and take off.

Why does this happen? Perhaps the fuming crowd walked away because they wanted to have eternal life but still hold on to their own lives. Maybe

they wanted to keep their sin and receive God's forgiveness. Maybe they wanted a relationship with God without his Son. They were willing to make a small sacrifice, but not a complete sacrifice. They wanted salvation without faith.

In short, they wanted the cheap Jesus. They only wanted to follow Jesus halfheartedly. Sure, they had made sacrifices, but they didn't want to bet their entire lives on Jesus. They could run from here to there with Jesus and handle getting tired as they followed him, but they couldn't handle actually placing their lives in his hands. That would require taking the risk of faith.

When the crowd had taken off and the dust had settled, Jesus turned around and saw only a small huddle of people staring at him. Jesus said to them, "Aren't you going to take off too?" A guy by the name of Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, piped up: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68). Peter laid everything on the line. He said, "I'm all in. I put my faith in you alone. I follow you!"

Peter made a clear declaration of what it means to give up everything to follow Jesus: "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." That's some serious trust in what Jesus says.

According to theologian John Piper, Peter is saying that "wherever we look for another Lord, another way, another friend, another philosophy, another view of God, another salvation, another meaning, they all come up short. We can't walk away. You have the words of life."

So we will follow Jesus, Peter says. Even if it means giving up everything.

### What Does It Look Like?

For me, following Jesus has recently included things such as going for coffee with a neighbor even though I might rather have been doing something else. It has included giving up sleep and space in our home to someone sleeping rough. It has meant just smiling while I watched neighbor kids tear up the newly seeded lawn. It has included our family living with less. It has meant volunteering in an inner-city school, a job that often comes with more pain than joy.

For a young single man in our community, following Jesus has meant giving up boiling anger and the desire to push people away. Since birth he's been in and out of foster care. He continues to struggle with the pain and anxiety of separation—not having parents who cared for him the way he always hoped, not having a dad around to spend time with him.

"After my experience with coming to Christ and joining a missional community (The Table)," he said, "I started to show up at their gatherings regularly. The more I went, the more free and peaceful I felt." For him, following Jesus into Christian community has become an amazing source of peace amid constant feelings of separation and anxiety. This young man continually gives up his desire to be alone and detach from others so he can be in and with Christian community.

I recently asked urban ministry practitioner Samantha Brinkman what it meant for her to give up everything to follow Jesus. She responded, "I can trust that wherever God is leading me is far better than wherever I can go on my own." These words ring true for the young man I mentioned, for Levi, for Peter, for Brady, and for me. Yes, leaving our stuff behind can be painful. But there's always something better on the other side.

"It's not just leaving your home to follow Jesus into the wilderness," Brinkman added. "It's leaving the burdens of a sinful world to walk beside still waters and lie in green pastures."

Brinkman's words remind us that leaving behind our personal desires to follow Jesus' desires instead always comes with amazing benefits.

Today Brady is still struggling with the slow leak of his ego and losing street cred. He's still learning new life rhythms beyond crime and addiction.

A young man continues to struggle with detachment issues and a longing to be alone.

I still struggle with what it means to give up more conveniences and comfort as our family does ministry in an under-resourced urban context where many people struggle daily to afford food and survive on disability support programs or part-time minimum-wage income amid an increasingly expensive rental market.

In the midst of the struggles, Jesus invites us deeper into something better, something we don't fully understand. Yet we follow Jesus. **B**



Terence Schilstra is the pastor/planter at The Table, a Christian Reformed church plant in downtown Thorold, Ont., and author of *Peace of the City: A Handbook for Missional Communities*.

1. What have you left behind, such as personal goals or pursuits, in order to follow Jesus?

2. What do you think should be the priorities in the life of a Christ-follower?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## Peyote Story

I tell him about the Holy Spirit, the good Spirit, the one who loves and cares deeply for children of God.

**IT IS EASIER** to talk faith with a pagan than with the average postmodern American neighbor with a grill, two cars, and a low-interest mortgage. Many Americans hesitate to talk about religion, but pagans understand there is a spiritual world and seek to engage with it. So pagans talk about faith.

The Peyote cult is pagan, engaging the spiritual world through hallucinogenic experiences brought on by ingesting peyote cactus. In the practice, dark spirits show practitioners visions through rocks glowing bright as TV screens, bring Peyote practitioners high above the earth to see people and things they could not see before, and bring others to the Peyote practitioner for advice and understanding. The practitioner then speaks deeply into those people's lives and is highly respected in the community.

Jon is a Peyote practitioner. That is why he is respected among his people as a spiritual person. Neighbors come to Jon for direction, advice, and prayer.

But Jon has been afflicted with a heart condition requiring a transplant, and for that condition he spent a long season in a Presbyterian hospital. There the Holy Spirit brought Christian chaplains, doctors, and nurses into Jon's life, speaking wisdom, giving him understanding, and praying for him.

The Holy Spirit helped Jon, a pagan practitioner of the Peyote cult, to see the spirituality of the Christian church.

The Holy Spirit introduced Jon to me, Pastor Evelyn Bennally of Sanostee Christian Reformed Church, and allowed him to recognize Sanostee CRC as a spiritually alive place. Jon began to engage me in regular spiritual conversation.

"Pastor, tell me about prayer." When Jon's neighbors come to him for prayer,

Jon practices what I explain. He learns how to pray.

"Pastor, was it really God who cared for me through this heart transplant?" Jon listens as I tell him about God, and he learns how to better care for those who come to him.

"Pastor, is it OK for a Native American to take the white man's healing and be part of this white man's religion?" I tell him about the Holy Spirit, the good Spirit, the one who loves and cares deeply for children of God. Jon nods his head.

I tell him about God the Father, who created Jon and who knows Jon by name, and about Jesus Christ, God's son who heals and saves. Again Jon nods his head.

I tell him, "Jon, you nod your head, but Romans 10 tells us to put faith into words and we will be saved." Jon smiles, perhaps not yet willing to put into words what his heart may be telling him. But still he nods his head.

Jon recently returned to the hospital with complications, and his prognosis is unclear. In his need, he does not call his old friends, nor traditional family members, nor the Peyote medicine man. Jon calls me, asking me to visit him in the hospital. And in that hospital I ask him, "Jon, may I pray for you?" Jon nods his head, and I pray that Jesus would heal him.

"Jon, do you know that it is Jesus who can heal you?" Jon nods his head.

"Jon, do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior?" Jon nods his head.

Then Jon, a community-respected practitioner of the pagan Peyote cult, turns to me and says, "Pastor, when you are here, I feel that Jesus is here too." With that Jon begins—just begins—to put some kind of faith into words as he is wheeled away to surgery. **B**



Evelyn H. Bennally is a retired educator and pastor at Sanostee Christian Reformed Church in Sanostee, N.M.

## Being Missional Means Avoiding Insider Language

If I truly want to include people from any belief system, I need to be attentive to the language I use when talking about faith.



Melissa Kuipers is a writer and the Christian Reformed chaplain to Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ont.

**“WHAT DOES ‘WILL’ MEAN?”** my child asked. Lately, with inquisitive young children, our family devotions have taken twice as long as it does to read the children’s Bible story. I love getting interrupted by questions like, “Where does God live?”, “Why did the fish have to eat Jonah?”, or “How did baby Jesus grow?” This evening, as we read about the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, I explained that Jesus taught us God’s will. “Someone’s will,” I said, trying to figure out how to word it, “is ... what someone wants to have happen.” It wasn’t until my toddler asked about what the phrase meant that it occurred to me: We seldom use “will” as a noun in our vocabulary anymore outside of the legal document. If I use the term “God’s will” with college students, do they know what to make of that phrase?

In campus ministry, I try to make it clear that everyone, regardless of what they believe, is welcome to attend our gatherings. But if I truly want to include people from any belief system, I need to be attentive to the language I use when talking about faith. It’s so easy for me to revert to insider Christian language, to default to using the shorthand phrases I’ve used most of my life for theological concepts.

It’s not that Christian lingo or discourse never has a place. Every group of people brought together by beliefs, interests, or culture ends up having unique terminology that is taken for granted by its people. (My friends roll their eyes whenever I start geeking out with other sourdough bakers about “peak fermentation,” “autolyse,” or “hydration levels.”) We use shorthand for theological topics because we can carry large concepts within single words or phrases such as “redemption,” “predestination,” or “atonement theory.” Often during in-depth theological conversations we

need a word or phrase to convey an idea—Reformed worldview, liberation theology, the Canons of Dort, eschatology—without having to explain it each time.

However, if we want our churches and ministries to be a welcoming space for newcomers, Sunday services or weekly campus ministry gatherings are times when we need to constantly be alert to our presumption that we are preaching only to the choir. Being welcoming means regularly asking the question: If someone who has never read the Bible or been to church before walked through our doors, would they understand what I’m saying?

Small groups, Bible studies, seminars, Christian education, and other forms of intensive faith development are excellent places to delve into and unpack loaded terms. But Sunday morning can be both accessible for people who are exploring or new to faith as well as spiritually challenging for those of us more seasoned in the church.

The best way to check our Christian lingo is to have deep and real friendships with people who aren’t Christians. I was caught off guard once by a close friend who laughed when I referred to “non-Christians.” It had never occurred to me to consider how that term might sound to someone who is not part of my religious community.

Having been raised attending church and a Christian school, sometimes I feel as if I’m learning a new language when I try to communicate about faith with people who don’t share the same upbringing. Here are some tendencies in my ministry that I’m trying to unlearn:

**1. Asking questions that people can only answer if they know the Bible**

I once heard a children’s ministry leader say, “When giving the children’s message during church, I never ask a question that only Christian kids can answer.” Because he wanted newcomers to feel as if they could participate too, he always began with a question any kid could answer (“How can you tell the wind is blowing?”). Then he would tie that into a biblical concept (“The Holy Spirit is like the wind.”). Contrast this approach to the time a minister began a children’s message with this question: “Now, who can tell me the language of origin of the word ‘hallelujah?’”

Phrases like “We all know the story of Moses and the burning bush” or “Most of us grew up singing ‘The B-I-B-L-E’” communicate to unchurched people that they are not part of the “we” that make up this gathering. The unintended message can be “You don’t belong yet.”

**2. Assuming people know the different books of the Bible**

When a visiting pastor at our campus ministry opened her Bible to read from the gospel of Luke, she began by saying, “We’re going to read from the second part of the Bible, which is called the New Testament. This is the part that starts with Jesus’ birth.” She then took a few sentences to explain how Luke tells us the story of Jesus’ life. I was so grateful she did, as we had a first-time visitor that week who had little biblical knowledge.

I’ve learned that one can give an effective introduction to a book of the Bible in two or three sentences. Identify whether the text is from the New or Old Testament, who the author is, and who their intended audience is.

**3. Assuming people know what liturgical practices mean**

I love when churches explain the meaning of confession, benediction, call and response, and the passing of the peace. Focusing on one element of the service each week and contextualizing why we do it can provide important education for new believers and encouragement for those of us who might be tempted to just go through the motions.

**4. Failing to explain connotations of words**


As a child, I was flabbergasted to hear a pastor asking his congregation, “I’m not religious, am I? I really hope you don’t think I’m religious.”

“How can a minister say he’s not religious?” I asked my mom as soon as we left church. “Doesn’t he believe in God?”

“He means ‘legalistic,’” my mom responded. A devout kid, I understood “religious” to mean someone who believed in a religion, but in this particular church we had

visited, the word carried completely different connotations.

Phrases like “dying to self,” “ways of the flesh,” “washed in the blood,” and other theological expressions can be very surprising and confusing to people who are not familiar with their meaning when we throw them around out of context.

Our messages don’t need to be watered down or simplified. Jesus spoke all the time in ways that confused his listeners, like using strange metaphors, hyperbole, or poetic language. But he also spoke in imagery that was accessible for his audience, in word pictures they would recognize and relate to: a farmer sowing seeds, a father embracing his runaway son, a vine growing fruit from its branches. The early church turned its attention to the Gentiles and expressing the redemption of Jesus in ways they could understand. Sometimes it’s tiring to keep re-evaluating our language. But if we claim to be missional, it is essential that our words and actions communicate that, regardless of how little you know about God, you are loved by God and welcome in God’s family. 

1. Describe an experience where you were a visitor or a newcomer to a meeting or organization and you didn’t fully understand all the terminologies or inside jokes. How did you feel? What might have been done differently to make your experience better?

2. Besides those listed in the article, what are some other “Christian lingo” terms you can think of?

3. What are some of the hardest questions you got asked about the Christian faith from non-Christians?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

# Zelda and the Good Gift of Creativity

**ALMOST 40 YEARS AGO**, I sat in my basement playing one of Nintendo's first major games, *The Legend of Zelda*. To my 12-year-old self, the game felt massive. Its whole point was exploration.

Since the joy of that moment, I've checked in over the years to see how the *Zelda* series has evolved over its many iterations. Since 2017's *Breath of the Wild*—widely considered one of the best video games of all time—fans have been eagerly awaiting *Tears of the Kingdom*, the direct sequel to *BOTW*, wondering where the creators could possibly go next. When *Tears of the Kingdom* was released this summer, it quickly became apparent that the sequel extends the worldbuilding of *BOTW*. Indeed, *Tears of the Kingdom* uses the same map, rearranges the location of key objects, and adds more destinations—alterations that at first glance might have seemed disappointing. However, it didn't take long for players to recognize the game's grandeur. In addition to the main map, *TOTK* features a series of islands floating in the sky and a massive underground chasm that (you slowly realize) mirrors the entire aboveground landscape.

As if this weren't enough, *TOTK* also gives players new abilities, one of which allows them to manipulate materials they find to build just about anything they can imagine. This feature seems pretty obviously inspired by *Minecraft*, but it goes a step further in that the physics involved in creation have to make sense. Try attaching a flamethrower to a raft, and you risk burning your boat. Tilt a fan wrongly on your glider, and you'll plummet to earth instead of ascending to that just-out-of-reach sky island. At one point, in fact, my son gave me a tutorial on how gears work so that

I could solve one of the game's many mechanical puzzles.

Ultimately, the game encourages imagination while also setting limits. What's amazing is that these strictures reward and enhance creativity rather than limit it. In the game's best moments, I found myself thinking, "Well, that's definitely not how the designers wanted me to finish that task, but, hey, it worked anyway." Similarly, TikTok and YouTube users are already showing off elaborate vehicles the creators likely couldn't have foreseen.

The game's range goes beyond its main quest and the inventions and workarounds it inspires. You can spend time cooking, reporting stories for a newspaper, playing minigames, or skydiving. I've spent more hours exploring than I care to admit, and there's still a lot I haven't done.

Perhaps the best compliment I can give this newest *Zelda* game is that, even well into adulthood, I can apply a word like *wonder* to my experience playing the game. Promos for the game highlight the idea that this game might encourage its players to see the real world in a new light—one that beckons adventure. This is probably overselling what a video game can inspire; after all, *Zelda*'s designers have nothing on the universe's Creator. Still, a video game like *Tears of the Kingdom* allows us to grasp the good gift of creativity afresh. (Nintendo) **B**



Andrew Zwart lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is director of interdisciplinary studies at Kuyper College. He enjoys gardening, impromptu dance parties with his wife and two boys, and taking walks while listening to podcasts.

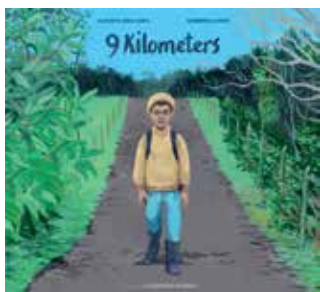


## Picard

Reviewed by Sam Gutierrez

*Star Trek: The Next Generation* went off the air in 1994. During its seven-year run, it had taken the familiar elements of the original series, added new characters and storylines, and breathed new life into a franchise that many thought was a niche science-fiction show of the late 1960s.

Who could have imagined that the main character with a French last name and a Shakespearean delivery—Jean-Luc Picard, played by Patrick Stewart—would become one of the most beloved *Star Trek* captains ever? *Picard* takes place in 2041, and the third season really stands apart as one final story of the original *Next Generation* crew, with plenty of nostalgic nods to the past. Once again, the Starship Enterprise-D flies through the stars on a mission to save the galaxy from a cast of bad characters threatening to destroy Earth.



## 9 Kilometers

By Claudio Aguilera,  
illustrated by  
Gabriela Lyon

Reviewed by Sonya  
VanderVeen Feddema

A young Chilean boy sets out on the nine-kilometer trek to school in the early-morning darkness. Though it's cold outside, the boy doesn't mind because he loves to walk and count. His teacher taught him that a kilometer is the same as 1,000 meters, so nine kilometers is 9,000 meters. He also learned that it takes about 1,600 steps to walk a kilometer, so nine kilometers is about 15,000 steps. The boy is amazed!

Illustrator Gabriela Lyon's exquisite pictures capture the boy's tenacious spirit and his delight in the people, creatures, and landscape he encounters on his trek. Included are brief vignettes about children from China, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Kenya, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Chile who travel many kilometers to reach their schools. A compelling story about the perseverance of a child and the human right to education. (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers)

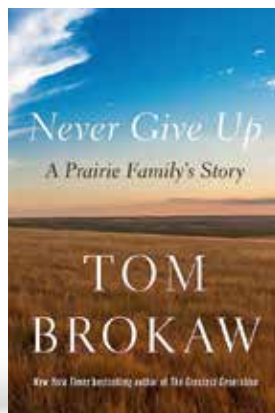


## What's Love Got to Do with It?

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Emma Thompson, icon of the rom-com genre, plays the wacky mother of unlucky-in-love documentary filmmaker Zoe (Lily James) in this winsome British film.

Zoe is likable, if frustrating, as she sabotages every relationship, much to the exasperation of her "mum," who is hilariously eager to marry off her only child. They both cherish their enduring friendship with the Pakistani Muslim family next door, who are also keen to marry off their single son, Kaz (Shazad Latif). When Kaz becomes engaged via "assisted marriage" to a near-stranger in Pakistan, Zoe films the whole process, from London to Lahore, and the two old friends must learn if it is possible to bridge the "continent between them." Effervescent and insightful. (Rated PG-13 for language and suggestive dialogue. On demand on various platforms.)



## Never Give Up: A Prairie Family's Story

By Tom Brokaw

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

As a descendant of Manitoba pioneers, I prize a good story in which someone prevails over the endless challenges of life on the plains. The former NBC news anchor's new book is an ode to the working-class South Dakotans whose unflagging work ethic shaped Brokaw into a top journalist. In this short, captivating read, Brokaw takes readers back in time, from R.P. Brokaw's 1883 hotel in Bristol, S.D., to his own rise as the son of Red, a large-machine genius who built dams and forts, and Jean, whose own father lost everything in the Great Depression. For readers interested in the history of the prairies, Brokaw's well-honed skill for storytelling and journalistic detail coupled with his loving reverence for his forebears makes this tribute well worth turning its pages. (Random House)

### Failure: The Gateway to Grace?: Low

*Anthropology* offers a liberating view of human nature, sin, and grace. Popular author and theologian David Zahl shows why the good news of Christianity is urgent and appealing. By embracing a more accurate view of human beings, readers will discover a true and lasting hope. (Brazos Press)

### The Third Installment

**Arrives Soon:** *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3* stars Nia Vardalos, John Corbett, Elena Kampouris, Andrea Martin, and Lainie Kazan. (Paramount, in theaters Sept. 8)

### Buster Breaks His

**Silence:** In *The Fall of the House of Murdaugh*, a new three-part docu-series about convicted murderer Alex Murdaugh, investigators interview family (including Murdaugh's son Buster), friends, and the defense team in the notorious case. (Fox Nation, Sept. 12)

### The Wind Knows My

**Name:** In this latest novel from Isabel Allende, a 6-year-old boy in 1938 escapes Nazi-occupied Austria and comes to the United States with nothing but clothes and a violin. In 2019 Arizona, his life comes together in a surprising way with Anita Diaz, a blind 7-year-old girl who escapes El Salvador to seek refuge in the U.S. (Ballantine Books)

## Why Isn't Life Fair?

Examples abound  
of good folks  
getting mired in  
heartache while  
people with  
questionable  
character  
rack up wins.

**THROUGH THE YEARS** humans have wondered why life doesn't seem fair. Examples abound of good folks getting mired in heartache while people with questionable character rack up wins. Even those of us with halfway-decent lives in North America look around and wonder how we have it so good: running water, mostly functioning governments, opportunities for education and advancement. Why do we have it so much better than our neighbors in Sudan—or our neighbors one town over?

Why is life like this?

The authors of the Belgic Confession wondered about this, too, and they wanted to make it really clear that God is in charge, and God is good. As in, nothing bad can come from God. This is how the authors put it in Article 13:

We believe that this good God, after creating all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without God's orderly arrangement.

Yet God is not the author of, and cannot be charged with, the sin that occurs. For God's power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible that God arranges and does his works very well and justly even when the devils and the wicked act unjustly.

Sin. That's why things are unfair. We make daily choices that undermine the kingdom of God. We are part of the unfairness.

On top of that, say our theological forebears, "the devils and the wicked act unjustly."

A pack of 12-year-olds decide that they don't like Sam anymore, and he's out. Amanda cheats on a calculus test and skews the curve for everyone else. The company board votes against

cleaning up pollution in 1966, and childhood leukemia rates soar in 2014. The sustained trauma of famine or war affects people at the cellular level, creating generations of descendants more susceptible to disease. Tyrants are accommodated and not confronted.

Now what?

When God directed his people on how to set up their society, he was clear about caring for those for whom life had been particularly unfair: foreigners, widows, and orphans. "Don't oppress foreigners, because you know how it feels to be a foreigner," God said. "Instead, look out for them. Leave the borders of your field heavy with grain for them. Leave some grapes unpicked. Make their lives better, easier, softer" (See Ex. 22:21-24; Deut. 14:28-29; James 1:27).

The assumption in these Scripture passages is that life will be unfair. Some wives will lose their husbands, some children their fathers. Nations will be disrupted by war or famine, and people will have nowhere to live. You will see unfairness. You will see inequity. You will see the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. What do you do then? You work for the kingdom of God.

You mentor kids at a local school so that children in that area have a little more help. You sell fresh produce out of your church basement so that immigrants can retain their dignity while also feeding their families. You staff the nursery so that a single mom can have 90 minutes of focused worship. You choose to make things just a bit more fair.

You become part of God's work in the world. You become a player on the justice team, a captain of the compassion squad, a joyful member of the anonymous donor crew.

And the world becomes a little more ordered, a little more godly, a little more Edenic. And you become a little more like Jesus.



Mary Hulst is university pastor for Calvin University and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.



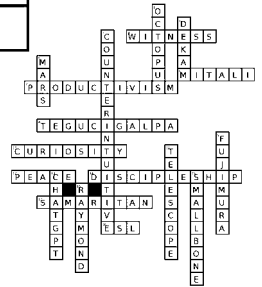
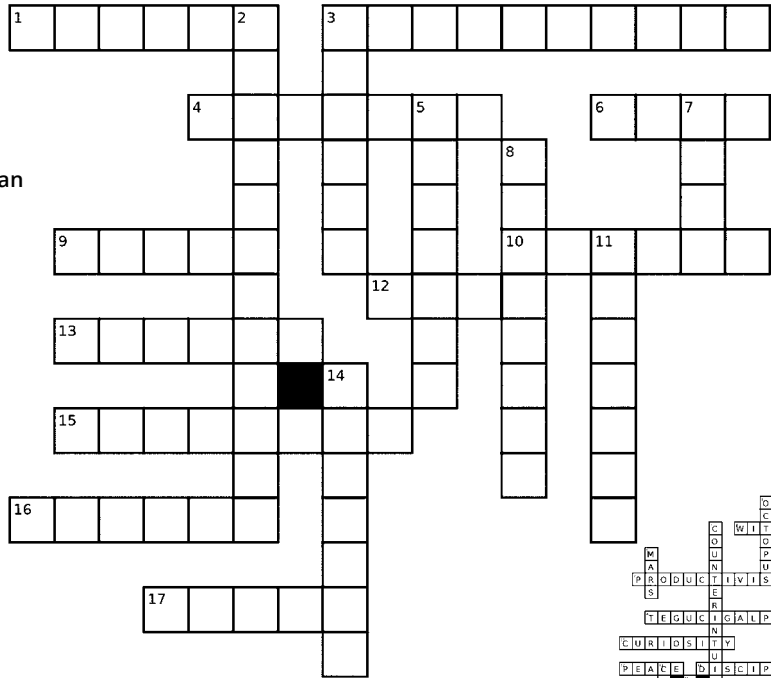
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!  
 (The solutions in this issue are from the June puzzle, as we do not publish Word Play in the July/August issue.)

**Down**

- 2. The Grimsby church that hosted an event about young adults and the church
- 3. Grand Rapids, Mich., clergy join city police on this
- 5. An Indiana-based nonprofit: Project Bible \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. The only gospel with the parable of the Good Samaritan
- 8. A rom-com explores \_\_\_\_\_ marriage, a new term for arranged marriage
- 11. A regional group of churches
- 14. Spanish spelling of "America's pastime"

**Across**

- 1. An orientation to learning lies behind this
- 3. The fastest-growing sport in America
- 4. Faith transforms \_\_\_\_\_, which in turn shapes faith
- 6. Calvin University program established in 1996
- 9. A new video game in the \_\_\_\_\_ series astounds and delights.
- 10. Two Michigan Christian schools won state championships in this sport
- 12. Biblical tax collector
- 13. This group understands there is a spiritual world
- 15. Their mounds can reach up to 20 feet.
- 16. A new memoir by Tom \_\_\_\_\_ hails his hardworking forebears
- 17. Insider terminology



Answers to the June 2023 puzzle

# Dwell Flex Brings Kids Together



Dwell Flex was developed with smaller children's ministries in mind. This **multi-age edition** of the popular *Dwell* curriculum features standalone sessions that require minimal preparation. It's perfect for programs that combine multiple ages (5-10 years old) in a group.

**Dwell Flex is...flexible!**

Flex also includes downloadable and shareable resources to encourage **simple and meaningful at-home faith formation** during the week.



Call 800.333.8300 to get access or visit [DwellCurriculum.org](http://DwellCurriculum.org) to learn more.

**DEADLINES:** Ads for the October issue are due September 4, 2023; November issue: October 1, 2023.

Subject to availability. Details online at [thebanner.org/classifieds](http://thebanner.org/classifieds), or for display ads see [thebanner.org/ads](http://thebanner.org/ads). Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

**PRICES:** Most ads are \$0.45<sup>US</sup> per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.38<sup>US</sup> per character and \$65 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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**Congregational Announcements**

**LUCKNOW COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH** is prayerfully seeking a full time Pastor. We are a small rural town in Ontario. Please contact our Search Committee at [plbrink13@gmail.com](mailto:plbrink13@gmail.com) for more information

**Church Positions Available**

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR/MINISTRY FACILITATOR** Is God calling you to a new adventure serving Him in the spectacular foothills of the Rockies? First Christian Reformed Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta is searching for a full time Ministry Facilitator with a heart to serve. The successful candidate will work with the senior pastor, be a liaison and support person for church ministry leaders, facilitate small group development and outreach, and welcome and enfold newcomers. It is not essential that the successful candidate be ordained, but does require a strong grounding in Scripture with a Reformed perspective. Please check out our website at [firstcrrcrocky.ca](http://firstcrrcrocky.ca) and contact us at [rockyfirstcrrcsearch@gmail.com](mailto:rockyfirstcrrcsearch@gmail.com).

**FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN CROWN POINT, IN** is seeking a full-time position Worship Leader who enjoys leading contemporary worship with traditional elements. The candidate will have a mature, personal walk with God, musical proficiency, and skill in developing individuals and teams. Visit [www.cpcrc.org](http://www.cpcrc.org) or contact [first@cpcrc.org](mailto:first@cpcrc.org) with cover letter and resume.

**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 OF INTERGENERATIONAL LIFE** Lombard CRC (Chicagoland western suburbs) is seeking to call a full time Pastor who provides opportunities for our various generations to connect through mentorship, worship, learning, and service. The role will be entrusted with transforming ministries to optimize intergenerational community within our steadfast congregation along with a percentage of preaching responsibilities. The position will work with and report to the Lead Pastor. Required qualifications are a current or forthcoming ordination in the CRCNA and an enthusiastic passion for building both ministries and community grounded in God's word. A full job description can be found at <https://www.lombardcrc.org/jobs/> If interested, please email [LCRCSearchTeam@LombardCRC.org](mailto:LCRCSearchTeam@LombardCRC.org)

**FULL-TIME PASTOR POSITION** Bethel CRC in DeMotte, IN is seeking a Pastor who is dynamic and passionately led by the Holy Spirit in preaching God's word to a multi-generational congregation with emphasis on youth, shepherding and growing our church. Please contact us if interested by reaching out to Russ Vander Molen at: [vander5@embarqmail.com](mailto:vander5@embarqmail.com)

**GGCRC** ([ggcrc.org](http://ggcrc.org)) is seeking a FT Sr. Pastor to provide leadership, direction and vision. Must be a committed Christ follower to serve Him and His people. Qual: M.Div. accredited theological seminary. Min 5 yrs church pastor exp. Proficient in English; fluent in Mandarin or Cantonese. Authorized to work in the US. Inquire at [srpastorsearch@ggcrc.org](mailto:srpastorsearch@ggcrc.org).

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**Church Anniversary**

**CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 100 YEARS**



**A CHURCH ON THE MOVE** First Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Falls, SD will celebrate their centennial, 100 Years of Memories and Ministry, on September 9 & 10, 2023. For more information go to [firstchristianreformed.org](http://firstchristianreformed.org).

**Anniversary**

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 72 YEARS**



**DE WIT**, Don and Lou celebrated their 72nd anniversary on August 20, 2023. God has blessed them with 4 children, 11 grandchildren and 25 great grandchildren. Don sang at many weddings including his own singing "Because You Come to Me" as Lou walked down the aisle. Greetings can be sent to 1400 7th Ave., Room 805, Sioux Center, IA 51250.

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS**



**VANDER MEER**, John & Donna (Helms) of 1047 Helen St NE, GR, MI 49503 will celebrate their 65th anniversary on September 13. Children: John & Lesa, Ruth & Karl DeYoung, Mary & John van der Veen, David & Michelle. 17 grandchildren(11 married) 6 great-grandchildren. We love you and thank God for His faithfulness!

**BERGSMA**, Henk and Diny (Teeuwesen) 278 Hurst Dr. Apt.2 Barrie, ON L4N 0Z3 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on August 22, 2023. Children: Fred & Donna, Henry & Sha-

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ron, Will & Helen, Jerry & Kari, Bernice & Paul (Van Loenen). 14 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Thankful to God for His goodness & faithfulness! Psalm 84:11b

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 55 YEARS

**VAN TIL**, Sam and Judy (Koning) Van Til of Crown Point, IN, celebrated 55 years of marriage in July. Their children, Cheryl Van Til and Steven Putt (Sam, Joseph, and David); Doug and Amanda Van Til (Mabel, Ella, and Libby); Kara and Curt Marcus (Grace and Josh); and Jana Van Til, are thankful to their parents for the Christian example and leadership they have provided and to the Lord for his faithfulness through all generations.

#### Birthdays

##### BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS



**MARCIEL KETT** of 2121 Raybrook Street SE, Lindick Ctr, GR, MI 49546, celebrates her 100th birthday on August 24. Praise the Lord. To God be the glory.

##### BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

**ALLAN JONGSMA** of Sunset Manor Room #1063, 725 Baldwin St., Jenison, MI 49428 will be celebrating his 90th birthday on September 7. An open house will be held at Sunset Manor in Jenison in the Town Square from 2 to 4 PM on Saturday September 9. Please use entrance A off Sally Dr.

**KENNETH HOEKSTRA** of Hudsonville, MI, celebrated his 90th birthday on August 11. Congratulations and much love from your family who has been richly blessed by you these many years. We praise God for your faith and Christian example for us all.

#### Obituaries

**BLAUW**, Joyce (née Potts) Age 80, after a long illness was called to her eternal home on July 2, 1923. Beloved wife of Rev. Richard, loving mother of Deborah (Craig) Knot, Rick (Kimberly) Blauw, David (Jody) Blauw, and Jennifer (David) Haan. Devoted grandmother of 18 and great grandmother of 3. Her only comfort was found in her faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

**BROUWER**, Phyllis (Kuipers) passed away on April 23, 2023 at the age of 93. She was preceded in death by her husband, Peter, with whom she served in churches across the country. She is survived by her brother, John (Elsie), 4 children, 11 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren.

**DE YOUNG** Edna, 94, entered into heaven on May 28, 2023. She is survived by her husband, Harold, children Chuck (Lorie), Chris, Mary (Bill), 3 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren. She was a member of Second Allendale CRC.

**ELDRENKAMP**, Judy, 76 of Oak Lawn, IL, July 12, 2023. Beloved daughter of the late Clarence (1972) and Corinne (2017) Eldrenkamp. Loving sister of Nancy (Paul) Zylstra. Adoring aunt of Roger Zylstra and Corie Zylstra. Memorials to Bethshan, 12927 S Monitor Ave, Palos Hts., IL 60463 appreciated. Revelation 21:1-4



**HARRIS**, John, 93 years of Winnipeg, Manitoba passed away peacefully on April 23rd, 2023. He was preceded in death by his 9 siblings and his first wife Evelyn (nee: Dornbush). He is survived by his second wife Trudy and

his 10 children, 24 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren. He was much loved and respected, and will be greatly missed by family and friends. John's career was as a Christian educator and principal in Christian schools in Winnipeg, Lethbridge, Ottawa and Regina; he then spent his retirement years back home in Winnipeg. John loved reading, and his other passion was gardening. He particularly loved the green growth of spring and the wonderful colours of the fall season. Memorials if so desired to the Calvin Christian School Supplementary Fund in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**HISKES**, George F. Sr., age 87, of Munster, IN passed away peacefully on Monday, June 12, 2023. Beloved husband of the late Audrey Mae Hiskes, nee DeHorn. Loving father of George (Elaine) Hiskes Jr., Jayne (Andrew) Griffin, and Mark (Carol) Hiskes. Cherished grandfather of 9; great-grandfather of 15; Dear brother of Doris (Donald) Koopman, Evelyn (late Ross) Smith, Anjean (LeRoy) Stegink, and Maria (James) Vanden Bosch. Kind uncle of many nieces and nephews.

**PRINCE**, Ellen D (Andre), age 91, of New Era, Michigan, passed away on June 1, 2023. She is survived by her husband Clifford; sons Kenneth (Jane), James (Ruth), Michael (Carol); daughters Laura (Doug) Fessenden and Andrea (James) Karsten; 10 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. She was a member of New Era CRC.

**SCHOTANUS**, William, age 85, passed away peacefully on July 18, 2023, in Kentwood, Michigan. Bill is survived by his loving wife of 61 years, Marilyn VanderLaan, their children, Ann (D) Brown and Bill (Dawn) Schotanus, and his grandchildren, Claire (Brandon) Sytsma, Grace Schotanus, Carrie Brown, Jake Schotanus, and Paige Schotanus. He was a member of Plymouth Heights CRC.

**VAN GALEN**, Maryann. Peacefully, on June 3, 2023 at Toronto ON, age 97. Born and raised in Grand Rapids MI, attended Oakdale Christian High and Calvin College (1947). Musician (violin), church choir leader, teacher. Wife to former Rev. Simon Terpstra (d. 1983). Mother to Jane, Alice, John and Ernest. Grandmother to 8, great-grandmother to 1 and devoted Christian.

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## Bèisbol and the Bible

It's hard to describe what I witnessed in that stadium in Miami.

**BASEBALL IN THE U.S.** has been shrinking in popularity ever since its primary broadcast platform switched from radio to television. The biggest complaints about the sport are that the game is too slow and too boring—things Major League Baseball has recently tried to address with rules changes. But while “America’s pastime” has been faltering for the past six decades, you wouldn’t have known this trend growing up in a Dominican home as I did. In our home, bèisbol was more than a game. It was a way of life.

I remember watching baseball games with my dad and my sister in the evenings. My dad knew when it was time to take the starting pitcher out of the game, when was the most opportune moment to steal a base, and when it was time to swing for the fences. He could also point out the strategic moves and miscues of the managers throughout the game. As a child, I just couldn’t understand how my dad knew what was going to happen before it happened.

My dad never studied past the eighth grade in the Dominican Republic, and yet he eventually learned how to speak English. I once asked my dad how he learned English after he immigrated to New York in 1962. His answer was simple: “Baseball!” Because he knew the game so well, he could put together what the English-speaking broadcasters were saying about the action on the field. That’s incredible!

When I became an adult, though, I too believed that baseball was dying—until I took my dad to see the Dominican team play against Nicaragua at the World Baseball Classic in the spring of 2023.

Some have called this tournament the greatest week in baseball. In this year’s competition, there were 20 different teams from all over the

world—from Japan to Puerto Rico, from Nicaragua to Israel—playing for the pure love of the game and for the honor of representing their home countries.

I don’t think I have ever experienced so much joy and exhilaration at a baseball game. It’s hard to describe what I witnessed in that stadium in Miami. The enthusiasm was spectacular, and the energy was contagious. Every time the camera panned to the stands, someone was dancing. The Dominican fans were even cheering for the Nicaraguan team when they did well. I even saw one outfielder signing autographs through the fence during a pitching change.

Returning to the game of my childhood taught me a valuable lesson about the kingdom of God. One thing I realized is that faster isn’t always better. In a world with Instagram posts and Instacart deliveries, we’ve grown accustomed in the church and in the Christian life to expect immediate results. But slowing down affords us more time to celebrate what God is doing in the present.

The parables of Jesus teach us that the kingdom of God grows slowly but surely. A commitment to making disciples and being a disciple is not a fly-by-night operation. In fact, it’s something that very much resembles a nine-inning baseball game. Discipleship is a long and arduous process that includes what appear to be many scoreless innings, and it’s this one-base-at-a-time approach that reminds us that Jesus wants us to keep running the race until our feet touch home plate. **B**



Felix Fernandez is pastor of South Kendall Community Church in Miami, Fla.

# Flight Patterns of Soaring Souls

There goes my soul  
across the sky,  
soaring in a windswept V,  
a pattern of belonging,  
attached to the wild soul in front of me  
and the one behind.

There above the earth,  
swept aloft by my Leader,  
the walls of tomorrow  
blend into yesterday,  
and eternity is the view from the heights.

They watch,  
those souls tethered to the ground  
in time and place;  
they listen  
to our haunting wild call  
and they know it to be  
the cry of joyful freedom.

They cannot come,  
they cannot soar,  
because they do not know  
my Leader  
and cannot then know how to fly.



Carolyn D. Gardner  
lives in Willamette  
Valley, Ore. She  
attends Westminster  
Presbyterian Church in  
Corvallis, Ore.

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” —John 8:36

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