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²² Transformation in the Dump

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Cover: Jenny and Josh De Groot, mother and son, not only share a home but teach together at Langley Christian High School in British Columbia. They are also both members of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church in Langley. Our thanks to Josh, especially, for being brave enough to be our emergent adult subject!

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN VAN DER LEEK



What's to Discuss?

THE ETHICAL POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH ON HOMOSEXUALITY

was reaffirmed by the denomination's synod (annual leadership meeting) in 2002-2003:

- homosexual orientation is a result of humanity's fallen condition and not the result of sinful choice(s) made by those who have this orientation;
- homosexual actions are sinful, and a person who persists in them is subject to church discipline;
- CRC members who have a homosexual orientation but do not engage in homosexual practices are eligible for church office, but those who engage in homosexual practices are not;
- our congregations must show full acceptance to all our brothers and sisters who have a homosexual orientation, lovingly enfold them in the fellowship of believers, and support them with pastoral care in living out God's will for their lives.

On that last point, synod admitted that our congregations have failed miserably in fulfilling our responsibility to those among us who are homosexual. I've asked around. We've made precious little progress on that since Synod 2003 made that admission. Congregations, de facto, use a "don't ask, don't tell" policy that continues to marginalize those who are homosexual and makes them feel anything but welcome in our midst.

This "ostrich in the sand" approach isn't serving any of us well. I know of a number of congregations who have members living in committed homosexual relationships and in which church leaders are not actively applying church discipline. Why not? It's not because those leaders are lazy or uncaring but because present CRC policy doesn't help them deal pastorally with same-sex couples who live in a committed relationship and who show strong faith, Christian maturity, and a sincere desire to continue within the fellowship of believers.

We still aren't fulfilling our responsibility to those among us who are homosexual.

Perhaps more common is the ongoing exodus of those who must choose between a lifelong same-sex partnership and membership in the CRC. They quietly leave our congregations to worship elsewhere.

Rev. Mike Veenema's IMHO on page 8 reveals the deep personal pain that people suffer because of this present reality in the CRC. Perhaps we need to maintain our official position with respect to homosexual practice but build on it and train local church councils how to implement it properly. Perhaps we need to modify it in some way to address differently those who are in committed same-sex relationships. In either case, we need to converse and deal openly with each other in seeking God's will and God's way in this very significant pastoral matter—without the chilling effect of ecclesiastical censure.

It's time to take another look at the best way for us to proceed together in faith, love, and unity.

Why risk discussing this again, seeing the pain it has brought in other denominations? Because, as Pastor Mike's IMHO shows, the pain is already here. It's quietly borne by those who are silenced and excluded and by their loved ones. For their sake and all of ours, let's heed Paul's urging to "speak the truth in love" so that we will "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15, NRSV).

Let's talk. ■



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

Alberta. See his blog at www.thebanner.org.

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Family Archaeology

RECENTLY my family sifted through objects from the past and the memories they inspired while cleaning out a sway-backed old horse barn that had long borne our “treasures.”

We expected the physical demands, but not the spiritual journey that God provided through visual reminders of his unfailing care and grace to our family of six.

First, as an old basketball hoop resisted removal with one last rusty bolt, its tenacity suggested that in life only sports are important. I’m glad our children outgrew that idea as they learned to enjoy satisfaction in life’s work as well as in its play.

Next, some old camping equipment revived vivid memories of distant destinations and cozy campsites near the van, along with the annoying backseat bickering so much a part of “family unity.” Peace was restored, however, around the many “meals on wheels” lovingly prepared by my wife on picnic tables from Boston to Bakersfield. Now our children camp with their own families, remembering that closeness to God can simply mean being close to the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of God’s creation.

Our daughter’s wooden Bible school stool and the three wooden toolboxes I built for our boys also appeared. Each was simple yet sturdy, and each avoided the dumpster better than store-bought articles—showing that investments of time can have more lasting value than investments that require only money.

Outside the barn stood our car, never again to be sheltered by a structure built around the time cars were invented. Earlier vehicles rested in the barn after various family trips, where they were repeatedly spared from serious accidents and breakdowns throughout. Our vehicles rarely required expensive repairs, much like the

Israelites’ sandals that didn’t wear out in the desert. God blesses not only by what he gives, but also by what he prevents.

I don’t fish, but some old fishing poles reminded me of how I tried to be “Dad” as best I knew how. I soon realized that fatherhood is far more challenging than providing your kids with fun activities. It also includes loving them unconditionally and wanting only good for them, in the hope of projecting at least a pale image of our heavenly Father’s abiding and supporting love for all.

Some objects spoke of dreams unfulfilled. One of my sons once found a sail and had grand plans to build a boat to match. The boat remains unbuilt, but God has blessed our family beyond what we could have asked or imagined in richness and design.

A box of old checks offered a tangible account of how God provided for routine and special needs throughout our family years—daily manna sent faithfully by God in exactly the right amounts.

This historical account, of course, does not match the magnitude of Joshua’s before entering Canaan, but I was glad to be reminded through an old barn and its contents how God supplied all our needs and more.

The next day the barn was demolished. Most of it was discarded, but my youngest son wisely salvaged dozens of its boards and beams, later resurrecting them as tables, toys, and other creations.

The barn is gone, yet it lives on in memory and in use, a fitting symbol of how our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord builds and renews the structure of our lives for today and for eternity. ■



Michael DuMez is the director of Creation Insights, which provides educational services, and a member of Oostburg (Wis.) Christian Reformed Church.



I HAVE COME TO
BELIEVE EVERY
ONE OF US MIGHT
TRACE A TRAIL
FROM GIFT TO GIFT
AS WE LOOK
BACK. LIKE CRUMBS
ON THE PATH,
THEY LED US ON
TOWARD THE
SOURCE OF
ALL ABUNDANCE.

—MARILYN CHANDLER MCENTYRE

Where Is My Son Welcome?

OPINION

Our son knew he was gay for 10 years without telling anyone.

SOME TIME AGO I asked my oldest son a question that was very hard to ask. My wife and I had talked about asking him on occasion, and as I was talking with him on the phone late one night, it seemed to come a bit naturally. I asked him if he was gay.

Our son had grown up in the home of a Christian Reformed pastor—his father, me. As a pastor I had thought about and re-thought and sometimes spoken about and written about (in newspapers) the issue of being gay. I am certain that our son understood from me what most Christian Reformed people believe about being gay.

Our son knew he was gay for 10 years without telling anyone. How he must have struggled, wondering if his parents would still accept him if he came out. As I remember the few times he asked me for my personal thoughts on people who were gay, it breaks my heart to think that behind the questions was a growing knowledge about his own orientation.

How he must have struggled when, years later, I left him at a Christian college—but not before we had dinner

with friends of the school. During that dinner we lamented the hardship caused to the school by the presence of a gay faculty member. How he must have struggled when his fellow students ostracized gays. Our son kept quiet.

He once did make a choice regarding his sexual orientation. In high school he chose to live a straight, heterosexual lifestyle. He thought he might never tell anyone of his orientation and still somehow have a wife and children. How much did he struggle when his dates with young Christian females did not create any sparks for him? Our son chose his sexual orientation and expression. But the choice did not catch. He remains gay.

The first setting in which our son was accepted as a gay young man was his “secular” medical school. The acceptance was immediate. What a sad contrast to his experience in the Christian community.

I believe that I am called as a father to love my son. God has placed him in our family. My wife and I are called to love and support him in every way. His brother and sister, along with many other relatives and friends, have been clear that they love him and support him. Our wish for him is the same as that for all our children: that he would live his whole life, whatever choices he will make, in the context of the grace of Christ. But if, in that context, he chooses a committed same-sex relationship with a Christian partner, a choice that does not conform to the expectations of most straight Christians, where will he be welcome? ■



Rev. Michael Veenema is pastor of Kentville (Nova Scotia) Christian Reformed Church.

Embryo Adoption

My family and I have enjoyed many articles in *The Banner* over the years. However, the January 2009 article “Is Embryo Adoption a ‘God Thing?’” was quite concerning to us.

The article begins by stating that embryos are “society’s most vulnerable members.” Therefore, it sent chills down my spine to further read that when using in vitro fertilization (IVF), couples frequently have “unneeded frozen embryos.”

It’s important to clearly define a human embryo as a person. And, in the case of Christians, a covenant child. Thus, shouldn’t we be outraged that IVF produces and kills many thousands of “unneeded, frozen” covenant children?

May we prayerfully seek the Lord Jesus Christ in this and all bioethical concerns.

—Allan Schwarb Jr.
Troy, Mo.

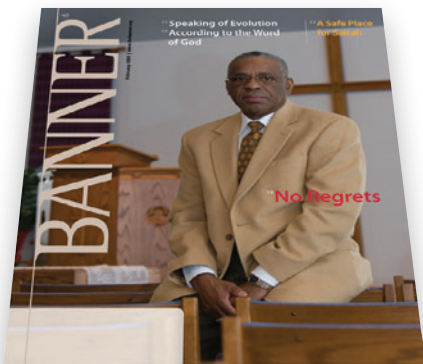
There is much good in this article. The article also raises a few issues.

Is an embryo a human life? I think of a stored embryo as the product of a scientific process. Once received and nurtured in a woman’s womb, it *becomes* a human life. The embryo is a significant component, but there is no human life apart from the womb’s significant contribution.

And isn’t the use of embryos to find cures for other diseases and disabling conditions also a “God thing”? Jesus was very much concerned with the restoration of the sick. I have a friend who is wheelchair-bound. He is active, employed, and has a family. Wouldn’t it be a “God thing” and an affirmation of the sanctity of human life if through the results of embryonic stem cell research he would be restored physically?

—Rev. Jochem Vugteveen
Grand Rapids, Mich.

LETTERS



To assert that “an embryo is not a potential human life—it is a human life with potential” is comparable to asserting that an acorn is an oak tree or that an egg is a chicken. This assertion makes the already difficult conversations about embryos virtually impossible and loads unwarranted guilt on those who lovingly make informed choices that result in the destruction of defective or healthy embryos.

—George Vander Weit
Rochester, Mich.

Calvin Cover

I have heard many comments from my brothers and sisters about the cover of your magazine (January 2009). Not one of those comments was good. You have no respect where there should be much. I am disappointed with you.

—Patrick S. Jones
Lynden, Wash.

I am offended by the front cover of the January *Banner*. Really, would Mr. Calvin approve a crazy drawing of a godly man?

—Marian Altena
Pipestone, Minn.

I was disappointed with this front cover. The many trade magazines or daily newspapers I get do not put comics on the front cover. In the past *The Banner* was

of a higher caliber. This type of front page does not help your image.

—Lester Langeland
Marne, Mich.

Kudos

Just a quick note to let you know that the brief reflections on the “Catch Your Breath” page that combine a quote and a photo help make my month. I usually clip them and tack them near my daily workspace. The ones that are particularly meaningful to me get placed in my Bible so I can review them periodically. My sincere thanks to whoever does those—they never fail to lift my spirit or my faith.

—Carol Veenstra
Richmond Hill, Ontario

Thank you! The *Banner* credits our thoughtful managing editor, Joyce Kane, for finding the insightful quotes and our talented graphic designers for the complementary photos.

—Ed.

Regarding your editorial of January 2009 (“Celebrating a Servant of God’s Word”), thank you so very much for helping us rethink who we really are and our purpose for living—which, as you suggested, is to glorify God our Father. In wishing John Calvin, that servant of God, a happy birthday, I would like to say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Happy 500th!”

—Patricia Smith
Stockton, Calif.

Financial Blessings

Although I agree with some of the author’s points in this article (“Is Prosperity a Blessing?” November 2008), he seems to take the extreme opposite view from that of the so-called prosperity preachers.

It’s true that financial prosperity may not be a sign of God’s blessing, but that certainly doesn’t rule out that God does

bless his people financially along with other ways.

—Dan Vander Kodde
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Shoe Boxes

Although the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is a wonderful organization to give to, I would like to clear up some misconceptions about Operation Christmas Child (“Christmas Giving,” November 2008).

When these shoe boxes filled with toys, clothing, soap, crayons, and other items arrive at their destinations, children and their families are invited to the local church or school. While the boxes are being distributed, family members are asked if they would like to hear more about our wonderful Savior. Who can put a price on sharing the gospel with others?

I have found this giving project to be a practical and inexpensive way for young children to serve. Every child, rich or poor, ought to have opportunities to be blessed by God, even in small ways.

—Karen Meinders
Mission, British Columbia

These shoe boxes provide local churches with an effective tool for evangelism. Included in each box is the gospel message in the recipient child’s own language. The boxes are followed up by discipleship programs and Bible studies. In many “closed” countries the nonthreatening shoe-box gifts open doors. Not to mention that the children who send them pray for the children who will receive them.

It’s a shame to criticize one of the many ways that God can choose to work through those who are willing to give.

—Samantha Bodine
Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Sea to Sea in Nicaragua

As 2008 gave way to 2009, a Sea to Sea bike tour was taking place in the southern hemisphere.

Sea to Sea Nicaragua brought together a team of 18 Canadians, six Americans, and four Nicaraguans. The team started pedaling on Dec. 29 in the North Atlantic coast city of Puerto Cabezas. When they dipped their tires into the Pacific Ocean on Jan. 6, they had cycled more than 400 miles (650 km).

Stacey Collie, a member of Thunder Bay (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church, was one of the younger cyclists in a group that ranged in age from 14 to 63. "The whole trip was a challenge in every way possible," said Collie. Steep hills and gravel roads embedded with rocks proved more challenging than any of the cyclists anticipated.

Sea to Sea Nicaragua was organized by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and its local partner in Nicaragua, Acción Médica Cristiana. The goal was to raise money to buy seeds for the Miskito farmers in Nicaragua, many of whom lost homes and crops when Hurricane Felix swept through in 2007.



Cyclists saw firsthand the difference their cycling tour will make. Here Cathy Dentz (left) talks with Yolanda Kristen and a friend. Kristen's house was one of the ones rebuilt after Hurricane Felix.

The cyclists raised nearly \$57,000. In a special arrangement with the Canadian FoodGrains Bank, the money was matched 4:1 by the Canadian government for a total of \$285,000.

Alie Beghuis, a member of Community CRC in Dixon's Corners, Ontario, cycled with her husband, Wim. "The temperature was a constant 28 to 30 degrees C [82 to 86 F]," she said. "The first days were steep inclines and incredibly rough roads with holes, rocks, and mud. We shared the road with cows, horses, pigs, and chickens."

A support team accompanied the cyclists to supply them with food and water along the way. Evening accommodations were sparse and rugged, without water or electricity, but even that couldn't dampen the cyclists' enthusiasm.

"Biking for a cause is super rewarding" said Calvin Dentz. Dentz and his wife, Cathy, also members of the Dixon's Corners church, were inspired to join the tour when presented with the challenge by visiting CRWRC missionary Mark Vanderwees. Vanderwees coordinated the tour and cycled with his 15-year-old son, Jesse.

The cyclists agreed that the most holy moment of the tour was a Sunday evening communion service at which they shared Gatorade and tortillas.

—Jenny de Groot



(above) Sea to Sea Nicaragua started at the Atlantic Ocean in the city of Puerto Cabezas.

(right) Sea to Sea Nicaragua ended at the Pacific Ocean in the city of Pochmil on Nicaragua's west coast.



Gravel roads gave way to pavement by day 7. Here Wim Berghuis cycles out of Boaca toward Managua.

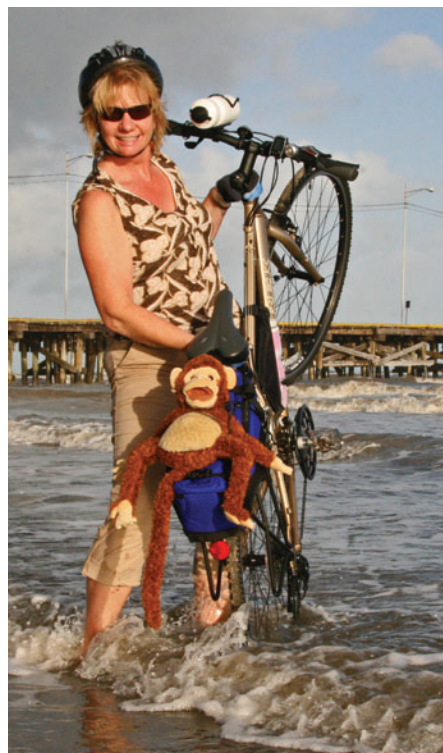


Chepe (Jose Medina) fixes Wim Berghuis's bike. Bike repair was a regular necessity.

(right) The cyclists were accompanied by a support crew that included, from left, Dave Stienstra, Kevin Voorberg, April Voorberg, and Rachel Pontier, all of whom live in Nicaragua.

(below) Cyclist Lynn Groen celebrates the completion of the trip.

(right below) The cyclists' route across Nicaragua.



CALLS ACCEPTED

From New Hope Community Christian Reformed Church, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., to Candidate **Mary L. Bosch.**

From Parkersburg (Iowa) CRC to **Rev. Russell Boersma.**

From First CRC, Detroit, to **Rev. Ben Van Arragon.**

CRC Ministries and Employees Feel Budget Pinch

The latest numbers show that denominational ministry share giving is still down from last year. Ministry shares are a major portion of the money local congregations send to fund shared ministries of the Christian Reformed Church.

With an anticipated 10 percent decrease in giving, denominational ministries continue to tighten belts.

“Projections, economic indications, and what we’re hearing from major donors and churches mean we anticipate a 10 percent drop at this point,” said Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRC.

Directors of all the CRC’s ministry agencies met with their staff and identified \$2 million in program expenses that could be cut or postponed for this fiscal year, which ends June 30. Those cuts include reduced travel, adjustments in programming, cancelled conferences, and more.

For example, Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of the Disability Concerns ministry, will take just three short driving trips this spring to help churches continue to incorporate people with disabilities into the life of the church. All other travel and speaking engagements at conferences and classis meetings have been cancelled.

For the fiscal year that starts July 1, each agency prepared a budget that anticipates a 15 percent drop in income. A consolidated budget from all the agencies will go to Synod 2009 for approval.

“Budgeting for a 15 percent decline from this year’s budget—we think that is conservative,” said Dykstra. “If revenues are better than that, we can do some of the things we didn’t budget for.”

Denominational employees are also feeling the pinch in their own pocketbooks. Pending approval in late February by the CRC’s Board of Trustees, changes to pensions and benefits will take effect immediately.

If the changes are approved, U.S. employees will see their health care premiums double from 10 to 20 percent—from \$132 to \$264 per month for families. In Canada, employees will start paying \$29 per month toward extended health coverage.

On both sides of the border, employer contributions to employee pensions would be cut by nearly two-thirds.

Because of rules established by synod, contributions to the pensions of ordained personnel working for the denomination cannot be changed. So those employees, on both sides of the border, would be assessed 4 percent of their salary for pension contribution.

Those changes are expected to generate about \$400,000 in savings over the last four months of the fiscal year.

Another proposal going to the board is to freeze the salaries of all employees for the coming year.

—Gayla R. Postma

California Woman Turns Hearing into Doing

During the holidays, you hear about people reaching out to those in need, but very few people actually do it. This past Christmas, Aileen Gram-Reefer of Faith Christian Fellowship CRC in Walnut Creek, Calif., turned hearing into doing.

When her employer wanted to promote team building, volunteer projects were the answer. Gram-Reefer was asked to organize the projects since she had been attending a “Hearing & Doing” series at her church. The program seeks to link volunteers to needs in the community.

Gram-Reefer coordinated three projects: food boxes for a local crisis center; gifts for Toys for Tots; and cookies, cider, and caroling at a convalescent center.

Her employer allowed her to organize the outreach activities during business hours. “Several of the folks who went to [the crisis center] told me that it was enlightening, sad, hard work, but it felt good and they will go back again and take their kids,” said Gram-Reefer.

The monthly “Hearing & Doing” speaker series was designed by the community relations team of Faith Christian Fellowship to help connect individuals and groups to the volunteer opportunities available in the community. The program includes 30 churches throughout Contra Costa County.

“It has worked out well to get people out of the pews and into the community,” said the series founder, Bill Gram-Reefer.

—Heidi Wicker



Donna Kennison (left) and Emily Giglio pack food boxes at Monument Crisis Center.

New Jersey Pastor Teaches Entrepreneurs

For Guillermo Godoy, ministry means planting businesses as well as churches.

Godoy, a ministry associate, is pastor of Jesus Te Llama (Jesus Calls You) CRC in Paterson, N.J., where the population is 83 percent Hispanic and African American and the median household income is \$10,000 below the nation's average.

Before Godoy was a pastor, he was an engineer and a consultant in his native Chile, with training in business and economics. When he saw that people coming to his church had a difficult time supporting their families, much less the church, he decided to help them do both.

He started with free two-hour lectures to the community, but



that soon expanded to six hours of teaching on two consecutive Saturdays.

Now the course Godoy teaches lasts 48 hours and covers marketing, organization, business finance, accounting, legal matters, and tax issues. Although the membership of Godoy's church is 80 percent female, the majority of participants in his courses are male. This is the congregation's first outreach program that has been successful in drawing in men.

Nilo Dias and Mara Saldana, immigrants from Uruguay, attended the training and have started a photography business. They said that the church is very important to their family and that the community will be positively benefited by ministries, such as this one, that support the work force.

—Calvin Hulstein, with translation by Allie Meyaard

Students in the business class at Jesus Te Llama CRC in New Jersey, from left: Eucaris Fernandez, Yasmin Gomez, Luis Gomez, Rachel Tomack, Hernan Zapata-Tomack, Jorge Villa Sr., Jorge Villa Jr., Martina Martinez.

A Return Ticket to Sierra Leone

Barry Meyer and a Christian Reformed mission team worked hard in Sierra Leone in the 1980s to install a water system for the Kuranko people in Foria.

But a decade later, Sierra Leone's civil war left the country in chaos. Agriculture and health programs no longer functioned. Villages were burned and water systems were damaged or destroyed.

This past Christmas, Meyer, a member of Third CRC in Denver, Colo., went back to Foria, but he didn't go alone. He took with him eight students, a teacher, and a parent from Denver Christian High School.

Supported by the entire Denver Christian School system and area churches, the team raised money for materials to rebuild a water system, paving the way for a construction team to follow. They filled a 40-foot shipping container with more than 2 miles (3.2 km) of plastic pipe, as well as cement, tools, toys, school supplies, and clothing.



Barry Meyer (second from right) presents school supplies to Konku Miye Conteh (right), Headmaster S.J. Koroma (second from left), and another government school official.

Arriving in Foria before Christmas, the team lived out their mission's theme, "Restoring Hope," and went door-to-door distributing gifts to every household. They also worshiped at Sierra Leone's first Christian Reformed church, established in Kabala in 2007.

For Meyer, going back was bittersweet—it was good to see the village again and greet

old friends, but painful to hear the stories of war and survival.

Nonetheless, Meyer said the trip couldn't have gone better. He was reminded of the words in Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. . . ."

—Alice Durfee

California Pastor Takes Reformed Theology to Ukraine



Rev. Glenn Gerdes traveled to Ukraine to teach Reformed theology.

In a country where most churches are Russian Orthodox, Rev. Glenn Gerdes is talking about Reformed theology. Gerdes, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Ripon, Calif., spent two weeks in Donetsk, Ukraine, teaching one class on the sayings of Jesus and another on the sacraments.

Gerdes worked with Reformed International Theological Education (RITE), which brings in visiting pastors and professors to train students in Reformed theology. The two-year program for Ukrainian



students alternates two weeks of classes with visiting pastor-professors and two weeks at home applying their learning.

"RITE is building up and encouraging pastors, teachers, and other servants of the church who are part of Ukrainian culture. . . . and who desire to serve the body of Christ in it," said Gerdes.

This was his second trip to Ukraine. He said one of the highlights of this trip was seeing the results of students learning, expe-

riencing, and sharing a Reformed worship service.

"Doctrinally, Reformed church plants are desperately needed in Donetsk, and the work of RITE helps fulfill this need," he said. "Because the students are eager to learn and RITE is committed to solid teaching, by God's grace and power we anticipate more of this fruit in the future."

—Heidi Wicker

Blindness No Roadblock for Colorado Woman

Gail Selfridge, a member of Horizon Community Christian Reformed Church in Highlands Ranch, Colo., realized a dream when she worked on a Habitat for Humanity house in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, last fall.

Selfridge, who is blind, had always wanted to do something to help others. Her opportunity came when she got a new guide dog named Alisse and met the puppy's trainer, Eydie Yemmans.

Yemmans was a Habitat for Humanity team leader who was hoping to include someone with visual impairments in a house-building project to show that people who are blind have much to contribute in the service of others.

Yemmans invited Selfridge to join the team, along with George Wertz, who is also visually impaired. Selfridge's church helped her raise the needed funds, and in October she and Alisse flew to Puerto Vallarta. The project was the first to include people with visual impairments on the team.

Selfridge sifted sand, loaded rocks into buckets, and handed cement blocks to Wertz and others who were putting them in place. She said the way the Mexican people treated her was exhilarating. "The people were wonderful—they never acted like I couldn't do what needed to be done, and they weren't afraid to steer me in the right direction."

—Alice Durfee



Gail Selfridge with her guide dog, Alisse.



Bill Kuyvenhoven, Reinskje Kampstra, Corry Kuyvenhoven, Woud De Lange, Bea De Lange, Pauline Van Huuksloot, Kees Brinkman, and Greg Brinkman traveled to Indiana to help flood victims.

Ontario Team Restores Lives While Restoring Homes

"Every church should do it!" exclaimed Bill Kuyvenhoven about a service project he participated in for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Kuyvenhoven and seven others aged 23 to 85 from Cephas Christian Reformed Church traveled from Peterborough, Ontario, to Delphi, Ind., to help people in that community who had been

affected by the flooding of the Tippecanoe River the previous winter.

The team hammered nails to lay new subfloors, painted, insulated, and helped restore homes to a liveable condition. They also helped restore the lives of people who had been surviving in trailers. One homeowner spent his days with the volunteer workers—even though he could hardly

walk, he wanted to help them fix his house.

Kuyvenhoven said the heartfelt thankfulness of that owner and of other people who received help left a lasting impression on the Cephas group. They had gone to help others, but they found themselves blessed too.

—Brenda Visser

Writing for Rights in Ontario

About 80 people from Good News Christian Reformed Church in London, Ontario, marked International Human Rights Day by writing letters to politicians around the world.

The church's public justice committee hosted Write for Rights, an event sponsored by Amnesty International at which people gather in groups to hear about human rights abuses and to write letters of protest to the governments involved.

Anton Brink, a member of Good News CRC, said the goal is to "put pressure on the heads of state for the release of political and religious prisoners."

The church's public justice committee held a potluck supper and educated those who attended about human rights abuses in four countries. Then everyone began to write.

In all, church members wrote 202 letters that evening and the next Sunday after church. Redeemer CRC in Sarnia, Ontario, also held a Write for Rights event. Across Canada, nearly 30,000 letters were written.

"It's pretty wonderful to see young children in grade 7 and 8 writing letters," said Brink. "If you look at the Bible, it talks about salvation, but there are many more references to doing justice—looking after the poor, the widow, the fatherless, people in jail. It's what Micah 6:8 is all about—doing justice."

—Heather Wright



CAROLYN KOSTER YOST

Glen Walstra (left) from Family Network of Wyoming, Mich., and Rev. Hank Vlaardingbroek of West Forty-Fourth Street CRC

Michigan Church Morphs into Food Pantry

When West Forty-Fourth Street Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich., disbands as a congregation at the end of March, it will continue to serve the community as a food pantry.

Church members unanimously voted to donate the mortgage-free 40-year-old building to Family Network of Wyoming, an interdenominational agency serving hungry people in southwest Grand Rapids.

"About a year or two ago, we realized our church was at the end of its life cycle," said Rev. Hank Vlaardingbroek, who will retire when the 52-member church closes. He said the congregation is making the transition well. "People are excited about this; they aren't going through a grief process," he said. "There won't be preaching from the pulpit anymore, but they will still be reaching out."

The nonprofit Family Network offers food, cooking and nutrition classes, medical equipment loans, and a Christmas store. Relocating from a cramped storefront site to the church building will put Family Network in the center of its service area, ministry director Glen Walstra said.

The agency feeds about 300 families each month.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

WORLD NEWS

Evangelicals, Progressives Find Common Ground

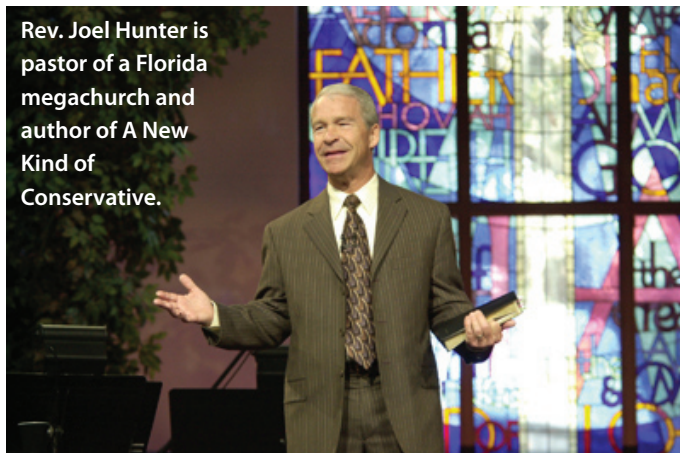
A U.S. evangelical-progressive coalition has developed an agenda aimed at moving beyond past divisions on hot-button social issues to seek policy changes on abortion, torture, and other issues.

After two years of discussion, the coalition has concluded that their "Come, Let Us Reason Together" agenda will include reducing abortion, protecting employment rights of gays and lesbians, renouncing torture, and reforming immigration laws.

"We offer the president and leaders of Congress on both sides of the aisle a road map on how to put an end to the culture wars, to move the country beyond the ugliness and stagnation of distrust and divide," said Rachel Laser, culture program director of the Third Way, a Washington progressive think tank, which spearheaded the coalition.

Evangelical leaders who do not condone gay marriage said they

Rev. Joel Hunter is pastor of a Florida megachurch and author of *A New Kind of Conservative*.



could nonetheless support greater workplace protections for gays and lesbians, provided there is an exemption for faith-based employers.

"Though I focus on the ideal for marriage as between one man and one woman . . . I also believe that each American citizen has the right to earn a living without discrimination," said Florida megachurch pastor Rev. Joel Hunter.

The abortion-reduction component of the agenda includes helping prevent unintended pregnancies, supporting pregnant women, and expanding support for adoption. The opposition to torture includes a call for the U.S. to forbid any interrogation meth-

ods it does not want used against Americans. The immigration reform component calls for secure borders, an "earned path to citizenship," and a guest worker program that fills jobs but doesn't create a disadvantage for American workers.

The effort has been welcomed by organizations such as NARAL Pro-Choice America and People for the American Way, and religious leaders such as Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and Fuller Theological Seminary President Richard Mouw.

(RNS)

No Evidence that Recession Fills Church Pews

The economic recession has not led to an increase in attendance at U.S. houses of worship, according to Gallup pollsters.

Despite anecdotal evidence cited in high-profile media outlets, Americans' worship patterns have held steady in 2008, the Gallup Poll reports. Since mid-February, Gallup said, it has asked 1,000 adults a day how often they attend worship services at a church, synagogue, or mosque.

About 42 percent said they go weekly or almost weekly. That figure did not increase in September through December, when the recession tightened its hold on the U.S. economy.

Gallup also said there has been no significant change in the percentage of Americans who say they attend church about once a month, seldom, or never.

"The available data on self-reported church attendance among American adults do not appear—as of mid-December—to support the hypothesis that on a society-wide basis, the current bad economic times have resulted in an increase in Americans' church-going behavior," Gallup's Dec. 17 report said.

The pollsters said they conduct about 30,000 interviews per month on church attendance, which results in a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percentage point for the surveys.

(RNS)

Rick Warren Shelters Breakaway Anglicans

Evangelical pastor Rick Warren has offered to open the campus of his California megachurch to conservative Anglicans who have broken with the Episcopal Church. The invitation came just days after California's Supreme Court ruled that breakaway churches cannot keep church property.

Churches Take Food Action Following Cholera Outbreak

In response to pleas for humanitarian assistance, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee as part of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is releasing

MAKING NEWS

10,000 tons of emergency food aid to 120,000 citizens in Zimbabwe. The relief follows a U.N. prediction that 5.1 million Zimbabweans would require emergency food supplements in the first three months of 2009.

India's Supreme Court Warns Orissa over Religious Violence

India's Supreme Court has told Orissa, a state on the country's east coast, that it will not "tolerate persecution of religious minorities" and that if the state government cannot protect Christians, then it should "quit office." Violence between Hindus and the minority Christian

population there has been ongoing since late August.

Two Canadians Arrested on Polygamy Charges

Two top leaders of a fundamentalist polygamous sect in Bountiful, British Columbia, have been arrested and charged with practicing polygamy. The case may test whether Canada's decision to legalize same-sex marriage also justifies the practice of polygamy.

See the story behind each headline in the February Banner online at www.thebanner.org.

Re-Emerging Adults

IT'S 6:30 A.M.—ANOTHER SCHOOL DAY in our household. I run upstairs to knock on our son's bedroom door and let him know the shower is free and that we are all running late for school.

That scenario wouldn't be unusual in most families, except that this son is 28 years old. He is also a teacher. He not only lives with us (his parents) but also carpools to school with me, his mom. Actually, it's not really carpooling—he catches a ride with me because he doesn't have a car.

Among his many other identities, our son carries the label of “emerging adult.” Emerging adults share a feeling of in-between-ness in their lives. They are well beyond the teenage years but not quite fully independent adults. They often live with their parents (see box on p. 18).

As I write this, my husband, Dennis, and I are the parents of four sons and a daughter-in-law, all in their 20s. Above our dining room table, four clocks remind us of one short season when all four of our children not only lived away from home but lived in four different time zones. Under varying circumstances, for different reasons, and at different seasons, they have all returned to the family home for a time.

During a recent summer our eldest son, Rueben, and our daughter-in-law, Asia, lived with us. They were en route from work, music, and university in San Francisco to the same in Kingston, Ontario. It was just one of several returns home for Rueben since leaving for university the first time 10 years earlier.

Our third son, Asher, has spent the past eight years away from home at university, with stretches of time in Canada as well as overseas. Until his recent employment with an architectural firm in Vancouver, he has always come “home.” These stays stretched from two weeks to four months, and prior to each stay there was always a phone call confirming flight numbers and arrival times. A welcome back home was never questioned.

Our youngest son, Gabriel, now in his fourth year of university in Ontario, still calls our house on Telegraph Trail home, though he has been away for stretches of university and work in Alberta.

Our second-eldest son, Joshua, is the one living with us now. Like his brothers, his journeys, travels, and studies have always brought him back home. When we spent six months in Africa several years ago, he tended our cows, fed our chickens, and planted our spring garden. This year he is teaching at the local Christian high school after having taught kindergarten children in Seoul, South Korea, for one year. »



Who Are They?

The term *emerging adult* was coined by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, who teaches as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. He began a study in 1995, conducting interviews with 300 young people ages 18 to 29 from varied economic, regional, and cultural backgrounds across the United States. Arnett published his findings and assessment in the book *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Arnett identifies five main features that define this era of emerging adulthood:

- **Identity exploration.** Young people are deciding who they are and exploring what they want out of work, education, and relationships.
- **Instability.** The post-high school years are marked by repeated residence changes as young people either go to college and/or work and live on their own or with roommates. For most, frequent moves end as they begin establishing families and careers.
- **Self-focus.** Freed of the parent- and society-directed routine of school, young people try to decide what they want to do, where they want to go, and who they want to be with—before those choices get limited by the commitments of marriage, children, and career.
- **Feeling in-between.** Many emerging adults say they are taking responsibility for themselves but still do not completely feel like an adult.
- **Possibilities.** Optimism reigns—for careers, travel, and relationships. Most emerging adults believe they have a good chance of a better life than their parents have. And even if their parents are divorced, they believe they'll find a lifelong soulmate.

—Jenny deGroot

Common Phenomenon

Our situation is not atypical. An increasing number of parents find themselves welcoming their adult children back into the family home.

Some emerging adults have never left home, but most have been away for a period of time. Although for many returning home would not be their first choice, many see it as a short-term solution and appreciate the support and willingness of their parents to allow them back.

As is often the case with a newly defined phenomenon, most of us do not have the experiences of our own parents to draw on. Influenced by many factors, the previous generation encouraged post-high-school education but also

expected that after high school their children would move out of the family home, become financially independent, marry, and purchase a home.

Our adult children have come back to our home under many circumstances, often in between or at the end of a course of study. Some needed a place to stay when transitioning for a career change or a geographical move. Cultural saturation or travel weariness can also draw children back to the family home. Some come home flat broke, and still others need healing from a broken heart or spirit.

In most cases, the home emerging adults return to is the one where they spent their teenage years. The chance that young adults will return to their parents' home for a prolonged period is minimized if the parents have moved out of the family home the children knew as teens. Statistics also show that the relationship with the mother has an impact on whether or not the young adult is able to reintegrate back into the family home.

An increasing number
of parents find
themselves welcoming
their adult children back
into the family home.

New Relationships

Scripture is clear about children honoring their parents and parents in turn honoring their children. Caring for each other as time and circumstance require is both honoring and obedient—though not always easy or convenient.

Living with young adults is very different from living with teenagers. As children become adults, the anxieties and responsibilities that come with raising teenagers fade. I don't know when I outgrew the habit of waiting up for adult children, but I eventually did.

Sharing a home with an adult child is an art, even if it's also a necessity. It's important that parents and their living-at-home adult child openly communicate about how this new household unit will function. Juggling several family, work, and social schedules is just one challenge. Dividing up household chores

Back to the Nest

Somewhere there is a very important article in some chic men's magazine that gives 10 easy steps to perfect bachelorhood. And somewhere near the top, in bold, somewhat threatening print, it says, **MOVE OUT OF YOUR PARENTS' HOUSE!**

Unfortunately that article won't have my name under it, while this one does—an article defending, or at least publicly making excuses to the single women of the Christian Reformed Church, why I am still living in my parents' house.

Watching the birds on my parents' feeder points to the most ubiquitous of familial metaphors: the home as nest. This generally evokes the image of small sparrow-like birds in quaint bird-houses watching their young flop and flit their way toward flight and finally wing away to begin life on their own. Then I picture my own family bird box, where there have been as many as two seagulls stuffed back in with Ma n' Pa Sparrow, squeaking and squawking into adulthood.

This new title I have fallen under, "emerging adult," does little to create a better sense of self than does the bird metaphor. Rather, it gives an inadequate, get-out-of-the-water-you-tadpole-that-never-lost-his-tail feeling. Adding to this sense of inadequacy is the struggle to find balance in singleness and an unstable world.

There are many different reasons why "emerging adults" end up back home. Life, we've discovered, doesn't come with an instruction manual, and things don't always go as we planned. And in our financially re-emerging times, few options are as good as the familiar stability of the family nest.

Life inside this bird box is a lesson in humility, frugality, blessing, and grace—a lesson that I have needed. It reminds me what's truly important.

I prefer the metaphor of home as nest to the sludge puddle that "emerging adults" suggests. But I'm sure that as my parents see me lurch out of my bedroom in the morning with disheveled hair and unshaven face, they wish I would read at least a few tips on self-preservation that can be found on the magazine racks.

—Joshua deGroot

is another. Who takes care of the bathroom? The laundry? The fridge? The garbage?

Reclaiming physical space in a house that has become occupied during a child's absence can also be difficult. More than once, as guitars and art easels, coats and shoes take over the open spaces, we have been reminded that "You have the whole house. I have only one room."

Financial obligations, particularly regarding room and board, need to be discussed, clearly understood, and agreed upon by both the young adult and parents. Preparing and sharing family meals and participating in a shared devotional life, church life, and social networks can also either enrich communal life or become sources of increased tension.

While parents must let go of taking responsibility for their adult children, those children must also embrace their own emerging adulthood and make their own decisions. For the young adult this can be a difficult transition. Living back in the family home invariably reminds Joshua that he is the child and we are his parents. It's easy to fall back into old patterns that we thought we had all outgrown.

Surprise Blessings

The return of adult children to the parental home for a time can also be a source of surprise blessings. Young adults who return home have the chance to renew and strengthen relationships with younger siblings. Their own childhood memories awaken. Both parents and young adults have the opportunity to share and expand their tastes in food, music, film, and literature.

In a culture that values and promotes independence, both for young adults as well as their emerging "empty nester" parents, choosing or being forced through circumstance to live in mutual dependence is not usually lauded. But embracing these opportunities for interdependent living has surprised us with blessing. In our family, for example, we enjoyed the shared experiences of spreading a winter's worth of manure on the fields, canning a year's supply of applesauce, and taking pride in our joint effort at home renovations.

As I write this, it is evening. Thinking back to this morning, I realize that the rush was not about getting a teenager out of bed, but about getting a family of adults who slept in up for a new day. I am not the mother of a teenager but of a young man who teaches high school students every day and who does his share in our household. This evening he made dinner, and he is now cooking soup stock for tomorrow and preparing a grocery list. We will sit down for a glass of wine before bed and chat about our day. And we will laugh together.

Right now, we are treasuring Joshua's company, knowing that this time, too, will pass. ■



Jenny deGroot lives in Langley, British Columbia with her husband, Dennis, and son Joshua. She is an assistant principal and teacher librarian at Langley Christian Elementary School and a news correspondent for *The Banner*. She is a member of Willoughby CRC, Langley.

Joshua deGroot is an artist, musician, and teacher, presently teaching English and journalism at Langley (B.C.) Christian High School. He lives with his parents and is also a member of Willoughby CRC.

A Multicultural Journey



ISTOCKPHOTO

THE MORNING AFTER Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in 1968, third-grade teacher Jane Elliott changed her lesson plan. She needed to find a way to help her rural Midwestern white students respond to a violent racist tragedy. For three days her class became test subjects in a social sciences project that has intrigued and tormented viewers of *A Class Divided* ever since. Watch it at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/>. Then, if you wish to pursue the matter further, take the following multicultural awareness challenge.

Read *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New Press) by James Loewen while viewing the HBO video *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and the Native American film *Skins* (First Look Pictures). If possible, attend a powwow—they're easier to find than most people think.

Concurrently, begin reading a chapter a day from the fine anthology *Asian American X* (University of Michigan Press), produced by college students who are the product of migration, adoption, or refugee status. Rent *The Namesake* (Fox Searchlight) on DVD, and settle in for a moving testimony of life and identity.

Next, immerse yourself in Timothy Tyson's gripping personal history, *Blood*

Done Sign My Name (Crown). Take half an hour to watch Charles Guggenheim's award-winning 1994 documentary *A Time for Justice* (Teaching Tolerance). Then go to your public library to get three PBS videos, together called *Race—The Power of an Illusion*.

Turning your attention to Hispanics, the newest major minority group in North America, read either Jose Ramos's *The Other Face of America* (HarperCollins) with its mesmerizing journalistic storytelling, or Roberto Suro's *Strangers Among Us* (Vintage), which offers fascinating sociological analysis.

Finally, make your survey fully contemporary by reading *American Crescent* (Random House), authored by Hassan Qazwini, who heads the American Center for Islam in Dearborn, Michigan. Watch David Stacey's journey (available on hulu.com) from a West Virginia evangelical Christian community to Qazwini's neighborhood in *30 Days: Muslims and America*.

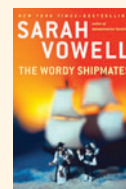
Externalize your conversations by inviting your friends or family over for a viewing of either *Crash* (Lions Gate, rated "R" for sexual situations and violence) or *The Visitor* (Anchor Bay). Be sure to put on the coffee for a long night of discussion. You will never see the world in the same way again. ■



Along with theology and biblical studies courses at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, Wayne Brouwer teaches "Encounter with Cultures."

The Wordy Shipmates

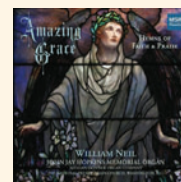
by Sarah Vowell
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr.



Author and NPR commentator Vowell's look at the Puritans is smart, funny, pithy, and fair—four things the Puritans themselves aren't exactly associated with. However, Vowell corrects many of the stereotypes that bedevil these flawed Calvinist geniuses, examining the story of John Winthrop and Massachusetts Bay—and how that story has echoed from colonial times till now—with equal parts hipster humor and moral passion. If you think learning essential American history has to be dull, give this book a try. (Riverhead)

Amazing Grace: 60 Hymns of Faith and Praise

by William Neil
reviewed by Randall Engle



This two-CD set showcases the magnificent Aeolian-Skinner pipe

organ of the National Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C. The substantial collection was recorded with the newest digital technology that captures the enormous space and versatile instrument in all their grandeur, from the whispery celestes to the thunderous 32-foot bombard pedal stop. Mr. Neil renders these 60 well-known hymns in such a way that they sound new again, in ear and in soul. (MSR Classics, MS1183 – 2 CDs)

Take a
multicultural
awareness
challenge.

Big and Bad

by Etienne Delessert

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Incessantly consuming creatures, Wolf spreads fear wherever he goes. The other animals band together with their own kind to stop him, but they are unsuccessful. However, when the various creatures—birds, badgers, cats, beavers, rabbits, and pigs—use three pigs to lure Wolf, their combined wits and efforts destroy the oppressor. In this brilliant retelling of “The Three Little Pigs,” Delessert’s humorous illustrations belie the seriousness of his theme—that tyranny is most effectively dealt with through communal creative endeavors. (Houghton Mifflin)



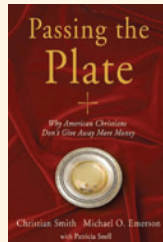
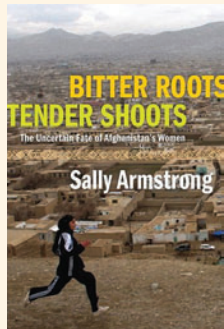
Bitter Roots, Tender Shoots

by Sally Armstrong

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this sequel to *Veiled Threat: The Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan*, Armstrong shows that, though women are marginally better off than they were under the Taliban, formidable problems remain. Warning that Afghanistan “cannot prosper until they alter

the status of women,” she explores the nation’s bitter roots, which are the cultural, political, and religious traditions that approve of and promote misogyny. She also explores emerging tender shoots: girls’ education, female change-makers, artistic renaissance, and the involvement of the international community. (Viking Canada)



Passing the Plate

by Christian Smith, Michael O. Emerson, and Patricia Snell

reviewed by Phil Christman Jr.

Sociologists confirm what you may have suspected: American Christians, with more money than any group of Christians in history, don’t give away much of it. But this well-organized, readable book doesn’t scold; it explains the institutional and social reasons while offering solutions. Its detailed description of what we could do if we all tithed will make you *want* to reach for your checkbook. To all Sunday school classes, small groups, clergy, stewardship committees: you’ve gotta read this potentially world-changing book. (Oxford University Press)

Woogiworld.com

reviewed by Ron VandenBurg



Woogiworld.com is a website where kids adopt a “woogi.” They can engage in any number of activities with their woogis, including playing educational games that train them how to use the Internet or improve their English, math, and science skills. Children can also download music, participate in Bigwig’s Blog, or chat with other woogi children (parent monitoring tools are available). Encouraging children to live on both sides of the computer screen, *Woogiworld* allows users to earn woogi money by doing acts of kindness or playing outside.



THE LOWDOWN



For the Kids: Disney’s film *Bolt* lightly probes the difference between television and reality with the real adventures of a canine TV superhero. On DVD this month. (Disney)



For You, Too: U2 fans are rejoicing this month as the band’s twelfth studio album, *No Line on the Horizon*, is finally released. (Interscope Records)



Paradise for the Rest of Us: The Parallel Prose Edition of *Paradise Lost* lays out John

Milton’s original work with Dennis Danielson’s modern prose. (Regent College Publishing)



Crossing the Divide: *Linking Arms, Linking Lives* by Ronald J. Sider, John M. Perkins, Wayne L. Gordon, and F. Albert Tizon promotes partnerships between urban and suburban churches in joint ministry efforts. (Baker)

Check thebanner.org for links to find out more about these titles.





by Mariano Avila III

Transformation

Breakfast at a maximum-security prison, lunch at a huge garbage dump, a stop at a shantytown before dinner, and a visit to street children before bed—that's what your day might look like if you were to follow missionary Joel Van Dyke around Guatemala City.

Van Dyke's work with Christian Reformed World Missions is to bring training in urban youth outreach to Central American leaders already passionate about that work. The training program is called The Strategy of Transformation.

"I seek to be a Barnabas (son of encouragement) to a group of grassroots leaders serving and living in the hardest places of the capital of Guatemala and the other capital cities of Central America," Van Dyke explains.

As the sun rises over the mountains around Guatemala City, Van Dyke and the team of national chaplains with whom he serves often find themselves careening up mountain roads to reach one of the concrete fortresses that serve as maximum-security prisons for gang members serving long sentences.

The chaplains have been doing this work for the past two-and-a-half years, taking food, clothing, and the gospel to some of the most dangerous men in the country. Last November, they persuaded gang members not to retaliate after a deadly episode with the police and other inmates.

On days when the prison visits are short, Van Dyke might brave the meandering mountain-ledge road back down into the heart of the city, where the national cemetery serves as the gateway to the Guatemala City garbage dump. About 11,000 people live off the garbage that the dump trucks bring there every day.

The dump is nestled in a gorge that follows a poisonous river. It ends at a



The central dump in Guatemala City provides income for 4,000 families.

slope encroaching into a toxic forest that is shrinking each year.

On their way to the gorge, the garbage collectors pick over the junk and remove anything of value, like metal or old appliances. They leave the real garbage behind for the scavengers—men and women who work up to 12 hours a day, hoping to find enough plastic and cardboard to make a meager \$5 U.S.

Van Dyke serves the ministries of Potter’s House and some local Young Life folks working with youths and families of the *basurero* (dump). “I just seek to come alongside of the folks within our networks as they love and serve their own people against all odds,” he said.

Until recently, children often worked the dump with their parents, but a documentary exposé pressured the government to enforce labor laws in the garbage collection industry. Some

children still sneak in, though.

“Many still sneak in to help their parents, as evidenced by the garbage avalanche that occurred this past June during the height of the rainy season,” Van Dyke said. “Eighteen people were buried alive by garbage, including four children between the ages of 9 and 11.”

After sharing some food with teachers, parents, and children at the dump, a similar setting awaits Van Dyke at a neighborhood called *La Limonada* (Lemonade). Like the dump, *La Limonada* follows a gorge and a putrid river that once cut through the mountain range and brought life to the jungle. Today, it carries raw sewage away from city homes.

This neighborhood, reminiscent of Brazilian *favelas*—sprawling slums of unfinished dwellings—straddles the river and adds its own waste to the mix. In *La Limonada*, Van Dyke provides training to Christian leaders who seek to bring hope to desperate hearts and strength to weary arms.

“The reality is that this is the essence of what we provide for all of the grassroots leaders

we serve in the Strategy of Transformation network,” Van Dyke said. “We seek to train, sustain, and model transformational leadership principles

and form missional communities of leaders who serve the least, the last, and the lost of their cities.”

When the sun drops behind the mountains and the city lights turn on, a nocturnal population comes into view. They are Guatemala City’s street orphans. Some have no families; others have no wish to suffer their family’s neglect or abuse.

They are dressed in rags, they smell of urine, their hair is a tangled crust, and »

Transforming Lives in Latin America

Thousands of people in several Latin American countries are touched, and many lives are transformed, by the work of the Christian Reformed Church.

Radio programs are beamed into Latin America; rehabilitation centers have been set up to help those with alcohol and drug addictions, and mission workers assist communities to develop infrastructure.

CRC-related agencies and organizations working in Latin America include Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Back to God Ministries International, the Office of Race Relations, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Partners Worldwide, Timothy Leadership Institute, and Worldwide Christian Schools.

“The bulk of our work is in leadership training and church development. But there are some special ministries that are just wonderful and especially life-changing,” says Luis Pellecer, CRWM’s program director for Latin America.

The CRC has had missionaries in Latin America for decades, but often they worked alone or in small groups. Today, the work is becoming more integrated, largely because of the Latin America Administrative Council (LAAC), whose goal is to find ways for the CRC to do coordinated ministry in Latin America.

“The idea was to build a structure that would create a different approach to missions—one that is highly collaborative and focuses on unifying all the CRC ministries in each country,” says Mike Bruinooge, director of ministry planning. He was asked to help get LAAC up and running and now serves in an advisory capacity.

“We do see a change in attitude and approach as people get together in planning sessions.”

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Missionary Joel Van Dyke with a street girl.

istry among urban street children in other Latin American countries. They dream of a home in Guatemala City where children can spend the night in safety after a meal and some Christian fellowship.

“Italo has recently been given a green light by a church to use a building in the middle of the neighborhood where many of the street youth attempt to survive,” Van Dyke said. He said plans are underway to take advantage of this resource for the children.

Working in dumps, slums, and

they hold one hand up to their mouth and nose to fill their lungs with the glue fumes that numb their minds to the suffering. They beg, they steal, they deal, and they prostitute themselves if times are hard. The orphans’ average age is 13, but they can be as young as 8.

The sounds of the city are mostly the noise of cars and horns and the buzzing of streetlights. But sometimes a cheer for Jesus echoes off the asphalt and cement.

A man named Italo, a professional clown by day and a lay evangelist by night, will clap and yell and sing until he has the attention of the children sleeping under plastic bags. They know him; sometimes he brings them food.

Van Dyke now occasionally brings groups of North American visitors to encourage Italo in his ministry. The visitors bring food and often part with a jacket or a necklace when they see children shivering in the rain or admiring what they cannot buy. Together they sing hymns and praise songs, share bananas and ham sandwiches, and drink soda out of Styro-foam cups.

Van Dyke is working to connect Italo with other people doing min-



Italo works with street kids like this 14-year-old girl.

prisons is hard. Harder still is working with the poor, the guilty, and the abandoned. But that is what it means to walk like Christ in Guatemala City.



Mariano Avila III is the communications manager for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Ministries in Latin America

NICARAGUA

Alicia Hamming, who works for Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), recently helped to dig a well for a new water system in a community in the mountains of Nicaragua.

“As a team, we helped dig the trench and carry sand up the side of a mountain,” Hamming says in a report to CRWM. “We learned how the community had committed to completing the project. We served by standing beside them with shovels and dirt, and shared laughter, conversation, and song together.”

In 1999 CRWM, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), and Food for the Hungry International decided to collaborate to help equip local leaders with a biblical worldview and promote associations between institutions and churches committed to this vision.

At the Nehemiah Center in Managua, Nicaraguans and North Americans work together to help improve people’s lives, as well as to offer a Reformed perspective on how to tackle the problems they face.

“In general, Latin America is an area in which evangelical churches are growing very rapidly,” says Joel Huyser, Latin America field director for CRWM and a former director of the Nehemiah Center. “We want to see advances in collaboration have a greater impact on Latin America.”

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Gladis González Juan credits the Latin American ministry of the Christian Reformed Church with helping her obtain Christ-centered schooling. Today, she teaches English, French, and Spanish at Juan Calvino Christian School in the Dominican Republic.

“Through a scholarship, I went on to high school at Juan Calvino and graduated with honors in 1999,” she says. “I enrolled in the university and pursued a degree in modern languages.” She says her life was changed dramatically because of her connection to mission workers.

CRWM and CRWRC work closely here in Christian schooling, agricultural development, and training for church leaders. The CRC of the Dominican Republic has 180 congregations and many other churches that are affiliates. In addition, there are 21 Christian schools.



These two street kids in Guatemala City have only each other.

Recently, the CRC's Office of Race Relations began offering its "Dance of Racial Reconciliation" training in Latin America. The training was developed for use in North America, but its value is being seen in places like the Dominican Republic, where the emphasis is on achieving reconciliation between native Dominicans and the immigrant Haitian population.

HAITI

CRC agencies work together in Haiti through the organization known as *Sous Espwa* (Source of Hope).

Sous Espwa has recently hired someone to help orient the many groups that come to Haiti to do short-term ministry. In addition, a person has been hired to help develop a follow-up center for people whose lives are touched by the BTGMI radio broadcasting.

An initiative to educate young people about HIV/AIDs has also begun. "In spite of the huge losses that many are experiencing, and in spite of the grueling conditions that many are living under, Christians in Haiti have much to teach the world. God is working in the lives of his people," says CRWM missionary Howard Van Dam.

HONDURAS

Missionaries Caspar and Leanne Geisterfer are moving to Honduras so that Caspar can work as a church planter and trainer. "In Honduras, there is a very healthy CRC as well as very healthy diaconal branches," says Leanne Giesterfer, who worked previously in Haiti and serves as CRWRC's Latin America director.

"There is a lot of collaboration there. [CRC people] are salt and light in their communities." CRWRC is involved in setting up legal clinics and in developing literacy projects. In addition, it brings public health care information to many communities in southern Honduras.

Paul Van Tongeren, who serves with CRWM, says the work sometimes involves helping to put on conferences, such as one on "Transforming Conflicts" that drew participants from churches, schools, and development organizations.

MEXICO

Outreach efforts in the Guadalajara area include starting worship services in homes. Last year two house churches began in the area.

"By starting in new homes we almost always add new people, mainly relatives and neighbors of the hosts," says Wayne DeYoung, who serves with CRWM together with his wife, Sandy.

Occasionally, they take to the streets with guitars and a violin, singing praise songs to draw interest. People step outside their

homes and ask questions. The DeYoungs have also held Bible studies in their home.

Scott and Marcia Geurink are helping the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico plant and develop churches in Tijuana. They work with local pastors in outreach, conduct home Bible studies, and are involved in new mission starts.

They teach at and are helping to develop the new Bible Institute in Tijuana, to connect short-term mission teams from North America with projects in Tijuana, and they help in the operation of the Christian Rehab Center, which currently houses 80 men.

COSTA RICA

Missionaries serve as teachers and administrators at the Evangelical University of the Americas, as well as *Instituto Farel*, and the Costa Rican Center for Reformed Studies.

In one of her prayer letters, teacher Cecilia Drenth, who serves with CRWM, expressed concern that the worldwide financial crisis will affect the work that she is doing, along with many others, to update courses for national accreditation at the Evangelical University of the Americas. But that doesn't mean that she and the church won't do their very best with what they have, she says.

GUATEMALA

In addition to the work of CRWM missionary Joel Van Dyke (featured in this issue), CRWRC and its partners are helping rural communities to develop more productive and conservation-minded agriculture and also assisting in preventive health care and education.

EL SALVADOR

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) broadcasts evangelistic and devotional radio programs on 16 stations throughout El Salvador. Two Spanish-language television programs, including a Spanish-language children's program, air on 10 stations. In addition, many families use *CADA DIA*, a daily devotional booklet. These discipleship programs and materials are available throughout Latin America.

BTGMI broadcasts Spanish programming on 400 radio stations and 120 TV stations throughout Latin America.

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



House-church member in Guadalajara, Mexico, sings praises to God.

Reflect, Focus, Prune

IT IS AMAZING HOW QUICKLY LIFE CAN CHANGE.

The least-expected events can alter things radically with little or no warning.

The Christian Reformed Church has recently encountered one of those unexpected, ministry-changing events.

Every one of us is painfully aware of the present worldwide economic downturn. Those with retirement holdings have seen their investments shrink dramatically. Housing prices have dropped to the lowest levels in years. Credit is tight, jobs are at risk, employers are nervous and companies are folding. It is not a pretty picture.

These events impact our personal lives, but they also affect our churches and our ministries. While some CRC churches are reporting better-than-expected giving, many are reporting declines in revenues and some report major reductions. Denominational ministries are being similarly impacted. At local, regional, and denominational levels, we will need to adjust our work and ministries to ensure that we continue to do kingdom work in ways that maximize the gifts God provides.

In the face of such challenges, where do we turn?

Whenever I am faced with any major event or challenge in my life, the first thing I do is step back and reflect. When I do that, I can stand in awe of what God has done and is doing. In this present economic challenge, we should remember that our ministry is not about us; it is about the transforming work of the Holy Spirit across North America and around the world.

This is also a time to check our focus and alignment. We need to keep first things first. We need to separate the impor-

““ We are making hard decisions about what programs and ministries may have to be adjusted. ””

tant from the seemingly urgent. We no longer have the luxury of pursuing the good at the expense of the great. This is true for each person, for each church, and for the CRC as a whole.

Finally, the present situation encourages us to prune. Pruning is a painful but important process. Fruit farmers know that to ensure the best produce they need to cut unproductive branches so that all the nutrients go to the healthy branches. In our churches and ministries, we will have to prune. Some of the things we are now doing or are planning may have to be abandoned, delayed, or temporarily suspended.

At the denominational level we are already doing these things. We are reflecting on God's goodness and grace in our ministries. We are focusing our work to ensure that our energies and efforts are going into our mission to transform lives and communities worldwide. And we are pruning. We are making hard decisions about what programs and ministries may have to be adjusted.

Doing these things is an act of obedience. Like the people in Jesus' parable who received the talents, we must use our Master's resources wisely and carefully. We will one day be held accountable. My prayer is that on that day all of us—individuals, local congregations, and the entire Christian Reformed Church—will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Recently a friend reminded me of Psalm 62. I encourage you to take time to read the psalm and reflect on how it applies to the challenges we face today.

We can respond to financial crises with fear and panic or with hope and confidence. If we rely only on our own abilities, then fear and panic are appropriate. But if we depend on God and his ongoing engagement in our lives, then we can look at every challenging situation with hope and confidence. ■



ISTOCKPHOTO



Jerry Dykstra is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

HERE & THERE



PHOTO HANS MULDER

REACHING GENERATIONS IN CHINA

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) began broadcasting the gospel by radio into mainland China in 1975.

At first, there was no indication that the message was reaching listeners. But late in 1978, after the death of Communist Party leader Mao Tse-Tung, the wall of silence cracked and letters came pouring out.

Today, with the availability of the Internet, BTGMI's Chinese ministry is touching the lives of literally millions.

Consider this e-mail from a father in China: "I thank God for your ministry to our family throughout the years. I still remember the days when I was very young and my grandmother used to listen to your programs with her little old radio. She had to do it secretly, late at night then. During the day, she would take time to share some of the lessons she learned with

my whole family, though at that time I was not really interested. But since I became a believer several years ago, I am so excited to find you on the Internet.

"I want to thank you for your children's program, too," the man added, "because now I can listen to it together with my young daughter, somewhat similar to what my grandmother did many years ago."

"The Chinese ministry has been so blessed to be used in this way," notes Rev. Jimmy Lin, Chinese ministry leader. "Though the format of delivery and the presentation of the content have been continuously evolving, the message remains the same."

One example is the newly released video presentation of the gospel titled *From the Cross to the Manger*, now available at www.chinese-goodnews.org.

BTGMI's Chinese ministry maintains four web-

BTGMI's children's programs continue a 30-year tradition of media outreach in China.

sites, including one specifically for children: www.kidswelcome.org. A fifth website is to be launched in March to support the *Truth Q&A* program and its follow-up process.

"*Truth Q & A* has been one of our most popular radio programs," reports Lin. "With the tightening financial situation we had to make some strategic moves, including less airtime. Launching this website will help compensate the loss of airtime. It will also reach out to a new audience on the web."

To support the Chinese media outreach, contact info@backtogod.net or phone 1-800-730-3490 (Canada) or 1-800-879-6555 (U.S.).

—Nancy Vander Meer is a staff writer for *Back to God Ministries International*.

THE GOSPEL TOUCHES AN ANGRY HEART

Recently the Back to God Ministries International Arabic outreach team received a very angry and threatening text message from a Jordanian Muslim man in response to a radio discussion on Jesus' teaching about prayer.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words" (Matt. 6:7).

Although the program did not mention Islam or Muslim prayers, it apparently touched a nerve. Faithful Muslims are required to pray five times a day, repeating the same words again and again as they face Mecca.

The staff's first reaction was to ignore the angry message. But it troubled them and they began to pray for the young man. Then they sent him a text-message reply, referring to Jesus' teaching on forgiveness.

In three days, the young man responded. This time his message had a much different tone. He apologized for his previous message and promised to study the teachings of *Issa* (Jesus) in the New Testament.

A member of the BTGMI Arabic staff wrote: "The young man's religion does not have a doctrine of forgiveness. Those who become the children of God must pray for those who persecute them. By God's grace, we were able to touch the young man's life with the gospel of love and forgiveness."

—Nancy Vander Meer, *Back to God Ministries International*



CALVIN RANKS FIRST IN STUDY ABROAD

Calvin College stands first among the top 40 baccalaureate institutions in the United States for the number of students who study abroad in a given year, as ranked by the International Educational Exchange.

Ellen Monsma, Calvin’s outgoing director of off-campus programs, sees the ranking as validation of the college’s efforts to promote international education. “Calvin has really encouraged students to do something off-campus during their college careers, and that has sparked interest,” Monsma said. “Our numbers have just continued to grow.”

On-campus research aligns with the findings. “When we did a survey of last May’s graduating class, we asked them if they had done any off-campus program, whether it was a semester or an interim,” said Monsma. “Two-thirds had done at least one, and some had done more than one.”

In the 2008 report, which uses data from the previous school year, Calvin had 632 students who studied abroad in semester programs, interims, and other programs.

Calvin’s many interim courses based in other countries multiply the opportunities to study abroad, said Monsma: “A lot of students can’t get away for the semester because they have a job, or they have a tight program—like nursing or engineering. It’s hard to go away for a semester, but they can go away for an interim.”

Calvin currently offers interims in Honduras, Belize, Panama, Jamaica, Spain, Germany, Scotland, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Greece, Switzerland, Kenya, Jordan, the Yucatan, China, Australia, and Tibet.

Monsma said students reap many benefits from studying outside their native countries. “Rather than learning about a country and a culture, they go and live in these places. It’s an experience that helps make the learning more real. And I think, too, that being away from their normal context of being on campus teaches them independence and self-reliance,” Monsma added.

“Interacting with other societies also stretches them in terms of their relationship with God and their experience with God’s world and what it’s all about.”

—Myrna Anderson is a senior writer at Calvin College.

A BLANKET OF GRATITUDE

Three years ago I started knitting a blanket, not knowing who would receive it. I was just starting Calvin Theological Seminary’s M.Div. program and I needed a project to help me relax in my oh-so-sparse free time.

As I kept knitting, I realized that the project was bigger than I had expected: the blanket is made up of 48 squares that each took about 2-1/2 hours to make. While knitting the tenth square, I decided to give the blanket to someone who had given me a lot of time, encouragement, and support.

At about the same time I started making the blanket, I began a mentoring relationship with Rev. Thea Leunk, my pastor at Eastern Avenue CRC. The more I thought about

it, the more it made sense to share my knitting project with her.

Over the three years that I have studied to become a pastor, Pastor Thea has guided me, answered my questions, overseen my internship, shared her experience and wisdom, and even shared some of her own faith questions.

As I handed her the blanket just before Christmas, I explained that it was a token of my appreciation for all of the time she spent shaping my life, guiding me, and enabling me to be a better pastor someday. I hope that Pastor Thea will be able to use it for many years to come, just as I will use the

things she’s taught me.

—Chelsey Harmon is a senior at Calvin Theological Seminary.



Chelsey Harmon presents a hand-knitted blanket to her mentor, Rev. Thea Leunk.



JOURNEY TO CITY CENTER

Since its formation in 2005, The Journey, a growing Christian Reformed congregation in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, has achieved a level of success. Now at 170 members, the church still enjoys a steady stream of newcomers.

But being a thriving church isn't enough for Rev. Adrian Van Giessen, senior pastor of The Journey, which was started with assistance from Christian Reformed Home Missions.

"We really want to be a church that is making a difference in our community, instead of just having Sunday services," he says. "So we needed to find a place that could be the center of our ministry to this city."

That's why The Journey recently opened a new ministry center in downtown Kitchener. The facility, which was purchased by the church and renovated with the help of community members, is "a place for us to work and reach out to a city in need," Van Giessen says.

The new ministry center means the church now has more space and the opportunity to expand its community programs, since it is located on a high-traffic corner with a lot of visibility.

"It's on a major bus route and gives us more exposure," he adds. "At least five times a week, people walking by stop in and ask for directions, so we invite them to have coffee with us and we tell them about our church. It's a nice low-key way for us to minister to them."

The center also has meeting rooms for small groups, creative arts, and pastoral ministry, as well as a special room designed for reflection and prayer.

—Ben Van Houten is a senior writer with Christian Reformed Home Missions.

GEMS GIRLS CONNECT

"I just really wanted to help the GEMS in Africa," said Kaitlyn Klumpenhouwer, an eighth-grade student from Living Hope/Redeemer Christian Reformed Church in Sarnia, Ontario, who raised over \$200 to help send girls in Zambia to camp.

Kaitlyn's motivation to help was inspired by her own experience at Get Connected! Camp, the GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) summer camp for early teen girls.

"[Get Connected! Camp] made me grow spiritually," Kaitlyn recalled. "It made me realize that there are a lot of other girls just like me, and that I'm not alone—God will help me through anything."

Her sentiments were echoed by hundreds of other GEMS across North America. Girls held bake-offs and dinners, made and sold crafts, pooled their allowances, worked odd jobs, and donated birthday money to help their African sisters in Christ.

Because of their efforts, 130 girls gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, last August to experience God in a new way. The purpose of Get Connected! Camp—Africa was threefold: to connect girls to critical truths from God's Word, to prepare Zambian counselors to run future camps, and to inspire the older GEMS to be counselors at these camps.

Each morning started with breakfast, worship, and connecting girls with a different biblical truth. Girls then spent time in small groups discussing the applications of that truth. Between the sessions were opportunities for activities including volleyball, crafts, drama, and creative movement.

Girls were shy at first, but by the final day it was obvious that new bonds had been formed between the Zambian girls and the 10 college-age and post-college-age counselors from North America.

"Camp, for me, was a huge testament to the work that the Lord is doing through GEMS in Zambia," said Stephanie vanKampen, a counselor from Prince Edward Island.

"Get Connected! Camp was an opportunity like no other, and the girls took advantage of it . . . In a country where young women are overworked and undervalued, GEMS is giving them a chance to lead."



Stephanie vanKampen was one of 10 college-age and post-college age GEMS counselors who helped to lead the summer camp in Zambia.

"So many lives were significantly touched by God at camp," said Jan Boone, executive director of GEMS. "It's just so incredible to see how God takes what we offer him—our best efforts—and grows that into something significant for his kingdom!"

—Amy White is publications and web coordinator for GEMS Girls' Clubs.

Silent Sounds

Creation is full of sounds. Humans hear many of them, but some sounds are "silent" to us because their pitch is either too low or too high for our ears. That's OK, because God made our ears just right for our needs.

In fact, God made most creatures' ears just right for their needs. They hear what they need to hear, and the sounds they don't need to hear are silent to them.

Want to "hear" about some silent sounds? Read on.



The Dark, Not-So-Silent Deep

People used to think that the deepest parts of the ocean were dark, silent places. Then scientists developed special equipment. Now they record sounds that we can't hear and play them back at pitches that we *can* hear.

Surprise! The oceans are full of sounds. Whale calls are a good example. Whales keep in touch with each other over long distances by talking to one another. We call their sounds "whale songs."

Humpback whale songs can be 25 minutes long. They're full of what sounds to us like moans, clicks, whistles, and grunts. Scientists think that these sounds are put together in certain combinations, just like we put words together in certain combinations.

To hear some whale songs, check out this website:
<http://www.whalecenter.org/av.htm>

Don't Bug Me

Some of the moths that bats like to eat can hear those bats' squeaks and clicks. When the moths hear those sounds, they drop to the ground. If they're flying, they may do barrel rolls and fly in zigzags to get out of range. Some moths even click back. Do you think that confuses the bats?

Super-Dog

Dogs can hear sounds that are softer and higher-pitched than humans are able to hear. Have you ever seen a dog suddenly perk up its ears and look around? It's probably hearing a sound that you can't hear. If your dog is waiting for you when you come in your front door, it's probably because the dog can hear you coming even if you think you're not making noise. That's why some people have watchdogs.



SCOTT HOLLADAY

Ears for You Only

All the crickets that you hear singing on a summer evening are males. Female crickets are silent. There are hundreds of different cricket species. As far as we know, each species has its own distinct song. Humans can't hear the difference, but female crickets can. Scientists think that maybe female crickets can hear only the males of their own species.

Some cricket songs change pitch when the temperature changes. On a cold evening the songs are lower. Even then, a female cricket responds only to the song of her own species. You could say that her "ears change pitch." We can't explain how this works.

Silent Prey

Ruffed grouse are birds that nest on the forest floor. They have a noisy mating ritual. The male grouse "drums" to attract a female. He makes a loud thumping noise by beating his wings on the forest floor.

Some owls eat ruffed grouse when they can catch them. So why doesn't the drumming of a ruffed grouse attract an owl? It's because the drumming is silent to owls. They can't hear sounds that are pitched that low.

Driving You Batty

Bats hunt bugs by sound. They make high-pitched squeaks or clicks and listen to the echoes that bounce off the bugs. In fact, most bats make three different series of squeaks or clicks. The closer they are to their prey, the faster they click or squeak.

Those sounds are too high for human ears to hear. Thank God for that. Bats make a real racket to ears that can hear those sounds. If you lived near bats and could hear them, they'd probably drive you batty when they went out hunting.

You can easily hear bat sounds and other animal sounds on your computer by visiting this website: <http://www.naturesongs.com/otheranimals.html>.

Your Turn

A cricket "hears" changes in air pressure, not sounds. To test a cricket's hearing, do this: go outside on a summer night and listen for crickets. Then clap and yell without moving your feet. Did they stop singing? Then walk toward them. Now did they stop? They "heard" you coming because walking toward them causes the air pressure near them to change.

Remember those moths that "hear" bats? You can tell if they live near you. On a warm night, turn on an outside light and let moths flutter to it. Then take a bunch of keys, hold them high and jiggle them. Some moths may drop to the ground. Those are the moths that "hear" bat sounds. Your jingling keys make high-pitched sounds like bats make.

Grumble Rumbles

We know that elephants make loud trumpeting noises. We can hear those. But they also make noises that we can't hear. Elephants live in family groups that are very important to them. If they're separated, they keep in touch by making low rumbling sounds. One rumble says, "Hello, I'm here." Another says, "Help, I'm lost." Humans can hear some, but not all, of these sounds.

Do you think elephants ever grumble when they rumble?

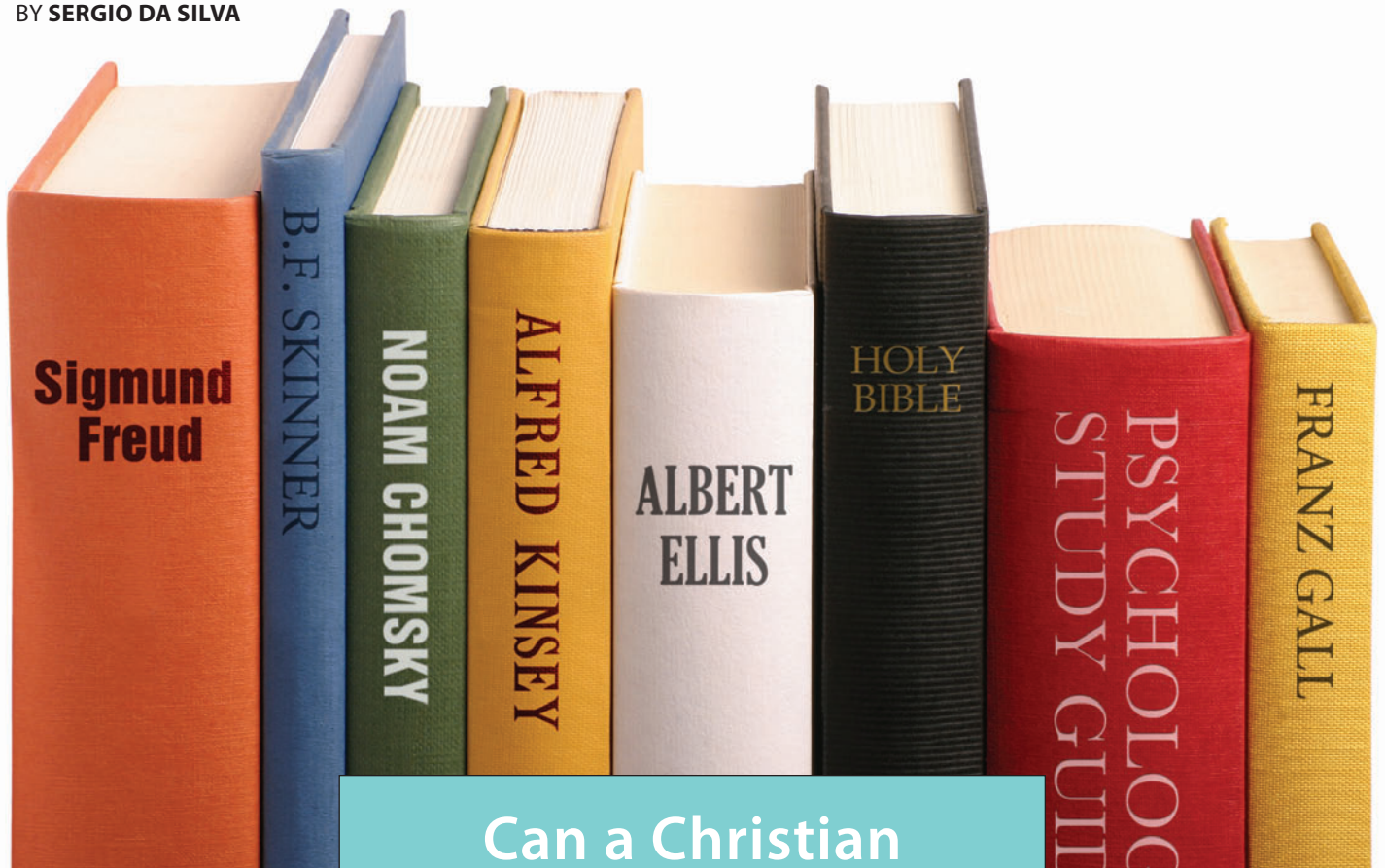
In Conclusion...

You get the idea: we can hear only a small fraction of the sounds that fill the air.

Creation—even the world of sound—is much more complicated than we imagine. Yet God gives each of us what we need to live well and enjoy his world.



Joanne De Jonge is a U.S. National Park Ranger in northern Michigan. She belongs to West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.



Can a Christian Really Be a Psychologist?

ASI READ through a stack of essays, one caught my eye. My student concluded her work with a strong statement: “After a whole semester of studies in psychology, I conclude that it is impossible to be a psychologist and a Christian at the same time.”

After I recovered from my shock, I responded: “If this is the case, then I cannot exist, because I am a Christian *and* a psychologist.”

I understand why my student came to this conclusion. A lot of Christians ask, “Isn’t the Bible enough for us? Why should we trust the ideas of those who reject God’s truth? Should mature, obedient Christians ever need psychological insight?”

Misconceptions not only prevent believers in Christ from entering the profession, but also from receiving needed help.

Moreover, the Bible says, “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14, TNIV) and, “the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight” (1 Cor. 3:19). It also affirms that Jesus “did not need human testimony about [humans], for he knew what was in them” (John 2:25).

And what about some Christian counselors who argue that professional counsel outside of the Bible is misleading?

Psychologists have a reputation for being skeptical atheists who think people made up the idea of God as a pacifier for

their anxiety. Indeed, many psychologists *are* atheists and are very critical of Christian beliefs. For example, rational-emotive counseling guru Albert Ellis accused those he called “devout religionists” of being irrational. Ellis is not alone. Sigmund Freud taught that God was invented by our need for a father figure. The works of prominent thinkers such as psychoanalyst B.F. Skinner, linguist Noam Chomsky, sexologist Alfred Kinsey, and many others also give the impression that atheism and psychology are related. Is this perception correct?

The short answer is no. Psychology and atheism are not necessarily related, and I’d like to explain some reasons why—not only for students like mine, but also for Christians who might opt out of receiving needed help because of misconceptions about psychology.

“Isn’t the Bible enough for us?”

Faulty Reasoning

Individual psychologists do not represent the whole field of psychology. This is true for any professional field.

Some time ago, newspapers published the sad story of a Christian pastor who was found guilty of murdering his own wife. No intelligent person would conclude that, in light of this case, Christianity teaches that husbands should kill their wives. The ideas and behaviors of professional persons don’t necessarily represent their professional field. While it is true that some psychologists are biased against Christianity, that doesn’t mean the science of psychology is anti-Christian.

Further, just as you will find many biased psychologists, you will also find many biased biologists, physicists, chemists, teachers, medical doctors, and engineers. We should not label professions anti-Christian because some professionals reject the Christian faith.

Compatible Conclusions

Most psychological studies are not hostile to Christianity. In fact, I propose that the bulk of psychological research is supportive of Christian teachings. A clear example of this is Diana Baumrind’s studies on parenting styles. Her research led to the conclusion that parents who listen to their teenage children and who impose clear limits on their behavior are the most likely to foster healthy adult offspring. This balanced parenting style echoes very closely the words of the apostle Paul to parents, “Do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

Another example is the large number of psychological studies that tells us venting anger is bad for us and for those around us. These studies demonstrated scientifically the wisdom of the apostle Paul when he commands us to “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger” (Eph. 4:31).

Obviously, not all psychological studies support Christianity. Some even seem to contradict Christian teachings. For example, some studies have concluded that intercessory prayer does not work. This conclusion directly contradicts what we read in James 5:16: “The prayer of a

righteous person is powerful and effective” (TNIV). However, it’s important to remember that psychology doesn’t normally have a single explanation for any event. Several psychologists have identified serious problems with the methods used in the studies that disqualify intercessory prayer, raising significant questions about the studies’ validity.

Appreciation for Complexity

Psychological theories are not fixed. The goal of psychological studies is not necessarily to discover absolute truth, but rather to create theories that help us organize our limited knowledge and understand what we observe. For this reason, psychological theories change constantly. Psychologists modify or abandon older conclusions in favor of better explanations. One classic example of this is Franz Gall’s idea of phrenology. This 19th-century theory associated people’s behaviors with the bumps on their heads. Interest in this theory dwindled, however, after a number of studies demonstrated that some violent individuals had large “benevolence bumps” on their heads!

Theories go through changes for many reasons, in part because human beings are too complicated to be explained with simple conclusions. The scientific method, to date, is not sensitive enough to grasp the complexities of our minds. Our memory and intelligence are not large enough to make sense of all possible factors associated with our minds.

As a Christian, when I look at the information psychologists are gathering about humanity, I am compelled to exclaim, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. . . . I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . .” (Ps. 139:6, 14).

Central Question

Perhaps a central question is this: can Christians learn from non-Christians?

The Bible teaches that even the least-educated Christian can understand

spiritual truths that a non-Christian is unable to grasp (Matt. 11:25). However, in matters of nature, non-Christians are as able as Christians to learn about God’s creation, even when they don’t recognize it as such. After all, the gift of intelligence was given to Christians and non-Christians alike (see Matt. 5:45).

Imagine that your physician says you urgently need brain surgery. Would you want to be operated on by a godly pastor without medical training, or by a prominent brain surgeon who happens to be an atheist? In the same way, even psychologists who reject Christianity can offer us valuable insights about the human mind and behavior. “Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Our Calling

With a background in both theology and psychology, I served in pastoral ministry for more than two decades. After much prayer I then made a career shift and chose to serve God by conducting research and teaching psychology. I made this decision in part because there are relatively few psychologists who claim Jesus as their Lord.

Jesus gave us a number of models for our role in his kingdom: a mustard seed, a treasure hidden in a field, a net that catches all kinds of fish. One of the models that greatly intrigues me is this: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matt. 13:33). Jesus wants his disciples to mix with the “dough” and influence it deeply. Applying this principle to our vocations, I believe there should be Christians in all possible professions, except those inherently unethical or immoral.

Believers should be “working through the dough” of society in all legal, respectable professions that exist, including that of psychology. Indeed, a committed Christian *can* be a psychologist! ■



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BY LEONARD J. VANDER ZEE



Just Doing Our

DUTY

A T A RECENT CONFERENCE

I was part of a panel of pastors who were talking about the realities of being a pastor. OK, let's face it—we were whining. Anyway, one of my fellow panel members said that sometimes he feels he's just slogging through the day, buried in administration, visiting, answering e-mails, scoping out texts for the next Sunday.

He went into the ministry full of excitement, responding to God's call, and doing it all for the love of God and God's church. But the things that once excited him now felt like a vaguely boring routine. "Half the time," he said, "it just seems like a duty." And there was much nodding of heads.

Suddenly it occurred to me, What's wrong with duty? My colleague was using the word *duty* in the way we often use it in our culture: *duty* is synonymous with a burden, a joyless routine, an unsatisfying obligation, a guilt trip. We want excitement, passion, freedom, and fulfillment in what we do. In comparison, duty seems slightly old-fashioned, like a cross-stitched motto on your grandmother's wall.

All this is quite a contrast with a tough little parable Jesus told in Luke 17:7-10. He weaves an odd scenario of a master who waits on his own servant, then sums up the absurdity of it all: "Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?" Of course not. Then comes the punch line: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

That idea of duty sounds harsh to our 21st-century ears. Many of us don't like the idea of servanthood in the first place. And then, when Jesus emphasizes that the servant is simply duty-bound and deserves no special recognition or thanks, it just goes against our grain.

But before you dismiss this parable as hopelessly outdated, let's take a closer look.

Jesus the Servant

It's very important to understand this story's cultural context. Bonded servanthood was extremely common among Jews

in Jesus' day. Even people like Jesus' own disciples, who were not wealthy people themselves, could have at least one servant. (After all, Jesus begins the parable by asking his disciples, "Which one of you . . .").

Of course, in this little story Jesus wasn't advocating the arrangement but using an example straight from his social context. Besides, Jesus often spoke of himself as a servant. "I came not to be served," he said, "but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many" (see Matt. 20:28). And remember John's unforgettable picture of Jesus washing the disciples' feet with a slave's towel around his waist? The Master became the slave.

Jesus' human life is always a model for our own. By his own servanthood, Jesus reveals ours. The term *servant* (*doulos* in Greek, which really means *slave*) became one of the central metaphors for the Christian life in the New Testament. Paul used it almost like a middle name: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. . . ."

Being a Christian means we are not owed, we are owned.

Being a Christian means we are not *owed*, we are *owned*. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ, bought with an enormous price. Still, what really irks us in the Luke 17 parable is the last part, when Jesus says, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

There is a little translation problem here. The word *unworthy* is probably better translated as "not owing to" or "not claiming merit," which I think is Jesus' point. The servant is simply acknowledging that whatever he does is fulfilling his duty; it is what he owes to the master, and the master owes him nothing in return.

It's the same thing you might say to your supervisor when your job evaluation comes around. She praises you for accomplishing your job description. Now, there's nothing wrong with praise and appreciation, but it's a gift, a grace. You have only done what was your duty. That's what you're paid for. So you might

respond, with proper humility, "Thank you for the good evaluation, but, after all, I'm just doing my job the best I can."

Medals Not Required

However we might misunderstand the concept of duty in our culture, there are times when we *do* get it. Who can forget the picture of firefighters and police officers running up the stairs of the Twin Towers on that fateful day in September 2001 when everyone else was running down? As a society we celebrate them as heroes. But for the most part, they didn't feel like heroes at all. It wasn't false humility; the praise seemed to genuinely embarrass them. "I was just doing my job," they would say. Or, "Anyone in my position would do the same thing." In other words, "I don't deserve any special acclaim. I was just doing my duty."

Webster's dictionary defines duty as "obligatory service, that which is required by one's station or office." Implied in that

definition of duty is that it's something you do no matter what—no matter what you feel like at the moment, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how difficult or demanding the job may be. Even if you're heading into an inferno, if there are people up there, it's your sworn duty.

Maybe we tend to make duty into an act of heroism because we've lost its true meaning. Sticking by your post, fulfilling your obligations, holding sacred the duties of office—somehow all this sounds so noble for the heroes of 9-11. But it doesn't seem quite so noble when our duties are lived out in ordinary days with their mundane demands and sacrifices.

When marriage gets too difficult (whoever heard of one that wasn't?), you get a divorce. But what about your duty to the promises you made, or to your children? "Well," the reply might be, "what about my duty to myself and to my own happiness?"

I'm not saying that everyone who gets a divorce has carelessly abandoned his »

There's nothing wrong with praise and appreciation, but it's a gift, a grace.

or her duty. I know we live in a broken world. But the prevalence and apparent ease with which divorce takes place today suggests that we have lost a great deal of the sense of duty in even our most intimate family relationships.

And we may be training our children to do the same. In the United States, at least, kids evidently need bumper stickers to celebrate their studiousness. Doing dishes deserves a prize, a smiley-face sticker. It all goes to prove Garrison Keillor's adage that in Lake Wobegone "all the children are above average."

The idea of the mutual duties of employees and employers is replaced by job descriptions, wage scales, and wholesale downsizing or outsourcing. A family member with a loved one in a nursing home once complained to me that a nurse refused to respond to the pressing need of her mother because, as the nurse put it, "She's not my patient."

Basic Christian Living

This societal rejection of duty seeps into the church as well. People go church shopping to find the place that's right for them, the place that makes them happy and has the programs that meet their needs. Calling people to their Christian duty doesn't seem a very good strategy for growth.

A few years ago a friend of mine attended a conference on church fundraising. She learned 25 ways to write a letter of thanks to people who gave. She was told that people give when they are personally recognized for their giving and even effusively thanked for it. After all, the church is a volunteer organization, and you've got to keep people happy. Giving as a duty was not one of the workshops.

Of course we thank and appreciate people. The master in another one of Jesus' parables says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But that's not why we're in it. Being thanked is a gift of grace. A while ago the minister of church education at the church I pastored sent thank-you notes to Sunday school teachers and youth leaders, and on those notes were pictures of the kids they were serving.

Someone said, "It's the best thank-you I ever got." It was so memorable because it didn't just pat the volunteers on the back. It helped them remember that in faithfully doing their duties they were helping children grow in Christ. They were part of something big and important, represented in each child's face.

Make a list of some of the simple basics of Christian living. What would it include? Prayer, worship, obedience to God, faithfulness to each other, sharing our gifts, feeding the hungry, extending the kingdom of God to our places of work and influence. These require no brass-band recognition. These are simply duties of the servants of the Servant, Jesus Christ.

So when you have done it all, say, "We are not owed anything. We have only done our duty." It doesn't matter whether it feels good at the moment. After her death, some letters Mother Teresa wrote to her spiritual director became public. In them she disclosed feelings of doubt, loneliness, and abandonment. Most of the time God seemed absent, heaven empty, and, bitterest of all, her own suffering seemed to count for nothing. For 40 years after the glorious experience of Christ almost personally calling her to serve the poor, Mother Teresa often walked through a spiritual desert. Yet each day she rearranged her deep facial creases into a smile, said her prayers, and bent down to cradle some half-dead person in her arms.

Thank God, that's not the typical picture. Yes, doing our duty may be difficult and demanding. It may cost us dearly, and it's not always immediately gratifying. But no matter what it feels like at the moment, the privilege of serving the Master is ultimately a joy. And that joy transforms our duties into delights.

The Delight of Duty

In Psalm 40 the psalmist sings, "I delight to do your will, O Lord." The one we serve, the one to whom we belong, is so wonderful, so loving, so gracious, so pure, so holy, so good, that it's a delight to be in his service.

In the Bible, love and the duty of obedience toward God are not in tension at all. They belong together. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15, TNIV). Love and duty belong together. To love God is to be part of the great work of salvation God is doing. To be a duty-bound servant to such a Master is life's greatest privilege. When we catch a vision of that loving duty we can pray every morning like the proverbial old Scot, "Lord, it's John MacDonald, reporting for duty."

Which suggests an overlooked gift that comes from doing your duty. To be duty-bound is to belong. It's to be part of the texture and fabric of committed relationships.

Whether it's amid a platoon, a firehouse, a family, a church, duty confers identity. Our duties are a significant part of what defines us. I am a husband, a father, a pastor. I have deadlines, responsibilities, a sacred trust; my family and my church depend on me. In these very duties, which may at times seem empty or burdensome, I know who I am. I know what to do. I am part of the family, the community, an essential member of the body of Christ.

In doing our duty toward the Lord, we know who we are, and no one and nothing else can own us. That truth frees us from all the false duties and obligations that claim our allegiance. We are servants of Christ and no one else.

The venerable Heidelberg Catechism puts it this way: "I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ . . . [who] by his Holy Spirit makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for him." That's the simple truth this parable wants to tell us: we are Christ's own servants, purchased by his blood, who willingly, freely, lovingly do our duty. ■



Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee is editor in chief for Faith Alive Christian Resources and was previously pastor of South Bend (Ind.) CRC for 16 years.

The Singer of Strasbourg

A CLEAR SOPRANO VOICE drifts down the narrow street into the gourmet sweet shop where I'm browsing among nut clusters, dark fudge, and fancy chocolates in olive shapes. Intrigued, I exit the store and walk left. Strasbourg Cathedral looms at the end of the street, its carved figures, arches, and intricate Gothic spires towering above the central square.

About a hundred people are gathered there, cutting off any view of the musician. "That woman must be a professional," I think, inching between packed bodies to catch a glimpse of the singer whose voice is like soft, warm caramel.

I crane my neck, a middle-aged couple moves aside, and I finally see . . . a stocky young man, blond hair tied back in a thick ponytail, lightning tattoos patterning both bare arms. He's wearing dusty fatigues and a black cape. Bells around his ankles punctuate each pause in the song and he strums a mandolin for accompaniment. I gape at him, like many others in the crowd. This is the singer whose voice I followed?

Though he sings in French, I recognize many words and phrases. After a moment, I forget about translating and lose myself in the melody. I'm reminded of the last rays of sun on a summer's evening, of yearnings for family and friends on another continent, of a longing for peace in our world.

Another youth joins the group, snickering at the incongruity between soprano notes and the performer's gender. I agree, the spectacle is odd, but when he sings, I can only listen and nod. Finishing his third song, the singer addresses us, asking for a few Euros to help him survive through the winter. His speaking voice is unremarkable; it could be any grown man talking.



He collects a hatful of coins and sells several homemade CDs, then it's time for another song. I want to stay all afternoon, soaking in the music. It seems appropriate to have Strasbourg Cathedral as his backdrop—sculpted saints, looming angels, and marble gargoyles overlooking a bravura performance.

Beside me, a teenage girl squats on the cobblestone pavement, staring intently at the singer. She seems on the verge of tears. As I glance around the semicircle, I notice men and women blotting their eyes with tissues, holding hands to their hearts, swaying sideways to the music. Pure and simple, he cuts through our facades, straight to the core: addressing our hidden passions, our desire for another world, our lapsed hopes and lingering dreams.

It jars me to see this man, with his clunky Doc Martens boots and silver eyebrow piercing, singing so angelically. But I'm moved to consider: doesn't God

speak to me, often in unexpected ways, through the most unlikely people? Mightn't the teenager next to me on a streetcar or in the deli carry an important word? I don't want to quickly dismiss someone who may turn out to be God's strange messenger.

His piercing song, carried on the breeze, lured me out of the candy store and into the streets of Strasbourg. If I ever visit the Alsace-Lorraine region of France again, I will keep my eyes open. I might stumble once more upon a young man, dressed entirely in black, strumming a battered mandolin and singing alone in the Old Town square with a voice of sunshine and rain. ■



Laurie Brose Cutter lives in southern Germany and is a member of Oak Hills CRC in Beaverton, Oregon.

FAQS

Money

Q My income just went down. Is it OK if I stop tithing until things get back on track?

A The short answer is no—and let me share why with three powerful principles from God’s Word that have guided our family through times of financial uncertainty. I think they’ll be a blessing to you too.

1. Keep giving God your very best. We need to remember that everything we have belongs to God and should be used to further his kingdom. *Treasure Principle* author Randy Alcorn acknowledges it’s easy to rationalize giving less, but compares that temptation to robbing six convenience stores last year and then hoping by God’s grace to rob only three this year. The point, he says, is not to rob God less, but to not rob him at all. It’s better to live on 90 percent or less of your income inside the will of God, Alcorn reminds us, than to live on 100 percent of your income outside of it.

2. Praise God for what you do have. The Bible offers a new way of looking at things that’s radically different from what we see and hear in the news. Barnabas Foundation conference speaker Mark Vincent recently pointed out that a biblical perspective moves us from a “scarcity” mentality to an “abundance” mentality. That means we can find joy in difficult times by counting the many blessings we do have, rather than fixing our minds on what we may not have or might not be able to get. The Bible is full of examples of people who lived with an “abundance” mentality, such as the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Although she had very little, she gave what she had, trusting God to provide for her in the future. One very practical tool that has helped me develop an abundance mentality is a website called www.globalrichlist.com.

It will give you an immediate picture of how your abundance compares with the rest of the world.

3. Replace fear with focus. The fear of the unknown is a powerful force in our lives and makes us want to protect ourselves financially and withhold from God. This is a natural reaction, but it can be toxic to our walk with God. As Pastor Andy Stanley pointed out in his book *Fields of Gold*, believers need to develop an attitude in which “God’s voice is louder than the soundtrack of ‘what-ifs’ in our lives.”

A biblical perspective moves us from a “scarcity” mentality to an “abundance” mentality.

To do that, we need to ask God to help us replace our fears with a focus on “the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” boldly trusting Jesus that as we follow him with our finances, “all these things will be given to [us] as well” (Matt. 6:33) and he will “increase [our] store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of [our] righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10).

—Mike Buwalda

Mike Buwalda serves as a stewardship consultant for the Barnabas Foundation (mike@barnabasfoundation.com).

Environment

Q Why should I care about the environment when the mission of the church is to share the gospel with the world?

A The gospel message is threefold: creation, fall, and redemption. God created the world and saw that it was good, human sin caused a break between humanity and God, and Jesus came to redeem that relationship through his death and resurrection.

So where does creation care fit into all of this? First of all, God created the world, and it was good (Gen. 1-2). Psalm 104 beautifully illustrates how God sustains his creation daily. And Psalm 19:1 says that the heavens declare the glory of God. So God created and sustains creation, and in turn creation points us toward God. That in itself is reason to work to keep the world healthy.

But there’s more to the story. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and the ground is cursed because of it (Gen. 3:17). The land mourns and is destroyed because of our sin (read Rom. 8, Hosea 4, Jer. 12, and Isa. 24) This is where the hope of the gospel breaks through. Jesus came to “reconcile to himself all things”—not just humanity but “all things” (read Col. 1:15-20).

When we care for God’s beloved creation, we are walking as disciples of the One who created the world and declared it good, sustains it daily, and redeemed it by his blood on the cross. And when we ensure that the water is clean, the air is not polluted, and the land is healthy, we are better able to do as Jesus commanded us when he said to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves. After all, what kind of love can we show when the water we extend to the thirsty is polluted and the land that is to grow food to feed the hungry is destroyed because of our greed?

—Cindy Verbeek

Cindy Verbeek is the church and community group liaison for A Rocha Canada—Christians in Conservation and an active member of Houston Christian Reformed Church, British Columbia. For more ideas contact her at cindy.verbeek@arocha.org. ■

The Most Beautiful Theater

ONE OF MY GREAT TEACHERS, HENRY STOB, a longtime Calvin Seminary professor, never tired of reminding his students that Jesus Christ came to save humans from sin, not from creation. He himself learned that truth from one of his great teachers, John Calvin.

Stob so admired Calvin that during his entire seminary career he mentored a student club that met weekly to discuss Calvin's classic treatise, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It was in that group that I learned how important it is, both theologically and practically, to keep the lines clear between the doctrines of creation and of sin. Doing so can help believers, despite sin's scarring effects, still see the created world for what it really is: God's sheer good gift to be enjoyed, to be thankful for, and to be treated with delicate care.

Calvin calls the world God made a "most beautiful theater." In something of a "hymn to creation's Maker," he becomes lyrical: "[W]herever we cast our eyes, all things [we] meet are works of God and display his glory and goodness. The first part [of our appropriate response to God] is exemplified when we reflect upon the greatness of the Artificer who stationed, arranged, and fitted together the starry host of heaven in such wonderful order that nothing more beautiful in appearance can be imagined. . . . Indeed, if we chose to explain in a fitting manner how God's inestimable wisdom, power, justice, and goodness shine forth in the fashioning of the universe, no splendor, no ornament of speech, would be equal to an act of such great magnitude. . . . For there are as many miracles of divine power, as many tokens of goodness, and as many proofs of divine wisdom, as there are kinds of things in the universe . . . either great or small" (*Institutes*, I.xiv.20-21).

We are stewards of what God has given us, and God calls us to care well for what we've received from his generous hand. As Calvin says, "The earth was given to man, with this condition, that he should occupy himself in its cultivation. . . . The custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition that, being content with the frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field so partake of its yearly fruits that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence, but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. . . . Moreover, that this economy . . . with respect

To be **fully human**
means that at
every day's beginning
we set our sights on
being open to wonder.

to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us, let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved" (Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*).

God's human creatures are the apex of God's creation, says Calvin. Of all God's creatures, only humans can take conscious delight in the creation and then say thanks. Calvin calls this twin activity taking "pious delight." To be fully human and fully alive, then, means that at every day's beginning we set our sights on being open to wonder—and to surprise! And at day's end, having spotted these gifts and reveled in them, we summon our spirits to sing the doxology and bless our God with glad and joyful hearts.

To go at life in dull boredom is sin against God. On the contrary, to cultivate delight and gratitude is a crowning gift we can offer God in return. ■

WEB Q'S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner's* website: www.thebanner.org.



Rev. Dale Cooper is chaplain emeritus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. *The Banner* thanks him for writing a special series this year on highlights from John Calvin's teaching.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

Agenda for Synod 2009

Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda:

- a. Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15.
- b. Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1.
- c. Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15.
- d. Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the printed Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15.

Materials will not be included in the printed Agenda if received after the synodically established deadlines.

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

Annual Day of Prayer

Synod has designated Wednesday, March 11, 2009, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, for crops and industry, and for the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U. S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U. S.) is May 7, 2009.

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

Admitted into the Ministry

CLASSIS ZEELAND examined Candidate James (Jay) Knochenhauer on Thursday, January 15, 2009, and with the approval of the Synodical Deputies from Classis Holland, Georgetown and Grandville, authorized his ordination to the gospel ministry at the Third CRC of Zeeland. The ordination service took place on Sunday, January 18, 2009

Available for Call

Mr. Efen Echipare is now available for call within the Christian Reformed Church. Having successfully been examined according to Article 7 of the Church Order, Classis Hackensack and Mr. Echipare's home church, the Norfolk, VA CRC, heartily recommend him to the churches. Please

contact him directly at: Mr. Efen Echipare, 1725 Meadowlake Drive, Norfolk VA 23518. His phone number is 757-855-8467 and his e-mail address is eechipare@suffolkrrha.org.

Eligible for Call

The Council of Kincardine Christian Reformed Church of Kincardine, Ontario wishes to announce that Rev. Elzo Tenyenhuis was declared eligible for call by Classis Huron on January 14, 2009. Rev. Tenyenhuis can be reached at (519) 908-9298 or email at etenyenhuis@cogeco.ca

We are pleased to announce that Adam Eisenga and Paul G. Hackett have now completed their academic requirements and are eligible for call as candidates for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

We are pleased to announce that Mark W. Hilbelink has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Financial Aid

Classis GR North is taking applications from students studying for ordained ministry in the CRC, who are members of one of the churches of its Classis, and are in need of financial assistance. Please contact Bud Balk at 3301 Brook Hollow Dr NE, Rockford, MI 49341 or at aebalk@comcast.net by March 15.

Classis Illiana Student Fund Committee invites applications for financial aid from students from our classis who desire to pursue full time ordained ministry in the CRCNA. For your application, contact Rev. Tim Koster at tkoster@crchurches.net or at 708-758-3343.

Students from Classis Rocky Mountain preparing for ordained/ non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2009-2010 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westebroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303)400-6723 or e-mail: robertwestebroek@comcast.net or bwestebroek@ehills.org. All requests to be received by May 31, 2009.

Students from Zeeland Classis preparing for ordained/nonordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2009-2010 school year. For information, contact Judi Steenwyk, 880 Mid Bluff Drive, Zeeland, MI, 49464 (616) 772-1772. All requests to be received by April 1, 2009.

The Classis Ministerial Leadership Team of Classis Grand Rapids East offers financial support to students pursuing seminary training to become Ministers of the Word in the CRCNA. Our team is currently accepting applications from students intending to pursue such training during the 2009/2010 academic year. In order to be eligible for assistance a student must be a professing member of a Grand Rapids East congregation, and be enrolled full- or part-time in a Master of Divinity (MDiv) program intended to meet the academic requirements of candidacy in the CRCNA. The deadline is March 16. Please direct requests for application materials, and all related inquiries, to Rev. Mike Abma, mike@woodlawncrc.org

The Leadership Development Team of Classis Holland CRC invites students from the Classis who are or intend to study for the ordained ministry in the CRC to apply for Classical financial aid. Applications are being accepted for the 2009-2010 academic year. Applications must be received prior to April 1, 2009. For more information and applications please contact Dave Altena at 616-335-6258 or or by email at altenad@sbcglobal.net

BE A PART OF HISTORY*

March 11, 2009 – 7:30 PM

2nd Lynden CRC
805 Grover Street

Dr. David Rylaarsdam, Calvin Theological Seminary

“Why the CRC Should Adopt the Belhar Confession”
(Presentation with Discussion Following)

In June, 2009 the Synod of the CRC will consider the recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee: “That Synod propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC and authorize the revision of the church order...to reflect that adoption.”

*The Belhar Confession, which helps guide the church in its mission in the 21st century, is the first confession considered by the Reformed church family in nearly 400 years.

Meetings of Classis

Classis Georgetown will meet in regular session on Thursday evening, February 19, 2008 at 6:30 PM. Classis will meet in the Fellowship Room of Love, Inc. in Hudsonville, Michigan. All materials for the agenda must be received by Friday noon, January 9, 2009. Harold Postma, S. C.

Classis Holland will meet in regular session May 14, 2009 at 6:00 pm at Kibbie CRC, South Haven, MI. Agenda items are due April 3, 2009 and should be sent to Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk, 272 E. 26th St., Holland, MI 49423. Fax: 616-494-6054, or email: louwerse@macatawa.org

The next regular meeting of Classis Niagara is planned for Wednesday, May 20, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. The location is to be determined. Materials for the agenda and requests to address Classis Niagara should be received by the Stated Clerk not later than April 1.

Congregational Announcements

First CRC Sarnia, On. will be celebrating the 75th Anniversary of its organization the weekend of May 30 & 31. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and

former members are certainly invited and welcome to join in this celebration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1c75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

CENTRAL FLORIDA LOCATION—CRC/RCA MINISTRY, Winter Haven—Orlando area, off Rt. 17/92. Services at 10:30 A. M. & 5:50 P. M. Feb—March 8 Dr. Dale Vander Veen; March 15—April 19 Rev. Alan Jongsma. For info, call: 863-422-2187. Web: www.lakealfredministry.org.

MESA & APACHE JCT. WINTER VISITORS: Worship with us at Maranatha CRC Dec. 7 through April 11, 10:00 A. M. at 6159 E. University Dr., Mesa, AZ. Rev. Gary Hutt Pastor. Info: 480-641-5496

Church Positions Available

YOUTH MINISTRY OPENING First CRC of Visalia California is seeking a youth pastor to join our ministry to jr. and sr. high students. This person will partner with our current full time youth staff in leading our various youth discipleship and missional ministries. For more information contact the head of our search team, Doug De Groff @ (559)280-7880 or send inquiries to: ym search team c/o First CRC, 1030 S. Linwood St. Visalia, CA 93277. Email: visaliacrc1@sbcglobal.net

New Hope Community CRC, Kincheloe, MI, is seeking a pastor. We have an exciting, diverse congregation with a passion for community outreach. We have strong ministries in place, and there is the potential for more to be developed. We are a small rural community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our current membership is about 40 member families. To obtain more information or a church profile please contact Joni Andary at 906-478-3205 or jandary@centurytel.net.

First Christian Reformed Church of Visalia, CA is seeking a full-time pastor of congregational life and outreach. Job descriptions include encouraging and providing leadership to small groups and congregational life and being able to develop and utilize creative approaches for our outreach ministries. For information, please contact the search committee chair, Stu Veltkamp at: visaliacrc1@sbcglobal.net. Or contact the church at MCL0 search, 1030 S. Linwood, Visalia, CA 93277. Phone number (559) 625-0444.

COORDINATOR OF MINISTRIES POSITION: First Rocky Mountain House Christian Reformed Church, located in Central Alberta's lovely Parkland area, is seeking a part-time, gifted person to assist the congregation in its ministries and "prepare God's people for works of service." The Coordinator of Ministries will work with the pastor and many volunteers in the areas of education, evangelism, youth and summer camp ministry. The position requires a strong grounding in Scripture and the Reformed tradition as well as gifts of administration and oral and written communication. An information package is available upon request at rockycrc@telus.net. Mail resume to: First Rocky Christian Reformed Church, RR #3, Site 4, Box 6, Rocky Mountain House, AB T4T 2A3.

South Bend Christian Reformed Church is in the heart of Notre Dame country in northern Indiana. We are seeking a half-time youth minister who can encourage middle and high school youth to love Christ, his church and its vision through mentoring, education, service opportunities and social events. For a complete job description and to learn more about SBCRC, visit our website: sbrc.org. For inquiries email paula@sbrc.org or call 574-272-8424.

LaGlace Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full time pastor. The hamlet of LaGlace is located in North Central Alberta. A church profile is available from the search committee by emailing natasha.vandellen@hotmail.com or by calling Nick (780)568-3906 or John (780)568-4141.

Cadillac CRC is seeking an energetic pastor talented in and focused on preaching and team ministry. With its thriving small group ministries, active community outreach, enthusiastic support of and involvement in missions, and an emphasis on youth ministries, CCRC is a healthy, multi-generational congregation whose mission is "reaching up and reaching out." The Cadillac area is a friendly community of about 18,000, surrounding two lakes and nestled in

beautiful northwest lower Michigan. Please e-mail search@cadrc.org and visit www.cadrc.org for more information.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP AND MUSIC Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, MI—Responsible for Sunday Worship and Music Ministry working with officiating pastor. 30 hrs per week. Contact John Flietstra (616-669-0443) for job description.

ALAMOSA, CO—SENIOR PASTOR needed for devoted, 50-family church congregation located in beautiful southern Colorado. This congregation was planted over 100 years ago by Dutch settlers and is alive yet today. The pastor God has selected for us will enjoy the challenge of inspiring, growing and ministering to His children who live in the beautiful San Luis Valley, home to the Great Sand Dunes. Are you the pastor whom God is calling to us? Let's find out together. Visit www.alamosacrc.org and Contact Paul Heersink at (719) 852-3436 or e-mail at pwh@amigo.net.

MARANATHA CRC OF Woodbridge, Ontario, is seeking a full-time pastor. The candidate should be compassionate, welcoming, have strong interpersonal skills with youth, and be a solid, Bible-based preacher. Our small, loving church, approximately 30 families, just north of Toronto, is looking for leadership to develop an outreach ministry in our neighbourhood, and encouragement for our spiritual journey. If you have questions, or to email us your resume and profile, please contact the search committee at maranathasearch@hotmail.com.

YOUTH PASTOR: Tired of northern winters? Do you have a passion for Christ, His church and people, especially those between 12-25? Then we are looking for you! Rural Texas church brimming with youth is seeking a youth pastor. Y'all can call 254-965-6409 at the Stephenville CRC, 1120 CR 351, Stephenville, TX 76401 or email merwin.rylaarsdam@gmail.com for more information.

PART TIME PASTOR Smaller CRC congregation with commitment to becoming fully missional seeks part time pastor who has missional heart and action. Important is pastor's access to health benefits from another source. Retired pastor can be considered. This multi-ethnic group located in Albuquerque, NM offers large parsonage, church office, some professional expenses. Contact Interim Pastor, Bob Walter, at 505-298-3176 or Council President, Sherry TenClay at 505-294-4942.

CHURCH POSITION AVAILABLE First CRC of Mount Vernon, WA is seeking a full time pastor who will lead us in God's Word, assist in the care for our congregation and help us to open our hearts and doors to our community. If you feel God's leading, please contact First CRC of Mount Vernon at 360-336-2405 or email us at firstcrc@fidalgo.net

SENIOR PASTOR Are you ready to lead a busy, multi-generational congregation, which embraces a blend of contemporary and traditional worship, places high value on the ministry of the Word, service to our community and authentic, Christ-centered relationships? Can you picture yourself in the fellowship of Soup Suppers and Cookie Sundays? Does your heart quicken at the sight of hundreds of kids singing praise songs at VBS, or the sound of dozens of adults coaching kids at Sports Camp? Third Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI is ready for new senior leadership. Our talented, passionate ministry staff is ready for your direction on this journey of growth. Are you ready? Contact the

Pastoral Search Team, Third Reformed Church, 2060 Michigan St NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, or direct your resume to Walt Lockwood, in care of email@thirdreformedchurchgr.org, or call (616) 458-3089 to inquire.

IMMANUEL CRC, a small but gifted congregation in New York's beautiful Hudson Valley, is seeking a full time pastor. We need a caring and visionary leader to guide a committed group of believers in our passion to serve the Lord. The candidate should be an effective speaker who cultivates a close, devotional relationship with God. Visit our website at www.immanuelcrcwf.org. If interested, email Deb Townsend at DeblTownsend@gmail.com.

LEAD PASTOR First CRC of New Westminster located in the greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, in Western Canada, is looking for a full-time Pastor committed to the Reformed tradition to work in team ministry with a part-time preaching pastor (Mike Goheen) and a youth pastor (David Groen) to give leadership in developing a missional congregation in a multi-ethnic setting. This pastor will need a missional imagination, will have gifts in preaching and pastoral care, will be a man of prayer and (if married) will be devoted to the godly leadership of his family. Interested candidates can call the church office at 604-521-0111 or email at nwcrc@telus.net or contact Pastor Peter Brouwer, chair of the search committee at pebro@shaw.ca.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC DIRECTOR Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI; 700 member congregations seeks passionate, Spirit-filled person to lead and develop our music and worship ministries in a half-time position. Person should have a strong musical background (both vocal and instrumental), good communications skills, a vision for blended worship, and a sincere commitment to Christ and to the Reformed faith. Contact Pastor Curt Walters at (616) 455-5120 (ext. 105) or e-mail at curt.walters@covenant-crc.org. To learn more about our church, please visit our website at www.covenant-crc.org.

HERE'S THE SCOOP! In Le Mars, Iowa, the Ice Cream Capital of the World, there is a special church with a special need. Calvin CRC, a diverse congregation, is praying for a pastor to lead this congregation. We are confident that God will bring to us a pastor who has a strong desire for sound biblical preaching and will compassionately lead this family-friendly church. Direct inquiries/profiles to: george aileen@yahoo.com (Gayle) or cezomermaand@hotmail.com (Chuck). Phone Chuck @ 712-562-6110.

The **Owen Sound First CRC** is located on beautiful Georgian Bay in Southwest Ontario. We are seeking an experienced pastor who is an effective preacher and good communicator committed to the Reformed faith. You should be a nurturing caregiver, a caring mentor for our youth, and be willing and able to challenge us to obedience in our daily lives. We offer a congregation with a high number of willing and gifted members that has given 60 years of service to our area, and is eager to be led in more. If you sense God calling you to be part of His plan for this community, please send us your profile c/o Pastor John Veenstra, our interim minister, at jveenstra@bmts.com or call his cell at 519-374-9946.

W. 44th St CRC, Wyoming, MI invites all friends and former members to a Service of Celebration, March 22 at 10 A. M. Join us as we conclude over 40 years of ministry at our location and joyfully gift our building to The Family Network of Wyoming for their continuing food bank and benevolent ministries. Formal worship will end March 29.

Church's 50th Anniversary

Bethlehem CRC, Thunder Bay, ON will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of its organization during worship services on May 24, 2009. A dinner and social evening will be held on Friday, May 22, 2009 (location and details to follow in a subsequent announcement). All friends and former members are invited to join in this celebration. Your early expressions of interest would be appreciated and useful for the planning phases of these events. For more information, or, to RSVP, contact the church office at (807) 767-3961, or, email bethcrrc@tbaytel.net.

Church's 25th Anniversary

Westside Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Kingston, Ontario invites former members and friends to join them in a celebration of God's faithfulness over the past 25 years. On Saturday, May 2, there will be an Open House from 2:30 to 4:30 followed by a dinner from 5 to 6:30 and then an evening of celebration at 7:00. A worship service of praise and thanksgiving is planned for Sunday at 10:00. Contact Corry Kelderman at 613-384-4308 or corry969@kingston.net to RSVP, to purchase dinner tickets, or for more information.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



LENA PLOOY, 930 W. Main, Ripon, CA 95366, celebrates her 100th birthday on February 19. Her children, Jeni (Dennis) Hoekstra, Carmen (John) Plooy, Helen (Douglas) Vander Wall, Henry (Joann) Plooy, and Tom (Sandy) Plooy, and her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren give thanks to God for her faith and long life.

95th Birthday

ANNA SCHRIPSEMA (born in Chicago) 1450 E Fulton #445, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 celebrates her birthday on March 6. Her children Carol (Dick) DeVries, David (Betty) Schripsema, Jo (Jack) Hulst plus 14

grandchildren, 32 great grandchildren give thanks to God for his faithfulness.

90th Birthday



Twin sisters, Margaret (Bos) Buwalda and Kathryn (Bos) Jeltema Kroonenberg, born near Platte SD in 1919, celebrated their 90th birthdays on February 27. Our families thank and praise God for His faithfulness and the blessing they are to us. We love you! **KATHRYN**, wife of the late Harold

Jeltema and late Clarence Kroonenberg, 2536 S. Leyden, Denver CO 80222. Children: Sharon (Gary) Price, Jim (Kris) Jeltema, Allan (Kathy) Jeltema, Kathy Ann Jeltema (deceased), Pam (Dan) Haan, 12 grandchildren, 10 great grandchildren. Stepchildren: Dale Kroonenberg, Ron (Deb) Kroonenberg, Steve (Adele) Kroonenberg, Carol (Jim) Junta, 11 grandchildren (2 deceased) and 11 great grandchildren. **MARGARET**, wife of the late Samuel Buwalda, 303 Elm Ave, Waupun WI 53964. Children Leann (William) VanderWoude, Larry (Joanne) Buwalda, Calvin (Louann) Buwalda, Velma (Mel) Elgersma, Bruce (Kathy) Buwalda, Mitchell Buwalda (deceased), 15 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren.

CAROLINE BODE KUIPER of Prairie View Manor, Sanborn, IA 51248 will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 28. Honoring her are her sons and their spouses: Ron & Ruth Bode and Dennis & Cathy Bode, Aldon & Jan, Les & Marlene, and Brad & Marcia Kuiper. She has 16 grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren, and many relatives and friends. Mom, you have blessed our lives with your strong faith and trust in God.

HANNAH MAE MEYER, Westview Care Center, Britt, IA, celebrated her 90th birthday on Feb. 15. Her children: Marj Nibelink, Larry Meyer, Jean DeJong, Linda VanderPol and Dale Meyer with their spouses send their love and God's blessings, along with 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

LILLIAN PIERSMA, 18245 Burnham Ave. Unit 6, Lansing IL 60438, celebrated her 90th birthday on Feb. 22. Her children, Harry Piersma, John and Candy Piersma, Michael and Jennifer D'Auria and Lorraine Ahrendt along with 9 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren praise God for her life of faith and love.

JEANETTE SITTEMA celebrates her 90th birthday on March 6. Her entire family joins her in praising God for His faithfulness throughout all of these years. She resides at Oak Grove Retirement Village, 221 West Division Road, Apt 212 DeMotte, IN 46310.

RUTH VAN HOF (Hoving), 2510 L. Michigan Dr. NW, #B216, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 celebrated her 90th birthday on February 2. Her children, Tom (deceased) and Mary Van Hof, Charles and Kathleen Van Hof, Janis and David Versluis, along with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren give thanks for her life of faith and love.

85th Birthday

RENA (LEFFRING) CLOUSING, P. O. Box 501, North Manchester, IN 46962, will celebrate her 85th birthday March 27. Congratulations and best wishes on reaching this milestone. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

GEORGE E. GRITTER (1096-51st Street, SE Kentwood, MI 49508) will celebrate his 85th birthday on March 13, 2009. Rejoicing with him are his wife Gladys (nee Kooi) and their children Robert and Ruth Gritter, Kenneth and Marianne Gritter, Cynthia and Vincent Gargagliano and Judith and James Kleinwolterink, 11 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. We give thanks for his example of faith and love.

HUNEFELD Clarence and Lois (VandenBerg) celebrated their 85th birthdays on February 12 and February 15 respectively. Congratulations and love from your family.

JOHN WULFSEN -3411 Brookview Ct. Hud. MI. 49426. Will celebrate his 85th Birthday on 3-26-9. Rejoicing also for 62 years of marriage with his wife Tena on 3-28-9. Their 6 children and families thank God for Dad's 85 years and Dad & Mom's 62 years together. Ps 145:3

80th Birthday

SHIRLEY (BEUKEMA) AARDSMA, 167 Lo Meadow Lane, Bailey, CO 80421 will celebrate her 80th birthday D. V. on March 27, 2009. Her husband Bill, of 61 years, children and grandchildren: Rhonda and Stuart Van Kooten (Heidi and Scott Dorr, Ryan and Heidi Arkema), Chuck and Bonnie (Tim, deceased), Sharman and Jim Hardin (James and Dana), and great-grandchildren Jackson and Sophie Dorr; Max, Dexter and Jadon Arkema; Caleb and Ashlee Givens thank God for His faithfulness.



REV. PAUL E. BAKKER (3165 E. University Ave., Space 430, Orangewood Shadows, Mesa, AZ 85213) will celebrate his 80th birthday on March 6. Celebrating Paul's life of faithfulness to the ministry of God's Word are his wife Marge, children Arloa & Kurt Harthoorn, Dirk & Kathy Kroeze,

Harlan & Jan Dirksen, Leon & Beth Wassenaar, Doug & Lynne Bakker, 15 grandchildren, and 9 great-children.

IKE HAMMING (15 Hamming Lane Wantage, NJ 07461) is celebrating his 80th birthday on Monday February 23. Please join his family by sending best wishes to him on this occasion.

PRINS, Ray, husband of Gert, will celebrate his 80th birthday on March 22nd. Congratulations! Joanne & Han (Jason, Jonathan, Neil); Ray Jr. (Brian, Bob, David, Johnathon; Jeanne & Eric (Benjamin, Daniel); Sherry & Dan (Andrew, Leah, Chloe, Jacob); Rob & Sam; Rachel & Jim (Anna, Jamie, Katie). We love you!!

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

VAN NOORD Lewis & Emma (Visser) 3121 Beechcrest, Hudsonville, MI 49426: 70th Anniversary—March 30, 2009. Their family joins them in praising God for His faithfulness.

60th Anniversary

DE VRIES Jolle & Jantje (Pikstra), 795 John St. W., Listowel, Ontario N4W 1B6, celebrate their 60th anniversary on March 18. Rejoicing with them are their 10 children and spouses, 26 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. We love you dad and mom!

TRINITY CHALLENGES ME TO WALK THE PATH THAT Jesus walked and to live as he did."

Chris Bosch '11
Business
Zeeland, Michigan

TRINITY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
Palos Heights, Illinois 60463
WWW.TRNTY.EDU • 866.TRIN.4.ME

M O M E N T U M F O R L I F E

ROOZEBOOM Gilbert & Bertha (Van Zanten), Pella, IA, celebrated 60 years of marriage on Feb. 16. Praising God with them are their children: Keith & Kate, Beverly & Allen Van Haften, Glenda & David Mathes, Joan, Kevin & Alicia, Kraig & Norma, Betty & Noel Kerr, 18 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren.

VANDER KAMP Glenn and Hazel (Vander Kolk) celebrated their 60th Anniversary on Feb. 8. Congratulations from your children: Barb and Ted Baumann, Sherrie and Rod Brower and Debra and Steve Dykstra. Praise God for His faithfulness and blessings.

50th Anniversary

BORN, Dewey and Tena, 6657 Byron Center Ave. SW, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on March 20, 2009. Congratulations from your children Steve & Deb Born, Henry & Alice Damsteegt, Clarence & Paula Born, Howard Born and Rob Born, and 6 grandchildren

DEVRIES, John & Frances (Koppendrayner), 1201 N Expwy 77, #662, Harlingen, TX 78552, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on March 20. We thank God for you daily! Love, your children and grandchildren.

GUIKEMA Ed and Carole (Bartman), 7046 Mindew Dr SW, Byron Center MI 49315, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Jan 21. Congratulations from your 3 children and 10 grandchildren.

HEYBOER John & Sharon (Ganzevoort) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on March 5. They will mark the occasion this summer with family and friends. May God continue to bless you with health and happiness. We love you! Your kids and grandkids.

HOFSTRA Duane & Jann (Post) of Dorr, MI will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on March 6th. The Hofstras have been blessed with 6 children, 21 grandchildren & 10 great-grandchildren. The family will celebrate the anniversary together this spring in Punta Cana. With much love and gratitude for all you have done for us.

Obituaries

BATTERINK, Lefert (Leo), aged 87, of Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett St, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5 on January 16, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 62 1/2 years, Jentina (Tena) Fluit, his children, Mary and Ed Faber, Annette Westra, Len and Nienke Batterink, Clarence and Jeri Batterink and his 12 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. Goodness and mercy followed him all the days of his life and he now dwells in the house of the Lord forever.

DEBOER: Albert P. DeBoer, aged 81, of Jenison, passed away on Tuesday, January 20, 2009. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Klazina. Albert was a member of Baldwin St. Christian Reformed Church for over 40 years. Surviving are his wife of 25 years, Aleida; sons, Bill and Carol DeBoer, Ray and Shelly DeBoer; step-sons, Harry and Madeline Heersink, Stanley and Cindy Heersink; many grandchildren and step-grandchildren. Funeral services were held at Matthyse-Kuiper-DeGraaf Funeral Home in Grandville on Friday, January 23, 2009. Interment Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens.

FLES Mrs. N Lucile; age 96; of 2121 Raybrook S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546 and widow of J. Herman Fles, went to be with her Lord and Savior Monday morning, January 5, 2009. She is survived by two sons and "her daughters in love": James H. and Ruth Fles of Spring Lake, William D. and Crystal Fles of Jenison; grandchildren: Brad and Jennifer Fles, Scott and Renee Fles, Thomas and Amy Fles; great grandchildren: Evan, Brandon, Ashley, and Jayden Fles; nieces and nephews.

HEEREMA Beatrice (Bossenbroek) age 71, passed away December 29, 2008 after a long illness with Alzheimer's. Born in Waupun, WI she lived in Tallmadge, OH since 1973. She is survived by her husband of 46 years, Frank; daughter Sheryl (Richard) Christianson; sons Jeffrey (Jennifer) Heerema and Brice (Darcy) Heerema; five grandchildren.

KAMP, Fenna H. (Danhof), age 87; 6475 Churchill Rd. Manhattan, MT, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Sunday morning, Jan. 4, 2009. She was surrounded by her family, at her home in Churchill at the time of her death. Her brother, Joe Danhof, predeceased her. She is survived by her loving husband of nearly 67 years Thomas J; children: John T. (Joyce) A. Joyce, Robert K. (Sharon) Lois; 8 grandchildren and 8 great grandsons.

KINGMA Shirley (Jeltje) nee (Dykstra) aged 80, of Kelowna, BC passed away on Dec. 16, 2008. Survived by her husband Mike (Minne) of 58 years and children: Kathy (Kenn), Jennie (Graham 1991), John (Bernice), Ed (Maria), Maryanne (Bill), Ray (Benita) and Michael (Karen), 24 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

KORRINGA Gertrude Korringa, 86, passed away Feb. 2, 2009. 3743 W Fairway Heights Dr, Mequoen, WI 53093. Resident of the Holland Home in South Holland, IL. Sister of Neil (Myra) Korringa, and Dorothy (Al) VanderVeen. Sisters-in-law of Angenette, Francis and Jean Korringa and Peter (Theresa) Hoekstra. Aunt of many nieces and nephews.

MENKVELD Robert K.; aged 78; January 26, 2009; 6313 W. Encantado Ct., Rockford, MI 49341; He was preceded in death by his brother Gerald. Bob was Board President of the Young Calvinist Federation (Youth Unlimited) and is survived by his wife of 58 years, Lois Menkveld (VanderLaan), four children; 12 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren; brother: Gordon (Harriet) Menkveld; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: Marcella Menkveld, Al (Shirley) VanderLaan, Mari (Gerald) Page, and Thelma VanderLaan

NEWMEYER, Marie passed away July 14, 2008, at her home in Willard, Ohio, at the age of 101 and 6 months. She is survived by 2 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren, and 2 great great grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

VAN BEEK, Gordon, age 73, of Spring Lake, MI, passed away on Thanksgiving, November 27, 2008. He is survived by his wife, Joyce, of 48 years; daughter Susan (David) Koetsier; sons Jeff (Deborah), Brad (Ruth), Mark (Andrea); 10 grandchildren; and brother Verne (Mary). Gordon was a life-long member of Spring Lake CRC.

VANDER HAAR Mrs. Margaret C.; age 88; January 11, 2009; 2121 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by her husband, Donald in 1996. Surviving are her children: Mary and Jim Winkle, Dan Vander Haar; her grandchildren: Doug Winkle, Julie and Jesse Moes.

Dordt College

Dordt College is seeking qualified Christian who are committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy for the following potential openings beginning summer/fall 2009:

Faculty Positions

Art-Visual Arts
Agriculture/Ag Business
Biology
Education
Engineering
English/Journalism
History
Mathematics/Computer Science
Physics
Sociology

Applications will be received until positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, e-mail a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Erik Hoekstra, Provost
Phone: (712) 722-6333
FAX: (712) 722-6035
Email: provost@dordt.edu

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

Dordt College, 498 Fourth Ave NE, Sioux Center, IA 51250

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

VANDERS Nellie (Kempema), age 93, of El Cajon, CA and Middletown, NY went to be with our Lord on Jan. 3, 2009. She was predeceased by her husband of 62 years, Raymond. She was a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to Herm & Gretchen Vanders (Karen & Dan, Pam & Brent), Grace & Jim Smith (Carrie—deceased), Myra & Tom Rogers, Norma & Bob Eck (Nicole & Craig, Rachel & John, Jonathan), Ed & Toni Vanders (Bill), Lori & Phil Weinberg (Trisha, Jack), and 10 great-grandchildren. Sister of Tillie, Jeanette Klein, Oscar (Gertie), Herman (Gert) and the late Edward Kempema

VEDDERS, Janet (Ruis) age 88, of Visalia, California passed away on December 4, 2008. She was preceded in death by her husband, Albert, in February of 2008. Her children: Karen DeSoto (Marvin), Duane Vedders (Jackie), Diane Brunzell (deceased) and Joy Griffin (Chuck); 16 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren.

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WALHOF Elmer, age 82, from Edgerton, Minnesota, went to be with his Lord on October 21, 2008, after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. He is survived by his wife of almost 60 years, Muriel; his children - Jeanne (Preston) Kallemeyn, Rose (Bill) VanNieuwenhuyzen, Don (Jolene) Walhof, Duane (Gayle) Walhof, Dean (Bev) Walhof, and Sandy (Don) VanEck; 21 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. His family is thankful for his faithful and consistent witness to God's love and grace throughout his life.

WERKHOVEN Sam, age 87, of Monroe, WA died on Nov. 5, 2008. Preceded in death by his wife, Hilda. Survived by children: Walt (Evie), Thelma (Stan) Vander Pol, Jim (Dolores), Andy (Gloria) Sue (Erick) Alberts. Also 19 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.



S U S T A I N I N G
Congregational
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for an SCE grant?

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by email sce@crcna.org
or visit www.crcna.org/sce

SCE is a program to support and strengthen CRC congregations—so they can be used by God to transform lives and communities.

Employment

CAREGIVERS NEEDED Are you interested in working for the best living assistance services company in West Michigan? Visiting Angels is looking for people who can be excellent, not average; make a connection with our clients; be perfectly dependable; practice compassion and work with integrity. Contact Elissa at 616-243-7080 or Elissa@vangels.com or visit our website at www.vangels.com and complete an online application.

HOUSING MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Part time leadership position at WESTTOWN JUBILEE HOUSING on the Grand Rapids West Side. Must love to serve the church and the city. Management skills required and construction

experience preferred. Check out our web site at wjhousing.org, visit at 724 West Fulton (616-458-4841) or email wjh@iserv.net.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY Title: Project Manager and Program Coordinator – Couple Needed. Location: Zambia, Africa. Contact: Jan Boone, GEMS Girls' Clubs. Phone: 616 241 5616 ext 3031. Email: jan@gemsgc.org. More Information: www.gemsgc.org. Salary: Raise own support. Description: GEMS Girls' Clubs, an international, Christian ministry focused on equipping women and girls to live radically faithful lives, seeks a mature, internally-motivated, hard-working, and God-dependent couple needed to expand Kingdom work in Zambia, Africa. Project Manager's Role: to help build and develop a Pre-K – 13 Christian School for orphan children that incorporates multiple sustainable, recyclable, reusable practices, causing it to become self-supporting and a center for education throughout the village. Program Coordinator's Role: to help expand the GEMS Club ministry throughout Zambia by mentoring women and establishing a micro-enterprise component that empowers clubs to become self-sustaining. Couple's Role: to serve as coordinators, spiritual mentors, and shepherds for all work teams coming to help build the school. To be Christ's ambassadors, befriending and serving the Zambian people.

Volunteers Needed

VOLUNTEERS AND WORK TEAMS are needed March - July to help Friendship Community CRC of Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, (church plant of Classis Heartland) finish their first building. Contact Verlyn Schaaap at 712-259-4730 or verlyn@longlines.com.

Real Estate: Sales and Rental

FOR RENT: San Clemente, CA 3bd/3ba house spectacular view of ocean & pier! 200 yards to the beach. www.vrbocom/196251vacationsanclemente@gmail.com (949) 413-6241.

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2BR/2BA rental units on the Atlantic Ocean in beautiful New Smyrna Beach, FL - Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates available. Call 1-800-874-1931 or check out our website at OBCRENTALS.COM.

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FOR RENT: In Cocoa Beach, FL, off or on oceanfront. Two pools, tennis, 1 hr to Disney. Mar 29-Apr 5 or Apr 5-Apr 12. \$650/1000 per week. 616-399-0885.

FLORIDA CONDO FOR RENT 2br 2bath deluxe, sleeps 8, 2 pools and lazy river, non-Disney resort inside Disneyworld, \$1,200/wk, year around times available. contact gbmey@sbcglobal.net

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba—comfortably sleeps up to 14. Very close to downtown Saugatuck & Douglas. Call 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info & reservations.

NORTHERN MI— Burt Lake sleeps 12 4 BR Boat/fish/ski/golf/fall colors. 20 min to Petoskey, Mackinaw, Harbor Springs BLcottage@comcast.net or 734-904-2660.

LAKE MICHIGAN Lakefront, Whitehall area; beautiful sandy beach, 3BR/2BA, private setting. No pets please. \$1350-1450/wk. 248-344-0996 or sji2003@comcast.net.

COTTAGE FOR RENT Weekly; Hess Lake, Newaygo, Michigan. 4 bed/4 ba, sleeps 12, sandy beach, newer home, \$1200/week. Call Lonnie at (616) 942-0048.

COTTAGE FOR RENT North Bay Shores Resort @ Big Star Lake in Baldwin MI - 2 bedroom, sleeps 8, washer dryer, large deck, beach with swim area, boat slip. \$850 / wk. call Amy @ 616-662-9659

FREE

Market Crash History Modern Portfolio Theory Investment Class

Tuesday, March 31 @ 6:30 PM
Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids
or

Wednesday, April 1 @ 10:00 AM
Hudsonville Congregational United
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HOLLAND MI nice 1 bedroom guest house across from south Lake Macatawa. \$375/ week \$80/ night www.hollandplace.com call vickie at 616-335-8766

LOG CABIN FOR RENT 2 bdr w/ priv. lake frontage 30 min N of Grand Rapids. incl. swim raft, kayak, fishing boat w/ motor. Sleeps 6-8. \$695/ wk call Janna 616-583-0407

WEEKLY COTTAGE RENTAL - Harper Lake is 80 acre all-sports lake in Irons, MI. 1 3/4 hour from GR. Comfortably sleeps 8, 1 bath. Fully furnished. Canoe, kayak, fish, icefish, swim, boat, hike, bike, ski snow/ water. Call 616.218.1275 or email kathyroseb@gmail.com for info and reservations.

SELKIRK LK RENTAL - Shelbyville, MI -Wk/Mth Sleeps 6 Sandy beach All sports 616-536-2124

FOR RENT: Hudsonville Apartment, triplex unit. Within walking distance to downtown shopping. 2 BR, 1 BA, no pets. Call Stephan at 616-340-1734.

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE FOR RENT Holland, MI. Private beach access, lake view, 2 bedrooms, \$1100/week in July-Aug, \$800/week in June. Call 616-455-2850 or sarahdv17@yahoo.com.

COTTAGE FOR RENT by the week. Located 5 miles south of Pentwater directly on Lake Michigan. Visit our website, "cottageonthebiglake.com" August and fall weeks available 616-454-728

PORTAGE LAKE Onekama Mi. 3Bedroom 2 bath waterfront cottage weekly\$2000.00. 2bedroom 1 bath waterfront condo weekly\$1200.00. 4unit available great for family retreats. Excellent all sports lake fish/ boat/ swim with access to Lake Michigan. For info call 616-786-3233 or e-mail maryvandeburg@yahoo.com

SUMMER COTTAGES on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

UPPER SILVER LAKE COTTAGE for rent, 4Bed/2Bath, fire pit, lots of space, perfect for two families, jwashler@yahoo.com

COTTAGE RENTAL Rockford MI all-sports lakefront. 3BR 1 BA, huge kitchen, flat yard to sandy beach, firepit, paddleboat, swim raft, fishing boat. \$850/wk. Email diane@ebbers.us, or call 616-451-3521.

LAKEFRONT COTTAGE FOR RENT Big Star Lake, 3 bedroom. Limit 6 people, no pets. \$700/wk dstra_fam@msn.com or 616-772-1881

COTTAGE FOR RENT: Hutchins Lake in Fennville Michigan Summer weeks available 3BR near Saugatuck/Holland/S. Haven All sports lake. \$750/week (630)782-5261

FOR RENT, Big Star Lake, 3 bedroom, 2 bath home, \$850/wk. 2 bedroom cottage, \$600 week, great beach, many weeks available. 616-669-9130 or 616-813-5972.

SALE Lake Michigan shoreline year round home. Norton Shores, 25 mi. from Grand Rapids. 3BR, 2B, 2,100 sq. ft. Great room with gas log fireplace. \$279,000. 231-798-2318 231-798-2318

COTTAGE FOR RENT Hess Lake Newaygo Michigan 2 lg. bed/ 1 has 2 dbls & 1 single. 1 has queen & crib. 1 1/2 ba. Fireplace/ spa available. Available year round \$750 wk. Call Ron 616-669-3953

CABIN FOR RENT 2 Bedroom 1 bath. Access to Long Lake off US 10 in Walhalla. Association beach, boat launch, docks. \$500/wk. Non shedding pets welcome. 616-566-3475.

Beaufort, NC 1 br cottage for rent in historic coastal town, near beach, fully furnished, linens, w/ d, tv, internet, bikes, BBQ grill; March - \$360/ wk; April & May - \$460/ wk; May 23-Sept 7 - \$560/ wk; 252-504-6262

Travel

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hosts, the VanderLaans - (417) 334-2397. Lazy Valley Resort, 285 River Lane, Branson, MO 65616. Open year round.

OBERRAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY Sept. 8, 2010, 13 days visiting Lucerne, Interlaken, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna, Munich. Dr. George and Fran Kroeze, 616 532 3770, fgkroeze@yahoo.com

OBERRAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY and tour of Italy with Collette Vacations hosted by Pastor Peter and Marianna Hogeterp June 28 - July 9, 2010. Call 1-877-352-5150 www.vellingastravel.com

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Home Missions: Changing Lives Through New Churches



Bob, a resident of Lincoln, Nebraska, had hit rock bottom. "In January of this year I sat in a motel room alone," he says. "I'd been suspended from my job for drug abuse. I was a practicing alcoholic."

While in that room, Bob called out to Jesus. "I surrendered myself to God's will that morning and asked that he would show me what he wanted me to do. I believe that God was speaking to me through one of his followers, because a few days later, I was invited by a friend to a service at *The Northern Lighthouse*," he says.

The Northern Lighthouse is a new Home Missions-funded church that worships with inmates, recovered and struggling addicts, the homeless, and others.

"I have since taken classes at *The Northern Lighthouse* to help me grow in my faith walk," Bob says. "I have shared my witness and done service projects with other CRC members. Christ lives among us and that Spirit is what keeps me at *The Northern Lighthouse*."

This year, Home Missions hopes to fund **30 new Christian Reformed Churches** that seek to change lives in North America. We thank you for your prayers and support.

For more information, visit www.crhm.org.

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STORTELLING Biblical storyteller available for church functions, VBS, etc, in West Michigan area. 20 years experience. Call Tricia (616) 494-9838 or email t.bartels@att.net.

GARDENERS - Get a themed Scripture verse on every packet of seeds you buy from Hundred Fold Seeds! Vegetable and herb seeds from Arugula to Zucchini. Bulk discounts. More info: 100Xseeds@gmail.com. US shipments only.

Miscellaneous

WANTED TO BUY - standing timber in Michigan only. Cutting on sustained yield policy. Write or call Burt Moeke Hardwoods Inc., PO Box 500, Mancelona, MI 49659; ph. (231) 587-5388. moekeoffice@torchlake.com.

WOOD SPLITTER FOR RENT 27 ton wood splitter for rent. will deliver and pick up. \$80.00 for the day. 1-508-869-3101

SEMINARIAN WANTS TO RENT RV for month long camping trip with family of 5 after Synod. bkuiper@crna.org or 616-975-9893

HOPE HAVEN BENEFIT AUCTION will be on Friday, April 3, 2009. We are asking you to donate items that will benefit our wheelchair ministry fund. Items needed (new only): Transferable airline vouchers and mileage points; Gift cards to restaurants and hotels; Sports memorabilia; Timeshares, resort and vacation home usage; Fishing/hunting trips; College and professional game tickets; Framed prints, quilts & other quality hand made items; etc. Please contact Michelle

Kuiken at 712-476-3126 or email: mkuiken@hopehaven.org. We will send receipts. All items listed on our website at: www.hopehaven.org. Deadline: March 25.

LANDMARKS I am in need of Heidelberg Catechism Landmarks (Sunday School) material and teacher guides years one and two 641-780-3981

ROOMATE WANTED, nonsmoking Christian woman to share SE Grand Rapids Condo with same. References required. Call 616-9494315.

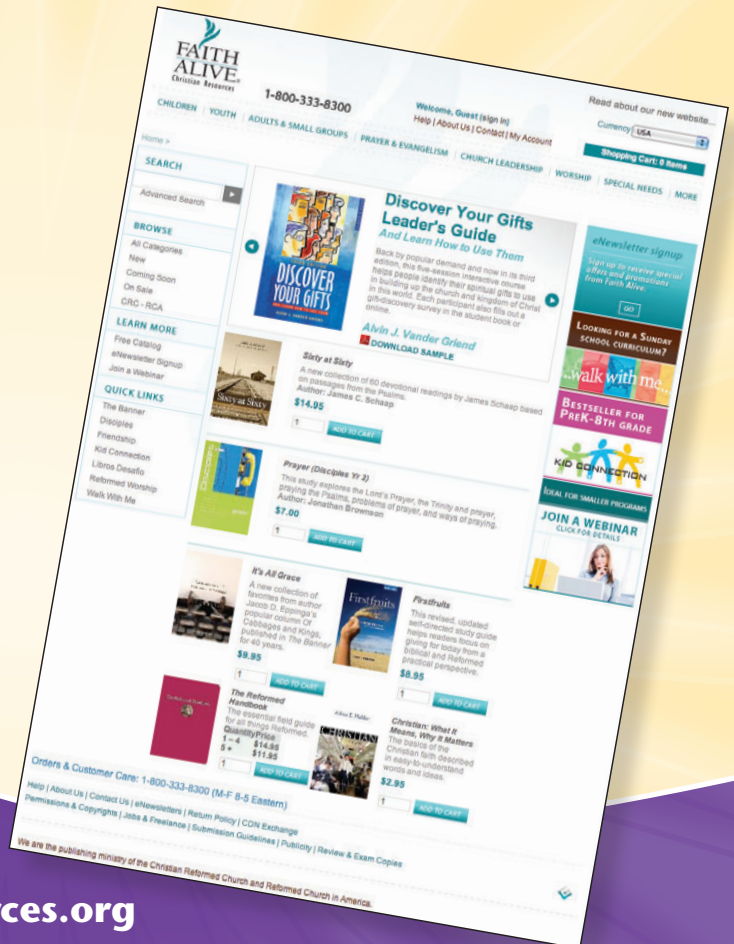
LAPTOP COMPUTERS NEEDED Looking for donation of 15 laptop computers to be used by First Hand Aid, a non-profit organization assisting doctors in 3rd world country children's hospital. Contact Jeff at 616-446-4441.

Frank Guter [previously pastor of First CRC Montreal and honourably discharged by Classis Eastern Canada for Missions in Europe in 2002], and his wife Hilary [musician] are seeking to return from Dublin, Ireland to full-time ministry work in the CRCNA [US or Canada] by this summer, 2009. Open to any and all enquiries at falguter@hotmail.com or 011-3531-214-8677.

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Punch Lines

Don't forget! Punch Lines can always use new jokes and humorous anecdotes. Please mail your submissions to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or e-mail them to editorial@thebanner.org. (It's best if they haven't been previously published elsewhere.)

John Ortberg told this one when he spoke at Calvin College's 2009 January Series:

A church had just received its first computer, and the secretary used it to prepare the baptismal order of worship when little Mary was baptized. When baby Edna was to be baptized a few months later, the church secretary pulled up the file with the baptism liturgy and did a "search and replace" to change "Mary" to "Edna." She was quite embarrassed on Sunday when the congregation recited the Apostles' Creed, a part of the baptismal liturgy, and said, "I believe in God the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Edna."

—George Vander Weit

Point to ponder: People want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.

—Joanne Vriend

A string entered the classroom of English literature students. Immediately their teacher said, "We do not want a string in here!"

Angrily twisting and turning, the string left, but after a few minutes returned. The teacher asked, "Are you the string I told to leave?"

"No," the string answered. "I'm a frayed knot." (Groan.)

—Herm Dikkers

My daughter Mary, a first-grader, has a little friend named Maya in her class. I was surprised one day when Mary declared, "Maya is in the Bible." I protested, of course.

"No, Mom, she *is* in the Bible," Mary insisted.

"How is that?" I asked.

Her older brother had been learning the books of the Bible and melodically reciting them every night. Mary proudly echoed, "Ezra, Ne-he-MIAH. . ."

I stood corrected.

—Joyce Suh

The new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses. She started her class by saying, "Everyone who thinks they're stupid, please stand up!"

After a few seconds, little Davey stood up. "Do you think you're stupid, Davey?" the teacher asked.

"No, ma'am, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself."

—Anonymous

My mother was coming to spend the holidays with us. Since we don't see her very often, I was trying to get my 3-year-old excited about her upcoming visit. I said, "Reagan, Grandma's coming soon! Are you going to come with Mommy to the airport to pick her up?"

"No, I can't." Reagan replied. "She's too heavy."

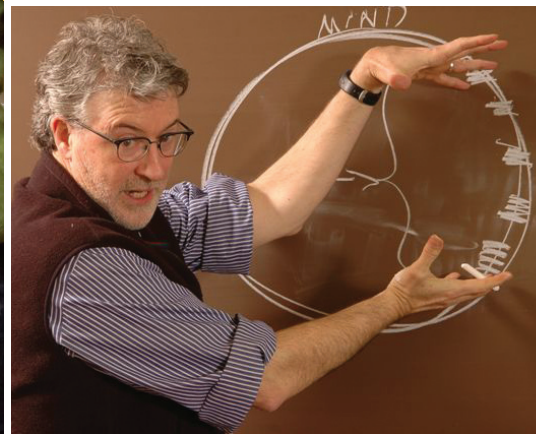
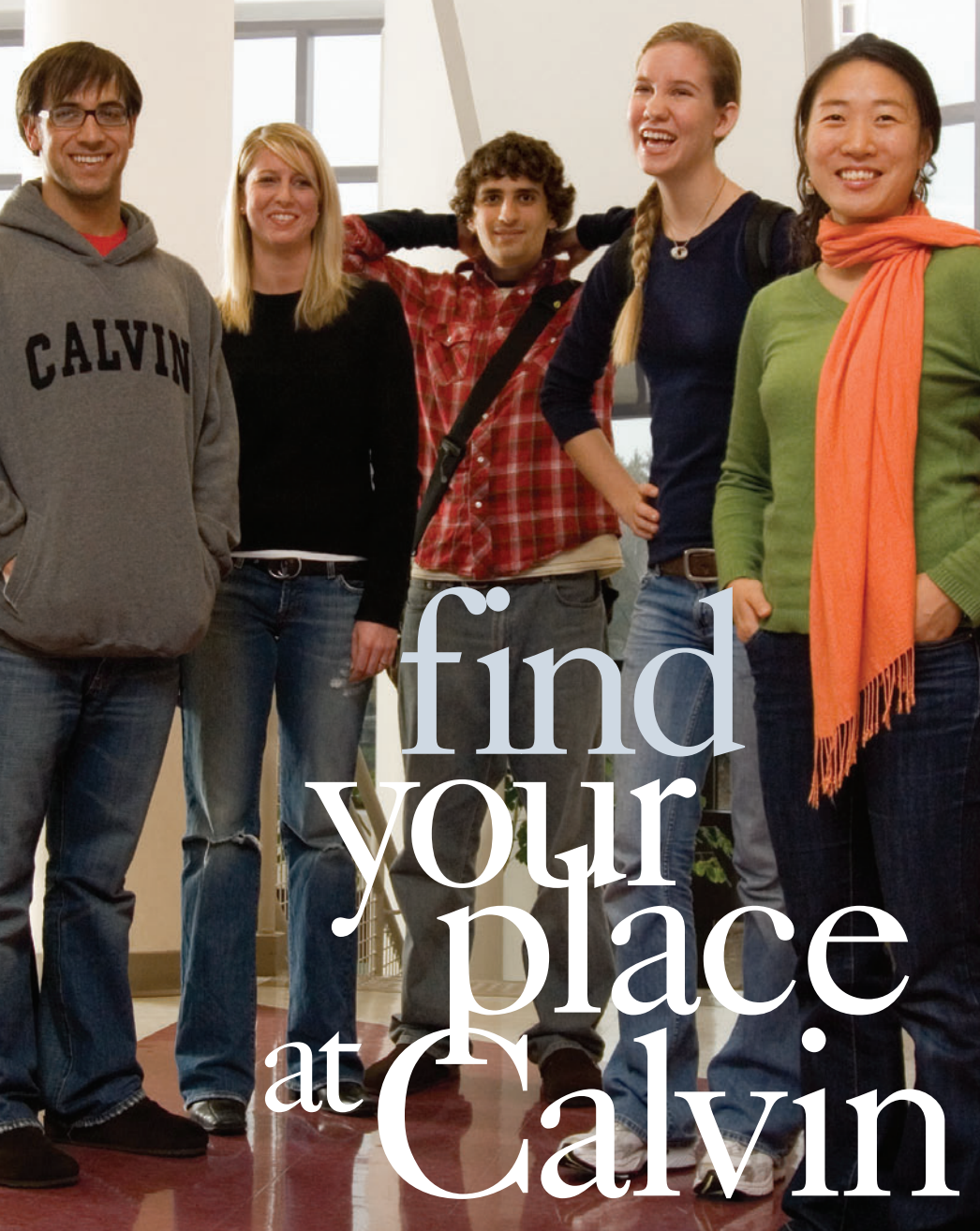
—Nicole Foster

The Banner staff is sending John Calvin on a whirlwind world tour for his 500th birthday. Look for photos of his travels on this page each month this year.



John Calvin was a man of many talents. Here he does a little farming in Neerlandia, Alberta (proving that John Deere is the only righteous choice for Reformed farmers). Assisting John in the operation of the machinery is Elton Wierenga of Neerlandia CRC. (Sorry about that reflection covering your face, Elton!)

Photo: Sandy Blacketer



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