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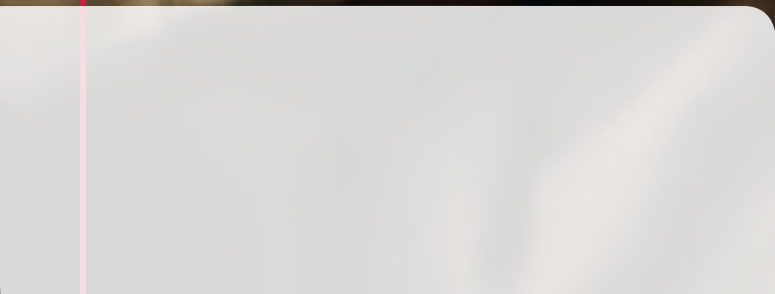
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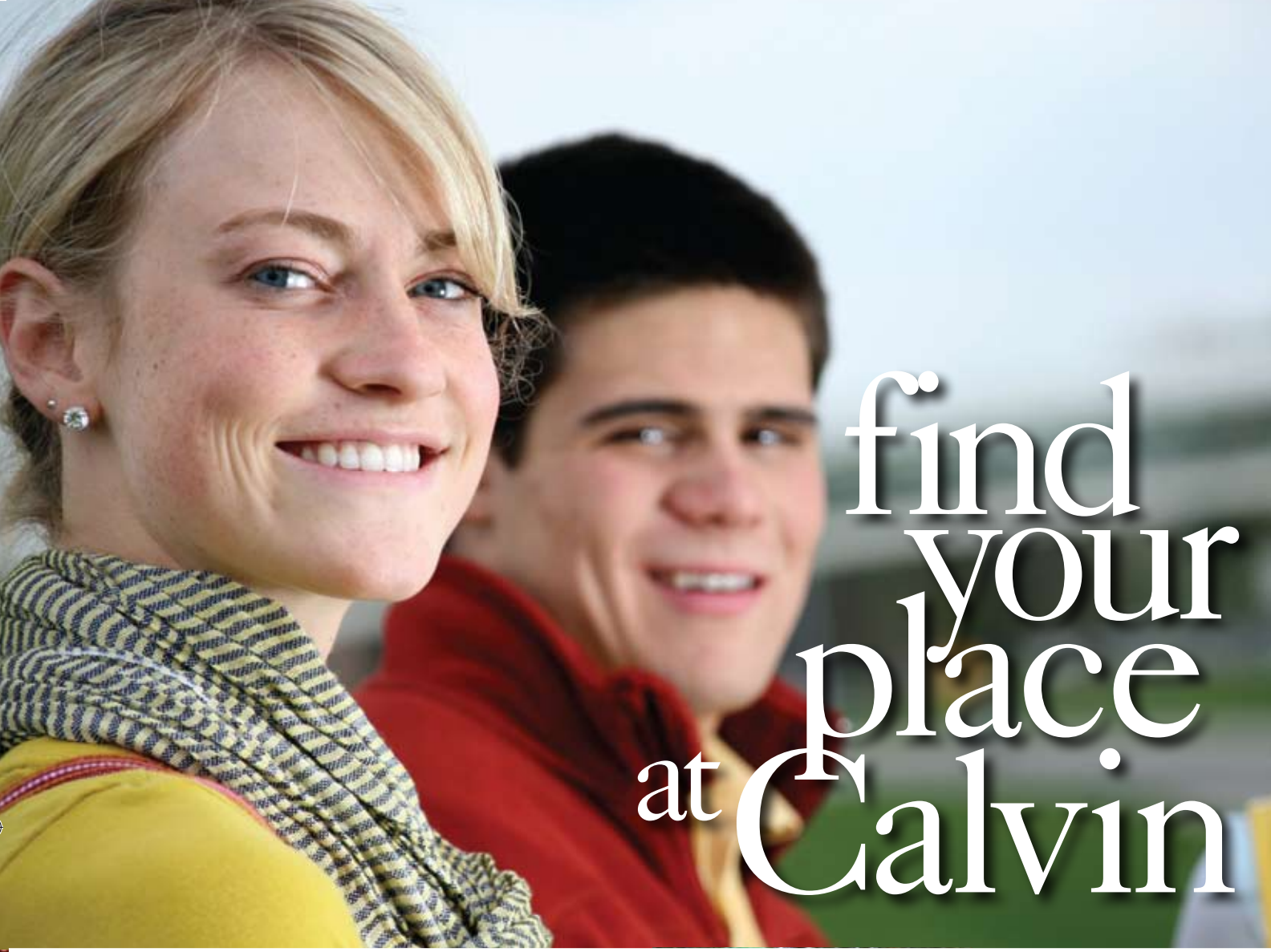
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M O M E N T U M F O R L I F E

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Jesus Will Figure It Out

MAY SUMMER GRANT YOU A WARM, SUNNY DAY to grab a lemonade, put your feet up, and do some serious daydreaming.

Neurologists claim that daydreaming is a good habit (except when it makes you ignore important stuff). It activates the part of your brain that helps you solve complex problems. Einstein was a daydreamer. It helped him figure out relativity and quantum mechanics. Imagine what it can do for you as you contemplate the large conundrums of *your* existence.

Like the end of the world. We know that we'll all individually "shuffle off this mortal coil," as Shakespeare delicately put it. But did you know that life en masse will also "buy the farm," even if global warming doesn't get us first?

Here are some things you may not know about:

- Somewhere in the frigid isolation of the Kuiper belt, a doomsday asteroid has Earth's name on it. It's not a question of *if* it will strike, just *when*.
- Supervolcanoes cause mass extinctions by super-erupting. Yellowstone Park is due to let one rip sometime within the next million years—give or take a few thousand years either way.
- Solar flares explode from the sun's surface, sometimes spitting earth-sized chunks of fiery plasma into space. Chances are we won't be on the business end of one of those monsters anytime soon. But when we are, goodbye atmosphere!
- The moon is moving away from the earth at about an inch (2.54 cm) per year. Sooner or later it will reel off into space and desert us. Not good. The moon stabilizes the earth's rotation around its axis. That keeps the seasons stable around the globe. Without the moon we won't survive the long, irregular winters and summers.
- Our solar system's orbit around the galaxy takes us out of the galactic plane every 26 million years or so. When it does, we're no longer shielded from interstellar radiation, and we fry.
- Our sun is some 5 billion years old. It will remain reasonably well-behaved for a few billion more. However, once its store of hydrogen fuel runs low, it will inflate into a red giant, vaporizing our planet.

Somewhere in the
Kuiper belt, a
doomsday asteroid
has Earth's name
on it.

But when he does return, will he still find faith on this planet (Luke 18:8)?

That's a more immediate concern.

The church isn't here to save the planet from nature. It's here to invite our neighbors to give Jesus the faith-filled welcome he deserves when he returns. And in the meantime, it's here to remind us to care for the good earth as best we can. That, too, makes for the right welcome. Beyond that, Creation's Lord will solve these minor inconveniences of global cataclysms and exploding suns. Don't worry about *those*. ■

Not that all this is immediately troubling. The chance of seeing such events during our lifetime or those of our great-grandchildren is minute. But apart from being kind of fun to contemplate in an apocalyptic sort of way (including dreaming up ways our descendants might survive by going to live on Mars or something), these situations could help us muse about Jesus' promise to return.

Before any of these catastrophes occur, he'll have made it back. I'll bet he won't wait till we're all, quite literally, toast.



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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Breathing Room

A **S I WRITE** there is a weeklong event taking place in England called “Slow Down London.” It is a protest of sorts against that city’s fast pace of life. People are being encouraged, through a number of opportunities, to stop rushing about and enjoy living, to slow down for the sake of their physical and emotional health.

North Americans are no strangers to the fast-paced life. Between the Internet, cell phones, and television (not to mention the great American work ethic) we complain to one another, “I’m SO busy!” To be truthful, a part of us feels good about this because we think our busyness testifies to the fact that we are important and purposeful. But are we overdoing it? Do we, too, need to slow down?

Last year there came a time when I couldn’t do it anymore. I couldn’t keep up with a life controlled by the clock.

Life had become a daily grind, a constantly moving treadmill, and I didn’t have a clue how to get off. I knew I needed to

slow down and build space into my life, but I was afraid. Time and again I would try a new coping mechanism so I wouldn’t have to risk my security by making a change. Eventually it became clear to me that I had no choice but to do something scary and radical: cut back my hours at work (and my paycheck) and fiercely negotiate more freedom at home.

In the beginning I felt like I was in freefall. I had no idea when I was going to hit bottom or be caught. But gradually I began to breathe without tension, and life began to open up. I found time to walk, to sit in silence, to pray—even to play (how crazy is that?). My mind gradually shifted from thoughts of performing my next duty to an opening awareness of time and space and grace.

I’ve become aware that the more I really *see* the ordinary things of life—the way the sunlight comes through the window, the sound of silence, the food before me, the snoring of a sleeping dog, even the tears that fall down my cheek and the pain inside me—the more I see the Creator of life and the Giver of all good gifts, the one who is present with me in joy and in sorrow.

Everyone can benefit from the practice of making space for God. After all, if we exercise our bodies for our physical well-being, we should also exercise our spirits by entering into the scary silence that allows God to speak to our hearts and enter our lives in a more intimate way. I have found that taking time to open my life to God does not lead to absence but to presence. And that presence is full of kindness and mercy.

For me, the practice of making room has paid off in ways I never could have imagined, in ways that I don’t yet fully understand. I am learning to let go of fear. I am feeling a sense of abundance and gratitude. And I am growing in freedom. The blessings are not coming in extraordinary ways, but are simple gifts that have been available to me all along. I was just too busy to notice. ■



Joyce Kane is part-time managing editor for *The Banner*.



God often meets us when we aren’t expecting it, aren’t ready for it, haven’t even written in our date books. At some unlikely time and place we may wake up and find that we are on holy ground—because God is there.

— MARTHA BARR

Cultural Sensitivity

We give the impression the gospel is only for men.



WHEN SENDING MISSIONARIES to another country, Christian Reformed World Missions gives them instructions about that country so their presentation of the gospel isn't unwittingly compromised by the missionaries' own culturally loaded words or actions. Shouldn't the same characterize North Americans who communicate the gospel in North America?

For decades women have entered many fields once the exclusive realm of men, and today women serve capably in every sector of society. This has impacted North American language, so much so that college students are now required to use gender-inclusive language in their work. However, too frequently we in the church still communicate in language that gives the impression that the gospel is only for men.

For example, the theme verse for the 2007 celebration of All Nations Heritage Sunday was Acts 1:26-27: "From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth. . . . God did this so that men would seek him." The theme verse of a local Christian school class for the 2007-08 school year was Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before men. . . ."

Don't we mean men and women? Some might skeptically reply, "You know what we mean—men and women." But what an unsatisfactory response, especially when we teach our children to follow the nonsexist writing conventions of the day. In addition, don't we encourage each other to "Say what you mean and mean what you say"?

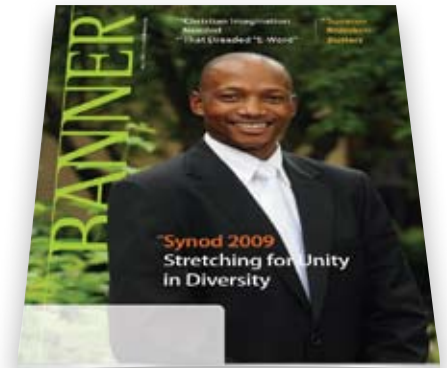
We, the church, should use inclusive, not exclusive, language, especially when we acknowledge that such language accurately reflects the intent of the biblical writers. All of us acknowledge that women as well as men ought to examine themselves as they partake of the Lord's Supper, even though Paul says, "A man ought to examine himself . . ." (1 Cor. 11:28). Shouldn't we use a version of the Bible that says what the writers (and we) mean?

While it might feel burdensome to change the Bibles in your pews, culturally sensitive, inclusive language is important—to our society and to us. Our congregation purchased Today's New International Version, a Christian Reformed-approved gender-accurate translation, as soon as it was available—through an offering. Other councils may wish to incorporate this major purchase in their General Fund budget. Or some of you might wish to gift your congregation with such Bibles.

No matter how this goal is reached, our church needs to be inclusive in the version of the Bible it uses and in the language our pastors use. Let's become more sensitive to our own culture, so that when we communicate the gospel we say what we mean. ■



Rev. Beth Guikema-Bode is pastor of Fuller Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.



The Belhar

Confessions arise, as the Belhar surely has, out of the urgent need to express the gospel in very particular contexts ("Shoes," June 2009). So it's hard to imagine that this "shoe" will ever fit us as well as our own Contemporary Testimony, written to address issues such as secularism and individualism that threaten the gospel in *our* context.

The testimony's beautiful phrasing and wide biblical scope (particularly its emphasis on creation, which so sorely needs to be heard now) *includes* the Belhar's themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice. So why has this elegant, locally made "shoe" not been given confessional status? Must all our confessions bear a name far away in either time or place?

It just might be that the strongest show of solidarity with our Reformed brothers and sisters in South Africa is not the adoption of their confession but the hard work of strengthening and deepening our own.

—Wilma van der Leek
Surrey, British Columbia

Thanks for drawing our attention to the Belhar Confession in your editorial. This document brings a whole new meaning to the phrase "confession of the church." You spoke about the different context of South Africa as being a reason for hesita-

LETTERS

tion. When 11 o'clock Sunday morning remains the most racially segregated hour of the week here in North America, it seems to be a more deeply human issue than a contextual one.

The Three Forms of Unity, by comparison, are much further removed from our context, as they are intended to address doctrinal disputes of the 16th century between warring factions of Christendom. This new confession may, in fact, even shed some theological light on Christian doctrinal disputes (there is a lengthy section on love and unity in the church).

I'm praying for its embrace as our denomination's confession—alongside our still-valuable historic confessions. It will bring a missional freshness to our "always reforming" faith.

—Peter Schuurman
Guelph, Ontario

Tea Party

I am protesting Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker's blatant political actions that sadly mix his political ideology with religion—thereby impugning the Christian Reformed Church.

I must and will attempt to determine if Wagenmaker's efforts are merely an isolated aberration under the aegis of our church. If not, I am behooved to leave the CRC and seek a denomination wherein I can worship our Lord free of any and all political entanglement.

—Raymond Joseph
East Lansing, Mich.

Regarding "Pastor Coordinates Tax Tea Party" (June 2009), first let's remember that under President George W. Bush, the U.S. national debt rose from \$5.7 trillion to \$10.6 trillion. A significant part of that debt was incurred fighting a war in Iraq because Iraq supposedly had weapons of

mass destruction. As it turned out, there were no such weapons.

Second, as the distinguished Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society." To me, one mark of a civilized society is the way persons who have special needs are treated. We have a son who has Down's syndrome. In 1971 the citizens of Grand Rapids, Mich., approved a school millage proposal that increased taxes so that our son and others like him could be properly cared for and educated. Our family firmly believes that on that day Grand Rapids demonstrated that it was a caring, civilized community.

—Robert Bolt
Grand Rapids, Mich.

I find it sad that *The Banner* saw fit to devote nearly half a page to this article. It seems odd that in a country where millions live in abject poverty, have minimal or no health insurance, have less than adequate or no housing (the list could go on), a tax revolt, no matter how it is disguised with pretty "Christian" rhetoric, should be considered as CRC News.

—John Kralt
Ottawa, Ontario

Mental Illness

Many thanks for publishing "Light for a Dark Path" by Rev. Tony Meyer (May 2009). I've experienced many episodes of depression, one forcing me off ministry responsibilities for eight weeks and another forcing me to take early retirement.

The severity and pain of mental illness calls us as a church to be informed to the extent that knowledge of the illness is available and to be "communities of compassion." The pain of the illness was clearly seen in the three who shared their personal stories along with the article. Thank you for your courage. Thanks also

to Rev. Meyer for shining a light on a very dark path. God does give healing, but sometimes we suffer relapses, as Angie Salomons shares.

Personally, I keep pinching myself to see if it's actually me as I experience a new recovery. To God be all the praise!

—Rev. Larry Van Essen
Visalia, Calif.

Bravo and AMEN! At long last an excellent article about mental illness in a Christian publication. Meyer discusses mental illness in such a profoundly truthful manner. I will definitely share this with family and friends who have had a hard time understanding and accepting my mental illness. Also, Verna Haverhals, Angie Salomons, and the 16-year-old writer deserve medals for sharing their own experiences in such honest and candid manners. My heart and prayers go out to them and the many Christians who experience these debilitating diseases. May we become communities of the kind of love, compassion, understanding, and acceptance that Jesus showed.

—A.S.W.
Edmonton, Alberta

See more letters online at
www.thebanner.org/

Correction

Wouldn't you know it? We mistakenly edited out the names of the only female models in our story about a recent clergy fashion show ("Retired Pastors Stage Unique Fashion Show," June 2009, p. 14). Those models were Rev. Ruth Romeyn and Rev. Paula Vander Hoven—and they're NOT retired. *The Banner* certainly regrets the errors.

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Chicago-Area Youths Raise AIDS Awareness

The youth group of Wheaton (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church was one of three Chicago-area youth groups to receive seed money from the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) to help them "Embrace AIDS."

As part of the agency's "Embrace AIDS" campaign, Randy Hedman of CRWRC presented \$1,000 to each group and asked them to use the money to learn about HIV/AIDS, share what they learned, and make a positive difference.

The Wheaton group led a worship service in February and showed the CRWRC film "Living with Slim" to sixth-graders through adults and led a separate program for children. Everyone who attended had an AIDS ribbon drawn on their palm as a prayer reminder.

The Wheaton group also hosted a meal for 100 people. Each diner received an Embrace AIDS bracelet and a prayer card and quiz about HIV/AIDS written by the youths.

Some of their grant paid for the meal. They also prepared \$20 "seed money" packets for

volunteers, who multiplied the funds in creative ways. More than \$4,000 was given back to CRWRC.

The youth group of Wheaton (Ill.) CRC received \$1,000 from CRWRC after an overnight youth event at the church.

The junior-high group of Orland Park (Ill.) CRC used their \$1,000 to get 15 kids started in an Iron Man Triathlon. Each participant raises \$500 and recruits a friend, so the fund-raising efforts expand (see jointherace.org).

Youths from First and Bethel CRCs in DeMotte, Ind., led a joint worship service and a Christian school chapel service. They hosted an evening event with a CRWRC missionary speaking and raised about \$2,500.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung



The congregation of Lincoln Center CRC celebrates 125 years.

Iowa Church Marks 125th Birthday

Lincoln Center Christian Reformed Church in Grundy Center, Iowa, celebrated 125 years of ministry, looking both to the past and the future.

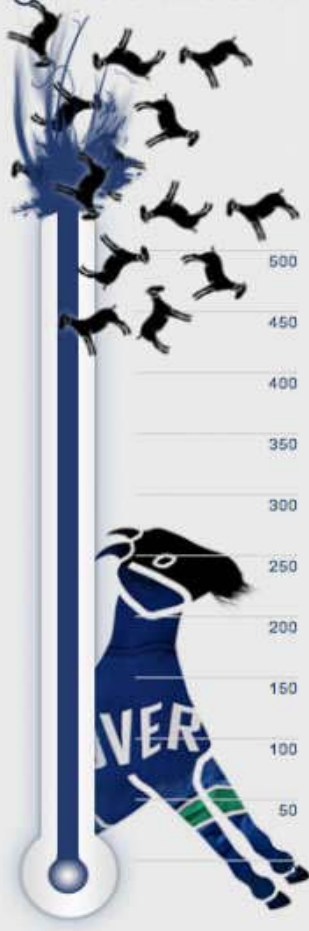
About 300 people attended a morning worship service led by lay pastor Dale Janssen and an afternoon service of praise on May 31. A dinner was also held between services.

"Congregational singing was just unbelievable," said Wayne Graves. "It was a tremendous time of worship and praise to God."

Three pastors, Rev. Andrew Bandstra, Rev. Ken Slager, and Rev. David Dykstra, returned to share in the festivities with their former congregation.

"There are a lot of exciting things happening in Lincoln Center, and we look forward to building on them as we go forward," Graves said.

—Paul Delger



Once the “goat-o-meter,” created by Darell Koopmans, surpassed 500, the meter showed an explosion of goats.

Playoff Fever “Goes to the Goats”

What started out as high hopes for the Vancouver Canucks hockey team in the playoffs for the Stanley Cup ended in an explosion of generosity in the form of goats for villagers in Africa.

Back in April, Joel Nagtegaal, 24, a member of The Bridge Community Christian Reformed Church in Langley, British Columbia, gathered with family and friends for their regular Sunday afternoon game of roller-hockey. During Stanley Cup playoffs the men in the group traditionally grow goatees in support of the Canucks, but this year Nagtegaal suggested that perhaps they could do something more. Goatees and goats—how about a goat donated for every Canuck playoff win?

The group was in for 16 goats if the Canucks made it all the way and won the cup. The goats would be donated through Christian Reformed World Relief Committee’s \$25-per-goat gift program.

Word spread, and the www.goatcanucksgoat.com website was born, complete with a “goat-o-meter” and a link to CRWRC to simplify donations. The website started getting hits from all over the world. T-shirts were created and promptly sold out.

The local and national media caught wind of the story, and Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada, was interviewed on national television with Nagtegaal. A CBC reporter in Kenya connected with CRWRC’s Rev. Fred Witteveen, who accompanied the reporter to a village that had received CRWRC goats in the past.

Months later, Nagtegaal is still shaking his head, surprised at how a simple idea took on a life of its own. Long after the Canucks lost early in the playoffs, more than 1,000 goats were donated.

Vancouver will soon host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, and Nagtegaal and his friends are thinking about “Goats for Gold.”

—Jenny de Groot

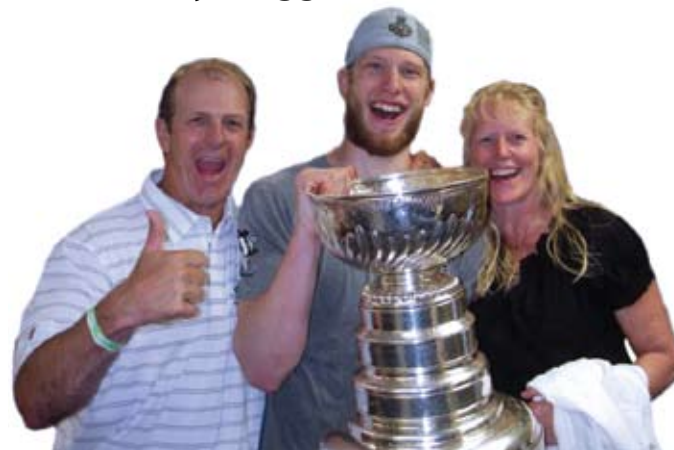
Ontario Man Brings Home Hockey’s Biggest Prize

Jordan Staal, 20, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, has brought home what for most boys is an unattainable childhood dream: the Stanley Cup.

Staal plays left wing for the National Hockey League’s Pittsburgh Penguins, who beat out the Detroit Red Wings in this year’s final round.

Staal is the third of four sons born to Henry and Linda Staal, also members of First CRC. The Staal brothers have collectively made an impact on hockey.

Eldest brother Eric plays for the Carolina Hurricanes, who won the Stanley Cup in 2006. Second eldest brother Marc plays for the New York Rangers, and youngest



Jordan Staal, flanked by his parents, Henry and Linda, shows off the Stanley Cup.

brother Jared has been drafted by the Phoenix Coyotes.

The boys grew up playing hockey on a backyard rink that Henry built and maintained dur-

ing the winters of their childhood.

Linda says she never imagined that her sons would play at the NHL level. “The whole town is proud of them. We are proud of them.”

—Jenny de Groot

New Jersey Diaconal Network Offers ESL Classes

The Diaconal Network formed by six Christian Reformed churches in the Paterson, N.J., area, is offering basic and intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) as a way of reaching out to the local community.

Hosted by Unity CRC in Prospect Park, each church in the Diaconal Network took turns providing refreshment and child care for eight students who gathered for the 13-week course.

Part of the funding to pay for the instructors came from Classes Hudson and Hackensack (regional groups of churches). Both instructors are members of New Horizon CRC in Clifton, N.J.

Bill Reitsma, coordinator of the ESL program, said the program was one of the ways the Diaconal Network connects with its neighbors.

Anna Almendares, an ESL student, was thankful for her experience. “For the first time I feel confident in speaking English at my job,” she said. Another student, Alba De La Cruz, will use what he learned to apply to Passaic County Community College.

Volunteers benefited as well. Bob Torbet, a member of Unity CRC, was awed by the experience, which “taught me how to connect with other cultures,” he said.

“I loved being with the children and seeing them respond to our love,” said Christy Van Genderen, a member of Covenant CRC.

—Calvin Hulstein

Digging Deeper in the Oil Sands



Caterpillar 777 haul trucks remove waste material above an oil sands excavation site.

CALLS ACCEPTED

From Bethel CRC, Dunnville, Ontario, to **Rev. John Heidinga** of Victoria (B.C.) Christian Reformed Church.

From Haven CRC, Zeeland, Mich., to **Rev. Randal Meyers** of Calvary CRC, Lowell, Mich.

From Racine (Wis.) CRC to **Rev. David Van Buren**, to serve as chaplain at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - All Saints Hospital, Racine.

From New Life CRC, Grand Junction, Colo., to **Rev. Kenneth M. Vander Horst** of Imlay City (Mich.) CRC.

The Christian Reformed Church's Canadian Ministries Director, Rev. Bruce Adema, joined leaders from other churches for a recent tour of the Athabasca oil sands and nearby communities in northern Alberta. The Alberta tour was organized by KAIROS, a church-based social justice movement of which the CRC is a member.

Alberta has large numbers of oil sands deposits, the development of which has made Canada the largest supplier of crude oil to the United States. But there is concern, according to KAIROS, that the growing number of local cases of rare illnesses and cancer might be related to the oil industry's practices.

After the tour, the KAIROS delegation released a statement noting that local churches and communities in Alberta are deeply engaged in the oil sands and see great benefits from these projects. "They don't want to lose jobs, and they are also concerned about the environment," the statement said. First

Nations people also see economic benefit of the oil sands.

But the statement expressed concern at "[the industry's] determination to keep up the pace of development" and says that individual consumers, industry, and government must create solutions. KAIROS called on the Alberta and Canadian governments to protect the common good through better regulation.

Adema said CRC members should be aware of the issues and offer a wise word to government about creation stewardship and help for the marginalized.

John Hiemstra, a professor of political studies at The King's University College and a member of Inglewood CRC, said that real change will require serious dialogue. "The churches are wise to focus on the oil sands. They pro-

tion, he said, we should celebrate God's good gifts within industry. "And then drill your way out from there," he said.

Dennis Vroom, a member of Evergreen CRC, works in the oil industry in Fort McMurray and is concerned about the impact the KAIROS statement will have on the churches there. "It is easy to point out the negative impacts of the oil sands," he said. He's frustrated that people dwell on the negative. "We should respond with an open, realistic mind and be prepared to listen," he said.

"Don't be afraid to question the facts, from both sides. Pray for guidance . . . for all of the people who are involved in making these tough decisions regarding the oil sands," he said.

—Rachel DeKoning Kraay



foundly crystallize . . . the major trends and problems that the churches have already been addressing, globally and ecumenically, for decades," he said.

Rev. John Van Sloten, pastor of New Hope CRC in Calgary, points out that "our world belongs to God," including oil and its industries. Instead of taking a "standing against" or "slowing down" posi-

From left, **Fabricio Guaman** of Oil Watch South America; **Michael Keania Karikpo**, Oil Watch International; **Rev. Susan Johnson**, National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Winnipeg; and **Rev. Bruce Adema**, Director of Canadian Ministries, CRCNA.

News from Spring Classis Meetings

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

Rev. Jimmy Han, along with his congregation, Good News Chapel, West Covina, Calif., was **welcomed into the Christian Reformed Church.**

Rev. Steven Baarda, Rev. Paul Baker, and Rev. Lisa Vander Leek were **released from ministry to their congregations.**

Rev. Hector Raul Orlandi, pastor of Principe de Paz CRC in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, is starting a **biblical institute in Puerto Rico** using local Reformed leaders to train people.

All people being examined for the office of ministry associate in Classis California South will be required to undergo a **psychological examination and police background check.**

Churches in Classis Zeeland are requested to inform the stated clerk ahead of time if they plan to **delegate a female elder to a classis meeting.**

Classis Holland **declined to take any corrective or disciplinary action** against Rev. Leonard Vander Zee regarding opinions expressed in his book *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper* on the basis of charges brought by Rev. Neal Punt.

Classis Niagara is developing a **response to the Banner editorial by Rev. Bob De Moor** in the March 2009 issue regarding same-sex relationships ("What's to Discuss?").

More details and additional news from the classes are available in this month's online *Banner* at www.thebanner.org.

—Banner News Correspondents



Rev. Leonard Meinema of Bethel CRC in Fulton, Ill., greets Classis Northern Illinois on behalf of Unity Christian School students.

Christian School Thrives with Support from Classis

Meetings of CRC classes (regional groups of churches) are usually attended only by adults. But at a recent meeting of Classis Northern Illinois, the entire student body of Unity Christian School in Fulton, Ill., was there to lead delegates in devotions and to offer lunch at the school's new thrift store.

Why such a connection between a school and a classis? In 2006 the classis gave the struggling school \$150,000 as affirmation of the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to Christian education (see *The Banner*, July 2005, p. 28).

Unity used the money for a tuition-reduction incentive program that enabled new elementary school children to attend their first year for as little as \$1,000. Since the support of the classis began, the school's enrollment has

increased from 142 to 214 students.

Nearly 90 of the students who came to Classis Northern Illinois' meeting were attending the school thanks to the assistance of the classis.

"Your generosity," wrote Unity Superintendent Dick Ritzema in a letter to the delegates, "has been extremely helpful and has impacted scores of families who want Christ and a Christian perspective in their child's education."

—Doug Evenhouse

Korean CRC Council

The Korean Council of Christian Reformed Churches met in May for its 26th annual meeting. Pictured here are its newly elected officers. Since 1984 the council, which has nearly 100 member churches, has served as a bridge between Korean churches and provided continuing education and ministry resources for Korean Christian Reformed congregations. Among its resources are *Voice of the Reformed*, a Korean version of *The Banner*, and the *TODAY* devotional published as a bilingual booklet in English and Korean. The meeting included reports from the Korean Institute for Ministry, which helps with continuing education.

In the closing sermon, Rev. Koong Jin Narm, pastor of Zion CRC, Portland, Ore., encouraged Korean churches to strive for unity as they change and mature.

—Jonathan Kim



JONATHAN KIM

Winning with Space Stations and Goldfish

Four students from Unity Christian High School in Orange City, Iowa, won first-place honors at the regional Eastern South Dakota Science and Engineering fair held at South Dakota State University.

Samuel Baas and Andrew Ter Haar, both members of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa, captured the grand prize by creating artificial gravity for space station use.

One of the problems in taking long trips in space is having enough gravitational force on the bones to maintain their strength. "The idea [of artificial gravity] has been presented, but no action has been taken because of the expense," said Baas.

Baas and Ter Haar found an inexpensive way to simulate gravity using an iPod Touch and a bicycle wheel.

They figured out the relationship between the RPM, the radius of the space station, and the creation of 1G (a measure of gravity). From that they could

determine the size and shape of the space vehicle and its rotational speed to simulate 1G on the bodies of the astronauts.

Success earned them scholarship money and an all-expense-paid trip to the International Science Fair in Reno, Nevada.

In the Animal Science division, Abigail Dykstra and Ashtyn Zomermaand won first prize by proving CBS's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* wrong about goldfish.

Dykstra, a member of Immanuel CRC in Orange City, and Zomermaand, a member of Bethel CRC in Sioux Center, noted that the television show had a segment claiming goldfish faded to white in 48 hours if kept in total darkness.

"We wanted to prove them wrong," said Dykstra. After 48 hours in the dark, the fish's color faded but then restored itself. *CSI* was wrong. The fish adjusted, noted Zomermaand.

—Sherry Kooiker



Adema Named Canadian Council President

Rev. Bruce Adema, director of Canadian Ministries for the Christian Reformed Church, was recently elected president of the Canadian Council of Churches.

The CCC is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, representing 22 denominations from the Anglican, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic traditions.

—Gayla R. Postma

Virginia Boy Takes Second in National Spelling Bee

Tim Ruitter, 12, spelled *psittacosis*, *passacaglia*, *byssinosis*, *cretonne*, *jacqueminot*, *reredos*, *oriflamme*, and *sophrosyne* correctly.

It was *maecenas* that tripped him up, giving him second place in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, broadcast live on the ABC television network.

Ruitter, a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Burke, Virginia, won \$10,000 for college.

When Ruitter, now home schooled, was in second grade, his teacher gave him a dictionary

and told him to pick out his own words when the standard spelling lists weren't challenging him.

Ruitter also excels in science. His home school Science Bowl team won the Virginia state title and went on to finish 12th in the national competition this year.

Ruitter is a junior youth leader in his church's Cadet program for

boys and plans to make profession of faith later this year.

—Calvin Hulstein

Tim Ruitter, second-place winner of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, being interviewed by Jennifer Donelan, a reporter with ABC.



From left: Andrew Ter Haar, Samuel Baas, Abigail Dykstra, and Ashtyn Zomermaand took home top prizes for science and engineering.



JON RUITER



Community kids play basketball in Sports 4 Life.

Building Community Through Sport

Reaching kids through sports is a passion of Rev. David Lindner, pastor of Bridge of Life Christian Reformed Church in Sacramento, Calif.

Four years ago, Lindner began Sports 4 Life, a youth sports league for children ages 7 to 15 years old. While sports bring kids in initially, Lindner said community is the focus.

All Sports 4 Life board members come from the local community. Costs for the league are kept low, and scholarships are available. All games and practices are held within walking distance of the neighborhood school so that students without access to transportation can be involved.

"Part of our vision is to do more than just sports or competition, but to provide for the kids in the community," said Lindner.

Speakers, professional athletes, police officers, and firefighters have come to interact with the kids and coaches. "We are called by God to recognize the inherent beauty, dignity, and God-given resources of each community," said Lindner.

—Heidi Wicker

Michigan School Wins Two Academic Championships

Kalamazoo (Mich.) Christian High School won the state championship in two different academic competitions this year.

The Quiz Bowl team won in its division for the second year in a row. In Quiz Bowl, four members of each team answer rapid-fire academic questions from a moderator.

Coach Al Nieboer heard from another coach that the Kalamazoo Christian team was the "class act" of the tournament, that "they modeled the Christian faith impeccably."

The school's Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS) team placed first in the state and also went on to place third nationally. That competition focused on the engineering that goes into theme park design and construction.

Competitors need excellent problem-solving skills and good knowledge of math and science. Student Connor DeWitt said, "You have to learn leadership skills, and you also have to learn to trust other people's instincts."

—Eileen DeVries



Kalamazoo Christian High's winning Quiz Bowl team: Back row (l to r) coaches Jim Potter, Scott VanDyke, and Al Nieboer; Henry Holland, Mike Timmerman, James Karsten, John Holland. Front Row (l to r) Cole Nedervelt, Connor DeWitt, Josh Withee, Jessalyn Balk, Jonathon Meinema.



Kalamazoo Christian High's winning JETS team: Back row (l to r) Coach Al Nieboer, Jeff Kloosterman, Nate Ackerman, Brett VanDam, Jonathon Meinema. Front row (l to r) Keri Barron, Libby DeKraaker, Connor DeWitt, Courtney Mulder.

West Michigan Girls Bring Home Soccer Title

The girls' soccer team from Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, Mich., landed its fifth consecutive state soccer title in Division 3. "They played very good team defense," said Coach Randy Heethuis. Their 1-0 championship victory marked the team's 13th consecutive shutout.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Soccer champions from Unity Christian High School





ANDREA VISSER

Rev. Winston Visser (left) and Rev. David Tigchelaar sweep the ice with enthusiasm during a curling game with fellow pastors.

Fun and Games for Ottawa Pastors Prevent Burnout

Curling, snowshoeing, board games, an art gallery visit—these were some of the activities Christian Reformed pastors in the Ottawa, Ontario, area enjoyed this past winter and spring.

The unconventional gatherings were funded by a grant from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program. Spurred on by the book *The Fully Alive Preacher*, the pastors were keen to be rejuvenated and to prevent burnout.

Rev. Winston Visser, pastor of Athens (Ont.) CRC, said, "It was good to get to know [each other] in another setting." They learned who among them loves art, who is a competitive board-game player, and who "rocks" at curling.

Rev. Jacob Boer of First CRC in Montreal said he was reminded of "how important it is to feed the part of our soul created to have fun and to fellowship with others."

Rev. Daryl Meijer, pastor of Barrhaven Fellowship CRC in Nepean, Ontario, organized the outings. "I think we all had fun. . . . I made sure to schedule a great lunch just in case!"

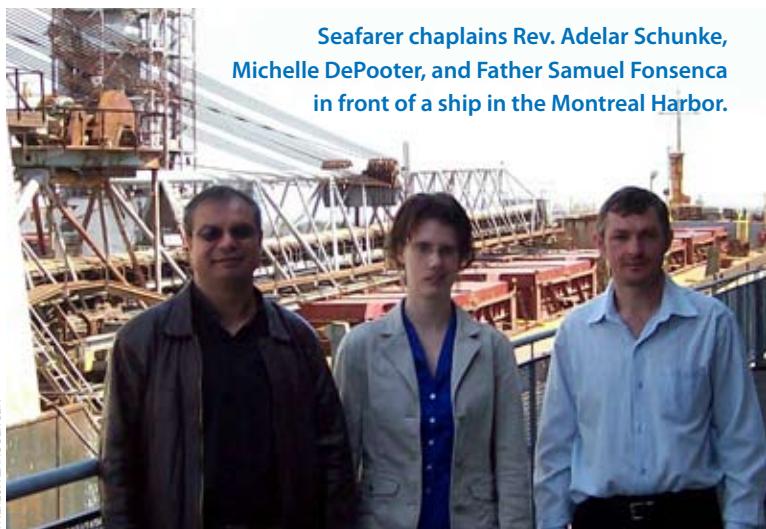
—Brenda Visser

Montreal Seafarer Ministry Hosts Exchange Program

In April, Ministry Associate Michelle DePooter welcomed chaplains Rev. Adelar Schunke and Father Samuel Fonsenca from the Brazilian city of Santos, São Paulo.

DePooter is the Christian Reformed chaplain for the Ministry to Seafarers in Montreal. The chaplains are participating in a "twinning project" through the International Committee on Seafarer's Welfare. DePooter visited Brazil in 2008.

DePooter frequently visits ships in port. She said that the sailors miss their families very much. When they come into the Seafarers' Centre, communication with families is a priority. "We sell more phone cards than we can count, and we don't keep track of the number of Bibles and videos we give away, but they are numerous as well," DePooter said.



THERESA ZANDBERGEN

Seafarer chaplains Rev. Adelar Schunke, Michelle DePooter, and Father Samuel Fonsenca in front of a ship in the Montreal Harbor.

Harsh working conditions, sickness, and even death are common on board ships. Schunke told of a time when a death occurred at sea. When the ship arrived in Santos, Schunke and others led a memorial service for the deceased sailor. He said, "The peace that came upon the men was visible on their faces."

Crime, disease, and prostitution are prevalent in the busy South American ports, and there is little law enforcement. Seafarer centers provide a safe haven for

sailors to relax, get medical attention, play games, and meet new friends.

Fonsenca travels across South America to promote ministry to seafarers. Port ministry in South America is new, but churches are enthusiastically joining in. Through exchange programs such as this one, chaplains are encouraged in the challenging work they do.

—Brenda Visser

Ontario Church Flings Open Historical Doors

Athens (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church invited the public into its historical building in May as part of a province-wide historical program called Doors Open.

In addition to history and architecture, the Athens congregation went beyond the building to remind visitors that church is about people worshipping God.

As a visitor looks at the original 1850s windows, feels the hand-hewn stone, or rings the historic bell, questions often arise about the church today.

Jannie Feenstra, a longtime member of Athens CRC, believes that literally having the doors open to visitors can help educate people about church and faith. One visitor wanted to know what the wooden attachments with circular holes fastened to the backs of the pews were, which initiated a conversation about communion. Others have expressed surprise that children attend church.

Members of Athens CRC hope that by opening doors, hearts will also be opened.

—Brenda Visser



BRENDA VISSER

Jannie Feenstra welcomes visitors to the church's bell tower during a recent historical event, accompanied by her granddaughter, Ashley Feenstra, and friend Oriana Visser.

FAQS

Church

Q Why doesn't Synod (or classis or ministers) do something about Sunday-night worship services? Also, why don't our churches celebrate the New Year?

A Forty years ago when I was in seminary one of my classmates said, "The people in my community will come back for the evening service even if the devil's in the pulpit." Those days are gone. Many Christians no longer attend the evening service no matter who's in the pulpit.

Synod last addressed the Sunday-evening service in 1995. Though some established churches no longer held a Sunday-evening service and some church plants had a mid-week service instead of a Sunday-evening service, Synod resisted any change to our historic custom of offering two preaching services each Sunday. Only because of the persistent effort of the advisory committee, which came back to the floor again after its initial recommendation was defeated, did Synod give permission for churches to have something other than a preaching service on Sunday evening. Article 51a now says that "congregations shall assemble for worship, *ordinarily* [emphasis mine] twice on the Lord's Day." The supplement to Article 51a guides councils that "are exploring alternatives to the second service."

Unfortunately, in a number of places our Church Order codifies customs that served us well in the past but do not serve us well today. Synod, classes, and ministers are simply incapable of ensuring that members will attend a Sunday-evening service. In my opinion, Synod should drop its requirement "that the congregation shall assemble for worship, *ordinarily* twice on the Lord's Day" and allow councils to do on Sunday evening what is best suited to their particular area: a traditional evening service, a combined evening service of nearby congregations, a service or visitation project, or no gathering at all but an acknowledgement that Christians may use Sunday evening as they see fit.

As to your second question, Article 51b of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed

Church calls councils to hold worship services "ordinarily on Old and New Year's Day," but many church members and pastors don't wish to have nine services in two weeks—six Sunday services and one each for Christmas, Old Year's, and New Year's.

—George Vander Weit

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

Relationships

Q When we got married, my husband did not want children, and we can't afford a child at this time, so we both use a form of birth control. I worry that taking hormones is trying to improve on God's design. Is this wrong? Can it be considered similar to abortion? Should a married couple not be intimate until God lets us know it's time to conceive?

A I would like to begin by focusing with you on the underlying issue of guilt, which your questions suggest you might be feeling. Letting go of guilt, and knowing God gives you and your husband the right as well as the responsibility to live a loving and joyful life, with or without children, is part of the heritage you received when you accepted Jesus as Lord. Guilt is a useful emotion only if you have purposely hurt someone or you need to help right a wrong against your neighbor.

The challenges of life facing each couple are influenced by many realities unique to them. There are no specific rules that dictate when, or whether, a couple should begin a family. It is not wrong to exercise your God-given responsibility to decide. And preventing conception is not the same as abortion, even with the use of hormones. Nor does God demand that you abstain sexually.

I am wondering if some of what prompted your questions might be related to your own ambivalence about having a child. If your worry relates to your own desire to conceive, it is time to have some frank discussions together about this. Try to dismiss any guilt or judgment, and talk about your hopes and fears with respect

to raising a child. Remember that a low level of income does not by definition preclude having a stable and loving family life.

Whatever the outcome of your discussions, please know that God's invitation to you does not change—God asks that you seek his kingdom of love, joy, and peace, with or without children. He invites you to dwell within his embrace, knowing yourselves to be his children.

—Judy Cook

Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, Ontario. She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster.

Creation Care

Q I appreciate people who work on environmental issues, but I don't feel that is my calling. Is this wrong?

A There are many parts of the body of Christ, and creation care is definitely one of those areas that interest some people more than others. But I could argue that if you ate and drank something today, the environment must concern you because we are all connected to this earth and it is in our best interest to keep it, and therefore ourselves, healthy.

Some people may take a leadership and educational role in environmental concerns, but everyone has a role to play with their lifestyle choices.

There is, of course, another reason for caring for the environment outside of self preservation. Much environmental degradation is the result of human greed, covetousness, carelessness, and self-interest. And God has a lot to say in his Word about these issues. God loves what he has created, and we are to do the same.

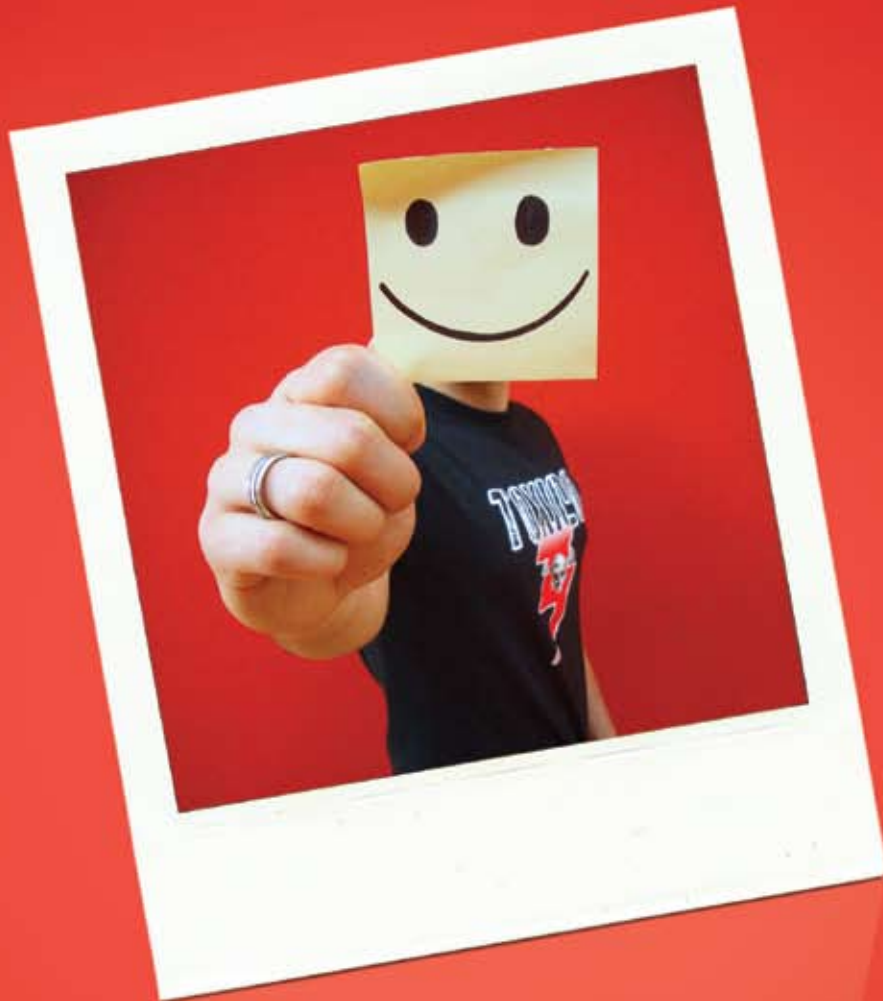
—Cindy Verbeek

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

BY JIM KOK

Merciful Living

Christianity killed paganism with kindness.
Imagine what could happen today.





SPEAKER ONCE ASKED his audience to raise their hands high above their heads. Everyone complied. Then he said, “Raise them higher.” Everyone extended his or her reach several inches.

Kindness is like that. Everybody can be kind and caring. But no matter how much you’re doing, it’s possible to do a little more.

Showing care and kindness to one another on the personal level is a defining feature of what it means to be a Christian. It started many generations before Jesus in the life of God’s chosen people, Israel. Then Jesus taught it as a primary doctrine: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus modeled loving-kindness to the ultimate expression: dying on the cross for the human race. His most well-known apostle, Paul, carried this ethic forward, strongly calling the young Christian community to lives of compassion, mercy, and sympathy:

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. . . . Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Col. 3:12).

Here was a fresh and revolutionary understanding of God. Here was God mandating love for one another in order to please the loving God. A dynamic new force was unleashed in the world—people caring for others in order to serve their God. Such behavior was unknown to the other religions of the day.

Killed with Kindness

Paganism’s main concern was finding ways to placate frightening and angry gods. Appeasing the gods, in ways directed by the temple priests, was the dominant flow of pagan religious life. That had been a prominent focus in the Jewish religion as well. Seeking atonement by means of sacrifices and rituals and rule keeping—all designed to keep the displeasure of God in check—defined their living more than anything else.

Not only was loving one another not taught in paganism, the influential philosophers of the day despised mercy and compassion. They regarded such emotions as weakness to be extinguished, not expressed. Such thinking guided people of

means and education and trickled down into the community in general.

It’s safe to claim that Jesus changed the way people lived on a very practical level. Certainly this was true in the Roman empire of that day. Jesus reached out to everybody indiscriminately. He responded with compassion to the outcasts of society, the crippled, the prostitutes, the rejected—male and female. There were no evident limits in his heart about who deserved healing, acceptance, and encouragement.

The pagan world, which defined life in the Roman Empire, had a radically different set of values. For example, it was common practice to heartlessly allow babies with deformities or weaknesses to be set outside for the elements, or animals, to take. Baby girls were also considered of no value. Newborn females could be disposed of similarly with no condemnation. Love for each other, especially the weak and those of little conventional value, was not a feature of religious living or any part of normal daily existence.

Loving-kindness on the part of Christians and the lack of it on the part of pagans were powerful factors in Christianity’s eventual dominance. The reason specifically, according to the eminent sociologist and historian Rodney Stark in *The Rise of Christianity*, is the expression of Christian care and kindness when terrible epidemics swept through the land.

In contrast to the merciful lives of followers of Jesus, this is what happened among the pagans, according to Dionysius, a well-known bishop of the church:

The heathen behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treated unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease; but do what they might they found it difficult to escape.

There was no teaching espoused by their gods and priests calling them to do anything but care for themselves. »

We will never know how much good just a simple smile can do. We tell people how kind, forgiving, and understanding God is, but are we the living proof?

—Mother Teresa,
No Greater Love

Then Dionysius describes the behavior of the Christians, many of whom were Jews of the diaspora, now followers of Jesus:

Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead. . . . The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of presbyters, deacons, and laymen winning high commendation so that death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in every way the equal of martyrdom (*The Rise of Christianity*, p. 82).

Love each other as I have loved you.

—Jesus

As a result of such loving-kindness, more Christians survived, since even a little tender-loving care can make a difference between life and death. Not only did a higher number of Christians survive the plagues, their care saved the lives of a significant number of pagans, who in turn were attracted to Christianity. (Add to that, as Stark notes, the shortage of women in the pagan community because of the practices mentioned above.)

The rampant care-lessness of the pagans contributed to the death of that religion while Christianity grew to spread a radical, life-affirming “love one another” value system in the world.

A New Script

Here’s what happened, and the Christian church needs to grasp this firmly and celebrate it more enthusiastically: Jesus’ death and resurrection put an end to the need for the obsessive concern with paying for one’s sins. Appeasing frightening gods is no longer necessary. Christ’s death and resurrection finished the task of atonement. Sacrifices, rituals, and compulsive rule-keeping to please God have been rendered obsolete. “Your sins are forgiven. I died for you,” says Jesus.

Jesus took the constant preoccupation with sin off the agenda and introduced a whole new life script, calling his followers to an entirely new way of thinking: “Thank God for forgiveness and turn your life toward good work, building a better world.”

In demonstrating God’s ultimate caring heart, Jesus modeled for us how to build God’s kingdom on earth: by committing specific, tangible, noticeable acts of loving-kindness every day toward everyone.

Caring and kindness are not limited to Christians, of course. Yet they are a powerful force in our world because of Jesus and the tradition of Christians practicing such loving behav-

ior. Today, compassionate behavior is embedded in the conventional expectations of ordinary people, religious or not. Few realize that this behavior largely originated as a way of life with Jesus’ followers.

But even today we tend to hold back on expressions of appreciation, words of encouragement, compliments, and showing personal interest in others. And it is rare that we are called from the pulpit to live lives of faith that result in increased friendliness at the grocery store, greater measures of kindness to our colleagues, and smiles to strangers.

Certainly the church as an institution is brightening the world. But we forget that each of us, individually, has something to offer. Loving behavior, every day, everywhere we go, indiscriminately given, must be part of how we define Christians and the church.

Jesus said to us, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Our faith must spill out all over the place on the people we meet every day of the week, going into hard places to encourage, support, and lend a helping hand. We need to realize that every one of us is a member of “the walking wounded,” and every one of us is eligible, needy, and hungry for loving-kindness.

My heart has been so hammered by this teaching that I now see that I have a job when I go to the bank, to the mall, to the parking garage. My job is to brighten a few lives and help wherever and however I can.

When Jesus prayed, “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven,” he was declaring God’s agenda for him and for us. God’s agenda is that earth become a place of love and peace and well-being—as it is in heaven.

And this is what Christian living is all about, plain and simple. When we look at the cross, we see what love is. It is about dying for others. That’s the most powerful revelation in all of history. ■

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



Rev. Jim Kok is director of care ministries for the Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, Calif. He is author of *The Miracle of Kindness*, available from Faith Alive Christian Resources (1-800-333-8300; www.FaithAliveResources.org).

Kindness has converted more people than zeal, science, or eloquence. . . . The world is lost for want of sweetness and kindness.

—Mother Teresa,
No Greater Love

31 Ways to Pray for Your Children

FOR YEARS, like any responsible Christian parent, I prayed daily for my two children, Aubrey and Aaron. I prayed for God's blessing and protection throughout their days. I prayed for them to be happy. I asked God to help them through difficult times and to help them make wise choices. My prayers were regular, heartfelt, and—for the most part—pedestrian and repetitive.

I wanted more than that, however. I wanted so much for my children, but when I knelt in prayer, I invariably found the same tired words rolling from my lips, like an adult who never progressed beyond "God is great, God is good, now we thank him for this food."

Then one day, Nancy, our pastor's wife, shared a testimony during a morning worship service that changed my prayer life. She told how her concern that her children develop strong Christian morals and the fruit of the Spirit had prompted her to develop a unique prayer list, one that included reminders to pray for her children's salvation and growth in grace, as well as other concerns (such as that they would "be leaders, not followers").

That day I decided to follow Nancy's example and develop a "parent's prayer program" of my own, a simple practice that has revolutionized the way I pray for my children.

Each day of the month, in addition to praying for their safety and for the concerns of that day, I also ask God to plant and nurture in them a specific character trait, virtue, or fruit of the Spirit, through my and my wife's efforts, through the influence of others, and through Aubrey's and Aaron's own actions and decisions. At the end of each month, I begin praying



through the list again, combining traits when the month is shorter than 31 days.

Here is the list I have developed, complete with brief suggestions for prayers from Scripture. Feel free to duplicate it—or improve upon it—to help you pray specifically and purposefully for the children in your life, that they may experience and evidence the following:

- 1. Salvation.** "Lord, let salvation spring up within them, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (Isa. 45:8, 2 Tim. 2:10).
- 2. Growth in grace.** "I pray that they may 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ'" (2 Pet. 3:18).
- 3. Love.** "Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to 'live a life of love,' through the Spirit who dwells in them" (Eph. 5:2, Gal. 5:22).
- 4. Honesty and integrity.** "May integrity and honesty be their

virtue and their protection" (Ps. 25:21, NLT).

- 5. Self-control.** "Father, help them to be 'alert and self-controlled' in all they do" (1 Thess. 5:6).
- 6. A love for God's Word.** "May they grow to find your Word 'more precious than gold, than much pure gold; [and] sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb'" (Ps. 19:10).
- 7. Justice.** "God, help them to love justice as you do and to 'act justly' in all they do" (Ps. 11:7, Micah 6:8).
- 8. Mercy.** "May they always 'be merciful, as [their] Father is merciful'" (Luke 6:36).
- 9. Respect (for self, others, authority).** "Father, grant that they may 'show proper respect to everyone,' as your Word commands" (1 Pet. 2:17a).
- 10. Strong, biblical self-esteem.** "Help them to develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus'" (Eph. 2:10).
- 11. Faithfulness.** "Let love and faithfulness never leave [them], but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts" (Prov. 3:3).

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Bob Hostetler is pastor of leadership and teaching for Cobblestone Community Church in Oxford, Ohio, and is an award-winning author.

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SUPERSTOCK

Imagining a New Future

Faith Alive Focuses on Faith Nurture

Imagine a church community where *broad and deep faith nurture* are a vibrant part of everything it does . . .

- where *committed and joyful disciples* of Jesus Christ bring his healing power to a lost and hurting world
- where *corporate worship is the heartbeat* of lives devoted to loving God and loving neighbors.
- Imagine a place where *a 7-year-old and a 70-year-old can't wait to talk to each other* about what's happening in their lives

- homes where *families talk freely about their faith*
- a church that brings an *indispensable servant presence* to its community.

Imagine a community that shares God's one true story and lives their lives out of it.

Christ-centered imagination is a powerful thing. It pulls us out of the present toward a new future. It invites us beyond "the way we've always done it" toward a new paradigm. It enables us to see beyond

our failures and dead ends to new possibilities.

At Faith Alive we are actively engaged in imagining a future in which faith formation and nurture is woven into every aspect of life.

Daunting Problems

Over the past decade, studies have shown that the church faces enormous challenges in its strategic work of passing the faith from one generation to the next. Researcher George Barna and others have identified disturbing trends:

Christ-centered imagination is a powerful thing. It pulls us out of the present toward a new future.

- Young adults are leaving the church in large numbers, even after intense church involvement in their teen years, with no strong indication of their later return.
- Families are spending less time in devotional activity, prayer, spiritual conversations, and joint mealtimes.
- Children spend less time in structured church education or Sunday school classes but more time in structured sports and other activities.
- Children and teens have far less basic Bible knowledge than their parents' generation did.
- Christian teens tend to reject moral absolutes for a relativistic approach.

Those are sobering observations. But with a Spirit-inspired imagination, we can discover new ways to nurture faith for all generations.

Ancient Pathways

Creating a living environment of faith nurture is nothing new. It's an ancient pattern in the Bible.

Through Moses, God told the Israelites, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut. 6: 6-9).

From this passage, as well as Israel's practice, some principles of faith nurture emerge: It begins in the home and family. It is anchored in everyday life.

It uses concrete symbols and regular practices.

However, faith nurture was not confined to the home. Israel's festivals, feasts, pilgrimages, and temple worship involved even the youngest children. Faith was

Way Ahead

Some churches are already blazing the trail of comprehensive faith formation.

At Pathway Church, a growing congregation in Byron Center, Mich., Pastor Steve Elzinga's goal is to make everything that happens in the church and in the homes of members an opportunity for faith nurture. He says the Sunday worship service is really "the culmination of walking with and worshiping God through the week."

All the adult and children's programs, as well as small groups and even families at home, follow a Bible-reading plan so that on any given day they are all, literally, on the same page. On Sunday the worship service is based on the same Bible-reading plan, and the service begins with a

learned, modeled, and practiced in every aspect of life.

Community Immersion

So how can we recover those biblical principles today? It takes more than a 45-minute Sunday school class, more than a few sentences of prayer before a meal. It takes immersion into a community of faith.

Faith Alive, in partnership with the Christian Reformed Church's Faith Formation Committee, wants to help churches create a congregation-wide environment of faith nurture—to become communities that foster faith formation in every aspect of life. »



Members of Pathway Church record Scripture songs written by people in the congregation.

recitation of the Bible passage of the month.

Elzinga says, "An impromptu Bible study happens anytime, anywhere, as people meet and say, 'Hey, what did you think of the chapter we read today?'"

In addition, congregation members have written original Scripture songs based on the readings. The songs are recorded on CDs so that people can play them at

home, in the car, and on their iPods.

Pathway Church also regularly marks milestones in faith development. Parents are trained to mark milestones in the home that are then echoed in church services.

In this and many other way, Pathway Church leverages every activity toward the biblical and spiritual formation of its members and friends. ■

New Life for Coffee Break

Coffee Break, a long-standing small-group evangelism ministry, is a cooperative ministry of Christian Reformed Home Missions and Faith Alive.

Home Missions' small-group developers, like Sam Huizenga in West Michigan, train churches and small-group leaders to use simple, inviting, inductive Bible study to link church members with unchurched neighbors. Faith Alive publishes the *Discover Your Bible* series used by these small groups.

Many churches have successfully offered a Coffee Break ministry for decades. At Milwood CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., leaders began wondering about their Coffee Break program's effectiveness, as numbers were dwindling. Coffee Break leader Julie Meinema and others decided to spend time in prayer for the ministry, seeking wisdom and direction from God. At the same time, they stepped up their efforts to advertise the ministry in the community. They were amazed



Leaders of Milwood CRC's Coffee Break ministry credit God for doubling the number of participants in just a few months.

and grateful when God by his Spirit nearly doubled the number of people in Coffee Break in a few months. They now have two groups, one of 12 and another of 14 members, many of whom are new Christians and people interested in finding out more about the Christian faith.

Faith Alive is now working in cooperation with Home Missions Small Group Developers in piloting and field-testing a new inductive Bible study series that will focus more directly on adults in their 20s

and 30s. The first of this series, on the book of Esther, will be released this winter. Another Home Missions ministry developer, Grace Park, has translated the Coffee Break training materials and many books into the Korean language, in cooperation with Faith Alive. She has also written two books about leading Coffee Break. These books are bestsellers in Korea, where Park was interviewed on a Christian TV station. Park has also trained another person to translate the *Discover Your Bible* series for the underground church in China. She says, "It would be impossible to count how many people in China are using Coffee Break materials, but it's huge." ■

continued from page 23

Here's what that looks like:

- developing a deep understanding of God's one true story of redemption, from creation to new creation—the story out of which we live our lives every day
- supporting and equipping parents and caregivers to make the home a place for learning and practicing faith and discipleship
- enabling congregations to find new ways to bring the generations together in learning and service
- helping churches to plan worship services that nurture the faith of all ages
- stimulating adult spiritual growth and discipleship that will influence the lives of children and teens
- providing curriculum materials that anchor children and youths in biblical knowledge while inviting them to live transformed lives.

Resources for Nurture

Faith Alive has already released several resources to help implement this faith-nurture vision. These include:

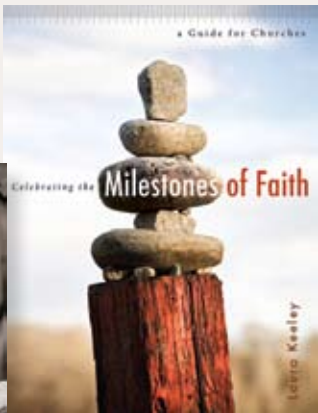
- *Nurture*: a newsletter for parents and families that provides engaging and practical tools to promote faith nurture in the home.
- *The True Story of the Whole World* by Mike Goheen and Craig Bartholomew is a wonderful retelling of the biblical story in a way that helps us understand the unfolding drama of God's story in the Bible and our place in it.
- *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith* by Laura and Robert Keeley, a guide to help families and churches celebrate the milestones of the faith journey from birth to death, from baptism to profession of faith, from kindergarten to graduation.

Coming this fall is *The Book that Understands You* by Kevin Adams—a user-friendly Bible study that helps new Christians, especially, grasp the Bible as God's big story that continues into our lives today.



In the next two years Faith Alive plans to release other major new resources designed to help churches create an environment that nurtures faith:

- a new Sunday school curriculum that will help churches tell God's story to the next generation and provide exciting tie-ins with worship and communal faith nurture
- a practical, video-based course on Christian parenting and nurturing faith in children, including a useful and accessible parenting handbook
- illustrated Bible-story books for younger and older children that helps them see the Bible as God's one true story that we continue to live out today



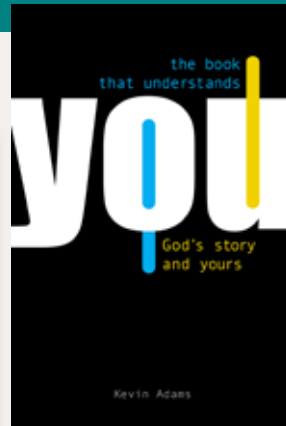
• an intergenerational course on church history that brings teens and adults together to explore how that history is deeply relevant for our lives today

- a book of essays on faith nurture for church leaders that will feature the best writers on the best theory and practices of faith formation in today's context.

It's our prayer that these resources will help you and your church deepen and strengthen your efforts to nurture one another in the faith as together we re-imagine our future. ■



Leonard Vander Zee is editor in chief of Faith Alive Christian Resources.



Faith Alive News

- **Is Sunday school missional?** At Rosewood CRC in Bellflower, Calif., most of the 90 kids who attend weekly Sunday school are from the community, and many of their parents now attend church classes or worship services. Family Ministries Pastor Bonny Mulder-Behnia uses Faith Alive's *Walk With Me* and *Kid Connection* curricula.
- **Mark Rice, Faith Alive's new director, reports:** "Faith Alive has the potential to *enable relationships*: congregant to congregant, pastor to pastor, pastor to congregant, denominations to pastors, denominations to the broader church, denominations to the broader culture, and of course, God to God's people. We enable people to build relationships through our media, our content. Our measure of success is how well people are connected, how alive the church community is, and how vibrant the conversation is."
- **Making use of technology:** In response to feedback, Faith Alive has produced two resources with video components in the past year—*God Wins: A Study of Revelation* and *Living Your Faith in a Messed Up World*. More DVD-based resources are to come. Faith Alive also now has several resources with significant online and Web components, with more to come. And Faith Alive's website (www.FaithAliveResources.org) has been completely redesigned for ease of use and purchasing.

Faith Alive at a Glance

- **Who we are:** Faith Alive is the publishing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church and the resource provider for the Reformed Church in America.
- **What we publish:** Sunday school curriculum, youth resources, small group studies, Bible studies, topical studies, resources for church leaders, curriculum and other resources for people with special needs, hymnals and other resources for worship, and two periodicals: *The Banner* and *Reformed Worship*.
- **Why we exist:** to connect and communicate with churches in the Reformed tradition and assist them in their mission of forming vibrant communities of faith.
- **Online catalog:** Check out our new online catalog at www.FaithAliveResources.org

We Are Making Progress

One of my greatest joys in summer is sailing on Lake Michigan. Now that Synod 2009 is history, there is time to relax in God's beautiful creation and at the same time reflect on the decisions of synod and on the Christian Reformed Church.

Recently, as I was enjoying a sail along the Lake Michigan shoreline, I noticed three young people climbing one of the magnificent sand dunes. It was a beautiful, warm afternoon, and I imagine that climbing the dune was not only hard but also a bit frustrating. If you have ever climbed a sand dune, you know that as you move forward, the sand gives way and you find yourself slipping back. It can be a tedious process.

Yet, ever so slowly, these climbers were moving up the slope. In spite of slipping sand and a steep climb, they progressed toward the crest.

From their perspective on the side of the dune, I suspect they saw little progress. At times, they may even have felt like they were actually sliding backward. From their point of view, the climb was long, hot, and tiring.

But from my perspective on the lake, I could see them inching forward and upward—making great progress. What they could not see, pressed against the wall of sand, was very clear to me.

As I watched those young people climb, I thought back to my previous week at synod. At synod I had been climbing



the dune of church life. It was a good climb—even invigorating—and still I wondered how much progress the church is really making. God has called us to climb, to strive, to work, to run the race, to press on toward the goal. Yet as we climb we often see little progress, and at times we become discouraged.

As a church we have committed ourselves to strengthening local congregations; we have pledged to become a more diverse family; we have promised to be agents of transformation in lives and communities worldwide. Yet sometimes we grow weary. We see the sand of life's journey stretching before and above us. The peak seems so far away and unattainable. We feel our feet sliding from beneath us and wonder if we will ever reach the crest.

It is in those moments that we need to stop, turn, and look back over the path we've taken. When we do, we discover that we have moved forward and upward. The spectacular view of the water stretches before us. Below us, we see the progress already made. And if we could, just for a moment, see ourselves from a distance, we would recognize that in God's grace and strength we are making progress. Lives are being transformed, churches are becoming healthier, and our denomination is growing more diverse and beautiful.

We are not yet at the top of the dune; we have not yet "arrived," and there is much hard work ahead. There will be challenges as well as opportunities. Our bodies and our souls will grow weary and doubts will creep in, but together in God's grace the Christian Reformed Church will continue to climb forward and upward.

At some point we shall reach the goal and experience the prize. We will stand with the great multitude gathered before the throne of the Lamb and cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Then we will know that our labor in the Lord was not in vain. ■

“ If we could see ourselves from a distance, we would recognize that in God's grace and strength we are making progress. ”



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

Avoiding a modern-day plague

When Christians in Mali hear about the plague of locusts in the book of Exodus, they know exactly what kind of havoc the insects can wreak. In their homeland billions of locusts often swarm an area and wipe out the food crops of entire communities.

The Mopti region of Mali experienced especially heavy rains last year—and with increased rains come more destructive locust swarms.

“When local [Mopti region] farmers discovered the large quantity of locust eggs, they immediately understood the gravity of the situation,” says Lynda Dykstra, a field worker in Mali for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.



AEDM staff person Joseph Ongoiba teaches villagers how to use sprayers to combat destructive locusts.

The farmers unsuccessfully tried traditional means to prevent the coming swarms: the removal of eggs and the practice of animist rituals. During the last week of August, they turned for help to a CRWRC partner, Agence Evangélique de Développement du Mali (AEDM).

With Dykstra as program consultant, CRWRC International Disaster Response

and AEDM worked with state agricultural agents to implement a spraying project that destroyed eggs before they could hatch. AEDM transported sprayers and spray to farms where brigades of villagers worked alongside state agents.

“This is a really good example of what can be done when a local partner organization has good relationships with state agricultural agents, a high level of trust with communities, a strong desire to be a witness to Christ’s love, and open lines of communication with CRWRC,” Dykstra concludes.

The total cost of the project came to \$3,857.50 in U.S. dollars. Had the eggs hatched, CRWRC personnel estimate they would have spent \$200,000 to \$300,000 to provide food aid to Mali. ■

—Stelle Sloomaker, CRWRC

Seminarians explore unconventional callings

Campus ministry comes in many shapes and sizes, and it requires people who love the church, love students, and are willing to roll up their sleeves and get involved.

That’s what seminarians heard when Calvin Theological Seminary’s Mentored Ministries Office and Church Planting Club hosted eight campus ministers in a lunch discussion to give seminarians a taste of this exciting ministry.

Campus ministers from Calvin College, Ferris State University, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University, McMaster University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Western Ontario talked about the challenges of their ministries: the constant turnover of

students, the busy schedules, the astonishing lack of biblical literacy, and the vast amount of time required to develop meaningful relationships.

They noted how every university or college has its own “personality”—a fact that calls for creativity on the part of campus ministers.

Advice they gave included the following:

- Learn as much as you can about your campus, its environment, and its history.
- Stay connected to the church; make sure you love the church and see yourself as an extension of it.
- Find ways to serve that match the gifts God has given you.
- Make room for “free time” when students can stop in to talk.



Mike Wissink (left) of Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich., talks with students Mark Hofman and John Eigege.

- Communicate with key people like the dean of students, the director of student life, or even the president of the school.
- Help students develop leadership gifts and a Christian worldview.
- Use the materials provided by Christian Reformed Home Missions to see

what’s going on in your school setting and ask how you can create a wholesome environment.

- Go and visit a campus ministry! ■

—Kathy Smith is director of continuing education for Calvin Theological Seminary and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Rescued from more than an earthquake

Armando Franco came to understand that God was close at hand after he was buried by a Mexico City earthquake in 1986, nearly died in a motorcycle accident, and found himself hooked on drugs and eating out of garbage cans.

When Franco was ready to accept God, the Lord was there for him, he says. Last December he was one of 30 men who graduated from the Christian Rehab Center in Tijuana, Mexico, where James and Barbarita Lee, who serve with Christian Reformed World Missions, teach Scripture and counsel the men.



Armando Franco: "My life has a purpose."

Francisco now helps run the center and is studying at the Reformed Bible Institute in Tijuana. "My life took a drastic turn: I became a child of God," he says. "Here I began to learn that God loves me and he has a plan for me. I am studying and learning from the Word of God, and my life has a purpose."

The center is called "Forjando Nuevos Destinos," which means "creating a new destiny." James Lee says it exists to bring the hope of Jesus to men who have found themselves tangled in a web of drugs, alcohol, gangs, and family problems. Lee says the center hopes to open a halfway house where the men can reintegrate into society while keeping a focus on their new relationship with God. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Online program helps turn Peruvian soldier into church planter

Twenty years ago Carlos Palacios traded the terror and violence of his then-unstable homeland of Peru for the hope of a new life in North America. Then he felt God calling him to ministry.

Palacios answered that call and recently became one of the first graduates of a new online degree program designed by Christian Reformed Home Missions in collaboration with Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College.

With his B.S. degree in missions/new church development, Palacios is fully credentialed to lead *Comunidad de Fe* (Community of Faith) CRC, the church he started in early 2008 in Kissimmee, Fla.

Palacios's path to church planting didn't happen overnight. After serving in the Peruvian army, he left Peru in 1989, eventually arriving in New Jersey.

Although he was committed to serving God, Palacios did not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus. One day he turned on a local radio station and heard a Pentecostal preacher. Inspired by the message, he drove to the station.

"They took me in and prayed for me right there," he says. "That was the day I accepted the Lord into my life."

He started teaching English as a Second Language classes through a Hispanic ministry based at Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, N.J., and went on to work with Pastor Marco Avila at New Horizon CRC in Clifton, N.J.

In 2007, after learning about the distance-education program Home Missions helped develop, Palacios enrolled in online classes. Soon afterward he started the in-ministry training portion of the program and moved to Florida to intern at Oasis Community Church in Winter Gardens.



Carlos Palacios and his wife, Trini, at graduation

Working closely with the Home Missions Hispanic/Southeast U.S. Ministry Team, Palacios started *Comunidad de Fe* in Kissimmee, a growing community near Orlando.

"We started out with worship in our house, and three months later we found a space in a local high school," he says. "Our vision is to transform the community into a community of faith in Christ." ■

—Ben Van Houten, Christian Reformed Home Missions

Korean *TODAY* finds readers

Stores operated by members of Korean Christian Reformed churches are just one place to find copies of the Korean *TODAY*, a devotional booklet produced in partnership by Back to God Ministries International and the Korean Council, an association of Korean congregations of the Christian Reformed Church.

Members of the council translate the devotional booklet into Korean and publish 10,000 copies in a bilingual English-Korean format; 9,000 of those copies are distributed to members of Korean congregations in the U.S. and Canada.

The results of this project, begun in January 2008, have been encouraging. The SoMang (Hope) Korean CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, reports that five new families joined the church through Korean *TODAY* connections. Rev. Roger Ryu, leader of the Korean *TODAY* publication team, notes that churches are using the material as an evangelism tool as well as for individual, family, and small-group devotions.

Rev. John SeHo Oh, senior pastor of the Korean American Church of Orange County, Calif., says the bilingual version helps bridge the gap between first- and second-generation Korean Americans, in which cultural and linguistic differences are so great that communication breakdowns are common in churches as well as in families.

“This Korean-English version of *TODAY* offers great opportunities for us as we reach out to the second generation and the community,” Rev. Oh says.

The publication team is looking at distributing the devotional outside North America, especially in South Korea and in other Korean immigrant communities.

When the Korean Council first discussed publishing *TODAY* in Korean, one of its main purposes was to provide a tool that would help develop a Reformed Christian worldview in the lives of congregations. People who read the Korean *TODAY* are impressed with the Reformed and pastoral content of the material.

The bilingual Korean *TODAY* is published by the Korean *TODAY* publication team, which consists of team leader Rev. Roger Ryu, translator Rev. Jae Young Kim,



The Korean *TODAY* is produced by Back to God Ministries International and the CRC's Korean Council.

distribution and church relations coordinator Rev. Peter Ryu, and others who provide administrative and editorial support.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the Korean *TODAY*, contact the Korean Ministry office, at 562-804-2584, or e-mail today.korean@gmail.com. The bilingual *TODAY* is also available online at the Korean Council's website: www.crckc.org. ■

—Rev. Tong Park,
Korean Ministry Director

Encouragement from *TODAY*

Franks and Abe met at a retirement home in Michigan. They were drawn together by their love for the Lord and their zeal for discussing God's Word.

Frank, 98, says he has read every issue of *TODAY* since Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) first began publishing the devotional booklet 60 years ago.

Until his wife, Cornelia, passed away in 1990, the couple treasured their daily devotional time together. One of their favorite issues of *TODAY* was the January 1990 issue that they read shortly before Cornelia died. It focused on the story in Genesis about how God worked through the difficulties in Joseph's life.



Two old friends share copies of the *TODAY* devotional.

Frank saved this issue and reads it often for comfort.

Recently that special issue was accidentally misplaced after Frank lent it to Abe to share with another friend at the home.

So Frank called the offices of BTGMI to see if he could get another copy.

BTGMI didn't have an extra copy, but staff contacted Rev. Ken Koeman, the author of the Joseph series. Koeman had saved two copies of that issue. He gladly sent one to Frank, whom he had met while attending seminary.

So if you ever wonder what to do with old copies of *TODAY*/*The Family Altar* that you've saved over the years, contact Back to God Ministries International at 1-800-879-6555 or info@BackToGod.net. Occasionally we get requests for previous issues, and we would love to be able to share them. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International

More than Meets the Eye

What's your favorite summer sight? A rainbow? An orange-pink sunset? Beautiful flowers? Busy bugs? Baby birds? There are lots of wonderful sights out there right now.

Correction: There are lots *and* lots of wonderful sights out there. We can't see all of them. Some are way too small for us to see. They're meant for bug eyes and not ours. Others are simply tucked away in places that we can't see. Yet these are all vital, working parts of creation.

Here's the point: There's more than meets the eye out there. Creation is much more complex than we'll ever know. Read these pages for some amazing examples that can be found near you. Then thank God for giving us this wonderful world.



Point of View

Answer this quickly: What color are dandelions? Yellow, right? Sort of. It depends on your point of view. Bug's eyes see different things than people's eyes do. If you were a bug, you'd look at a dandelion and see a splotchy checkerboard pattern. You'd see plain petals with splotches of dark colors in the middle. Because bugs need nectar and pollen, God made their eyes able to look for them. Bugs often see the flower parts that hold nectar and pollen as dark targets in the middle of pale petals. Sometimes they see lines pointing like arrows to those parts. You don't need pollen and nectar, so those parts don't stand out to you. Yet you can see a flower's beauty. That's perfect, from either point of view.



Designer Bugs

Try this: Go outside and sit very quietly in some natural place. You'll soon see little "dots" scuttling along the ground, creeping up a plant, or dancing in the air. Those are designer bugs. They're specks of life designed perfectly for their role in creation. Take fairyflies for example. Their role in creation is to keep other bugs in check. They do this by laying eggs inside the eggs of other bugs. No wonder they're so small!

But *small* doesn't mean *simple*. Fairyflies eat, breathe, and reproduce just like other living creatures. They've got all the right systems tucked inside of them, and all those systems work. Their flight systems are especially amazing.

Imagine a tiny speck trying to fly. A slight breeze could send it way off course. The poor bug wouldn't be able to make any headway. So it's been given fringed wings to help it fly. Some wings are almost all fringe, so the fairyfly floats rather like a dandelion seed.

Some fairyflies lay eggs in bug eggs found in water. They use their wings like oars and paddle through the water. And they hold their breath to go beneath the water.

There are about 1,400 types of fairyflies. Each type is made a little differently. Imagine how many different fairyfly designs there are.

But fairyflies are only one of several designer bugs. Imagine how many designer bugs are out there. In creation, there's not only more than we can see—there's way more than we can imagine!



SCOTT HOLLADAY

It's in the Air

When you go outside, do you sometimes cough and sneeze, snuffle and wheeze? Most likely there's pollen in the air. Pollen makes some people cough, sneeze, and snuffle.

You can't see pollen grains because they're so tiny. Ragweed pollen (which is out right now) is a good example. You must place 25,000 grains side by side to cover one inch of space.

Yet those pollen grains are beautiful. Every plant's pollen grains have a unique shape. Ragweed pollen has spikes. Other pollen may have knobs, ridges, lumps, bumps, or a combination of those. The variation is endless. The designs are wonderful.

Although you can't see pollen grains, you can see pictures of them. Go to google.com/images and type in "pollen grains." You'll see some beauties, and they're all the work of God, the Master Designer.

Pollen is only one very tiny part of a normal-sized flowering plant. Can you imagine a whole plant too small to see? Read about that in "Small Wonders."



Sweetie, this isn't pond scum...
It is a bouquet of millions
and millions of flowers!



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

See for Yourself

What's hidden in soil? What's too small to see in water? Check out these websites.

Soil biology movies:

www.agron.iastate.edu/~loynachan/mov/

Click on any picture to learn about the creature.

The smallest page on the Web:

www.microscopy-uk.org.uk/mag/wimsmall/x_small1.html

Click on the picture of the water droplet to see what lives in pond water.

Back to School



BIGSTOCK PHOTO

WHEN CRAMMING FOR AN EXAM at Harvard Law School, Thomas Rollins felt woefully unprepared. So he obtained videotaped lectures of a noted authority in the field. To his amazement, the lectures “were outrageously insightful, funny, and thorough.”

Years later, when he felt the wisp of educational nostalgia resurging, Rollins founded The Teaching Company (www.teach12.com), capturing excellent university lecturers in many disciplines on audio and video recordings. A friend and I first bought *Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition* together, and I’ve thanked Rollins ever since. These stimulating lectures have broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of so many dimensions of human existence. Religion, history and philosophy are my

Go back to school in your car or home or even at your computer.

draws, although I constantly dabble in all disciplines. Professor David Zarefsky’s final lecture on Abraham Lincoln brought tears to my eyes.

I’ve since added *The Modern Scholar* lectures from Recorded Books (www.modernscholar.com) to my ear-candy collection. Though the lecturers are less consistently out-of-the-ballpark-great as those of The Teaching Company (and sometimes there are obvious editing mistakes), these are also more than worth the price. Listening to Timothy Schutt recount the “Wars That Made the Western World” is about as fascinating and intriguing as human communication can get. Marvelous!

A host of free resources can also be found online. YouTube has created a separate address (www.youtube.com/edu) for university lectures. The sheer volume of presentations available is daunting, but viewers can click on the “Most Viewed” videos to find plenty of great options.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a leader in the field of online open classrooms. While the focus is obviously on the sciences, all courses found at <http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/web/courses/courses/index.htm> are incredibly interesting, even for non-scientists. A host of other university courses can be found at <http://internet-tv-search-engine-swicki.eurekster.com/online+lectures/?=lectures>.

Most engaging for its truly broad diversity of scintillating presentations, with none more than 20 minutes in length, is www.TED.com. A dose each day will make you the most interesting conversationalist on the block.

This fall, when the buses roll through your neighborhood, don’t miss out. Go back to school in your car or home or even at your computer. ■

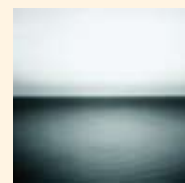


Wayne Brouwer teaches at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich.

No Line on the Horizon

by U2

reviewed by Robert Keeley



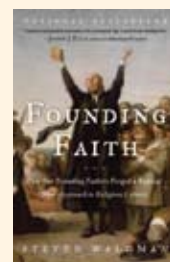
In their new album *No Line on the Horizon*, U2 looks into the future

and sees a time when there is no line separating heaven and earth, when there is justice and peace. They sprinkle their songs with scriptural references but keep them oblique enough that fans can spend weeks figuring out what they had in mind. One song is clear, though: “Magnificent” is a beautiful psalm of praise and one of the highlights of this thoughtful and compelling album. The psalm references will continue when the companion, *Songs of Ascent*, is released later this year. (Interscope)

Founding Faith

by Steven Waldman

reviewed by Wayne Brouwer



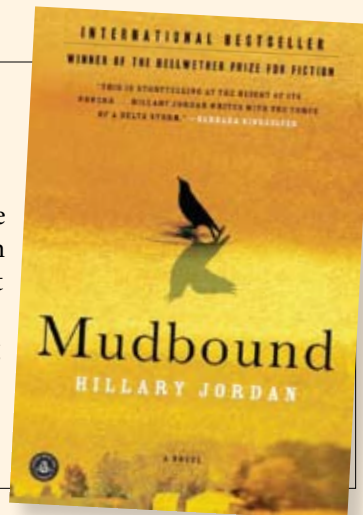
Some say the United States was fashioned by Christians establishing a biblical theocracy. Others maintain

that Enlightenment rationalism was the only religion of the founding fathers. In a wonderfully clear, concise, readable study, Waldman finds a truth somewhere in-between. Digging into the lives and writings of Franklin, Adams, Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, he reconstructs their intentions. Ensuring that there would never be a national church, they safeguarded both political and religious freedom in a historical first. (Random House)

Mudbound

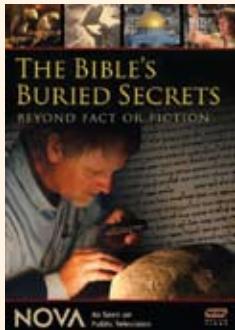
by **Hillary Jordan**
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

At a farm called Mudbound, both the white owner and the black sharecropper welcome home their beloved sons from the horrors of World War II. The young men struggle to adapt to life at home while trying to reconcile themselves with their new battleground: the racist South. Told through alternating voices, Hillary Jordan's novel draws readers into the world of the Mississippi Delta and into the lives of unforgettable characters bound by tragedy and love. (Algonquin)



The Bible's Buried Secrets

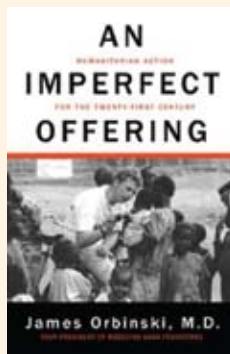
reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**



This public television DVD presents concrete proof of the existence of—among many other biblical facts—Solomon's palace and the Israelite people. Using models and special effects, along with the perspectives of the world's most renowned historians, this film presents 100 years of excavation and centuries of biblical scholarship, digging deep into the origins of the Old Testament. I liked the film because, even though I have faith that every word of the Bible is true, the findings of highly respected archaeologists proving biblical facts makes me feel really good. For video previews, see www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bible/.

An Imperfect Offering

by **James Orbinski, M.D.**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**



After serving in Rwanda, Somalia, and Afghanistan, Dr. James Orbinski of Canada was elected president of Doctors Without Borders/Medicins sans Frontières. Besides graphic descriptions of the horrors he saw, this book tells how the organization lobbied for justice in a number of places, calling individual countries and the United Nations to account. While those countries were not always pleased with them, Doctors Without Borders won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee works in many of the places Orbinski describes, facing the issues he explores. (Doubleday Canada)

A Bear in War

by **Stephanie Innes and Harry Endrulat**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In 1916, Teddy makes a remarkable journey in a care package from the loving arms of his young Canadian owner, Aileen, to her father on the battlefields of France. While there, Aileen's father derives strength from Teddy's company, knowing the love that sent him there. A year later, Teddy returns home, but Aileen's father doesn't. Told from Teddy's perspective, this poignant children's picture book, based on true events, shows children the power of love at work in dangerous and desperate places. (Key Porter)



THE LOWDOWN



A Shoe for a Shoe: TOMS offers canvas and vegan

shoes with a philanthropic twist. Each time a customer purchases a pair of shoes, TOMS gives a pair of shoes to a child in need (www.tomshoes.com).



Star Power:

Rob Bell's latest book, *Drops Like Stars*, examines the

connection between suffering and creativity. (Zondervan)



Hit the Holy Road:

Check out *Travelujah.com* for a website focused on

travel in the Holy Land. Gather travel information, share your trips and photos, and, of course, they'd also be happy to sell you a tour.



A Good Hart:

The book *I Did It His Way* is a collection of religious-themed comics by the

late Christian cartoonist Johnny Hart, creator of the long-running "B.C." comic strip. (Thomas Nelson)

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



BY STEPHEN W. MARTIN



AUGUSTINE'S GREAT COMEBACK

How this fifth-century African bishop helps us think theologically about today's world

EVEN AS A RESURGENCE of atheism fascinates the mass media, a new theological engagement with public life is taking shape. Gone are the days of theology's false modesty, apologizing for daring to leave its safe repose in private space to speak a public word. Just as biblical scholars are recovering the New Testament's criticism of empire at its peak, so theologians are renewing interest in an ancient bishop who ministered in North Africa during the decline of that empire. The explosion of interest in Augustine's political thought is one of the more remarkable trends in contemporary theology.

Reformed people know Augustine for his development of the doctrines of original sin and predestination, and he's valued by Roman Catholics for his sacramental theology. But the Augustine we meet in contemporary theology goes beyond these parochial divides and subjects.

Fantasia? Ignoramus?

British journalist Christopher Hitchens, author of *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, once described Augustine as a "self-centered fantasist and an earth-centered ignoramus." But much of the secularist stereotyping of Christians as sexually repressed comes from a misreading of Augustine, especially of the *Confessions*. Christian theologians have made similar claims about Augustine, sometimes treating him as the founding father of Western dualism, the idea that sets the (good) soul over against the (evil) body.

Augustine has also been criticized as the first "theologian of empire," the one whose massive *City of God* gives Rome a key role in restraining human sin. He is known as the developer of the tradition of "just war"—a phrase contemporary leaders in our time use freely to justify invasions, even without giving evidence of having read Augustine.

These views of Augustine, as well as the idea of him as a dogmatist, are being rethought by theologians. It's something of an understatement to say that

Augustine has never been a favorite of feminist theologians. However, as a theologian of the formation, malformation, and reformation of desire, he's garnering some interest from them too.

It's in political theology, however, that some of the most interesting work on Augustine is being done. For Oliver O'Donovan, Augustine's genius was that he used his experiences and observations within the church to build "a Christian social theory." That social theory, according to John Milbank, co-founder of the "Radical Orthodoxy" movement, paves the way to a "post-secular" theology that boldly engages our culture with the claims of the gospel. And despite his association with the "just war" idea, pacifists too are taking a new interest in Augustine's understanding of the roots of human social and political conflict.

Augustine on Human Conflict

For Augustine, violence is rooted in fallen humanity's attempts to create peace

of another new Augustinian, Charles Mathewes, the world is imagined as "a collection of solitudes." It's no wonder we're so afraid.

It wouldn't be far off to say that, for Augustine, "we are what we love." And worship generates societies of people, gathered around "common objects of love." However, the church is different from other societies because it worships the *Creator* of those objects. The church, when it truly worships the Creator, forms the counter-community to the empire. What binds the church together is love, represented most profoundly by the sharing of bread and wine—which is at the same time a sharing of God's very life—in communion. What binds "the empire" together is force—force that secures its borders and guarantees the satiation of its elite.

So an Augustinian reading of the problem of conflict in human society tells us that when our loves are not properly ordered to their true source, we live in a world of chaos and violence.

Augustine saw the secular not as a space, but as a time.

through "wars to end all war." We were created to be in relation to God as well as to others. However, when we exchange the true God for another "god" or "value"—which Scripture calls "idolatry"—we lose our basis for being secure and at peace in the world. We start a restless quest to control our social environment. Others become a problem, a threat we must keep at bay.

Ironically, secularist liberal philosophies of "live and let live" work on this very basis. "Good fences make good neighbors." Public political life becomes a demilitarized zone where we dare not bring our deepest commitments to it, lest a "war of all against all" break out. Created to be a symphony playing in harmony under the divine conductor, the world becomes an assemblage of soloists playing their own tunes. Justice means keeping others from interfering. In the words

This same idea also suggests a diagnosis of consumerism: we seek to quiet our restless hearts by possessing goods. Augustinians such as Rowan Williams claim that the problem of modern capitalism is not simply greed, but idolatry. We go to the sacred space of the mall looking for God, but we can never find God there among the go[ods] on offer, not merely because God can't be bought, but because God is not a thing like other things. (This also means that we don't have to choose between God and the good things of creation. Rather, we steward and share the good things of creation in order to glorify God.)

In short, we love either the Creator, and the creation in him, or creatures instead of the Creator. There is no other choice.

Augustine says this another way: "Two cities are created by [these] two loves." It is in the community called "church" that »

The explosion of interest in Augustine's political thought is one of the more remarkable trends in contemporary theology.

we catch a glimpse of the city Scripture calls “the kingdom of God.” But does this mean we leave the public sphere to bureaucratic politicians who seek to manage human behavior? Is “public” space “secular” space? How are the two cities related?

Augustine on Public Life

It was Augustine, ironically, who gave us the idea of “the secular.” However, he saw the secular not as a *space* (from which religion must be banned), but as a *time*: that time between the ascension of Christ and Christ's return.

We live, says Mathewes, not “in” but “during” the world. And during the world, we seek to live faithful to that story whose end is not violence, but peace. This time is to be spent training for life in the New Jerusalem, which means occupying public space—including politics—in a way that seeks the City of God through, rather than in spite of, our differences. At the same time, this “occupying until he comes” works against any ideas that the New Jerusalem, which comes as a gift from God, could ever be fully realized through politics. It can only be *anticipated*.

But it *can* be anticipated.

Countering the general cynicism about public life in our time, Mathewes claims Christians should see politics as a good signpost to fulfilled political life in the world to come. The restlessness of public life, even in a declining global empire, should be nurtured, rather than resolved or overcome. Perhaps this idea is best captured in Nicholas Wolterstorff's idea of “restless shalom.” Shalom without restlessness fails to take the brokenness of the world seriously; restlessness without shalom leads to desperation and violence.

William Cavanaugh imagines things somewhat differently from Mathewes. He suggests thinking of the two cities as “performances” of radically different stories. The city of this world is a performance of a tragedy in which violence is inevitable, vice is virtuous, and satisfactory resolution impossible. The City of God, by contrast,

is a performance of a comedy in which peace prevails, goods are shared, and harmony is found at the end. But here's the catch: both performances happen on the same stage and at the same time. Both performances are “during the world.” Both performances use the same objects or props, and the actors from each seek to influence the other. The Christian mission during the world is to find ways of interrupting the tragedy and co-opting its actors into the comedy.

Cavanaugh, who once described his politics as “eucharistic anarchism,” points to the practices of Voices in the Wilderness, an organization that violated sanctions against Iraq imposed by the “nation-state” (representing the tragic story) by dropping parcels of food immediately prior to the 2003 invasion. In doing so, it challenged the idea that humans could be divided into nation-states at war with each other and imagined a common humanity across borders and promised redemption in Christ.

Augustine and Reformed Theology

Those two creative uses of Augustine's thought, one by an Episcopalian (Mathewes) and the other by a Roman Catholic (Cavanaugh), demonstrate the fruitfulness of this ancient African bishop for helping us think theologically about today's world. But their insights should not be entirely new to Reformed people. After all, the understanding of creation as good-but-fallen is deeply embedded in our confessions (perhaps most profoundly in our Contemporary Testimony)—as is the idea that fallenness neither condemns the world as an evil to be escaped, nor separates the things of the world into good (redeemable) and bad (irredeemable).

What might be unusual is an emphasis on the church as that place where Christian desire is formed and we are called to visibly demonstrate what the City of God looks like in its practices. Indeed, both these ideas are becoming more important within contemporary theology in general.

One Reformed philosopher-theologian working along these lines is James K.A. Smith. His upcoming book *Desiring the Kingdom* takes note of the way that cultural gatherings around “common objects of love”—in shopping malls, sports arenas, and lecture halls—serve to form us in ways counter to the kingdom. We need, he says, to recover a “robust” sense of the Christian institution as a place of counterformation, where we are trained to desire God rightly. Smith also claims Augustine as mentor in this, seeing profound possibility in reintroducing the classical Augustine to the culturally transformative Kuyperian churches and colleges—and in so doing building bridges to the great tradition of Christian theology and practice that is our common heritage.

The City on a Hill

In our time we have seen the vulnerability of the West revealed politically, militarily, and economically. So it's no coincidence that a new appropriation of Augustine is happening in our day. Augustine knew how the unraveling of empire unleashed violence at its edges, even as “the desire to acquire” left lives fragmented and uncertain within its gates.

But the certainty and security promised by modernity are illusions. Theologians who follow Augustine's thought in our time know, as he did, that “the city on a hill” can ever be equated with an earthly city or nation. “Empires,” notes Anthony Chvala-Smith, “thrive on the myth of their own permanence.” That Augustine saw this clearly, and the way that myth supported the domination of the many by the few, “remains Augustine's living legacy to the postmodern world.” But more than this, Augustine shows how to form citizens of the New Jerusalem to perform God's story in the midst of a tragic world. ■



Dr. Stephen Martin is associate professor of theology at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alberta.

A Sort of Perpetual Cross

EMILY, A FORMER STUDENT OF MINE, had endured a semester's worth of ridicule and abuse from her grad school professors and fellow students for professing her allegiance to Jesus Christ. During Christmas break she paid me a visit in my office. She sighed, "No one ever told me that to be a Christian would be this hard."

Well, Emily, let's be clear on one point: When Jesus called his earliest disciples to follow him, he never hid his scars. He didn't then, and he doesn't now. Never does he present his offer as though it's a bargain.

Rather, straightforwardly he warns any would-be follower that trouble lies ahead. Few truths, if any, are more important to learn about Christian discipleship than this one, especially in this self-maximizing, "We-do-it-all-for-you" age.

And few pastors in Christian history have more clearly reminded believers of this central fact than did John Calvin. Along with self-denial and meditation on the future life, Calvin made cross-bearing one of the three cardinal features of every Christian's journey through this life:

Each must bear his own cross. For whomever the Lord has adopted and deemed worthy of his fellowship ought to prepare themselves for a hard, toilsome, and unquiet life, crammed with very many and various kinds of evil. It is the heavenly Father's will thus to exercise them. . . . Beginning with Christ, his firstborn, he follows this plan with all his children. . . . Why should we exempt ourselves, therefore, from the condition to which Christ our Head had to submit? (*Institutes*, III.viii.1).

But, though harsh and difficult, these troubles are not without purpose. In the same passage Calvin writes,

The apostle teaches that God has destined all his children to the end that they be conformed to Christ. Hence . . . a great comfort comes to us: we share Christ's sufferings in order that as he has passed from the labyrinth of all evils into heavenly glory, we may in like manner be led through various tribulations to the same glory. . . . By communion with him the very sufferings themselves not only become blessed to us but also help much in promoting our salvation.

Come what may, and though even our closest friend should turn away when our enemy hurls taunts at us, our heavenly

Jesus warns any
would-be follower that
trouble lies ahead.

Father will never desert us, assures Calvin. God promises to be with us—to carry us through.

On the very evening before he was evicted from Geneva in 1538 by a white-hot determined group opposed to his reforms, Calvin wrote to his fellow Reformer, Guillaume Farel: "If we had been serving man, we had been badly rewarded! However, we serve the One who never withholds from his servants that which he has promised them. Beyond measure, the Lord cares for us his servants."

What's more, through the discipline of the cross our Father keeps beckoning us to train our eyes on home. God makes our hearts pant for that coming day when our troubles will be over. These two actions of the Lord—both the carrying of his weary and embattled children in the present and the beckoning of them toward a heavenly future—make progress in the Christian life possible, says Calvin. Thus, our daily task and calling are obvious: we must remember our Lord's powerful care for us today amid our distress, and dream about God's promises for us tomorrow. In doing so, we can make sure spiritual progress. ■

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. In honor of John Calvin's 500th birthday, he is writing a special series for *The Banner* this year on Calvin's central teachings.

THE NEW CALVINISM

CALVINISM'S ON THE RISE—
BUT OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS
ARE GETTING ALL THE CREDIT.



WONDER HOW MANY readers were surprised by *Time* magazine's recent cover story "10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now" (March 22, 2009).

It wasn't surprising that a national magazine came up with an insightful article like that. What must have caught many off guard, however, was the inclusion of "The New Calvinism" among the 10. But what may have been most disconcerting to many of us in the Reformed Church in America and in the Christian Reformed Church in North America was the article's failure to mention either of these traditions.

As we remember John Calvin's 500th birthday this year, we acknowledge that Calvinism has not had positive press in recent years. Its critics have characterized it as a dour, rigid view of God that leads its followers to a less-than-appealing way of life. Thankfully, in recent years a number of insightful scholars have bemoaned the bad rap Calvinism has received.

Writers like Marilynne Robinson (*Gilead*) look ahead to the time when Calvinism will again be recognized for its potential contribution to world affairs.

The *Time* article indicates that Calvinism is on the rise. It refers to a growing number of scholars in traditions other than the RCA and CRC who are cashing in on insights they've learned from John Calvin. I wonder why the RCA and CRC traditions weren't mentioned. Whatever the reason, now might be the time for us to take another look at who we are and how we might be included among other Calvinists who make a noted difference in today's world.

Unsung Contributions

That we're on the way to being recognized is already evident in our contributions in many arenas—for example, work being done by the economics department of Calvin College in the area of community development. Each year the department holds a seminar that attracts hundreds

of students and scholars from a number of traditions to reflect on meeting this challenge from a Christian (Calvinistic) perspective.

There's also the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship's annual Worship Symposium, which draws interested people from all over the world. And Trinity College, located in the Chicago area, recently invited Paul Young, author of the bestselling book *The Shack*, to speak about how his novel addresses the role of God in the midst of the unspeakable tragedies we regularly encounter.

We're also making significant contributions in the area of faith and science. The debate between the two was placed on the front burner by Francis S. Collins, noted director of the Human Genome Project, in his book *The Language of God*. It is largely through his research that we learn how beneficial it is to know about the DNA structure of our bodies. Collins was an atheist in his early career but is now a dedicated Christian. He maintains

that faith in God and faith in science not only can be, but must be, combined into one worldview.

While Collins does not speak directly out of the Reformed tradition, Deborah B. Haarsma and Loren D. Haarsma, who teach in the department of physics and astronomy at Calvin College, agree with Collins that faith and science must respect one another. They recently wrote *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, & Evolution*, in which they urge us to live out of the faith we express in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession. In that article we declare that God makes himself known by two means: first by the creation and then by

plays well from the pulpit. It is an arrogant position that may consign good acquaintances to hell while granting heaven to only a select few.

It's time we make a concerted effort to shift the focus of election away from eternal bliss to the biblical concept of God calling the elect to be a blessing in the world.

When God called (elected) Abraham, God mentioned nothing about Abraham's being translated to heaven after death. Instead, the promise was wrapped up with what Abraham and his descendants were to do in their daily lives. While the New Testament assures believers of eternal bliss,

the worshiping congregation as a gathering of believers who, out of their brokenness, come into the presence of God not only to confess their sins but to hear the Good News about the grace of God.

Calvinists have never been proponents of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to as a "comfortable pew." Calvinistic theology is a strong proponent of social justice in the world—a justice that God calls his people to promote by what they say and do.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship sets forth a biblical concept of worship that calls worship leaders to be faithful to God. The leaders of the insti-

The *Time* article indicates that Calvinism is on the rise. . . . I wonder why the RCA and CRC traditions weren't mentioned.

God's holy and divine Word. The Haarsmas strongly advocate that we take both God's Word and God's world seriously.

Our Problem with Election

An area that we in the CRC tradition must address if we are to be part of the "new Calvinism" is the perception that there is an albatross that hangs around our neck. I am referring to the perception that we believe God predestines some people to everlasting hell, while others are granted eternal life in glory.

We have been reluctant to deal with this because we have not fared well when it's been up for discussion by our major assemblies. While most seem to have moved away from the concept of double predestination (God is glorified by those assigned to hell as well as by those accepted into heaven), the biblically based concept of election remains a major factor in our theological structure. Yet election remains a topic that's rarely addressed from the pulpits of our churches.

There may be a number of reasons why pastors shy away from this. Among them is probably the understanding that election is associated primarily with going to heaven after death. While that idea may be comforting to those who believe they are among the elect, it is not a topic that

it places its primary emphasis on how believers are to conduct their lives. When we make that biblically supported shift in our theological perspective, preaching about election will be enhanced and we may be recognized among other Calvinists who make a significant contribution to the ideas shaping the world.

Ongoing Challenges

We face an even greater challenge in the way we conduct our worship services today. Worship in Reformed churches is currently in turmoil. Many Christians have become self-centered in their concept of what worship is about. As a result, successful, effective worship is often measured by the size of the congregation and the ability of those leading worship to satisfy those gathered for worship. Highly skilled preachers who can tell both young and old how to feel better about themselves draw huge crowds.

Calvin's concept of human depravity has never been popular. However, it appears that the current economic crisis brought about in large measure by human greed reaffirms the biblical truth expounded so forcefully by him. It is Calvin's contention that the biblical concept of grace can only be appreciated against the background of human sin. Calvin sees

tute recognize that churches of many traditions struggle with declining membership. This is a major concern. But they also know that the answer to this is not to be found in teaching worship leaders how to compete effectively with professional entertainers. The answer lies, instead, in worship leaders being creatively obedient to what God requires of believers in God's Word.

The road ahead may at times be discouraging, but God's blessing rests on that which is grafted into the life, death, and resurrection of God's Son. Persistence in this direction may not be accepted by everyone, but Calvinists believe it is the road God expects us to take.

The challenge before us, of course, is not that we be recognized by major magazines as movers and shakers in the world. Rather, our task is to be perceptive about how effective we are at being obedient to Christ in our proclamation of Good News to a hurting world. That's bound to get noticed. ■



Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church.

Continued from p. 21

12. **Courage.** “May they always ‘be strong and courageous’ in their character and in their actions” (Deut. 31:6).
13. **Purity.** “‘Create in [them] a pure heart, O God,’ and let their purity of heart be shown in their actions” (Ps. 51:10).
14. **Kindness.** “Lord, may they ‘always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else’” (1 Thess. 5:15).
15. **Generosity.** “Grant that they may ‘be generous and willing to share [and so] lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age’” (1 Tim. 6:18-19).
16. **Peace, peaceability.** “Father, may they ‘make every effort to do what leads to peace’” (Rom. 14:19).
17. **Joy.** “May they be filled ‘with the joy given by the Holy Spirit’” (1 Thess. 1:6).
18. **Perseverance.** “Lord, teach them perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to ‘run with perseverance the race marked out for [them]’” (Heb. 12:1).
19. **Humility.** “God, please cultivate in my children the ability to ‘show true humility toward all’” (Titus 3:2).
20. **Compassion.** “Lord, please clothe them with the virtue of compassion” (Col. 3:12).
21. **Responsibility.** “Grant that they may learn responsibility, ‘for

This simple practice has revolutionized the way I pray for my children.

- each of you should carry your own load” (Gal. 6:5, TNIV).
22. **Contentment.** “Father, teach them ‘the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . . through him who gives [them] strength’” (Phil. 4:12-13).
 23. **Faith.** “I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children’s hearts, that by faith they may gain what has been promised to them” (Luke 17:5-6, Heb. 11:1-40).
 24. **A servant heart.** “God, please help them develop servant hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, ‘as if [they] were serving the Lord, not people’” (Eph. 6:7, TNIV).
 25. **Hope.** “May the God of hope grant that they may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).
 26. **The willingness and ability to work hard.** “Teach them, Lord, to value work and to work hard at everything they do, ‘as working for the Lord, not for human masters’” (Col. 3:23, TNIV).
 27. **A passion for God.** “Instill in them, Lord, a soul that ‘followeth hard after thee,’ a heart that clings passionately to you (Ps. 63:8, KJV).

28. **Self-discipline.** “Father, may they develop self-discipline, that they may acquire ‘a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair’” (Prov. 1:3).
29. **Prayerfulness.** “Grant, Lord, that their lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that they may learn to ‘pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests’” (Eph. 6:18).
30. **Gratitude.** “Help them to live lives ‘overflowing with thankfulness’; that they may be ‘always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’” (Col. 2:7, Eph. 5:20).
31. **A heart for missions.** “Lord, please develop in them a desire to see your glory declared among the nations, your marvelous deeds among all peoples” (Ps. 96:3).

After several weeks of praying through the above list, I discovered an additional benefit: as I prayed with my children each night, the Lord brought to mind the quality I’d prayed for that morning, and I would repeat my request in Aubrey and Aaron’s hearing. Before long, they began to echo my praying and pour out their own hearts in prayer for the very virtues I desired to see in them. Thus, my simple prayer program changed not only how I pray, but also how my children pray . . . and, by God’s grace, how they live as well. ■

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

Synod 2009 has approved a one-year extension of candidacy for the following candidates: Paul Birnbaum, Steven Boersma, Micah J. Bruxvoort, Darrin Compagner, Adam Eisenga, William Harris, Mark Hilbelink, Laurie Hogge, Ryan Schreiber, David L. Spoelma, David Stockdale, David VanBerkel, and Brian Willats.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Change in Time of Service

Bethel CRC in Lansing, IL will be worshipping at 5:00 p.m. from Sept. to May and at 6:00 p.m. from June to Aug. for the evening service. The morning worship service remains the same at 9:30 a.m.

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that Mark Neymeiyer has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Meetings of Classis

Classis Georgetown will hold its September 2009 meeting at the Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan. The meeting will begin at 8:30 AM. All items for the agenda must be received by August 7, 2009.

Classis Heartland will meet in regular session on Saturday, September 26, 2009, at the Calvin Christian Reformed Church in LeMars, Iowa. Please forward all items for inclusion in the agenda to me by August 21.
Rev. David Heilman, Stated Clerk.

Classis Kalamazoo will have its regular meeting 9:00 am Tues. September 15 at Westwood CRC. Material should be submitted to the Clerk by August 11. Jake Weeda, SC. 269-672-9821.

Classis Zeeland will meet on Thursday, September 10, 2009, 4:00PM, at the Overisel CRC. Agenda deadline is July 30, 2009.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 50th Anniversary

Crossroads Church (formerly Madison WI CRC) celebrates its 50th Anniversary in September, 2009. Former members and friends are invited to join us for events during the month. See our Website: www.crossroadscrc.org for more details.

Portland in November! Parklane (formerly Calvin) CRC in Portland, OR, celebrates her 50th anniversary November 13-15, 2009. Banquet the 13th (reservations required; 200 people max), reunions the 14th, worship and celebration the 15th. For more info contact Larry Niemeier (theniemeiers@comcast.net) or Pastor Vance Hays (vancehays@juno.com). See you there. God has been good to us!

Retirement

After 36 yrs. of faithful service to God, the last 22 at Faith CRC, Elmhurst, IL, **Dr. Lee Koning** is retiring. His last sermon will be on Sept. 20. He and his wife, Pat, will be honored at a dinner on Sept. 10 at The Carlisle, 435 E. Butterfield, Lombard. For details on the dinner, call the Church Office before Noon on Aug. 10 at 630-279-1776.

Pastor Harvey Stob The Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church set aside June 24 to celebrate the many contributions of Rev. Harvey Stob, who is retiring after 37 years in the ministry, including 12 years as Pastor of Congregational Life in Ann Arbor. Prior to his appointment in Ann Arbor, he held pastorates in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Ridgewood New Jersey. He also served in the Reformed Church in Argentina where he did graduate work in Biblical Studies at ISIDET in Buenos Aires. He will continue working with the church on a part-time basis as Director of International Ministries. We wish Harvey & Audrey God's continued blessings.

Announcements

Conferences

After 500 years: John Calvin for Reformed Churches Today presented by the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary; 1st CRC Byron Center, MI Sept. 3-5, 2009 - 500yearsofcalvin.org

Birthdays

95th Birthday

Rose Laning of Wayland, MI, will celebrate her 95th birthday on August 5. She is a real blessing to her family. Her children are Dan, Gerda Wubben & Peter, Adrianna Laning. Her grandchildren are Dan, Michelle, Don, Julie, Dean Wubben, Pete and Sherri Laning. She has ten great-grandchildren.

90th Birthday

J George Aupperlee 93 No. 16th st, Prospect Park, NJ 07508 celebrated his 90th birthday on July 7. Married to Anne for 63 years on May 21. Children: George (Connie), Jim (Ruth), Tom (Marcia), Don (Jeany). 14 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren. Praise God for His graciousness!

Evadean Broek of Sioux Center, IA, member of Bethel CRC, celebrates her 90th birthday Aug 17. Her sons Wayne (Marla) & Marlin (Shirley), g-children & g-g-children are thankful for her godly example.

Fred Hollebeek, 930 Edison NW #319, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 celebrates his 90th birthday on August 8. His wife Dorothy of 64 years, deceased, Mart & Mary Hollebeek, Lois & Ken Schepel, Ruth & Gord Bylsma, 9 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren. Friends and family are invited to an open house on August 8 from 2-4pm at Edison Manor.

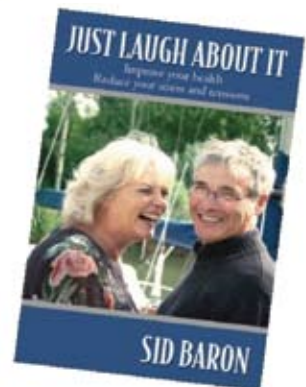


Hermina Hoving (2121 Raybrook SE, Rm N-340, Grand Rapids, MI 49546) will celebrate her 90th birthday on Aug 2. She was born in Chicago, IL to Samuel and Agnes Hoving. She has three living sisters, Betty (Edwin) Hoogstra, Dorothy (Elmer) Ribbens and Marcia (Peter) Noor; two

deceased brother, Abel (Jen/Jo) and Richard (Elaine); two deceased sisters, Florence (Jack) DeKruyter and Thelma (Clarence) Werkema. She has 58 nieces and nephews, 108 grandnieces and nephews and 48 great-grandnieces and nephews. Her birthday will be celebrated with a family reunion at Payne Lake. Mina has been a loving sister and aunt to her family. We give thanks to God.

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85th Birthday

Grace VanderNagel Box 203 Jordan Station ON L0R1S0 celebrated her 85th birthday June 29. Her children thank the Lord they could all celebrate with her together with most of her 18 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren.

80th Birthday

Dorothy (Van Der Wal) Pap, 4714 Rubidoux Ave, Riverside, CA 92506, is celebrating her 80th birthday on August 16, along with her children: Dennis & Lori, Curtis & Mary Ellen, Mark & Cindy, Sandra & Rudy Ramirez, her 12 grandchildren & 1 great grandchild. We love you!

Anniversaries

60th Anniversary

Brock, Sid and Margaret (Rozeboom), 6856 Clyde Park SW, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate 60 years of marriage August 26. Our family is thankful for God's love and faithfulness in their lives and ours. Children: Don and Sheryl Van Eck, Ken and Kathy Brock, Rog and Kathy Brock, seven grandchildren.

Buikema, Ralph & Florence (DeBoer), 10529 Utah Ct., Orland Park, IL 60467, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Aug. 19. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren: Cindy & Kevin

Bos (Jason, Lori & Marc, Jonathan), Bill & Jan (Aaron, Rachel) and 1 great-grandchild.

Hendrikse, Erwin & Margaret (Van Ess) 839 Anthony Circle, Oostburg, WI 53070 June30. Congratulations and we thank God for you! With love from your children: Larry & Mary VanArendonk, Mike & Carol Eischen, Steve & Sue Hendrikse, Jim & Chris Hoeflich, Scott & Anne Hendrikse; 15 grandchildren & 5 great-grandchildren

Poel, Norman & Lucile (de Stigter), 2042 Mallard Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI, 49546, August 18. Congratulations from your children: Bill & Sue Lemkuil, Rick & Mary Kruis, Jeff & Barb Anderson, Randy (deceased) Mark & JoEllen Kauk, Rick & Nancy Poel, Mike & Lisa Broekhuis, 15 grandchildren, & 6 great-grandchildren.

Church Positions Available

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.

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.

Bethel CRC of Waupun Wisconsin is accepting resumes for a Youth Pastor position available May 2009. Please submit resumes by email, waupunbethelcrrc@att.net.

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.

Grace CRC in Kalamazoo MI is seeking a senior pastor who will powerfully proclaim "Thus saith the Lord" in traditional worship, compassionately shepherd our church family, and creatively guide us to reach our community. Send inquiries to: johnjvanderploeg@charter.net or 269-217-4683.

Great opportunity in the NW The Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church in Tacoma, WA seeks a senior pastor to serve a vibrant, committed and diverse congregation. The ideal candidate will be a gifted communicator, with a heart for pastoral care and a desire to serve the community alongside a team of devoted staff and volunteers. We are a supportive and united congregation of 250 members that combines diverse backgrounds with CRC values and traditions. Please send inquiries to Stan Vander Pol at PastorSearchTacomaCRCC@comcast.net.

Pastor of Congregational Life: Faith CRC in Elmhurst, IL, a suburb of Chicago, is seeking an ordained minister to work with the Senior Pastor in a large range of pastoral responsibilities at our 900 member church. For more information please call the church at 630-279-1776 or email Scott Smits at s.smits@comcast.net

Pastor of Outreach and Congregational Life: Providence CRC of Cutlerville, MI is seeking an ordained minister with strong leadership skills and passion for outreach and congregational life. This gifted man of God will work under the supervision of the Pastor of Worship and Leadership as a vital part of our ministry leadership team.

Providence is committed to equipping our members to grow in Christ and to share His life with those who have not met Him. Therefore, the ideal candidate will have strengths in leading the outreach ministry to our community, equipping our members, building positive relationships, caring and teaching. Responsibilities include preaching twice monthly. Please submit inquiries to search committee chair Ron Stuursma at: mstuursma1@att.net or call (616) 608-3978 (h) or (616) 560-9045 (c)

Lead Pastor Immanuel CRC of Ripon, California, is seeking a Lead Pastor to work as a member of a team ministry with our Youth Pastor (Bret Lamsma) and our Coordinator of Ministries (Lauri Howard). We are looking for an individual who is passionate about preaching and sharing God's Word. As our pastor, you will encourage and develop leaders in the church, challenge us to deepen our faith, and partner with us in reaching our community. Immanuel's purpose is to love God above all, to care for each other, and to serve the world. If you are interested in learning more about our congregation of over 700 members, please contact Jeff Miller, Chair of Search Committee, at jrmkmler@charter.net, or see our website at www.immanuelcrrc.org.

Youth Director Clinton CRC seeks a dynamic and energetic leader for our youth and young adult ministries. We are praying for a person that has a love for Christ, a passion for youth, good interpersonal and leadership skills. Working with an advisory committee you will develop a relational ministry from a reformed perspective. For a complete job description, send résumés to Clinton CRC, P. O. Box 697, Clinton, ON NOM 1L0 or email to clintoncrrc@tcc.on.ca and we will send the description to you.

Ridgewood CRC Jenison, MI seeks a full time Director of Youth Ministries. Ordained or not ordained. Visit ridgewoodcrrc.com, Youth Ministries tab for more info., and send resume to wstob@aol.com

Wallaceburg CRC is seeking a full time pastor to lead us in ministry. We are a rural congregation located in South-Western Ontario with approximately 50 families, or 240 members. We have a large contingent of younger families and a vibrant youth ministry. A church profile and recently updated vision statement are available on request. Please contact Clarence Dykhous at clarence@wbmbindery.com or 519-677-1393

Southside Chicago Pullman CRC has 240 worshippers: 62% African American, 27% European American, 11% Caribbean/mixed; flourishing Family Night and youth programs; spirited gospel music ministry; other programs in a dynamic congregation. We seek a faithful, articulate, and socially-ethnically aware pastor, committed to Biblically Reformed perspective to minister in an enduring, intentionally multiethnic setting. To contact Search Committee, see <http://pullmanchurch.org>

Interim Pastor Kincardine CRC of Kincardine Ontario Canada is seeking an Interim pastor. We are a small congregation located on the shore of Lake Huron. Assist us in carrying forward our ministry. For more information please Contact Stuart Vandervaart at stuvan@hurontel.on.ca

Ann Arbor CRC The Ann Arbor CRC (Michigan) has an exciting ministry opportunity for a full-time pastor. We are looking for a qualified person to join our pastoral team taking on primary responsibility for the needs of family and youth. He/she will also participate in worship leading and preaching with our Pastor of Worship Ministries. The job description comes with the built-in flexibility to shape the position based on the selected candidate's gifts and interests. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.aaccr.org/about/pastor-position>, e-mail AACRCSearch@aaccr.org, or call 734-255-1452.

Fellowship CRC Fellowship Church of Traverse City is seeking a pastor to lead our praying community of believers. Located in beautiful northwest Michigan, one of the growth areas of Michigan, Traverse City is a center for agriculture and yet recognized as the recreation capital of the Midwest. Fellowship Church is passionate about reaching out to our economically diverse community. We are praying for an effective preacher and worship leader who will guide the spiritual growth of the congregation, seek and welcome those looking for a church home, and foster our strong and caring fellowship. If you sense you may be part of God's plan for this community, please send your profile to: Search Committee, Fellowship Church, 2555 Garfield Road North, Traverse City MI 49686 or to fellchurch@juno.com

Director of Youth Ministries Cascade Fellowship CRC, a vibrant, rapidly-growing church in suburban Grand Rapids, MI, seeks someone possessing dynamic leadership and interpersonal qualities to become an integral part of the church leadership team. We are looking for a person passionately committed to embracing a clear vision for continued growth and enrichment of Cascade's middle school and high school youth programs. A job description and candidate qualifications are available on our website, www.cfrc.org. Please send resumes or direct inquiries to YouthMinistries@cfrc.org.

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 firstcrrc@fidalgo.net.

Terra Ceia CRC is currently vacant and is seeking a Pastor who is passionate for His Lord. We are a small congregation located in rural Eastern North Carolina. To obtain more information or a church profile please contact Arie DeHoog at 252-964-2230.

Hillcrest CRC of Hudsonville, MI, is seeking a part-time ordained Associate Pastor to assist with our ministries in the areas of pastoral care and preaching. Interested persons please contact Rev. Brian Bosscher at bboscher@hillcrestcrrc.org or at 616-669-6556.

Wanted: Fisher of Men. Community CRC - Dixon's Corners, ON is seeking an energetic Youth Pastor for their vibrant youth group. Part time position available August 2009. Please contact us @ 613-652-2400 or communitycrrc@ripnet.com. Website: www.communitycrrc.ca.

Spoelma, Roger & Betty (Kortman), 10201 S. Blodgett Road, McBain, MI, 49657, will celebrate their 60th Anniversary on August 3. Love and congratulations from your children, Paul & Kathy Spoelma, Mark & Rosemary Jenema, Bryan & Carol Spoelma, Jeff & Lynnette Beerens, grandchildren & great-grandchildren.

Terborg, George & Odeline (Redeker), 7329 W. 154th St, Orland Pk., IL 60462 celebrated their 60th anniversary on July 1st. We thank God for their example to us. Marvin & Linda, Mark, Diane & Mike Gordon, Donna & John Gustafson, 8 grandchildren, & 2 great-grandchildren.

Vander Ploeg, John and Marie of Grand Rapids, MI with gratitude to God for his faithfulness celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 24. Love and congratulations from your children Marlene and Mark Vanderhill, Brian and Jane VanderPloeg and grandchildren Leah and Ryan Schoonover and Lydia Vanderhill.

55th Anniversary

Haan, Harold & Laverne (Post), 18768 Sherman St, Lansing, IL 60438, will celebrate their 55th anniversary on August 20. Congratulations and love from your children: Jim & Becky, Betty & Larry, Ken & Joann, Donna & Brian, and your 14 grandchildren & 2 great grandchildren. We praise God for his faithfulness.

50th Anniversary

Armstrong, Rev. David and Janet, 757 S. Prospect Ave. Elmhurst, IL 60126 will celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 29. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren: Doug and Beth Bardolph, Justin, Aaron, Chelsea, Ethan and Anna. We love you.

De Haan, Stanley & Joanne (Harkema) will celebrate 50 years of marriage with an open house at 9895 Sunrise Ridge in Caledonia, MI on Saturday, August 15, 2009 from 2:00-5:00p.m. (no gifts please). Giving thanks to God with them are their children: Doug & Vicki DeHaan, Dennis DeHaan, Kathy & the late Randy VanVuren, Dan & Kim VanEngen, David & Micki DeHaan, Darin & Sheri DeHaan, and 19 grandchildren.

De Vries, Don & Alma (Vander Lugt), Holland, MI celebrated 50th Wedding Anniversary on June 5, 2009. Congratulations and love from your children-Carl & Kathy De Vries, Quentin & Jane Reynhout, Doug & Linda De Vries and 9 grandchildren. Thanks be to God for his continued blessings!

Greidanus, Morris & Alice (Schweitzer) 200 Sligh Blvd NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 celebrate 50 years on August 7. Congratulations and love!

Hoffland, Gary & Ellen (Lubbers), 5424 Dixon Ave. West, Dixon, CA 95620. August 20. Children: Phil & Jackie (Jonathan, Mariellen), Jonathan & Susan (Rebecca, Christopher, Heidi), Calvin & Jamie (Benjamin, Micah, Levi, Jeshelle), Mark & Cory (Kendra, Isaiah)

Medenblik, Lambert & Martha, 513 Woodvale, Rock Hill, SC 29730, (803) 366-8783. Love from your children & grandchildren: Jul & Jackie (Josh & Julianne), Wilma & Ron Lamberts (James, Adam & Michael) & Ted & Anne (Jonathan & Alyssa)

Montsma, Ted & Thelma (Talsma) of Delavan, WI will celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 21, 2009. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren.

Mulder, Harold & Marlyce (Van Dyke), 3128 Nicholson Dr, Winter Park, FL 32792 will be married for 50 years on August 6. With love and thanksgiving our family will continue to celebrate God's faithfulness. Keith & Susan Buwalda, Tim & Kristen Cinollo; Jeff & Amy Neisen; Vaughn & Allison Mulder, grandchildren & great-grandchildren!

Ruiter, Art & Carole (Steensma), 18147 Lost Creek Lane, Spring Lake, MI, 49456 will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 25. Children: Steve & Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra, Jeff & Lisa Ruiter, David Ruiter, Jamie & Amy Goorman and 10 grandchildren. Thanks be to God, our family and friends.

Smit, Larry & Trena (Huizinga), 5520 W. 41st Ave., Gary, IN 46408, will celebrate 50 yrs. of marriage on Aug. 21. Children: Terry & Debbie Smit, Linda & Stanton Visser, Debbie & Jason Hubers, Diane & Tim Bakker. 10 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren.

Theune, Jack and Marion (Ehert), 1946 N. 10th Street, Sheboygan, WI, 53081, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 27. Giving thanks to God for them are their children and grandchildren: Greg and Terry Ebbel-

ing (Kellsie, Jodi, Scott), John and Kathy Andringa (Kathryn, Sam, Ben), John and Ann Theune (Olivia, Owen, Celia). Great is His faithfulness!

Youngsma, Curt and Marjorie (VanderWeit), 5050 E Vassar Ave, Denver, CO 80222, celebrated 50 years of marriage on December 27, 2008. Hospitality has been a hallmark of their marriage, and they will open their home for a celebration this summer. Children: Christy, Julie and Doug Drost, Susan and David Wilkins, David and Charys. Eight grandchildren. Thanks be to God for the blessing your marriage has been to your family, the Church and God's kingdom.

Obituaries

Bolt, Eunice DeVries; May 31, 2009; age of 82; 2421 Autumn Ash S. E., Kentwood, MI 49512; She is survived by her three children: Macyn, Tamsen, and Valerie (Wegner); sisters: Miriam Donseler, and Audrey Van Dyk; grandchildren: Vanessa Bolt, Justin Wegner, and Alayne Wegner; and several nephews.

Boomsma, "Archie" Arnold, 79, went to be with his Lord, May 28, 2009. 111 St. Andrews Dr., Schererville, IN 46375. Husband of Marilyn VanderZee. Father of Brian (Mariellen) and Bruce (Mary) Boomsma. 5 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren.

Bosman, Heimen; age 93 of Baldwin, Wis. passed away May 26, 2009. Survived by his wife Marie (TeGrootenhuis), Steve & Trudy, Glenda & Roy Kanis, Rose & Jim Hutt, Tim & Cynthia, 19 grandchildren & 39 great-grandchildren.

Decker, Grace, nee Teune, 92, went to be with Our Lord on June 13, 2009. 456 Illinois Rd, Wilmette, IL 60091. Wife of the late Herman Decker. Mother of Ron (Marshall Kindy) Decker, Keith (Carol) Decker, and Jane (the late Ron) Engelsman. Grandmother of Brent and Shawn Decker. Sister of John (Ruth) Teune, Peter (Sophie) Teune, Jean (Ed) Zylstra, the late Hank (Betty) Teune, and the late Garrett (Rita & the late Rose) Teune.

Dykhuis, Arthur, age 83 yrs., formerly of Paw Paw, MI and Decatur, MI finished his race on June 12, 2009, in Portage, MI. Beloved father of Bill (Nell) Dykhuis, Kalamazoo; Mary (Al) Van Kampen, Portage; Ruth (Dale) Lubbers, Mattawan; Ellen, Portage; Jim (Teri), Batavia, IL; ten dear grandchildren. Preceded in death by wife, Janice (Kraker) July 2001. Brother of the late James (Lois), Tom (Nancy), Marie (Roy) Tanis, Sarah (Leverne) Tanis, and Alida (Jason) Blauwkamp.

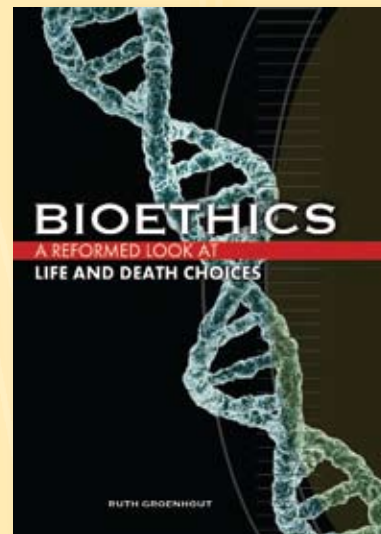
Frieswyk, Irene (nee Heyboer); age 87 of Holland, MI, went to be with her Lord on Saturday, May 9, 2009. She was preceded in death by her husband of 61 years, Dr. Melvin J. Frieswyk in 2008. She will be lovingly remembered by her children, Dr. John and Laurel Frieswyk, Robert and Ann Frieswyk, Sue and Bill Wiechertjes, Mary and Craig Borgman, 11 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Myroup, Cornelius "Neil" went to be with our Lord June 7, 2009. 415 N York Rd, # 217 Elmhurst, IL 60126. Husband of C. Fernella, nee Munn. Father of Craig (Sue) Myroup, Kim (Ed) Biesboer, the late Dale (the late Lee) Vandenburg and the late Charlene (Louis) Systma. Grandfather of 10 and great-grandfather of 7. Preceded by 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Memorials to Trinity Christian College or Elim Christian Services.

Olthoff, Mrs. Shirley R.; aged 82; June 11, 2009; 2121 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She is survived by her husband of 62 years: John P. Olthoff; children: John (Delores) Olthoff, Jacquelyn Ford, Richard (Michele) Olthoff, Marcia (Wayne) Visbeen, and David (Karen) Olthoff; grandchildren: Alex Olthoff, Michelle Padua, Steven Olthoff, Rebecca Olthoff, Jaclyn Visbeen, Julia (David) Holwerda, Elise Visbeen, Carl Olthoff, and Katherine Olthoff; two brothers and one sister.

Poort, Betty (nee Rosier) age 92, died May 16, 2009, preceded in death by her husband, Neal. Loving mother of Kenneth (Janice) and Ruthanne Casey, Grandmother of four and Greatgrandmother of seven. Loving sister of John (Jean) Rosier, Dorothy (the late Richard) Weidenaar. Preceded in death by Frank (Anne), Martin (Anna), Winifred (John) Eldrenkamp and George (Alice).

Prins, Eva (Van Lant); age 93; died on June 18, 2009 at Bethany Home in Ripon, CA. She is survived by her husband of 68 years, Edward, at 930 W. Main St, Ripon, CA 95366. Children: Edwin and Anna Jean Prins, John and Marge Prins, Arlo and Rita Prins, Willie and Jolene Bylisma, 16 grandchildren and 42 great-grandchildren, 6 sisters and 3 brothers.



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Rosendahl, Connie R., age 77, of Holland, died Thursday, June 4, 2009. Preceding her in death was her husband, Duane Rosendahl, brothers-in-law Robert Molenhouse, and Richard Visser. Surviving are her children, Robert Rosendahl, Diane and Tony Signore (Julia and Dan), Ruth Ann and Harold Blaauw (Jim, Jeff, and Will), and Bruce and Vicki Rosendahl (Ted, Tom, Micah, and Angela); sisters, Martha Molenhouse, Bernice and William Buiten, Florence and Corry Bussema, and Ruth Visser; sister-in-law, Mary and Earl Vander Meulen; 14 nieces and nephews; and a special friend, Marge Slater.

Terpstra, Shirley (nee Siske Montsma), born in Kollum, the Netherlands, age 84, passed from this life into eternal life May 19, 2009. Surviving are her husband Arie of 62 years, Delavan, WI., 8 children, 22 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren. Jesus is Lord.

Vanderveen, Neva-Jean (Boerema); aged 83; June 13th, 2009; 1268 Beach Dr., Holland, MI 49423; Neva was preceded in death by her loving husband John of 57 years. She is survived by her children: Bruce

and Linda Vanderveen, Doug and Carol Vanderveen, Jeff and Sue Vanderveen and Paul Vanderveen; grandchildren: Marc and Heather Vanderveen, Nathan, Katie, Brent, Lauren, Joel and Taylor Vanderveen; great-grandchildren: Paige and Abby Vanderveen

Van Dyk, Marten; 99 years, June 27, 2009 at Grimsby, Ontario. Beloved husband of Tina (Schievink) and the late Elisabeth (Schilstra). Dear father of James (Grace); George (Carol); Hilda (George) Feddema; Margaret (Gerry) ten brink; Martin (Hattie); JoAnne (Julius) de Jager; John (Elizabeth); and the late Florence Brink. Father-in-law to Frank Brink (Barb). Sadly missed by his 31 grandchildren and 51 great-grandchildren. Lovingly remembered by his step-children: John (Nellie) Schievink & Gerrie (late Peter) Rupke.

Vonk, John; age 83; 1201 21st Ave. Rock Valley, IA 51247, went to be with His Lord on May 26, 2009. Married 60 years to Eleanor (Gesink). Children: Ken & Nancy Kramer, Brian & MaryBeth, Galen & Marlys, Orin & Christine, Nora and Jack. 10 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren.

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.

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Immediate Need. Chief Executive Officer. Synodically approved, reformed, International Theological Education Ministry (ITEM) seeks part-time CEO to direct the ministry's fund raising and arrange for visiting instructors to teach at overseas seminaries. Candidate should be experienced in fund raising, have strong interpersonal skills and be computer savvy. Theological educational background desirable. Candidates should provide their CV to Fred Johannsen at frjto@charter.net.

Volunteers

Mississippi Chr Family Services in Rolling Fork, MS is in need of volunteers to work in the Lighthouse Variety Store for the months of July, Aug. & Sept. Airconditioned store and housing accommodations. A wonderful way to serve Him! Contact Cliff & Huddy Doornbos at huddyd@gmail.com or 616-453-1984

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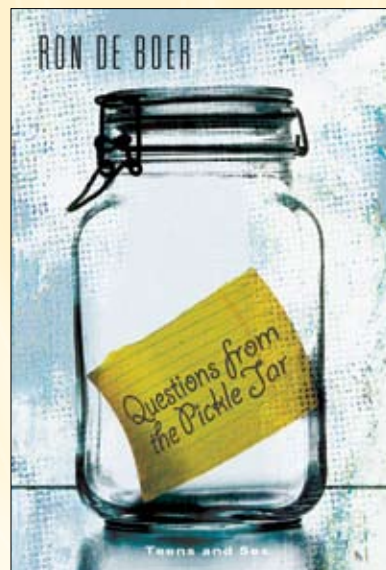
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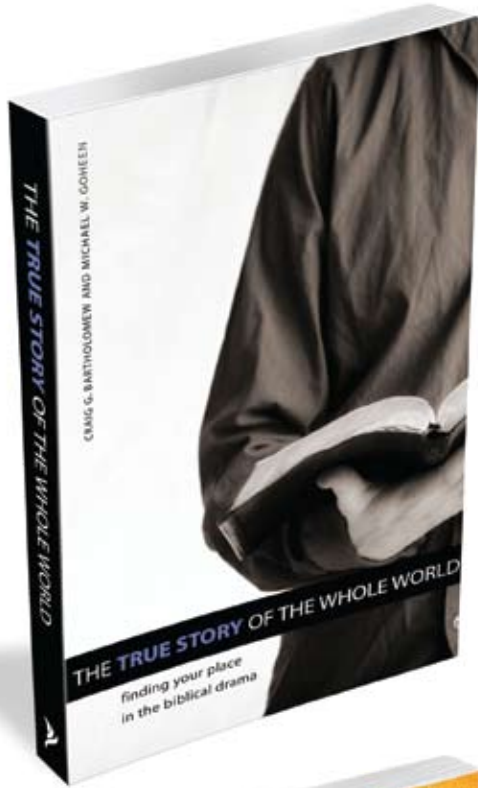
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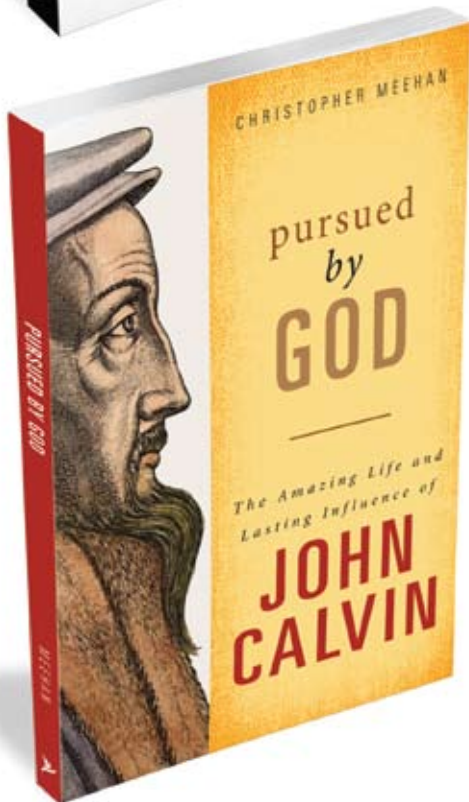
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Punch Lines

During the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, one morning's executions began with three men: a rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a rationalist skeptic.

The rabbi was marched up onto the platform first. There, facing the guillotine, he was asked if he had any last words. The rabbi cried out, "I believe in the one and only true God, and he shall save me!" The executioner then positioned the rabbi below the blade, set the block above his neck, and pulled the cord to set the terrible instrument in motion. The heavy cleaver plunged downward, searing the air. But then, abruptly, it stopped with a crack just a few inches above the would-be victim's neck.

"It's a miracle!" gasped the crowd. And the executioner had to agree, letting the rabbi go.

Next in line was the priest. Asked for his final words, he declared, "I believe in Jesus Christ, in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who will rescue me in my hour of need." The executioner then positioned this man beneath

the blade. And he pulled the cord. Again the blade flew downward. Thump! Creak! Again it stopped just short of its mark.

"Another miracle!" sighed the disappointed crowd. And for the second time the executioner had no choice but to let the condemned go free.

Now it was the skeptic's turn. "What final words have you to say?" he was asked. But the skeptic didn't hear. Staring intently at the ominous engine of death, he seemed lost. Not until the executioner poked him in the ribs and asked the question again did he reply.

"Oh, I see your problem," the skeptic said, pointing. "You've got a blockage in the gear assembly, right there!"

—Charley (from "Bob's Blog" at www.thebanner.org)

A knight riding a fine horse spies a tiny bird lying on its back in the road, its spindly legs pointing heavenward.

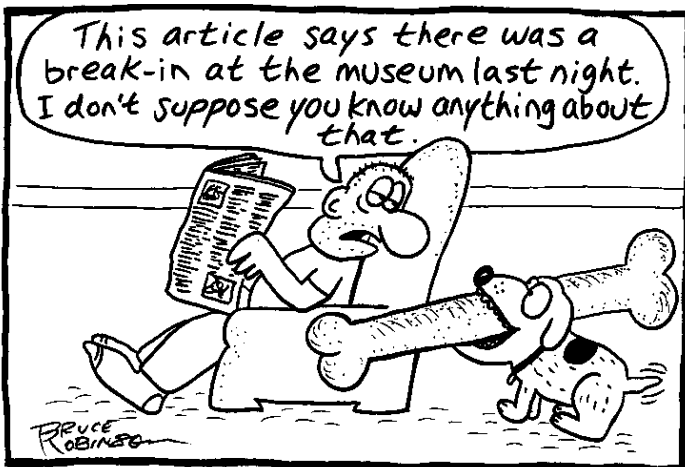
"What are you doing?" asks the knight?

"The sky is falling," answers the bird.

The knight bursts out laughing: "So with your wee little legs you're going to hold up the entire sky for us?"

"One does what one can," responds the bird. "One does what one can."

—Bob De Moor



This year, Disneyland and Walt Disney World are offering free admission to guests on their birthdays. John Calvin celebrated his 500 years by visiting Disneyland in Anaheim, California, with Rachel Van Dyk and daughters Hannah and Sarah. So he would not feel left out, the Van Dyks crafted a pair of tiny Mickey ears for John. He wore them with dignity.



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