

BANNER

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¹⁷ **We've Been Married
That Long?**

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THE LIFE
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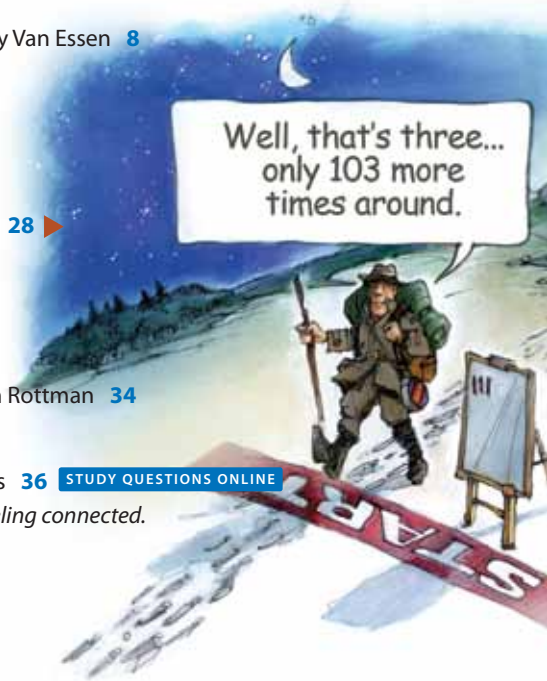
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Thank Heaven for Colleagues!

WHEN STRESSED, I HAVE A RECURRING DREAM. I'm standing behind the pulpit and I'm supposed to preach. But I'm paralyzed. I have nothing prepared and nothing to say.

Not too many folks know about that dream. The inevitable response from those who do is, "De Moor, that's ridiculous—we should be so lucky! We haven't ever seen you get to the final 'Amen' in time." With friends like that . . .

If most of my parishioners don't know my fear of being publicly tongue-tied, it's because I have benefited so much from wise congregation members who have supported me in my preaching. I have also benefited greatly from my colleagues who have, throughout my ministry, taught me, guided me, given me fresh ideas, and freely shared their best insights. Honestly, if I had to cite the source of every one of those in my sermon, there would be more citation than message. Not very edifying!

To be sure, Professor Rottman rightly points out the perils of plagiarism on the pulpit (see p. 34). Stealing the sermons of others is dishonest thievery; it's a breach of one's calling. Yet we all need to realize that our pastors do not and should not prepare sermons in isolation. Every sermon has something borrowed. There is one gospel. There is one mission to proclaim that gospel worldwide. And where we can help each other do it well, we need to share resources. Let's copyright sermons—but not the ideas, explanations, and applications in them. Let's lend them to others to use in the service of Christ's kingdom.

Here are some of the "inputs" to my preaching over the years. Some of these I've had the opportunity to acknowledge, many not:

- My dad, whose preaching in so many ways shaped my own and who gave me blanket permission to "steal" his stuff whenever I wanted as part of my inheritance.
- College theology profs and seminary profs who were so patient with a greenhorn rebel.
- The Catholic priest in the town where I served my first congregations who knew Reformed theology better than I did and who showed how to make it count in my preaching.
- Henry and John, my brothers in the ministry, who often rescued me when I panicked because I had no fresh ideas for Christmas or New Year's Day.
- The many colleagues along the way who formally and informally shared what they were reading, thinking, and doing.
- The many commentaries that contribute the insights of generations of preachers long since fallen silent.

From our pulpits we rightly expect a creative, fresh explication and application of God's Word each and every Sunday because each congregation and listener within it exist in their own unique time, place, and context. (Of course, if your pastor runs out of time, there's nothing wrong with him or her reading someone else's work, as long as the source is clearly and openly acknowledged.) But let's never forget, or forget to give thanks for, the debt your preacher owes to all those others who proclaim the same Word, driven by the same Spirit, in service of the same Lord.

Seriously, there's only One who is truly original. ■



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

I'm supposed to preach. But I have nothing prepared and nothing to say.

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A Valentine's Embrace

I **T WAS A VALENTINE'S** Day I'd never forget—not that my dating career had given it much competition. I was a sophomore in college, and my prospects of finding a girlfriend seemed as bleak as the chill gray sky of West Michigan in early February. So when my friend Matt invited me over to his dorm room I was happy for the company.

I'd met Matt the first semester of our freshman year. We were both biology majors and looked the part. Tall, lanky, and slender-faced with prominent noses, sometimes we were mistaken for brothers. He was from Canada, where his dad was a Christian school teacher. I was from northern Michigan, where my parents were dairy farmers. But we both loved science. And *Star Trek*. So he overlooked the fact that I had never heard of Tim Hortons, and I forgave his inability to name the four stomachs of a Holstein. We became fast friends.

But this day something was different. As we took a seat on the couch, there was a weight on his heart as heavy as the wintry sky.

He started out with a question. He wondered what I thought of homosexuals. That question should have cued me into a deeper pastoral concern. It didn't. After my convoluted answer, somehow he felt safe enough to go on. But his next words were slower in coming, settling in the room as quietly as a feather: "I'm gay." With the disclosure came the painful back story: The terrible, lonely questions as a boy. The terror of unwelcome feelings and unspoken desires. The unanswered prayers at church. The deep shame.

As he finished, we sat in silence.

As Matt spoke, I had been racking my brain for words. Words to make the pain go away. Words about how his attraction for men did not change God's unconditional love for him. Words to remind him that his sexual identity did not trump his core identity as a child of God. Words to assure him of our continued friendship despite the difference in sexual orientation. In the silence, I looked into my soul and found no such words. In the stillness, I heard God's whispered call to action that still echoes. Taking a deep breath of obedience, I asked my hurting friend if

we could boldly go where our friendship had never gone before: I asked if I could give him a hug.

Looking back, that holy moment in a dorm room was not the Valentine's Day I would have chosen. There was no chocolate or flowers, no candlelit Hallmark romance. No girl. But that moment pointed to a deeper kind of love. For Valentine's Day was soon to give way to the season of Lent and a bigger story of passion. In the pain, Matt and I found ourselves under the cross, with a Savior who in his loving came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). In that simple gesture of friendship, we were reminded of a God who did reach out with a nail-pierced embrace big enough for us all. ■



John Lee is pastor of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa.



In a world of too much information
about almost everything,
bodily practices remind the willing
that faith is a way of life.

—BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR

Do We Need to Change Our Church Order?

IF I did not preach with unbelievers in my mind at least some of the time, I was not living up to my calling.



THESE DAYS, many preachers and members of the Christian Reformed Church seem to believe that evangelism is not the task of the church at Sunday worship. But how can that be right?

The Church Order of the CRC says: “A minister of the Word serving as a pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. . . . The minister, with the elders, shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism” (Article 12). The minister *engages in and promotes the work of evangelism*. In fact, the Church Order goes even further. It boldly asserts: “The calling of the minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ.”

What does it mean to “gather in . . . the members of the church of Jesus Christ?” I know the Church Order does not explicitly state how to go about this task. Perhaps a sign out on the front lawn

stating the time of the worship services would be sufficient. In that case, perhaps that could also qualify for building up the members of the church. Unlikely! According to the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, it means to gather as in evangelism: “The minister of the Word, along with the members of the congregation, must reach out into all the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that unbelievers may be won for Christ. The preaching of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, is the means by which this may be done.”

Maybe I’m just dense, but for all my life as a preacher in the Christian Reformed Church—I’m now retired—I have thought that if I did not preach with unbelievers in my mind at least some of the time, I was not living up to my calling as a Christian Reformed minister. The 2011 *Yearbook* records that in 2010, out of 1,084 churches in our denomination, 604 had no evangelism growth. Do we need to change our Church Order, or do we need to change our thinking and practice of worship and evangelism? ■



Larry Van Essen is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.



Unhealthy Dichotomy

Joel Phillips’s article (“An Unhealthy Dichotomy,” December 2012) [suggests] that there is a struggle between faith and science. This is false. The struggle is between two different faiths and between two different ways of doing science. God created science, and he gave us faith in Christ [and] in his Word, so it is impossible for there to be a struggle between faith and science. I agree with Phillips that looking at scientific evidence without God does not make sense. But the raw evolutionary theory tries to make God and Scripture irrelevant. It is not necessary for medical students to assume evolution in order to be good medical students. Genetics does not require evolution in order to be good science.

—John Zylstra
Fairview, Alberta

The Ring

I experienced an unexpected emotional moment when I saw B.J. Huizenga’s “The Ring” (November 2012). I’m B.J.’s eldest daughter and I remember this ring my dad wore so faithfully; it’s a part of our family history. My memory of Dad’s reaction to this reassurance of God’s hand has invigorated my own assurance of God working in my life.

—Jacalyn Wood
Grand Rapids, Mich.

TTERS

“The Ring” by B.J. Huizenga brought back many memories of Rev. Bartel N. Huizenga when he served Akron Christian Reformed Church. Sandra played the piano for our worship services and had a close-up view of the ring when seated at the piano next to the pulpit. We fondly recall Rev. Bart’s stories about his time in New Mexico, his explanation of what a mesa looked like, and his recollections of his good friend Scott Redhouse. Just yesterday I reread my Bible notes on Rev. Huizenga’s 1989 sermon on the three parts of the Heidelberg Catechism, one of many meaningful sermons. Thanks for a beautiful article.

—Fred and Sandra Wybenga
Tallmadge, Ohio

Arm in Arm

Thank you to *The Banner* and to Rev. Harry Kuperus for sharing his vision of an inclusive church (“Arm in Arm,” November 2012). I hope Kuperus and I live long enough to see it.

—Marlene Bergsma
Wellandport, Ontario

We personally knew the pastor and his wife referred to in Rev. Kuperus’s article “Arm in Arm.” He married us and baptized our twin sons. In the years following, we would learn that one of our sons is gay. Since then, I have been on a personal mission to explore and discover who my son really is. Who would make such a choice and be exposed to verbal abuse, threats, condemnation, and possible alienation from family, friends, and church?

As Christ loves all of us with an unconditional love and “just as we are,” we love each of our children unconditionally “just as they are.” Sexuality is not a choice but is as much of who we are as the color of our skin.

The Bible teaches that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23); we are called to love and not to judge (Matt. 7:1-2).

Recognizing the eternal importance of seeking and loving God above all else, the church should respect and include all people regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation. A person’s church should be one of his or her most welcoming and affirming places. It is our prayer that in our lifetime we can witness unconditional love, acceptance, and affirmation of all people.

—Abe and Tena Horneman
Leduc, Alberta

Growing Business, Healthy Planet?

I was surprised by some of the comments in the article “Can a Growing Business Sustain a Healthy Planet?” (November 2012) such as the one that students “strongly suggest” that business motives operating in conflict with environmental stewardship principles “cannot be the case” as our society “no longer tolerates such activity”; “in today’s economy businesses would quickly lose sales if they overtly spoiled or misused the environment.” Further, “businesspeople they know realize the importance of sustainability and want to live in a world where people honor their stewardship responsibilities.”

These seem rather naive statements to me given that, for example, for years many manufacturers have continued to mine and burn coal in ways that are harmful to our land and our environment. The recently adopted synodical report on climate change provides many similar examples.

I am sure that many businesspeople believe as stated above; I wish it were not so altruistic to believe that most do.

—Gary Mulder
Springfield, Va.

God’s Economy

When Mr. Kollenhoven (“God’s Economy or Ours?” November 2012) decries those iPhones and big houses and other items I wonder, Who gets employed to *make* those items? Does wealth just grow on trees? I am reminded of the deacon in my church who works as a carpenter on one of those “big” homes. He commented how very grateful he is for wealthy people keeping him employed! The reality is that rich people buy things to keep us less fortunate working. Those iPhones keep people working so they can feed themselves versus having some “do-gooder” giving them a handout.

—Pastor Doug Quenzer
Ellison Bay, Wisc.

Why is it an either/or proposition (“God’s Economy or Ours?” November 2012)? God didn’t give those commands to the Israelites to starve people but so that the soil could be replenished and be able to bear fruit in the long term. Lots of organic farmers have reverted to and are applying those principles nowadays—sometimes without even knowing they’re in the Bible—because industrial farming is not environmentally friendly.

If we have to choose between God’s economy and ours, I’d say God’s anytime. We claim he is all-wise and omniscient in church on Sunday and implement practices that say the opposite on Monday, and then we want to preach to unbelievers about him? We’d better clean up our act first.

—Michèle Gyselink
Montreal, Quebec

[MORE ONLINE](#)

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Visser Reinstated at Belleville's Maranatha CRC

In early January, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church announced that it had lifted the suspension of Rev. John Visser, which had been imposed by Synod 2012, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. The Board acts on behalf of synod between meetings.

Visser is the senior pastor of Maranatha CRC in Belleville, Ontario.

Synod 2012 imposed the suspension after finding that Visser had abused his office by soliciting or allowing a counselee and her husband to invest in companies he and his family owned.

Synod also directed the council of Maranatha CRC to contract

for immediate and ongoing oversight of the healing ministry at the church after concerns were raised about the safety of that ministry and breaches of confidentiality related to it.

Maranatha's assistant pastor, Dave Botting, said that the church had contracted with Phillip Hamberg of Grand Rapids, Mich., for oversight of the church's healing ministry. Hamberg is a therapist and the author of *Attach Me If You Can*, published by Essence Publishing, a company owned by the Visser family.

Botting said Hamberg's recommendations focused on ministry structures and procedures. As a result, Botting will be the staff



Rev. John Visser

supervisor of the restoration ministry instead of Visser; as supervisor he will report directly to the church council. »

British Columbia Church Debates Northern Gateway Pipeline

West Coast Community Christian Reformed Church in Delta, British Columbia, is an emerging church of about 60 members situated where the mighty Fraser River empties into the Pacific Ocean.

In that setting, pastor Jim Berry wasn't afraid to take on the biggest local environmental issue of them all: the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline, which would bring oil from Alberta to the west coast of

British Columbia for shipping to other parts of the world. "The proposed pipeline is front and center in the minds and hearts of many folks in British Columbia," said Berry.

Berry led a month-long sermon series on social justice issues related to the proposed pipeline. "We looked at legitimate economic issues as well as legitimate environmental issues," Berry explained. "As a result, we committed to doing more locally to care for our environment and to



Members of West Coast Community CRC clean up a local beach.

stay abreast of such issues provincially and nationally."

The sermon series motivated church members to get involved in local environmental stewardship projects.

"There are differences of opinion about the conclusion of how to sustain a viable economy as well as a healthy environment, but the dialogue was excellent," Berry said.

—Tracey Yan

Other recommendations include weekly ministry team meetings and weekly consultations between Hamberg and the ministry team via Skype.

"Rev. Visser will be involved as part of the restoration ministry team," Botting said. "He will be . . . subject to all of the policies and procedures of the ministry."

Some members of the Maranatha church community are disappointed that the assessment processes did not pursue their concerns about the safety of the healing ministry more vigorously. One of those members is Theo Brunsting.

"We noted that the decision to lift [Visser's] suspension was based exclusively on information provided by the council of Maranatha CRC," he said. "This is very troublesome in that a major bone of contention in the past has been a general lack of transparency on the part of council and leadership."

Brunsting also noted several concerns about the consultant hired to provide ongoing oversight of Maranatha's healing ministry. "The person hired by Maranatha has had a book published by a company owned by the Visser family, which raises a legitimate concern about independence," he said. "The consultant does not . . . even live in Canada. We wonder if this really amounts to 'independent, ongoing oversight,' as called for by synod."

Brunsting said that for many in the community this matter is far from resolved.

—Gayla R. Postma

GEMS Gets New Director



Kathryn Miller is the new executive director of GEMS.

GEMS, the girls' club active in many Christian Reformed churches, will have a new executive director on March 1.

Kathryn Miller comes to GEMS with leadership experience in both the non-profit and corporate sectors. She has also served as a missionary and a rehabilitative coordinator in Thailand.

Miller said she first sensed God calling her to mentor and disciple young women this past summer. "God is always faithful," she said. "His faithfulness is what has brought me to the GEMS ministry, and my heart is overflowing."

Miller will succeed Jan Boone, who has served as executive director for the past 18 years. "GEMS has given me the opportunity to intentionally live out what it means to be a Titus 2 woman—to teach and train the younger women and girls who come behind me the things of God," Boone said.

Some of Boone's contributions to GEMS include guiding the ministry through a name change from Calvinettes, starting a weeklong summer camp for early teen girls, and expanding the international presence of the ministry to countries such as Zambia. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Daina Kraai

Prayer Partners in Grand Haven Cross Generations

For the last two years, Sheila Warners has met regularly with her prayer partner from Second Reformed Christian Church in Grand Haven, Mich. What makes their partnership unusual is that her partner is 9-year-old Karlee French.

"Karlee is such a delightful little girl, and she has a heart for people," said Warners, who described their first meeting at a coffee shop, ordering hot chocolate and talking about prayer requests. "I have a wonderful friend in Karlee."

This prayer partnership is part of Second CRC's effort to encourage intergenerational prayer and support.

"We did not want it to be just a one-way prayer responsibility, so we made it prayer partners, where both adults and students are asked to pray for one another," said coor-

dinator Steve Marotti, stressing that this is not a mentoring ministry.

Students from third grade through high school are paired with an adult in the church. Some pairs stay together for years; others switch. A few times a year all the pairs get together at church for an activity.

Alyssa Koetje, 12, has been partnered with Norma Schuitema since Alyssa was 9. Since Schuitema's grandchildren do not live nearby, she attends many of Alyssa's school and sporting events, and they remember each other's birthdays.

"I really like the Prayer Partner Program," said Alyssa. "For me, it's almost like having another grandmother to do things with. I also like how I can pray and do things for Mrs. Schuitema, as well as her for me."

—Daina Kraai

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Leonard Bossenbroek
1920 – 2012

Rev. Leonard Bossenbroek, 92, a man who "walked the talk," was solid in his faith, a gifted teacher of the Word, and a fine musician.

Bossenbroek began ministry in 1952 in Harrison, S.D. Subsequently he served Ocheydan (Iowa) CRC, Moline (Mich.) CRC, and Faith Community CRC in Wyoming, Mich. He retired in 1984.

A deeply pious man, he made sure that what he preached from the pulpit he modeled for his family and congregation. His strength lay in the teaching ministry. Leading Bible studies and teaching catechism classes were close to his heart.

He was a faithful visitor of the sick and elderly and a promoter of Christian education and missions. An accomplished violinist, he loved classical music.

Bossenbroek's wife, Sarella, preceded him in death a month earlier. They are survived by four children and their spouses, 18 grandchildren, and 27 great-grandchildren. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

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



Michigan Church Brightens Valentine's Day

(L-r) Elijah Augustin, Marcia Gears, and Twylla Nieboer are among volunteers at Ridgewood Christian Reformed Church in Jenison, Mich., who prepare colorful Valentine's treat bags for members who can't leave their homes. Volunteers deliver the bags just before February 14th, visiting if the recipient's health permits. "People light up with a smile. They're always surprised and happy to see me," said Ray Schat, one of the volunteers.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Michigan Church Offers Household Items for Lent

Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., has a long-standing Lenten tradition of collecting donations for a local cause. For many years, congregation members donated money to a different cause each year.

One year Sue Hollemans, ministry coordinator at the church, decided that this was "kind of boring." So she got creative: in recent years the congregation has donated equipment to start the church's community garden and "buckets of love" filled with cleaning supplies for a local ministry supporting families.



Fuller Avenue members Paul, Pam, and Polly Slotsema, Jonah Phelps, Jacob Guikema-Bode, Cristina Garcia, and Bekki Landman bring Lenten donations.

In 2012, congregation members brought lightly used household items each week to donate to New 2 You Shoppe, a local boutique thrift store whose proceeds reduce tuition at Grand Rapids Christian Schools. This cause is especially close to the congregation because the thrift store is fully staffed every Wednes-

day by volunteers from Fuller Avenue CRC.

"This has helped my kids understand Lent," said Marci Phelps, whose children, ages 13, 11, and 6, chose which toys to donate. "We revisit it weekly as a family."

—Noah J. K. Kruis

Write for The Banner!

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

Worship Swap in Texas

On a Sunday in November, unfamiliar faces met churchgoers at Peace Community Christian Reformed Church in Houston, Tex. Absent were the faces of their typical worship team. The pastor, Dave Horner, was also missing.

Instead, worship leaders from Sunrise Community Christian

Reformed Church, Austin, Tex., and Rev. Mark Hilbelink led worship.

All were participants in the annual Worship Swap. Instead of just exchanging pastors, for the past three years Sunrise Community and other area Christian Reformed churches have been swapping pastors and worship teams.



They travel to each other's churches the night before and then lead worship in the morning.

"It's basically just an expanded version of a pulpit exchange," said Hilbelink.

Hilbelink sees huge dividends from the experience. "Taking the bands and letting them experience another church really helps them grow as leaders. They get to see some new things we could try and some things to be thankful for about our church. Everyone agrees the time in the van and staying overnight have been some of the most transformative times we've ever spent together."

—Sarah Boonstra

Sunrise Community's worship team at a neighboring church.



Twenty New Jersey teens on a retreat.

Young Men “Taken” at Camp

Read the word “taken” and you might think of something that’s been stolen. But that’s not the message Orlando Bolan and Josh Dornbos of New City Kids wanted twenty young men to walk away with when they planned a guys’ retreat just days after Superstorm Sandy plowed through their New Jersey neighborhood. The retreat’s focus was “Taken”.

“We talked about how God takes us in spite of our sin, and that he wants to take us places we may not have imagined,” Dornbos explained.

“There is a lot of brokenness here,” he said, describing the area where New City Kids is located. Many of the attendees are without a father figure; some are the only male in their homes. Many struggle with anger, shame, and the lure of gangs, making the message of God’s love for them difficult to grasp.

The retreat was not fancy. “There were no bells and whistles,”

said Rev. Trevor Rubingh, executive director of New City. “No focus on sports. No music. No sailboats. Just a promise to engage with God,” which is exactly what the group of 14- to 18-year-olds was looking for.

Greg Nelson, one of the chaplains for the retreat, said that it’s hard to summarize the impact of

the retreat on the young men, but he saw them build relationships with each other. “They realized that being in a relationship with God is ‘real,’ and now they are using that relationship as a model with each other.”

—Callie R. Feyen

25%

Goal set by Synod 2011 for hiring people of ethnic minorities to fill senior denominational leadership positions.

February 3 is designated for Race Relations offerings.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Vernon Luchies

1927 – 2012

Rev. Vernon Luchies, 85, was a humble servant of his Sender and fervent witness of the gospel, always helpful and hospitable.

Luchies served six Christian Reformed churches: Wright CRC in Kanawha, Iowa; Hope CRC in Rapid City, S.D.; Terrace (British Columbia) CRC; Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich.; West Sayville (N.Y.) CRC; and Appalachia Reach Out in Inez, Ky. He retired in 1989.

Luchies and his wife were generous with their limited material means, never hesitating to take in people who were poor. Vernon was vocally gifted and regularly sang a few hymn lines as he preached. His deeply personal relationship with Jesus was the source of his love for evangelism. His congregations also remember him as a problem-solver, both spiritual and those of a more practical nature.

Luchies was predeceased by his wife, Wilma, in 2011. He is survived by four children and their spouses, 12 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

Cyclists Gear Up to Cross the Continent



GAYLA R. POSTMA

Signing up to spend his summer on the seat of a bicycle made sense to Rev. John Noordhof, a pastor from Williamsburg, Ontario. He's traveled extensively around the world and seen firsthand the reality of poverty, from Haiti to Zambia. This summer he'll pedal from Los Angeles to New York City to raise awareness and money to fight poverty.

Noordhof is one of more than 150 cyclists who have signed up so far to pedal 3,900 miles (6,276 km) in nine weeks for the Sea to Sea 2013 Bike Tour.

The tour is hosted by the Reformed Church in America, Partners Worldwide, and World Renew.

All funds will go to programs that alleviate poverty locally and internation-

Cyclists in the 2008 tour

ally. The 2008 tour sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church raised \$1.5 million.

"We have been able to make a difference in fighting poverty, locally and abroad, before. But there is so much more to do. The needs today are greater," said Claire Elgersma, chair of the tour's steering committee.

—Gayla R. Postma



Minnie Mulder, left, reads a book of psalms aloud to fellow centenarian Gertrude Tesselink.

Pair of Centenarians Share the Bible

Although there are plenty of Bible apps and Bible DVDs, the experience of listening to a friend read Bible passages aloud is hard to match.

For several months now, Minnie Mulder, who turned 101 on December 28, has read aloud to Gertrude Tesselink, who celebrated her 103rd birthday on December 10. Both women are residents of Good Samaritan Society in Corsica, S.D. Mulder, a lifelong member of New Holland (S.D.) Christian Reformed Church, lives next door to Tesselink, a member of Corsica (S.D.) Christian Reformed Church.

Reading has been a passion for Mulder that she has carried through her entire life.

Mulder said that while Proverbs 3:5-6 holds special meaning to her, so many passages in the Bible are precious. Tesselink, meanwhile, often quotes Psalm 118:24: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Melissa Holtrop

Ministry Helps Women Before and After Abortions

When Lisa (not her real name) had an abortion at age 17, it was as if something had been stripped away, she said.

Now 34, Lisa has found healing and hope through a Bible study and retreats with Garden of Hope in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"We as post-abortive women can find hope that Jesus is hanging onto our babies until we can see them again," she said. "You can't imagine the healing that comes over you."

In addition to counseling for women who have had abortions, Garden of Hope helps women who are considering having an abortion. Supporters pray for these women and encourage those who are at the clinic for an abortion to reconsider their decision.

With support from donors and local Christian Reformed churches, Garden of Hope has bought vehicles, purchased baby furniture,

and paid rent and other bills for women who choose not to have an abortion.

Lisa said there is work to be done for women who have had abortions. "I want post-abortive women to know that they are allowed to grieve their aborted babies, they are allowed

to surrender their secret, and they are allowed to begin the healing journey and not be paralyzed by their choice," she said.

—Ryan Struyk

A Garden of Hope billboard



POST-ABORTION COUNSELING

GARDEN of HOPE.com

Michelle Nieviadomy and Harold Roscher of the Edmonton Native Healing Centre listen during the reconciliation event at John Calvin CRC.



MIKE HOGETERP

Reconciliation Matters to Maritime Churches

Residential school survivor Isabelle Knockwood led a sharing circle with participants from Canadian Maritime churches and members of the community during a reconciliation event at John Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Truro, Nova Scotia.

"It Matters to Me" was a follow-up event to the 2011 Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission stop in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the general public was invited to hear stories of residential school survivors as part of healing and reconciliation.

Mike Hogeterp of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue in Ottawa said that "people were listening deeply and respectfully and resonated with the call to reconciliation more deeply." He said that the CRC Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee and the Centre for Public Dialogue hope to support similar events across the country. "We would like to encourage all Canadians to embrace our responsibility for reconciliation," he said.

—Brenda Visser

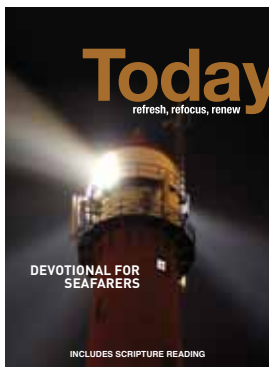
Canadian Chaplains Produce New Devotional for Seafarers

Christian Reformed chaplains working in the ports of Vancouver and Montreal have partnered with ReFrame Media, the English-language ministry of Back to God Ministries International (BGTMI), to produce a seafarers' edition of *Today*, a new devotional to encourage seafarers far from home. BGTMI is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

Jason Zuidema of the Ministry to Seafarers Centre in Montreal wrote the devotions specifically for seafarers using familiar concepts and words. Each devotional has the Scripture reading printed out in full.

The format is similar to the *Today* devotional booklet that graces the homes of many CRC members in North America.

—Brenda Visser



Devotional for Seafarers

Pen Pals for Nearly 80 Years

Marian Donkerbrook and Gonny vanBuuren have a pen pal friendship spanning continents, decades, and even a war.

The correspondence began in 1934 and continued even during World War II. "We didn't write to each other for about three years, from 1942-45," said Donkerbrook, "but then [Gonny] wrote me to say that she was all right."

Since then they have written each other three or four times a year, always through postal mail.

Donkerbrook turned 89 on September 3, while vanBuuren turned 90 on August 15.

The friends have met just once, in Holland, in 1998. They spent five days together, traveling to the town of Donkerbroek, among other locales.

"My love for her and her love for me, that's what has kept us together all of these years," Donkerbrook said. "And our faith is the same. It's like I'm going to church with her next Sunday like I have my entire life."

Donkerbrook attends San Jose (Calif.) Christian Reformed Church while vanBuuren attends a Reformed Church in Amsterdam. [MORE ONLINE](#)



Gonny vanBuuren



Marian Donkerbrook

—Melissa Holtrop

British Columbia School Pioneers Electronic Toy Recycling

While most kids were thinking about the new toys and gadgets they wanted for Christmas, students at John Knox Christian School in Burnaby, British Columbia, searched their closets for electronics they were ready to part with.

The school is the first in Canada to pilot a project for recycling electronic toys, from old gaming devices to broken remote-control vehicles and talking stuffed animals that children have outgrown. John Knox is partnering with Genesis Recycling Ltd. in Langley. Yvonne DeWith and her grade 3 class had the opportunity to tour the Genesis plant and see firsthand how toys are dismantled and sorted into various components that are reused or recycled.

Student Seth Visser of New Westminster Christian Reformed

Church said, "The recycling program changed my perspective and made me think about what will last and what will break down."

Classmate Flora Wong added, "I learned I should not just get toys that wear out because the stores just want you to pay more money."

—Tracey Yan



ARUSHA VEET

John Knox students collect broken electronic toys for recycling.

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Is *The Hobbit* a Christian Film?

Travel along, if you dare, with Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*—either J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved 1937 novel or the first installment of Peter Jackson's film trilogy based on the book, which opened in theaters in December.

Either way you will essentially be traveling in a world constructed on Christian principles, says Devin Brown, professor of English at Asbury University, a Christian liberal arts college near Lexington, Ky.



PHOTO COURTESY THE HOBBIT

Ian McKellen as the wizard Gandalf the Grey in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.

That's not to say that *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are explicitly Christian tales. Jane Chance, professor emerita of English at Rice University and editor of *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*, said there are definite undertones of

Christian theology throughout the Tolkien books, but you won't find that on the surface.

Tolkien "did not feel you should be explicitly allegorical or Christian," Chance said. "That doesn't mean you can't create a Christian subtext. That's what he does throughout his writing."

Churches under Fire for Using Gun Classes as Outreach

A few dozen churches in the U.S. offer concealed carry certification classes as a way to reach out to non-Christians and attract new members.

But in the wake of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in which a gunman killed 20 children and six adults, such classes are coming under sharp criticism from fellow Christians.

Richard Cizik, formerly a top official at the National Association of Evangelicals and now head of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, said he is concerned about churches using weapons training as a means to reach non-Christians. "This seems to be an ethically suspect message," he said. "The gospel should be 'Put your faith in Christ.' This seems to be 'Put your faith in Glock.' The church has always used a variety of methods for drawing people in. However, I do think there are plenty of organizations more suitable that could be doing the training."

—Religion News Service

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

Sports Accomplishments

Houston (British Columbia) Christian School made history when it fielded a coed team in the provincial boys' volleyball championships because the school did not have enough students to field both girls' and boys' teams. The school moved up from its 12th-place ranking to ninth, quite a feat for a school with only four students in Grade 12.

Langley (British Columbia) Christian School's boys' volleyball team took home gold in its division, adding to the silver and three bronze medals it brought home in the past seven years.

Eli Tolkamp of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church was named most valuable player of the tournament.

Ten students from Rehoboth (N.M.) Christian School received All-Star honors in four sports from the *Navajo Times*. Those honored were Jordan Ide, Jennifer Lewis, Shannon Begay, Tyrell Natewa, Caleb Bia, Danny Bremer-Bennett, Tyra West, Destiny Laughlin, Tanya Watchman, and Taylor Begay.

Caleb Bia was also named Player of the Year for boys' soccer.

—Tracey Yan and Shashi DeHaan

For more on these stories and for photographs, please visit thebanner.org.

Cupcake Wars Raise Money for Mental Health

Students at Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, Mich., baked 4,200 cupcakes to raise awareness of mental health and teen suicide.

Unity's Cupcake Wars raised \$4,000 for the Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan.

The campaign grew out of adversity after a Unity student took her own life earlier last fall.

Student organizer Nana Temple said she now thinks about what she's going to say before speaking.

"You might not think what you say has that much input on someone, but it's that one word that can make or break someone's day," Temple said.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Greg Chandler



Unity Christian High's Cupcake Wars raised \$4,000 for suicide awareness.



We've Been Married That Long?

JUST MARRIED; TWO KIDS AND A DOG;
EMPTY NEST; RETIREMENT

POETS, SONGWRITERS, and storytellers have long celebrated, questioned, and agonized over love. More recently scientists have begun to *study* love. These scientists have been making amazing discoveries that can help us stay married through all the different stages of our lives. They have discovered the foundational importance of “secure attachment.”

It's All about Attachment

The idea that a safe, secure, nurturing attachment is important first occurred to

scientists about 50 years ago. Shortly after World War II, Dr. John Bowlby noticed that hospitalized children who were prevented from seeing their parents for extended periods of time failed to thrive. Children really can't stand to be alone.

But it isn't just children who can't stand to be alone. Neither can adults—which is the reason why solitary confinement in prisons is such a terrible punishment. Scripture proclaims this insight as early as Genesis 2, where God declares that it isn't good for Adam—and by extension, any human—to be alone. It turns out that, when it comes to marriage, secure attachment is more important than

common interests, great communication skills, fair fighting, and the ability to be self-sufficient.

Think of it this way: underlying every marital exchange and every marital challenge is some version of the basic question “Are you there for me?” Sue Johnson, in her book about adult love and attachment (see sidebar on p. 18), lists these versions of that basic question:

Do I matter to you?

Do you approve of me?

Do you have my back?

Will you come when I call?

When spouses behave in ways that sound like “yes” to these core questions, »

they stand shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, and better tolerate the stresses of life, including the inevitable challenges that being in a relationship brings. But

more pain than those women. The women who experienced the least amount of pain, by far, were those whose hands were being held by a beloved partner. A secure attach-

a significant other. So when couples argue about finances or sex or who does what in the house, it is counterintuitive to think that the real issue might be something deeper and more profound.

Marital conflicts are often, at root, about some form of attachment distress. They are a result of emotional distance. Spouses are really asking, “Can I count on you?” “Will you rely on me?” Understanding that helps couples be curious about how it is that they might, often inadvertently, be causing emotional insecurity in the other.

Underlying every marital exchange is some version of the basic question “Are you there for me?”

when the answer sounds more like “no,” unease, uncertainty, and suspicion set in.

The rugged individualism of the Marlboro Man and the solitary power of the Virginia Slims women (remember them?) are actually bad for our health, longevity, self-esteem, and, yes, even our earning potential. Adults in nurturing and emotionally responsive relationships with other adults are happier and healthier, live longer, have less depression and anxiety, recover from heart attacks faster, have shorter hospital stays, and even, on average, make more money. It’s important to note here that marriage is not the only place where such relationships are formed. Singles, widows, widowers, or divorced folks can also enjoy lives that are happy and fulfilling. These folks have built secure attachments in community with others, including their family, their friends, and their church.

Brain Science Supports the Need for Attachment

Contemporary scientists are finding corroborating evidence for every person’s need for attachment. In one study, Virginia researcher Jim Coan put women inside an MRI machine and explained that they would receive small electric shocks. He asked the women to rate their pain, and he also measured their pain objectively by watching the women’s brains in the MRI machine. Women who were alone when they were shocked reported more pain than those whose hands were being held by strangers, and their brains registered

ment gives people the emotional stamina they need to face bigger challenges.

Similar studies by neuroscientists have discovered that emotional rejection—the opposite of secure attachment—and physical pain are coded identically in the brain. In other words, the pain of rejection is not a metaphor. People really feel it.

The bottom line is that the kind of love that will last for a lifetime, from early marriage through the parenting years, empty nesting, and beyond, is love rooted in secure attachment. It isn’t that good conflict resolution skills and frequent, great sex don’t matter at all. It’s just that love in each of these phases of marriage is rooted in secure attachment: a deeply felt emotional bond of safety and security with another person—your safe haven, your immovable rock in the changing river of time.

When Couples Lose Sight of Attachment

Of course, even securely attached couples mess up from time to time. Misses are inevitable. No one can be emotionally responsive and accessible all the time. The real trouble begins, however, when we fail to realize that the emotional core of many of our conflicts are not so much about the presenting issue—the dishes or finances or whatever. The core of the conflict is really about that emotional disconnect.

As the Marlboro and Virginia Slims cigarette ads suggest, our culture teaches us to prize independence. By implication, we may feel ashamed of vulnerability and our need for emotional connection with

Refocus on Attachment

The operative word here is *inadvertent*. Couples who are securely attached understand and sense deeply that fights or distance are about loneliness and vulnerability, not about intentional slights or misses. Securely attached couples are not perfect, of course, and sometimes they too get lost for a time in surface arguments. But eventually they get to the level of tending to each

Digging Deeper

Books



Canadian Sue Johnson has written a very accessible book for couples about the attachment approach to adult love relationships

called *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*. You can read an excerpt at www.holdmetight.net.



Archibald Hart and Sharon Hart Morris are Christian authors who have written about marriage from an attachment perspective. Their book is *Safe Haven Marriage: Building a Relationship You Want to Come Home To*.

Internet

Want to hear Professor Jim Coan talk about his research with women in MRI machines? Go to YouTube and search for “Jim Coan.” Googling “physical pain and emotional rejection” will pull up numerous articles reporting on this research.

Mike and Linda's Story

Mike and Linda have been married for 10 years. Mike balances work deadlines and kids' soccer games. Linda juggles a full-time job, parenting responsibilities, and a passion for community theater. Lately they've been arguing a lot. After the arguments, silence and sadness set in for both of them.

Until recently, relationship books and most marriage counselors would have taught Mike and Linda to fight fair, plan date nights, and seek out common interests. These approaches suggest that fixing relationships is a matter of getting the *technique* of marriage right. And it is not as if technique doesn't matter at all. But these days, marriage therapists are more likely to help Mike and Linda look at their attachment needs and longings. Here's how that works.

Mike often comes home from work tired and grouchy. Underneath his fatigue and grouchiness, Mike is worried that he can't do it all. He wonders how good a husband and father he really is. Mike needs reassurance. Reassurance is an attachment need.

But Mike doesn't ask for reassurance. Like many of us, Mike has been taught that attachment needs are a sign of weakness. So instead he becomes quiet. To Linda, Mike seems distant and uninterested in her. She tries to snap him out of it by snapping at him. It is a moment of disconnection.

Moments of disconnection happen in every relationship. What happens next can make all the difference in the world for Mike and Linda's relationship. If they can

stop the withdrawing and snapping, and instead take a moment to reach out tenderly to the other with a touch, a look, or a word that conveys something like, "Hey, let's stop this negativity. We're here for each other, remember?" they're on the way to repair and reconnection.

These days, though, Mike responds to Linda with defensiveness and anger—and Linda's snappiness of late is indeed something to avoid! Feelings of rejection and panic set in. Losing connection like this endangers Mike's sense of security and safety. He further retreats into himself and into his laptop. Linda responds by spinning out a negative interpretation in her head: "He always comes home out of sorts. What's the matter with him, anyway? He's just a miserable man to be around." She snaps again. Underneath her snappiness and anger Linda also is feeling lonely. Mike *does* shut her out with his fatigued face and laptop.

If Mike were in an MRI machine while having these feelings, the amygdala, the part of his brain highly sensitive to threat, would light up in a nanosecond. So would Linda's. Both feel threatened. The trouble is, a brain with a highly charged amygdala doesn't take the time to think; it just reacts. And it reacts in one of only two ways: by running from danger, leaving it far behind, or by fighting it into submission, thus taming the danger.

Mike and Linda are triggering each other. Mike's dismissiveness or defensiveness suggests to Linda that her feelings don't really matter. Mattering is an attachment need.

So, Linda, who yearns to matter to Mike, insists that yes, it does matter that Mike is so distant and grouchy. To Mike, she looks dangerous. Since his need for safety is not being honored in that moment, he protects himself by minimizing—running from—her concerns. Mike perceives that his laptop is safer than Linda. Both Mike and Linda end up feeling lonely and isolated and unhappy. And lately this negative pattern has become so entrenched in Mike and Linda's relationship that even little concerns set off this damaging cycle.

When couples don't take the time or don't know how to repair moments of disconnection, these moments eventually take on their own momentum, and the couple is trapped in a never-ending negative cycle that unravels their attachment.

Fortunately Mike and Linda sought help. The negative cycle they were caught in when they called had been going on for quite a few years. Each was feeling very wounded and on guard. It took patience and difficult honesty for them to look at how their arguments went deeper than the surface issues. But they persevered. Today Mike and Linda still find themselves in stuck places once in a while, but they're much better able than they used to be in slowing things down and taking the time to really connect emotionally before going on to tackle the problem of the day.

other's core fears of abandonment and disapproval—fears that haunt all of us on a deeply spiritual level.

The God of Attachment

The Christian faith is big on attachment. In the beginning, Adam's isolation and loneliness turned to attachment joy when he exclaimed, "Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone."

Jesus' agonized words from the cross were a cry of the most profound attachment distress the world has ever heard:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" God could not let that cry go unanswered; three days later God repaired the attachment by raising Jesus up from death. There is even a sense in which the unity of the three persons of the Trinity—a unity so profound that we speak of one God—is a model for human attachment. We are, after all, God's imagebearers.

When just-married couples strive to emulate that God-like attachment, they can look forward to staying married a long

time. And when those who've already been married through retirement tell their friends and grandchildren what actually kept them married *that* long, they will echo themes of emotional safety and security—stories of secure attachment. ■



Irene Oudyk-Suk, MSW, RSW, is a couples and sex therapist in Toronto (couplesinstep.com). Irene is a member of Lawrence Park United Church.

Prayer Changes Things

Prayer can take many forms arising from the needs of our hearts. In the end, though, prayer is a conversation with God.

Sometimes prayer involves asking God to provide for our needs. Answers to prayer come in startling, miraculous ways, showing evidence of God's care for his people.

Here are some stories that illustrate this ongoing conversation and God's responses to the prayers of his people in the Christian Reformed Church.



Pastor Elihu Metallus, foreman, and Edouarnis Estivil, project manager, measure the foundation for the new Jacquet church in Haiti.

You add.
God multiplies.

For seven years, members of Jacquet Christian Reformed Church in Haiti prayed to God for land to build a church.

Last August, the church broke ground for a new building—a building made possible through God’s work in events, members, and other organizations.

The Jacquet church began in 1987 as a church plant in Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital. Five years later it moved to the Jacquet area of the city. The church met in the second floor of the pastor’s house, which he had built specifically for that purpose.

As the years passed, more and more people began coming to the church. They squeezed into every available space, crouching in corners and even standing outside.

As the church grew, the people began asking God to provide a new place to meet.

“The prayer request was basically for a miracle because the high cost of land in Jacquet was far beyond the reach of the financial resources of the congregation,” said Zach King, a Christian

Pastor Delpeche of Jacquet CRC rests from his labors.



Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary in the region.

In faith, church members began setting aside money for a new church property. Every offering not used for diaconal work went toward the project. Even the pastor’s salary was redirected to the church fund.

At the same time, an organization called SON-BEAM International (SBI) began in Michigan after a group of people spent several months praying and discussing how God could use them to serve others.

The group felt led to help congregations in the developing world build churches. Members decided they would raise money to buy building materials while the recipient churches would cover labor costs.

The group partnered with CRWM, and soon SON-BEAM was working with the church in Jacquet.

In 2007, the church found land but the deal fell through when another party proved ownership. The search began again.

The need for land came to a head in early 2011. The church had been meeting in a tent since the January 2010 earthquake had damaged their meeting place. Although the house had been repaired,



Digging the foundation for Jacquet CRC’s new building.

people still were reluctant to enter it. Moreover, the founding pastor had moved to the United States and wanted to sell the building.

Finally the church found property. The next step was to raise funds to buy it.

Several thousand miles away in Goderich, Ontario, Trinity CRC also was starting a building project. Like Jacquet, Trinity had outgrown its space. Trinity members had heard about another church that tithed out of its building project and felt led to do the same. They contacted World Missions and began praying about where to give. Jacquet was one of three building projects Trinity supported.

At last Jacquet was able to purchase land to build a church. God provided for the church’s needs through the sacrificial gifts of its members and through donations from SON-BEAM, Trinity CRC, and two other Christian Reformed churches: Lakeside CRC in Alto, Mich., and Calvary CRC in Holland, Mich.

“Although it has been many years in coming,” King says, “God’s faithfulness in answering his prayers is evident in Jacquet. [International partners] and one very motivated Haitian congregation have come together with the Holy Spirit to build a facility urgently needed for gospel proclamation.” ■

—Sarah Lin, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

Many Ways to Pray

There are many ways to pray and a range of words, spoken and unspoken, that you can use.

One approach is to pray by reading your way through Psalms, the prayer book of the Bible. The psalms contain every emotion that we feel and poignantly direct us to God. John Calvin called the psalms “an anatomy of all parts of the soul.”

Here are some other ways to pray:

- Contemplative prayer is setting aside time to pray to God in quiet and especially listening to what God is saying.
- In prayers of petition we ask God to care for and bless other people as well as ourselves.
- In prayers of confession we come before God to honestly and fully admit our sins and to ask for the forgiveness that is already ours.
- Prayers of thanksgiving involve expressing our gratitude to God for all he has done for us, for our families and friends, and for those we don't know.
- Sometimes prayers are set to music in songs and hymns, often sung during worship.
- Memorizing Bible verses is a form of prayer that entails taking in Scripture and making it a deep part of ourselves.
- Intercessory prayer focuses on others and on situations that require God's saving grace.
- Spontaneous prayer allows for speaking out, usually in community, using our own words to pour out our hearts to God.

Coming Events

- Growing the Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit conference at Camp Geneva in Holland, Mich., March 11-14.
- Christian Reformed Church Prayer Summit at All Nations Church near Los Angeles, Calif., April 15-17, 2013.

A Woman of Prayer



Nancy Hinga Kimani is a woman of prayer. There is very little about her work in Malawi with World Renew (formerly the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee) that Kimani doesn't bring before God in prayerful petition.

“We pray a lot,” she said. This includes middle-of-the-night prayer vigils for friends and colleagues who are suffering with sickness. It also includes prayers for organizational frustrations.

“With one of World Renew's partners, I've spent a lot of time in prayer around the process of change,” Kimani said.

Their accountant had been mismanaging funds, but the staff was reluctant to fire him. In Malawian culture, she said, it is difficult to fire people because of the loyalty managers feel to employees and their families.

“People also tend to avoid facing up to problems,” said Kimani. “After months of the organization doing nothing despite my urging, all I could do was pray.”

Prayer continues to be a central component of World Renew's Village Savings and Loan program in Malawi.

That's what she was doing one night when her phone rang.

“As I was finishing my prayers, I received a phone call from the board president. I shared with him my concerns. This time he took action. He called the general secretary; they posted an advertisement for the position right away and laid off the accountant that week.

“This would not have happened without prayer. I could see God's hand removing obstacles that were standing in the way.”

Later, as she was driving a newly hired community development facilitator to a meeting to launch a new program, she said she felt the urge to pull over to the side of the road to pray.

“We were going to pilot a new village savings and loan program and had hired a woman named Grace Swira to run it. I had taken her to the training and bought

*You add.
God multiplies.*

the resource kits she'd need for working with community members. As I was driving her to visit with the first village, God told me to pray," said Kimani.

"We stopped at the side of the road and asked God to take leadership of the program."

They spent several minutes in concentrated prayer, laying the matter before God and reminding themselves that the work belonged to the Lord; they were simply his agents. They asked for God's leadership and blessings on the program.

At the village, Swira presented community members with an overview of the program she hoped to start. She encouraged local women to consider joining a savings group where they could pool their funds to invest in each other's small businesses.

From that one visit in September 2010, the new village savings and loan program has grown to 68 community groups.



Nancy Kimani Hinga surrounds her ministry with prayer.

Another community organization has seen the good work and established 12 more groups, bringing the total number of those who have been reached by the project in two years to 80 groups and nearly 2,000 people.

"I encourage everyone to surround their work with prayer," Kimani said. "Identify someone who has an inclination to pray and then pray with them. It makes a difference." ■

—*Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,*
World Renew

Prayer Opens Doors



God opens doors in India for face-to-face discipleship.

Followers of Jesus in the Hindu stronghold of Chhattisgarh, a state in northern central India, face hatred and hostility. But through prayer, God has opened doors for the gospel to take hold and for seekers to come to faith in Christ.

"We knew people in Chhattisgarh were listening to our broadcasts [in the Hindi language]," said Stephen, the Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) ministry leader in India. "We occasionally received letters from listeners asking for discipleship materials."

BTGMI staff in India tried to bring Bibles and Christian literature into the area, but were stopped when their van was pelted by rocks. Hindus living in the area refused to allow any Christian teaching.

"Our media ministry team felt an urgent need to make face-to-face visits »

TOGETHER DOING MORE

THE POWER OF PRAYER

with the listeners,” Stephen said. “We believed the Lord wanted to manifest his power, that people would see God at work and come to faith in him. So we prayed. And God opened doors.”

In 2010 the ministry team gathered a group of prayer warriors—more than 60 people from many denominations—who were committed to praying that God would open doors in Chhattisgarh.

There are few churches in this predominantly tribal area of India. Maoist radicals stir up violence in order to gain control. Christians are ostracized and

Prayer Resources

- A prayer guide for the agencies and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church is produced monthly. Sign up for a weekly or daily prayer email or download a printer-friendly version at crcna.org/prayer.
- CRWM's weekly ePray is an electronic newsletter of praise and prayer items from missionaries worldwide. Sign up at crwm.org/membership.
- World Renew's monthly electronic newsletter includes stories from the field, program updates, and specific needs you can bring to God in prayer. Sign up at worldrenew.net.
- Join the BTGMI prayer team and receive specific prayer requests from seekers and believers worldwide who have responded to our ministry. To sign up, visit BackToGod.net/getinvolved/for-you/prayer-team or call 1-800-879-6555.
- Join Home Missions in praying for North American ministries. Sign up for weekly prayer requests and praise announcements at crhm.org/prayer.
- Sign up for the Office of Social Justice prayer list at crcna.org/pages/osj_newsletters.cfm
- You can pray with the Calvin College community at calvin.edu/faith/prayer/.



Seekers came from remote villages to receive Bibles and Christian literature from BTGMI staff.

sometimes forced to leave their villages. In some places worship is forbidden. Women face abuse and physical attack.

But listeners kept pleading for BTGMI media missionaries to meet with them to answer their questions. In May 2012, BTGMI received another letter from a listener in the region begging, “Please help us. We want to study the Bible. Can you bring us Christian literature?”

In response, the BTGMI prayer warriors—retired pastors, bank managers, school teachers, social media experts, leaders of the YMCA, and members of other Christian ministries in India—gathered for a time of intense prayer.

“In faith, we made plans to try again to visit these villages,” said Stephen. “The next time we tried to visit Chhattisgarh (in late summer 2012) we met with no resistance! The Lord answered our prayers and opened the way for us to travel throughout the area to meet with groups of listeners.”

Visitors from the outside are rare; people in the villages warmly welcomed the ministry team. Because they have little access to Bibles, hymn books, or

other Christian literature, they gratefully received the resources BTGMI provided.

News of the visit spread widely. BTGMI staff worshiped with several listener groups and met with interested seekers.

“We told them about our radio program. Many of the seekers had never heard it,” said Stephen. “Listeners testified clearly how God’s Word proclaimed through our radio program changed their lives.

“We witnessed the physical healing of some who attended. Believers were strengthened; seekers came to faith. Prayers were answered as we saw the hand of God at work in Chhattisgarh.

“By the grace of God, Christians in this area pray for those who persecute them,” Stephen said. “They continue to provide witness to reconciliation, love, and service.”

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International

On Fire for Prayer

After returning from the Christian Reformed Church prayer summit last April, Rev. Stanley Jim was so on fire for prayer that he decided to gather local church leaders in Classis Red Mesa, a regional group of churches, for weekly prayer meetings.

The summit kindled in him zeal to pray and especially to pray with others in the area where he lives and ministers, Jim said.

He wasn't sure what to expect when he contacted Christian school administrators and church leaders, asking if they would meet for an hour on Mondays to pray. But he needn't have worried.

"When the call came out to pray, church and school leaders answered it and really went into prayer," said Jim, a member of the Navajo Nation who works with Native Americans as a regional ethnic team leader for Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM).

The group of church and Christian school leaders meets from noon to 1 p.m. on Monday afternoons. Leaders who can't attend have been asked to set aside that hour to pray wherever they are; several have agreed to do that.

"I'm excited that we can pray like this. There is something that is precious about prayer," said Jim, adding that the prayer summit gave him a refreshing new perspective on prayer.

Jim is one of many people whose lives were touched and changed through the prayer summit. Others include a pastor who has begun a time of early-morning prayer in his congregation.

Another pastor showed a video of the prayer summit at his church and found members who were inspired and interested in spending more time in prayer. Still others have turned to personal and



Stanley Jim

contemplative prayer as a way of listening to what God is saying.

The next prayer summit, set for April 2013, will set aside time for people to tell stories of how prayer has touched their lives, said CRHM director Rev. Moses Chung, one of the coordinators of the summit.

"We will be asking that some of the stories be told," said Chung. "They will testify to the righteousness of God that happened through prayer."

In Red Mesa, people often pray out loud, asking for the Holy Spirit to be there with them. Located mainly in New Mexico, the classis has 15 organized churches and five emerging churches.

"We pray to our God who works wonders," said Jim. "We are clearing the time so that we can 'waste time' together with God."

They also take time to pray for particular ministries. At one point, Jim and others asked God to bring more people to Red Mesa churches, including Jim's church, Fort Wingate Christian Reformed Church.

Not long afterward, new people started showing up. Numbering eight in all, including young people, they have shown interest in the church where Jim is one of the ministry leaders.

Although this was a welcome answer to prayer, his church is not putting pressure on the visitors. "Right now, we're not

The Church at Prayer

- Praise God for Jacquet CRC's growth. Pray that the church may continue to draw in others who do not yet know Christ. Pray that the church may continue to rely on God's faithfulness and presence in every situation.
- Praise God for the success of the Village Savings and Loan program in Malawi. Pray for World Renew staff around the world as they work with churches and communities in need.
- Pray for the prayer group in Classis Red Mesa and that God will use the people and churches there to reach their communities and bring people to himself. Pray also that the April prayer summit will ignite a renewed passion for prayer.
- Pray for BTGMI outreach in northern India and in many other places around the world where the gospel is forbidden. Pray that people will hear God's Word proclaimed and come to faith in Christ. Pray for the safety of staff who travel to meet with seekers or to disciple new believers.

pushing," he said. "It is a matter of them getting interested in what we are doing."

Ministries also have emerged as a result of praying and looking to find things that God wants them to do, including a firewood ministry to help elderly people fuel their homes and a proposal for opening a bicycle shop for the community.

On one occasion, said Jim, he prayed with a young man who was afflicted by evil spirits, helping to ease the man's difficulties.

Jim says he will talk about the power and significance of prayer when, as regional leader for CRHM, he starts to visit other churches in his region in 2013.

"This is the first time I've prayed like this," he said. "I've learned that, if you pray, God will show you some things." ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Always Keep On Praying

In North America, the standard railroad gauge (the distance between the rails) is exactly 4 feet 8 1/2 inches. Do you have any idea why?

That's how they built them in England, and many of our railroads were built by English expatriates. Why did the English build them that way? Because the first rails were laid by those who had built the tramways, and that's how the trams were built. The trams were built that way because the builders used jigs and tools they had used previously for building wagons. And—you guessed it—that's how wagons were built.

Why? Because that's how far apart the ruts were spaced on existing roads. And that was the case because the first long-distance roads in Europe were built by imperial Rome for its legions. The ruts the wagon makers had to match were created by Roman war chariots. And those chariots were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Now you know: the standard railroad gauge comes from the original military specs for an imperial Roman war chariot. It's a habit that goes back nearly 2,000 years.

Habits are not necessarily bad things, unless you forget why you do them. Then you're just stuck in a rut. Paul urges the Ephesians—and us—to engage in the habit of prayer. "Always keep on praying" (Eph. 6:18), he says, but make it vibrant, active, and lively. Anything but a rut to get stuck in.

In that same chapter Paul outfits the Christian in the battle gear of the Lord. "And pray . . ." he adds. Prayer is not simply

a piece of the Christian's gear. It is the atmosphere in which we put on and wear it. We are to pray "on all occasions" and use "all kinds of prayers" and "always keep on praying."

Paul piles up the adjectives to show that prayer is supposed to be more than an occasional practice. It is to be a habit of the heart—all the time, in all ways, at all hours and "for all the Lord's people."

Picture a room with hundreds of your brothers and sisters gathered in one place practicing this habit—always, on all occasions, using all kinds of prayers, and concerned for all God's people.

That's something you will be able not only to see but become a part of by attending the second denominational prayer summit on April 15-17 at All Nations Church in Lake View Terrace, Calif.

These three days are designed to give you a taste of what Paul advocates in Ephesians 6:18—praying not just once a year in a faraway place but in such a way that you will be inclined to bring the recipe home and bring others into a circle of prayer where you live.

Albrecht and Franz were poor, young, struggling artists. They agreed that one would support the other while the other studied and then reverse roles. Franz, the first to support his friend, engaged in manual labor that left his fingers stiff and twisted.

One day Albrecht came across Franz kneeling, his gnarled hands folded in prayer. He was praying for the success of Albrecht, though he no longer had any hope himself of enjoying a career in art. Albrecht, whose last name was Dürer, sketched those folded hands, a work still known as "The Praying Hands."

In this story, the man behind the hands was the real artist. You and I can regularly reproduce that scene by praying "on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests . . . always" and "for all the Lord's people." ■



“The standard railroad gauge comes from the original military specs for an imperial Roman war chariot.”



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

Society Cries Out for Values of Faith

With its preponderance of violence, greed, and immorality, today's secular society needs the transformational power that only the values of faith can provide, Yale professor Lamin Sanneh said last November at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS).

Sanneh, who was speaking at the annual Stob Lectures sponsored by CTS and Calvin College, said that while separation between church and state may be a helpful tool in today's culture for managing the conflicting demands of politics and religion, it is both difficult and ultimately destructive for

society and often for religion itself, Sanneh said.

"There cannot be a rigid separation between church and state," said Sanneh, professor of missions and world Christianity at Yale University.

In a lecture that ranged from the state of Christianity in Africa to the political approaches of Muslims and Christians, Sanneh said it is neither healthy nor particularly easy to divide the political and moral impulses of human beings.

Both have their purposes, he said.

"The secular state is very good at using values, but not at producing values," he said



Lamin Sanneh gave the 2012 Stob Lectures at Calvin Theological Seminary.

in one of the lectures. "Religion has a most important role to play in creation of the common good."

Society flourishes, he said, by its diverse character and

the care and service that we show one another, especially since we are sinful people whose tendency toward self-exaltation, abuse of others, and individual success goes against the idea of a common good and a sovereign God.

"Being a political animal and carrying on political transactions is not enough," Sanneh said. "Human beings are not logical animals in a political landscape. We are imbued by our Creator with the knowledge and ability to do right and wrong."

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Program Helps Students Prepare for ACT

In 2006, Nathan Tonlaar, a Calvin student from Ghana, was reading a bulletin board when he spotted a flyer offering coaching for the American College Test (ACT).

The ACT is one of two tests high school students can take to show their college readiness. "The cost was hefty, and [Tonlaar] had the idea that anybody should receive assistance for the ACT," said Tasha Cruz, Calvin's director of pre-college programs.

Tonlaar worked through Calvin's Service-Learning Center to set up an ACT test prep program with Ottawa Hills High School in Grand Rapids, Mich.

He recruited students from various departments to tutor the Ottawa Hills students, familiarizing them with the ACT and with the general college application process.

Tonlaar's program continues in the form of Excel, a five-week ACT test prep

A Calvin College student mentor helps a high school student prepare for the ACT.



program sponsored by Calvin's department of pre-college programs.

Currently 33 students from Grand Rapids-area high schools participate in the program.

Twenty-two tutors from a range of disciplines are paired with students based on the test subjects they want to work on.

The pairs meet once a week. "They're going over some of the questions that are in the ACT," Cruz said, "but they're also helping them with problem-solving skills."

For serving as Excel tutors, Calvin students earn Cross Cultural Engagement (CCE) credit necessary for graduation.

—Myrna Anderson, Calvin College

Around the World



Right now there are more than 7 billion people living on earth. And do you know what? God loves each and every one of them just as much as he loves

you. Every person in Africa, Asia, Antarctica (where most people are scientists or tourists), Europe, Australia, and North and South America is special to God. How

do we know? Because God made us all. And because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved THE WORLD that he gave his one and only Son."



How Many Is 7 Billion?

- It's really hard to imagine a million of something, isn't it? A billion is the same as a thousand millions, so that's almost impossible to imagine! And then try to imagine **7 billion people** in our world! Can you do it? Here are a few ways to try:
- **7 billion ants**, at an average weight of 3 milligrams each, would weigh at least 23 tons (46,297 pounds or 21,000 kg). Yikes!
- **7 billion seconds** ago, the year was 1789. That was the year George Washington was inaugurated as the first U.S. president and Congress met for the very first time.
- If you took **7 billion steps** along the earth's equator at 2 feet per step, you could walk around the world at least 106 times.

A World with 100 People

Let's imagine that there are only 100 people in the world. If that were true, here are some facts about what those 100 people would be like:

- Fifty would be male and 50 would be female.
- Twenty-six would be children and 74 would be adults.
- Sixty people would be from Asia, 15 would be from Africa, 14 would be from North or South America, and 11 people would be from Europe.
- Thirty-three people would be Christian, 22 would be Muslim, 14 would be Hindu, and seven would be Buddhist. Twelve people would practice other religions, and 12 would practice no religion.
- Chinese would be the first language of 12 people. Five would speak Spanish, five would speak English, three would speak Arabic, and 75 would speak other languages.
- Eighty-three people would be able to read and write and 17 would not.
- Seven people would have a college degree and 93 would not.
- Seventy-seven people would have shelter and 23 would not.
- One person would be dying of starvation, 15 would not have enough to eat, and 21 would be overweight.
- Eighty-seven people would have safe drinking water and 13 would not.

Where do you fit into this picture? Talk about it with your family. To get an even better picture, count out 100 coins or beans or stones and use them to make the different groups listed above.

—STATISTICS FROM WWW.100PEOPLE.ORG. UPDATED IN 2012.

Answers: Turkey = cheese and olives; Japan = miso soup; China = congee; India = idli



Scotland

Indonesia

China

Saudi Arabia

The Other Side of the World

Pretend you're standing on the middle of the border between the United States and Canada. If you followed that line to the other side of the world, you'd end up in Kazakhstan. That's a country surrounded by Russia, China, and some smaller countries. Find it on a globe or a world map.

Christine and Andy Wicker are missionaries to Kazakhstan. They work for Christian Reformed World Missions to help tell people about Jesus. Christine teaches fifth grade and is the elementary vice principal at Tien Shan International School. Andy works with people who have problems with alcohol and drugs. We talked with Christine to find out what life is like on the other side of the world. Here's what she said.

Q. What do kids in Kazakhstan eat for breakfast?

A. Kids in Kazakhstan often eat *kasha* (which is what they call porridge) for breakfast. It can be made from rice, oatmeal, or wheat. Or they eat bread with *kolbasa* (sausage) or cheese and some vegetables. They also drink *chai* (tea) with milk.

Q. What do they do for fun?

A. Kids here love to go to the mall, eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken, and play at "Happyton," an amusement park with rides and video games. They like going skating in the mall or on outdoor rinks in the winter. Our neighbor kids also love to play rugby or soccer in our yard.

Q. What do you love about Kazakhstan?

A. I love my students! They come from many different countries, such as South Korea, the United States, Canada, Norway, and India. I asked them what they like about Kazakhstan. They said they love our school, and they also love the mountains and going skiing and sledding. The things they don't like about Kazakhstan are that there is garbage and litter everywhere and the air is polluted. They also feel very sorry for the many stray dogs on the streets.

Q. What do the kids in your class miss the most about their home countries?

A. Their favorite candy, their grandparents and cousins, and doing things like going four-wheeling.

Scrambled Breakfast

All over the world, people wake up hungry and ready to eat. What do you usually have for breakfast? Corn flakes? Eggs? Toast? If you live in North America, those are common breakfast foods. But if you lived somewhere else in the world, your breakfast plate or bowl might look very different. Try to match these breakfast foods to the country where people eat them. Then check your answers on the left page. Which foods would you like to try?



Cheese & Olives



Idli



CORN FLAKES



Congee



Miso



USA



China



Turkey



Japan



India



Sandy Swartzentruber is a freelance writer and editor. She attends Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Mongolia



Peru



Japan



Mexico



India



Ukraine



Australia



Russia



Ghana

BY JOYCE KANE



LIVING
THE LIFE
YOU
NEVER
WANTED

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG GIRL in the 1950s, I had terribly unrealistic notions about life and what it meant to live as an adult. I lived in a television utopia of perfectly happy families who seemed to have perfect lives: “Father Knows Best,” “Ozzie and Harriet,” and “Leave It to Beaver.” Back then I had every hope of having such a life myself. But now that I’m older, I think the movie *Forrest Gump* presents a more realistic picture: Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re going to get.

In 1975, author and retreat director Paula D’Arcy was a happy young woman married to a man she loved and the mother of a young daughter. She was pregnant with her second child. Life was good. Then she and her family were broadsided

by the car of a drunk driver. Paula and her unborn child were the only ones who survived.

Teacher and writer Philip Simons was in the prime of his life with a great job and a beautiful family. He was diagnosed with ALS when he was 32 years old and died a slow and painful death.

In a hazy memory from years ago, I was standing in the dining room of my home when my husband came into the room carrying a suitcase and told me he was leaving. He then walked past me and out the front door. Our three children were sleeping upstairs. It’s taken me years to understand what happened in that marriage—and to honestly see my part in its end.

I tell you these stories not to horrify or depress you but to remind all of us that they are part of the reality of our lives and the lives of people around the globe. We are witnesses to the parade of death, loss, and grief every night on the evening news.

Many of us may escape horrible tragedies, but we all experience the smaller deaths of physical or emotional pain, struggle, disappointment, and loneliness. And we're aware, at least on some level, that we will not get out of this life alive.

The Fruit of Suffering

What do we do with our suffering? How do we live with it or live through it? Those are the big questions. Life and death are mysteries too deep for the logical mind. They need to be uncovered through a myriad of experiences that gradually reveal their secrets. They need to be tenderly attended to with courage, patience, and compassion.

D'Arcy said of her experience, "I'd lived as though I had life figured out. The sudden death of my family . . . proved to me that I knew very little. All of us must ultimately find our way. Still, there are guideposts, small glimmers of light that direct all our journeys. In the end, the goal does not rest in being successful or even happy. It's about finding a way through the layers of resistance that keep us frightened and small. Life creates an opening."

And often this pondering—this searching for an opening, this agonizing wrestling—helps us to move from a life we never wanted to a life we never imagined.

Professor and author Marilyn McEntyre, in her article "What You Get for the Price," tells the story of a rabbi "who, when a member of his congregation came to him rejoicing, would say, darkly, 'How do you know it's not a disaster?' On the other hand, when one came lamenting, he would ask, 'How do you know it's not a blessing?' . . . We don't know what we're being prepared for. We don't know how things may work together for good. . . . It is the not knowing—the certainty that there is 'a divinity that shapes our ends' who is at work in ways we can't fathom—that opens us to surprise and invitation."

Healing takes time; there are no shortcuts or quick fixes. There's no cheap grace. But Henri Nouwen, the priest, teacher, and author who suffered bouts of depression, anxiety, and self-doubt, encourages us toward healing with these words: "The great challenge is loving your wounds through instead of thinking them through. It is better to cry than to worry, better to feel your wounds deeply than to understand them, better to let them into your silence than to talk about them."

Healing is a creative work because the Spirit that makes an opening in us takes many forms. I found myself drawn out of grief by two friends who walked with me in the mornings; by the beauty and silence of the natural world; by my dog, who always makes me smile and who taught me to play; by going back to school; and by the spiritual director who listened to me as I tried to unpack what had happened to my life and where God was in the mess.

The Turning

In my earlier years, cooking inspired me and gave me joy and satisfaction; I even had a few professional gigs assisting well-known chefs who would come through town on book tours. Some days, when I was a single mom, I dreamed of escaping to France to study cooking. But life had fenced me in, and I often struggled just to get through the day. There was no success, no self-sufficiency anywhere. This time of emptiness, even though

I was not fully aware of it then, helped create a hunger in me for God—not the God of my childhood who would protect me from all harm, but the One who would hold me in love no matter what.

Because of the pain of my divorce, I had deep questions that have turned into a search that never ends. I now spend much of my free time tracking down the best mystery ever—the mystery of dying and rising, of living and healing—with the help of authors from across the globe and through the ages who have written

about exactly that. The Persian poet Rumi gifts me with his words "Through love all pain will turn to medicine."

My community is large indeed, and I recognize my need for others. It is in our sharing life together that healing takes place. It seems to me that if we're honest, we are all searching for wholeness in fractured lives.

Christians have a model for healing in the life of Jesus. Richard Rohr, in his book *Falling Upward*, writes, "The genius of the Gospel was that it included the problem inside the solution. The falling became the standing. The stumbling became the finding. The dying became the rising. The raft became the shore." He refers to these as "the big patterns."

Lent begins this month. It's a season that invites us to notice the big patterns discovered on seemingly narrow roads—the roads of human life. The disciples did not understand this journey toward death, nor did they recognize Jesus traveling with them after the resurrection. We are walking the same confusing road, and now we wait for the dawn of a new day with Christ as our guide.

Let us, like him, give our complete trust to the One who loves us and accompanies us through good times and bad. And may this Lenten season break our hearts open to kindness and compassion for ourselves and others who suffer—so that we can walk with them and reflect back to them their beauty and worth, offering the gifts of hope and blessing. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)

LIFE AND DEATH ARE MYSTERIES TOO DEEP FOR THE LOGICAL MIND.



Joyce Kane is editorial assistant for *The Banner*.

Pain Versus Gain



A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO, former NHL hockey player Laurie Boschman spoke to students in the eighth-grade class I was teaching. Just retired from the game, he told my students how challenging it had been to be a Christian in the world of professional sports. Afterward I asked him how he felt about being retired. Boschman was a young dad and only 33 at the time.

He said, “I feel beat up. I can swing a stick, but I’ve had so much surgery over the years I can’t throw a ball overhand to my boys.”

Lots of sports injuries have made the news recently. Houston Rockets center

Balancing the desire to compete against the need to take care of the “temple of the Holy Spirit” can be a tricky thing.

Yao Ming was forced into early retirement by a recurring ankle injury. The Todd Bertuzzi sucker punch that ended Steve Moore’s hockey career is still before the courts. Every professional sport has seen young athletes forced to abandon their game at the top of their form.

But for every athlete injured in a dramatic way—such as Joe Theismann, the quarterback whose leg was broken on live television in 1985—there are many more like Boschman, whose accumulated smaller injuries leave them aching and sore long after retirement.

Amateur athletes, too, know their share of chronic injuries.

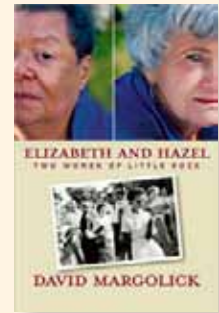
Each year in the U.S., more than 3.5 million children 14 years old or younger receive medical treatment for sports injuries. Sixty-two percent of those injuries happen in practice. Basketball leads the way with almost 700,000 injuries a year.

For Christians, balancing the desire to compete with the need to take care of the “temple of the Holy Spirit” can be a tricky thing. After all, many of us play sports to keep in shape as we age. That’s why my church hockey team’s mantra was “Play hard tonight, but make it to work in the morning.” Often that advice was forgotten once we hit the ice. In 2001, I sliced my right Achilles tendon in a game, and it still causes problems when I run.

Christ was always at the center of Laurie Boschman’s career. For Boschman, that meant listening to his body, hanging up his skates, and spending more time with his family when the time came to leave professional sports. For us amateurs, finding that balance is no less necessary. ■



Lloyd Rang is a communications director at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ontario and a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville.



Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock

by David Margolick
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On September 4, 1957, the lives of 15-year-olds Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan became irrevocably connected when they were photographed together the day Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas was desegregated. Hazel’s hateful taunting directed at Elizabeth’s African American heritage captured the great divide between white and black Americans. Margolick’s analysis of the lives of two women caught in their nation’s failure to see all people as equal in God’s eyes is painful, thought-provoking, and hopeful. (Yale University Press)





Northern Redemption

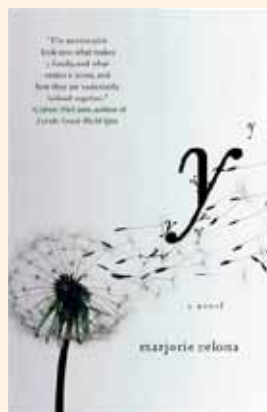
by **The Abrams Brothers**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

The Abrams Brothers are young and talented. They will get you on your feet with *Northern Redemption*, their first album of original material. Their bluegrass gospel sound blends thoughtful lyrics, rich vocals, and strong instrumentation. According to the liner notes, the brothers follow in a long line of family musicians: "Music found its way into our world in two settings: in church, and in the family living room." This album will make you want to gather your family and friends around for a toe-tapping jam session of your own. (United for Opportunity)

Y

by **Marjorie Celona**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**

Why did Yula leave her newborn baby on the steps of the YMCA at dawn? Why was this mystery baby placed with dysfunctional foster families, one after the other? Y for why? Or Y for YMCA, as in the opening sentence "My life begins at the Y"? This novel details the overwhelming challenges abandoned children face, including the mystery of their biological identity. Author Marjorie Celona, who lives in Cincinnati, has been nominated for Canada's prestigious Giller Prize this year. (Penguin)



Tea Cakes for Tosh

by **Kelly Starling Lyons**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Tosh loves his Grandma Honey's delicious tea cakes and the stories she tells him of their family, a people once enslaved. Through Honey's words, Tosh meets his ancestor Ida, who baked tea cakes for her master's family but was forbidden to share any with the slaves. As Honey becomes forgetful, struggling to recall the recipe, Tosh takes over baking the tea cakes and telling the tale. E.B. Lewis's warm illustrations complement this story that celebrates freedom, love, and the importance of keeping family history alive. (G. P. Putnam's Sons)

Bully

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

What's life like for a child who is bullied? This documentary will break your heart. It is disturbing to see how the defenseless are victimized. The value of the film is in the experience it presents, not necessarily its artistic quality. The movie affirms the need to recognize the problem and address it organizationally in our schools. As Christians we should take this opportunity to emphasize that every person is created in the image of God and that we are called to defend the weak and the helpless. This film is not for young children; parents should use discretion in watching it with teens. On DVD mid-February. (Starz)

Editor's note: This film is not related to the picture book of the same title reviewed in last month's Banner.



THE LOWDOWN

Have you missed some of our online music reviews? Read full reviews at thebanner.org.

Across the Imaginary Divide, Bela Fleck and the Marcus Roberts Trio (Rounder). "A refreshing place where blues and bluegrass meet."
—Otto Selles

Birds of Relocation, Eric Peters (Catapult). "This reflective record offers hope."
—Paul Delger

CTRL, Derek Webb (Fair Trade). "Calls us to renewed spirituality and to paying close attention to the sacred."
—Robert J. Keeley

I Win, Marvin Sapp (Verity). "Sapp worked through his grief by putting all of himself into the music."
—Reggie Smith

Lost in Transition, Sixpence None the Richer (Sixpence). "A welcome return to form for this interesting band."
—Robert J. Keeley

Mercyland, Phil Madeiras (Tone Tree). "An album of uncommon grace."
—Kristy Quist

My Head Is an Animal, Of Monsters and Men (Universal Republic). "What really stand out are the imaginative lyrics."
—Greg Veltman

Tempest, Bob Dylan (Columbia). "Traverses the back roads of American music."
—Robert N. Hosack

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

I Think the Pastor Stole That Sermon

ONE SUNDAY a friend in Toronto was worshipping away from his home congregation. As he settled back into the pew to listen to the sermon, the preacher, a ministry colleague, seemed a bit nervous. He recognized the morning Scripture passage as one he had used recently. A few minutes into the preaching, the sermon itself began to sound hauntingly familiar—word-for-word familiar. The preacher was delivering my friend’s sermon right there in front of him. She was preaching stolen goods.

At Calvin Seminary, where I teach, students sometimes steal others’ work and present it as if it were their own. That’s called plagiarism.

Plagiarism varies in type and severity. Some say using more than three words from someone else’s writing counts as plagiarism; others say ten. In academic work, stealing just a few words is a punishable offense. But stealing an idea also counts as plagiarism. Stealing someone’s whole work is the most obvious form of the crime; stealing an idea is perhaps a grayer area. Taking a few words may be understandable, especially if the person is unaware of the standards for plagiarism in Western culture. Occasionally a student will unconsciously reproduce words not his or her own after reading them in preparation for a paper. So it’s important to determine whether a given case really counts as plagiarism.

Although plagiarism in the pulpit is a slightly different animal than plagiarism in the academic world, it too requires investigation and conversation. Simply preaching somebody else’s sermon without any acknowledgement of its source is clearly an instance of theft, a violation of the eighth commandment. Thou shalt not steal—sermons included.



But there are occasions when the sermons of another preacher can be useful. Our denomination’s Sermons for Reading Services Committee provides collections of sermons for use in congregations.

When the regular preacher is absent, somebody else’s sermon will have to do. And what about those occasions when the preacher is present, but events of the past week have left him or her emotion-

The sermon itself began to sound hauntingly familiar— word-for-word familiar.

ally spent? Perhaps it's been one of those weeks when two funerals, a sick child, and a nagging cold have left little time and no energy for writing a sermon, much less a second sermon. Under such circumstances, it may be permissible to borrow a sermon or major ideas for a sermon—providing the preacher explicitly acknowledges the source of those words and ideas.

Is it possible to steal from yourself? I once heard of a preacher who announced that he was going to preach sermon reruns for the summer months—sermons that members of the congregation had requested that he preach again. Oddly, no one in the congregation could remember requesting a rerun. Does preaching one's own sermon over again to the same group of people sound like plagiarism? Maybe it does and maybe it doesn't. Either way, a pastor should acknowledge when he or she is preaching a rerun. If the sermon in question is a reworked version of an earlier sermon, perhaps an explanation is less necessary. If, however, the congregation stands in any danger of recognizing the preacher's offering as something they have heard before, it's important to set them at ease by mentioning the sermon's early history. At the very least, reusing one's own sermon without acknowledgement leaves the preacher open to accusations of slothfulness or deception.

Ordinarily the sermon should be the preacher's own work, a product of his or her weekly listening to God's Word and bringing that Word to the congregation.

But what about using a handful of someone else's words, or borrowing an idea or two from time to time? Does the preacher really have to footnote everything in his or her sermon? Is every instance of borrowing plagiarism? Admittedly, the preacher cannot take the time to cite the name, source, and credentials

What to Do

- **If you suspect plagiarism in the pulpit, check out your suspicions. Google the part or parts of the sermon that you suspect might belong to someone else.**
- **If you find indication of plagiarism, contact one of the elders. The elder who becomes involved should go with another elder to talk with the preacher. Since plagiarism is not an issue of personal offense, but a public one, the first step in Matthew 18 doesn't really apply here. In talking with the preacher, the elder team needs to investigate the nature and extent of the alleged plagiarism. Was the plagiarism a careless oversight? Is it a single instance or part of a larger pattern?**
- **If this initial conversation with the preacher indicates an occurrence of plagiarism and the preacher offers no plausible explanation for what has been discovered, the council needs to become involved.**
- **The council must have a further conversation with the preacher. If the plagiarism is considered relatively minor (a single idea or quote) and the pastor is contrite, the matter may be handled within the council. In such a case the original accuser should be informed of the council's action.**
- **If the plagiarism is part of a larger pattern or if the preacher is unrepentant, the congregation needs to be informed. It may be necessary to call in the classical church visitors. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the council may need to place the pastor under discipline—a process that might eventually lead to suspension.**

All of these steps are intended to address plagiarism in a pastoral way and to work toward restoring the preacher and the trust that the plagiarism destroyed.

of every person or idea that appears in the sermon. Such citation would take away from the flow of the sermon and could make proclamation sound like an academic production. Still, it's always necessary to alert listeners to the borrowed character of ideas and quotes.

Sermons ought to employ what I like to call the law of minimal attribution. The words or idea borrowed for the sermon should be cited as belonging to someone else, but the citation should be as modest as possible so as not to distract from the sermon. So, for example, when quoting New Testament scholar N.T. Wright in an academic paper, I would cite the specific work, the publisher, and the year of publication. But in a sermon I might attribute Wright's words or ideas by simply mentioning his name or by saying something like "a colleague has said . . ." This keeps the sermon from bogging down while at the same time acknowledging ideas or words that are not my own.

The principle is clear: Preachers must not present the work of others as if it were their own. To do less is stealing. How serious the offense and what to do about it requires investigation and conversation. The integrity of the preacher and, more importantly, the integrity of the gospel are at stake. ■



John Rottman is a professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Keeping Our Promises

LAST YEAR OUR DENOMINATION LAUNCHED a concerted effort to address the fact that for the past decade or so, a generation of young adults has been walking away from the church. This ecclesiastical exodus of Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) has been detailed in books with ominous titles such as *Lost in Transition*; *You Lost Me*; and *unchristian*. It is being chronicled and commented on in countless blogs, provoking church leaders and educators from all corners of North American Christianity to rethink how they approach ministering to emerging adults and to re-evaluate what effective lifelong discipleship programming should look like. Here in the CRC, we've formed a task force on Young Adult Leadership, established a Youth Collective, and held a young adult summit called re:kindle that featured a joint session with synod delegates to discuss and pray over the issue—all in the hopes of bridging the gaps and putting a plan in place to stem the tide of departure.

I've spent a fair amount of time studying the books and blogs, talking to those who've stayed and those who've left, as well as with denominational leaders young and old working to reverse the trend. I'm also one of the members of this generation who walked away from the church as a young adult. As a child, I remember looking forward to church on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights, but by high school I had some real questions about the Christian faith that no one seemed willing to answer. After I went off to college, seven years went by before I set foot in another church on a regular basis. This issue is close to my heart.

So why are so many young adults leaving the church? In *You Lost Me*, David Kinnaman contends that “the dropout problem is, at its core, a faith development problem; to use religious language, it's a *disciple-making problem*.” For a while, this seemed like the best answer of the many I'd heard. But after spending some time with other young adults from the CRC at last summer's re:kindle summit, hearing the stories they shared and listening to the pleas they made, I've come to believe the answer is deeper than just a faith development problem.

It seems to me that one of the reasons we are failing at faith development and are at risk of losing this generation is that we are struggling to establish and sustain genuine intergenerational relationships in our congregations—the type of

You could feel the tension
in the room fall away
as the Spirit moved in.

relationships that connect our teens and young adults to the wider congregation and enable discipleship.

A few months ago I was flipping through the pages of a youth ministry resource catalog when I came across a series of resources for adults covering all sorts of ways to engage with teenagers: how to talk to them, play games with them, answer their questions, preach to them, lead groups of them, even how to text-message them. As I looked at this collection of titles, I found myself wondering how we ever got to a place where we needed books to help us communicate with the teens that have been sitting alongside us in the pews for years. After all, these are the same kids whom, when they were baptized, we promised to walk alongside of, pray for, encourage, and sustain. They're

Taking the First Step

Wondering how to start fostering intergenerational relationships in your church? Here are a just a few suggestions.

- Offer intergenerational small groups and Bible studies.
- Offer intergenerational Sunday school classes.
- Plan intergenerational worship services.
- Offer intergenerational service trips.
- Host an intergenerational event (check out Faith Alive's WE events at faithaliveresources.org).
- Consider using mentors in high school ministry instead of traditional classroom models.
- Provide “care packages” for college students.
- Start an “adopt-a-grandparent” program to connect kids with older members.
- Allow young adults to play an active role in the church.

the same kids we rocked to sleep in nursery, sang Bible songs to in Sunday school, and smiled at as they ran to the front for the children's message. How did we allow those relationships to break down to the point where we don't even know how to connect with our own kids anymore?

Our Reformed faith calls us to be a church of "we," emphasizing the covenant relationship that binds us together across generations as children of God through the waters of baptism. But far too often we've allowed ourselves to be a church of "me," where interpersonal relationships seldom stretch beyond peer groups or age-specific ministry programs. When we fail to pursue genuine relationships with each other, we are forgetting our identity as a covenant community called and formed by God.

Too often, by the time the kids in our congregations reach middle and high school, we've forgotten the baptismal promises we made to them, figuring that their Sunday school or youth group leader will take care of all that stuff anyway. We forget that those were communal promises—as covenant people we too bear the weight of helping to raise our young people in the Lord. We forget about the importance of the relationships we're supposed to have with each other across generations.

This leaves many of our younger members feeling disconnected outside of their age-specific ministry centers—a disconnect that only widens as teens graduate from youth ministry programs and struggle to connect to the congregation of adults they have suddenly been asked to be a part of, especially when no previous relationships have been established. Young people are leaving the church because they don't feel connected and because we've been doing a poor job of building relationships with them as they've been growing up.

I can't help but wonder what would become of the young adult exodus if we unearthed the richness of our Reformed covenantal and sacramental theology. What would happen if, as a community, we would start to make good on the promises we make at baptism and begin to intentionally cultivate relationships with the children, teens, and young adults in our congregations that last for a lifetime?

I saw a hint of what this intentional cultivation can bring about at re:kindle when the young adult leaders and the "older" adult leaders from synod broke into intergenerational small

Digging Deeper

Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Church . . . and Rethinking Faith*, Baker Books, 2011.

Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Kara Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*, Zondervan, 2011.

Momentum: The Official Blog of the CRC's Young Adult Leadership Taskforce <http://yalt.crcna.org>.

Shift: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the CRC, a film written by Beth Terpstra <http://yalt.crcna.org/shift-film/>.

groups and began to discuss the issues that are driving a generation away. As they listened to each other's stories, you could feel the tension in the room fall away as the Spirit moved in. Many of the groups wrapped their arms around one another as they closed the session in prayer, asking God to help them continue to build the relationships that were started that night.

It's built into our Reformed DNA to promote "we" over "me." We just need to have the courage to take the first step, to engage in the messy work of building relationships with each other—and to trust God to guide our efforts. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Derek Atkins is an associate curriculum editor for Faith Alive Christian Resources.

FAQs

Ethics

Q A friend at work asked how to perform a certain kind of operation on the company computer without the possibility of its being traced back to him. Proud that I had recently discovered how, I showed him. Later I learned that what he did was in violation of company policy. Am I an accomplice in his wrongdoing?

A If you knew that he would use this information to violate company policy, you are definitely an accomplice. The same is true if you knew that he was likely to violate company policy.

If the thought never crossed your mind that he would use this information to do something morally suspect, you might not be complicit in his wrongful behavior. Nevertheless, the fact that he was seeking anonymity might have aroused your suspicions, and you might be blameworthy for placing what is in effect a potential weapon in the hands of someone without asking how it would be used.

Thomas Aquinas distinguishes nine ways in which someone can be complicit in the wrongdoing of another: commanding, consenting, counseling, assisting, encouraging, covering for, failing to denounce, failing to prevent, and silence. If what you did qualifies as complicity, it falls under the rubric of counseling, providing information that makes it possible for someone else to engage in wrongful behavior.

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

It may be time to stop thinking of it as your problem.

Church

Q We are without a pastor. A growing number of members are concerned that a few people in leadership positions are making decisions that are not in the best interest of the members. Anyone who questions these decisions is labeled a troublemaker. What can we do?

A Sometimes councils make good decisions that are perceived by some as “not in the best interests of the members.” And sometimes people think a “growing number” of people are opposed when in reality the majority supports the decisions. Sometimes people are indeed troublemakers. So start by prayerfully discerning what the actual situation is and asking God to give wisdom to officebearers and members alike.

Then proceed with care and with love even for those with whom you disagree, realizing that your efforts to solve problems can increase the division in the congregation. Those who share your perspective can ask to meet with the council to discuss these matters. This gives the council an opportunity to hear first-hand how their decisions are affecting the congregation and gives members an opportunity to hear why decisions are being made. Such conversations can bring understanding and healing and promote unity.

If you see no improvement after such efforts, ask the council to request the assistance of “church visitors,” officebearers appointed by classis to assist councils as they give leadership to the congregation. Although church visitors cannot make decisions that bind a council, they can give advice that may assist in resolving difficulties.

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

Relationships

Q My brother wants me to come to his house for Christmas, but his wife hates my guts. Why should we try to get together around holidays and pretend to be happy families when we’re not?

A It might be helpful to define clearly for yourself what could be behind your sister-in-law’s feelings of dislike. If you know the reason—perhaps a conflict that has yet to be resolved—then it is time to look for ways to come to a resolution. Writing a letter expressing regret about the incident, owning your own part in it, and expressing your hopes for an improved relationship is one option. Alternatively, if you believe approaching her about past conflict is likely to make things worse, you can resolve to forgive her for her part and choose to “live in harmony,” at least as far as it depends on you, in accordance with Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12.

If any peacemaking on your part has been rebuffed, then it’s time to stop thinking of it as your problem. Acknowledge that you’ve done all you can and resolve to enjoy spending time with your brother and other family members you feel close to at celebrations.

Avoid thinking in all-or-nothing terms about happiness. It is not true that unless everyone is happy with everyone else, no one can be happy. Be polite and respectful toward everyone, but seek out those who appreciate you. Accept that you have a right to be who you are without pretense, and if that is not acceptable to someone, it is that person’s problem, not yours.

Extending kindness and warmth to all family members, regardless of their attitude toward you, is inviting. Love is much stronger than hate.

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

ADS

Deadlines: March issue is 2/4/2013; April issue is 3/4/2013. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2013 Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the office of the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda: a) Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15. b) Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1. c) Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15. d) Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15. Materials will be included in the printed Agenda if received before the synodically established deadlines.

Joel R. Boot Executive Director

ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER Synod has designated Wednesday, March 13, 2013, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, crops and industry, and the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U. S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U. S.) is May 2, 2013. Joel R. Boot Executive Director

Available for Call

ELIGIBLE FOR CALL: Having served well as executive pastor since 2008, the council of Mill Creek Community Church recommends **Rev. Ladan Jennings**. She may be reached at 425-280-4826. Rev. Jennings has a heart for outreach, service, and evangelism, and has excellent administrative skills. We commend her to the churches for their consideration.

THE SECOND CRC of Fremont, MI, calling church for Rev. David Loew, who most recently served the Lakeside Church of Ludington, MI, declares him available for call to the churches.

Eligible for Call

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

Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **David Ten Clay** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

Financial Aid

CLASSIS KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial aid for the academic year 2013-2014 to apply no later than March 31, 2013 by contacting Paul Vander Kamp, 2221 Ridgefield Rd., Portage, MI 49024, phone 269-321-0709, or e-mail vdrkmp@juno.com. Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2013-2014. Students presently receiving aid must reapply.

STUDENTS FROM ZEELAND Classis preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Student Fund Committee for the 2013-2014 school year. For more information, contact Dan Kinnaas, (616) 772-2390 or (708) 926-5882. All requests need to be received by April 1, 2013.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS AB SOUTH & SASK. will meet in regular session on Friday, Mar. 8, 2013 at the University of Calgary. All agenda items should be sent to the Stated Clerk, Mr. Al Brander at clerkabss@gmail.com or to 1203 High View Point, High River, AB. T1V 1N9.

Congregational

75th Anniversary

PIPESTONE CRC in Pipestone, MN will be celebrating 75 years of God's faithfulness on April 21, 2013. A special morning service is planned with a noon meal to follow. All former pastors, members and friends are invited to join us. If unable to attend, we invite you to send a greeting to help us celebrate.

Announcements

THANK YOU RedArrow Ministries and the Village of Paw Paw would like to thank Parchment CRC for their tremendous gifts for the new Paw Paw Youth Center.

JOIN US for winter worship services at Farnsworth Hall, 6159 East University Dr., Mesa, AZ. The Maranatha Community CRC meets at 10

AM each Sunday from 12-02-12 thru 4-14-13. Contact Rev. Gary Hutt @ 509-499-4561 for more information.

LAKE ALFRED MINISTRY—CRC/RCA January thru April 14, 10:30 AM, 5:50 PM. Located on Rt. 17/92, Lk Alfred, FL. Close to Winter Haven & Rt. 27. Preaching Feb. Dr. J. Nederhood; March-April 14 Dr. G. Kroeze. Phone: 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442.

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

Birthdays

100th Birthday



FORREST ECKELS of Britt, Iowa celebrated his 100th birthday on January 7, 2013. His children are Wayne and Judy Eckels, Bonnie and Marvin Kusters, and Bill and Marilyn Eckels. He has 8 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. They are all thankful for his years of good health and his love for his family.

Spring Tour

DORDT COLLEGE CONCERT BAND & CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

- MARCH 7** Dakota Christian School, Corsica, SD
- MARCH 8** Rapid City Christian School, Rapid City, SD
- MARCH 9** Manhattan Christian School, Manhattan, MT
- MARCH 10** Trinity United Reformed Church, Lethbridge, AB
- MARCH 11** Northwest Christian School, Colbert, WA
- MARCH 12** Sunnyside Christian School, Sunnyside, WA
- MARCH 13** Lynden Christian School, Lynden, WA
- MARCH 14** Bellevue Christian Reformed Church, Bellevue, WA
- MARCH 15** Nampa Christian School, Nampa, ID
- MARCH 17** Third Christian Reformed Church, Denver, CO
- MARCH 22** Tour Homecoming Concert at Dordt College

For more details, go to dordt.edu/arts/music/tour

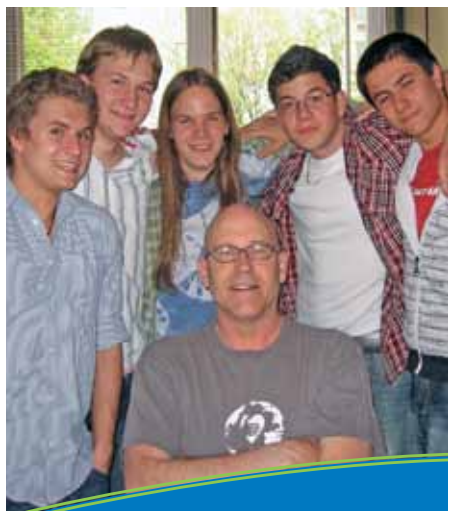


ALENA (BOSCH) STEENWYK residing in Royal Park in Zeeland, MI celebrated 100 years on January 21. with the Lord as her Shepard. Children: Claus & Et Steenwyk, Kathy & Henry De Weerd, Hank & Judi Steenwyk, Jim & Nancy Steenwyk, 14 grandchildren, 29 great grandchildren.

95th Birthday



DOROTHY PERSENAIRE 819 Claremont Ct, Holland, MI, celebrated her 95th birthday on December 17. Children Jenine Vaslie (Jim), Judi Siegers (Dr. Calvin), and Rev. Robert Persenaire (Adrianna Anema) praise God for the blessings He has poured out through her. 6 grands, many greats. We love you Mom



90th Birthday

CORNELIUS AND ELEANOR LIEUWEN Box 32, New Holland, SD 57364; Cornelius Lieuwen celebrated 90 years on Dec. 25, 2012 and Eleanor (Zylstra) Lieuwen celebrates 90 years on Feb. 23, 2013. Their children, Bea and Terry Pheifer, Fran and Marlin DeVries, Jan and Ron Van Zee, Percy and Vicki Lieuwen, and Gail and Alvin Punt, along with 13 grand children and 18 great-grandchildren praise God for the blessings of their lives. The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy.

NELL ALICE (HOVING) PIERSMA of Sun Prairie, WI. celebrated her 90th birthday on December 31. Children, Donna (John) Hoekstra, Tom (Ellen) Piersma, 7 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren praise God for the devotion, love, and Christ-like example she has shown to us during her many years here on earth.

JESSIE (JONGSMA) ZEILSTRA (3000-51st St. SW #305, Calgary, AB, Canada T3E-6S7) will celebrate her 90th birthday with family and friends on February 5. Her children Ed (Ruth), Barb (Edwin) Kamphuis, Bill (Nancy), and Jim (Alida) along with 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren thank God for the blessing she is to all of us.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

KOK Herman and Jean (Griffioen) 16300 Chickadee Circle, Orland Park, IL 60467 celebrating 65 years of marriage on Jan. 29, 2013. You've been an example of Christian marriage to children John and Sanneke, Jim and Debbie, Wayne and Mary, Philip (recently deceased) and Lorraine, as well as 21 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. All praise and thanks to God!

60th Anniversary

KLOOTWYK Gerrit and Trudy of 33550 Northview Place, Abbotsford, B. C. V2S 6P4 celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on March 5, 2013. Open house from 10AM til 4PM.

VISSCHER Herman & Sadie (Heeringa) of Everett, WA will commemorate 60 years of marriage on February 27. Children Carol (Rick), Sharon (Paul), Bryan (Memory), 6 grand-children and 1 great-grandchild celebrate and honor you.

50th Anniversary

Langworthy Dave and Dianne (Moore) 8547 Elkwood St. Byron Center, MI 49315 celebrated 50 years of marriage on Feb 1, 2012. Their children Drenda, Dan & Wanda, Chad & Deb, Roger & Doreen with their children, grandchildren & great grandchildren praise God for his love and faithfulness.

STOL John & Teena members of Bethel CRC in Lacombe, AB celebrated their 50th anniversary on Nov 23, 2012. Friends and family gathered to celebrate this blessed occasion!

Obituaries

BORGENDORFF Leonard H., age 48, died of accidental injuries December 23, 2012. Len is survived by his wife Marcia and four children ages 9 to 16. Additional survivors are Peter and Janet Borgdorff, Arlene and Dan De Kam, Nicholas and Jonna Borgdorff, Trish Borgdorff, Suzi and Andy Bos, Curtis and Joyce Deck and many other relatives.

BRUINIUS Nellie, nee Beukema, age 95, of Orland Park, IL went to be with her Lord on January 3, 2013. Beloved wife of the late Jacob (1980). Loving mother of Bernard "Butch" (Dorothy) Bruinius. Cherished grandmother of Bernard Jr. (Karen), Terri (Craig) Boonstra, Glenn

Church Position Announcements

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

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP First CRC of Ripon, CA is seeking a gifted musician who deeply appreciates Reformed theology and can utilize a broad range of musical expressions (both past and present) to be our next full-time Director of Worship. For a full job description and to apply, please contact our church office at office@riponfirstcrc.org or 209-599-3225.

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

CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Areopagus, a campus ministry in Ames, IA, is seeking a leader to work with Trinity CRC in reaching out to students at Iowa State University. Iowa State is home to 31,000 students including many internationals and is a large part of the Ames community. Is God calling you to join us in bringing the gospel to our campus? Send resume and letter of interest to Rev. Kelly Vander Woude at pastor@amestrinity.org.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR First CRC, Red Deer, AB. We are a growing congregation located in Central Alberta. We are seeking an energized full-time Associate Pastor to work alongside our Senior Pastor to grow and learn about our diverse congregation. We are seeking a Pastor who is gifted musically and can bring renewed leadership to the music ministry in our church. This individual would come equipped with an M. Div to provide spiritual leadership in the formation of small groups, discipleship and increasing outreach within our con-

gregation and community while working alongside our Senior Pastor and other staff as a collaborative team. We are looking for an individual who feels gifted in working with children's ministries and young families. This individual would also be asked to preach once a month. If this position interests you please contact futurestaffing@firstccreddeer.org. Visit our website at www.firstccreddeer.org to learn more about our church and current programming.

SENIOR PASTOR - Lafayette, IN CRC. We are seeking a pastor who can help us reach out to our community to grow our church both spiritually and in numbers. If you have experience and are gifted in outreach, leadership, leading worship, and feel led to explore this opportunity with us, please respond by sending your ministry profile/resume to secretary@lafayettecrc.org. Our Search Team contact is Steve Jonker at shjonker@yahoo.com

SENIOR PASTOR. Mill Creek Community Church (30 min north of Seattle) is searching for its next Senior Pastor due to Pastor Eleanor Rietkerk's retirement in January 2013. We are looking for a pastor who is passionate about preaching, with strong leadership skills, enthusiasm for community outreach and helping our church grow in membership. Please send resumes and/or applications to mccc-searchteam@hotmail.com. Experience preferred.

PASTOR AVAILABLE Western Michigan Pastor looking for 15-20 hours per week of ministry. Contact Pastor Jim at 460-1811.

PASTOR: Covenant CRC is looking for a Reformed and reforming pastor to provide energetic servant leadership in Sioux Center, Iowa, a Christian college community. covenantcrc.net | covenant@mtcnet.net

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

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(Valerie), Dawn (Scott) Gibson and the late Jackie and John. Dearest great-grandmother of 16 and great-great grandmother of 3. Fond sister of Helena Creaney, Jean Heersma and the late Clara DeBoer, Ida Bruinius, Alice Kerkstra and Albert Beukema.

DECKER Julius Arthur (Bud) age 91; January 2, 2013; Grand Rapids, MI; He was preceded in death by his parents, first wife Shirley, his second wife Ella, and his brother Albert. He is survived by his children: Helen Brighttrall Keehner, Henry and Jacki Baker, George and Judy Brighttrall, Jerry and Sherri Decker, Jon and Mary Schuster, Jim and Ellen Decker, Tim and Jodi Nieboer; 15 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

DE NOOY Margaret (Marge) went to be with her Lord and Savior on November 8, 2012 - two weeks before her 94th birthday, at the Holland Christian Home in North Haledon, NJ. Preceded in death by her parents; her siblings: Garret De Nooy, Jack De Nooy, twin sister, Henrietta Brandes, Jean Boonstra, and Carrie Schaaf. Survived by a sister, Kathryn (Rev. Harry) Arnold of Portage, MI, and step-sister Pauline Van Beekum, sister-in-law Wanda De Nooy, and many nieces and nephews, as well as, grand-nieces and grand nephews. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

DYKSHORN Martha (Veurink), age 85, went to be with her Lord and Savior Dec. 20 at the Good Samaritan Nursing Home, Corsica, SD. Preceded in death by 'Bill', her husband of 56 years and daughter-in-law Lynn Dykshorn. Survived by children: Sharon (Ron) Jones, Patty (Fred) Ligtenberg, Percy (Carol) Dykshorn, and Loren Dykshorn; 10 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren. Great is God's faithfulness.

JOLING Bert, 95, Wisconsin Rapids, WI, died Nov 7, 2012. Treasuring his influence and thanking God for his steadfast faith, keen mind, musical gifts, and generous spirit are Dena, his wife of 73 years; daughters Donna Blik, Joanne Vander Lugt, Karen Van Vuren, Beverly Altena, Rose Blankespoor, Shirley Engelsman, and their spouses; and 97 other descendants including spouses. He was preceded in death by great-grandson, Micah De Kam, 3, Sept 5, 2012.

KLEIN John W., 75; went to the LORD 12/27/12 in Gallup, N. M. His wife of 46 years, Ruth, survives, along with daughter Elizabeth of Phoenix, son Robert of Gallup, 8 grandchildren, brother Alan of Maine, sister Shyla of Michigan and the loving family of God at Rehoboth CRC.

MARLINK Lenore (Vander Ark): age 82, was released from the prison of Alzheimer's to the loving arms of her Savior on Dec. 8, 2012. She and her husband, Rev. Earl Marlink, served as Home Missions Interim Ministry Specialists for 13½ years. Lenore is survived by Earl, her husband of 61 years, 5 daughters, 3 sons-in-law, 9 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. Condolences may be sent to Earl at 7958 Caceres Way, Sacramento CA 95823 or emailed to marlinkel@earthlink.net. Please send memorial gifts to Christian Reformed Home Missions.



PLEIMA Albert, age 90 died Oct 16, 2012. 714 West 1st St. Pella, IA 50219. Survived by wife of 64 years, Lenora. Children: Linda Roose, Marcie Brink, Randy Pleima and Arvin Pleima, and Duane Pleima (deceased) 10 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

WILTJER Robert J. age 81, met his Lord Dec. 17. Beloved husband for 60 yrs. to Theresa (Wiegiers) Loving father of Beverly (Neal) Stob, and James (Renee). Beloved grandfather to Nicole (Dan) Collins, Jeremiah, Heather and Ashley Wiltjer. Dear brother of Rich (Marilyn) Bettie (Bob) Triezenberg and Jim (Nancy). Brother-in-law of Grace (Art) Rosenwinkel, Dena & Will Wichers, Barbara & John Buursma. Bernard (Lynne) Wiegiers, the late Hilda (late Don Huisenga).

Employment

BOOKKEEPER International Needs, Zeeland, MI. Part time position 20 hours per week. Associate degree and 5 years' experience required. Must be proficient in QuickBooks and Microsoft Office. For full job description, go to www.innetworkusa.org. Send resume and cover letter to careers@innetworkusa.org.

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 Heather at 616-243-7080 or heather@vangels.com or visit our website at www.vangels.com and complete an online application.

DRIVERS NEEDED: Local greenhouse looking for semi & straight truck drivers with current CDL and Medical Card for spring season. Competitive wages paid. Please contact Amy at 616-875-7211 for more information.

MUSIC COORDINATOR NEEDED: Covenant Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, is seeking to fill the position of Music Co-ordinator. In order to enhance the proclamation of God's Word and to enrich the act of worship in an integrated and unified manner the

Music Co-ordinator role will provide musical leadership for the congregation in its life and worship services, nurturing musical gifts and accompanying worship through a variety of musical methodologies. A detailed role description can be provided upon request. A music degree is preferable or equivalent experience. We will be taking applications for part and full time. For more details about this position or to submit your resume, please contact the Music Co-ordinator Search Team Chair, Chris Exelby at chris@BayviewFlowers.com

PROVOST Kuyper College is seeking applications for the strategic leadership position as Provost of the college. As the chief academic officer, the provost assumes a key leadership role in guarding, promoting and nurturing the college's unique mission and heritage of preparing Christian leaders. More detailed information about this opportunity and the application process can be found at www.kuyper.edu/provost

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VACATION RENTAL JENSEN BEACH, FL Turtle Reef Club - 2br, 2ba unit on Atlantic ocean, sleeps 6. \$1200 wk, booked before Dec. 1 reduced to only \$1100. Weeks available in Dec 2012 and 2013-Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr. Email: garymaryb@yahoo.com

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Direct all inquiries to Mr. Loren Veldhuizen,
Executive Director Search Committee Chair
veldhuizen45@gmail.com

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Miscellaneous

MISSION TRIPS! MOSES (Making OurSelves Equipped Servants) offers short-term mission trips for teens and adults. Locations: Mississippi (March 28 – April 6, 2013), New Jersey (June, 2013, tentative), and Ensenada, Baja, Mexico (July, 2013). Reasonable fees, all inclusive. Call 616-949-0344; mosesweb.org

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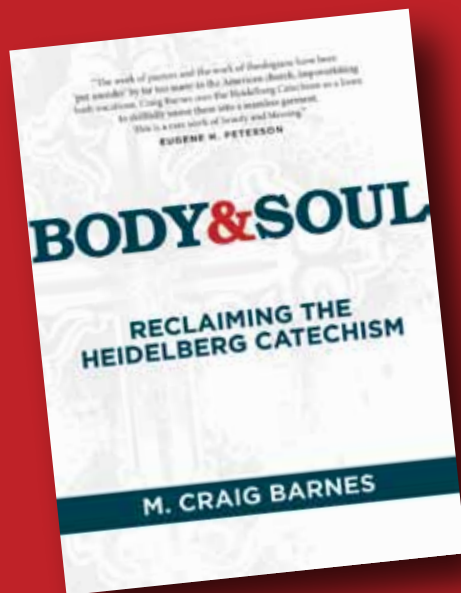
For more information, visit www.trnty.edu, highlight General Info and then click Job Openings. Processing of applications will begin mid-February.

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Dordt College

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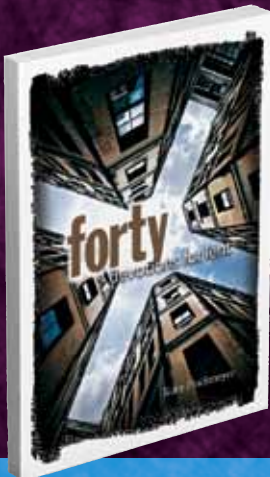
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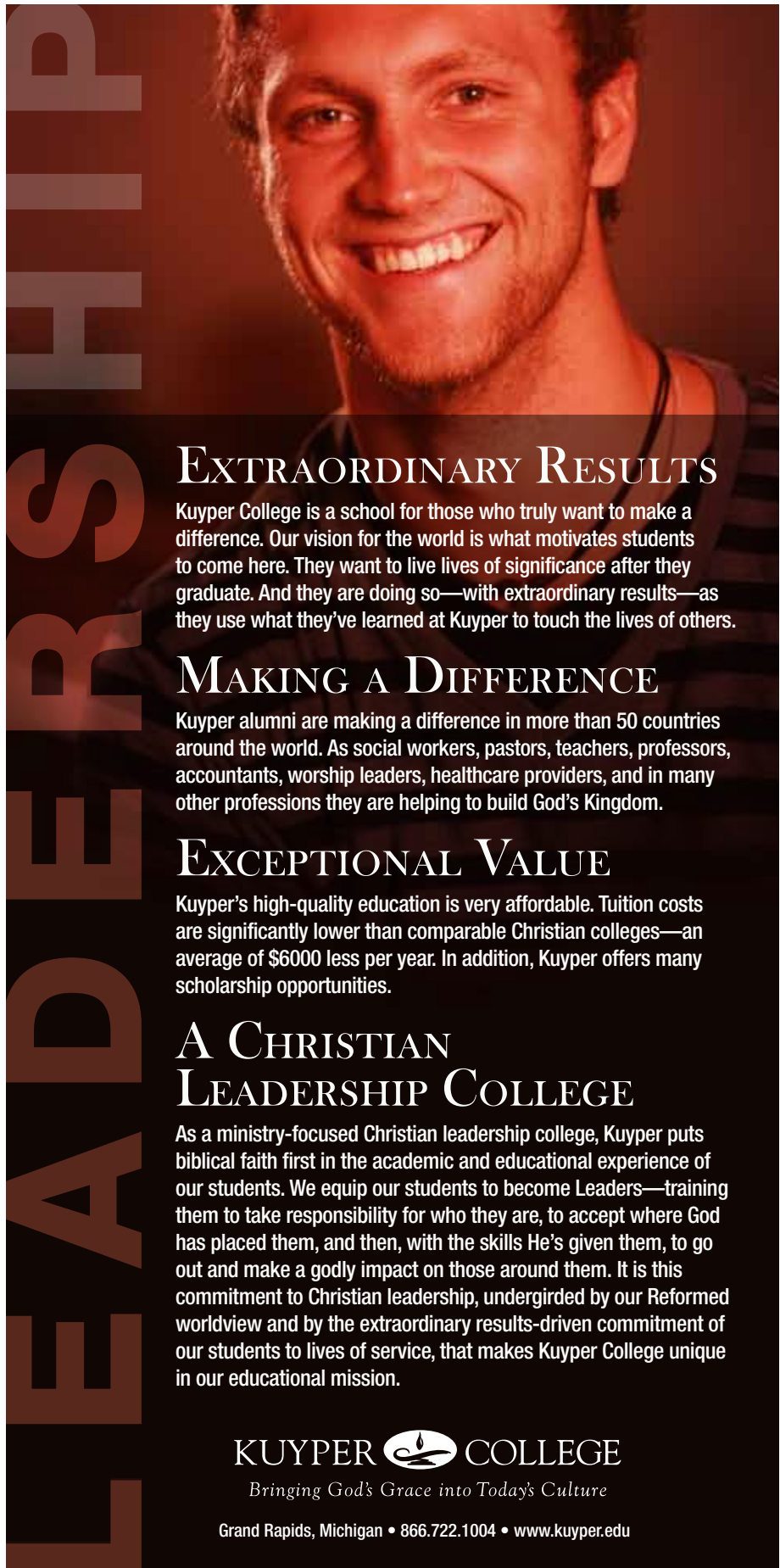
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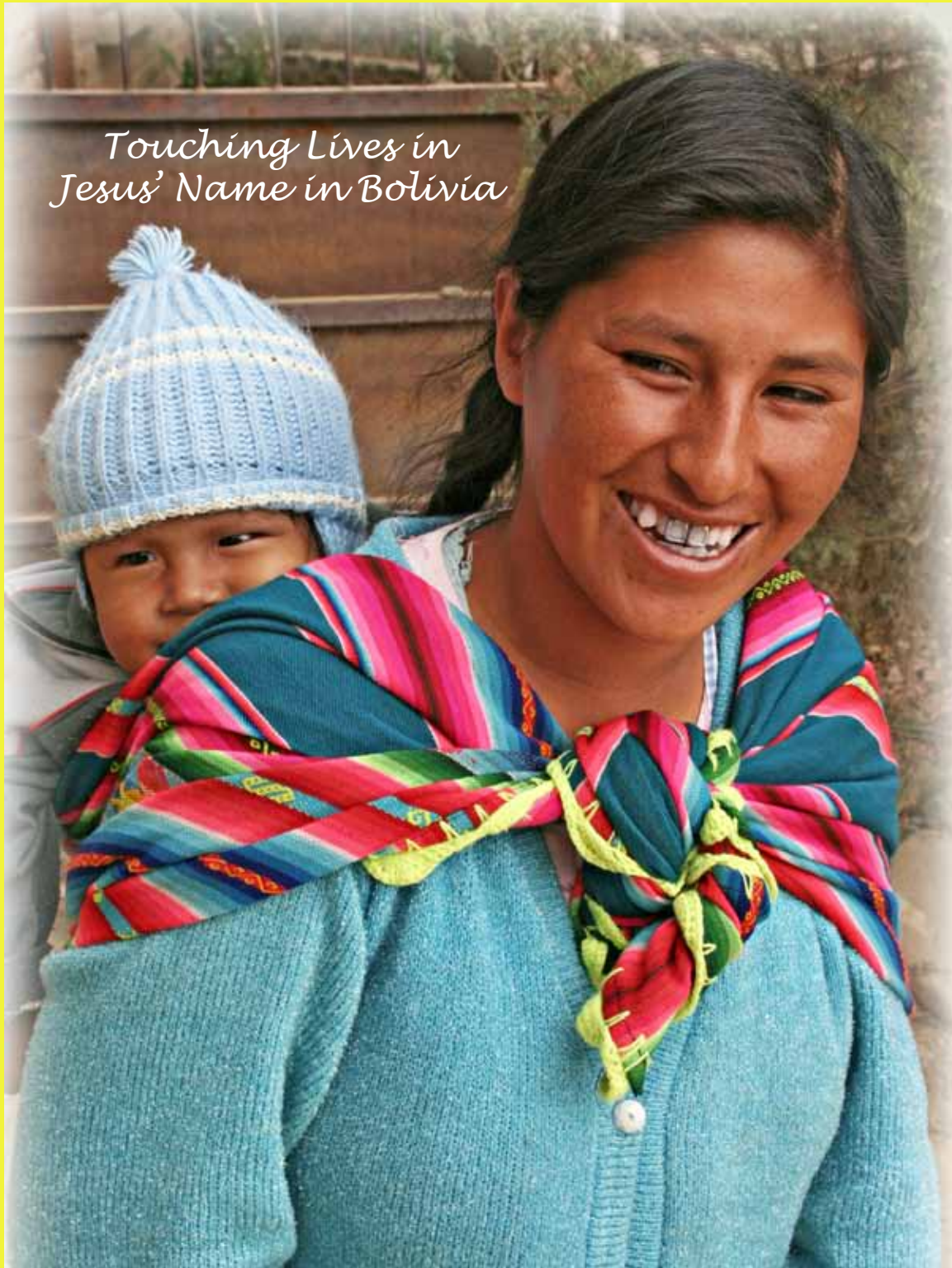
As a ministry-focused Christian leadership college, Kuyper puts biblical faith first in the academic and educational experience of our students. We equip our students to become Leaders—training them to take responsibility for who they are, to accept where God has placed them, and then, with the skills He's given them, to go out and make a godly impact on those around them. It is this commitment to Christian leadership, undergirded by our Reformed worldview and by the extraordinary results-driven commitment of our students to lives of service, that makes Kuyper College unique in our educational mission.

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# Punch Lines

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



**M**y son Jonas, 4, was playing with our "little people" nativity scene. If you look closely at the picture, you'll find an unexpected range of characters, from dinosaurs to Darth Vader to Superman, along with many animals and "regular" little people. When I asked him to tell me about it, he smiled and told me they were all worshipping and visiting the baby Jesus. Just what Christmas is and should be—everyone is welcome to worship the King!

—Alicia Lise

**A**t a local church, a tall sign includes service times, the pastor's name, and this timely reminder:

"Accept the Bread of Life, or you are toast."

—Conn Witt

**A** woman went to the post office to buy stamps for the

Christmas season. "What denomination?" asked the clerk.

"Good heavens! Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well, give me 50 Catholic and 50 Christian Reformed."

—George Vander Weit

**A**fter the pastor read aloud the passage from Matthew where Jesus said, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," an elderly man told his wife, "Honey, I think I'm getting pretty good at having my left hand not knowing what my right hand is doing."

She thought for a moment and replied, "That's true, dear, and your right hand doesn't know what your left hand is doing anymore either."

—Ade Vander Starre

**S**udden Death: What happens to the attention span of the congregation if the preacher goes into "overtime."

—Suzanne Lauritzen

**T**hree boys in the school yard are bragging about their fathers. The first boy says, "My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper. He calls it a poem and they give him \$50."

The second boy says, "That's nothing. My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper. He calls it a song and they give him \$100."

The third boy says, "I got you both beat. My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper and calls it a sermon. It takes eight people to collect all the money!"

—John Veltkamp

**W**hat is a grandparent? Here are a few answers from a class of 8-year-olds:

- They wear glasses and funny underwear.
- They are the only grownups who like to spend time with us.
- They have to answer questions like "Why isn't God married?" and "How come dogs chase cats?"
- When they take us for walks, they slow down for things like pretty leaves and caterpillars.
- Grandparents are a lady and a man who have no little children of their own. They like other people's.

—Herm Kelderman

**A**n insurance broker called his client to say that his insurance premium check had bounced for lack of funds. "So," said the client, "Who didn't have the money, me or the bank?"

—Dick Bylsma

**A** 4-year-old patient recently came to our pediatrics office and hopped up on the exam table, ready for his checkup. I placed my stethoscope over his heart and listened. With wide eyes, he asked excitedly, "Did you hear Jesus?"

—Dr. Jayne Rauwerda

**O**n a recent road trip, my son and I were listening to CDs. After we'd heard one song for about the third time, I asked him, "Why are they singing, 'I spilled the beans?'"

He replied, "They were singing, 'I still believe!'"

—Onetta Siegersma



"Before considering any plea bargain, my client needs to know if you're talking human years or dog years."



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