

BANNER

June 2013 | www.thebanner.org

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Synod 2013
Synod 2013 will be held in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 7-14. Look for updated articles at *thebanner.org*, Facebook (*The Banner* magazine), and Twitter (@crcbanner) throughout synod. You can also follow synod via webcast and synod news office press releases, all of which can be accessed via the Synod 2013 website.
The July print issue will arrive in your mailbox a little later than usual so we can cover synod right up to the closing doxology.



Cover: Daniel Camacho
PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL DEVRIES

Don't Do It

SYNOD WILL EVENTUALLY APPOINT A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR for our denomination. The successful candidate may benefit from some advice: *don't do it*. Don't devise yet another grandiose denominational plan that is supposed to be implemented by denominational agencies, ministries, institutions, and even local congregations. Listen to the old warhorses who have actively participated in all those previous attempts: it's not gonna happen. Spinning out yet another will waste money and energy and frustrate many loyal CRC folks.

Don't misunderstand: every denominational agency and ministry needs a solid plan based on what the churches ask them to do. And interagency collaboration to advance those plans should be encouraged. But collaboration between CRC agencies and institutions should further the distinct mandates that synod has given each of them, not some overarching plan imposed on them by a committee of the whole. This is what happened in the past when every ministry was expected to participate in "group projects" that were amalgams of hastily called cross agency brainstorming sessions—with precious little enthusiasm on the part of most participants. A further irritant was the hope that vetting this patched-together "plan" to the Board of Trustees and synod would make it serve as a rallying point for and by our churches. In our dreams!

Churches expect the denomination to help them fulfill their congregational calling as *they* perceive it, not as denominational leaders do. Congregations are more than willing to join forces under denominational leadership to do the things that we can best do together. But that's it. Our congregations do not look to Grand Rapids to tell us how to march in lockstep toward denominationally concocted goals.

Churches expect the denomination to help them fulfill their congregational calling as *they* perceive it.

Our new executive director should build on those areas where previous administrations have made clear gains:

- catalyze regular conversations between agency, ministry, and institutional leaders to encourage fruitful collaborative efforts that will advance their own synodical mandates
- provide integration of support services such as human resources, finance, development, communications, physical plant, and publishing
- facilitate the work of big and small ministries alike, making room for them to excel at the work that the churches expect from them
- provide overall supervision and accountability so we get the best bang for our buck
- support, encourage, and assist congregations when asked

Local churches operate best when their Spirit-gifted folks are freed, equipped, and empowered to serve in ministries they themselves feel led to pursue. The structures flex to make room for the specific gift mix the Spirit provides. Church leaders resource those saints rather than running the show and telling them where they must fit in.

Yet, as this more open-ended kind of leadership flourishes locally, denominations still try to devise centralized plans that are supposed to integrate everything—whatever that means in a multichurch setting.

Let's hope that our denomination's next executive director will realize—fully supported by the rest of us—that the church is happiest and most productive when the movement of the Spirit allows for it to be a wondrously messy place overflowing with *many* gifts, visions, and dreams (Acts 2:41-47). ■



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

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My Neighbor

MY NEIGHBOR IS A RARITY.
A busy sushi chef, a devoted single father,
His posture seemed worried to me,
Always walking and turning keys.

I stayed alert all summer and finally caught him.
At our apartment's mailbox I asked about dinner,
Something nondescript? And (oh!) he agreed.
"This is how neighbors are made," I sang on my insides.
I warmed and grew wide with joy;
My soul rose and sat back like a piano lid.

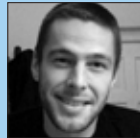
The day came, brimming with expectancy.
I rang him in the afternoon to confirm our time,
But he answered his phone in the next town over;
He had forgotten and was playing baseball.
He apologized. I lied and said, "Hey, no problem."
Numb, I ate our meal alone.

Someday, the earth will have concord.
We will know what things mean to people.

Someday, humanity will awaken.
Heavy laden with unfulfillment,
He will gather this from us,
And it will look so small.

Wide with joy,
We will rise and sit back.
And then we will eat,
Laughing at the past.

For now, nothing is harder than
Loving my neighbor as I wish I was loved. ■

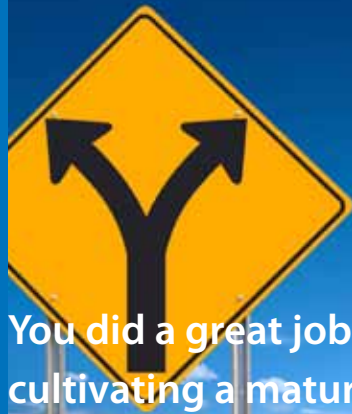


Simon Cunningham is a church planter in Seattle, Wash., through Christian Reformed Home Missions.



Let Us Go

OPINION



You did a great job of cultivating a mature church in Canada.

DURING THEIR YEARS of living in Egypt, the people of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham prospered. But 400 years after Joseph had initially brought the 12 tribes to Egypt, Moses came to Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go.” It took many attempts before Pharaoh acceded to the request. The people of Israel did not rise up in a rebellion, a civil war, or a labor stoppage. Instead, through Moses, they relied on those in power to voluntarily give up their power.

Martin Luther King Jr., as head of the civil rights movement, also came to those in power. He went to white people, legislators, and common church people, and said, “Let my people go.” Give us human rights. Again, it was the 90 percent of the population who had to voluntarily give up discrimination, voluntarily grant equality.

Dear friends in the United States, you have been “mother” to the earliest congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada for more than 100 years. You have been our mentor and helper for more than 60 years, since the flood of immigrants and the tenfold multiplication of congregations in Canada after World War II. Now it is

time for us to say: “Let my people go.” Let us go. Let us be an independent CRC in Canada.

This is not a rebellion, a civil war, or a stoppage of ministry shares. It is more than time for you to recognize that you did a great job of cultivating a mature church in Canada. There are thousands upon thousands of Christian Reformed people in Canada who have benefited from your colleges and seminary in the early years so they could pursue the Christian Reformed testimony in Canada. We have matured. We have grown up. We want to move on in partnership, in equality, with equal rights, in equal determination. We want to be the CRC in Canada, not the CRC in North America.

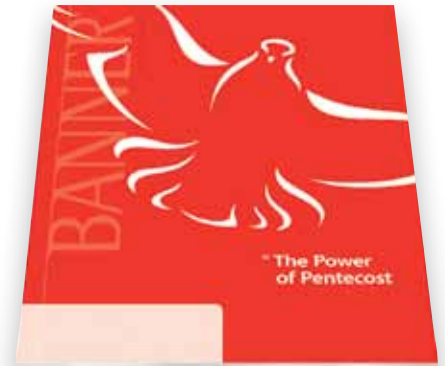
Dear U.S. friends, urge your synodical delegates to make motions toward true independence for Canada. As Americans you are proud—humbly proud—of the mission success in Nigeria. There you claim the CRC has more members than in North America. You did not hold that church in subjection as you are holding the Canadian churches in subjection. Stop dictating to us how to do Canadian Home Missions, Canadian Chaplaincy, Canadian First Nations relations. Stop administering Canadian pensions and auditing Canadian bookkeeping records. We can do it, and we want to do it. Delegates to synod, have the courage to make the motions for Canadian independence.

We can come back stronger as true partners. ■



Harry Houtman is a specialist in gift and estate planning. He attends First CRC of Toronto, Ontario.

LE



Not Sure?

In the editorial “Don’t Be So Sure” (April 2013), creation is suggested to be one of many Bible mysteries that we should not be sure about. I suggest that God nailed it down and the only reason it is a mystery is because we thought it politically correct not to be sure. For many, [the creation story in] Genesis is a fable with any number of interpretations, all of which are thought to be more viable than the literal account God says it is in Ex. 31:17; Ps. 33:6, 9; 1 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5; and more.

I believe a good number of those young in faith have spiraled into unbelief because we allowed the discussion to make Genesis look silly, and therefore the rest of the Bible suspect as well.

Certainly when God speaks and later confirms, one can be sure, and discussion to the contrary is disrespectful.

—Mene Zoerhof
Holland, Mich.

Is there room for questions about our beliefs (“Don’t Be So Sure”)? Absolutely. But the answers don’t come from ourselves or others—they come from the Scriptures. Do we need to understand everything? Absolutely not. But we believe his Word without a shadow of doubt, knowing that all things will be revealed when we see our Savior face to face.

—Carl Wiersum
Jenison, Mich.

TTERS

Are creation, the flood, Christ's birth, death, and resurrection a mystery? ("Don't Be So Sure"). Of course, who among us has not had to pray, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." But the mystery is lifted when the Holy Spirit again and again prompts us to turn to the infallible Scriptures (see Rom. 1:19-21).

—Albert Rumph
Collingwood, Ontario

How I wish Synod 2012 had practiced some of the "holy hesitancy" about doctrinal expressions recommended by Clarence Vos ("A Holy Hesitancy" April 2013) and Bob De Moor ("Don't Be So Sure") instead of reinserting the unhesitant phrase "fully agrees with" to the new Covenant for Office-bearers at the last moment. This decision left me to stumble over the phrase at my ordination despite 10 years of Form of Subscription revision committee work to be more "reverently reserved." We are not yet ready to "risk the conversation" and bring doctrinal subscription to the more hesitant place Vos and De Moor suggest, and our denomination's witness is less authentic because of it.

—Wilma van der Leek
Surrey, British Columbia

How could six-day creation be mere dogma when it is clearly recorded in the Genesis account and the fourth commandment ("A Holy Hesitancy")? Responsible hermeneutics means (1) the Bible is its own interpreter, being true to the text; (2) general revelation, God's world, must be interpreted in the light of special revelation (God's Word); (3) the authority of Scripture is not to be subordinate to external evidences or influences; and (4) the text can only have one correct interpretation.

Postmodern liberalism, on the other hand, replaces creation days with evolutionary ages (what we think is true rather

than biblical truth) and human dogma based on opinion.

—Mel Mulder
Banning, Calif.

Guys with Guns

After reading that NRA president Wayne LaPierre's statement (taken out of context) "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun" is "morally mistaken" and "religiously repugnant" ("Religious Coalition Takes on the Gun Lobby," March 2013), I am looking forward to a full exposé that includes the other side of this issue.

It is very easy to join in liberal rhetoric [and] the politics of intellectuals and pursue false solutions to societal challenges. I trust *The Banner* will not fall victim to such misleading populist thinking.

—Gary Braaksma
Bellingham, Wash.

The statement made by NRA head Wayne LaPierre about "good guys" and "bad guys" with guns, taken in context of his entire speech, is essentially correct ("Religious Coalition Takes on Gun Lobby"). He could have chosen better adjectives and elaborated a little more, but was not, as Jim Wallis characterized, "morally mistaken" and "religiously repugnant."

The clergy's response to this issue comes from their perspective of being exposed to inner-city gang and drug violence, a vastly different perspective than that of millions of Americans who are responsible owners of firearms.

Consider that if the second amendment were to be repealed, it would not be long before we lost the first.

—Jack Dykstra
Comstock Park, Mich.

Blue Marble

The story "His Blue Marble—and Mine" (March 2013) reminded me of a time when the late Rev. Eppinga was to be the

featured speaker at one of the "Ladies' Rallies" held for many years in the Thunder Bay church community. He spoke about his blue marble and why he carried it in his pocket. Afterward the ladies were invited to take home their own blue marbles and follow his example.

A year later the featured speaker, a friend of Rev. Eppinga's, asked about the marbles. A show of hands indicated that many were faithfully carrying them.

"Good," he quipped. "Rev. Eppinga will be happy to know you haven't lost all your marbles!"

—Cathy Ypma
Barrie, Ontario

As a busy college student, I often feel that everything is out of control. Reading "His Blue Marble—and Mine" reminded me that God is always in control. He never forgets about me or about his creation. Angie Soloman's article was a great reminder for me.

—Kayla Smits
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Church History

I appreciated Lloyd Rang's concise history of the church ("Church History Highlights," March 2013). However, I would like to point out two areas of possible improvement. First, the Reformed tradition starts church history with Adam, and the history of Old Testament Israel is part of the church's history. So a better title might have been "New Testament Church History." Second, there were several councils of Ephesus debating the nature of Christ. Other than that, I found the format very useful.

—Larry Sauvain
Centennial, Colo.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

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Nominee for Executive Director Withdraws

The nominee to be the next executive director of the Christian Reformed Church has withdrawn from the nomination process.

Just days before the candidate was to be interviewed by the denomination's Board of Trustees, the Board was informed that the candidate had withdrawn for

reasons that were not made public.

The nominee had been selected after nine months of work by a search committee. Had the nominee sustained a successful interview, the Board would have recommended that Synod 2013 interview and appoint the person as the new executive director.

It appears unlikely that the Board will present a new nominee in time for Synod 2013. After lengthy discussion, the Board voted to ask its executive committee to propose what the next steps should be.

The Board also unanimously voted to request that Joel Boot, 66, and Peter Borgdorff, 73, stay on for the com-

ing year. Boot was appointed as interim executive director in 2011 for a two-year term, and subsequently hired Borgdorff as deputy executive director. Borgdorff had been executive director prior to retirement in 2006.

—Gayla R. Postma

Michigan Church Transforms Cadet Program into Outreach

On any given Monday night, the Cadet building at Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., is a hive of "organized chaos."

On one such night, under the supervision of eight veteran counselors, elementary- and middle school-age boys drill into wood that will be assembled as camp stools, sand and spray-paint pinewood derby cars, and practice archery.

"I like to make cars," said Blessing Htoo, 10, who came from Myanmar as a refugee with his family.

Htoo and his brother are the only two of 16 regular attendees who are members of the church. The others are all children from the neighborhood who have become connected to the ministry.

"The change was subtle over the years," said head counselor Dale Rietberg, who has been part of the program for over a decade. When he started, every boy who attended was a part of a family that belonged to the church. "The Cadets keep me coming back. They are so enthusiastic. They learn from us and we learn from them. It is great to see the pride that they've made something themselves." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis

(top) Jerry Van Veen observes as Cadets smooth their pinewood derby cars on the power sander.

(right) Gordy Van Haitsma helps a Cadet assemble a campstool.



NOAH KRUIS

The Banner Wins Church Press Honors

The Banner was recognized with five awards from the Associated Church Press (ACP), and five more from the Evangelical Press Association (EPA).

From the ACP, *The Banner* took home the following awards:

Award of Excellence

Convention or Meeting Coverage: "Synod 2012," Gayla R. Postma, news editor.

Award of Merit

"The Art of Lament," Nicholas Wolterstorff, author.

Honorable Mentions

"The Beauty of Belonging," Harold Hiemstra, author.

"Tuned In," Kristy Quist, department editor.

"Why Being a Binational Church Is So Important," Gayla Postma, author.

From the EPA, *The Banner* took home the following awards:

Award of Merit

The Banner in the category for denominational magazines.

Second Place

"Urban Ministry: Looking for a Place to Call Home," Brian Walsh, author.

Third Place

"Christmas Narratives: Jesus' Family Stories Help Us Make Sense of Our Own," Jennifer Parker, author.

Fourth Place

"God's Belly Button," Leonard Vander Zee, author.

"Missing Maggie," Judith Claire Hardy, author.

Friendship Ministries' Nella Uitvlugt Dies



Nella Uitvlugt, executive director of Friendship Ministries, died unexpectedly on March 20, 2013.

Uitvlugt spent 16 years at the helm of the nonprofit organization, which helps churches in more than 75 denominations in 28 countries welcome people with cognitive disabilities.

"She knew that churches who decided to give Friendship ministry a try would not regret it," said Gwen Genzink, who worked with Uitvlugt at Friendship Ministries for eight years. "They would understand God's kingdom in a fresh way and experience the joy that comes when the Spirit breaks down walls between people."

Genzink also said that Uitvlugt wouldn't let churches off the hook if they told her they didn't have any members with intellectual disabilities.

"She would push them, asking them why it is that people with intellectual disabilities are part of the human family but not the church family," she said.

"[Nella] also leaves us with a beautiful example of how to live life passionately and compassionately," Genzink continued. "We look at people and see so much more because Nella showed us how."

Uitvlugt is survived by her husband, Eric, and her children Andrea, Kevin, and Trevor. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Harry Kwantes

1930 - 2013

Dr. Harry J. Kwantes, 82, known for his friendliness and firm handshake, passed away on January 23 following a lengthy struggle with cancer.

After migrating to Canada as a child, Kwantes graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1959. In 1988, he received a D. Min. from Trinity Theological Seminary in Indiana.

Kwantes served Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario, Minnesota, and Michigan. He also served as a hospital chaplain.

Kwantes readily shared his considerable administrative gifts with the churches, serving as stated clerk for what was Classis Minnesota and for Classis Grand Rapids South.

Fluent in Dutch, Kwantes translated the well-known Dutch scholar H. Veldkamp's standard work on the Heidelberg Catechism, *Zondagskinderen*, under the title *Children of the Lord's Day*.

Kwantes deeply loved the Word of God, especially the Gospel of John.

Kwantes is survived by his wife, Henrietta, four children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, and four 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*.

NEWS

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John De Pater

1923 – 2013

Rev. John De Pater, 89, passed away after a brief illness. Kindly strong-minded, he passionately emphasized the need for divine grace.

De Pater worked in the underground resistance movement in the Netherlands during World War II and subsequently served in the Dutch army in Indonesia.

In 1951, he and his family migrated to Canada. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1966 and later received a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies from the University of Ottawa.

De Pater served Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario, British Columbia, and California. He retired in 1988 but continued to serve as an interim pastor.

De Pater was a serious student of the Scriptures. He was passionate about the salvation of people, consistently emphasizing the call to repentance and the need to be born again.

The family did a lot of camping, and De Pater never wearied of pointing out God's hand in the beauty of nature.

De Pater was predeceased by his wife, Alice, in 2012. He is survived by six children and their spouses, 24 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Synod 2013 Urged to Fund Diversity Efforts

Synod 2013 is being asked to approve hiring a diversity director for two years to help further the goal of ethnic diversity in the senior leadership of the Christian Reformed Church. A key recommendation coming from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG II), it initially carried a price tag of \$2 million, but that amount was recently reduced to \$200,000.

The Board of Trustees of the CRC encouraged Synod 2013 to adopt the recommendations once the requested budget was reduced by 80 percent.

In a report to the Board of Trustees, Deputy Executive Director Peter Borgdorff wrote, "In earlier communications to the Board, the administration expressed significant concern about the viability of the recommendations. We are grateful to report that we have reached an understanding, subject to synod's approval, of a more modest but hopefully effective way forward."

This is the second report on Diversity in Leadership since Synod 2009 instructed the Board of Trustees and then-Executive Director Gerard Dykstra to convene "an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination."

Synod 2011 received the first report and adopted some recommendations. But it also expanded the original group and asked it, among other things, to propose strategies to raise up and mentor diverse leaders at all levels of the church.

The committee proposes that the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations develop a plan for identifying and recruiting multiethnic leaders and create a database of candidates. To grow that list of leadership candidates, the committee is recommending the development of training materials that can be used in local churches, classis meetings, regional events, and conferences to equip people for service in all levels of the church.

Regional workshops would provide training on the importance of participation on denominational boards, how boards function, how to become effective board members, and how classis meetings run, in addition to covering CRC history and polity.

To help denominational boards achieve a goal of 25 percent multiethnic representation, pastors would be called upon to

solicit multiethnic members to participate at broader levels of the church. Classes (regional groups of churches) would be asked to be intentional about nominating diverse people to denominational boards.

Another recommendation is for enhanced and ongoing professional development in diversity education and cultural sensitivity for all staff. Each agency and educational institution would be required to include diversity goals and timelines in their strategic plan. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma



GAYLA R. POSTMA

Board of Trustees Elects New Officers

The officers of the binational Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church are president Sheila Holmes (center), vice president Kathy Vandergrift (right), and vice all Scott Greenway.



RON RUPKE

Jasper Hoogendam will ride part of the Sea to Sea tour on a unicycle.

Sea to Sea Rider Going on One Wheel

Jasper Hoogendam, a 59-year-old member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Cobourg, Ontario, plans to ride a unicycle for at least 10 percent of his trip on the 2013 Sea to Sea bicycle tour. The tour is sponsored by several agencies, including World Renew.

Hoogendam will be riding for two weeks, beginning in Grand Rapids, Mich., and finishing in Montreal, Quebec. Along with his fundraising goal of \$5,000, he pledged to highlight the link between handicaps and poverty. He describes his unicycle as a bicycle with a one-wheel handicap.

Hoogendam said, "As I put on kilometers to get ready for Sea to Sea, if nothing else I bring many a smile as I ride by."

The nine week-long ride starts on June 24 in Los Angeles and ends in New York City on August 24. Funds raised will be directed to several Christian agencies that fight poverty. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ron Rupke

Benjamin's Hope Brings Hope for the Journey

Krista Mason, a member of Providence Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., gets to work at a miracle every day.

That miracle is Benjamin's Hope, a 40-acre rural campus in Holland Township that serves people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Ever since her son Ben, now 17, was diagnosed with autism at a young age, Mason has been dreaming of a place for him to live, work, play, and worship. This seven-million-dollar dream-turned-reality will include residences for up to 24 adults, a farm, and an activity/worship center.

Nurturing connections with the local community is one of Benjamin's Hope's unique emphases. "The intention is not to isolate people with disabilities from society. It's a community itself and will encourage involvement from the broader community," said Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns for the Christian Reformed Church.

Eventually 300 adults with special needs will participate each

week in day programming, including vegetable gardening and caring for farm animals. Mason said, "Farming creates a natural fit for folks who have challenges with language."

A joint CRC-Reformed Church in America church plant on campus will be tailored for families who have children with disabilities. "There are folks who give up on church completely. That's happened much too often," said Stephenson. "This is going to be a church in which people with disabilities and their families are going to feel welcome."

"We looked at this as 'how do we create a place of grace where there is a place for unique expressions and sound and movement?' That became a very critical part of the whole of this," Mason said. "If we want to create something that helps families be strong from the time their toddler is diagnosed all the way through the journey, it has to have a church."

—Susan Vanden Berg



SUSAN VANDEN BERG

The site of Benjamin's Hope in Holland, Mich.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Stanley Vander Klay 1935 – 2013

Rev. Stanley Vander Klay, 77, was a believer without guile, uncomplicated but profound, with a heart zealous for people's salvation. He passed away on March 4.

Vander Klay graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and obtained a Master's in Counseling degree from New York Theological Seminary. He received a Doctorate in Ministry degree in 1984.

Vander Klay started a ministry at Northside Community Chapel in Paterson, N.J., and remained there for 36 years. He went on to serve in Baldwinsville, N.Y., for four years and retired in 2000.

Those who knew Vander Klay emphasize that he was a caring, generous, diligent, and humble servant of the Lord.

He was an able church planter, an advocate of Christian education, a leader of denominational ministries, a mentor of younger pastors, and a promoter of racial justice.

He loved traveling, photography, nature, and cars. He was the author of *Chains of Grace* (2011), snapshots of how one community dealt with the Civil Rights movement. He and his wife, Barbara, were recipients of the Calvin College Distinguished Alumni Award in 1987.

Vander Klay is survived by his wife, three children and their spouses, and 10 grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John Petersen

1919 – 2013

Rev. John A. Petersen, 93, a man of letters and passionate pastor, passed away on January 29.

Petersen graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1949 and served Christian Reformed congregations in California, Washington, Michigan, New Jersey, and Montana. He retired in 1984.

Petersen was a lover of poetry and a poet himself. Theologically well-versed, he had a fondness for and understanding of Barthian theology. A man of sympathy, humor, and ready laughter, he saw the positive side of life. He filled the role of toastmaster at many church social functions. He and his wife instilled in their children a love of the arts and music as well as an appreciation of national parks and nature in general.

Petersen's wife, Suzanne, preceded him in death in 2006. He is survived by three children and their spouses, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Two Percent Ministry Share Increase Recommended For Faith Formation

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church is recommending to Synod 2013 that ministry shares be increased by 2 percent for the coming year. Ministry shares are the monies collected per member to fund denominational ministries.

With the dissolution of the Faith Alive board as early as July 1, many of that ministry's critical functions will be realigned with other denominational ministries. That realignment will include new faith formation initiatives and better integration with the support services for congregations provided by the Specialized Ministries.

The new ministry share will be \$332.79 per member, up from

Ministry Allocation by Board:	
Back to God Ministries International	\$43.97
Calvin College	\$31.60
Calvin Theological Seminary	\$35.91
Christian Reformed Home Missions	\$46.88
Christian Reformed World Missions	\$60.56
Board of Trustees:	\$113.87
Faith Formation	\$6.53
Former Faith Alive	\$21.99
Specialized Ministries	\$47.94
Denominational Office	\$37.05
Special Assistance Fund	\$0.36
TOTAL	\$332.79

Note: World Renew does not receive ministry shares.

\$326.26. Each ministry share dollar translates to approximately 80 thousand dollars in ministry funds.

The increase comes after last year's synod approved a 3 percent (\$10) per member increase. That money was intended to shore up the operations of Faith Alive.

This year's 2 percent (\$6.53) is designated for faith formation initiatives. It will be combined with the \$21.99 formerly allocated to Faith Alive. The ministry share for the rest of the ministry agencies and educational institutions will remain at the same level as the previous two years. (See box.)

Executive Director Joel Boot reported to the Board that significant time has gone into realignment of ministry functions "as a consequence of the Faith Alive, Faith Formation, and (for the most part) Specialized Ministries integration into a more streamlined and effective support system to serve congregations."

—Gayla R. Postma

Worshipping the Lord with Dance



Dancers learned new choreography at the workshop.

A recent dance workshop reminded participants at Nelson Avenue Community Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia, that dance is an integral part of worship and communion with God. The workshop and a performance were hosted by the Soli Deo Gloria Ballet group.

"Often when we think of the word 'worship' we think of songs and music, but the arts, and dance in particular, does not jump to the front of our minds," explained organizer Stephanie Asselstine.

The workshop explored the scriptural basis for the arts, with an emphasis on dance. It also included a practical component in which participants learned a dance to a piece of contemporary Christian music.

"It was really nice to see how all the participants were able to get something out of this dance and find their own part in it. Even though we didn't always have the right step on the right note or forgot a step here or there, it's really all about giving the glory back to God! No matter where we mess up or how off the music we are, he still finds our dancing beautiful and pleasing!" said Asselstine. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Tracey Yan

Worshiping at
Celebration Fellowship.



Training Leaders in Prison

Congregants of Celebration Fellowship Christian Reformed Church are learning to be leaders within their context. That context is the Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility and the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

"The reason we do this is because [inmates] don't have anything that a normal church would have for crisis situations," said Andy Hanson, pastor of Celebration Fellowship. "And they are in a continual crisis: a hostile environment and removed from family. So we're teaching the men how to care for one another."

Hanson has been using Timothy Leadership Training to train anywhere from five to 40 inmates.

"The great thing about the teaching is that it's inductive. This method pulls the right solutions for the problems from the guys' situations."

"It's another tool in our belt for implementing the work of the Holy Spirit here at Handlon," said Ken, an inmate. "TLT has given me the confidence to put into action what I'm learning from the Scriptures."

One week, a man who had spent over 20 years in solitary confinement and had not been to

the training before, suddenly began to speak up.

"This man has a difficult time communicating with people, but he began pointing at each guy saying, 'I saw you spending time with that person.' He went on to say, 'This is real. I didn't think it was, but now I know that you guys are real,'" said Hanson.

"In prison, talk is really cheap. People care what you do, not what you say. The Lord had taken what they had done, and done more than what they had set out to do. In two weeks' time, there were five men in the prison who didn't feel alone anymore, and then there was Will, this guy who witnessed it, was inspired by it, and encouraged."

—Daina Kraai

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Edwin (Neil) Culbertson 1954 - 2013

Rev. Neil Culbertson, 58, was an eloquent messenger of the gospel and a thoughtful theologian. He passed away on January 29 from brain cancer.

In the fall of 1983, Culbertson and his wife moved to the island of Guam, where they would serve for 27 years. Culbertson was pastor of Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church in Mangilao.

In 2010 the Culbertsons returned to the U.S. to serve Christian Reformed Community Church of Tacoma, Wash., a ministry cut short by Culbertson's illness.

Culbertson was a serious believer with a delightful sense of humor. He also had a deep concern for maintaining the truth of the Reformed faith. Not given to small talk, he was a gifted speaker and preacher known for his skill in Hebrew and Greek.

The Guam government awarded him its highest distinction: the Ancient Order of the Chamorro. He was a fine musician and also president of the Guam Running Club and could regularly be seen running his miles.

Culbertson is survived by his wife, Janie-Lou, and their son, Paul. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

NOTEWORTHY

- **First Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton**, Ontario, received a Heritage Conservation Award for preserving the architectural heritage of the region, following a major restoration of its 130-year-old building.
- The **Edmonton Christian High School Lions** won their first-ever boys' basketball gold medal in the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association 3A division. At 350 students, Edmonton Christian High is one of the smallest schools in the city.
- **Providence Christian College** in Pasadena, Calif., has been granted initial accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- **Anneke Branderhorst**, a teacher at Calvin Christian High School in Fridley, Minn., has received the 2013 "Courage to Teach" award given by Tolerance Minnesota. The award was given for her passionate teaching about the Holocaust.
- **Nicole Michmerhuizen, Abigail Streelman, and John Strikwerda**, all of West Michigan, were recently awarded the prestigious Barry Goldwater Scholarship, which recognizes outstanding undergraduate scholars in mathematics, engineering, and the natural sciences. All three students are studying at Calvin College.
- **Case Vink**, a member of Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta, recently received an Award of Excellence for Pastoral Practice in Education from the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC), a national multifaith organization for chaplains and pastoral counselors.
- **Sewa Adegorite, Mark Hanna, and Angelo Duraisingham**, all students at Toronto District Christian High School, recently travelled to Ottawa, Ontario, to meet with Canada's Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty.

—Banner correspondents

Please visit our website at thebanner.org for all these stories.

NEWS

SYNOD 2013

Will Synod 2013 Matter in the Pew?

Synod 2013 is right around the corner. It would be easy for most of us to ignore it or to use its 400-plus page *Agenda* as a convenient doorstep. Sometimes it's hard to see what difference this annual gathering of church leaders makes to those sitting in the pews (or chairs) in a thousand Christian Reformed congregations on Sunday mornings.

But as it turns out, there are quite a few items on this year's docket that could change life in your local church.

To be sure, some items won't matter much to anyone who doesn't work directly for the denomination. That's not to say they aren't important for the orderly operation of our denominational structure!

For instance, there is another report coming from the task force looking at the structure and culture of the denomination's administration. But the only way its work will really matter to my aunt sitting in her church in Grand Rapids, Mich., will be if it streamlines how easily her church can tap into resources for its local ministries, or if new ways of organizing the various denominational agencies and committees could save some money on ministry shares.

It had been expected that Synod 2013 would interview and appoint a new executive director. That plan fell through, and it's a dilemma for the Board of Trustees and synod to deal with (see p. 10). But will it change church life for my friend in Nanaimo, British Columbia? Probably not so much.

So what does matter to local churches? Have a look at the report from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II. When the first iteration of this group reported in 2011, it primarily fulfilled its mandate to propose how to bring more ethnic diversity to the ranks of denominational leadership (see p.12). This

year's report expands on that with recommendations on how to raise up leaders from ethnic minority members *in the local churches*. Whether the denomination needs to hire a person to implement those recommendations is up to Synod 2013 to decide.

The task force studying the role of deacons (Diakonia Remixed) is recommending widespread change to how deacons' work is viewed and carried out at the synodical and regional level, but also *the local level*. It is proposing changes to everything from wording in the Church Order, to diaconal representation regionally and at synod, to the forms used for ordination, to how long a deacon's term in office should or could be (see March *Banner*, p.10).

Every year synod must study and approve the budget. The budget and the minister's pension plan matter a great deal to local churches because it affects their own local budget (see p. 14).

But where the synod agenda really reflects the life of the local church is in the overtures (requests). Most overtures come from a classis (a regional group of churches), which means that whatever the issue is, that classis deemed it of such high need that it wants to involve the denomination.

There is a request for an affinity classis, a group of churches that believes the Bible mandates the exclusion of women from ordained leadership roles in the church. How synod responds will mean a great deal to those congregations that are feeling like pariahs in their current classis. (see May *Banner*, p. 16).

Two overtures (and possibly a third) are bringing up (again) homosexuality and same-sex relationships. With same-sex marriage now legal in Canada and in an increasing number of states in the United States, people in local

churches are looking for guidance on how to respond when their aunt or brother or friend wants to live in a life-long committed relationship with someone of the same sex and still be a fully embraced member of their congregation.

Other topics of overtures include capital punishment, religious persecution, eastern mysticism, and ministers' pension plan rules. It might seem like a random collection, but these are the issues that are challenging *local churches* in their ministry.

So yes, much of what synod attends to falls under the category of minding the store. The work of the Board of Trustees and all the ministry agencies and educational institutions must be assessed, approved, and, yes, celebrated. Each year after synod, delegates (especially first-timers) express appreciation for the time they spent at synod. Even though the days are long, they come away with a new appreciation for the depth and breadth of the work we do together as the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

But for those hundreds of thousands of church members like my friend in Nanaimo and my aunt in Grand Rapids who won't be at Synod 2013, there is much on this year's agenda that will indeed matter as they sit in their pew or chair in one of a thousand congregations on Sunday morning.

—Gayla R. Postma, News Editor

Synod 2013 will be held in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 7-14. The Banner will post updated articles at thebanner.org, Facebook (The Banner magazine), and Twitter (@crcbanner) throughout synod. You can also follow synod via webcast and synod news office press releases, all of which can be accessed via the Synod 2013 website.

One hundred of Encounter's 270 attendees are students from various colleges in the Grand Rapids, Mich., area.

Michigan Church a Magnet for College Students

Two years ago when Brianna DeWitt first heard about Encounter Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich., she was working at a local ice cream shop, trying to keep up with college tuition payments.

Now DeWitt, 22, sits on the leadership team of the church plant where 100 of 270 attendees are college students.

Pastor Dirk VanEyck said that the two-year-old church attracts

most of its students from Calvin College but also draws from nearby Kuyper College, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College, and Davenport University.

The church gives out care boxes, and older members invite college students for lunch, but VanEyck said, "we've seen little to no fruit from all these labors."

VanEyck, DeWitt, and other attendees instead point to the

opportunities students have to get involved as reasons for success.

"Instead of just creating things to try to get college students to show up on Sunday mornings, it's becoming a place for students to connect and get involved with the community," said DeWitt, now a Kuyper College grad.

Students are involved on worship teams, as nursery volunteers, in small groups, and in fellowship. Amy Schepers, a current Calvin student and member of a worship team, agreed. "Some churches don't really utilize the college students that attend because they're only there temporarily or nine months out of the year," she said.

Shane Brandsen, another Calvin student involved in worship, focused on becoming invested at the church. "College students want to make church more than just a place where you show up on Sunday morning," he said. It's not just what can Encounter do for me, but how can I be invested in this church?"

VanEyck also credits word of mouth for bringing college students in. "If someone's going to come to church, it's probably going to be because somebody else invited them," he said. It's not like an advertisement or a flyer, but person to person." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk

Service Dog Goes to Church



Sparrow

Since last fall, Mike and Lisa TerBeek have been training Sparrow, a golden retriever, how to behave in public settings, including going with them to Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"If she's doing her job," said Mike, "no one will know she is there." Mike often sits with the dog in the narthex, where invariably he has to deter church members, young and old, from petting Sparrow, who is not to receive special attention while she is wearing her work cape.

Before bringing Sparrow to church, the TerBeeks consulted with Calvin CRC's Disability Concerns committee. The TerBeeks felt it would be especially good to expose Sparrow to a church service so that her future companion might be able to enjoy going to church.

Of Sparrow's first experience in the pews, Mike said, "Aside from being very interested in the offering plates that passed by—they do resemble her doggie bowls, upon reflection—she was very well behaved." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis



GANLA R. POSTMA

Larry and Barbara Van Genderen of Jackson Hole, Wyo., were on hand to purchase the very first copy of the new hymnal.

Lift Up Your Hearts Arrives

The new hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts* has rolled off the presses. When the news spread through the denominational building in Grand Rapids, Mich., on May 2, a celebratory flash mob formed in the atrium as staff and members of the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees held an impromptu hymn sing.

Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs is the first hymnal released by the CRC in 20 years. It is a joint production of both the CRC and the Reformed Church in America.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

FAQs

Church

Q Why do the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism use the summary of the law in the first section and then use that same law in the last section?

A Most catechisms written during the Reformation used the Ten Commandments as teachers of sin. Instead, the Heidelberg Catechism uses the summary of the law for that purpose in its first section. It uses the law in the third section as a guide for grateful living. This arrangement, sometimes called “the Reformed use of the law,” is a wonderful teaching tool in itself. It reminds us that the first and shortest section of the catechism, which deals with our sin (see Part 1: Misery), is to be the shortest chapter of our lives and of our preaching and teaching. The majority of our time and effort is to be spent rejoicing in God’s gracious salvation (see Part 2: Deliverance) and responding to our Savior with faithful service (see Part 3: Gratitude).

Note: You can read the updated version of the catechism approved by Synod 2011 online at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism.

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

Ethics

Q Once when some tools went missing, the owner of the company I work for walked through the company lot and looked through car windows with a flashlight. He also says he wants to install a microphone in the employee break room to monitor conversations. Another time he searched his assistant’s locked drawer for a document. And sometimes when talking to a

A man in our sales department, he rests his hand on an arm of the man’s wheelchair. Aren’t these invasions of privacy?

A The first incident does not seem morally problematic, assuming he had no physical contact with anyone’s vehicle. At worst his actions seem a bit creepy. A microphone in the break room to monitor conversations? This strikes me as unnecessarily invasive.

Assessing the third incident depends on whether the assistant was told ahead of time that the owner had a key and might occasionally use it. If she wasn’t, he invaded her privacy. Its contents might have contained things he or she would have been embarrassed to have him see.

Finally, Dr. Thomas Hoeksema, professor emeritus of Calvin College coordinated Calvin’s special education program, informs me that one should not touch someone’s wheelchair unless certain that it will be positively received. It is tantamount to touching the person’s body.

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

Relationships

Q Our daughter, 19, lives at home. She wants to visit a former boyfriend at his college, but he was abusive with her when they dated before. Do we forbid her from going? If she goes anyway, what do we do when she comes back? Do we throw her out?

A It is often difficult for parents to let go of being in charge when their children become adults. It is especially difficult to let go when we see our children making poor

relationship choices. However, now that your daughter is 19, it is imperative that you allow her to make her own decisions—not only with respect to her education or career choices but also to her choice of a boyfriend or other friendships. Difficult as this may be, especially when you want to protect her from an abusive relationship, you must accept that she has to resolve the relationship issue herself.

It is certainly not wrong to let her know of your worries, but you and your husband do her no favor when you insist that she behave in a certain way—or else. Although you have the right to evict her from your home, having her live in your home does not give you the right to tell her what to do.

At 19, maturation is all about becoming independent from parental control and learning to navigate one’s own life. You may, in fact, be accomplishing the exact opposite of what you desire (the break-up of the relationship) by making demands she will likely resist in her legitimate quest for independence.

This is a difficult period in your relationship with your daughter. As you learn to let go, she will learn to do what is best. Cheer her on when she makes a good decision—and learn to be silent when she does not—while continuing to love her and pray for her.

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

BY EDWIN WALHOUT



Tomorrow's Theology

I SUSPECT THAT a thousand years from now Christians will look back at the 21st century and say, “How could Christians have let themselves think *that*?” They’d have in mind our theology—some of the doctrines that are so precious to us and that we consider to be the backbone of Christianity.

And we do the same thing, don’t we? Of the people who lived 500 years ago we say, “How could they really have believed those things to be so important in their Christian faith?” We have in mind such doctrines as purgatory, indulgences, relics, the authority of the pope, apostolic succession, transubstantiation,

the Inquisition, the sacramental system, Mariolatry, and so much more.

So I wouldn’t be surprised if a thousand years from now, or even in 500 years, people look back at *our* cherished doctrines and exclaim, “How could they believe all that?”

Why do I say this?

Because something is happening in our world that is likely to shake our systematic theology to its foundations when we better understand its implications. It won’t change the Bible or the theism that shapes our way of thinking. But as future theologians work at uncovering the implications of this discovery, they may find that some of the doctrines that form the essential structure of our creeds and

confessions miss the mark. New insights and new doctrinal formulations will replace those we now treasure. People in the future will study the same Bible but understand it differently. Something is happening in our world right now that will bring vigorous theological revision for generations to come.

What is that “something”?

It’s an insight that began as a hypothesis in 1859, gradually developed into a scientific theory, and is fast becoming recognized as established fact. I refer to what we have been calling “the theory of evolution.”

Scientists recognize generally that the universe began with an enormous explosion—the “big bang.” They provide »

New insights and new doctrinal formulations will replace those we now treasure.

various scientific avenues to demonstrate the great age of the universe, perhaps as old as 15 billion years. The varied scientific disciplines provide convincing demonstrations of the continuous development of the universe since its beginning, such as producing over billions of years the vast reaches of space and the seemingly infinite number of stars and planets and galaxies that dot the heavens.

Our planet, Earth, has been part of this development. The scientists who study these things demonstrate how life appeared and how it has matured and diversified over millennia. They see this process of development producing a form of life called *homo sapiens*, and they trace this development from its common ancestry with other forms of life.

There may, of course, be areas of disagreement among scientists about certain items. But very few competent scientists will challenge the underlying process of development. These scientific discoveries can all be subsumed under the rubric of *evolution*—or, if one cannot get past the negative connotations of that term, we can use the alternative term *development*.

Implications for Theology

The question facing Christian thinkers is this: What effect does this process of evolution have on Christian theology? Do modern scientific discoveries have any implications for the way we understand the purpose of Christianity? If so, what are they? I am not going to argue whether or not evolution is true; I accept that the findings of modern science are reliable and must be taken as established fact. I also accept that the Bible's basic teachings are just as definitive as those of science. So what might the implications for our theology be? If evolution is the catalyst for change, in what areas might

we need to reconsider our traditional theological understanding?

Creation: We have traditionally accepted the words of Genesis 1—that God created the world as we know it today in six literal 24-hour days—at face value. Bishop Ussher's chronology even suggests the exact year when that happened: 4004 BC. But there is no way we can possibly continue to hold that doctrine, any more than we can hold the doctrines of a flat earth and a geocentric universe. One week for God to create the vast universe as we know it? That just doesn't comport at all with the reality of a universe billions of years old. So we have to find a better way of understanding Genesis 1, a way that embraces scientific insights honestly and a way that also embraces the reality of God's creative activity.

Adam and Eve: Traditionally we've been taught that Adam and Eve were the first human pair, Adam made out of dust and Eve from one of Adam's ribs. But sustaining this doctrine is extremely difficult when we take seriously the human race as we know it today sharing ancestry with other primates such as chimpanzees. Where in the slow evolution of *homo erectus* and *homo habilis* and *homo sapiens* do Adam and Eve fit? We will have to find a better way of understanding what Genesis tells us about Adam and Eve, one that does justice to Genesis and also to what the Bible teaches about their connection to Jesus.

Fall into sin: We have traditionally understood Genesis to show the first human beings, in a state of innocence, living sinlessly in the Garden of Eden. They are then tempted. They yield to temptation and God sends them out of Eden. But if we take the discoveries of historical science seriously, where could we fit that story in?

It would be extremely difficult to locate any such Garden of Eden, and even if were able to do so in modern Iraq, where is the scientific and historical evidence of a pristine origin and expulsion from that Garden? Furthermore, at which stage in human development would we place this event? We will have to find a much better way of understanding what sin is, where it comes from, and what its consequences are. Theologians will have to find a new way of articulating a truly biblical doctrine of sin and what effect it has on us.

Original sin: According to this doctrine, the fall of Adam and Eve is an actual historical event that plunged the entire human race into sin. Ever since, both the guilt of sin and the pollution of sin, theologically speaking, have been passed on from parent to child in such a way that we all come into the world tainted by them. We say that our children are conceived and born in sin. But if Adam and Eve are not understood as real historical people, then there can hardly be an inheritance of sinfulness from parent to child all the way back to Adam—in which case the entire doctrine of original sin falls by the wayside. We will have to find a better way of understanding not only what sin is but its effect on the population in general—a way that does justice both to the Bible and to science and that helps us understand how sin works in our own lives under God.

Salvation: We have traditionally understood the work of Jesus as dealing with the two aspects of original sin: guilt and pollution. Jesus removes our guilt by dying for our sins on the cross; he removes our pollution by sending us his Holy Spirit. This makes good sense, but if the doctrine of original sin needs to be revisited, theologians need to consider whether our

understanding of Jesus also needs to be revised. Does the theory of evolution have any implications for how we understand Jesus' ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension? How does Jesus fit into the ongoing process of evolution in the fullness of time? How does his ministry impact people in later generations? We'll want our theologians to tackle this issue in a truly biblical way, preserving everything essential to the biblical story while fitting it into a new paradigm that defines meaningfully what Jesus Christ has done and what it means for us to be Christians.

God's purpose in history: Evolution is a way of understanding history that describes a process of development taking place from the beginning of time. We, then, need to be asking questions like these: What is God's purpose in all of this? If there is a meaningful process taking place in time and history, where is it going? What does God want the human race to become? What is our future over the long reach of time? Traditionally we have talked about an end of the world. But if we take evolution seriously—that is, the 15 billion years that already have passed—what are we to think about what the world will look like a billion years from now, or even a mere million? Can we see anything of God's purpose for time and history, and can we get a glimpse from science of what that future might be—one that preserves what the Bible teaches but also is true to science? Our philosophical theologians will need to take a serious look at these questions. Major changes may well be in store for our eschatological doctrines.

I could go on and give my own insights about these doctrines, but this is sufficient to make the point that we need to take seriously in our theology the theory of

Committee on Creation and Science Report

- E. The present apparent conflict between Christian faith and science over questions of origins cannot be easily resolved. Not only are there various interpretations of the evidence confronting natural science; there are also various plausible interpretations of Genesis 1. Thus all sides in the debates about origins should acknowledge that they do not have a completely satisfactory solution to the problem and that therefore certain criticisms made by some of their opponents are at least partially justified. In the midst of such disputes, the church must firmly confess that which is the clear teaching of Scripture and central to the Christian faith; but cognizant of the legitimate freedom of science to examine the evidence and of the legitimate freedom of exegesis to interpret Scripture, the church must not bind consciences beyond that confession.
- F. The Scripture clearly teaches that God is the Creator of all that is, that he created all things good, [and] that man and woman were made in his image to serve on God's behalf as stewards of the world that he made. This biblical teaching of Creation stands in judgment over all naturalistic, evolutionistic worldviews.
- J. Some hold that this clear biblical teaching necessarily requires an explicit rejection of any theory which posits the existence of evolutionary forebears of the human race, that there is a clear clash of paradigms between prevailing evolutionary theories and the biblical account of origins. They argue that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to see how a responsible exegesis of Genesis 1-3 does not rule out the evolutionary account of human origins. Others are not fully convinced that this clear biblical teaching requires such a rejection, for various reasons. . . . Some take Scripture (Job 38:4; 1 Cor. 13:8) to teach that God has no intention that we know all the answers in this area. Some believe that we are called to somehow take account of both of God's revelations whether we currently know how to do that or not and that traditional conclusions would be compelling on scriptural grounds were it not that nature seems to be authoritatively telling us something else. That is not to say that the scientific theories are right, but only that neither we nor the church is presently in a position to state authoritatively that Scripture speaks definitively on this issue.

—from Report 28, Committee on Creation and Science, Section VIII:
A Summary of Conclusions, Agenda for Synod 1991, pp. 408-9

evolution, now developed into established fact. Huge changes may well be taking place in tomorrow's theological world, but we ought not be afraid of facing them. On the contrary! We should be excited and challenged by God's grace to move onward and upward into more realistic insights into his Word and will. Who knows but that God has brought us into the world for such a time as this, to listen to what he has been saying and doing for billions of years and to take the lead in improving our understanding of biblical theology accordingly?

There are various ways we could respond. One option is denial—saying evolution can't be true because it contradicts the Bible. Another option is inattention: who cares? Still another option is carelessness, or jumping to immature

conclusions. The best option is prayerful attention, listening carefully to everything God is saying both in his original creation and in his redemptive gospel. If we can find the grace to do this humbly and obediently, surely we may trust the Lord to guide us into all the truth he wishes us to understand. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Edwin Walhout is a retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church living in Grand Rapids, Mich. To read more by this author,

visit Smashwords.com, where over two dozen of his e-books may be downloaded.

Confessions of a Worship Snob

I USED TO BE a worship snob.

Growing up in a family where we would sing two-part harmony as we washed dishes, I would do my best not to sit in front of someone in church who sang off-key. And it would completely ruin my Sunday if the pastor's sermon was too hard to follow or too simple, if it bored me, or if it was, in my opinion, too one-sided. If the musicians played too loudly or not loudly enough, too quickly or too slowly, or without enough feeling, I was ticked off.

In short, I expected a smooth, professional approach to worship, with a sermon delivered by a pastor who was confident but humble while admonishing the hypocrites in the church. If I made a contribution to the worship service, I expected a certain amount of praise and recognition for my efforts. I thought, in short, that worship was all about me and God—in that order. I expected my pastor to be a perfect stand-in for Jesus and the music to be angelic. I called this “critical thinking.”

Meanwhile, I never once considered the feelings of the folks who made the worship service possible or considered that the people using their gifts of preaching, teaching, and music were doing what they did for God's glory. I just couldn't seem to get past my own need for edification. Simply put, I had the ABC's of Christianity all wrong. I had a bad attitude, followed by poor behavior and an inactive conscience.

Attitude

With what attitude do we come to the body of Christ? Do we recognize Christ as the head of the church, or do we see ourselves as the center? No man is an island unto himself, said poet John Donne, but really, when we're being



honest, are we not individually at the center of our own universe? Imagine what the church might look like if each person participating in its fellowship was there to honor Christ, the head. Perhaps it's time to dust off those old plastic WWJD (What would Jesus do?) bracelets to remind us to have the mind of Christ. After all, our attitude has a direct impact on our behavior.

Behavior

How do we behave toward our fellow Christians? Do we treat one another as

valuable coworkers in the kingdom of God? I remember actually criticizing a fellow Sunday school teacher for singing too loudly with her class. Of course I didn't talk to her directly; I just talked about her. How pathetic is that? When we can't treat one another with respect, we're not in a position to invite others to join us.

How *do* we invite others to join the body? Do we even have friendships outside the church? Back when I was a high school student, I remember thinking that my friends who attended other churches

I expected my pastor to be a perfect stand-in for Jesus and the music to be angelic.

in town were only nominal Christians. Did I think this because they weren't walking the right path? Not at all. I thought this because they weren't attending a "true" church—that is, *my* church. And yet I never thought to invite them to come to youth group with me. I forgot to ask myself these important questions: Can others see the relevance of my beliefs in my actions? Does my walk match my talk? Does what I say match my beliefs? If not, then perhaps I was having problems with my conscience.

Conscience

In my personal experience, an inactive conscience doesn't happen overnight. It happens through a series of small temptations in which we rationalize our poor choices over and over again until they become unconscious habits. Spiritually, this can happen quite easily. Our busyness gets in the way of spending time with God, and running short of time becomes a habit. As a congregation, it can happen when we point the finger at the leadership in our churches. What is our excuse? We no longer live in a time when only the pastor and a few wealthy members are able to read the Bible. When we refuse to get into God's Word and spend time in prayer throughout the week and then expect our worship leaders to fill us up on Sunday morning, we are like binge eaters who starve themselves all week long and then expect to get all their nutritional needs met in one meal. When we continually deny our conscience, we make its voice quieter and quieter until finally we can't hear it at all.

The remedy? We need to seek God in prayer. We need to ask God to cleanse our hearts and renew a right spirit within us, to realign our attitudes and correct our behavior to reflect the life and teachings of our Savior, and to reignite our conscience.

I started out by admitting that I used to be a worship snob. Although I still have the tendency to judge, I am learning that the worship service is about God, not about me. I am learning that I am part of a community of believers. I am learning that if the service didn't speak to the depths of my soul, maybe it spoke to someone else's soul. When I pray for God's blessings and for strength for my pastor and those in church leadership, I find that my own attitude changes. By getting involved in some of the behind-the-scenes activities that go into making

a worship service come together, I have gained a new appreciation for the amount of work that is involved. And I am finding that when I exercise my own gifts, I have less time to be critical of others. I try to remember that my fellow Christians are my teammates in God's kingdom—not my rivals. Most of all, I prayerfully try to put Christ—not me—at the head of the body, where he belongs.

So was the singing at your church off-key this Sunday? Were there some awkward moments? It's quite possible. But more important, was the truth proclaimed? Was your spirit involved in your worship? When we worship God in spirit and in truth, then our off-key singing sounds like an angel chorus to God, and the awkward moments are only the tiniest blip in the scope of eternity. After all, none of us has achieved perfection yet. Remembering that helps me relax a little on Sunday mornings. ■



Liz Kraan is a teacher and the mother of five grown sons. She attends Collingwood (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church.

Discovering What God Has Equipped Me to Do

by Matt Kucinski



Daniel Camacho

JILL DEVRIES

Daniel Camacho of Uniondale, N.Y., first came to Calvin College in 2009 through the Entrada Scholars program, a month-long college immersion experience for ethnic minority students.

Camacho, who grew up Methodist, was intrigued by the Reformed worldview and enrolled at Calvin, where he is now a senior. He also has joined a Christian Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Junior Sarah Stripp started at Calvin College in the fall of 2010. She is a member of a CRC in her hometown of Kalamazoo, Mich.

Both Camacho and Stripp have been involved in a number of spiritual formation opportunities, including the Jubilee Fellows program (see sidebar on p. 24).

This fall, Camacho plans to attend Duke Divinity School in pursuit of his Master of Divinity degree. He also plans to complete the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy through Calvin Theological Seminary.

Stripp has one year remaining at Calvin and then plans to pursue a Master of Divinity degree as well.

We recently talked with Camacho and Stripp about how their experiences at Calvin helped shape their faith and influence their vocation.

What does the word *vocation* mean to you?

Sarah: I came into Calvin bent on a set path, a set career—that's what I was looking for. But I started to realize vocation doesn't have to be one specific job. There's not one career that's going to fulfill me. Over this past semester I changed my major from English education to just English, with a plan to go to seminary afterwards.

Vocation is looking at gifts: where God has gifted me, what I love, and how I can use what I love and the skills that I have for the kingdom of God and doing work there. My definition of vocation has expanded from the idea of one perfect

You add.
God multiplies.

Calvin has helped me realize how vocation is intimately connected to the life of the church.

career to the understanding that God's kingdom is already alive. Finding my vocation is discovering what God has equipped me to do within it.

Daniel: Calvin has helped me realize how vocation is intimately connected to the life of the church, and so vocation, in the way that I've come to understand it, is kind of nested within our common call to ministry and to be Christians.

I've loved how Calvin emphasizes how everybody can do some type of ministry, whether it's math or being a nurse, and I think that is something distinctive about Calvin. . . . We have been able to get this perspective of vocation in which even what we study in our careers is part of our discipleship.

How have your classes shaped your faith formation?

Sarah: Every class I've taken and every professor I've had has very intentionally integrated faith into the class. . . . Every time we read a piece of literature in my English classes, we talk about the way this shapes us as human beings. How can we look at a piece from modernism, which is very dark, very, like, "Let's get God out of here," and how can we look at that as the state of human beings, and how can we look at that in regards to something like total depravity, and how can we talk about redemption in that?

Daniel: In philosophy, I had one class where we were reading Thomas Aquinas, and our professor had us imagine that we were all brothers and sisters in an order, like a Dominican order. She had us imagine that we are not in competition, that we are not trying to outdo each other, but instead participating in this together, something that is shared, where we all

are striving to know God more and to build each other up.

That for me was an amazing experience because I do think that going through school and even taking classes can become a very selfish and competitive thing. But I've had many professors emphasize how to be humble, how to be loving. . . . How can we fight the toxic spirit of competition and approach this as a common project?



Students on the Calvin College campus.

Is there a particular experience at Calvin that has influenced you?

Sarah: This past semester we'd go once a month on a Sunday to the Kent County Jail and lead a few services. We would usually do the singing and reading of Scripture, and there would be a sermon.

I think as Americans—but also as Christians—we set up this fake dichotomy where we are like these morally righteous people who haven't done anything wrong,

and that's why we are not in jail, and [those in jail] are beyond hope and morally deficient. But that's just not true. When you look at why people are in jail, a lot of the reasons are the same as what Calvin students could get convicted for, but they just don't have the money to pay the fines.

Our country sets up these systems that make it literally impossible to move on from that—like, you can't get a job—so it was really mind-blowing for me to be in that situation and see what's going on. My eyes have definitely been opened to a lot of injustice there this year.

Daniel: This past summer I did the Jubilee Fellow internship in East Harlem (N.Y.) at a church plant, and that was a

helpful experience for me. I didn't know the CRC was in Harlem, so that was news to me, but it was very cool because I got to see what the church looks like in a different setting. I lived for 10 weeks in East Harlem in a traditional public housing building, with all the trappings that come with it—a legacy of socioeconomic inequality.

What I found helpful about the ministry and the church there is that the »

Jubilee Fellows Program

Calvin offers numerous opportunities to cultivate students' faith, from residence hall Bible studies to daily chapel services to events like the Festival of Faith and Writing, Festival of Faith and Music, and the Symposium on Worship.

The Jubilee Fellows program is one of those opportunities. Designed for 12 promising students who are strongly inclined toward Christian leadership and church ministry, it aims to foster the next generation of church leaders.

The year-long program seeks to help students explore their vocational calling through interdisciplinary learning, mentoring, and ministry experience. It includes a semester seminar, a 10-week ministry internship at a congregation in North America, and a service component.

pastor had me do something called asset mapping, which meant that I would go around and locate assets in the community, whether it was in the form of local businesses or agencies or even individuals, who provide some meaningful service or some meaningful gift to the community. So rather than see it (because it's a place with a history of poverty and violence) as "Everything's bad or corrupt," or "People are nonproductive"—no, let's see it as "God is already at work there, and we have to have the eyes to see it."

How has your faith matured over the past few years?

Sarah: I grew up with a very narrow perspective on life with the people around me, and to be able to come to Calvin—where, yeah, there's a solid theological base, but there are a lot of different ideas from a lot of different people—coming and just being able to talk about that and

being very open about talking about that has helped me to think more critically about what I believe and gain an understanding of other perspectives.

Daniel: One way my faith has matured is connecting my personal faith to the larger Christian tradition. I've appreciated the Reformed emphasis. And to me, coming from an evangelical background where it was just more personal and not as much historical like it is at Calvin, I think my faith matured in that way. And now I think in terms of the people who preceded me and being a part of this larger body. That's really helped.

Calvin has [also] helped me to engage others charitably and to engage all spheres charitably. So just because, let's say, a filmmaker or a writer or an artist or somebody is not Christian, I am not going to dismiss them because they aren't preaching about Jesus. How is the king-



Daniel Camacho and Sarah Stripp

plies.



Sarah Stripp at worship.

dom of God and how is restoration manifested in their work, even though they may not realize it? How does it contain fallenness or the things that we have to resist?

When it comes to spiritual formation, what does Calvin do best?

Daniel: What it does best is represented by the activism and also the service. . . . Spiritual formation is tied to justice issues, and helping people around us and getting involved on multiple levels with things around us that are broken, whether it's the education system or the prison system, and encouraging us to see how our faith is connected to what is happening in our society, what's broken in our society.

Sarah: Calvin is really good about not isolating faith to one sphere, but saying that every single part of our lives has to do with being a Christian, and that's our first and foremost identity. Faith is not just something that you do at Chapel or LOFT (Living Our Faith Together) or going to church on Sunday, but you will talk about faith in your classes, and you will talk about faith in your dorm and in the community, and you will talk about faith in your extracurricular activities.

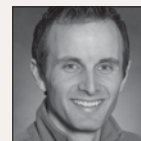
For what has Calvin prepared you?

Sarah: Calvin has prepared me not to shy away from the hard situations in the world. If you would have told me my senior year of high school that between my junior and senior summer I'd be going

to the inner city in Jackson, Miss., and teaching kids about God and doing a chaplaincy for a summer program, I would've laughed, because that would've scared me to no end.

But Calvin has really helped me see how much brokenness there is in the world and made it so I'm not afraid to enter into that brokenness and look at where God is already working within that and how I can use my own gifts to help out.

Daniel: Calvin has prepared me to be . . . a holistic Christian and a holistic Christian thinker. I feel that Calvin has prepared me really well to think critically about a wide array of topics and also to think Christianly and to try to think faithfully. I think it's a huge help for the future. ■



Matt Kucinski is the senior editor of *News & Stories* at Calvin College.

Supporting Calvin College in Prayer

- Pray for wisdom for the leadership of Calvin College as the college continues its prioritization and strategic planning processes in the coming year, and for faculty and staff throughout this process.
- Pray that more than 900 new graduates may find meaningful work and serve God as agents of renewal wherever they are.
- Pray for the incoming class of students who will be joining us in late August to arrive safely and to grow closer to God during their journey at Calvin.
- Pray for Calvin College's mission to remain clear, compelling, and relevant to the next generation of students. Pray that all faculty and staff will remain committed to integrating faith into every learning opportunity.

Everything, Everywhere, All the Time

It's a little oblong box. On a piece of paper rolled up inside the box are the words from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 about loving the LORD with heart and soul and strength, about talking about him all the time and everywhere, and about wearing God's words on hands and forehead.

The paper must be rolled up from left to right so that the first word visible as it is unrolled is the word *Hear*. (Hebrew is read from right to left.) The little box must be placed on the right side of the doorframe on the upper third of the doorjamb. Those who enter the room must touch the box and, in so doing, remember the words inside it.

Jews call that little box a *mezuzah* (from the Hebrew word for doorpost). Using it was their way to be obedient to God's command to "write" his commands "on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut. 6:9). There's still a *mezuzah* on the right-hand side of the Jaffa Gate in the wall surrounding Old Jerusalem, and pedestrians still reach out and touch it on their way into or out of the city.

The principle of the *mezuzah* is at the heart of a Reformed world-and-life view. God's Word is at the center of everything. It's unavoidable, inescapable. God's people bring God's Word to bear on all they do wherever they are: sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down, and getting up. They behave in such a way that God's Word is noticeably operating in their lives. In other words, Scripture impacts everything everywhere all the time.

In addition, Moses says, "impress [the commandments] on your children." Notice that he doesn't advocate force-feeding. He suggests showing them that God is relevant always. He suggests that parents—really, all adults—live such evidently

God-influenced and God-controlled lives that their children (and all members of the younger generation, for that matter) become curious and ask why they live the way they do. Then parents can tell them and in so doing reveal the will of God to them.

I remember as I watched the people walk through the Jaffa Gate that the *mezuzah*-touching could be somewhat ritualistic and mechanical. We sometimes treat God's Word that way too. My wife and I rarely touch the *mezuzah* on the doorframe leading into our living room. We noticed it there just the other day and reminded each other of what it meant. Let's remind one another of the same truth—not by simply touching the doorpost, but by doing what the words in the *mezuzah* remind us to do: make God inescapable.

That is the heart of Reformed theology: the conviction that there is not a square inch of the universe over which Jesus does not shout, "I am Lord!" That is the mission of all true God-fearers. That is the mission of all parents. That is the mission of Christian schools. That is the mission of Calvin College: to allow God through us to touch every aspect of the world and life around us. It is not only permissible but mandatory.

There are some among us who believe that issues of ecology and conservation are of less importance than the proclamation of the gospel. The reality is that we've always said both are important before God. Now we must back up what we have said with how we will live.

In ancient Israel, no one was to enter or leave one's house without confronting God and making it evident that all that went on there was a response of love to God. God's people today are obligated to live the same way. ■



“The principle of the *mezuzah* is at the heart of a Reformed world-and-life view.”



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

You add.
God multiplies.



Cody Stenquist is part of a *Today* family legacy.

Today Through the Generations

Every night, 2-year-old Cody Stenquist holds his own copy of *Today* as his family in Boise, Idaho, gathers to read the daily devotional together. Cody is part of the fourth generation in his family to use the *Today* readings.

The tradition of reading the devotion began almost at the start of its publication with Cody's great-grandparents, Bob and Kathlyn Niemeyer of Muskegon, Mich. The couple has been reading *Today* together for nearly 60 years.

"When families carry a tradition together, it keeps them closer," says Kathlyn. For many years Bob has helped coordinate distribution of *Today* throughout Muskegon.

The Niemeyers have three children who all continue to read the devotional, including Anne Van Grouw, their daughter and Cody's grandmother.

"*Today* has always provided a wonderful devotion with Scripture that we enjoy reading and applying to our daily lives," says Anne, who also appreciates the ways *Today* is delivered as technological opportunities increase. ■

—Brian Clark,
Back to God Ministries International

Learning from the Animals

Some 50 pastors and congregational leaders met earlier this year at the Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference in Muskegon, Mich., to sort through some of their own personality characteristics and find out how they can better relate to others.

They did this in part by comparing their personality traits to those of different animals such as golden retrievers, otters, beavers, and lions.

"We're trying to get participants to see the diversity of the people in their congregations and how each of these personality types has good qualities as well as challenging ones," said Lis Van Harten, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) program, which sponsored the gathering.

The two-day event focused on helping church leaders "realize their own similarities and differences better so that problems don't destroy their ministry," said Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, one of the presenters.

So often in trying to help, he explained, a pastor can get caught in a web of conflicting—and often powerful—personalities. This can lead to significant problems in a congregation, said Van

Niejenhuis, a pastor/congregational consultant for the CRC's Pastor-Church Relations office.

"We're trying to help church leaders learn how they can be of help instead of getting enmeshed in other people's problems," he said.

SCE, whose purpose is to foster healthy congregations, has held 33 learning events for more than 300 smaller CRC congregations over the last few years.

The Muskegon event included presentations, a range of hands-on activities, and times for reflection and discussion.

"I learned that we are all the same, but each of us is different," says Larry Smith, an elder at Coit Community Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., one of the 11 churches that took part in the two-day conference. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



Multiplying Churches in Mexico

Ismael Ruvalcaba was working at a large funeral home in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2001 when he came across the body of a man who was about to be cremated. Then something shocking happened.

Ismael looked at the man's face and saw his own. His mind froze, and he heard God tell him he would one day be in the same position.

In tears, Ismael repented of the way he had been living, supposedly serving God. Once

Ben Meyer and Ismael Ruvalcaba with another church planter.

more he heard God speak, telling him that many people who said they loved him served two masters. God wanted to use Ismael so that others would know him. Ismael responded, "Use me according to your will. Today I will quit my work and join yours."

Ismael and his wife, Rocío, had previously purchased land in Nextipac, a small town



outside of Guadalajara, hoping to build a cottage.

Now he wants to use the land to serve the community. In the

summer of 2002, he organized a one-day mission effort in Nextipac. Almost 70 people came to faith that day. »

Deacon Does Great Service in Haiti

Adelson Jean Philippe grew up as an orphan in Haiti.

Today he is 50, married, and the father of adult children. But he has not forgotten the hardship of growing up in poverty without parents.

Perhaps that's why he became a deacon in Communauté du Christ Church in the Carrefour neighborhood of Port-au-Prince.

World Renew has been working in Haiti since 1975. One of its primary ministries is to train church leaders such as Adelson in some of Haiti's poorest neighborhoods so that they can better understand their role in caring for those in their communities.

This is done through a local partner called the Program for Training Diaconal Organizations (PWOFOOD).

"Haiti is a very religious country," said World Renew's Lunise Cerin-Jules. "Church services are held several times a week, and people are committed to saving souls. Unfortunately, in many churches Christianity is tied to faith alone. There is little understanding of the need to care for people physically



As a deacon, Adelson Jean Philippe has developed programs to serve many others in Haiti.

as well as spiritually. That is where PWOFOOD comes in."

Adelson went through a three-year diaconal training program, learning the importance of living out his Christian faith and gaining skills to address such needs as adult literacy and small-business training.

Then, in 2005, Communauté Du Christ and several other churches in Carrefour

received funding and support from World Renew to start a program to help congregations care for AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children.

Adelson and two other deacons formed a committee to oversee the project, also starting an adult literacy class for the parents and caregivers of the children.

Adelson was working to earn a living, but he spent much of his free time volunteering. At the project's halfway point, the two other deacons quit, but Adelson remained committed.

When the project finished in late 2006, more than 100 children were benefiting from the program, and the churches were running three literacy centers for 40 parents.

Adelson then began to seek out scholarship funding at private schools so the children could continue their education. He also helped start literacy programs in eight new communities. Thanks to Adelson's ministry, today there are 14 literacy centers serving 390 people. ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
World Renew

You add.
God multiplies.

MINISTRY SHARES
TOGETHER
DOING MORE

» The following Sunday, Ismael and others began holding church services. Soon after, Ismael and his family rented a home in Nextipac.

Christian Reformed World Missions has been working alongside Ismael in his church-planting effort, helping him to address difficulties so his church could flourish.

In 2007, CRWM missionary Ben Meyer connected with Ismael through Multiplication Network Ministries (MNM), which offers training and tools to help church planters and their churches thrive.

After attending an MNM conference, Ismael applied what he learned and started advising other area church planters and pastors.

Three years later, MNM appointed Ismael to work with church planters of various denominations across Mexico.

“Training pastors and leaders on a national level has been a great blessing,” says Ismael.

The Nextipac congregation, now known as Wellsprings of Life Church, holds weekly Sunday worship services and weekday in-home Bible studies. Its members have captured the vision for sharing the gospel, and some are now planting churches in other communities. Others are taking Bible classes and preparing to be leaders in the church. ■

—*Christian Reformed
World Missions*

Reaching Out to Roseland

The Roseland neighborhood on the south side of Chicago was settled in the 1840s by Dutch immigrants who called the area *de Hooge Prairie*, the High Prairie, because it was built on higher ground.

According to Ed Rockett, pastor of Fresh Word Ministries, a Home Missions-supported church planted in the struggling heart of Roseland, there’s reason to believe this community will find higher ground once again.

“Since the 1960s,” Rockett says, “the area has become known for crime, drugs, gangs, and prostitution. But there are strong businesses operating here and ministries passionate about reaching out.”

Rockett launched Fresh Word in 2009, envisioning “a ministry founded on Reformed sensibilities that would incorporate both worship and art.

“I have theater and musical performance in my background,” Rockett says, “and I wanted to use creative and performing arts in worship to bring the gospel to life in urban areas of Chicago.”

Rockett has found that community members are drawn to the church’s inventive blueprint.

While attending a party at a college friend’s house, the pastor told a young man, a bass player, and a young woman, a singer and keyboard player, about his church. “They started coming to Fresh Word because we were doing something out of the box as far as arts and music,” Rockett says.

With the music ministry and other outreach programs, Rockett’s dream is to draw troubled teenagers from gang culture into a church that will embrace their talents. ■

—*Lorilee Craker, Christian Reformed Home Missions*



Ed Rockett, pastor of Fresh Word Ministries in the Chicago area, is using music as one way to encourage community members to attend worship.

Chocolate Trees

Oranges, apples, and pears all grow on trees. But did you know that chocolate grows on trees too? It's true! Even though you'll never find a tree ripe with Hershey's Kisses, chocolate is made from the cocoa beans that grow on cacao (kah-KOW) trees. So how does chocolate make its way from a tree to your kitchen? It takes a lot of work! Read on to find out how.

Cacao Trees

Cacao trees grow in tropical places where it is hot and wet, including parts of Africa and South America. The flowers on cacao trees turn into large pods. Inside the pods are white cocoa beans. When the pods are ripe, farmers harvest the pods by hand. They cut the pods open and take out the cocoa beans, heaping them in piles and covering them for several days.



Cocoa Beans

Next the farmers spread the cocoa beans out to dry in the sun for up to a week. As the beans dry, they turn from a whitish color to brown. These dried beans are packed in sacks and sent to chocolate factories all over the world. From there the beans are made into your favorite kinds of chocolate.



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



Making Chocolate

Once the cocoa beans get to the factory, they are roasted in very large ovens. If you were standing outside a chocolate factory, you'd smell the wonderful chocolaty aroma of roasting cocoa beans! Next the shells of the roasted beans are removed. A special machine mashes the dark brown insides of the seeds, called nibs, into a cocoa paste. By itself, cocoa has a very bitter taste, but chocolate makers add sugar, milk, and vanilla to create a sweet and creamy liquid. This liquid is mixed together in a machine to make the chocolate smooth. The longer the chocolate is mixed, the smoother it becomes. Finally the mixture is poured into special molds where it sets into solid chocolate. Delicious!



Chocolaty Treats

Who doesn't enjoy yummy chocolate treats? Try these recipes at home!

Cocoa Blizzard

Things you need:

- 1 packet of hot cocoa mix
- 2 cups milk
- Pot (or microwave-safe bowl)
- Wooden spoon
- Ice cube tray
- Blender



What to do:

Ask an adult to help you heat up the milk on the kitchen stove, or pour the milk in a sturdy bowl and heat it up in the microwave. Pour the hot cocoa mix into the hot milk and stir. Allow the hot cocoa to cool a little and carefully pour the mixture into the ice cube tray. Place the tray into the freezer overnight. The next day, ask an adult to help you pour the frozen cocoa into a blender. You may want to put the bottom of the tray in hot water to loosen up the cubes. Blend the cubes together to make a cocoa blizzard! Pour the frozen cocoa into a glass. Enjoy!

Tip: If you want to make enough for family or friends, make a double batch of this recipe.

Chocolate Tree Pops

Things you need:

- Store-bought or homemade sugar cookie dough
- Popsicle sticks (one per tree)
- 1½ cups melted chocolate chips or chocolate frosting
- M&M's or sprinkles (optional)

What to do:

Shape the dough into cookies. Before baking them in the oven, insert one end of a Popsicle stick into each cookie. The Popsicle stick will serve as the trunk of each tree. After baking, allow the cookie trees to cool completely. Then spread melted chocolate or chocolate frosting on each tree with a plastic knife or spoon. Add M&M's or sprinkles to each tree. Enjoy!



Cocoa Butter

If you've ever had really itchy and dry skin, you may have rubbed in some lotion made with cocoa butter to make it feel better. Cocoa butter is a type of oil extracted from cocoa beans during the process of making chocolate. It has a sweet, chocolaty scent and is used in making white chocolate and milk chocolate. Because the oil also makes dry skin moist and soft, cocoa butter is also used in many soaps and lotions. Even though they smell good, they're not for eating!

Chocolate Trees

The Bible mentions many different kinds of trees: fig trees, pine trees, olive trees, cedars, poplars, and palms. Trees in the Bible remind us of life and goodness. A person who loves God and who does what is right is "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither" (Psalm 1:3). When we obey God's commands, we are like strong and sturdy trees. If I had to choose what kind of tree I'd like to be, I'd choose a chocolate tree! What about you?



Christin Baker is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

BY MARY S. HULST

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR PREACHER

I COULD NOT BELIEVE how exhausted I was!” The first-time preacher was standing in my office doorway, talking about her Sunday. “I went out to my car and had to summon the energy to drive home. It was as if I had run 10 miles!”

Another new preacher, an older student who enjoyed a long prior career as a beloved teacher, slumped in my office after his first classroom sermon had not been what he wanted. “I’ve taught for years. . . . I’m used to being up in front of people. . . . I’ve been in theater. . . .” He fell silent for several seconds. “This was unlike anything I’ve ever done.”

Twenty years after my first preaching gig, I am still amazed at what preaching demands. Thoughtful engagement of Scripture. A prayerful life. A deep love of the people to whom you are preaching. Engaging, relevant illustrations and life-changing application—along with a delivery that keeps people not only awake but interested.

Add to this the spiritual dimension that those who preach are at the same time the mouthpiece of God and the object of the enemy’s attacks, and a mere mortal can quickly become overwhelmed.

In the winter of 1982, author and pastor Frederick Buechner accepted an invitation to teach preaching for a term at Harvard Divinity School. In his book *Telling Secrets*, he writes, “I had never

understood so clearly before what preaching is to me. Basically, it is to proclaim a Mystery before which, before whom, even our most exalted ideas turn to straw. It is also to proclaim this Mystery with a passion that ideas alone have little to do with. It is to try to put the Gospel into words—not the way you would compose an essay but the way you would write a poem or a love letter—putting your heart into it, your own excitement, most of all your own life. It is to speak words that you hope may, by grace, be bearers not simply of new understanding but of new life both for the ones you are speaking to and also for you. Out of that life, who knows what new ideas about peace and honesty and social responsibility may come, but they

PREACHING IS A UNIQUE PRACTICE, WHOLLY DEMANDING AND YET ROUTINE. HOLY AND HUMAN.

are the fruits of the preaching, not the roots of it” (p. 61).

We love good sermons. We believe that they matter. Many of us can remember sermons that corrected us, comforted us, or stretched our imaginations in ways they needed to be stretched. We can read a passage of Scripture and recall an illustration from a sermon preached on that passage years before that still rings within us. Most of us go into worship expecting that the sermon will do something—teach, encourage, challenge, convict.

But the man or woman standing there in front of the congregation is a human being. Trained, yes; experienced, often—but still a person whose child may have been sick in the middle of the night, or who conducted a funeral and spent four nights away from his family this week, or who herself is struggling with God right now and finds it very hard to stand up and preach.

The high demands on the preaching event are a perfect storm: God can do amazing things, or it can be 22 minutes of pain for preacher and parishioner alike. And these things are not mutually exclusive—God, thankfully, is not limited by the skills of the preacher. But preaching is a unique practice, wholly demanding and yet routine. Holy and human. Exhausting and exhilarating. It takes everything the preacher has. Knowing this, how do we help our preachers?

How Do We Help?

First, find out if your preacher is getting enough rest. It is hard to be creative when you are exhausted. Does your preacher use the gift of Sabbath? Is there a day when he or she does not use email, go to the office, or attend meetings? Is there a

day to rest physically and spiritually? A day to pray, journal, go to the gym, or sit in a park and enjoy the spring blooms? A recent *New York Times* article touted the benefits of regular rest as a way to accomplish more. We were created to enjoy the rhythms of work and rest. Because of the demands of a regular preaching schedule, the need to have stamina when a crisis hits, and also, of course, because this is a commandment, preachers need a Sabbath. They need to have one day when they rest and remember that God is in charge and they are not, and to release their parishioners into God’s keeping. So encourage your preacher to enjoy Sabbath.

Second, preaching employs the use of words—sometimes carefully crafted, sometimes simple and straightforward. What words is your preacher reading? Does your church have a line item in the budget for the pastor to purchase commentaries, novels, or subscriptions to newspapers or magazines known for good writing? Perhaps the gift of a subscription could be your annual way of expressing your gratitude for the work he does. Reading is a good way to mine for illustrations but also shapes the preacher’s imagination. A great novel allows her to think about the intersection of theology with daily life in fresh ways. A succinct article in a newspaper can reveal the strength of brevity as a communication tool. Reading words well written will encourage your preacher in the wise use of words in worship.

Third, say thanks. A handwritten note expressing gratitude for a recent sermon series or an email that notes an illustration from Sunday’s message and how it helped are fuel for your preacher’s fire. So often we preachers wonder if people

are listening. Are they paying attention? Is what I am doing helping anyone at all? Hearing specific feedback on what was helpful allows us to shape future messages in similar ways. An encouraging word about a recent sermon can do so much to keep your preacher excited about preaching.

The final but most important role for a parishioner to take in caring for a preacher is to pray. Do you know when your pastor writes her sermons? Set an alarm on your phone to ring every week at that time and pray for her. Pray every Saturday night as you fall asleep. Pray around the table with your children. Pray for the armor of God to protect her. Pray for the Holy Spirit to equip her. Pray for good ideas and for clarity. Pray for a deep love of the Word. And let your preacher know that you’re praying. Knowing that there are parishioners who are interceding regularly for the preaching ministry of the church will bring deep comfort for all who step into that pulpit Sunday after Sunday.

As Buechner writes, preaching “is to speak words that you may, by grace, be bearers not simply of new understanding, but of new life both for the ones you are speaking to and also for you.” Through our good care, may our preachers be bearers and receivers of the good news of the gospel. ■



Mary Hulst is chaplain for Calvin College and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Books for Beach or Back Porch Bliss



Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus

by John Ortberg

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



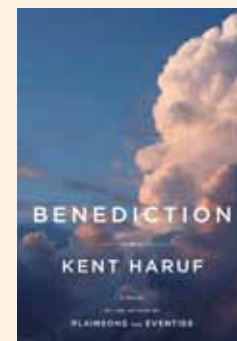
Writing for both Christians and non-Christians, Ortberg says that Jesus' influence "has swept over history like the tail of a comet . . . he has taught humans about dignity, compassion, forgiveness, and

hope." Particularly compelling are insights into the ways Jesus' words and actions led to the liberation of women, children, and slaves, and how he introduced a profoundly different view of sexuality, marriage, and singleness than the pagans espoused. Ortberg urges Christians to be truth-seekers, willing to see that Christ loves and seeks those whom we might consider to be on "the other side." (Zondervan)

Benediction

by Kent Haruf

reviewed by Otto Selles



In Holt, Col., Dad Lewis managed a hardware store, keeping a careful account of his sales. Diagnosed with terminal cancer, he now takes "all of his years into account" and finds himself lacking.

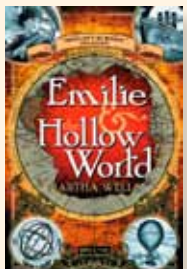
Fans of Haruf's *Plainsong* will be glad to find him back to his laconic style, but may wish he had kept his focus on Dad Lewis and his family. While the novel portrays great sadness, moments of good offer a strong sense of the hope found in family and community. (Knopf)



Navigating Early

by Clare Vanderpool
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Jack Baker and Early Auden meet in post-World War II Maine at a time when both have experienced deep losses and shattered security. Early leads Jack on a quest that takes them deep into the mountains. All the while, Early weaves a tale for Jack that encourages them to continue their trek. Through their harrowing experience, Jack and Early come face to face with their pain and the depth of their friendship. This coming-of-age novel weaves adventure and excitement with deep sadness and the search for family love. Ages 10 and up. See thebanner.org for an interview with the author. (Delacorte)



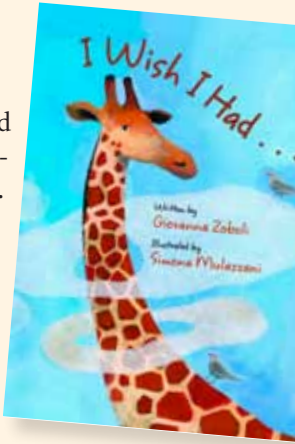
Emilie and the Hollow World

by Martha Wells
reviewed by Francene Lewis

Hoping to stow away on the local ferry, Emilie crawls onto Lord Engal's private steam yacht. She is quickly caught up in an expedition to hunt for a lost airship, its inventor, and its crew, which have disappeared into the interior of the world. This old-fashioned young adult adventure follows the daring Emilie and other rescuers as they search for their friends and attempt to escape from their enemies. Along the way, Emilie discovers the courage to solve her problems both in the hollow world and at home. Ages 12 and up. (Strange Chemistry)

I Wish I Had . . .

by Giovanna Zoboli
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber



There's much to see and think about in this beautiful new picture book. Giovanna Zoboli's gentle text celebrates the best qualities of the animals in God's creation, from "the feather-light steps of a tiger" to "the quick heart of a mouse."

Simona Mulazzani's friendly and vibrant illustrations and delicious color palette make this book a visual treat for readers of all ages. *I Wish I Had . . .* is an excellent quiet-time read and a thoughtful gift. (Eerdmans Young Readers)

My Journey to Heaven: What I Saw and How It Changed My Life

by Marvin J. Besteman and Lorilee Craker
reviewed by Reginald Smith



Retired banker Marv Besteman just wanted to keep his mouth shut. His trip to heaven during a hospital stay was not an easy thing to explain. He had conversations with the apostle Peter, waved at his

deceased grandparents, and smiled at long-gone friends. Lorilee Craker's easy-reading prose captures his experience in their joint effort, *My Journey to Heaven*. Besteman reports that he will dance in heaven, and we will too. It's all the more poignant given that Besteman passed away last year before his book was printed. (Revell)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

The Artful Parent

by Jean Van't Hul
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber



Even if you can't draw a stick figure, this book will help you introduce young children to an artful life. Van't Hul explains the concept of "process art" (finding joy in the doing as well as in the product) and gives tips on planning for art projects, making space, gathering materials, and displaying kids' art. The book's second half is chock-full of easy but inspiring projects for kids ages 1 to 8 (and up), including art for playdates and parties, art with recycled materials, and quiet-time projects. (Roost Books)

Joni and Ken: An Untold Love Story

by Ken and Joni Eareckson Tada, with Larry Libby
reviewed by Kristy Quist



You may think you know Joni's story, but you've only heard the half of it—literally. Joni found her soul mate in Ken Tada, her husband. They both knew there would be hurdles to clear in their marriage because Joni is quadriplegic. However, as in most marriages, there were other challenges they couldn't have foreseen. In *Joni and Ken*, they share with honesty and encouragement how those obstacles distanced them, and then how God guided them through the hardships to a closer, stronger relationship. (Zondervan)

Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales: One Dead Spy

by **Nathan Hale**
reviewed by **Francene Lewis**

Many remember Nathan Hale's famous last words: "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." But who was this schoolteacher, really? With humor and whimsy, the author (who happens to have the same name) introduces us to major moments and people of the American Revolution through the eyes of this early spy. This graphic novel delves into Hale's life in the American army, relating stories of heroism and ingenuity, tension and danger. Ages 8 and up. (Amulet)



Each Kindness

by **Jacqueline Woodson**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**



How Maya, the new girl, fits in depends on everyone else. In this softly told and illustrated story, Maya is left out and mocked. One day her seat is empty. Inviting the children in her class to consider how a small pebble dropped into water creates a continuous ripple outward, the teacher says, "This is what kindness does. . . . Even small things count." But Maya does not come back, and each day the chance to show her kindness becomes "more and more forever gone." *Each Kindness* encourages children to see opportunities to pass on a ripple of kindness to another. Ages 4-8. (Nancy Paulsen Books)

Laughter Is Sacred Space

by **Ted Swartz**
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Ted Swartz's career path toward Mennonite ministry took an abrupt turn when he failed Greek exegesis. He discovered that his heart wasn't in pastoral ministry; instead, he wanted to write, act, and perform comedy. He formed the duo Ted & Lee Theater-Works with Lee Eshleman. Their comedy shows, many based on humorous and thought-provoking spins to familiar biblical stories, took the pair on the road until Eshleman committed suicide. Swartz's book details his walk of defeat, victory, and tragedy. In it, you'll find God's grace in strange but necessary places. (Herald Press)



The Painted Bridge

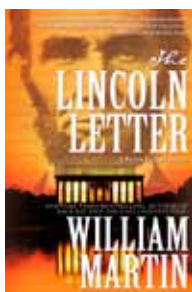
by **Wendy Wallace**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



In 1859 England, Anna Palmer's husband, a minister, declares her psychologically unfit and admits her into a shoddy private asylum known as Lake House. Nearly broken, Anna yet discovers hope in relationships with fellow patients and a visiting doctor. How Anna survives and even surmounts her troubles is the subject of this riveting novel, which subtly contrasts the misuse of the Bible and religious power with the authentic message of the One who says, "Come to me." (Scribner)

The Lincoln Letter

by **William Martin**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



In 1865 Abraham Lincoln freed Negro slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. How did Lincoln, "a man wrestling to do what's right, then doing his best," come to his decision? In this fast-paced historical novel, readers journey back and forth between two interrelated worlds set in Washington, D.C.—as it existed during the Civil War and as it exists today—to discover the answer in Lincoln's diary. Martin's narrative, which includes some vulgarity, gives readers insights into the complexity of Lincoln's decision, the forces for and against abolition, and present-day political intrigue. (Forge)

The Third Son

by **Julie Wu**
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**



Chai-Lin's story begins when his name is still Saburo. While Chinese rule replaces Japan's control of Taiwan, Chai-Lin's father still rules in his home. As the third son in the family, Chai-Lin is neither loved nor properly provided for. The filial piety that his family expects in spite of how they treat him is just one of the loyalties he must contend with as he makes a new life for himself. Hopeful, funny, and sometimes heart-breaking, this novel leads readers through the identity crises of both the young man and his homeland. (Algonquin)

The Magic of Saida

by **M. G. Vassanji**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**

Kamal, a doctor in Edmonton, Alberta, returns to his roots in Africa to search for his childhood sweetheart, Saida. Through the pen and voice of a venerable village poet, author M. G. Vassanji, a two-time winner of Canada's prestigious Giller Prize, recounts both Kamal's journey and the history of Tanzania's emergence from colonization by Germany and Britain. In this novel, Vassanji blends a compelling story with insights into Tanzania's African and East Indian cultures. (Doubleday Canada)



Why Work?

A FEW YEARS AGO my best friend was asked by a co-worker, “You’re paid by the hour, so why do you put so much effort into working efficiently?” That still seems like a question worth asking. Why do we work so hard?

In fact, why do we work at all? For many people, the answer is uncomplicated: to get by, or maybe even to “get ahead.” Such answers come from people across the board, from struggling single parents to affluent boardroom executives. They have in common the idea that our purpose for working is “mammon.” However, as people being continually reshaped by the Spirit, we know that there’s more to our work than earning money. We do not serve mammon. We demonstrate our faith in God in all that we do, including our work.

God worked. In the beginning, God created. And as the crowning jewel of his work, God created humans in his image. Then God placed them in the Garden of Eden to “work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). From the beginning, work is threaded throughout God’s story. Scripture recounts the skilled Israelite workers who built the tabernacle and the temple. It tells us that Peter was a fisherman, Paul a tentmaker, Lydia a dealer in purple cloth. (Know any carpenters?) Being created in God’s image inherently makes us workers; it has been breathed into us. Recognizing that, we do our work for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Our daily work is a high calling. Work brings us joy because we have been wonderfully made in God’s image as creators. An effect of faithful, diligent work is that we imprint on the working world around us part of God’s redemption plan, an echo of the righteousness of his original, perfect creation. Living out our faith at work is more than simply chatting at the water cooler about last Sunday’s worship service. As employees, it means we are on time and dependable. We listen to coworkers and employees because they are God’s imagebearers along with us. We admit to mistakes, give recognition to those who deserve it, and speak up for people who are treated unjustly. This work ethic stands out as “something different.”

Several years ago, the company I work for in Grand Rapids, Mich., which designs and manufactures retail packaging, was pursuing opportunities to expand out of state. One market they wanted to tap into was California, a tough market with lots of competition. Three prospective customers from the Los Angeles area responded that they’d heard about the “West

We imprint on the working world around us part of God’s redemption plan, an echo of the righteousness of his original, perfect creation.

Michigan work ethic” but hadn’t experienced it until they worked with us. The integrity our company’s people demonstrated set us apart from our California-based competitors.

We are achingly aware, however, that this world is broken—work and all. We struggle with unemployment from lack of jobs. We face barriers to employment such as physical and mental disabilities or a criminal record. We encounter rude customers, inept suppliers, harsh employers, lazy employees, or intolerable officemates. “By the sweat of your brow will you eat your food” (Gen. 3:19), we read in God’s Word, “For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun” (Eccles. 9:9). But the places where we work are square inches over which Christ is sovereign, and in such circumstances we live out our faith in perseverance and hope.

So how did my friend answer her co-worker’s question? She said, “While it’s true that I work for this company, ultimately I work for God, and he deserves nothing less than my very best.” ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Marc Meyer has done paid work for almost 30 years, beginning with a paper route as an early teen. He attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

ADS

Deadlines: July issue is 6/3/13; August issue is 7/1/13. 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

Calls Accepted

REV. VERLAN VANE has accepted a call to the Kenosha CRC in Kenosha, WI.

Available for Call

FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF DENVER announces that Rev. Nathan DeJong McCarron is available for call. We joyfully recommend him for further ministry in the CRC. We wish him and his family the Lord's blessing as they seek to serve a new community of faith. He can be contacted at natedejongmccarron@gmail.com

CLASSIS ATLANTIC NORTHEAST joyfully declares that Rev. Stan Sturing is available for call as Minister of the Word to any church looking for a pastor. Rev. Sturing may be reached at STSTURING@aol.com.

AFTER 14 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE, First CRC, Highland, IN, having united in ministry with Faith Church of Dyer, IN, commends Rev. Randall Bergsma to the churches as available for call. He can be reached at randallbergsma@gmail.com or call (219) 838-6231.

Meetings of Classis

CALL TO SYNOD 2013 The council of Roosevelt Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, calls all delegates to Synod 2013, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the Covenant Fine Arts Center auditorium of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Friday, June 7, at 8:30 a.m. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday morning, June 9, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. at Roosevelt Park CRC, 811 Chicago Drive SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Reginald Smith will deliver the message. All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June

2, and on Sunday, June 9. Council of Roosevelt Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Retirement

PASTOR DUANE NIEUWSMA of Dorr Christian Reformed Church will be retiring June 30, 2013. Pastor Duane began his ministry 22 years ago at the River Walk Community CRC in Battle Creek. He has been the much loved Pastor for the Dorr congregation for the past 11 years. A celebration meal and program will be held June 29 at 6:00pm in the church fellowship hall (4220 18th St, Dorr, MI). Past and present members of both congregations, as well as friends and family are invited to attend. Please RSVP to the church office (616) 681-2104 or dorrcrc@sbcglobal.net. Pastor Duane's farewell sermon will be on Sunday, June 30 at 9:30am. Everyone is welcome.

PASTOR GERALD ERFFMEYER of Orland Park CRC will be retiring this summer. To celebrate his 47 years in ministry, everyone is invited to a celebration at Di Nolfo's Banquets in Mokena on Thursday evening, June 27. (Tickets will be available for \$15.00.) Everyone is welcome Sunday, June 30, between the services at 9:30 a.m., for a coffee and cake celebration. Contact Orland Park CRC for more details.

PASTOR JAMES DEKKER of Covenant CRC in St. Catharines, ON is retiring in June. A special worship service is planned for Sunday, June 23 at Covenant CRC at 10 a.m. Please join us for a time of celebration and thanksgiving for his 35.5 years of faithful service as a missionary and minister. For further details call 905-937-3942.

RETIREMENT With praise to God for his living and enduring Word and with thanks to five loving and supportive congregations, Pastor Karl Bratt of Second CRC in Randolph, WI, plans to retire on June 24. He previously served churches in Sioux City, IA; Kalamazoo, MI; Leota, MN; and East Palmyra, NY.

PASTOR JACOB WEEDA will be retiring from the East Martin CRC on June 30. We celebrate his 38 years in ministry.

REV. TERRY GENZIN will retire after 39 years of serving the Lord in the CRC. He has been a pastor for Brocton, MN; Trinity in Sparta, MI; Pipestone, MN; and, for the past 18 years, Messiah in Hudsonville, MI. Everyone is invited to a cake reception following the 9:30 service at Messiah on June 9. We praise God for blessing us through Pastor Terry and his wife, Mary.

Congregational

Church's 125th Anniversary

BALDWIN CRC in Baldwin, WI will celebrate 125 years on July 6 and 7. We invite all previous pastors, members and friends to join us for Sat. activities and evening concert and Sunday worship and pot-luck dinner. For details, contact the church at 715-684-2928.

Church's 100th Anniversary

COMSTOCK CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in November. With praise and thanksgiving, special services are being planned for November 3 and November 10. A time of fellowship will follow both morning services. Former pastors, members, and friends are invited. Please contact the church office at (269) 342-2646 or office@comstockcra.org for more information or to share a special memory or reflection.

Church's 75th Anniversary

RAYMOND CRC in Raymond, MN will celebrate 75 years on June 22 and 23. We invite all previous pastors, members and friends to join us for a Saturday evening program and worship service and pot luck dinner on Sunday. For details contact the church at 320-967-4721 or rrcc@frontiernet.net or the web site at www.raymondcra.org.

THIRD CRC LYNDEN, WA hopes to celebrate its 75th Anniversary on October 19 and 20, 2013. All former members, pastors, and friends are invited. There will be a dinner and program on Saturday and a special worship service on Sunday. For details, contact the church at 360 354 1448 or on line at www.third-church.org.

Church's 50th Anniversary

CRESTVIEW CHURCH, BOULDER, CO is celebrating 50 years of ministry! Celebrations and dedication of the remodeled sanctuary are set for Sep 7-8. If you are a former member or attendee we invite you to join us. Please RSVP to office 303-444-5780 so we can plan accordingly.

ZION CRC in Oshawa, Ontario will celebrate its 50th Anniversary on June 22 and 23, 2013. We invite all friends and former members to celebrate and worship with us. Thanks be to God. Info. at 905-436-3255 or www.zioncra.ca.

DISBANDING

AFTER 53 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GOD, his church, and this community, The Pine Grove Community Chr. Ref. Church of Pinellas Park, FL is disbanding. The final worship service was held on April 21. We give thanks to our God for these years together, for the ministry he gave us to fulfill, and now for a time to say "farewell" to one another, knowing that we will see one another again. Psalm 90:16, 17

What I Saw and How It Changed My Life
My Journey to Heaven
MARVIN J. BESTMAN and LOUISE
MARVIN J. BESTMAN

Marvin Bestman went from a hospital bed to the gates of heaven and back again. He never forgot what he saw.

Here's his inspiring true story.

To order the book or DVD visit www.myjourneytoheaven.com

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Birthdays

95th Birthday

HAROLD HARTGER will celebrate his 95th birthday on June 15. His children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are grateful for him, his servant heart, and how he shares his faith, his stories and his music to enrich others' lives. He lives at 2121 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.



TWINS Ada (VanGilst) Rozenboom and Anna (VanGilst) DeBruin will celebrate their 95th birthday on June 19, 2013. Ada Rozenboom resides at 2121 Raybrook St SE #150 Grand Rapids MI 49546. Her husband Gysbert; children Lois, Al, Pat, Nadine and spouses; her many grand-

children and great-grandchildren honor her for her love, care and faithfulness. Anna DeBruin resides at 2102 S Market St Oskaloosa IA 52577. Her 3 children Wayne, Don, Jan and spouses; her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren have all been blessed by her example of a faith-filled life.

CHRIS VANDEN BERG will celebrate his 95th birthday on June 16. Address: Covenant Village, 2520 Lake Michigan Dr., N. W. Room 209, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

90th Birthday

WINIFRED (WIERSMA) DE JONGE celebrates her 90th birthday on June 11. Through her marriage to the late Raymond De Jonge, she is blessed with a loving family: Joan and Ed, John and Jan, Bob and Manette, Pat and Dan: 16 grandchildren and their 7 spouses; and 12 great grandchildren. Her life of Bible study, prayer, letter writing, and service to others are a continual blessing to all who know her. Her family gives thanks to God for His love and faithfulness.



GLADYS (KOOI) GRITTER of 2121 Raybrook St. SE, Apt. 113, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 23, 2013. Her children are Bob (Ruth) Gritter, Ken (Marianne) Gritter, Cindy (Vince) Gargagliano, Judy (Jim) Kleinwolterink, 11 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren. An open house for friends and family will be held at Raybrook Manor Friendship Room from 2 to 4 PM on Saturday, June 29. We thank God for our mother, and for her love of God and family!

BONNIE JUNE JELLEMA at Maple Woods Resthaven, 49 East 32nd St., Holland MI 49423 will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 1, 2013. Her family and friends are grateful for her many faithful prayers. Happy Birthday, Bonnie!

JOHN WOLTJER 1725 Batchawana ST. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508 will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 2. His children, Ron (and Cindee), Mary (and Tom), Ruth (and Evan), Laura (and Tom), Ted (and Lisa), 12 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren give thanks to God for his life of faithfulness, devotion and love that he continues to share with us.

85th Birthday

ROSE (KEEGSTRA) HOLLEMANS of Grand Rapids, MI celebrated her 85th birthday on May 28. Her children, grandchildren and great grandchild thank God for their blessings.

80th Birthday

WILMA DYKHOUSE of Ripon, CA celebrated 80 yrs. on May 2. Her children are Ken (Cheri) Dykhouse and Janet (Randy) Engel. Her grandchildren are Kara (Christian) Chan, Erin, Tony and Deshawn Dykhouse, and Janelle and Kelly Engel. We all wish her many more and are thankful for her

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

DRIESEN Morrie & Gertrude (Koenes) will celebrate 70 years of marriage on the 9th of June. Their children, Jim, Tom, and Mary, with their spouses and 9 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren thank

God for His love and faithfulness for these many years. They reside at 10925 Aspen Trl. Zeeland, MI 49464.

65th Anniversary

POSTMA Floyd & Ruth (Herrema) 1725 Port Sheldon St. B408, Jenison MI 49428 are celebrating 65 years of marriage in May. We, your family and friends, give thanks to God for the beautiful testimony displayed through your love and commitment to each other. Thank you for the inspiration you are!

60th Anniversary

BONNEMA Doug & Dorothy (Wieberdink), 2500 Breton Woods Dr. Unit 2006, Kentwood MI 49512 will celebrate 60 yrs of marriage on June 17. 4 children, Duane (Nancy), David (Marilyn), Doreen Gunniink

(Loren), Dale (Linda); 12 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. We praise the Lord for the many blessings in the past 60 yrs.

VANDER ARK Gordon and Saramae (Witt), June 18. 7131 Union Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49548. Children: Kris and Edwin Timmer, Steve and Mitzi, Dave and Theresa, Jill and David Martin, Heidi and Jeff Wenke; 18 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren. Phil. 2:3-4, Psalm 33:1-3.

VELGERSDYK Harold and Jackie (Van't Hul) 6097 S. Fulton, Englewood, Colo. 80110 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on May 1st. Their 2 sons Dave (Karen) and Darryl (Jill) with 7 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren are thankful for their commitment to God and each other.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR Willoughby CRC is searching to grow into its calling of greater service to our community of Langley, British Columbia. We are seeking a fulltime pastor with strengths in preaching, leadership and relational gifts to help us in that service. The pastor would work in a team staffing model. For more information contact search@willoughbychurch.com.

PASTOR: Talbot Street CRC is an energetic, multi-generational congregation located downtown in the heart of London, ON, Canada. As a congregation, we seek to discover Christ and grow in Him through solid Biblical teaching, strong leadership and visioning from our Pastor. We are a diverse faithful congregation with passion for worship, service projects and actively living for Christ. With God leading us forward, we seek a Pastor who is able to challenge us. Those interested with a priority of preaching and teaching, and excelling at leading a multi-staff ministry as well as ministering to our downtown community, should send their inquiry to Harry De Jonge at harryde@sympatico.ca. For more information on our church and a church profile, please check us out at www.talbotstreetchurch.com. Job description posted on website under About Us - Job Opportunities.

PASTOR Bethel CRC in Listowel, ON is seeking a second full time pastor to serve a vibrant, all-ages congregation of approx. 350 members. For a job description, please email John Greydanus jhgrydaus@gmail.com

YOUTH PASTOR Crosspoint Community Church (CRC) in Anchorage, AK, is seeking a full time children and youth pastor. Visit crosspoint-community.com for job description, or phone (907) 868-5147.

NEERLANDIA CRC is a large, rural congregation located in Northern Alberta. We are a well-established, active church enjoying a blended style of worship. Our Search Committee is looking for a full-time pastor willing to assist us in becoming the church God expects us to be. Interested applicants may contact Erna at famvn@hotmail.com for more detailed information.

YOUTH DIRECTOR 12th Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, MI, is seeking a part-time Youth Director for our children's and youth ministries. We are looking for a Christ-follower who has a passion for young people and for reaching out to the community. The Youth Director responsibilities require approximately 20 hrs/wk. Please visit our website at www.12thaveccr.org to view the full job description and to apply. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

PASTOR: Lakeside Church serves a small, diverse population in Ludington, MI. Our vision is to be joyful followers of Jesus through worship, service and play and to offer "church" to those for whom church may not have worked in the past. We are seeking a full-time pastor: a spiritually-gifted teacher to connect Biblical truth to daily life and a shepherd to love and encourage children, youth and adults. Our fellowship is warm and our beaches are fabulous! Contact brendajmassie@gmail.com

WORSHIP/MUSIC DIRECTOR The Human Resource Team of Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, Ontario is searching for a full-time Worship/Music Director commencing September 2013. A job description for this position is available upon request from Nelly Baarda at nbaarda@mountainviewcrc.org. Anyone interested in this position is invited to submit an application to Sue Kikkert, Secretary of the Human Resource Team, at suekikkert@hotmail.com. Please include a brief history of your work experience that you believe to be appropriate for this position.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP Calvary CRC of Pella, IA is seeking a full-time pastor who is called to faithfully preach from Scripture, share a passion for the Gospel, and lovingly serve as lead pastor of the ministry team. Contact us at search@calvary-crc.org.

SENIOR PASTOR Pine Grove Community Church of Howard City, Michigan is seeking a full-time senior pastor who has a passion for preaching God's word, possesses strong leadership skills, and a heart for reaching the un-churched. We are a well-established church in a resort/vacation/recreation area that includes a unique and vibrant summer ministry to accommodate all who wish to worship with us. There is a full job description at www.pingrovechurch.net. If interested, please contact Edward Buikema at ebuikema@yahoo.com or 312-285-6721.

FULLER AVE CRC seeks a full-time pastor to lead a ministry team and a highly committed congregation in SE Grand Rapids, MI. Our priorities include inspiring preaching, strong interpersonal skills, and effective leadership in cross-cultural ministry with our neighbors. Please send letter of interest, CV, and profile to John Chapin, Search Committee secretary at john.gf@earthlink.net. All inquiries held in strict confidence.

FULL TIME PASTOR - Holland Heights CRC in Holland, Michigan, is seeking an experienced pastor, committed to Biblical preaching, and gifted in leadership. The ideal candidate will provide leadership to, and actively promote participation in, the life of the church, encouraging all members to become fully committed followers of Christ. Lead us as we grow spiritually, making disciples in our community, and reaching out in his name around the world. To request our church profile and job description, please contact us at searchteam@hhccr.org.

FULL TIME PASTOR Bethany CRC Fenwick, an active church located in the beautiful Niagara Peninsula, is seeking a full time Pastor. We desire a humble leader passionate for the Lord, who's gifted in preaching to diverse age groups, committed to spiritual development and has an enthusiasm for community outreach. Profile available upon request. Respond to: andriaslappendel@gmail.com.

WE AT IMMANUEL CRC in Hamilton, Ontario, are looking to grow in the specific areas of youth ministry, outreach, ministries development coordination, preaching, and discipleship. Do you sense the call of God and have gifts in any or all of these areas? If so, then we would like to discuss with you the potential of joining our current ministry team. Please email search@immanuelministries.ca so we can get in touch with you.

50th Anniversary

ELLENS Sy & Jan (Hoekstra) of Kalamazoo, MI will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 28, 2013. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

GROEN Fred & Bev (Visscher), Zeeland, MI, will celebrate 50 yrs on June 13th. Children Mike (Jeanne), Steve (Jill), Dan (Claire). Nine grandchildren. Thankful to God for his faithfulness.

SCHOON Dr. N. Lewis and Janice (Meyer) 16049 Timberview Dr., MI, 48036, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 29 with their children: Jennifer and Imad Ghandour, Anthony and Eli; N. Steven and Jackie, Maria and Nadia; David H. and Jennifer; and other loved ones, with thanks for God's faithful presence in their lives.

STRUCK Cal & Carolyn (Slager) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 7, 2013. They have 2 children and 4 grandchildren. We praise God for this milestone and invite you to celebrate with us at Princeton CRC on June 1 from 1:30 – 3:30.

WYATT Jim & Ardis of Caledonia, MI, celebrate 50 years on May 13. Our children; Richared & Fawn Postma - grandsons Luke & Derek. James & Jackie Wyatt - grandsons Peyton & Logan. We praise God for his faithfulness and love.

45th Anniversary

LANINGA Eugene & Phyllis (Vander Bok), 727 State St., Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate 50 years of marriage June 19, 2013. Children are Brad & Patti, Bonnie & Scott Kooiman, Barb & Todd Gosselink, Beth & Andy Savage. We praise God for His love and faithfulness.

Obituaries



ALLINGTON, Eldona "Donie" (nee Weller) age 87, of Cedar Springs, went home to be with her Lord and Savior on Tuesday, April 23, 2013. Donie was a Charter Member of Pioneer Christian Reformed Church. She is survived by her husband of 68 years of marriage, George; their children, Dr.

Richard and Dr. Anne Allington, Allen Allington, Len and Kimberly Allington, David and Paula Allington, Mary and Kim Coonen, and Dale and Marcey Allington; 19 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren.

BROUWER Lucille, age 81, of Cedar Creek Dr., Zeeland, MI, went to be with her Savior and Lord on March 12, 2013. Beloved wife of Rev. Ted Brouwer for 57 years. Loving mother of Daniel (Mary) Brouwer, Laura (Mike) Boot and Rosali (Douglas) Hossink. Brothers and Sisters-in-law: Peter and Phyllis Brouwer, Donald and Mariann Alsum and William and Renee Brouwer. 8 grandchildren.

BRUXVOORT Elaine (Vogel) died March 12, 2013. Age 76. Bloomer, WI. Survived by husband, Ralph; Children: Rhonda Berg (Dan); Kristen Ribbens Bruxvoort; Ellen Stephens (Linnie); Joel (Barbara); Susan Lipscomb (Ben); three sisters, one brother and 16 grandchildren. Preceded in death by sons Glenn and Ned (in infancy) and granddaughter Katherine Stephens.

DEVOS Franklin (Frank) Alwyn; March 22, 2013, Grand Rapids, MI; Frank was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years, Esther (Ibershof) DeVos, an infant son, a 4 1/2 year old son, Jackie, parents, Francis and Ada DeVos, brother, Adrian DeVos, and sister, Pearl Haveman. Frank is survived by his children: David (Paula) DeVos, Nancy (Scott) Stehouwer and Julie (Daniel) VanderWoude; grandchildren: Becca (Andy) VandeGriend, Aaron (Afton) DeVos, Ben (Sarah) Stehouwer, Emily (Frank) Smith, Jonathan Stehouwer, Anna Stehouwer, Aubrey VanderWoude, and Jereme VanderWoude; great-grandchildren: Joshua, Ellie, and Hannah VandeGriend, Zachary DeVos, and Charlie Stehouwer; sister: Margaret DeMaagd; and sister-in-law: Dorothy Ibershof. His special gift was offering others a glimpse of God's handiwork through floral arrangements and gardening. Those who wish may send remembrances to Shawnee Park CRC Evangelism Fund, Grand Rapids Christian School Association, or the Holland Home.

DYKEMA Mark A., 47 of 73 Woodland Dr. Oak Brook, IL 60523. Husband of Diane, nee De Groot. Father of Benjamin, Amanda and Abigail. Son of Rev. Henry & Cora Dykema. Son-in-law of Paul & Flora De Groot. Brother of Carol (Brett) Miles, David Dykema, Brenda (Bruce) Frey, Jennifer (David) Zeilbeck; brother-in-law of Dave & Ann De Groot. Nephew, cousin, uncle of many.

HOLTGEERTS Gertrude (Trudy) went to her heavenly home March 9, 2013 in Holland MI. She is survived by her husband of 69 years, Herbert; daughters, Judith (Nick) Unema and Faith (Daryl) Kamphuis; 5 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren.

JOOSSE Elizabeth (Vander Lugt) of Racine, WI went to Glory on 4/2/13 at age 97. She is survived by her 3 sons Stan (Laureli), Wayne (Anamaria), and Mark (Martha), 6 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. We thank God for her long life and Christian influence.

MEINES Alyce (Pruiksma-Panalis) age 80, of Littleton, Co went to be with her Lord on March 5, 2013. She is survived by her husband Clarence (Clix); son Steven; step children, Robyn Mann, Jeffrey and Dean Meines and Darla Carringer; 11 grandchildren.

NIEMAN Joyce, nee Vander Ploeg, of Kanawha, IA, age 83, went to be with her Lord on January 20, 2013. Joyce was preceded in death by her husband, Martin. She is survived by her children, Karen (Patrick) George, Lakeville, MN; Jill, Lakeville, MN; James (Julie), Kanawha, IA; 8 grandchildren.

RECKER James Anton, age 92, DeMotte, IN passed from life to eternity January 23, 2013. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, Mary, and children Jim (Sue), Jan LaMar, Jerry (Luann) Recker; son-in-law, Ken DeVries; step-children, LaVerne (Gary) Jordan and Karen (Jim) Getz. Additionally he was cherished by 21 grandchildren, 51 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great grandchild.



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ROBERT Frank Carl, aged 75, of Grand Rapids, MI passed away on Good Friday, March 29, 2013. He was History Professor and Academic Dean at Calvin College total of 32 years. He loved telling of God's grace TO ALL GENERATIONS. He was preceded in death by an infant daughter, his parents

Louis F. and Frances Roberts of Rochester, NY, and his sister Alma (John) Hoogland. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Doris M. Roberts (Ludwick), brothers David (Cindy) and Doug (Margie, deceased), his sons Barth (Denise), Blake (Kristina Oliveira), F. Corey (Brynne), Derek (Kristen) and seven grandchildren, Anneke, Ashton, Jared, Elena, Katerina, Simon, and Vivian.

ROTTMAN Fritz began his new life with Christ on March 2, 2013. He is missed by wife Carol (Vanden Bosch), children: Barbara (David) Hoogenboom, Douglas Rottman, Susan (Steve); eight grandchildren & brothers, Jack and Bob. "Great is the Lord...[we] will celebrate your abundant goodness." Ps. 145



SLEGERS Lenwood Mitchell, age 89, went to be with his Lord and Savior on March 20, 2013 in Bakersfield, Calif. He will be dearly missed by his wife of 66 yrs, Tess and 5 children, Janet, Hubert, Jim (Mary Ann), Fred, (Zev) and Ben (Rhonda), 8 grandchildren, Nate (Christina) Alexa

(Tyler) Sonya, Tracy, Matt, Jason (Tawnee) Chelsie, Trevor, and 3 great grandchildren, Hayden, Taytum, Bentley. He is also survived by his sister Pearl, and sister-in-law Dorothy. Len was pre-deceased by his son Mitch, his brothers Honk and George, and sister Liz. Dad's highest priority and greatest love in life were his family and his relationship to our God.

SLOFSTRA, Alice, age 88, beloved wife of Rev. Lammert Slofstra, was suddenly called to higher glory on April 29, 2013. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, her 5 children and their spouses, 17 grandchildren and 40 great grandchildren. 9030 - 158 St., Surrey, BC V4N 5G4.

TEN BROEK Harold, aged 84; April 24, 2013; 2300 Raybrook SE, #203, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He was preceded in death by his brother Bernard and sister Sylvia. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Lory; daughters: Nancy Ten Broek, Deb (Ty) Van Kempen, Carol (Dirk) Monsma; grandchildren: Jacob Van Kempen, Jonathan Van Kempen, Rachel Van Kempen-Fryling, Emily and Eric Monsma; great grandchildren: Tyler, Sophia, and Olivia Van Kempen; sisters-in-law: Marilyn Ten Broek and Louise DeMey.

VAN DELLEN NellieJane (Rudenga) 91, was welcomed into Heaven by her Lord and Savior on 4/13/13. Her beloved husband of 67 yrs, Roger, predeceased her. She is survived by her children: Joyce, Roger Jr. (celebrating in Heaven), Carolyn (Rev. Timothy) Cartwright, and Dr. Alfred (Gwen) Van Dellen. Her faith was expressed in the words of her favorite song, "Blessed Assurance". Memorial donations can be made to The Back To God Hour Ministries International and the CRC World Renew.



VAN DOP, Adrian, age 91, of Grand Rapids, MI. went home to be with his Lord and Savior on March 7, 2013. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Roline; children Bruce and Nina Van Dop, Dennis Van Dop and Kim Watrous, Mary and Larry Hoogerhyde; 11 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren,

a sister, Cora Hendrick, brothers William and Yvonne Van Dop, Henry and Carol Van Dop, John and Millie Nummerdor, sister in laws Pat Nummerdor and Mae Nummerdor.

VANDER SYS Johanna, age 103, of Artesia, CA went to her eternal home on April 18, 2013, joining her husband Matt. She is survived by her three daughters, Rika (Al) Scheenstra, Jan (Milton) Vanderburg, and Carolyn (Merwyn) Tanis, 8 grandchildren, 23 great grandchildren, and 1 great great grandchild. We praise God for her loving and godly example.

ZEILSTRA John H. age 87, went to be with the Lord April 27, 2013. 1615 Cermak Ct, Naperville, IL 60563. Husband for 65 years of Evelyn Zeilstra, nee Wichers; father of Barbara (Jim) Brouwer, Janice (Dale) Holtrop, John T. (Janice) Zeilstra, William (Karla) Zeilstra, Mary (John) Cook, and Evelyn (Brad) Wiering; grandfather of 21 and many great-grandchildren; brother of Evelyn (the late Ira) Slagter and Don (Vern) Zeilstra, brother-in-law and uncle of many.

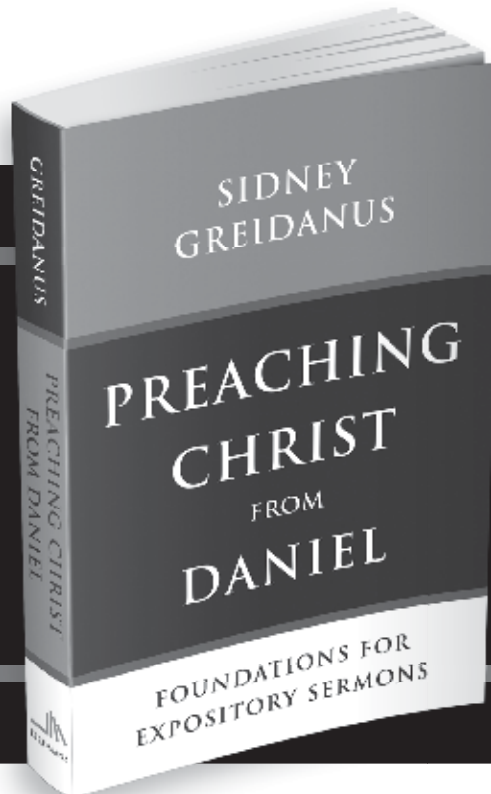
ZYLSTRA Gertrude (Faber) 904 S. Plains Park Dr. Roswell, NM 88203 (formerly of Clearwater, FL and Haledon, NJ) went to be with the Lord on April 1, 2013. Preceded in death by sisters Wilma Osinga and Henrietta Valkema, brothers Evert and John III. She is survived by her husband Marvin, sons Gerben (Jen) and David, Daughters Wilma (Jewell) Miley, Marie Zylstra, and Carol (William) Rouse, 3 grandsons, 3 granddaughters, and 3 great grandsons.

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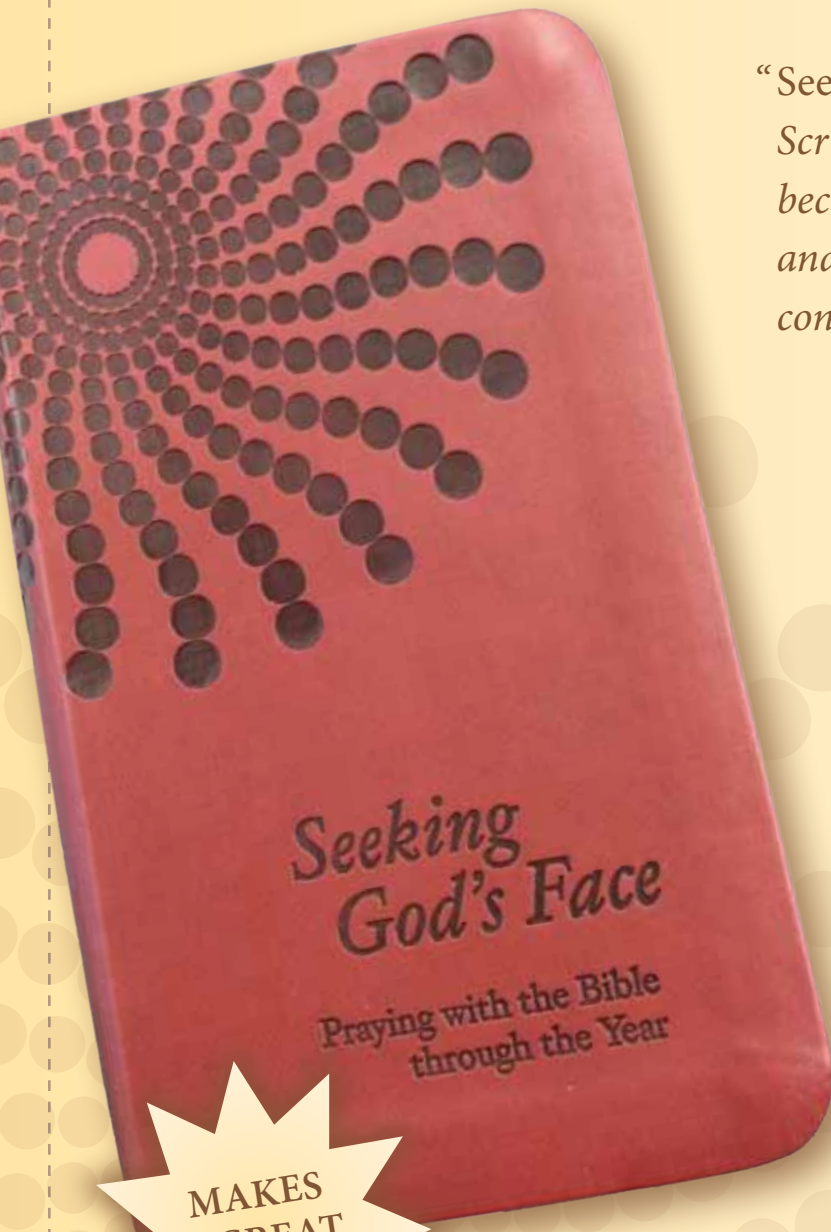
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Punch Lines

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. Thanks!

I visited my preschool grandson for lunch one day. As I sat with seven little ones on a miniature chair at a miniature table, one little girl asked Brandon who was with him today. He proudly introduced me as his grandma. She replied off-handedly, "I have a grandma too, and she's not dead yet either!" Then it was back to grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup.

—Judy Groenendyk

Seen on an outdoor sign at Dover Congregational Church, Westlake, Ohio:
 CHORAL LED SERVICE
 NO SERMON
 HALLELUJAH

—Dick DeVries

One night a little boy's mother told him to go out to the back porch and bring her the broom. He said, "Mama, I don't want to go out there. It's dark."

The mother smiled. "You don't have to be afraid of the dark," she explained. "Jesus is out there. He'll protect you."

The boy looked at her and said, "Are you sure he's out there?"

"Yes, I'm sure," she said. "He is everywhere, and he's always ready to help when you need him."

The little boy thought for a moment and then went to the back door and cracked it a little. Peering into the darkness, he called, "Jesus, if you're out there, please hand me the broom."

—Clarence A. Wildeboer

During the service, our pastor said to the congregation, "Please be seated for the singing of 'Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.'"

—R. Boone

One of the best things about Faith Alive's *Dwell* curriculum is that it gives space for kids to imagine themselves into the story.

When we heard about Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, I asked the kids what they thought Mary did next.

"I bet she jumped up and down," said one little girl.

"I bet she ran to Joseph and said, 'We have to get married right away!'" said another.

But one little boy said, "I bet she went and poured herself a large brandy!"

—LaVonnie Carlson

A parishioner seceded with a few others who were unable to accept the doctrines of the church.

When a clergyman asked this man if he and the others worshiped together, the answer was: "No. I found that they accepted certain points to which I could not agree, so I withdrew from communion with them."

"Well then," the pastor continued, "I suppose you and your wife

carry on your devotions together at home."

"Not exactly," the man admitted. "I found that our views on certain doctrines are not in harmony. Now she worships in the northeast corner of the room and I in the southwest."

—Cyndi Boss

Leaving church one Sunday morning, a family stopped to shake hands with the minister. Their little boy said, "When I grow up and get rich, I'm going to give you lots of money!"

The minister beamed. "Why do you say that?"

"Because my mother said you were the poorest preacher she ever heard," the boy said.

—Bob Lubbers

Our son overheard this conversation taking place between his 6-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. Anna had recently learned about monotheism and polytheism in her Christian school and was set to test her little brother on that.

"Levi, are you a polytheist?" she asked, to which he answered, "Yes."

Later in the day, she asked him again: "Are you a polytheist or monotheist?" To which he replied, "I'm a SPIDERtheist!"

—Jolene Visser



"Would you like something to read while you're waiting for the doctor?"

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