

# THE BANNER

May 2014 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

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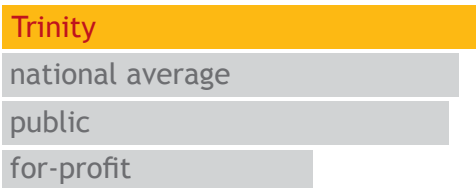
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# BANNER

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# Time to Move On?

**MARGO AND I INFLICTED THE SAME TRAUMA ON OUR CHILDREN** that my parents inflicted on me. We tore our kids from their home, their community, and even their country. Several times they, and we, had to be the new kids on the block. At times it was brutally hard. But I believe that ultimately it was good for us and, more important, for the church. That's because my dad was a minister of the Word and so am I. He bound on my heart that ministers need to leave *before* the church wants them to.

That sounds harsh. But it's part and parcel of ministry. The gospel of Jesus Christ is so much bigger than any person who proclaims it. That's why from the very beginning preachers have been itinerant. That's why Calvin Seminary taught us rookie preachers to steel ourselves for the worthy sacrifice of moving on.

Times have changed, of course. Today many pastors' spouses—rightly—embark on their own careers. And *their* calling needs to be on the table every time a move is contemplated. Today ministers invest in their own homes because the Ministers' Pension Plan says you need to if you ever hope to retire. But every time you have to sell and buy a house, you take a financial wallop. Today there are fewer vacancies than there once were—and churches think twice about calling an older preacher. Today the increasing diversity of congregations makes taking a call elsewhere an “iffy” proposition because we are uncertain whether it will be a good match. No wonder today more pastors go beyond their “best before” date.

We urgently need to figure out a better calling process that facilitates clergy mobility. How about a four-pointer like this?

1. Every call is a term call—the congregation and its new pastor covenant for an initial three-year stint.
2. Before the term expires, the council (with input from the congregation) decides with the pastor whether to renew the arrangement for another three-year period. Either side can “walk” with no stigma either way.
3. The denomination would form a (match-making) placement committee (with teeth) that assigns pastors who are freed from their congregations to vacant churches who are looking for a pastor. As an added benefit, churches that have a hard time competing for pastors in the “open market” would be able to have an experienced pastor who isn't yet counting the weeks from his or her ordination or the months to retirement.
4. Finally, the ability of pastors to embark on non-ministerial callings will no longer be discouraged. If they cannot move because of their spouses' careers, for example, they would be entirely free to find other employment. As Reformed Christians we believe that *all* legitimate callings are kingdom callings. Let's practice that.

There may be better ways to tackle this issue. But the goal matters: we need to get our preachers back on the road—though maybe less frequently than in the 1950s.

Churches should be formed in Christ's image, not in the image of their pastors. So wise pastors will get out of Dodge before that happens.

If even Jesus himself had “no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58), moving should remain an unavoidable job hazard for pastors. ■

The gospel of  
Jesus Christ is so  
much bigger than  
any person who  
proclaims it.



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

# BANNER

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## Grace Mic'd



**RACE MIC'D** makes a beautiful sound.

At mosaicHouse, a church plant in Edmonton, Alberta, we worship with a multicultural accent. One way we do this is to ask people to lead the offertory song in their native tongue during Sunday worship service.

But one day at a worship planning meeting, our new praise team leader said, "Let's try something else!" He thought we should invite people to come forward and say a short prayer in their native language. My first reaction—unspoken—was, "Well, *that* will never happen—even here." However, reluctant to shoot down this rising star's creativity, I acquiesced. "That's a brilliant idea! Let's go for it!"

So unconfident was I that I cornered two persons in the congregation and had them swear that they'd be the first ones to go up to the mic the following Sunday when I'd make an open invitation. Planting the seed, I *may* have said to these two new Christians, not versed in the Bible,

something like, "Everyone in heaven prays in at least two different languages."

Then came the following Sunday. Following our repertoire of praise songs, I went up to the microphone in the front and said, "Folks, in place of our usual congregational prayer by the pastor, we will try something new. Y'all get to lead it. Please come up to the mic and offer a prayer in your mother tongue. I assure you that the Lord can understand your prayer." Then, taking a leap of faith, I sat down.

Nothing happened for what felt to me like a very long and awkward pause.

Then grace showed up. One Latino gentleman came to the mic and offered a prayer—a short prayer—in Spanish. At least, I am pretty sure it was Spanish. He then sat down. Not long after that, a Ph.D. student in the university came up to the mic and prayed very softly in Hungarian.

Next a young woman in her 20s came up to the mic and prayed in Malay. It turns out that this was her first visit to our church. She was followed by a Haitian woman who came up and prayed

in Creole, which sounded like she was singing *bel canto*. Then a Korean man came up to the mic and prayed. A woman in her 50s came up and prayed in English for her friends who were going through a tough time. To my knowledge she was not a Christian and had a very limited church background.

After she sat down, a second-grade boy came forward. He had to lower the mic way down. Then he put his hands in his front pockets and prayed in English. I don't remember what he prayed for because by now I was holding back the tears.

Grace is always amazing. And when grace is mic'd, it makes a beautiful sound. ■



Victor Ko is a church planter with mosaicHouse in Edmonton, Alberta.

**"The central element  
in communion with God  
is the act  
of self-surrender."**

— HOWARD THURMAN



# On Board with the 90 Percent

We will discover the Lord moving people to go to bat for us.

**THE JANUARY BANNER** included an article sharing the point of view of some World Missions missionaries who objected to the new goal of raising 90 percent of our support by 2020. I offer a different perspective here because my wife and I, and many others, are on board with the new paradigm.

Many decades ago, the denomination supported World Missions missionaries almost exclusively. They did so through ministry shares in a time when the cost of doing ministry was lower. Now the cost of doing ministry is much higher, and ministry shares giving has long been declining. People prefer to give their money to support concrete needs. The idea of a general budget is hard for many to visualize or get excited about. These are things to lament.

At the same time, many of our churches use part of their missions budgets to support missionaries from other missions and send mission teams overseas. These are things to rejoice about. Still, they affect our mission adversely. World Missions needs to adapt to this new reality, and the 90 percent paradigm is part of that adaptation.

A bit of context: my wife and I served with an interdenominational mission in

the 1990s. We raised 100 percent of our support plus travel and ministry expenses. The administrative staff of that mission organization, though they were wonderful people, could offer us nowhere near the help we get from the staff of World Missions. Our salary and benefits were minimal during that time, whereas now they are on a level comparable to those who work in the U.S. For that organization, the administrative cost was 12 percent, whereas with World Missions it is 8 percent.

We were told not to view raising support as an interruption of what we do but as a part of what we do, ministering to people back home and inviting new people to take part in what the Lord is doing in our ministries. The missionaries quoted in the *Banner* article don't seem to see it in that way.

Some voices are grumbling, resisting change, and criticizing the home office without knowing what goes on there. Others are even portraying the situation as adversarial: World Missions versus missionaries. But I would "show you a more excellent way"—that is, love.

If we who are at the forefront of the foreign missions efforts of the Christian Reformed Church are willing to connect more intimately with people back home, our enthusiasm, global perspective, and authenticity will help inspire and strengthen them. Then we will discover the Lord moving people to go to bat for us. The support will come in.

To God be the glory. ■



**Dave Gifford** is an ordained minister in the CRC and a missionary with World Missions. He and his wife, Blanca, have

served in Mexico City for the last nine years. The Giffords' website is [www.giffmex.org](http://www.giffmex.org).



## A Living Wage

Thank you for Kathy Vandergrift's comments on the "living wage" (FAQ "Justice," Feb. 2014). As a sociologist and long-term student of homelessness, I have come to understand that the basic cause of homelessness in North America is a shortage of living wages and affordable housing.

It is good to see that U.S. public opinion polls now show strong support for a more decent minimum wage. But the sad fact is that many of the rich are getting much richer while more of the very poor are being totally left out. Meanwhile, the middle class gets smaller.

Jesus spoke strongly for the poor and other outcasts. As Christians in the tradition of John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper, we [should] work for the revival of what Christ taught regarding the poor. Why don't we listen more carefully to his teachings?

—Ron and Betty Vander Kooi  
Arvada, Colo.

## Guns

Mr. Warner is to be complimented for his concern about protecting his family ("Should Christians Carry?" Feb. 2014). However, I wish that his concern were broader and would include schoolchildren in Sandy Hook and Newtown.



# LETTERS

The lack of gun control in the U.S. and the resultant mass shootings is a dark blot on our society. Folks in Canada, for example (Christian and non-Christian), cannot fathom the callousness we tolerate—especially as preached in the gospel of the National Rifle Association.

—Harry Boonstra  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Thank you for offering multiple voices on a controversial issue (“Should Christians Carry?”) and allowing both to speak side by side. It allows both sides to feel they have a voice and those who are undecided to make informed decisions.

—Brad Vos  
Vancouver, Wash.

Mr. Berghoef states that carrying a weapon is in direct conflict with his desire to be a faithful disciple (“Should Christians Carry?”). By extension, those who choose to carry a weapon are living in conflict with Mr. Berghoef’s vision of Jesus’ disciples. I fear we are too quick to infer the answers to “WWJD?” to suit our own predispositions.

I assure you, Mr. Berghoef, I am not obsessed with violence; I carry a handgun when I feel I need to. I don’t obsess about violence; I don’t hunt, watch violent movies, or glorify war. The violence referenced in your article, in fact, is courtesy of the muggers. I respect your right to rely on the authorities to use violence, but I believe ascribing that decision to Jesus’ wishes is as improper as doing the opposite.

—Ross Harrell  
Palisade, Colo.

Civil law may permit me to act in self-defense (“Should Christians Carry?”), but God’s command to love others as myself

makes me question my right to decide which life is of more value, mine or another’s. If my life is taken, my eternal destiny is assured in Christ. If I take another’s life, I would be taking from that person every potential opportunity to come to know Christ’s reconciling peace with God.

Would it be the act of a fool to risk my life for another’s potential salvation, or would it be a Christ-like act? How could a gun contribute to my ministry of reconciliation?

—Joanna Meyer  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

A recent TV program about guns in the U.S. told of a toddler who was able to climb to the top shelf in a closet to get his dad’s handgun and died from his wounds (“Should Christians Carry?”).

Children ages 3 to 5 who had been given explicit warnings concerning guns and specific instructions [about] what to do if they saw one were observed by a hidden camera. Most of them in a room with a gun picked it up and looked down the barrel or pointed the gun at another child.

Who guards the guns of the guards? The plea of the parents of the dead boy was “Lock up your gun.”

As a dual citizen, I invite readers to compare firearm deaths of children in the U.S. and Canada.

—Tom Posthumus  
London, Ontario

It is interesting to note that in 2012 there were 532 homicides in Chicago, whereas Houston, a city of similar size and ethnicity, had 216 (“Should Christians Carry?”). It is also interesting to note that the citizens of Chicago have no “right to carry” laws, whereas Houston’s citizens do have the right to carry.

Can it be that law-abiding citizens who carry weapons cause crime to decrease?

—Jerry Huizenga  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Feedback for Preachers

Thank you for the encouraging article “Preachers Are Like Peaches” (Jan. 2014). In our elders’ meetings at First CRC in Sioux Center, we devote at least half an hour to reviewing the worship services of the previous month. That includes giving our opinion on the sermons preached—as well as the selection of songs, etc.

Most of the time we are complimentary, but sometimes we have to say where we disagree. That gives our preacher an opportunity to get a clear sense of how the sermons are heard. Our pastor and council have benefited greatly by engaging in this practice. We encourage all elders to do this.

—Charles Veenstra  
Sioux Center, Iowa

## Breaking the Silence

I have never made a secret of my struggles with mental illnesses (“Breaking the Silence,” Feb. 2014). I’ve done all I could to share what I learned about my diagnoses. I encourage Lynn Hamilton to look up the website *mentalwellnesstoday.com*. In fact, anyone wishing to get information about mental illnesses can look up the site; it’s not restricted to people who have one.

—Michele Gyselinck  
Montreal, Quebec

# NEWS

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## Classis Toronto States Deposed Pastor May Not Serve as Elder

**C**an a pastor deposed for sexual misconduct subsequently serve as an elder in a congregation?

After a local council in Classis Toronto decided that he could, Classis Toronto became involved and said that decision was inappropriate.

In early 2013, a woman abused by the deposed minister many years ago wrote to the council in protest of its actions. The reply she received from the church council stated that the former pastor's nomination to be an elder took into account his sins but also his repentance. "It isn't fair to his victims or [the pastor] to be reconvicted of the same offence," the letter to the abused person read. "Both he and you suffer from the same life sentence already."

The woman took her case to Bonnie Nicholas, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Safe Church Ministry. "Safe Church Ministry works only in an advisory capacity," Nicholas said. "I sent a letter to the church council about the importance of holding church leaders to a higher standard and asked them to reconsider allowing this person to hold his current position."

Nicholas said she was assured by the council that they were aware of the past infraction, and that the one who perpetrated the abuse was repentant and had been forgiven by God and the church. There were strict limitations placed on him. For example, he could not do visitation alone. "So the council believed that they

were handling the situation appropriately," Nicholas said.

The person who was abused was not satisfied with that and, with Nicholas's encouragement, took her case to classis.

After investigating the facts, Classis Toronto took action, asking that the local council ask the deposed pastor to resign his term as an elder, which he then did.

At its most recent meeting, Classis Toronto stated that an officebearer (which includes pastors) who is deposed under Church Order Article 82 and 83 may not be reinstated as an officebearer without the approval of classis.

Classis also noted in its minutes that some senior persons in the classis who knew the perpetrator's history and knew he was being ordained as an elder either didn't know or understand the rules, or felt the rules were not relevant, or ignored those rules.

The classis is sending a letter of regret to the person who was abused.

According to Rev. Henry De Moor, an authority on the Church Order and author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, a local church council is free to nominate any qualified person for the offices of elder or deacon. However, he said, in the case of a deposed pastor, the reasons why a pastor can or cannot be reinstated as a Minister of the Word according to the Church Order should also inform the council's decision on appointing that person to any role as a spiritual leader in the congregation.



**Bonnie Nicholas, Director, Safe Church Ministry**

"While technically the Church Order does not forbid it," he said, "it would seem to me a violation of the spirit of that process." De Moor also noted that the language in the supplement to Church Order Article 84 does not talk specifically about ministers but uses language that refers in broader terms to officebearers being reinstated to office. "This wording was intentionally chosen by Synod 2004 and, in my opinion, should be respected by local councils as informing them in all local matters."

The person who was abused said she is satisfied with the result in Classis Toronto but wonders why it took a year to get there. And, she asked, what policies are in place to make sure that something like this can't happen again?

Nicholas also said the situation brings up a need for a system of accountability for pastors who have been deposed. "Confidentiality must be weighed against the value of preventing future harm in these kinds of situations," she said. "Given the horrific effects of clergy abuse, I believe it is best to err on the side of safety and prevention."

She added, "I'm so thankful for people who have the courage to come forward with their experience of abuse, even in the face of pain, shame, and opposition. My prayer is that the Lord will give us ears to hear."

—Gayla R. Postma

## California Church Reflects on Hurts Caused By Churches

In most communities there are people who have been hurt by a church but lack a safe, gospel-centered place to express their pain. Pastor Marc Holland of City Life (Christian Reformed) Church created a communal environment for struggling people to heal.

On a Sunday in mid-March, the church hosted "Sunday for the Wounded," reflecting on church members' hurts. "We all are running into so many stories of friends who were specifically hurt by things churches did or said, and we want to give safe space for people to process these wounds through the gospel," said Holland.

Holland preached on Psalm 139, encouraging the congregation to practice self-examination and invite God to examine their own hearts. "Gospel community admits we've all been a part of the problem. The church has and will continue to inflict wounds, yet the gospel defines a grace-giving response," he said. "Experiencing



God's forgiveness and healing is our endless source that turns us into people who can do this."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Posters advertise the "Sunday for the Wounded" service.

—Amy Toornstra



Quilters from Hope CRC and women from Roseland Christian Ministries.

and love," said Joe Huizenga, pastor at Roseland Christian Reformed Church, the worshiping body of Roseland Christian Ministries. [MORE ONLINE](#)

## A Patchwork of Connections

When Roseland Christian Ministries in Chicago transformed its women's shelter into 17 individual rooms, members of Hope Christian Reformed Church in Oak Forest, Ill., made a handmade quilt for each of the renovated rooms.

Women who graduate from the shelter's program after 18 months get to take the quilt with them. "The quilt—something to keep you warm at night—is a beautiful sign of Christ's compassion

—Melissa Holtrop

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. John Elenbaas**  
1925 – 2014

John Elenbaas, 89, was a veteran of World War II, a sympathetic and gentle pastor, and a diligent student of the Word. He passed away on February 18 following a bout with heart trouble.

After serving in the U.S. Armed Services during WW II, he graduated from Calvin College and Seminary in 1952.

Elenbaas served Christian Reformed congregations in South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Montana. He retired in 1987 but continued preaching and visiting those in need well into retirement.

A kind and gracious man, he had a big heart for the incarcerated. His disarming kindness made him a sought-after pastor for those seeking encouragement.

Elenbaas loved singing. He met his wife, Maybelle, while singing in the Back to God Hour Choir. Reading, hiking, mountain climbing, and gardening were other interests.

Elenbaas is survived by Maybelle and by five children and their spouses, 19 grandchildren, and 25 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 and on The Banner's website.

# NEWS

## CRC Members Participate in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Events

**T**he truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation." That message greets visitors to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's website (TRC). It also informs the TRC's mandate to contribute to truth, healing, and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples surrounding the legacy of the Indian Residential School system.

The era of Indian Residential Schools that began in the 1870s and ended in 1996 is a painful part of Canada's history. During those years, more than 150,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families and placed in government-funded, church-run schools where they were forced to learn English and to adopt Christianity and Canadian customs. While some former students had positive experiences, many children suffered abuse, and thousands died.

The Commission was established as part of the settlement reached between legal counsel for former students of the residential schools, legal counsel for the churches that formerly ran the schools, the Assembly of First Nations, other Aboriginal organizations, and the Government of Canada.

Even though the Christian Reformed Church was not one of the denominations that ran residential schools, its members have taken part in TRC events across Canada over the past couple of years—either attending hearings or organizing follow-up events in

communities from Truro, Nova Scotia, to Victoria, British Columbia.

But perhaps the denomination's largest presence was in Edmonton, Alberta, at the seventh and final hearing of the Commission.

CRC folks were among 9,000 people who showed up on the first day of the four-day event.

Among them was Melle Huizinga. Because of his involvement in reconciliation work with First Nations, Huizinga, a member of Fellowship CRC in Edmonton, was asked to offer an Expression of Reconciliation on behalf of Classis Alberta North. At his side were



**King's University College president Melanie Humphreys with professors Roy Berkenbosch (left) and Will Van Arragon at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing.**

Martin Mobach and John Ooms, both pastors in that classis.

"We commit ourselves to learning about the unspeakable intergenerational impacts of residen-

tial schools and to teach these to the members of our churches," read Huizinga's statement, in part. "We commit ourselves to advocate for justice and dignity for the

### Centre for Public Dialogue Campaigns for Aboriginal Education Reform

The Christian Reformed Church's Centre for Public Dialogue is taking a lead role in a new campaign to promote reforms to the Indigenous education system in Canada and is hoping to draw thousands of Canadians into the conversation.

According to Mike Hogeterp, director of the centre, educational funding for schools on reserves can be 30 to 50 percent less per student than for off-reserve schools, a funding gap that has contributed to national graduation rates of less than 40 percent on reserves compared to about 80 percent for the rest of the student population. The lack of adequate resources, coupled with a history of intergenerational trauma caused by the old residential school system, continues to impact students negatively.

While the centre has been involved in a conversation about educational reforms with Indigenous and church leaders for about three years, it is only in the last few months that solid progress has been made to bring together all the parties, including large church groups, key Indigenous organizations, and public figures who are willing to lend their influence to the process. "We have definitely felt the Spirit's presence in bringing these diverse groups together in what is a truly remarkable gathering," Hogeterp said.

Hogeterp also said the timing is right to cooperate and act now, building on the momentum and recommendations from Canada's recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The goal of the campaign is to build public awareness of the need for both reforms and additional funding and to encourage the public to pressure the government to act on the necessary changes. "Our Indigenous friends and partners tell us that the ongoing problems with education are not due to a lack of workable solutions [but to] a lack of political will that is rooted in the indifference of the Canadian public," said Hogeterp.

—Tracey Yan



Placing KAIROS's quilt into the Bentwood Box.

survivors and all people affected. We commit ourselves to speak out against racism, inequality, and systemic oppression against our Indigenous sisters and brothers."

Also in attendance were the entire student body and faculty of The King's University College. Faculty and students had spent the previous day learning about the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools.

Afterward, King's student Lisa Nieuwenhuis reflected, "Although I learned of the tragedy of residential schools in high school, I had never before been faced with a first-hand account from a survivor. The most transformative message I heard was one that was reiterated several times over. Many of the survivors do not want sympathy. . . . Rather, they desire empathy and understanding—for people to not only hear their stories but to really listen to their stories."

KAIROS, an ecumenical justice organization that includes the CRC, was also represented. Louisa Bruinsma, a member of Edmonton's Fellowship CRC, offered an Expression of Reconciliation on behalf of the organization. In part, she said: "We are here to say that we are very sorry for this

shameful page in the history of our country. We are here to say that we share in that legacy. And it is a shame deepened by the fact that your horrific treatment was often carried out in the name of Christianity. We confess that we have not lived up to the Christian call to do justice."

KAIROS offered a beautiful quilt made by two CRC members, Evelyn Martin and Irene VanderKloet, as their symbol of reconciliation. Afterward, Bruinsma said, "[This is] a transformational time for our country and for the Christian community in terms of realizing some of the devastating cultural acts we have done historically in the name of Christ, confession of this, and [discovering] what reconciliation may mean. These hearings were profound."

The CRC was also represented through the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), which delivered a formal Expression of Reconciliation on behalf of its 25 member churches. The Expression, prepared by a writing team led by Peter Noteboom, deputy general secretary of CCC and a member of First CRC in Toronto, was delivered by a delegation of five officers of the CCC. In part, the statement read: "In the long history of

the relationship of Indigenous peoples in Canada with other Canadians, it is painfully clear that we, as Christian communities, have often fallen short of living the love and service of Jesus. . . . We take seriously the challenges of reconciliation, to deepen bonds of friendship and solidarity, to strive to walk together in the present and future, and to consult with you about how we can take that journey together."

emly placed into what is called the Bentwood Box that has traveled with the TRC to all of its seven national events. At the end of the TRC mandate it will be housed in the National Research Centre at the University of Manitoba.

Even as the hearings conclude, the CRC continues to work at reconciliation. The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue is campaigning for reform



Ben Vandezande, interim director of Canadian Ministries and signatory for the CRC, said he welcomes the 25-denominational member CCC speaking with one voice alongside the individual Expressions of Reconciliation.

"The CCC's Expression of Reconciliation, coming from a large and diverse body of churches, underlines the need for all churches and all Canadians to embrace the journey of reconciliation and healing with our Indigenous neighbors," Vandezande said.

All the statements and symbols of reconciliation have been sol-

Placing Classis Alberta North's statement into the Bentwood Box.

in the Aboriginal education system. (See box.)

Those who work in and support the CRC's three urban aboriginal ministries, established many years ago, carry on the work of reconciliation every day.

—Janet Greidanus and Alissa Vernon

# NEWS



## “A New Day” in Canadian Ministry

**S**ynod 2000 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) adopted a report on denominational governance structure that included a restructuring of the denomination’s Board of Trustees (BOT). When the Canadian Ministries Board was folded into the BOT that year, half of the board’s membership of 30 was to come from the Canadian side of the denomination. It was to be known legally as the CRCNA-Canada Corporation, or, as it has become known, Canada Corp.

At the February 2014 BOT meeting, a broader interpretation of what Synod 2000 decided was put forward by the Canada Corp. The recommendations adopted by the full board “affirm the direction for the CRCNA-Canada Corporation outlined in the ‘Governance Proposal’ to Synod 2000 as the interpretation of the meaning of ‘in Canada’ functions that ought to be done by the CRCNA-Canada Corporation.” That includes “providing strategic advice based on judgments about the cultural appropriateness of existing programs in Canada” and “ensuring that outcomes from national conferences are incorporated into denominational ministry plans with appropriate accountability.”

The new approach “includes regular gatherings of Canadians to focus on the future of the CRC in Canada specifically, a voice in setting priorities for all ministries in Canada, and input into the budget from the Canadian perspective,” said Kathy Vandergrift, president of Canada Corp. and vice president of the full BOT.

Vandergrift said that the changes parallel an expanded role for the Canadian Ministries Director. “That helps to make this a ‘new day’ for CRC ministry in Canada,” she said.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Small Group Bible Study Includes Fitness Training

For Pastor Sean Hall of Fountain Parish, a Christian Reformed church plant in Bellingham, Wash., discussing biblical truths also includes weight lifting, gymnastics, and cardio workouts.

Besides serving as a pastor, Hall is a Crossfit™ trainer at CrossfitX, a gym located in Bellingham. Small groups of adults meet together for workouts, and many become tight-knit communities.

Hall formed a group called the Godwod. (WOD is a Crossfit™ term that stands for Workout of the Day.) The group meets about once a month for physical workouts that also include devotionals and Christ-centered teaching. “Crossfitters rally around physical health and friendship in communities,” said Hall. “But there is a lack of spiritual health. What is needed to complete a holistic health is spiritual vibrancy in the person of Jesus.”

Many people have joined the group through friendships with Hall or another athlete at the gym. “It’s mostly me just becoming a pastor to folks in the gym and organically inviting them to join our Godwod community to further explore spiritual health,” said Hall. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Amy Toornstra



Rachel and Chantelle enjoy working out with the Godwod group.



Coach Dan lifts weights while Pastor Sean Hall oversees the workout.

## Three Volunteers in Their 90s Stand Out

For inspiration on volunteerism, look no further than three members of Grace Community Christian Reformed Church, in Oak Lawn, Ill.—the youngest of whom is 91.

John Langeland, 91, Don Holwerda, 92, and Harry Beezhold, 94, have volunteered at Pass It On Thrift Center since its doors opened in 1999. Volunteers run the entire operation, and all proceeds go toward tuition relief for families whose children attend the three campuses of Southwest Chicago Christian Schools.

"We enjoy being there, the opportunity to do something, and the ability to generate funds to help parents put their children through Christian school," said Holwerda. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Melissa Holtrop, with Jamie Hiskes



(L-r) Harry Beezhold, Don Holwerda, and John Langeland are three committed volunteers at Pass It On.

PHOTO BY JAMIE HISKES

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Kenneth Vis**  
1942 – 2013

Ken Vis, 71, was musically gifted and wonderfully people oriented. He passed away on December 6 of pulmonary lung disease.

Born in Rock Valley, Iowa, Vis attended Calvin College and Seminary, graduating in 1967. He served Christian Reformed congregations in Iowa and Michigan and devoted the last decade of his ministry to chaplaincy in nursing home and hospital settings. He retired in 2007.

Vis excelled as a pastoral caregiver. Young and old felt drawn to him. He lived life with zestful commitment and is remembered by many of his parishioners as one who walked with them in their suffering. He was an effective advocate for women in church office.

During the earlier years of his ministry, he was sought after as a tour host for adult singles. The Vis family thinks back with gratitude to the many trips they made.

Vis is survived by his wife, Lorraine, three children and their spouses, and six grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

## Committee for Pastoral Guidance on Same-Sex Marriage Seeks Input

In light of increasing public support for gay marriage and the fact that it is legal in Canada and in more than a third of U.S. states, Synod 2013 appointed a committee to help the Christian Reformed Church lovingly and pastorally communicate its position on homosexuality. The CRC's 40-year-old stance states that homosexual orientation is not sinful but that homosexual activity is.

Synod 2013 (the CRC's annual leadership meeting) specifically declined to reopen discussion of the CRC's position.

"Church members are increasingly connected to persons in same-sex committed relationships, whether involving legal marriage or not," said committee chair Rev. Rolf Bouma. "Family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and colleagues—[same-sex relationships are] a part of our interconnected lives."

Bouma said that the eight-member committee is giving focused attention to the varied experiences and questions pastors and church members have with same-sex committed relation-

ships, with an eye to providing pastorally and spiritually appropriate guidelines for navigating the challenges that exist.

To learn what those experiences are, the committee is gathering information and input through consultations, roundtable conversations, and a survey conducted by the Calvin College Social Research Center. "The survey covers the topics of same-sex marriage and homosexuality and will help us gather the scope of questions, concerns, and experiences present within our community," the committee noted. "[It] is not a 'vote,' but a way for the committee to hear the variety of experiences and views within the denomination."

The committee is aware that the topic can generate fear for a variety of reasons. "It touches on important core values that go to the heart of who we are as followers of Jesus. This is an opportunity for us as a denomination to exercise the fruit of the Spirit, respecting one another and respecting the process synod has called us to," said committee member Julia Smith.

Bouma said that Synod 2013 also had an eye toward generational shifts in thinking and experience when it gave the committee its mandate. "The college students and young adults I work with in campus ministry think about these matters differently than the generation I grew up with. Their experiences are dramatically different."

Another committee member, Karl Van Harn, said that the issue of same-sex marriage is also related to other issues such as the church's relationship to the state, the nature of marriage, and our understanding of human sexuality. "When synod requested that we follow a shepherd model, it asked us to listen carefully to both Scripture and church members' experiences with same-sex attracted brothers and sisters," he said.

The committee is scheduled to submit its final report in the fall of 2015 for deliberation at Synod 2016.

—Gayla R. Postma

# NEWS

## CHURCH WORLDWIDE

### World Vision U.S.'s Gay Marriage Flip-Flop Reflects Evangelical Culture Shift

Within 48 hours of World Vision U.S.'s announcement that it would employ people who are in same-sex marriages, the \$1 billion Christian organization reversed course, saying that it had made a mistake. The World Vision U.S. flip-flop reflects the struggle within evangelicalism over how to respond to a growing cultural, legal, and even religious acceptance of homosexuality, particularly same-sex marriage.

At stake is not only the financial bottom line but also issues of reputation and social acceptability. Caught in the middle are rank-and-file evangelicals, particularly younger Christians who are trying to come to grips with a rapidly changing culture.

While World Vision U.S. may be the latest evangelical institution to get caught up in the culture wars, it won't be the last, and the pressures facing its board are likely to affect others.

Canada and a third of U.S. states have now legalized same-sex marriage. In the wake of those changes, organizations across the country are trying to figure out how or whether to adapt to those new laws.

The initial policy change had the potential to result in enormous financial loss from many evangelical leaders. The Assemblies of God, a large Pentecostal denomination, urged its members to drop support. By the time the policy was overturned, the agency reportedly saw a loss of 2,000 child sponsorships—an initial drop of at least \$840,000 per year.

For groups like World Vision, even though the culture may be shifting, the grass roots aren't. In 2014, 54 percent of Americans now support same-sex marriage, compared with 39 percent who oppose it.

Not so for evangelicals, however. "Despite a modest increase over the past decade, white evangelical Protestants are the main exception to the more recent trend of growing support for same-sex marriage," Pew Research Center's Fact Tank wrote.

However, research on evangelicals suggests that younger evangelicals are more likely to support same-sex marriage than those of an older generation.

World Vision U.S. may have gone back to the status quo, but the larger issue of how religious institutions will handle a growing acceptance of same-sex marriage will not go away. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Religion News Service

### John Ortberg's Menlo Park Presbyterian Votes to Leave PCUSA

Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, one of the largest congregations in the Presbyterian Church (USA), voted to leave the denomination, despite facing an \$8.89 million cost to retain its property.

The San Francisco Bay area church is led by well-known author and pastor John Ortberg. It is the ninth-largest PCUSA church, with about 4,000 members.

The church voted to join a newer denomination called ECO, A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, which has attracted 115 other Presbyterian churches since it started in 2012. In its rationale for leaving, Menlo Park cited differences in identity, mission, governance, and owning its property.

While not cited in Menlo Park's key reasons for leaving the denomination, differences over sexuality have been a key issue for many departing congregations. The PCUSA's General Assembly in 2012 upheld the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman, a decision that is expected come up again during this summer's assembly. In 2010, the denomination moved to drop its ban on noncelibate gay and lesbian ministers.

The PCUSA has 1.8 million members, losing an average of 60,000 per year, according to the denomination. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Religion News Service

## NOTEWORTHY

Dr. Jim Belcher has been appointed the new president of Providence Christian College in Pasadena, California.

**Madison Square Church** in Grand Rapids, Mich., celebrated its 100th anniversary together with St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church. The two congregations have both existed half a mile apart for 100 years.



World Vision's U.S. President Rich Stearns, center, visiting with Syrian refugees in Irbid, Jordan.



Roy Berkenbosch

**Roy Berkenbosch**, Christian Reformed pastor and professor at The King's University College, was recently recognized for his outstanding service in reaching out to Aboriginal communities and his engagement with the legacies of residential schools.

**First Christian Reformed Church** of Highland, Ind., merged with Faith Church (Reformed Church in America), to become Faith Church Highland.

—Banner correspondents



# FAQs

## Relationships

**Q** At what age may Christians retire? Should we keep working as long as we can, or is there an age when we can begin to enjoy spending our time as we like?

**A** Your question reveals this assumption: our life is divided. As Christians we serve God especially in our work, but then, before we get too old, too sick, or too feeble, we need to be allowed to relax and think about ourselves.

With that assumption: yes, by all means, after a life of service to God, spending time doing what is enjoyable to you is reasonable. "Retirement age" currently stands at about 55 to 70ish, so see what your finances will allow as you continue to love your neighbor and tithe faithfully to your church.

However, this scenario does not fully reflect the call Jesus places on us. When changed circumstances occur, the Holy Spirit invites us to listen prayerfully with Scripture to discover how to answer a new (or long-buried) call.

Above all, Jesus is called "the way," which denotes a walking with, a relationship. Experiencing changed circumstances is an invitation to get to know him better. He says, "I stand at the door and knock." The image is of our opening the door of our hearts to him so that he can spend time with us, as one does with a friend over a meal.

The Holy Spirit helps us "see" Jesus more truly. He invites us to partner with him and gives us the gifts we need to answer a (new) call. And our Father in heaven has promised to take care of all our personal needs when we seek his kingdom, even in retirement.

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

This scenario does not fully reflect the call Jesus places on us.

## Church

**Q** The Apostles' Creed says that Jesus descended into hell. What does that mean? Did Jesus actually go to hell?

**A** This "descensus clause" is a later addition to "... died and was buried," first appearing in the early fifth century. Its meaning is much disputed because, apart from the somewhat obscure reference in 1 Peter 3:19, 20 to a proclamation for "imprisoned spirits" (those who perished in Noah's flood and abided in Sheol), there is no clear New Testament basis.

Many early Roman Catholic theologians saw this as a part of Christ's glorification, confessing a victorious Savior who displays his redeeming resurrection power over death and the "underworld" while on his way to his Father's throne. Thomas Aquinas agreed, but saw it also as part of Christ's humiliation. Christ not only redeemed the "imprisoned" but also bore the full penalty for our sin. Lutherans echoed Aquinas in this. Calvinists, on the other hand, came to understand the clause as referring primarily to Christ's humiliation rather than his glorification.

According to Lord's Day 16 of the Heidelberg Catechism, this clause assures us "that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell."

Hell is the total God-forsakenness on the cross (Matt. 27:46; Ps. 22:1). Theologian Herman Bavinck added to this the three days in the grave. Even our Redeemer, he said, true God and true man, was, until God raised him, a prisoner in the realm of the dead. Only then was he the Conqueror, God highly exalting him (Phil. 2:9).

—Henry De Moor is professor of church polity emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He's the author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary (Faith Alive, 2011)*.

## Ethics

**Q** I just discovered that my family member is addicted to Internet porn. What should I do? How can I help him?

**A** Porn addiction, like any other addiction, requires help for the addict and not simply stronger willpower. First, your family member needs to recognize and want to free himself from this addiction. Encourage him in this regard; if he is a Christian, draw on his faith for motivation.

Second, he needs your loving support. He probably feels ashamed about his addiction, so do not judge or scold him. That might push him further into isolation. Encourage him to seek help. This would involve him confessing his addiction to others. Strongly support him in this. I believe that secrecy gives more power to sins and addictions. Enlarge the circle of accountability for your family member by involving others to form a support group.

Third, seek professional help or recovery programs. For starters, check out either Sex Addicts Anonymous at [saa-recovery.org](http://saa-recovery.org) or XXX Church at [xxxchurch.co](http://xxxchurch.co) for local and online programs and resources.

Your family member needs to find the root cause of his addiction. This might require therapy or spiritual counseling. It definitely means hard work. He needs to identify the emptiness in his heart or life that is making porn so alluring. Without such professional help, the symptoms may be addressed in the short term without fixing the real problem.

—Shaio Chong is a chaplain at York University in Toronto, Ontario. ■



# THE SCANDAL

## of the Old Testament God

**N**OT LONG AGO, a young woman came to my office. She was quite troubled. “I don’t understand,” she said. “My granny told me to take a Bible class—she thought it might help me sort out some things in my life. But I’ve been reading the Old Testament these past couple of weeks, and I just don’t see how it can help me. I mean, has she read it? There is some pretty shocking stuff in there.”

The young woman’s reaction is understandable. Old Testament texts are hardly the stuff of polite conversation, rife as they are with stories about sexual improprieties, political scheming, pagan worship, violence, and bloodshed. Far from what we might expect of sacred Scripture, the Old Testament is quite candid about the depravity of the human heart and the immoral behavior it provokes. Even great heroes of the faith such as Abraham, Moses, and David are presented as deeply flawed and prone to sin.

More problematic than the conduct of Bible characters, however, are the disturbing images of God we find in parts of the Old Testament. At times, the Old Testament portrays

# SKIPPING AHEAD TO THE NEW TESTAMENT IS LIKE STARTING A NOVEL TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY THROUGH.

a God who seems judgmental, vengeful, and capricious, sanctioning or even instigating excessive violence. One has only to think of the conquest recorded in Joshua and God's command to "utterly destroy" the Canaanite nations (Deut. 7:2; 20:17). Or descriptions of God unleashing disease and death among his own people (Num. 21:6; 2 Sam. 6:7; Jer. 21:3-7). Or the psalmists' prayers to God as the great Avenger who curses our enemies and heaps evil upon those who seek our downfall (Ps. 69:22-28; 109:8-15).

Television personality Steve Allen summarized the problem succinctly: "I was taught that Christians should not hate others and that we should try to love everyone, including even our enemies. Why, then, did God not do so in the Old Testament times?" (*Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion, and Morality*, p. 309).

## An Unsettling Portrait

For many, the portrait of God found in these texts is so unsettling that they bypass the Old Testament and head straight for the New in search of a more comforting and appealing picture of God in the stories about Jesus.

This shortcut in our biblical reflection on God, however, is a strategy fraught with problems. Skipping ahead to the New Testament is like starting a novel two-thirds of the way through. Without a clear understanding of the characters, the conflict, and the plot, the rest of the story doesn't make much sense and is easily misunderstood.

Such is the case with the Bible. Without the Old Testament, we may learn that Jesus died for our sins, but we may not understand *why* Jesus died. We may not understand what his death means or how his death bears witness to God and God's love for us.

Moreover, while it is common for people to think of Jesus as a maverick, the leader of a radical new movement, the truth is that Jesus' teachings and values are often reiterations of Old Testament piety. Jesus' exhortation "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself," for instance, comes directly from the Old Testament law (Mark 12:30-31; cf. Deut. 6:4, 5; Lev. 19:18). Jesus' concern for the lowest and the least, the widow and the orphan, are values deeply entrenched in the law and the prophets. And his very mission is an extension, a climax, of God's redemptive work in and through Israel for the sake of God's world.

In other words, if we want to know who Jesus is and what Jesus would do, we would do well to immerse ourselves in the worldview of the Old Testament.

This was certainly the conclusion of the early church. Thus, when Marcion, a second-century bishop, jettisoned the Old Testament on the grounds that the teachings of Jesus were incompatible with the Old Testament God, the church fathers declared his theology heretical and affirmed unequivocally the unity of the Old and New Testament, which together bear witness to the one true God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

This is not to say that early interpreters were oblivious to the disturbing images of God in the Old Testament. Many found them just as challenging as we do. But they also believed that more is lost by abandoning the Old Testament than is gained. Assuming, then, the value of the Old Testament, what do we do with passages that portray God in ways that seem scandalous?

## No Easy Answers

Unfortunately, there are no easy or satisfying answers to this question. The truth is that there are indeed troubling images of God in the Old Testament, troubling not just because they violate our moral sensibilities but because of the way these images have been used to justify violence and brutality in Christian history. Too often, Christians have read violent Old Testament texts as a call to "smite the enemy" in God's name, spreading hate rather than love. Given this history, it is fitting, as we consider how to make sense of these texts, to acknowledge our own discomfort with them and to grieve over the violence they have been used to sanction.

On a more exegetical level, there are resources and interpretive approaches within the Reformed tradition that can lend perspective and depth to our understanding of these troubling texts. For instance, while there is no denying that in the Old Testament, God is sometimes associated with aggression and violence, this isn't the only or even the dominant testimony about God.

Rather, the Old Testament writers affirmed again and again throughout Israel's history that the Lord, the God of Israel, is "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6; see also Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Neh. 9:17). This core testimony provides an important counterbalance to the more difficult texts about God, reminding us that when we take into consideration the larger context, the overwhelming testimony of the Old Testament is that God is good (Ps. 119:68).

## Divine Accommodation

Another important consideration when reading difficult Old Testament texts about God is what John Calvin described as "divine accommodation." According to Calvin, God accommodates himself to our limited moral and rational capacities, revealing himself in the context of our cultural realities in ways that we can recognize, understand, and accept.

The prime example is Moses' teaching on divorce (Deut. 24:1-4), which Jesus interprets as a concession to the people's hardness of heart (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-9). According to Calvin, "[God] does not show Himself subject to change. Rather, He has accommodated Himself to men's [*sic*] capacity, which is varied and changeable" (*Institutes* 2.11.13).

The point is that though God does not change, how God reveals himself to us can change. This notion of divine accommodation is particularly helpful in thinking about Old »

## THAT THE CREATOR AND REDEEMER OF THE WORLD WOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE US IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT WE SPURN HIM TIME AND TIME AGAIN IS A HAPPY MYSTERY.

Testament texts that associate God with violence. The ancient Near East was a warring culture, and commitment to the utter destruction of one's enemies is solidly attested. We might say, then, that God allows Israel, in the centuries before Christ, to imagine and experience God as a fierce and mighty warrior who assumes the posture and practices characteristic of warrior gods in the ancient Near East—even if, ultimately, God doesn't sanction the brutality and violence Israel came to associate with this image.

It may be helpful to note here that in many of the places where violence is associated with God in the Old Testament, God, as the divine warrior, is battling the forces of evil and injustice, fighting on behalf of the weak, the marginalized, and the oppressed. This is particularly true in the psalms.

Consider, for example, Psalm 58 where the wicked are depicted as powerful rulers who devise injustice and mete out violence. The psalmist prays that God would avenge the victims of this injustice and put an end to their oppression by sweeping away the wicked. It is precisely when God acts powerfully against the wicked, says the psalmist, that “people will say . . . ‘Surely there is a God who judges the earth’” (Ps. 58:11b). In other words, for the psalmist, God demonstrates that he is a God of righteousness and justice by overthrowing the powerful for the sake of the powerless.

God's warring, then, is not fickle or capricious, nor is it politically or ethnically motivated, as is much of the violence perpetuated by human hands. Instead, it is a reflection of God's decisive judgment against evil, evident in the fact that God acts even against his own people when they exploit the poor and fail to care for the widow and orphan (Isa. 5:8-30; Jer. 22:13-19).

### Literary Conventions

Furthermore, it is useful to keep in mind that the Old Testament writers employed the literary conventions, codes, and practices of the ancient Near East when compiling and writing the words of Scripture. Attending to these conventions and codes is an important exegetical practice that can help us better hear the Old Testament texts as ancient Israel and the surrounding nations would have heard them.

For instance, battle reports in the ancient Near East were often characterized by hyperbole. Like modern-day fishing stories, they were accounts full of bravado, written to fulfill a particular rhetorical function and designed to celebrate a leader's military prowess and bolster his political capital.

The Merneptah Stele (ca. 1207 B.C.), boasts, “Israel is wasted, his seed is not,” suggesting the total conquest and complete eradication of the Israelites by Egypt in the 13th century B.C. Clearly, the Stele overstates the case, as the southern kingdom of Israel continued to exist until the sixth century B.C.

The fact that the Old Testament and the book of Joshua itself make contradictory claims about Israel's success in eradicating

the Canaanite nations suggests that hyperbole also characterizes the biblical texts that describe the conquest. Thus, while Joshua 11:12-23 indicates that Israel rid the land of the Canaanites, Joshua 13:1-5 and Judges 3:1-6 list nations that the tribes of Israel were not able to cast out of the land. What's more, individuals of Canaanite heritage show up regularly in narratives of Israel's history (see 1 Sam. 7:14; 26:6; 2 Sam. 11:3), clearly indicating that they were not completely eradicated as Joshua 11:12-23 suggests.

Knowing that the Old Testament contains these contradictory reports about the conquest gives us good reason to believe that we are dealing with battle reports whose primary objective is to celebrate God's military power and might on behalf of the small and seemingly insignificant tribal peoples of Israel.

### Israel's Role in Redemptive History

Finally, as we consider these difficult texts, it is important that we recognize the missiological uniqueness of Israel's role in redemptive history. According to the Old Testament, God allowed and even sanctioned violence at times to ensure the survival and religious purity of the nation through whom the Savior of the world would come.

Such violence, however, was for a specific purpose and time in history. As such, it does not sanction the use of violence today. While we share with Israel the common identity of being the people of God, we are also post-resurrection Christians, and our calling in God's redemptive plan is different from theirs.

Ours is the task of bearing witness to Jesus, the Savior who has come into the world to bring about a kingdom of peace and justice and righteousness and whose coming again we eagerly await. This task we do most effectively not through acts of violence but by living out kingdom values here and now, which include loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

In the end, while violent portrayals of God do scandalize us, the real scandal of the Old Testament is not these troubling images but rather God's long-suffering and steadfast love for us. That the Holy and Almighty God, Creator and Redeemer of the world, would continue to pursue us in spite of the fact that we spurn him time and time again is a happy mystery and the source of our hope and joy.

In all our preoccupations with what is troubling in the Old Testament, may we never lose sight of the Old Testament scandal of God's relentless pursuit of and costly love for us. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Amanda Benckhuysen is an avid reader of Scripture who delights in exploring the riches of the Old Testament. This summer she will be moving to Grand Rapids with her husband and two daughters to join the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty.

# The Profanity of Indifference



## OUR KIDS LOVE TO SING

“Oh Be Careful, Little Eyes.” I’ve been leery of this song because it sounds somewhat legalistic to me, although it does go on to say that God is looking down in love and not in fierce condemnation. So I’ve set my wariness aside, and now I sing “Oh be careful, little tongue, what you say” with full voice, since this verse has always been the most problematic for me.

I don’t say bad words often, other than the occasional bedtime-routine-gone-wrong, during which I might say a few to myself. Our kids are only 5 and 3, but they are already discovering the power of words and the additional power of naughty words, even though they don’t know any real swear words yet.

Eli came into the kitchen one day and, upon seeing all the cupboards wide open, exclaimed, “What in the forehead!” I don’t know where he got that phrasing or how he chose “forehead” as his key word, but I realized he is already putting the building blocks of language together. It won’t be long before a word spicier than “forehead” comes off a not-so-careful tongue.

I don’t recall my parents making a big deal of swear words when I was growing up. Taking the Lord’s name in vain was an obvious no-no, but since my parents are Dutch immigrants, most words of an edgy nature didn’t even show up on their radar, much less get reprimanded. I do, however, remember three words that my mother would not tolerate: “I don’t care.”

Whether I said it about the dinner menu or a more meaningful issue, “I don’t care” was profanity of the highest order at my house. My little tongue learned to be very careful indeed when it came to this forbidden language. Mom seemed totally offended by it, and not just in a



**“I don’t care” was profanity of the highest order at my house.**

legalistic way. For her it was deeply spiritual, regarding my heart more than my tongue.

“How can a Christian say they don’t care?” she would ask me. I had no answer for that and wondered why she took my flippancy so seriously.

Like most things my mom used to emphasize, I have finally come to see the wisdom in this. In her book *Acedia and Me*, Kathleen Norris writes about the danger of living with an “absence of care.” When life gets too demanding or people become too complicated, we simply avoid the hard work it takes to engage, and in doing so we slide into not caring . . . or what Norris calls the “ease of indifference.”

It was the indifference, I think, that was so obscene to my mother. For someone to live under God’s banner of love and then to say the words “I don’t care” . . . well, in her mind it was the ultimate way to take the Lord’s name in vain—to curse with your life instead of just with your words.

As one pastor put it, “Jesus came to take the sting out of death, but we can help take the sting out of life.” Perhaps caring is the first step toward that.

Because of my mother’s wisdom, I will probably pay more attention to the words my kids use regarding caring rather than swearing. Very soon they will realize the power their words hold: the power to heal or wound. The power to show care or indifference. Which is why I might add a verse to that “Oh Be Careful” song:

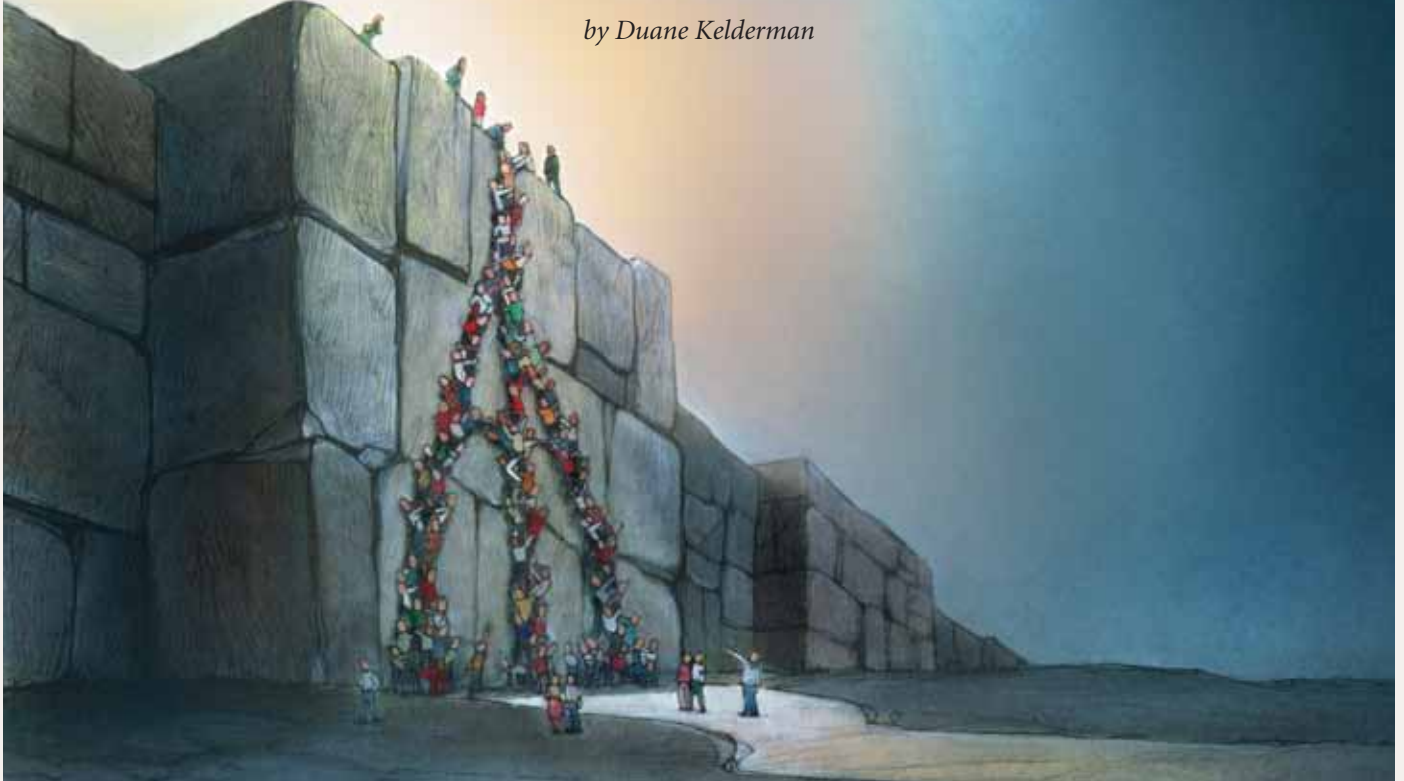
*Oh be careful, little heart, how you care,  
Oh be careful, little heart, how you care,  
for the Father up above  
looked down on you with love,  
so be careful, little heart, how you care. ■*



Andrea Visser Bult lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Madison Square Church with her husband, Michael. She stays home with her children Eli and Annika. Because of them, she never runs out of things to write about.

## Why Is Change So Difficult?

by Duane Kelderman



**A** congregation is tired of hearing how cold and uninviting it is to visitors. They want people to come to their church and like it.

Finally they take the plunge and spend \$2 million to build a beautiful, spacious fellowship area complete with visitor center and coffee bar. But a year after the dedication, they realize nothing has changed. Visitors still find the congregation cold and uninviting.

Another congregation knows it needs to get serious about evangelism. So they hire a staff member to generate evangelism programs in the church. Two years later, nothing has really changed. They still have no growth from evangelism.

Why?

In both cases, these congregations failed to distinguish between a technical challenge and an adaptive challenge.

A technical challenge is straightforward: you have the resources and skills to fix something, so you fix it.

An adaptive challenge is much more difficult. Adaptive challenges go to the culture of an organization: the unspoken ideas, feelings, and values that account for an organization's behavior. Adaptive challenges involve soul-searching and learning, and then changing who we are and how we live together.

Why is change so difficult? Because most significant change is adaptive. It involves changing a culture and asking soul-searching questions about not just what we are doing but how and why we are doing it. It involves changing *us*.

The entire Christian Reformed Church—from local congregations to denominational ministries—is facing adaptive challenges. This is no one's fault. It is simply that massive changes in the

world and within our own denomination require change—deep change. The CRC is finding its way.

A sidebar to this article lists 12 key challenges the CRC faces. These are the challenges named by CRC members across the denomination in a listening tour conducted by the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT) described in another sidebar.

These challenges generally apply to both congregations and denominational ministries. Notice how many of the challenges are adaptive: reconnecting with local contexts, engaging young people, becoming more multicultural, and so on. They name problems that the church does not yet know how to solve.

Reading the list may feel depressing. But correctly naming and framing the church's challenges is a big first step toward effectively addressing them.

## Culture change is the challenge of most local churches and denominational ministries.

### Denominational Ministries

Not just local churches but also denominational ministries are facing huge adaptive challenges. For starters, denominational ministries are being asked to focus more on helping congregations.

Once upon a time, congregations didn't ask, "Hey, what have denominational ministry shares done for us lately?" Once upon a time, the CRC thought of ministry shares as ways to extend the ministry of the local congregation around the world.

To be sure, ministry shares still do that. The CRC has first-rate colleges, top-flight mission and relief organizations, skilled specialized ministries, and a fine seminary.

But today, local churches are also crying for help. Many of those cries are embedded in the 12 Key Ministry Challenges. Churches expect denominational ministries not only to continue to extend the local church's ministry around the world but also to help congregations address what often are life-threatening challenges.

Another major adaptive challenge for denominational ministries is learning to work more effectively with each other. There are many "silos" in denominational ministries, often causing isolation, overlap, and poor communication.

Again, this is no one's fault. It simply reflects how denominational ministries often evolved: the church identified a need; synod created a ministry to address the need. Each new ministry began with its own mandate and office. Each had its own budget and planning process.

One of the adaptive projects underway right now involves realigning the func-

tions of the CRC's former publishing agency, Faith Alive, as well as Proservices, Communications, Specialized Ministries, and Home Missions into five streams. (See sidebar for a longer explanation.)

Consider one of these streams: the Justice, Mercy, Inclusion, and Advocacy Group. Before realignment, the following offices worked, in varying degrees, independently of one another:

- Office of Social Justice
- Office of Restorative Justice
- Disability Concerns
- Safe Church
- Race Relations
- Centre for Public Dialogue
- Canadian Justice Communications Coordinator
- Aboriginal Ministry Committee (Canada)
- Home Missions Ethnic Ministry directors

Many of these ministries are very small in the number of staff they employ and the size of their budgets.

Think of the communication, synergy, and mutual support that can be gained by these offices working more closely with one other. Imagine the mutual learning, sharing of best practices, and efficiencies gained through shared resources and support staff. Imagine a budget where "mine" and "yours" is replaced by "ours" as ministries think about how to maximize the impact of not just their own ministry but all these ministries.

Similar benefits are envisioned for each of the five streams. But this is difficult work. It involves changing a culture. This is classic adaptive change. »

### Key Ministry Challenges\*

Here are the 12 key ministry challenges named by the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT):

1. Many congregations are not sure how to connect or reconnect with the local contexts in which they minister.
2. Congregations ministering in their local contexts need to be a key focus of denominational ministry.
3. Many in the younger generations are increasingly disconnected from the CRC and are exiting.
4. The rate of progress of the denomination becoming a multicultural church is insufficient, both internally and in relation to our changing North American context.
5. Something is missing within our denominational life in regard to discipleship, spirituality, and being Spirit-led.
6. The direction and overall focus of the CRC are no longer clear; our sense of a shared identity is no longer self-evident.
7. The present operation and sustainability of our centralized ministry delivery system are now in question.
8. We are not sure how to move into a new financial paradigm.
9. Many congregations, classes, and denominational ministries are not sure how to deal with the continuous process of change.
10. The structure, purposes, ministry, and leadership of classes are no longer working like they once did; many classes are under stress.
11. Lay leadership is under-emphasized and clergy formation processes are inadequate for engaging the challenges before the denomination.
12. We presently lack any ongoing process of convening and listening with CRC members, congregations, and classes.

\*Note: These challenges will continue to be refined and developed.

—Duane Kelderman

### Technical Problems vs. Adaptive Challenges

#### Technical Problems

1. Easy to identify.
2. Often lend themselves to easy solutions.
3. Often can be “fixed” by an expert.
4. Solutions can be implemented quickly.

#### Examples

1. Add a fellowship hall to be more visitor-friendly.
2. Create a new members class for new believers.

#### Adaptive Challenges

1. Difficult to identify (easy to deny).
2. Requires changes in values, beliefs, relationships, and approaches.
3. People with the problem must do the hard work.
4. Progress requires experiments, trial and error, and collaborative learning.

#### Examples

1. Challenge behaviors and attitudes that subtly exclude the “outsider.”
2. Seek to develop a culture of discipleship for all members.

### Three Task Forces

Three denominational task forces are currently addressing denominational change at a cultural, adaptive level:

- The **Task Force on Structure and Culture** was appointed by Synod 2011 to assess the current denominational structure and culture. This task force was appointed with the awareness that rapid changes in the church and society require the church to look seriously at not just the content but the form of its ministries.
- The **Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT)** was appointed by the Board of Trustees in 2012 to design and implement a “fundamental reframe” of the denominational ministry plan. The 12 Key Ministry Challenges identified (see sidebar on p. 23) are the result of conversations between SPACT members and key leadership groups and stakeholders throughout the denomination. There is a deep conviction that the plans and strategies carried out at a denominational level need to be more closely connected with classes and churches—and vice versa. SPACT will recommend a comprehensive strategic plan for the denomination to the Board of Trustees in 2014. To learn more about SPACT, visit [crcna.org/spact](http://crcna.org/spact).
- The **Denominational Ministry Realignment Project** was created by the senior administration to realign the work of all smaller denominational ministries and Home Missions, as well as the functions of the CRC’s former publishing agency, Faith Alive, into collaborative work groups in one of five ministry streams: (1) Justice, Mercy, Inclusion and Advocacy; (2) Leadership Development; (3) Worship and Proclamation; (4) Starting and Strengthening Churches; and (5) Discipleship and Faith Formation. This project addresses the need
  - for convergence of like functions that have been scattered and isolated in various offices and agencies.
  - to weaken and dismantle internal barriers to collaboration, thus encouraging new creative groupings and innovation.
  - to frame and structure denominational ministries in ways that serve and build up the local church.

### » Some Practical Suggestions

Adaptive work is difficult. By definition, it’s a journey whose destination is often not clear. Are there any general principles that could help congregations and a denomination that no longer enjoy a clear straight path into the future but find themselves in the midst of adaptive work?

Here are three suggestions:

**1. Be hopeful.** Remember that adaptive work, while murky and often painful, is the way to new life. Jesus said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Like Jesus, organizations go through death and resurrection. Adaptive work is the way to new life.

**2. Pray.** Expect God to work and reveal new things in these searching times. Too often the church functionally operates as though it doesn’t need God but can do just fine with its latest management techniques and problem-solving skills. The church on its knees before God is in a position where it will finally look to God to act.

**3. Focus on the mission.** The irony of the gospel is that when churches try to save their life, they lose it; but when churches are willing to lose their life for Christ’s sake, they find it. The goal of adaptive work in the church is not institutional survival. It is rediscovering our mission, our true identity. Churches that focus on their own institutional survival die. Churches that lose their life for God’s sake find life, even though that life may look very different from past institutional forms.



**Duane Kelderman** is interim pastor at Faith Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. He is a convener of the realignment project described in this article.



You add.  
God multiplies.

## Two Churches, One Mission

**W**hen leaders of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America traveled across the United States and Canada earlier this year to meet with pastors and congregational leaders, they had one major theme: togetherness.

Rev. Joel Boot, executive director of the CRCNA, and Rev. Tom De Vries, general secretary of the RCA, wanted to take away the focus from one “m” word: *merger*, and replace it with another: *mission*.

“The more we can be working together toward the mission of God, the better testimonies we can be,” Boot said.

“There is genuine openness to talking together, working together, praying together, worshipping together, and reaching out together. I found people across the continent hungry for that emphasis and eager for that engagement,” he said.

As the denominations prepare for their first combined general synod June 13-19 in Pella, Iowa, Boot and De Vries showcased the collaboration that exists in three major areas: increased missional impact, realized efficiencies, and expressing a common witness.

They noted that when CRC and RCA congregations work together, they accomplish much more than they do on their own. At the denominational level this is also true. Sharing resources enables us to create new initiatives that help congregations and worldwide efforts.

This collaboration in mission has already taken many forms.

Disaster relief has been made easier as World Renew and the RCA Care network have jointly hosted relief teams.

Students at both Western and Calvin theological seminaries gain leadership experience together in areas all around the world during the January term.



Joel Boot and Tom De Vries

Christian Reformed Home Missions and the RCA’s church multiplication offices are collaborating in what are called “kingdom enterprise zones.” In these designated areas, leaders from both denominations pool their skills as they look to strengthen current churches and create growth for new ones.

The two denominations are also working closely together in the area of disability ministries.

Another way in which the CRC and RCA are joining forces and sharing resources is through the Reformed Benefits Association. This collaboration provides health insurance for ministers, lay personnel, missionaries, and retirees in both denominations.

“Every dollar that we can save on health insurance is a dollar a church can put into ministry,” notes Bob Nykamp, COO of Pine Rest Health Services. “Maybe that’s one more life touched.”

The information technology departments in the RCA and CRC have also

created a single team that provides help-desk and other support for CRC and RCA offices in the U.S. and Canada.

For a few congregations, collaboration has meant becoming a dually affiliated church. These churches share membership in RCA and CRC classes. Among them is Pillar Church in Holland, Mich., where the CRCNA was created when it split from the RCA in 1857.

The CRC and RCA are working together with the larger Christian church, expressing Christian unity by emphasizing common beliefs. Along with shared creeds, the two denominations share memberships in a number of national and international ecumenical organizations, including World Communion of Reformed Churches, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the Canadian Council of Churches, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Sojourners.

The two denominations also have a common witness through their media ministries. Back to God Ministries International and Words of Hope work together internationally, and in North America they jointly produce “Groundwork,” an English-language radio program that includes cohosts from both denominations.

As the two denominations move forward, Boot and De Vries asked for prayers and invited people to send notes of encouragement that will be displayed at synod.

“We hope that they may know better not only what we are doing together but why it matters in the work of Jesus Christ,” Boot said.

—by Brian Clark

## Together (Again)

It was billed informally (at least around our offices) as “The Spaghetti Tour.”

Eleven cities across the United States and Canada in about as many days. Speaking to pastors and interested church officers for 90 minutes during each day. Dining with 20 to 30 church leaders at night.

The tour spanned the continent and included Wyckhoff, N.J.; New York City; Hamilton, Ontario; Pella and Orange City, Iowa; Bellingham and Lynden, Wash.; Modesto and Anaheim, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Chicago, Ill.; and, in a few months, Holland and Grand Rapids, Mich.

Tom De Vries, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, and I, together with a few others from our respective denominations, went on tour to highlight something of great importance: the collaborative efforts in which the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches are currently engaged.

It depends on how you list them, but there are at least 20 such efforts that fall neatly into three categories: partnering for increased impact, partnering for increased efficiency, and expressing a common witness.

At these gatherings, which themselves consisted of often equal numbers of members of our two denominations, stories were told of our original antipathy toward one another and our growing affection for and cooperation with one another.

We’ve called these collective efforts “The Reformed Collaborative” and chosen the theme “Together (Again).” Some 400 or more people have thus far celebrated with us.

At no point along the way did we actually eat spaghetti. So why did we call it “The Spaghetti Tour?”

It’s because the person who funds the foundation that gave the grant that made this all possible said over coffee one day: “You know, the RCA and the CRC have a lot in common. We share a common heritage, a common set of confessions, a common theological bent. Maybe what we need are just some

good old-fashioned spaghetti suppers where we gather around tables and get to know one another better.”

We visited these places, crossing four time zones, to sit around tables and, figuratively speaking, “eat spaghetti” together. To get to know each other a little better. To celebrate our increased collaboration. To enjoy fellowship. But, most important, we came “together (again)” to remember what God has done for us and what we must do for him.

There are those in both camps who fear that the motive is merger: erasing names and calling ourselves something different. But it is not that. It is so much more than that.

Everywhere we went, we urged one another to replace that freighted m-word *merger* with another: *mission*. The response was enthusiastic. There is a genuine desire to work together (again), to reach out together (again), to fellowship together (again), and to engage together (again) in the mission of God in the world.

We asked those hundreds to pray for God’s blessing on this collaborative effort. Now I am asking you. We urged the people with whom we met to learn more about our collaborative efforts. Now I am urging you. We encouraged folks to send notes of support and even paragraphs of prayer for this renewed engagement in God’s mission. Now I am asking it of you.

We intend to post these comments and prayers on a bulletin board during the joint synods of the RCA and CRC this summer in Pella, Iowa, to celebrate our growing commitment to mission.

Perhaps as we do this—together (again)—we will learn not just to know one another better and get along better or even simply to collaborate more but to become part of the answer to our Lord’s prayer in John 17:21: “. . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

That’s his prayer for us all—and mine, too. ■

mission

“What we need is some good old-fashioned spaghetti suppers to get to know one another better.”



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

To learn more about ways in which the CRC and RCA are working together, visit [crcna.org/TogetherAgain](http://crcna.org/TogetherAgain).



Roberto's church sees *Cada Dia* as "manna."

## *Cada Dia* Brings Spiritual Nourishment in Cuba

Every two months, Roberto distributes *Cada Dia* devotional booklets all over his community in Cuba.

Roberto also brings the Back to God Ministries International Spanish-outreach booklets to members of his church. But it takes some work before they receive their copy.

"I write Bible trivia questions and give the booklets as a prize for a correct response," says Roberto.

The week before *Cada Dia* arrives in his mailbox, Roberto announces which

book of the Bible his trivia questions will come from.

"Everyone studies," says Roberto. "The booklet helps them get to know the Bible better."

Roberto says his small church is especially grateful for the devotional messages. "*Cada Dia* has fallen like the manna for Israel in the desert."

Roberto also appreciates how *Cada Dia* relates well to many of the issues that people face in Latin America. This is one of the major goals for Rev. Guillermo Serrano, BTGMI Spanish outreach leader.

"New choices in lifestyles threaten the truth of God's Word," Serrano said. "We have to be creative to provide resources that challenge the readers and listeners." ■

—by Brian Clark, Back to God Ministries International

## Learning to Serve and Teach

While organizing food drives as a student coordinator for the Service-Learning Center (SLC) at Calvin College, Deborah Walker saw the valuable collaboration between Calvin and its community partners in addressing hunger.

But she also experienced something else at the SLC and at Calvin—an ongoing dialogue of faith that helped prepare the 2005 Calvin graduate to teach in impoverished communities.

"Most of my memories . . . are about the thoughtfulness and the reflection," she says.

She joined discussions about theological and historical perspectives on the Bible and about current issues and events. "I was humbled because people knew so much," Walker said.

As a math education student and academically based service-learning coordinator, she developed "the mindset that there's always something to give; you shouldn't just be taking in life."

Walker, the daughter of two preachers in Detroit, now teaches sixth-grade math at a Promise Academy charter school in Harlem.

"Teaching for me is an act of service, just interacting with kids and finding ways to love them and let them know they're cared for and they matter," she said. ■

—by Katie Van Zanen, Calvin College

You can find longer versions of many of these stories online at [thebanner.org/together](http://thebanner.org/together).

## CRC Launches Credentialing Program

Three members of Third Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich., are among the first people to receive credentials to serve in ministry as part of a new process now underway in the CRC.

Even before receiving credentials, the three had been involved in ministry. Cyndee Viel served as part-time director of children's ministry, Joy Koning as part-time worship coordinator, and Bryan Keeley as youth pastor.



Bryan Keeley, Cyndee Viel, and Joy Koning of Third Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich.

Rev. Ken Baker, senior pastor, says he is grateful for the program offering credentials to qualified applicants who have gone through an individualized program of study.

"It is too easy to underappreciate the professional ministry skills cultivated by these staff members over the years. They have no 'diploma' on the wall that identifies their training for their work in ministry. Now they have something to hang on the wall and hold to their hearts."

Credentialing was identified by denominational leadership in 2009 as one way to encourage leadership development among church staff ministry leaders. The staff ministry team connected to the Pastor-Church Relations Office was mandated to create such a process.

"This program is for those who are recognized as having the knowledge, skills, and character to do this well," said Jeanne Kallemeyn, staff ministry specialist for the office. ■

—by Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications

## Missionary Dream Becomes Reality

As a young boy, George Ahiome wanted to preach the gospel as a missionary.

He will be doing just that later this year in Nigeria as one



George Ahiome and his wife, Sara.

of Christian Reformed World Missions' newest career missionaries.

Ahiome and his wife, Sara, are currently raising the support necessary for them to serve in Abuja, Nigeria. As coordinator for CRWM's Transformational Network, he will gather Nigerian Christians and other leaders to seek Christ-centered renewal in every societal sector.

Sara hopes to help Christian businesspeople apply the gospel to their work.

Ahiome was born and raised in Nigeria. Over the years, he has befriended many

## Traditional Congregation Grows in California

Christ Church is "a ridiculously traditional Christian Reformed church," said Rev. Erik Dirksen of his three-year-old Home Missions-supported church plant in Davis, Calif.

Even though the 100 parishioners had little knowledge of the Reformed tradition, they have formed a church that is quite old-fashioned and time-honored.

The church holds liturgical worship services on Sunday and embraces such strong Reformed, biblical values as hospitality and mission.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary, Dirksen and his family moved to Sacramento, where he completed a pastoral internship while getting to know his Davis neighbors.

In 2010, 10 adults and 14 kids came to the Dirksens' first backyard meeting, and Christ Church was born.

Despite its reputation as a cynical, liberal community, "Davis is a spiritually curious town. . . . We want to be a church that loves this city and invests in it over the long haul," Dirksen said. ■

—by Lorilee Craker, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*



Rev. Erik Dirksen and his family.

missionaries serving in Nigeria and has seen the missions opportunities in the region.

“Many Nigerian Christians don’t see the need to restore the earth, as they view it as only a temporary abode until they go to their ‘real home’—heaven,” says Ahiome. “The church is seen as an end to itself rather than an agent of the kingdom.”

Many churches, he notes, reinforce this mindset.

“Many Nigerians are ‘lights put under baskets,’” says Ahiome. “[We are] excited to identify those lights and see how God will work within Nigeria and Africa.” ■

—by Sarah Lin, *Christian Reformed World Missions*



## Students Bridge the Distance of Learning

**D**istance learning at Calvin Theological Seminary is not always so distant. In fact, for one week each semester, learning is up close and personal when students come to Grand Rapids for intensive study.

Late on a Friday afternoon, a class is still busy with an ethics intensive that meets for 18 contact hours over three days.

In order to finish before Sunday, students will attend class Friday night, all day Saturday, and Saturday night. For some of them, it will be the second Saturday night in a row of such intensive class participation.

Sleep drops on the priority list as students learn and live together, enjoying lunches together between classes or a late-night outing to nourish connections they have made with others.

According to Peter Choi, director of the distance learning program at Calvin Seminary, distance learning is for those who can go the distance in adding seminary education to busy lives.

Its advantage is relevance and applicability. When asked why she likes the distance learning format, one second-year student said she loves to be able “to listen with the ears of application.”

She’s involved in ministry at her church, so she has an immediate context for her education. She said her Calvin Seminary education will deepen and broaden her abilities to serve and lead. ■

—Jinny De Jong, *Calvin Theological Seminary*

## Growing Hope in Mozambique

**L**ocated in a lowland plain between two rivers, the Mutarara district of Central Mozambique is home to many farming families.

As a result of a decade of poor weather, many of these families have repeatedly lost their crops and faced severe food shortages and hunger.

“Often the rains start on time, but then stop for several weeks, leaving tender young plants to wither and die—along with people’s hopes for a sufficient harvest,” said Ida Mutoigo, World Renew’s Canadian director.

Over the past decade, World Renew has partnered with the Reformed Church of Mozambique (IRM) to provide food and other emergency assistance to families in Mutarara when they needed it.

Beginning in 2010, World Renew and IRM also began working with farmers to teach them about improved farming



methods that could help them grow crops in times of poor rainfall. They also taught farmers better ways to store their crops safely and to supplement their incomes with other activities in case their crops failed in times of flood.

Funded in part by the Foods Resource Bank, this project has reached more than 1,400 farmers in Mutarara over the past four years. Today these farmers are producing more food for their families.

“If not for the seeds from World Renew, many farmers would have been suffering,” said Jorge, one of the farmers who saw the direct benefit of the program following a recent flood. ■

—by Kristen deRoo Vanderberg, *World Renew*

# Power Plants

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your energy level right now? Are you feeling lively and excited, or does a quick nap sound pretty good? Circle the number below that best describes how you feel.

- 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10  
 very tired    feeling great!

## Plants = Food = Energy

If you are feeling great, that's terrific! You might have had something to eat in the last hour or so. But if you are feeling a little sleepy, maybe it's time for a healthy snack. The food you eat gives you the energy to do things with your family. But did you know that some of the best foods for your body come from plants?

Take that peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich you may have had for lunch. The bread comes from plants that grow the wheat grain, which is ground into flour. The peanuts for the peanut butter come from peanut plants. And the grapes in your jelly grow on vines. (If you're more of a strawberry jam fan, you probably know those berries grow on plants too!)

In fact, almost all of the foods we eat can be traced back to plants of some kind—even hamburgers and turkey sandwiches. The meat we eat comes from animals, but guess what? Those animals eat lots and lots of plants!



That is not how it works. That is not how any of this works!

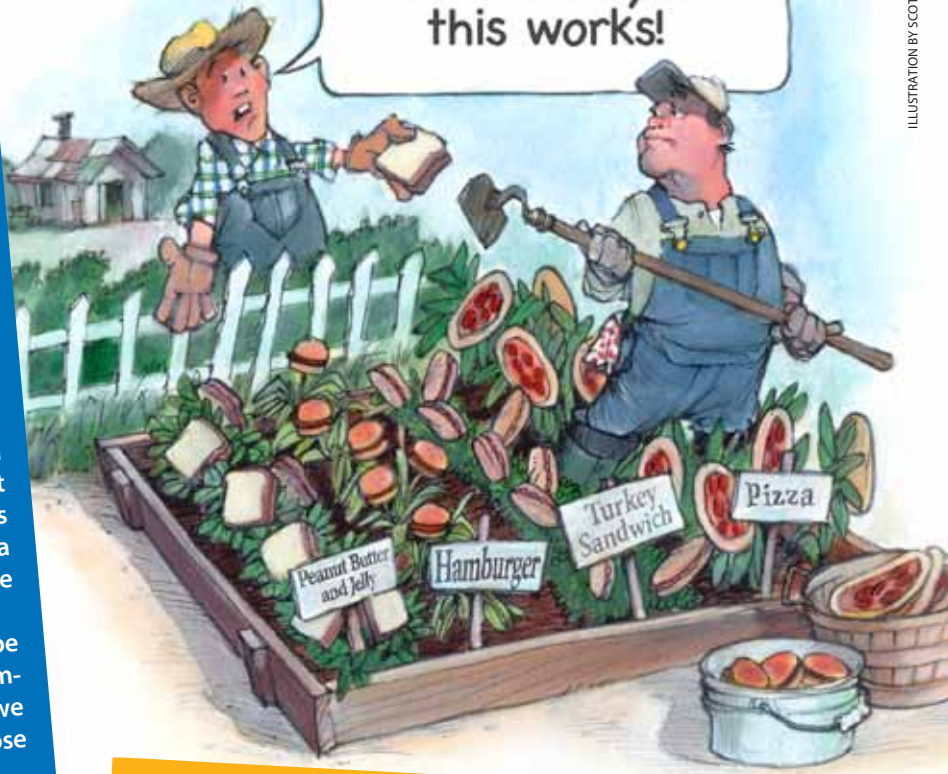


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Travelin' Trail Mix

Make this healthy and delicious snack to take with you to school or on a car trip. Nearly all of the ingredients come from plants found in the Bible!

You'll need ½ cup of each of these ingredients:

- dried dates, chopped
- raisins
- dried figs, chopped
- walnuts
- shelled pistachio nuts
- almonds
- chocolate chips or M&M's (optional)

Combine all of these ingredients and place the mixture in an airtight container or plastic baggie. Enjoy when you need a good energy boost!



1. lilies; 2. flax; 3. mustard; 4. raisins, figs; 5. sycamore

Answers



# Name That Plant

Read the phrases below. Then unscramble the words in the Scrambled Word Bank below to fill in the blanks. Use the Scripture references for clues.

1. Jesus said, "See how the \_\_\_\_\_ of the field grow." (Matthew 6:28)  
What plant was he talking about?
2. Rahab hid two Israelite spies under this plant. (Joshua 2:6) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a \_\_\_\_\_ seed."  
What type of seed was Jesus talking about? (Matthew 13:31)
4. Abigail prepared 100 cakes of \_\_\_\_\_ and 200 cakes of \_\_\_\_\_  
to give to David. (1 Samuel 25:18)
5. Zacchaeus climbed a \_\_\_\_\_ fig tree to see Jesus  
better as he passed by.

## Scrambled Word Bank

AFXL

GISF

ISNRSAI

ORCSEYAM

RUDMTSA

ILSIEL

## Plants in the Bible

The Bible mentions about 130 different kinds of plants, including willow trees, mint, garlic, beans, and mustard plants. Let's take a closer look at a few of the plants people used for food and more.



### Dates

Dates grow on a type of palm tree called the date palm. These trees bear fruit best in very hot weather. Dates are sweet and can be easily dried for quick snacks. The palm branches that the people of Israel waved and placed on the ground as Jesus traveled to Jerusalem were probably from the date palms in the area. To read that story, see John 12:12-15.



### Figs

Figs grow on trees with wide trunks and thick branches. They are sweet fruits with lots of small seeds on the inside. (Try them sometime!) Figs are eaten fresh or dried and baked into delicious fig cakes. In Matthew 21:18-22, Jesus used a fig tree to teach his disciples an important lesson.



### Grapes

Grapes grow in bunches on vines called vineyards. Grapes were very popular in Bible times and were used in many ways: people ate them fresh, dried them into raisins, or turned them into wine. At a wedding in Cana, Jesus showed his power by turning water into wine! You can read about it in John 2:1-12.



### Olive Trees

Olive trees were very useful in Bible times—and they still are today. These trees produce olive fruits toward the end of summer. They are harvested as green (unripe) olives or black (ripe) olives. Most of the olives were made into olive oil that was used for cooking and other purposes. In Bible times people poured oil on their hair and skin to protect it from the dry climate, and they used it to keep their lamps burning brightly. No wonder olive oil was very valuable!



### Wheat

In Bible times, wheat was grown and harvested in large fields much like it is today. Grains of wheat are hard and can be stored for a long time. Then and now, wheat was ground into flour and used for baking bread. Remember the story of Joseph? He stored grain for the people in Egypt so they could eat bread, even during the years of drought. Read about it in Genesis 41:46-54.



**Christin Baker** is a full-time stay-at-home mom. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



# On Modesty



**L**AST SEPTEMBER, a mom used her blog to write an open letter to the female friends of her teenage sons. She told the young women that their family had been discussing the pictures these teens posted on Facebook. She pointed out that many of the shots featured girls in skimpy clothing, PJs, or bathing suits, often posing seductively. The family had come to a decision: any girl who posted a photo like that would be “blocked.”

Here’s how she put it:

And so, in our house, there are no second chances with pics like that,

ladies. We have a zero tolerance policy. . . . If you post a sexy “selfie” (we all know the kind), or an inappropriate YouTube video—even once—it’s curtains. I know that sounds so old-school, but we are hoping to raise men with a strong moral compass, and men of integrity don’t linger over pictures of scantily clad high-school girls.

The comments section on this mom’s blog blew up. There were many who agreed, yes, but there were many more who pointed out that this mom had chosen to illustrate her post with photos

of her sons—in their bathing suits. The comments included this one:

I appreciate the thoughts in this post (and do agree!) but I find it a bit funny & thought-provoking that you decided to illustrate this post with pictures of your boys in their swimsuits. They are good-looking young guys, and of course that is perfectly normal and acceptable for them to be in their swim trunks, but couldn’t a young teenage girl looking at that with friends be led to talk about them looking “hot” or whatever if they were popping up in their Instagram account?

Other comments were more direct:



I view this essay as very damaging. You have taught your sons to blame others for their own behaviors and thoughts, and you have added to the myriad of voices already placing shame and blame on young women.

So what's a mom to do? In this case, the author agreed with the comments, swapped the original photos with shots of her well-clothed family, and eventually closed the comments section.

### Assumptions About Modesty

But this leads to a much larger discussion on the topic of modesty. One could pull apart this mom's line that "we are hoping to raise men with a strong moral compass, and men of integrity don't linger over pictures of scantily clad high-school girls," and point out that her real work is not to tell the daughters of other parents to get their acts together but to rear her sons so that when they are presented with visual temptations (actual or online), they have

post, or air. And honestly, *control* isn't really the right term for this discussion.

### The Discipline of Modesty

When friends of mine were newlyweds, they took a winter trip to a warm place. In the pool at their hotel, a woman was swimming nearby who was wearing a smaller top than was, well, fitting. The husband's eyes kept going back to the woman. His wife noticed.

When they got back to their room, she told him how much that had hurt her—he literally had eyes for someone else. Her husband didn't defend himself; he didn't dismiss her concerns. Instead, he changed. He disciplined himself so that he never intentionally looks at a woman below the neck (so much so that it can take him a while to realize that a friend or coworker is pregnant).

The discipline of modesty takes place within community. The wife in this story did not approach the woman whom she did not know and suggest she get a one-

modesty and several of the women said that his jeans were so tight as to be distracting. He'd bought them when they weren't, but had gained muscle in his legs since the purchase. He heard, considered, and then acted. When he said he'd done so later, some of the girls thanked him.

Modesty is a communal discipline. It is also an expression of love in the agapic, self-giving sense: I will lay down my life for you. I will lay down my desire to look at other women. I will lay down my desire to wear these jeans. I will lay down my desire to flaunt my physicality. I will love you with my modesty.

Modesty depends, ultimately, on each of us; on the messages we choose to send out and on the messages we choose to allow in. The question is not "How do I avoid these images?" or "What clothing can I get away with?" but "How do I love?"

- When I am dressing for school, how do I love the 15-year-olds who will sit next to me in geometry class?
- When I am surfing the Internet, how do I love my spouse—or child or friend or future spouse?
- When I see someone dressed in a particularly immodest way, how do I lay down my life for that person?
- How do I dress so that I express love for the strangers at the mall?

We practice modesty because we love. We love those who may not yet have the discipline of their eyes. We love our brothers and sisters who want to engage with us fully and without distraction. We love those whom we may eventually marry or to whom we are married by communicating that certain things are only for our beloved. And we love ourselves, not seeking acceptance in a display of six-pack abs or firm thighs but in the love of God for us. To discipline our eyes and our lives and our attire for the sake of another is modesty. And it is love. ■



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

## Too often we frame modesty as someone else's responsibility.

the ability to discipline themselves—which, I am sure, she knows and does.

To put it far too simply, the assumptions around modesty seem to be that men can't control themselves so it's up to women to do it for them, and that women need to be told to do this because they can't figure it out for themselves.

Too often we frame modesty as someone else's responsibility: those people shouldn't dress like that. Those people shouldn't produce that commercial. Those people should post different pictures.

But such language isn't helpful. As the commenter mentioned earlier reminds us, that places the blame for our own behaviors and thoughts on others. The truth is, we can't control what other people wear,

piece suit. She went to her husband. She did not go around and ask every woman, every advertiser, every filmmaker, Facebook poster, or TV producer to create only modest images for her husband's sake. She went to the one who loved her and asked him to love her by disciplining his eyes. And because he loved her, he did.

Another important move toward modesty within community is to express your concern to a friend, spouse, or child about what that person may be wearing. When I raised the topic of modesty on my own Facebook page, one of my students told this story:

A male friend of mine actually donated many of his jeans and bought new ones after a group of us were talking about

## Slow TV: Moving at the Speed of Life



**WE'VE ALL LAUGHED** at “The Yule Log,” the popular holiday TV show that features only a burning fireplace log. (I counted myself among the scoffers until a few years ago, when I discovered how mesmerizing it is to try to identify the exact moment when the video loop resets.) But while the burning log is an example of Christmas kitsch, the Slow TV movement itself is suddenly gaining ground.

In Norway, millions of people while away the hours watching such riveting fare as a 10-hour train ride, a five-day cruise on the fjords, or the making of a wool sweater—beginning with the sheep shearing. (I am not making this up.)

It sounds like a joke, but in Norway, Slow TV is big business. In fact, these marathon viewing experiences could soon be coming to a cable channel near you. Los Angeles-based LMNO Productions, the force behind the TLC show *The Little Couple* and many other reality shows, has purchased the rights to Slow TV technology.

But can this new genre make it in North America, the land of the frenetic and the home of the Bravo channel? It's an interesting question.

## Can this new genre make it in North America?

As Annie Dillard wrote in *Life* magazine's essay collection *The Meaning of Life*, “We are here to witness the creation and abet it. We are here to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. . . . Otherwise, creation would be playing to an empty house.”

A program like “A Day in the Life of a Snail”—in development now in Norway—could help refocus viewers' attention on the quiet but amazing realities of the real world in a way that “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” never will. (To test how long a snail's activities can hold your interest, visit [tinyurl.com/snail-day](http://tinyurl.com/snail-day).)

OK, maybe a snail's life isn't the best topic for Slow TV's American debut. But if you're tired of the competition, narcissism, consumerism, and hype that characterize reality television today, then keep your eyes peeled for Slow TV. Even better, lie on your stomach on a sunny lawn for an hour and watch the ants do their thing. ■



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



### The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like This

by **Rain for Roots**  
reviewed by **Robert J. Keeley**

Rain for Roots is back with their second album for children. *The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like This* opens with an invitation to listen (“Open Our Eyes”), followed by eight songs based on Jesus' parables. While their first album was aimed at preschoolers, it sounds like this album was created with slightly older children in mind. These songs beautifully convey truths of Scripture in a way that is theologically sound but simple enough to speak powerfully to children. Adults will enjoy it too! (Rain for Roots)





## Cracking Open White Identity Towards Transformation

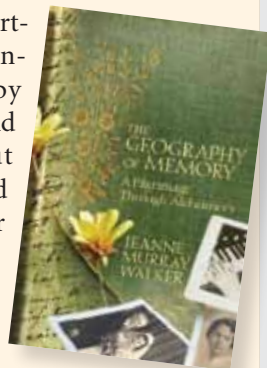
by **The Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network**  
reviewed by **Shiao Chong**

In a society affected by racism, identity is inevitably wrapped up with implications of power and privilege or the lack thereof. Those in a society's dominant group are often oblivious of that fact. This book is a tool that helps us "crack open" the power and privilege surrounding white identity in North America. *Cracking Open* is a collection of personal essays by an ecumenical cast of primarily white Christian writers, including some from the Christian Reformed Church, examining their own journey in discovering white privilege. These are accompanied by biblical reflections and learning activities, making this book suitable for church workshops and study groups. (Order by email: [order@councilofchurches.ca](mailto:order@councilofchurches.ca))

## The Geography of Memory: A Pilgrimage Through Alzheimer's

by **Jeanne Murray Walker**  
reviewed by **Adele Gallogly**

In this tender memoir, poet Walker tracks a difficult pilgrimage: caring for a loved one with dementia. She tells the story of her mother, whose memory began to fail in her 80s, and sets this narrative against her own memories. She is frank about the heart-break and conflict caused by Alzheimer's and honest about the ups and downs of her spiritual journey. Walker's voice is lyrical and full of hard-won hope as she offers up her experience as evidence that "maybe faith gives a person the ability to see whatever joy and beauty and wit flickers in the disorienting darkness." (Center Street)



## Reader-Submitted Reviews

Did you know that readers like you are submitting their own online reviews of books, movies, and music? You can too! Here are some excerpts of reviews that have been posted lately.



*Ash & Bloom* by Ash & Bloom (music): "The instrumentation is very organic with lots of earthy percussion and acoustic sounds . . . their songs offer just the right mixture of meaning yet ambiguity so that listeners can add their own interpretation of the song." —*Micah van Dijk*



*August: Osage County* (movie): "In that respect [character] Barbara is no different from any other person we might want to tell about Jesus. We don't know their story. We don't know where life has taken them until the moment we encounter them."

—*John Van Donk suggests an evangelism training technique in his online review.*



*Be Still and Know* by Lois Hoogeveen (book): "Although Hoogeveen shares her personal journey through the illness and death of a beloved spouse, anyone suffering loss will find both the technique of breath praying and this selection of prayers helpful." —*Judy Hagey*



*Good News for Science*, by Davis A. Young (book): "Does an excellent job of building a strong case for the existence of God and of arguing that matter is not eternal and the universe did not create itself . . . the book would be useful to any Christian who would like to be prepared to discuss God with unbelievers."

—*Ken Van Dellen*



*Heartfelt Hospitality*, by Jane Loerop (book): "Now in her 70s, she has written, in 15 short chapters, what happened to her when she took seriously God's command that we love our neighbor."

—*Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven*



Macklemore (musician): "Macklemore does display the themes of forgiveness, equality, and sin in his music, but he does not recognize Jesus as his personal Savior. . . . Keep in mind that there is more to his music than meets the eye." —*Kimberly van der Giessen*

## Moms' Night Out

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

Allyson needs a break. She arranges a night out with two other moms, but everything starts to go wrong. In the tradition of *Date Night* or *Bridesmaids*, minus all the vulgar, gross-out humor, *Moms' Night Out* combines the familiar frustrations of motherhood with screwball comedy. While parts of it seem derivative, the film is populated with likeable actors and manages to avoid the preachy pitfalls of some Christian movies. The lighthearted film encourages women to be content with their own gifts rather than comparing themselves to others.

Opens in theaters May 9. (Tristar)



**MORE REVIEWS ONLINE**

## Redeeming Neighborhood Violence— One Block at a Time

### WHEN BULLETS FLY, INNOCENT PEOPLE DIE.

In October 2012, a 27-year-old man was shot and later died because the wrong people showed up at a bar within a stone's throw from my house. In February 2013, four people were shot at the same bar. I can't get used to the familiar sights of a crime scene: yellow police tape wrapped around light poles, bullet casings littering the street, and frightened people holding their children close, hoping and praying that they won't be the next victims.

Violence in our neighborhoods isn't kept at bay in blighted housing projects or separated by railroad tracks. Violence visits people of all races, locations, and socioeconomic levels. And no matter where it happens, there are usually churches nearby.

So what can we do about the violence in our neighborhoods? How do we avoid either minimizing it with easy answers or throwing up our hands because it overwhelms us?

### How One Church Got Involved

Here's how my church—Roosevelt Park Community Christian Reformed Church—got involved as agents of shalom in our neighborhood.

As pastor of the church and president of the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association board for the last 18 years, I strategized with the Association's executive director and crime prevention worker to gather crime data on the bar where the shootings had occurred. The data showed that the bar was not a good neighbor. It stood in direct opposition to God's shalom flourishing in our neighborhood: over a two-year span, more than 50 incidents had been reported to police. That allowed us to build a case to have the bar's liquor license revoked by the city.

The association board began to rally neighborhood residents to fight for streets free of violence. It fought to keep a community police officer, despite budget cuts. The community officer worked tirelessly to convince the business community that violence never learns from its mistakes. It taints everything, spilling over boundaries and causing lost revenue, negative neighborhood perception, and diminished hope. She knocked on every business door and convinced the owners to write letters against the bar. One bar, she explained, could not be allowed to take down an entire neighborhood.

My church wrote a letter against the bar too. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that our world—including our

Shalom breaks out whenever  
God's people take seriously  
the fact that our world  
belongs to God.

neighborhood—belongs to God. That means we have to work and pray for human flourishing for all people.

Meanwhile, a suburban gentleman wrote a guest column in the local newspaper. He objected to our call to revoke the liquor license of the bar. He said closing the bar would not stop the violence.

I responded with a guest column to counter his view. I wondered if he could answer my questions. Why can't my neighbors walk the streets without fear of having their hopes and dreams snatched away by stray bullets? Why can't my neighbors' children experience the joy of playing soccer without running for their lives because of violence?

I believe that my neighbors are entitled to flourish just as much as my suburban friend's are. When we live in a community, our neighbor's problems are our problems. An attitude

### Practical Ways to Curb Violence in Your Neighborhood

- Join your neighborhood association board.
- Sponsor block parties with your neighbors.
- Mentor a child or teenager.
- Partner with an urban church or organization near your home.
- Report crime.
- Start a prayer ministry against violence in your church.
- Teach a child to read or learn math.
- Plant a garden and show kids how to tend it.
- Attend a Christian Community Development Association conference.

of individualism, on the other hand, doesn't contribute to human flourishing. As pastor and author Tim Keller rightly concludes, "When a [neighborhood] perceives a church as existing strictly and only for itself and its members, the preaching of that church will not resonate with outsiders." Shalom and justice are always connected to the heart and soul of the gospel. Justice doesn't back down from violence.

### Redeeming Violence

One day I got a call from my neighborhood association director to come quickly to her office. I rushed down the street to find out the news. The bar's liquor license was before the city commission; its fate was to be decided. Instead, the director reported that the owner of the bar had quietly given up the license. An agreement with city and police meant that no bar could ever set up shop at that location again. Those of us who had gathered to find out the city commission's decision cheered and cracked open bottles of Coke and Sprite. I looked around the room at my neighbors—people who believe that violence doesn't have to have the last word in our neighborhoods. As my good friend and former professor Neal Plantinga wrote, "Everything corrupt needs to be redeemed, and that includes the whole natural world, which both sings and groans." Violence needs to be redeemed. Reformed Christians have a well-stocked world-and-life view and a ready mandate from our Master Jesus to risk reclaiming God's property from the wiles of the world and the devil.

And what became of the bar? In October 2013, five members of my church were prayer-walking in the neighborhood. They noticed that the old bar was open and ventured in to see what was going on. In its place was a brand new beauty salon. The owner had moved into the space because she needed more room for her bustling business. The owner invited the church members in and gave them a grand tour. One of them asked permission to pray for her business. She gladly agreed. They grabbed hands, and two young church members prayed for the success of the new business, for the owner, and for God's protection.

Redemption happens one block at a time. Shalom breaks out whenever God's people take seriously the fact that our world belongs to God. We can make a difference if we are willing to get involved.

### Digging Deeper

Here are some resources on how churches can provide leadership in their community. Consider choosing one or more for small group study and discussion.

- *Christian Community Development Association, ccda.org*
- *A Heart for the Community*, John Fuder & Noel Castellanos (Moody, 2009)
- *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*, Tim Keller (Dutton, 2010)
- *Linking Arms, Linking Lives: How Urban and Suburban Partnerships Can Transform Communities*, Ronald Sider, John Perkins, Wayne Gordon, F. Albert Tizon (Baker Books, 2008)
- *Renewing the City: Reflections on Community Development and Urban Renewal*, Robert Lupton (IVP, 2005)
- *Restoring At-Risk Community*, John Perkins, ed. (Baker Book House, 1995)
- *Urban Churches: Beyond Charity Toward Justice*, Nile Harper (Eerdmans, 1999)
- *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God*, 2nd ed., Harvie Conn & Manuel Ortiz (IVP, 2010)
- *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church*, Stephen Um & Justin Buzzard (Crossway, 2013)

Christians take resurrection seriously. Author Eugene Peterson once said, "Resurrection only comes from graves, tombs, and emptiness. It is where God is. He's in the middle of it. This is God's characteristic action in the world—through waters, through the valleys, and through the grave."

Do you believe our Lord is still in the business of creating resurrections? Violent neighborhoods can be redeemed when the resurrection people of God enter the arena, knowing that every square inch of the world's real estate belongs to God. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Reginald Smith is pastor of Roosevelt Park Community Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and an ardent supporter of the Chicago Cubs baseball team.

## Viral Slander

In your 20s or 30s? We want to hear what's on your mind as it relates to living out your faith in today's world. Please send manuscripts (600 words) to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

**ONE OF THE MOST PERVASIVE** examples of the Internet's power to shape popular culture is the sharing of messages on social media like Facebook. Jokes, photos, or stories can quickly "go viral" as people share something with their friends, who then share it with more friends, exponentially spreading it through the Internet. And *viral* is a fitting description for information that spreads like a disease.

These messages may range from heart-warming to hysterical. But as a source of information they share a common flaw: there is no accountability. Readers understand that information from news sources, despite those sources' biases and agendas, is fact-checked; presenting inaccurate information would make them vulnerable to lawsuits.

On the other hand, fiction posing as fact can spread like wildfire on Facebook, unchecked and virtually unstoppable. This may seem fairly harmless when sharing stories of human (or animal) loyalty and sacrificial love. But isn't that sentiment cheapened when it masquerades as truth? Stories do not have to be true to be powerful, but when fiction is presented as reality, it becomes a lie.

Viral shares become really harmful when they are slanderous. If you browsed Facebook during the previous election, you saw "shares" that tore into the reputations of various politicians. Did you share these without question to support your own opinion? Or did you check the facts and the context? For example, if a politician voted against a bill, was it because he did not support the main issue or because the bill included implications that went well beyond the issue?

I believe that asking such questions is more than simply a matter of making sure we understand the big picture. In the end,

it is our moral obligation to discern the truth in a world of misinformation and prejudice.

The Bible teaches God's perspective on slander, praising the person "whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others" (Ps. 15:2-3).

The usual understanding of slander is intentional misrepresentation of a person's actions or character. But what about *unintentional* misrepresentation of a person? In the end, the results are the same—someone is harmed by falsehood. The excuse "I didn't know" does not heal the wounds of slander.

We are called to a high standard of behavior: treating others with Christ-like love. This is not limited to friends and acquaintances but also to our enemies. So while I may disagree with a politician, I am still called to love him or her. One aspect of that love is a deep reluctance to spread negative information about anyone, unless we are specifically led by God to proclaim the truth.

Notice that the motivation does not come from any human agenda or feeling. It is limited to following God's guidance and sharing only information that is true. We should not rush to cause others to react negatively against those with whom we disagree.

So next time you come across a post others have been sharing, pause for a moment. Check for relevant news articles or facts related to the topic. Remember that *you* are responsible for the accuracy of the information you share with others. Someone else may have created a lie, but you can choose whether to continue spreading it around.

Choose not to feed the fire of misinformation that runs rampant on the Internet. Check your facts and be careful of what you share. This is an important way to honor our God of truth. ■

**Arielle Fischer** is an intern with Beautiful Brokenness, an equestrian-themed discipleship ministry. She attends Portico Church in Charlottesville, Va.



Choose not to feed the fire of misinformation that runs rampant on the Internet.

# ADS

**Deadlines:** June issue is 5/5/14; July issue is 6/9/14. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Call to Synod 2014

**CALL TO SYNOD 2014** The council of First CRC, Pella, Iowa, calls all delegates to Synod 2014, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the Kuyper Fieldhouse on the campus of Central College, Pella, Iowa, in some joint sessions with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) General Synod, and in the Kuyper Gymnasium for CRC synod sessions. Synod will begin with a joint worship service at Third Reformed Church in Pella, on Thursday, June 12, at 7:00 p.m.

All area CRC and RCA members are invited to join the delegates of the CRC and RCA synods in worship at the Synodical Service of Praise on Sunday evening, June 15, 2014, at 5:00 p.m. at the Vermeer Pavilion, 2110 Vermeer Road East, Pella, Iowa. Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff will preach the sermon. A picnic supper will be served to all attendees following the service.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 8, and on Sunday, June 15. Council of First CRC, Pella, Iowa

### Financial Aid

**CLASSICAL STUDENT AID** Students from Classis Rocky Mountain preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classical Ministry Leadership Team for the 2014-2015 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westebroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 or [robertwestebroek@comcast.net](mailto:robertwestebroek@comcast.net) or (303)400-6723. All requests are to be received by May 31, 2014.

**FINANCIAL AID** Classis Illiana's Student Fund is currently accepting applications for financial assistance for the 2014-2015 school year from prospective students within the classis. If you will be a seminary student or college student at least a junior level with a final goal of full-time ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, we encourage you to request an application from Rev. Richard Zekveld at [pastor@cottagegrovechurch.com](mailto:pastor@cottagegrovechurch.com)

## Congregational

### Church's 75th Anniversary

**SEYMOUR CRC** of Grand Rapids MI, will celebrate 75 years of God's faithfulness with a dinner, June 13, and worship service, June 15. We invite all friends, former members and pastors, to join us in giving thanks and praise. Please contact the church at [info@seymourchurch.org](mailto:info@seymourchurch.org) or 616-245-8726.

**BROOKFIELD CRC (WI)** will celebrate 75 years of God's faithfulness August 9 & 10, 2014. Former members and friends are invited to join us for a picnic, a program and a worship service to celebrate "WHAT GOD HAS DONE... WHAT GOD WILL DO..." For details contact [office@brookfieldcrc.org](mailto:office@brookfieldcrc.org).

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**FRESNO CRC** With great joy and thankfulness for God's blessings, the Fresno Christian Reformed Church will celebrate its 50th Anniversary with a special service and luncheon on Sunday, May 18. All former pastors, members, and friends are invited to attend. Details at [fresnocrc.org](http://fresnocrc.org).

### Church's 30th Anniversary

**COMMUNITY CRC OF RICHMOND HILL** Through God's faithfulness, Community Christian Reformed Church of Richmond Hill is celebrating their 30th Anniversary on Sunday, May 25 at 10 a.m. All former

members and pastors are invited to attend. For more information, contact the church office at [dianehoving@community-church.ca](mailto:dianehoving@community-church.ca)

## Announcements

**CALVIN CRC** in Oak Lawn, IL announces a fundraising drive for member Jay Iwema to continue therapy to leave his wheelchair and walk. On May 3, there is a supper, fun fair, and silent auction from 5-8:30 p.m. For info or to donate, call 708-843-3597.

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday



**GENEVA (BOLTHOUSE) BUSH** of Muskegon, MI, married to the late John Bush celebrates her 100th birthday on May 16, 2014. Her children are Dale and Karen Carlson and David and Jan Bush. Her grandchildren are Glenn (Jen) Carlson, Carrie (Joel) Anderson, Courtney (Brian) Kingshott, and Chris (Laura) Bush. She has 9 great-grandchildren. Geneva resides at Christian Care Center, 1530 McLaughlin Room #334 Muskegon, MI 49442.



**GERALDINE (GERRI) FONGERS** is turning 100! Come celebrate with the whole Fongers family on Saturday, April 5 from 2-4 in the Friendship Room of Raybrook Manor.

### 95th Birthday

**MARIE (TEITSMA) LUDWICK** Praising God for her health, happy heart & unwavering love, faith, prayers. Loved dearly by Ed Ludwick, Tom & Betsy Ludwick, Doug & Sylvia Ludwick, Kathy & Jim TenHarmel and their families. 8300 West Lake Drive, WPB, FL 33406

### 90th Birthday

**CHESTER DOZEMAN** Happy 90th Birthday Dad! Love from your children, grand-children, and great grand-children! Thanks for the memories and love you shared with us and providing for us in so many ways.

**HARRIET LEENSVAART** of 1251 Hekman Circle, Ripon, Ca. 95366 will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 13. Her family gives thanks for her Christian example and faithfulness.

**THERESA TERMAAT** (Devries) celebrated her 90th Birthday on May 6, 2014 with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We thank God for her life and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. She reside at 18012 Kansas Court, Orland Park, Illinois 60467

### 85th Birthday

**WILLIAM J (BILL) MEUZELAAR** will celebrate his 85th birthday on June 13, 2014. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren thank God for his faith and love. Birthday wishes can be sent to 18062 Wentworth Ave., Lansing, IL 60438

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**KIMM** Harold and Dorothea will celebrate 65 years of marriage on April 19. Their children Kathleen and Jim Perkins, Charles and Vonnice Kimm, Norma and George Kent, Marie and Bob Kootstra, 10 grand-

children, and 17 great-grandchildren thank God for His love and faithfulness to them.



**POEL** Norman & Lucile (de Stigter), 2042 Mallard Dr., Grand Rapids, MI 49546, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary, August 18. Norman will also celebrate his 90th birthday, June 6. Their children invite you to an open house for both events on May, 31, 2014, from 2-4pm at Shawnee Park Christian Reformed Church.



**SCHOLTEN** Herman and Helen (Rozema) will celebrate 65 years of marriage on May 5. Their family is grateful for an example of faithful love and service.

### 60th Anniversary

**DYKSTRA** Bob and Yvonne (Veenstra) of Taber, Alberta are celebrating their 60th anniversary on May 3, 2014. Their children: Andy and Bev Dykstra, Bob and Lorraine Dykstra, Rick and Lori Dykstra, Ivan and Wendy Karsten, Ted and Luci Dykstra, Paul and Janice Lassen, 18 grandchildren, and 6 great grandchildren are thankful to God for all His blessings.



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Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada

**Email:** Janice Draksler  
([jdraksler@redeemer.ca](mailto:jdraksler@redeemer.ca))

*Only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.*

**HAAGSMA** Jim & Mary (Huizinga) of 1725 Port Sheldon, A401, Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on May 25. Their children, the late Carol Vail, Fred & Lisa Vail/VanHarn, Dave & Joan, Tim & Maxine, and Bill & Susan along with their 16 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness through the generations. We love you!

**KLAP** Herman & Peggy, 203 W. Calle del Estribo, Sahuarita, AZ 85629-8530. On May 6, 2014, we are still very much in love with each other after 60 years of marriage. God has blessed us with 4 wonderful children; Eddie, Susie, Tom and Rob. We are also Papa and Granny to 4 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren with 1 on the way. We thank God for the ability and good health, as we travel often to be with our family in Denver, CO. We are also thankful that we can serve God as we work our 20th year this month with World Renew/DRS.

#### 50th Anniversary

**TACKEMA** Merle and Tilly, 36 Lowe Road, Sussex, NJ 07461. Married on May 8, 1964. We and our four children, sixteen grandchildren and five great grandchildren thank and praise God for His faithfulness!

**VAN DONSELAAR** Rev. Marvin and Esther 488 14th St. SE, Sioux Center, IA 51250. June 3, 2014. Children: Marla (Gary) DeJong, Brian (Carey), Sheryl (Brent) Vande Kamp, Karen (Jason) Soodsma, Mark (Diane), 11 gdchildren. Thanks Be To God!

### Church Position Announcements

**SEEKING PASTOR** Beautiful Calgary, Alberta near the Rocky Mountains is seeking a pastor for Covenant Christian Reformed Church. We are an active, smaller and diverse church family with a full range of ministries. We are looking for an inspiring, motivating leader able to apply Scriptures to our contemporary lives and to work collaboratively with our ministry leadership. In a city that offers everything from sports to arts and prairies to mountains, we invite you to consider helping us build a body that is alive in Christ! For more information contact Tim Kielstra [tim@vyeifield.ca](mailto:tim@vyeifield.ca). Church profile available from the Ministerial Information Service at CRC's Pastor Church Relations.

**PASTOR** needed by Hope CRC in Thunder Bay, the farming, industrial and transportation hub of North-Western Ontario. Since 1985 we have been seeking ways to concretely serve the Lord, and we need someone to grow and work with us. Contact our interim minister; Pastor John Veenstra, 807 473-0726 email: [cnotenwheeler41@gmail.com](mailto:cnotenwheeler41@gmail.com)

**LEAD PASTOR** Sahali Fellowship, located in Kamloops, in the interior of beautiful British Columbia, is looking for a pastor to become part of our small church family. Join our leadership team and help our church grow in intimacy with God, worship Jesus in every aspect of our lives, and take comfort in the care of the Holy Spirit as we continue to reach out to others. For more information visit [www.sahalifellowship.com](http://www.sahalifellowship.com)

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH:** Prairie Edge CRC of Portage, MI is seeking a full-time Director of Youth to oversee our Middle School, High School, and Post-High ministries. Candidates should have a degree in Youth Ministry or commensurate experience. Job description available upon request; call 269-327-1570 or email [pecoffice@charter.net](mailto:pecoffice@charter.net).

**PART TIME PASTOR:** Leighton CRC, a small, rural, conservative congregation in south central Iowa is seeking a part time pastor to lead us in ministry. Interested parties are invited to contact the search committee at [LeightonCRC@gmail.com](mailto:LeightonCRC@gmail.com) or call Leroy Nugteren, chairman, at 641-626-3704.

**EXECUTIVE PASTOR** Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia is searching for an Executive Pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. Having recently moved into our brand new 1200 seat Worship Centre and completed a comprehensive Strategic Plan, we are a multi-generational congregation of approximately 650 members seeking to faithfully impact our city and surrounding area with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The successful candidate will be primarily responsible

### Condolences

**DEBOER** Nelva, age 95 of Sibley, IA died 3/16/2014. Funeral Services were at the Christian Reformed Church in Sibley. Online Expressions of Sympathy can be sent to [www.andringafuneralhome.com](http://www.andringafuneralhome.com)

### Obituaries

**BOLT, FLORENCE** nee DeBoer, 88, went to be with her Lord, March 3rd, 2014, 100 West Butterfield Rd, apt 403N, Elmhurst, IL, 60126. Beloved wife of William J. Bolt; loving mother of Deborah Kuiper and Gary (Catherine) Bolt; devoted grandmother of Max and Lee Kuiper, Bradley (Jesse) Bolt, Lauren (Bryan) Turner, and Nicole Bolt; great-grandmother of Isabelle and Scarlett Turner; fond sister of Richard (the late Edith) DeBoer, Christine (the late Robert) Nicodem, and preceded by George (the late Ruth) DeBoer, James (the late Arthea) DeBoer, and Edward (Jeanette) DeBoer; aunt of many nieces and nephews.

**EISENBROEK**, Gertrude -VanBuiten -99 GrandRapids, MI & Hawthorne, NJ. Joyfully with the Lord-12/20/13! Dedicated RN for many years! Dearly loved & missed by sons Jim(Alli) & Roy(Karla), 6 GC & 10 GGC. Philippians 1:21

for the management of all church operations including the leadership and training of staff and volunteers, the supervision of care groups and enfolding ministries, and the implementation of the strategic plan. Although ordination is not a requirement of this position, there may be occasional opportunities for preaching. Abbotsford is located one hour east of Vancouver and three hours north of Seattle. The city has a population of one hundred and forty thousand people and is experiencing continuing growth in both numbers and cultural diversity. For more information about this opportunity and how to apply, please follow this link to our website: <http://www.gateway-crc.org/employmentopportunities.cfm>. Deadline for receipt of resumes is May 15, 2014.

**MINISTRY COORDINATOR** Shawnee Park Christian Reformed Church (SPCRC) in Grand Rapids, Michigan has an exciting opportunity for a full-time Ministry Coordinator to work with our pastor and ministry teams. In keeping with SPCRC's focus on intergenerational ministry to and by teens and young adults, this position will recruit, equip, inspire and inform leaders and volunteers in worship, education and youth ministry, evangelism and fellowship. Preference will be given to candidates with previous experience in worship and leadership. For position description and application contact Jeanne Engelhard, Chair of the Personnel Committee, Shawnee Park CRC (616-243-2418 or [engelhad@comcast.net](mailto:engelhad@comcast.net)). The search committee will be accepting applications immediately.

**MINISTRY POSITION** ~ First Christian Reformed Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, is searching for a Pastoral Director of Congregational Life with a heart to serve and equip God's people. The position will be full-time including leadership in small groups, pastoral care, welcoming and enfolding newcomers as well as summer camp ministries. Skills in the new media and preaching would be helpful. First CRC has 450 members and is located in lovely west central Alberta. For more information, contact [rockycrc@telus.net](mailto:rockycrc@telus.net).

**MUSIC LEADER** Covenant CRC (Grand Rapids) is an intergenerational, 600 member, music-loving church seeking an energetic, organized, part time Music Leader to oversee our music ministry and help organize our blended worship services. For further information, see our website: [covenant-crc.org](http://covenant-crc.org)

**PASTOR** Tillsonburg CRC is a committed congregation of 50 families located in a small, rural community in southwestern Ontario. After almost 2 years with an STM, we are now looking for a Pastor who can help us develop our vision and lead us into God's future. Send letters of interest & profiles in confidence to Harry Dykxhoorn [hdykxhoorn@gmail.com](mailto:hdykxhoorn@gmail.com).



**KETT** John R, age 90, died March 1, 2014. 2105 Raybrook Estates II, GR, MI 49546. Survived by Marciel, wife of 69 years, children; David (Gloria), James (Jeri), Larry (Kathi), Laura wife of Ronald (deceased), Sara Wondergem (Randy), 13 grandchildren, and 11 great grandchildren.

**SCHEURWATER** Jessie of Kalamazoo, Michigan, on March 23, 2014. Survived by sisters Nellie Wiersema, Connie Scheurwater, Anne (August) Faber; nieces and nephew Karen (Bruce) Behrendt, Judy (David) Bareman, Greg Faber; special cousin Janice (Dennis) Vanden Berg; several grandnieces and grandnephews; predeceased by brother Gerrit Scheurwater and brother-in-law Nick Wiersema.

**SEVEN** Raymond P, age 92, passed away peacefully on April 6, 2014, at Raybrook Manor in Grand Rapids. Ray is survived by his four daughters, Phyllis (Rich) Herlocker, Peggy Seven, Nancy (Dave) VanDerPuy and Barbara (Bob) VandeVusse. Ray is also survived by three step-children, Lee Barnes, Barbara (Quinn) Schultze, John (Janet) Hoekenga, many grandchildren, great grandchildren, a great-great granddaughter, nieces and nephews. Also surviving are sisters-in-law Doris DeVries and Grace Huitsing, and brother-in-law Jay (Betty) Huitsing. Ray was preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn (DeVries), his second wife, Dot-tie (Huitsing Hoekenga), one brother, Marvin Seven, one sister, Francine Seven Katt, and granddaughter, Anjuli Rae VanDerPuy. He died as he lived, according to his favorite verses, Philippians 4:6-7

**SMITH** Martha of Grandville MI, age 101, went to be with her Lord on March 25, 2014. She is survived by daughters Ann (Don) Herring and Kathy (Bernie) DeYoung, 4 grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren.

**STAP** Adeline, 87 yrs. Lynden, WA Died Mar. 15, 2014. She is survived by Kay (Lloyd) Broersma, Jake (Jeanette) Stap, Joan (Ray) Stuit, Yvonne (Marshall) Zoerink, Lorraine (Dick) Katte, numerous nieces & nephews.

**TELLINGHUISEN** Gladys; age 82; March 8, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her parents, Rudolf and Serena (Damhof) Tellinghuisen; and by her step-mother, Dorothy Tellinghuisen (Daane). She is survived by her friend and companion: Jim Terborg; brothers and sisters-in-law: Raymond and Sadie Tellinghuisen (Pease, MN), Gordon and Lorna Tellinghuisen (Artesia, CA); step-brothers and step-sister: Don and Marlys Tellinghuisen, Roger and Pat Tellinghuisen, Dave Tellinghuisen, Ruth and Rich Erickson; several nieces, nephews and cousins.



**VELLENGA** Klaas, 86, went to be with His Lord on March 16. Klaas passed peacefully at his home with his beloved wife of almost 63 years and his family by his side. Klaas was born on June 4, 1927 in Friesland, The Netherlands. He immigrated to America in 1949 engaged to his sweetheart, Marion

(Murdje) Zeilstra who joined him two years later. They were married on April 25, 1951. Klaas was a humble dairy farmer who worked hard to care for his family. He enjoyed the beauty of nature and continued helping on the farm until just a few months ago. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was a member of Sussex CRC, Goshen CRC and Hudson Valley URC. He served on the board of Goshen Christian School and as both Elder and Deacon in Goshen CRC. His love for God was evident in everything he did for his family, for his church and for his community. Klaas and Marion enjoyed traveling together during their retirement and felt blessed to be an American. Klaas is survived by his sister Janet (Egbert) Couperus of Canada; his eight children: Sidney (Wilma); George (Henri); Marguerite (Martin) Nop; Annette Levett (Rich) Hoyt; Debbie (Charlie) Kuperus; Renee (Kenny) Kuperus; Eric (Carol) and Troy (Tina). Klaas was the Pake to 34 grandchildren and 67 great grandchildren. Klaas was predeceased by his parents, Sipke and Antje Vellenga, his brother Willem, and his son-in-law John Levett. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life." - Romans 6:23 Memorial contributions can be made to Goshen Christian School, Goshen, NY.

**WOLTJER** Henrietta (Velgman) aged 97; of Zeeland MI; She was predeceased by her husband Herman. Survived by Jean Woltjer, Paula and Dick Hengst, Anne and Bob Drnek, Betty and Glenn Kotman, Jane and Dick Venema. 11 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.



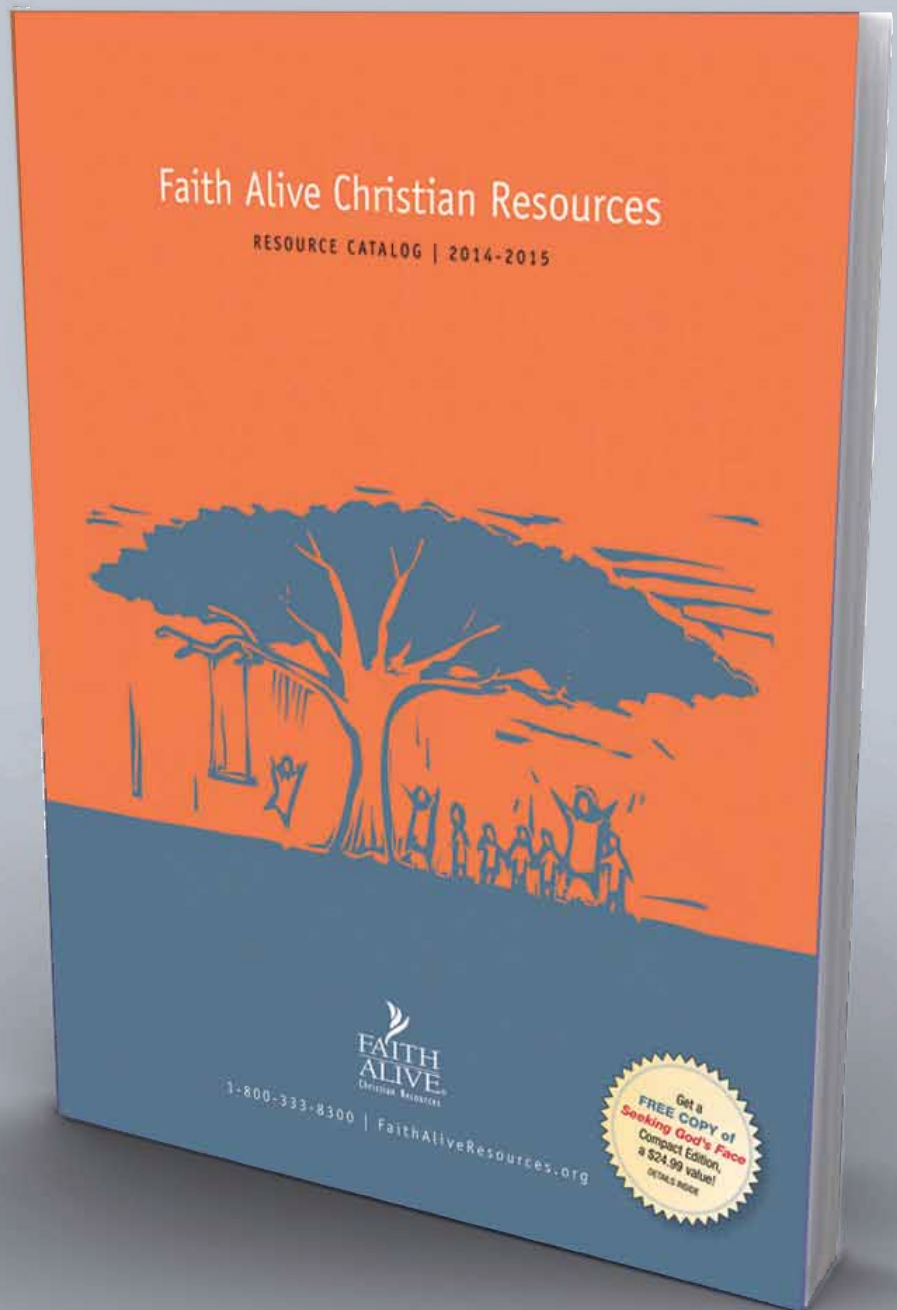
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CELEBRATING



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**VAN BEEKUM** Pauline, (nee Nyland), age 96 of Midland Park,. She went to be with her Lord on March 14, 2014. She was preceded in death by her husband, John of 67 years, in 2009. They were long time members of MPCRC, in N. J. and later resided together at the Holland Home N. Haledon, N. J. She is survived by son, John and wife Trudy, daughter Linda Baker and husband Jack, 7 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

### Volunteers

**NEEDED** at Mississippi Christian Family Services in Rolling Fork, MS, volunteers to work in the Lighthouse Variety Store for summer months. A warm, loving place to serve the Lord. Housing provided, air conditioned store and housing. A minimum of 2 weeks is requested. Call Betty 662-873-9055 or Helene Doornbos 616-453-1984 or email huddyd@gmail.com for more info

### Employment

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

**PART-TIME CLERICAL JOB** The West Michigan Mechanical Contractors Association, WMMCA, is a non-profit trade association located at 3221 Three Mile Rd. NW Grand Rapids, MI. We are looking for a part-time clerical worker to work 16-20 hours a week from 8-4 or thereabouts in 2 or 2 ½ days a week. The work would include clerical work, data entry and miscellaneous office work. This person would need to be willing to work in an office setting alone as the only other employee does not always work in the office. This is a long term part-time position. Interested persons should contact Cindy Morse at 616-560-2184 or send resumes to info@wmmca.org.

**OPENING FOR AFC RESIDENT:** Friendship Family Homes, a Christian adult foster care home located in McBain, MI has an opening for a female resident. We offer a loving and supportive Christian environment for ladies with developmental disabilities. Please call our home at 231-825-2042 for more details. Email inquiries to stahl200@att.net

### Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

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**BEAUFORT, NC:** two 1 br furnished cottages for rent in historic coastal town, near beaches, w/d, TV, A/C, internet, grill, bikes. [www.theshellcottage.com](http://www.theshellcottage.com) (252) 504-6262.

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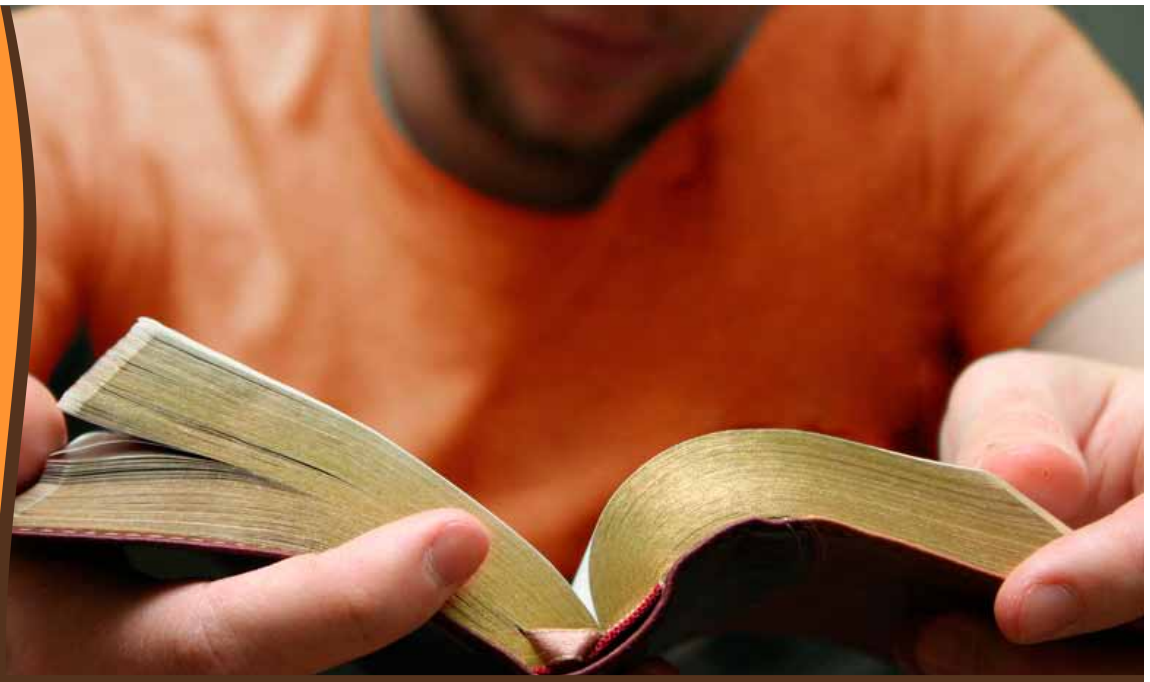
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The Synodical Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance Regarding Same-Sex Marriage is gathering input for its work.



To participate in the survey on homosexuality and same-sex marriage, go to:

[crcna.org/samesexmarriagesurvey](http://crcna.org/samesexmarriagesurvey)

Thank you for your participation!

[pastoralcare-samesex@crcna.org](mailto:pastoralcare-samesex@crcna.org)

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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 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**M**y mother, Alida, sat down for breakfast and opened the meal with, "Thank you, Lord, for this new day."

Across the table, her son did a few quick calculations and then said, "Well, you've just said thanks for the 33,788th new day."

Never one to miss a beat, my mom, age 92, laughed and replied immediately, "Seems like he is listening!"

—Alida Reitsma

**M**y son, his wife, and two children skied for the morning, and then went out to eat at a restaurant. My 4-year-old granddaughter ordered bacon and eggs. When the waitress asked, "How would you like your eggs?" my granddaughter replied, "Cooked!"

—Jim and Betsy McClure

**S**een on a church billboard: "Fight truth decay, read your Bible."

—I. Payne

**A** father sat in church with three of his young children. As usual, they sat in the very front

row so the children could properly witness the service.

During this particular service, the minister was performing the baptism of an infant. The 5-year-old daughter watched carefully as the minister spoke the words of baptism while pouring water over the baby's head.

With a quizzical expression, the little girl turned to her father and said, "Daddy, why is he brainwashing that baby?"

—Clarence Wildeboer

**I** was preparing to go to a pool for a swim with my two daughters, ages 4 and one-and-a-half. The youngest had just scratched her knee and said she had better not go into the water.

I told her that the water would help heal her "owie."

To which my other daughter responded, "That's psychology!"

—Sandy Sall

**A** woman was mailing a Bible to a friend. Arriving at the counter, the postal employee asked, "Is there anything breakable in the package?"

The woman replied, "Only the Ten Commandments!"

—Lew Brassler

**I**n my grandson's home, mom and dad take turns every other night tucking in their youngsters by reading a book and hearing their prayers. One night it was dad's turn, but his son kept asking for mom. My grandson explained that it was his turn, but the tears

and asking for mom continued. Finally he said, "Son, if you ask for Mom one more time I will have to discipline you."

His reply: "Daddy, could you please send your wife in here to tuck me in?"

—Caroline Douma

**O**ur grandchildren, Laura, 8, Rachel, 5, and Olivia, 3, enjoy watching home movies. Some of these movies were taken before they were born. Watching one of those, Olivia asked, "Where am I?"

Rachel's response: "You were with God."

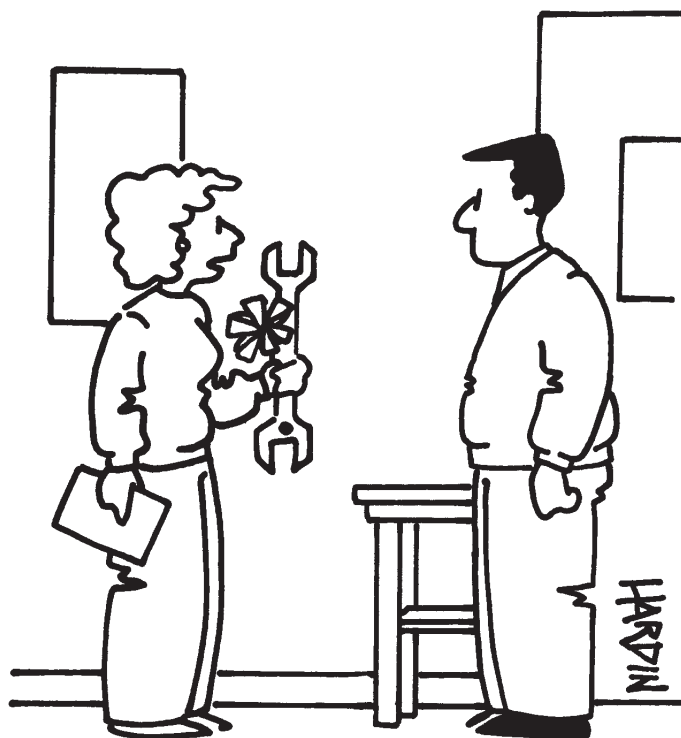
—Pieter and Andrea Miedema

**A**n earnest discussion occurred about what would happen to our beloved daisy dog, Kimi Soo, when my husband and I die. The decision was reached that granddaughter Lucy will "inherit" Kimi Soo.

One day Lucy asked, "If you and Grandpa Jack die in Florida, how will Kimi Soo get to me in Michigan?"

Not to worry—Lucy's uncle (not a dog lover) has assured her he will deliver the dog!

—Arden Post



"I know it's the thought that counts—what were you thinking?"



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