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-Erin Haayema

An English and French major, Erin spent a semester at the Sorbonne, the University of Paris.

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BANNER

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Synod 2014

Synod 2014 will be held on June 12-19 at Central College in Pella, Iowa. Look for updated articles at thebanner.org, Facebook (*The Banner* magazine) and Twitter (@crcbanner) throughout synod. You can also follow synod via webcast and synod news office press releases, all of which can be accessed via the Synod 2014 website.

The July print issue will arrive in your mailbox a little later than usual so we can cover synod right up to the closing doxology.

Trust

TRUST IS IN SHORT SUPPLY THESE DAYS. In some ways, rightly so. “Trust me,” shout a thousand ads, “this product will make you live to be 100, and you won’t even look like it.” “Trust me,” enjoin the politician, the wayward preacher, the pusher, the pedophile, and the pornographer. We do what we can to teach youngsters *not* to be so trusting. Misplaced trust can cripple, even kill.

But maybe we have learned that lesson too well. Who still trusts governments, banks, lawyers, teachers, denominations, parents? Who still trusts tradition or life or the future, for that matter? And who really still trusts in a God we cannot see?

Our media-saturated, wired-in way of life can turn us into functional agnostics who learn to trust no one: not our workmates, not our spouses, not even ourselves. So what part, if any, can trust still play in our lives? And what part should it play?

There’s an old story about a lone cowboy who plods across a sun-scorched desert only to find himself completely out of water. He’s in mortal danger by the time he stumbles upon a shed with a rusty old pump. In utter desperation he goes to town on the pump, but it produces nary a drop.

Close to despair, he notices a beat-up tin cup. Miraculously, there’s water in it! Even as he reaches for it to slake his thirst, he knows it’s not nearly enough to see him through his journey. Then he notices a scribbled note underneath the cup. It says: “Have faith, friend, there’s water down there.”

The cowpoke knows what he has to do. He must prime the pump, pouring that precious water—now dearer to him than his horse—down the pump to create the suction to let him draw up all the water he needs—*maybe*. To get enough to save his life, he needs to risk the bit that won’t. He needs to trust the note or he’s a goner.

I’ll forego the urge to preach the sermon that goes so well with this story. You get it. (Look up Mark 8:35.) The countless times our trust is disappointed does not make it desirable, or even possible, to live without it. Ask any newborn. Or ask the prophet Habakkuk: “The righteous live by their faith” (Hab. 2:4).

But the story isn’t quite done yet. The now well-saturated cowpoke turns over the note. On the back side he reads: “Hey, lead-foot, don’t fergit ta leave water in that cup fer the next greenhorn who’s fixin’ ta die of thirst out here.”

How will we Pentecost folks live in a way that inspires enough trust in our soul-thirsty family, friends, and neighbors so that they will accept from our faltering, sin-stained hands God’s “cup of salvation”?

Who left that Living Water out for you to find? And how will you follow suit? ■

Who left that Living Water out for you to find?



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

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Bowing but Not Scraping

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

—Psalm 95:6

I RECENTLY returned from a few months teaching at a seminary in Korea. One thing I had to get used to was all the bowing. While some kind of bow, however slight, is common in Korea when people meet, professors hold a revered position in that society and are favored with a bow of at least 25 degrees. And there is always a bow in return, but at a much smaller degree. Needless to say, I got used to it.

But it did get me thinking about bowing before God and what that means. It's all over the Bible, from numerous references in the psalms to Revelation's dramatic portraits of heavenly worship. Interestingly, bowing is not a gesture you're likely to see in a Protestant church. We are not big on gesture in our worship. For us, it's the words that count.

One place you can experience bowing in North America is in a monastery. Dur-

ing their regular times of prayer the monks pray the psalms. And, according to centuries-long tradition, after each psalm they speak the familiar words of the *Gloria Patri*: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." With these words, the monks—or nuns—all incline in a low, graceful bow.

On my regular visits to a monastery, I always find that this act moves me deeply, and tears come to my eyes. It's not just the glorious words spoken or sung—it's the act of bowing with them that makes it so profound.

Somehow, bowing before God is more than a mere gesture. It allows my body to properly express my deepest identity. Bowing before the Lord is not groveling like some court lackey backing away from a pompous monarch. Bowing before the Lord, my Creator, strangely fulfills me, as though I have found my proper place in the universe. Rather than making me feel insignificant, bowing gives me a deeper sense of my significance as a creature of God.

What would it be like if at the beginning of a worship service the congregation would sing, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker," and everyone would bow low? I like to think it would feel good and right and true.

We might think of it as practice for the grand finale of history. Then, in John's glorious vision, "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" bows in worship, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13). ■



Leonard J. Vander Zee is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.



Pride makes us artificial
and humility makes us real.

—THOMAS MERTON

What's a Christian to Do?

OPINION



Humans made up the rules about separating countries.

WHEN GOD CREATED THE EARTH and all that was therein, he did not place any border lines separating countries. Borders and boundaries were established by kings and queens and governments of all types.

I believe that God created the earth with the idea that people could live wherever they wanted to live. Where you were born could be anywhere on earth, and where you wanted to live could be your privilege and freedom to choose! But then humans made up the rules about separating countries. I personally have a hard time with the word “illegal” when talking about a person seeking a country to live in.

Today, governments around the globe make their own rules concerning who may and may not enter their countries and who may become a citizen. The rules pertaining to immigration vary from country to country. The United States of America is now going through a period of debate over how to deal with immigration; Canada and Mexico are involved in discussion on the immigration issue also.

Demonstrations by people who are on one side of the immigration issue are

met with protests by people who are on the opposing side of the issue.

Just what should a Christian do?

Scripture tells us that we should love the foreigners within our land (Deut. 10:19). Scripture also says that we should love our neighbor. And even if we consider those who are immigrants an enemy, Jesus had a back-up plan for that. He said, “Love your enemies.”

On the “citizen” side of the issue, we should participate by asking our elected officials to do everything they can to welcome immigrants to our land—and we can follow through by attending any meetings the elected officials call to have dialogue about immigration. Let them know how you feel!

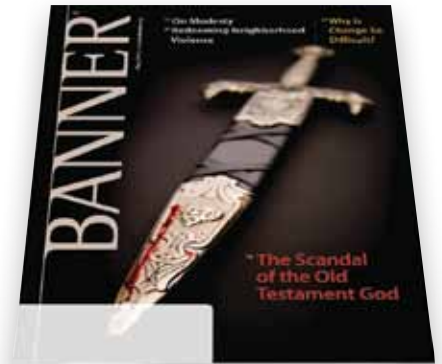
On the “Christian” side of the issue, we should pray for immigrants in their quest to become citizens of our land.

Get to know some people who want to become citizens. It may be your server at a restaurant or the person bussing your table or the person giving you some water to drink. You may even want to try speaking his or her language to become friendly. This friendliness can also be carried into the workplace. I have seen the joy on the faces of immigrants who have become citizens. It is as though they are born again!

Being kind should be a way of life for everyone. ■



Dean Koldenhoven is a former mayor of Palos Heights, Ill. He attends Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church.



Health Care

It strikes me as a bit ironic that two men (Henry Holstege and Bob Ritsema) who made a living teaching students whose parents did not feel government-run education was acceptable now want to turn our health care over to this same government (“Health Care: A Moral Imperative,” March 2014). [Their article makes] no reference to one of the biggest controversies of the Affordable Care Act: the requirement of employers to provide contraceptive coverage to employees regardless of their religious beliefs. To ignore this aspect of the ACA in a magazine funded and published by the Christian Reformed Church is disturbing.

—Gary J. Tenpas
Brookfield, Wis.

Where Have They Gone?

Coincidentally, on the same day I read “Where Have They Gone?” (March 2014) I saw a newly published survey of more than 4,500 respondents conducted by the nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute indicating that “nearly one-third of millennials who left childhood religion cite negative church teachings about gay and lesbian people as an important factor.” Clearly, this issue is one that is important to the younger generation. As a fellow

LETTERS

millennial, I keep holding out hope that the church will fully engage with this topic and explore what it means to actively engage in ministry to the growing segment of the population that either identifies as gay or has a relationship (friend, family, classmate, coworker) with someone who identifies as such.

—*Lisa Thomson*
Frankfort, Ill.

While I can hurt for you and weep with you (“Where Have They Gone?”) I cannot agree with you. I am holding to the position that homosexuality is a sin. However, it is no worse sin than a man who leaves his family for another woman. No worse sin than the abuse of a drunken parent toward their child. No worse sin than gossip, lying, pornography, or hypocrisy.

You raise a very good question: “Isn’t it time for the church to welcome back its gay sons and daughters, along with their spouses and children?” I want to welcome you and your family and I want to minister to you, so I would humbly ask you, “How would that look? What do you envision would be the appropriate response of the church?”

—*Erica Boerman*
Zeeland, Mich.

Is the CRC so absolutely certain of its perspective that tellers of inconvenient truths find it necessary to hide behind the cloak of anonymity? (“Where Have They Gone?”). The writer asks, “Isn’t it time for the church to welcome back its gay sons and daughters?” I only hope the *kairos* moment has not passed.

—*Bill Lenters*
Chicago, Ill.

Personalized Medicine

As a Christian working as a genetic counselor (for information on genetic counsel-

ing, visit nsgc.org), I read with great interest the article “Personalized Medicine” (March 2014).

Genomic medicine is a rapidly advancing field with strong ethical/moral implications. These advances will, in one way or another, impact all of us at some point. With this developing knowledge comes great responsibility. But rather than shy away from this responsibility or make assumptions based on fearful ignorance, I encourage Christians, particularly young people, to learn more about genetics in order that Christians may have a stronger presence in this field and add to the discussion in a meaningful way.

—*Mary Post*
Midlothian, Ill.

Guns and Christians

The article “Should Christians Carry?” (Feb. 2014) points out to me the capacity for human beings to rationalize almost anything. Even more bizarre, the Bible is used to justify deeply held beliefs about firearms and culture.

If you carry a gun, or keep one in your home, the chances you will use it become more and more likely. I really hope the author doesn’t release a bullet accidentally into a dear friend or family member someday, or that they use it on him. Although Americans may fear the random stranger or the potential street thug more than friends or family, that fear is misplaced. Statistically, the threat of being killed is much greater from someone who is welcome in your home than from an unwanted intruder.

—*Henry Lunshof*
Smithville, Ontario

Not all killing is murder (“Should Christians Carry?” Feb. 2014). Also, not all

self-defense is violence. We need to understand that people who use self-defense even with a gun or knife may be saying to evil, “No farther; my family is worth saving.”

—*Thomas Martinie*
Hudsonville, Mich.

A major fallacy propagated by the National Rifle Association (NRA) is that humanity can be divided simply into “good guys” and “bad guys” (“Should Christians Carry?”). The good guys must be armed to counter the actions of the bad guys with guns. However, all too often a bad guy is a first offender with a gun.

Here’s an opportunity for the church and the denomination to contribute to a public policy life-or-death dialogue that currently generates more heat than light. God help us if we allow this to become another conservative versus liberal fracas.

—*Gerrit L. DenHartog*
Walker, Mich.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Correction



This is a photo of Dave Gifford, author of “IMHO: On Board with the 90 Percent” (May 2014). We’re sorry that we printed the wrong photo with his article last month.

NEWS

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GAYLA R. POSTMA

Rev. Darren Roorda

Ontario Pastor Named New Canadian Ministries Director

Pastor, husband, father, environmental scientist—now Darren Roorda can add to that list Canadian Ministries Director of the Christian Reformed Church.

In recommending Roorda to the denomination's Board of Trustees, the search committee noted that Roorda has a passion for ministry and partnership with the local church and also an ability to cultivate and nurture a shared vision for the mission of the denomination, especially in the Canadian context.

Roorda's appointment comes at a time when the Canada Corporation half of the board is taking an increased role in determining how denominational ministries in Canada are carried out.

"I love the fact that our church is binational," Roorda told the Board

of Trustees (BOT) in an interview. "We have a long history of one side of the border helping and assisting and learning from the other side. [I'm also] open to the idea of strengthening the capacity of the Canadian CRC for a little more independence and [finding out] what that might look like. How we do ministry and mission always needs contextualization."

Roorda said that even though his new role is an administrative position, he sees it as a pastoral role. "I want to be a pastoral person who listens well when I present to classes and work with churches," he told the BOT. "It is a posture that is needed now within the local church."

Roorda is currently a senior pastor at Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario. Before that he served at Bellevue (Wash.) CRC.

He came to ordained ministry after initially working as an environmental scientist.

Roorda, 45, and his wife, Beverley, have three daughters.

Roorda's appointment must be ratified by Synod 2014, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC.

"I sense the clear call of God to this position," Roorda said. "I promise to be faithful to it, whether it means pain and hardship or delight and joy."

—Gayla R. Postma



Rev. James Petersen and his daughter Rev. Heidi De Jonge after De Jonge preached at Petersen's installation service.

Installations a Family Affair

It is not entirely uncommon to find several pastors in one family. And then there's Rev. Tim and Rev. Heidi De Jonge, both Christian Reformed pastors. Both have also led an installation service for their father, most recently in March, when Heidi led the service for her dad, Rev. James Petersen, at Morrison (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church.

"Twenty years ago, on March 5, 1994, my dad first asked me if I had ever thought of being a pastor," said Heidi. "At that time, I had never thought of it, as I had never seen it! At that time, no women were ordained in the CRC. Now here we are, 20 years after that conversation, me serving in my second church and my dad being installed in his seventh. I am so grateful for God's faithfulness and for how he has used my dad to encourage me, and me to encourage my dad."

Heidi is currently the pastor of Westside Fellowship CRC in Kingston, Ontario.

Petersen preached at his daughter's ordination at Faith CRC (Holland, Mich.) and at her installation at Westside, while Tim's father, Rev. Philip De Jonge, preached at his son's ordination at Faith CRC.

Tim then preached at his dad's installation at Seymour CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.). Not to neglect a connection, Philip De Jonge also preached at Heidi's installation at Harderwyk Ministries (Holland, Mich.), a church he himself had pastored in the early 1980s. Tim and Heidi also both have grandfathers who were pastors.

—Melissa Holtrop

Washington Church Responds to Oso Landslide

When a landslide devastated the town of Oso, Wash., on March 22, the congregation of Sumas (Wash.) Christian Reformed Church responded with compassion in the form of household essentials, gas cards, and offerings toward funeral costs.

Although Sumas is located 80 miles from where the landslide occurred, church members cared for those affected by the disaster.

Rev. Mark VanDyke said, "For quite some time I have been praying that God would give our church an opportunity to serve those in need, and the passion, energy, and follow-through to provide such aid. God answered that prayer by inspiring some hard-working people who took care of the planning and logistical aspects of our donation to Oso."

Dale and Audrey Snapper, members of Sumas CRC and Red Cross volunteers, helped place victims in shelters. "This has been a tough, emotional, but very rewarding assignment. We thank God that we could be a part of it, at the same time thanking the locals for allowing us to help," said Dale.

Snapper told the congregation that the landslide victims had plenty of food. The greater need was for paper towels, dish soap, and toiletries. This motivated church member Leea Heeringa to conduct a clothing and toiletries drive. People from the church immediately responded and within a few days had filled a 14-foot U-Haul with clothing and toiletries.

The landslide caused numerous road closures, forcing people from Oso and nearby towns to drive extra miles to get into town. A young Sumas member, Melissa, responded to the problem of extra gas costs by asking

for donations from customers at the gas station in Sumas where she works, raising \$570 in one weekend. This money was converted into gas gift cards for victims burdened by extra driving.

On Good Friday, the congregation took an offering to support the Oso Community Chapel Funeral Fund, which assisted victims who had lost loved ones in the landslide with



Dale and Audrey Snapper did relief work in Oso and surrounding communities devastated by the March 22 landslide.

impending funeral and burial costs.

"It has been great to see God using his people as instruments of peace," said VanDyke. "Many in our church have gotten excited about serving the Lord by giving to the people of Oso."

—Amy Toornstra

NEWS

Infant Dedication Issue Raised in British Columbia

At a recent meeting of Classis British Columbia South-East, a regional group of churches, it was noted that several congregations are offering infant dedications, contrary to Christian Reformed Church polity.

Over the years, synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) has addressed the issue of infant dedication several times. On every occasion it has affirmed the practice of infant baptism as taught in the Reformed confessions and outlined in the Church Order. Synod has asked churches to refrain from performing infant dedications in public worship services and find other ways to celebrate the birth or adoption of those children.

Most recently Synod 2011 expressed the importance of a “faithful, encouraging, pastoral response” to parents who do not present their children for infant



baptism, saying that “teaching on the subject offers a rich opportunity to promote greater biblical understanding.” Synod also raised concerns that the ritual of infant dedication may cause confusion

about the meaning and purpose of baptism. The recommendations of Synod 2011 were again affirmed by Synod 2012.

Gateway CRC in Abbotsford raised the issue at the classis

meeting after a church newsletter printed a notice of a dedication performed at nearby New Life CRC.

“It seems to us that it would ultimately be reasonable to expect that New Life either conform its practice and policy to our Reformed confessions and the decision of synod, or follow the process provided by the Church Order in challenging a decision of synod,” Gateway said in its submission to the classis.

That process consists of sending an overture requesting that synod change its decision, while proving that there are sufficient and new grounds to reconsider the matter. Rev. Henry DeMoor, an expert on CRC church polity, noted that pastors, elders, and deacons sign the Covenant of Officebearers when they take office, signaling their affirmation of the Reformed confessions and

NOTEWORTHY

First Christian Reformed Church of Sheboygan, Wisc., recently celebrated its 125th anniversary.

Kuyper College in Grand Rapids, Mich., celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Rev. Peter Hofman, a CRC chaplain for the U.S. Army stationed in Fort Bragg, N.C., recently earned his Special Forces tab. In 2009, Hofman earned his Ranger tab, making him the only chaplain in the history of the U.S. Army to earn both.

Bev Thomas, a member of Wallaceburg (Ontario) CRC, has been selected to participate in the Special Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, in July. She will compete in five-pin bowling.

The girls’ basketball team of **Edmonton (Alberta) Christian High School** won the provincial championship.

Rev. Mark Stephenson was awarded the Christian Service Award by the Bethesda Lutheran Communities Directors for his work serving and helping the spiritual lives of those with disabilities.

—Banner correspondents

Please visit thebanner.org for all these stories.



Edmonton Christian High School girls’ basketball champions.

committing to communicate any differences of belief through those proper procedures.

New Life CRC has never communicated with synod on the matter of infant dedications, yet it offers them. Eric Van Egmond is the chairperson of New Life's board of elders. "New Life established itself over 27 years ago as a community outreach church, and as such has welcomed members from a variety of denominational and theological backgrounds," he said. "Although New Life teaches, practices, and defends infant baptism, we acknowledge that children who are not baptized are no less children of the Lord and part of his covenant than those who are baptized. We recognize these children publicly and give parents the opportunity to dedicate them to the Lord."

Rev. Bert Slofstra, pastor of Gateway, the church that raised the issue, said that New Life has been doing infant dedications for a long time without being challenged. "We love them, but we need to be accountable to each other," he said. Classis agreed to send church visitors to New Life to discuss the issue but also noted that the practice of infant dedication extends to other churches in the region.

Paul Lomavatu, pastor of Cariboo Community CRC in Williams Lake, said that his church performs both baptisms and dedications because it was not a CRC church plant but began with a multid denominational group of Christians from the start. "We joined the CRC because of its kingdom and mis-

sional emphasis, and although we do teach about infant baptism, we leave the choice to the parents," he said. He also explained that a good number of First Nations people attend Cariboo CRC. "We are sensitive to their history with the Roman Catholic Church . . . and some continue to have a negative view of infant baptism," he said.

In Abbotsford, Lee Hollaar is a member and former council member of Hillside CRC, where infant dedications are performed along with baptisms, based on parental preference. "Hillside values the richness of the CRC's history, but we do not force what our tradition has deemed to be the only appropriate response, which others may not embrace," he said. "Our church believes that sometimes we need to move beyond the rigidity of doctrine to see how God is moving in the world today. We want to meet people where they're at, just as God does, and find a way to enfold them into the body."

Not everyone sees it that way. Dan Meyer briefly served as an interim pastor at Hillside but left the church partly over this issue. "I am all for being relevant and flexible, but I find doing both dedication and baptism to be confusing for people and at odds with the Reformed theological distinctives," he said. "The greater issue, however, is the church's unwillingness to submit to the greater body and its clearly defined polity."

—Tracey Yan

California Church Teaches Bible Literacy

When members of CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church in Chino, Calif., realized how many people lacked a basic knowledge of the Bible, they decided to help remedy that problem by opening CrossPoint Bible Institute last fall.

"The mission of the institute is to present the Word of God in its fullness, which would then lead us, as disciples, to acts of service," said Bryan Vander Tuig, a pastor at CrossPoint CRC and one of the teachers at the institute.

"We live in a time of great Bible illiteracy," added Danell Czarnecki, the church's director of ministries. "The institute hopes to give those who attend a bigger and deeper understanding of Scripture."

The three-year, non-accredited program covers the Old and New Testaments, spiritual disciplines and Reformed distinctives, and ministry leadership as well as outreach skills. Thirty-seven people completed the first year of the program.

"It has been a great joy to see how God has used the institute, both in our church and in the broader community . . . and to watch both long-time and new believers devour God's Word," Vander Tuig said.

Mark Vanderzee is one of the students. "My participation in the Bible institute has renewed my passion for the Word of God, deepened my love for our patient and faithful Father, and inspired me to continue to serve him in furthering his kingdom here on earth," he said.

Fellow classmate Ken Czarnecki agreed. "Attending the Bible Institute has been a great experience. Walking through the Old Testament book by book helped link the greatness of God's story in new and exciting ways."

Courses at the institute will begin again in the fall.

—Tracey Yan

Students of CrossPoint Bible Institute mark the end of their first year of classes.



NEWS

What If?

- What if the Board of Trustees were the only body to receive specific delegated authority from synod, with other agency boards and ministry councils receiving its designated authority through that Board of Trustees?
- What if a council of delegates from every classis met annually between synods and elected a group of 12 persons (six Canadians and six Americans) to form an executive group to meet more frequently to “provide more nimble support and guidance to an executive team led by the executive director?”
- What if agency boards remained as registered charity boards for their external functioning but were able to align within a classically based Board of Trustees?
- What if we formed a nominating committee that would identify more persons to serve at various levels of the church?
- What if some or all agency boards became advisory councils?

Those are the types of questions that the Task Force to Review Structure and Culture wants the Christian Reformed Church to grapple with over the coming year.

The task force was formed in 2011 by synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) following the resignation of the executive director and the director of denominational ministries. Synod mandated the task force to recommend short-, medium-, and long-term measures that would improve the culture, structure, and leadership of the CRC.



During the first two years of its mandate, the task force developed new position descriptions for senior leadership positions, including that of executive director, and identified ways to cultivate the binational character of the CRC. It also received Synod 2013's endorsement for its “Five Streams” proposal as a way of aligning ministries that are working toward similar goals.

In its report to Synod 2014, the second-to-last year of its mandate, the task force examines the relationship between local church councils, classes, synod, the denomination's Board of Trustees, and the boards of the specific ministry agencies such as World Renew, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Back to God Ministries International. In particular, the task force looked at the dual authority and accountability that

has existed for more than two decades between those agency boards and the Board of Trustees, which, said the task force, “has at times led to confusion, duplication, suspicion, and tension.”

Already in its 2012 report, the task force noted, “The CRCNA operates largely as autonomous agencies and ministries—in part due to our history, culture, structure, and leadership—a ‘confederacy of nonprofits’ versus a ‘union of ministries.’” That has contributed, the task force observed, to conflicting interests between agency boards, agency directors, and central administration that has resulted in, among other things, a very complex organization with a culture of competition and division, underrepresented specialized ministries, funding distribution issues, difficulty in making timely decisions, and an

organization that may be too costly to maintain.

The task force identified the need to retain people's focused passion for specific ministries and to keep those ministries connected to local congregations and classes. It also noted the need for the denomination to respond nimbly to new ministry opportunities, along with clear accountability and the elimination of unnecessary dual accountability in the church's structure and a reduction of costs.

“In the course of our denominational history, we have sought to work through the polarity of centralization and decentralization. We have sought to honor the focused passions of people and ministries while also seeking to harness together resources and people for a unified mission.”

In its report to Synod 2014, the task force said that the church can continue with the current structure, maintaining the status quo. It could centralize authority by changing all agency boards to advisory councils and maintain the Board of Trustees as it currently exists. It noted that those two options—decentralization and centralization—have been part of the ongoing denominational conversation since 1990.

But the task force also asks, What if there is something in between those two poles? To that end, it would like the church to wrestle in the coming year with those “what if” questions.

The full report of the task force, including all those questions, is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2014*. Synod 2014 will be held in Pella, Iowa, in June.

—Gayla R. Postma

Maine Church Takes on Culture

For some folks at New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Bangor, Maine, Sunday school includes watching a little television. The class, led by interim pastor Jonathan Fischer, is studying movie and television clips and commercials alongside Scripture in order to grow in discernment and become aware of the messages that surround us daily.

Fischer, who writes and teaches the curriculum, came up with the idea for the course "Deep Roots: Culture and God's Word." "I enjoy picking apart commercials and movies and comparing the underlying ideas to Scripture," he said.

For example, Fischer took a tagline from a Sprint commercial, "I have the right to be unlimited," and set that alongside verses like

Philippians 3:11-13 and Romans 8:28-32. He then led a discussion around the idea of learning to be content no matter what the circumstances, rather than buying into the idea that one has the right to happiness. "Happiness is not bad, and unhappiness may be a sign of a problem," Fischer explains, "but happiness must never be the ultimate goal."

Fischer thinks it is important to look at media through the lens of Scripture in order to have the tools to discern countering world-views as opposed to just absorbing what we view. "It helps to know the culture in order to know how to introduce people to the culture of Jesus," he says.

The class has generated positive feedback from participants ranging from teens to adults. One



Jonathan Fischer leads a class on media and Scripture.

person, who felt bombarded by constant advertisements, appreciated being able to discuss and analyze them alongside Christians.

"The class has taught me to take the message a commercial is sending in perspective," said one

13-year-old. If it weren't for the class, she said, she "wouldn't think much about it."

—Callie Feyen

The Banner Earns Press Awards

The Banner brought home several awards from the Associated Church Press and the Evangelical Press Association.

Awards from ACP included the following:

Awards of Excellence

"Cyber Bullying: What Parents and Schools Can Do" by Ron De Boer

"Church History Highlights" by Lloyd Rang

Awards of Merit

"Grace in Times of Evil" by James Boldenow

"Tomorrow's Theology Today" by Edwin Walhout

Tuned In department, editor Kristy Quist

"Annual Ministry Report," designers Dean Heetderks, Pete Euwema, Frank Gutbrod

Honorable Mentions

Just for Kids department, designers Dean Heetderks, Pete Euwema, and Frank Gutbrod

Awards from the Evangelical Press Association included the following:

First Place

Just for Kids department, designers Dean Heetderks, Frank Gutbrod, and Pete Euwema

"Being Christian and Gay" by Merrill Nosler

Second Place

"Accepting the Gift" by Reggie Smith

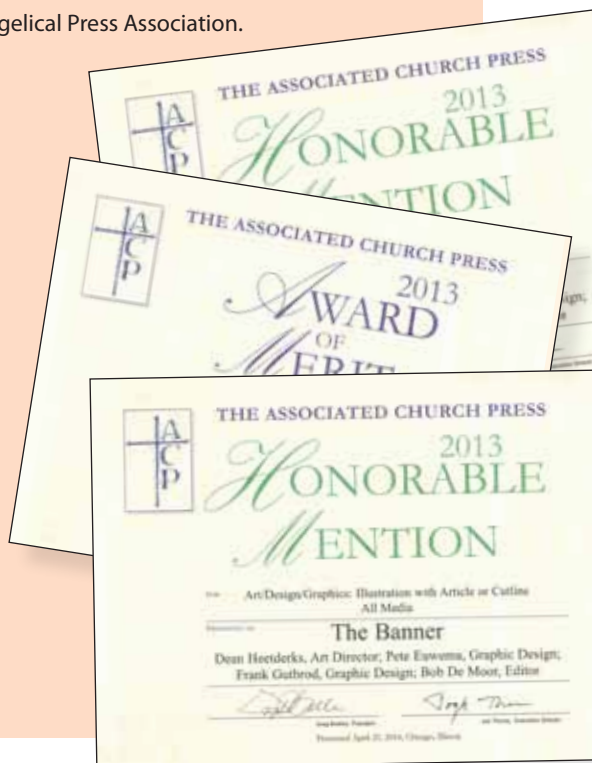
Third Place

Tuned In department, editor Kristy Quist

Fifth Place

"Don't Do It," Editorial by Bob Demoor

—Banner staff



Finding a Heart for Muslims

Learning, laughter, and even a few shouts of “Amen!” marked a recent presentation in Holland, Mich., as about 130 people attended an event about bringing the gospel to Muslims. The evening was hosted by Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church and organized by New Life Fellowship Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Three speakers shared different perspectives on how to bring the message of Christ to Muslims.



Hicham Chebab speaks at Central Avenue CRC.

SUSAN VANDEN BERG

Kamal Saleem of Koome Ministries and Hicham Chebab of Salam Christian Fellowship Church

(Lombard, Ill.) are both originally from Lebanon. Each related personal stories of a Muslim extremist background, including time with the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), and later conversion to Christianity. Chebab also touched on Middle Eastern history. “The Middle East is a mosaic—not a simple story,” said Chebab, who learned English reading comic books and Louis L’Amour novels.

The third speaker was Victor Atallah, director of Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), an international missionary organization that has partnered for many years with Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI).

Central Avenue CRC has been a long-time supporter of MERF, said senior pastor Chad Steenwyk. “For many years we’ve had a growing heart for bringing the gospel to Muslims.”

Atallah, who is from Cyprus, said, “Muslims are never won by attacking their religion or their prophet.” Instead, he said, what young Muslims are attracted to is hearing Scripture and learning of God’s self-sacrificing love found in the person of Jesus Christ.

When Christians reflect on political and religious movements

throughout history, “we must believe in a sovereign God and not become paranoid,” Atallah said. “God has all things in his hands.”

Dan Walcott, pastor of Bethany CRC in Holland, attended the event. Having spent time with Muslim students in Nigeria and Turkey, he appreciated Atallah’s comments about “loving people, walking alongside them, caring for them,” he said.

Steenwyk valued getting three different perspectives on how to bring Christ to Muslims. “In the end,” he said, “I thought there was great reason for hope in the power of the gospel of Christ, and the night seemed to crescendo in that way.”

—Susan Vanden Berg

Financial News from the Board of Trustees

At its meeting in May, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church approved a recommendation to Synod 2014 to increase denominational ministry shares by 1 percent, to \$336.12. Ministry shares are the monies collected per adult member for shared denominational ministries.

The board’s finance committee noted that the weaker Canadian dollar and discontent with the direction of *The Banner* are both having an impact on giving in the denomination. In 2013, Canadian churches remitted almost 70 percent of the requested amount; U.S. churches remitted 58.5 percent of the requested ministry shares.

The finance committee also noted that the reduction in the giving level included some of the largest churches in the denomination. Funds not received through ministry shares need to be raised by the individual fundraising staff of the agencies and institutions, significantly raising the administrative costs to these groups.

—Gayla R. Postma

New Board of Trustees officers, back row (l-r): Chris Van Spronsen, Scott Greenway, Ken Baker, Garry Sytsma; front row: Trevor Vanderveen, Kathy Vandergrift.



GAYLA R. POSTMA

SYNOD 2014

What to Watch for at Synod 2014

Even a cursory read through the *Agenda for Synod 2014* shows that the Christian Reformed Church is a denomination in transition: from administrative leadership to synod to the local church.

The most obvious sign of change is increasing collaboration between the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America. This year the synods of both churches will meet at Central College in Pella, Iowa, at the same time. The two denominations will conduct their business separately, but they will worship together and have at least one plenary session together.

Both synods will consider a joint resolution about the many ministries on which the two denominations already collaborate. This resolution states, in part, “we declare that the principle that guides [the CRC and RCA], and the intention that motivates us, is to ‘act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately.’”

At the denominational leadership level of the church, synod will bid farewell to Rev. Joel Boot, who has been the acting executive director for the past three years; it will interview Dr. Steven Timmermans to take up that task. Synod will also be asked to ratify the recent appointment of Rev.

Darren Roorda as the new director of Canadian ministries.

The face of synod continues to be in transition. For the first time, deacon advisors will bring their perspective to the deliberations at synod—in preparation for 2016 when synod will include deacon delegates.

However, for the first time since 1996, there will *not* be ethnic advisors at synod, since the number of delegates from an ethnic minority has reached 25.

Eight years after synod declared that women can be delegated to synod, that representation is less than 7 percent. None of this year’s female delegates are pastors, and none of them were appointed to be chairs or reporters of advisory committees.

A new addition to synod will be a variety of workshops on many aspects of ministry offered to delegates on Sunday afternoon.

The overtures (requests) that come from classes (regional groups of churches) and from individual congregations also show a church worried about how it perceives the church to be changing. Concerns include what biblical perspectives should be allowed in *The Banner* (the church’s official publication) and how the work of professors at Calvin College fits within the doctrine of the church. One classis wants synod to appoint a committee to look

into the theological views that consider the creation accounts in Genesis to be literary rather than historical, citing both articles in *The Banner* and the work of Calvin College professors.

The growth in the number of Korean congregations in the CRC has reached the point where Pacific Hanmi, the Korean classis, is asking to divide into two separate classes.

Some churches are concerned about the transitions happening at Christian Reformed World Missions that will see missionaries raising 90 percent of their support from sources outside of ministry shares. Christian Reformed Home Missions outlines how it is changing its approach to aiding congregations in the work of outreach and evangelism.

The committee that prepares sermons for reading services sees the need for its services declining as more and more sermons are available online.

The agenda for this year’s synod will also be a preview of what is on tap for Synod 2015 as both the Task Force to Review Structure and Culture and the Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon present major reports this year that will not require decisions by synod until next year.

Even as the church goes through changes and transitions, it also celebrates the history on

which it continues to build. Synod will note the 75th anniversary of Back to God Ministries International, the 40th anniversary of the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg, and the 20th anniversary of Calvin Theological Seminary’s Ph.D. program.

Synod 2014 will convene on June 13, in Pella, Iowa, following an evening worship service on June 12. *The Banner* will post articles on its website throughout synod and keep readers updated via Twitter and Facebook. You can also follow synod via webcast and press releases from CRC Communications, all of which can be accessed at the Synod 2014 website.

—Gayla R. Postma

BY SYLVIA C. KEESMAAT

PENTECOST AND FIRE

What is it about God and fire?
You may remember Moses and God
and the bush with the lights in it.
The bush on fire,
that never burns up.
Fire and not fire.
Burning and not consuming.
Out of the fire God issued to Moses
an invitation and command:
Go, lead my people out of their slavery.
And Moses began a journey to gather a people for God,
to lead them out of Egypt,
to lead them in the wilderness,
to feed them and comfort them.
Moses learned that you want to be careful with fire.
You never know what passion it might ignite in you,
what command it will give you,
what fire it will light in your belly.

Or you may remember God
and that pillar of fire shining forth in the night.
In the desert the Israelites wandered,
freed slaves with no direction home,
except for God's leading
in pillar of cloud by day
and pillar of fire by night.
Fire in the desert.
In the dry desert.
Fire.

Fire and not fire.
Burning and not consuming.
Protecting and leading them.
From slavery to freedom.
From despair to hope.
From anxiety to trust.
The wanderers in the wilderness learned
that you want to be careful with fire.
You never know where it might lead you.

You may also remember
that fire wasn't always for comfort.
Years later came the fires of invasion,
the torches of the enemy,
the smoldering ruins of a nation defeated.
There were some who said God was in this fire too.
The fire that was fire.
Burning and consuming.
The purging fire of judgment.
All they held dear destroyed;
thrown back again on their God.
No gold or silver,
fine clothes or shoes,
weapons or houses,
no carved gods or temples.
All that kept them from God, now destroyed by fire.
The Israelites learned that you want to be careful with fire.
It can purge far too quickly.
That ring of fire.

So what was God thinking
as the followers of Jesus sat in that upstairs room waiting?
What was God thinking, sending those tongues as of fire—
Fire and not fire.
Burning and not consuming.
Tongues of fire resting on each of them.
What did it mean?
Why send fire?
Why send *the Holy Spirit* in fire?

Was God thinking of that first moment with Moses,
of a command to go and bring freedom to the enslaved,
a command to gather a people
who would follow and worship him?
To feed that people in the desert
and teach them the ways of God?
Did the tongues of fire ignite a passion
to go and gather,
worship and follow,
feed and set free?
Is that what the Spirit is for?

Or was God thinking of that long road to freedom,
tirelessly giving light in the darkness,
providing protection from all that lurked in the night.
Were the tongues of fire
a sign of God's leading and protection,
no matter how difficult the road and how rocky the way?
Is that what the Spirit is for?

Or was God thinking of how fire had purged the people,
burned off their idolatry and sin,
left them raw and needy before their God?
Were the tongues of fire
a sign that God would purge
of all unfaithfulness?
Was the Spirit coming to make all things new?
Is that what the Spirit is for?

A passion was ignited at Pentecost,
a passion for the way of Jesus.
A promise was given at Pentecost,
a promise of comfort in the darkness,
a promise of hope in despair.
And a new thing began at Pentecost,
the beginning of painful renewal
in the image of God.

And so we remember the fire.
We remember God's passionate call to us.
We remember the steady flame
of comfort and hope God provides for us.
And we remember that no matter how painful our journey,
God is tenderly shaping us into something new. ■



Sylvia C. Keesmaat teaches biblical studies at the Toronto School of Theology. She is a member of Lindsay (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church.

FAQs

Outreach

Q In our church we spend most of our energy on internal programs. What is our role toward everyone else in our community—that is, nonmembers?

A We are certainly called to build one another up in Christ, to help one another reach maturity and growth in our lives of faith, to teach our children, to care for our older generations, to hear the preaching of the Word, and to administer and receive the sacraments. All these are vital for the health of any church community.

Yet is this all? I've heard it phrased this way: "If we as a church were to close our doors tomorrow, would anyone in our neighborhood notice?" If the answer is no, perhaps it's time to start thinking about that other community—your neighborhood and surrounding area. What is the church's responsibility toward them?

I would say it is to work for the betterment of the neighborhood, to help create a space in which life can flourish, to share and embody the gospel.

The way in which this happens is unique to each church and each neighborhood. Some notice a need for mentors for children and supply volunteers to spend time with children in this capacity. Others notice a shortage of healthy food options and open a food pantry or start a community garden. Or they identify a need to learn English as a second language and offer free classes.

Every church can find ways to walk alongside, be present with, and pour themselves out on behalf of nonmembers.

A body of water that doesn't flow anywhere eventually becomes stagnant. So too with a body of believers. If we are flowing outward, even as God pours his life and grace into us, we will be healthier, and so will our neighborhoods.

—Bryan Berghoef is a church planter in Washington, D.C., and is the author of *Pub Theology: Beer, Conversation, and God*.

Respect for all rights, including religious freedom, contributes to the good of all people.

Faith Formation

Q Am I too soft-skinned for ministry? I love my calling; it's a privilege to preach the Word every Sunday. But there is one gentleman who considers it his sacred trust to critique every sermon I preach. Usually I try to steel myself, but too often his words completely deflate me.

A Thirty years ago an elder told me that his calling was to serve as a "watchman on the walls of Zion." He was a lot like your critic. The saddest result of his self-appointed role was that it only served to build huge walls around his heart, and he was unteachable. He died an angry man.

I suspect you're not too soft-skinned; you're just like the rest of us. So this response really needs to address the church.

People of God, the church of Christ needs an army of encouragers—men and women who know how to be Barnabas. I have a mentor whose life motto is, "It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

I'll never forget teaching our youngest how to catch a baseball. Every time he dropped it, I'd point out what he'd done wrong. Finally in exasperation he blurted out, "Dad, tell me what I'm doing *right!*" Ministry wrings one's soul; it needs to be surrounded by loving encouragement.

Are you someone who is constantly critical? If so, you need to know that you have a spiritual issue to work on. A good place to start is a prayer discipline called "100 B'rakhot" (check Google).

—Syd Hielema is a professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

Justice

Q Does religious freedom trump other rights?

A Tensions are growing between the right to religious freedom and other human rights such as rights to equal treatment for women and nondiscrimination in public services. Some who are concerned about religious freedom treat it as a higher right than others; they press for religious freedom as the top priority when it is threatened, but are silent about other rights.

International human rights conventions are based on the indivisibility and integration of *all* rights, but the mechanisms to resolve disputes between rights claims are weak in most states and international bodies.

If all people are created by God and called to image God, then all human rights are important for Christians, not just religious freedom. Respect for all rights, including religious freedom, contributes to shalom and the good of all people. This is a different approach to rights and their counterpart responsibilities than personal self-fulfillment rooted in individualism.

If Christians advocate for the full range of rights, our concerns about religious freedom will seem less self-serving. That includes speaking up when religious freedom is misused to violate other rights, such as the use of religious freedom to justify forced early marriage of girls.

A shalom perspective can play an important role in mediating the tensions between different rights claims. Perhaps the Reformed branch of Christianity, with its emphasis on a holistic approach to life, has a gift to help resolve competing claims without a trump card.

—Kathy Vandergrift teaches public ethics to university students and advocates for the rights of children. ■

Poetry, Leisure, and Paying Attention

WHEN I WAS TEACHING college writing, I often assigned my students poems as part of writing exercises. I thought I was being innovative and creative, that I was adding a little beauty to my students' busy days.

More often than not, though, my students met these poems with boredom. "This sounds pretty," they would write for my exercises, "but when will I ever need a poem?"

This question continues to rattle those of us who, in agreement with Abraham Kuyper, see poetry as a distinct, vital participant in the order of creation. Words not only belong to God, but our ability to use them to create images, scenes, and stories echoes the mandate we received in Eden that was redeemed and renewed by Christ's death and resurrection. Poetry, like carpentry, preaching, and economics, clearly and simply belongs to God. So why aren't more of us reading it?

The reasons are endless: we are too busy, too connected to our digital devices, too addicted to the latest edition of *Candy Crush* to pick up a book of poetry. We walk past the poetry section at Barnes and Noble, and the titles are either scandalous or confusing. Or perhaps we've had one too many teachers—ahem—drill us about meter and meaning for us to associate poetry with anything but classrooms, assignments, and grades.

We are also, I think, deeply burdened by the daily needs that require so much of our attention. In the months preceding and following the birth of my son, I have spent my time doing things that feel entirely utilitarian: cook, clean, wipe, nurse, wipe again. It is an endless cycle of meeting immediate physical needs, and I barely have time to shower, let alone revisit the poems of Jane Kenyon, Shake-



What if leisure is as necessary as the dishes and diapers?

PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION BY RICK & BRENDA BEERHORST/FICKR

speare, or Naomi Shihab Nye. The demand that marks my days feels too heavy for the leisure of poetry, and I suspect that most of us, regardless of what our lives look like, feel the same way.

But what if leisure is as necessary as the dishes and diapers? What if, in order for me to be a good mother, I need to turn to poetry as a way of refreshing my weary self in the midst of this busy season?

For while it is true that the Scriptures are both restorative and instructive, it is also true that a good poem can refocus our vision, deepen our understanding, and even give us words to pray. I think of my friend Tania Runyan, a poet and mother whose newest book, *Second Sky*, strings together images and stories from her life and observations with the words

of Paul throughout the epistles. I think of these lines from her poem "The Road to Damascus":

*Can he save me again,
a woman too laggard to lose any hope,
too blind to collapse in a flash of light?*

These are words I need, both now and every day. And I hope that the next time I come across a book of poetry, I'll take the time to open its pages—to, as Mary Oliver writes, "pay attention / This is our endless and proper work." ■



Allison Backous Troy is a writer and educator who resides in Laramie, Wyo., with her husband and son. She writes for *Image* journal's Good

Letters blog at patheos.com/blog/goodletters.



More and more Sierra Leoneans are baptized every month.

Remarkable Growth

by Sarah Lin

Jerome (not his real name), had been a sorcerer for decades. Like many Sierra Leoneans, he revered the spirits his ancestors followed and practiced rituals passed down through the generations.

But last summer something changed. Jerome, at more than 60 years old, became a Christian.

The Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone (CRCSL) has many new believers like Jerome. In the past decade, the fledgling denomination has grown from 36 churches and 500 believers to more than 60 churches with as many as 5,500 people attending worship services. Almost every Sunday someone is baptized.



MB Jalloh is a prominent CRCSL leader.

This explosive growth is highly unusual in a predominantly Muslim society.

“Nationals describe the CRCSL as the fastest growing church, if not in Sierra Leone at least in the northern province,” said Rev. Istanifus Bahago. A missionary from the CRC of Nigeria (CRCN), Bahago is serving in Sierra Leone through a partnership between Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) and the CRCN.

CRWM has worked in Sierra Leone since the 1980s, remaining even during the country’s brutal civil war. Afterward, it linked with international partners to renew church planting efforts in the region.

Rev. John Phiri, a Zambian pastor, led the CRCSL through its initial growth spurt. Since then, CRWM has partnered with the CRCN to send two Nigerian missionaries, Rev. Bahago and Rev. Ezekiel Sudu, to help strengthen Sierra Leonean church leaders for outreach.

“The workers in the CRC of Sierra Leone are few, but they are committed,”

said Bahago. “Because of that, God is prospering the work. Almost weekly we receive calls to come and start churches in new areas.”

Growth does not come without challenges. Most of the believers are from Muslim backgrounds and are learning about salvation through grace for the first

World Missions at a Glance

For more than 125 years, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has partnered with people, churches, and organizations to extend Christ’s reign among the nations. Today CRWM has more than 200 missionaries serving in over 40 countries. Through partnerships, this work extends to more than 50 countries. They focus their efforts on

- multiplying believers and churches.
- equipping and connecting leaders.
- reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview.
- strengthening churches and organizations.

You add.
God multiplies.

“To see this reality unfolding is to witness a work of God’s Spirit that will last forever.”

time. It takes time and some mistakes for them to realize how faith in Christ offers a new view of work, family life, marriage, and other areas of life.

Low literacy levels mean that many people are unable to explore the Bible on their own. Even some church leaders are



Leadership training is greatly needed in the CRCSL.

unable to read. This makes it difficult for new believers to receive the spiritual nourishment they need.

Material poverty is also a challenge. It’s tempting, Bahago notes, for people “to see the church as a development agent that will provide food, shelter, and everything for free.” CRWM and its partners have to constantly evaluate whether their activities create dependency or encourage self-sustainability.

And yet, the CRC of Sierra Leone is growing stronger every day. More and more leaders are learning and applying biblical principles as a result of leadership training events. Women are growing in their faith and getting involved in the church through a women’s ministry pro-

gram. Boys are learning what it means to follow Christ by participating in a Boys’ Brigade (similar to Calvinist Cadet Corps).

As they grow in faith, people are embracing new opportunities for sharing their faith.

Edison Kamara, an evangelist, is one of the CRCSL’s promising leaders. Last fall he spent four months in Nigeria receiving training on evangelism and discipleship. When he returned, he led an evangelism training event in which he challenged everyone to go home and share the gospel with a nonbelieving neighbor or friend.

One participant brought a friend to church the following Sunday. As the friend listened to the sermon, he became convinced that Jesus had come for him. He decided to follow Jesus.

Sometimes, Bahago notes, people are reluctant to tell their friends or neighbors about Jesus, thinking that they will not accept what they hear. Once people step outside their comfort zone, however, they’re often encouraged and surprised by the results.

As believers mature in their faith, the denomination becomes more rooted too. Last year, the church celebrated a significant milestone—its first synod. Churches that once worked on their own are now collaborating with larger-scale initiatives to share the gospel in Sierra Leone.

Other denominations have noticed the CRCSL’s good work. Over the past year, the council of churches in Sierra Leone has asked the CRCSL to oversee two community projects—a justice program and a program to help vulnerable



A Sierra Leonean believer celebrates his recent baptism.

children return to school. These initiatives offer additional opportunities for reaching out.

No one knew how the church in Sierra Leone would survive during the country’s civil war, but the tremendous growth since the war testifies powerfully to God’s hand at work.

“When Muslim-background believers confess, ‘You are the Christ,’ Jesus’ promise to Peter, ‘I will build my Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it,’ remains as true as ever,” says Ron Geerlings, CRWM’s West Africa Regional Leader.

“To see this reality unfolding before us . . . is to witness a work of God’s Spirit that will last forever. For missionaries and a mission organization, on this side of eternity, that is as good as it gets.” ■



Sarah Lin is a writer for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Grace in Guatemala City

Pastor William lives in a neighborhood ruled by one of Latin America's most notorious gangs.

Like many Christians in the area, he used to avoid all contact with gang members. Then he realized that he had a responsibility to love even his neighborhood's most feared and despised members.

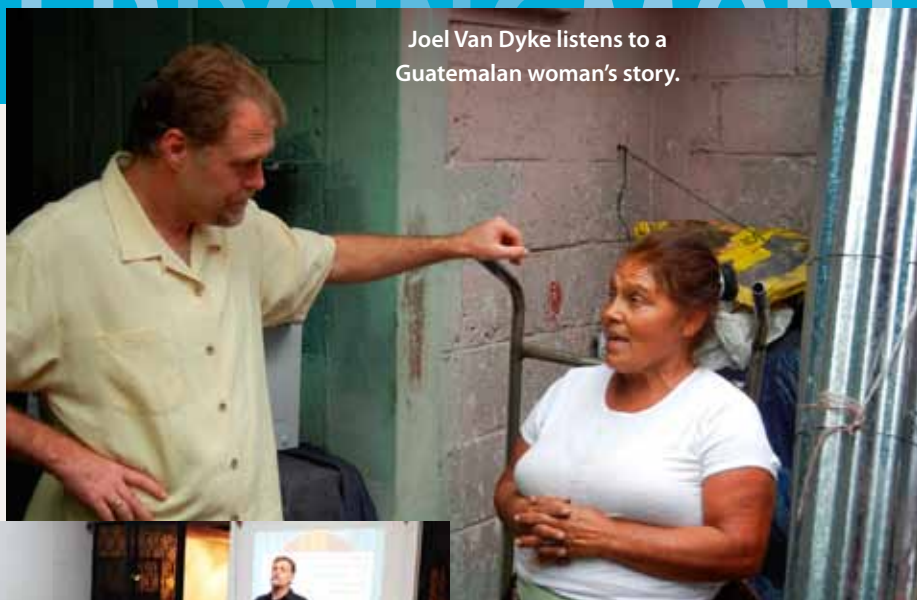
Over a year ago, Pastor William started making daily visits to a local prison to share Scripture with gang members. Fearing for his safety, the guards would only let him meet with inmates for an hour, and only from outside their cells.

But that wasn't enough for Pastor William. He started asking the guards for a chance to physically share space with gang members.

After numerous refusals, the guards finally agreed that he could visit with the gang members, one small group at a time. They urged him not to meet with the gang leader or the most violent gang members. Pastor William, however, would not be dissuaded.

When they finally met face-to-face, the gang leader asked to hug Pastor William. The guards warned that it could be a trick to kill him, but Pastor William went for it anyway. As they embraced, the gang leader whispered, "Pastor, thank you for coming into our prison. Thank you for coming consistently. Thank you for loving us when no one else will."

Pastor William is part of a growing network of Guatemalan Christian leaders seeking to spread God's love and grace



Joel Van Dyke listens to a Guatemalan woman's story.



Joel Van Dyke leads a training event for Guatemalan leaders.

in Guatemala City. Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) partners with the Center for Transforming Mission Guatemala (CTMG) to train and support these leaders in reaching out to people whom the church has traditionally ignored.

Begun in 2005, the center initially focused on equipping Guatemalan leaders to follow Jesus' example in serving the "least, last, and lost." The leaders worked with urban youth ensnared in poverty, gangs, prostitution, or other difficult situations.

As the training expanded to other leaders and countries, the center added a spiritual formation component.

CRWM missionary Joel Van Dyke has worked with CTMG since the beginning and has seen the challenges its members face.

"When you understand the implications of incarnational mission and begin to apply it in a broken, dysfunctional

community," he explained, "you're going to find that things happen that you're not prepared for. Once you get there, you're a mess unless you have a spirituality that can sustain the work."

This year CTMG initiated a third ministry focus: organizational capacity building. CTMG's network includes churches and nonprofit organizations that offer feeding programs, shelters, educational programs, and other ministries.

While these organizations have the vision and passion for ministry, they do not always have the necessary infrastructure for sustainability. CTMG's new training program will provide directors with tools for helping their organizations succeed.

"Transformation cannot occur outside of community," said Van Dyke. "What cities need is a group of people who come to a table committed, not to get something from the table but to put something on the table for the city's spiritual and social transformation."

Across Guatemala City, leaders like Pastor William are breathing grace into the lives of people typically cast aside—and they're receiving grace in return. Through the Holy Spirit's work, God's love and grace is beginning to transform neighborhoods renowned for violence. ■

—Sarah Lin, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

You add.
God multiplies.

Weary Student Finds Rest in Christ

Ruth (not her real name) is a university student in Asia. She had been unhappy for years.

Scarred by a long history of family challenges, Ruth wondered if she would ever find relief from suffering. She started bringing her questions to a teacher who seemed to have the peace she craved. What she heard changed her life.

Every year, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) sends out dozens of CRC members to teach in international public and Christian schools.

The students they teach are from local families or from expatriate families in the area for missionary work, business, or diplomatic reasons. Some students are from Christian families. Others have grown up following Islam or no religion at all. But through their teachers' words and actions, these students learn what it means to know and follow Jesus.

Ruth lives in a region where teachers are restricted from freely sharing their faith in the classroom. However, she could tell by her teacher's lifestyle that she believed in something greater than herself. Wanting to learn more, she started connecting with her teacher outside of school.

Soon Ruth started having intense dreams. In her first dream, she saw the skies open up and pour out so much light that she was forced to her knees. The second time, she dreamed she was asking her teacher, "What happened to the lamb?"

Ruth told her teacher about her dreams, listening carefully to her explanation of the Lamb who had given himself up. Intrigued, she started attending a fellowship group. Later, she bought a Bible.

Ruth's teacher watched her explore the truth for weeks. One evening she felt bold enough to tell Ruth that she had to decide whether she believed it.

Ruth spent the next few days thinking about their conversation. She read her



A CRWM volunteer with students. CRWM partners with many CRC members who teach in international schools.

Bible, did some research online, and continued to have spiritually related dreams. Then she hit a turning point—experiencing healing from chronic pain. This confirmed for her that the One she had heard and read about truly existed and cared for her.

On a fall night, Ruth committed her life to Jesus. Afterward she proclaimed, "Oh, I feel such a relief. I knew the decision was going to keep bothering me until I made it. I am so glad I did it now."

The young woman who rarely laughed now lets laughter flow freely from her mouth. "It doesn't really matter if I suffer in this life anymore," Ruth professed. "No matter what happens, someone will always be there."

It's for students like Ruth that CRC teachers commit to teaching overseas. They know the experience will not be without its challenges and adjustments. Yet the opportunity to share the gospel with a student who hasn't heard it is one they don't want to miss.

For a list of open teaching positions, visit crwm.org/teaching. ■

—Sarah Lin

Church at Prayer

- Pray that the CRC of Sierra Leone will have open doors to share the gospel in more communities.
- Pray that God will raise up more spiritually mature leaders within the CRC of Sierra Leone.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work mightily through teachers to bring students closer to Jesus.
- Pray that teachers will have the energy and creativity they need to serve students well.
- Pray that God will fill Guatemalan leaders with strength and wisdom to handle challenging ministry situations.
- Pray that Christians will be united in their commitment to serving Jesus in Guatemala City.

For a weekly email of prayer requests, sign up for CRWM's ePray at crwm.org/membership.

We Are the Story

We just printed a new pictorial church directory at Ridgewood Church, where I am a member. There is something about pictures that adds a lot to names. *Oh, that's who that is*, I think as I see a picture on page 3. On page 7 I notice someone I have been praying for. Page 12 reminds me of some kids who came to the front for the children's message.

It's a congregational family album, that directory is. It makes folks more real, draws them closer to my heart.

Romans 16 is something like that. It is a verbal family album with photos made of words. To some, I suppose, it is just a directory that is hopelessly out of date. Those people have all moved on. We do not know them at all.

But look again. The words trace the outlines of real people, real struggles, real faith, real ministry. We meet Phoebe, called a "servant," a "deacon" in some versions, but pictured by a word that is rendered "minister" when it is used of Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6).

We know Priscilla and Aquila (we think), but we do not know when they "risked their lives for" Paul and for the gospel. This picture shows something of the strength of their faith.

And there's Epenetus, who dared to be the first Christian in his community. That picture is worth a thousand words. And Mary. How many Marys are there? This is the sixth we know of, and all we know of her is that "she worked very hard." But that picture is a vivid one.

We really do not know Andronicus and Junias, but they endured imprisonment for their faith and were judged to be "outstanding among the apostles."

We move along, page after page filled with "photos" of people whose stories we do not know, but whose images are

engraved on our minds because they were carefully placed in this album and are described as loved or hard-working or "tested and approved" or with the lovely caption "in the Lord."

And there's Rufus. I wonder if he's the Rufus whose dad was commissioned to carry the cross (Mark 15:21). That's a picture worth pausing over. And a group shot of Asyncritus and Phlegon and Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, along with other saints whose names are not even recorded beneath the pictures.

There is a lot of inspiration in these "pictures." These are real people with real lives and real stories. Their "pictures" are here for a reason—they're not just credits at the end of a lengthy treatise. They are really the point of it all. They are flesh-and-blood people for whom "there is now no condemnation" because they are "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

They have joined the ranks of those who know they are "more than conquerors" (8:37). And they have offered their lives "as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (12:1). They are believers who had "the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had" (15:5). Their names, their

stories, their pictures remind us of their message. Our faith is made stronger, and we want to join the ranks of those who "work hard in the Lord" (16:12).

It is a kind of church directory, this chapter is. And the pages, which we usually call verses, bring us back to our calling to embody the Word and to proclaim the Word to the very ends of the earth. That was their mission, and ours: to live and speak and leave stories behind that proclaim, "Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ . . . to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen" (16:25-27). ■



These are real people with real lives and real stories.



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

OUT AND ABOUT

Case Manager Helps After High River Flood

Linda Clarke's home in High River, Alberta, suffered extensive damage last June when the High River overflowed, flooding much of the town.

She was uncertain what to do to get her life back to normal. She wasn't alone.

Because of the extent of the damage and the independent nature of Alberta residents, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) employed Sarah Bruinsma, a senior case manager, as part of its response.

This was the first time World Renew used a case manager in a North American disaster.

As with other DRS projects, World Renew sent a team of volunteers to High River to go door-to-door assessing unmet needs.

They found that while many people qualified for provincial assistance, insurance, or local social services, they weren't sure how to access them. The case manager was added to help address this issue.



Nellie and Jack Admiraal did Needs Assessment surveys as part of their disaster relief work in High River, Alberta.

One of Bruinsma's main tasks is to talk to people about their financial situation, find out what they have received from government assistance and insurance, and then identify gaps.

Bruinsma is also a survivor of the High River flood. A lifetime resident of High River, Bruinsma's house was so severely

damaged that she couldn't return home until this past February—eight months after the disaster.

Because of her experience, she is able to empathize and help people get assistance.

That's what happened with Linda Clarke. After stopping in at the High River Renewal office for help, she was connected to Bruinsma, who went over Clarke's case.

"Sarah was very good," said Clarke. "She really went the extra mile."

A few weeks later, World Renew volunteers went to Clarke's home and put down flooring, reinforced floor joists, constructed a new garage door, and painted.

"They were really just wonderful. It didn't seem to matter what I needed; they were there," Clarke recalled. ■

—by *Kristen deRoo VanderBerg*,
World Renew

Reformed Collaborative at Work

After Hurricane Sandy hit Union Beach, N.J., Elena spent time helping her neighbors. When she finally checked her own home, she found it was in much worse shape than she'd thought.

"The studs in the basement were basically waving in the breeze," said Jim Homan, who led a World Renew group mission trip from his church, Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church, to help in reconstruction. "Mold was setting in."

Homan was part of an effort between the CRC and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) called the Reformed Collaborative.

The collaborative includes work the denominations are doing in disability concerns, a health care cooperative, and disaster relief.



CRC and RCA members joined to provide disaster relief in New Jersey.

After Synod 2013, World Renew officially became the RCA's primary partner in domestic disaster response. The denominations also partner in

international disaster response and development.

This agreement allows people like Elena and others impacted by Hurricane Sandy to be reached more effectively.

More than 595 volunteers came to serve in New Jersey with World Renew, some from CRC churches and others from the RCA.

A nine-member team from Ann Arbor CRC spent a week putting up drywall, replacing a side of Elena's home, and installing insulation and windows.

When they left, volunteers from Westwood RCA in Muskegon, Mich., took care of more drywall. After a second week of work, the repairs were nearly complete. ■

—by *Brian Clark*

Calvin Seminary Celebrates *Dies Natalis*

Calvin Theological Seminary has celebrated *Dies Natalis* (Latin for “birthday”) every March since the Depression.

Even though the seminary is 138 years old, this celebration goes back about 80 years, beginning in the Depression when seminary professors and their wives hosted a meal for the students.

Ovide Bighetty Dies

Ovide Joseph Bighetty, a Cree artist whose series of paintings continues its tour across Canada, died in late March.

The tour, featuring his series of paintings called “Kisemanito Pakitinasuwīn—The Creator’s Sacrifice,” was organized in 2011 by the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee of the Christian Reformed Church.

Bighetty, 44, died peacefully on March 20 at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. His wife, Linda, and other members of his family were at his side.

Bighetty’s connection to the CRC started in 1994 when he visited the denomination’s Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

As this became an annual event, the students wanted to show their gratitude by presenting a brief program of entertainment—music, skits, and monologues, said seminary Elaine May.

Fast-forward to 2014, and *Dies Natalis* brought faculty and students together for a meal and laughter, even though the dinner was replaced by breakfast. Classes were canceled for the day.

Connie Mulder, advancement assistant, remembers helping her mother, Claire Kromminga, wife of President Emeritus John Kromminga, make table favors in the late 1950s.

Churches Growing in South Texas

New Life CRC is one of several churches being planted or strengthened with the help of Christian Reformed Home Missions in southern Texas.

Located in places like El Paso and Austin along with a network of Korean churches, these ministries are learning



Professor John Bolt sings during *Dies Natalis*.

“My mom and I spent hours putting sticks on cloth bags that mimicked the old Dutch ‘offering bags,’” she said.

May said that this year’s event was tied to “Called to Serve,” the inauguration theme of seminary president Jul Medenblik.

“We felt the origins of the event tied in nicely with the seminary’s renewed focus ‘Called to Serve,’ and we are grateful for the ways faculty, staff, and administration serve us.” ■

—Jinny De Jong, *Calvin Theological Seminary*

from the past as a way to honor the church planters who came before.

Pastor Andy Sytsma of New Life in Spring, Texas, summarized three lessons they are following.

The first, he says, is keeping evangelism as key. The second is continual training for pas-

tors, elders, and deacons. The third is recognizing that there is power in community.

Church planters and pastors meet regularly to share ideas, offer financial support, and pray together. ■

—Rachel Gabrielse,
Christian Reformed Home Missions



Young members of New Life CRC.

You add.
God multiplies.

Singing Leads to Hope Network

Herb Start always loved singing when he attended Calvin College, performing in choirs and being named outstanding senior vocalist.

But Start's longest performance was in a different field. Hope Network, the organization he directed for 37 years, has opened doors for thousands of persons with developmental disabilities. And it serves as a model for similar agencies from coast to coast.

Start's career in health care administration began in a surprising way after he served in the Army and

started teaching at South Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Performing as a soloist with his students during a presentation of "The Seven Last Words of Christ," he caught the attention of a member of the audience, Dr. Gelmer Van Noord, head of what is now Pine Rest Christian Hospital.

Van Noord saw something in Start and asked him to switch careers—from teaching to health care for people with developmental disabilities.

Start was tasked to develop an "activity schedule" for every patient. He went for training and began structuring occupational and music therapy for patients.

The effort grew quickly. Hope Network became an independent organization in 1983.

Start retired in 2000 but keeps an active schedule as a consultant, a board member, and a singer.

"Really, I've enjoyed every minute of what God brought my way. In the same day, I got to spend time with a child with Down syndrome and interact with a state representative [on] the politics of health and disability issues," he said. ■

—Michael Van Denend, Calvin College



Herb Start



Gustav is baptized.

Taking Christ's Love to the Streets

Back to God Ministries International's Portuguese leader Rev. Hernandes Lopes preached a message on revival that transformed Leandro, a 22-year-old medical student in São Paulo, Brazil.

Leandro was so inspired that he led a group of young people to take to the streets to share the gospel with prostitutes, drug dealers, and others.

One night Leandro found Gustav sitting in the square in torment. Leandro asked permission to share God's love. "Gustav was startled, but he allowed us to sing."

Leandro prayed with him. "God's presence was extremely strong over us. Gustav gave his life to Christ," Leandro said.

Gustav started crying and told Leandro that he had left home with the intention of taking his life that night.

Leandro's group disciplined Gustav, who was baptized a few weeks later.

"Our prayer is that young people everywhere would be willing to give their lives for love of Jesus, to look around them and manifest the kingdom of God in our cities and neighborhoods," says Leandro. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International

Find longer versions of
many of these stories
online at
thebanner.org/together.

Fun Things to Read and Make This Summer

If you have books and crafts, you'll never be bored! Here are some fun things to read—and make—this summer.

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures

by Kate DiCamillo

When Flora's neighbor vacuums up a squirrel by mistake, nobody is ready for what happens next. Flora's quick thinking brings the squirrel back to life, but she soon notices that he's not your ordinary animal. He seems to be developing superpowers! You'll love this fun, quirky book by the author of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *The Tale of Despereaux*, and *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. (Candlewick Press)

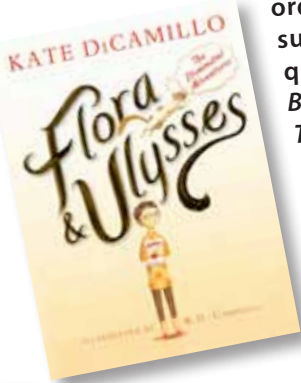
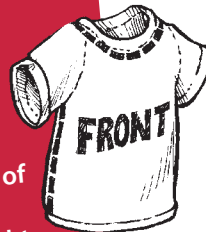


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

T-shirt Superhero Cape

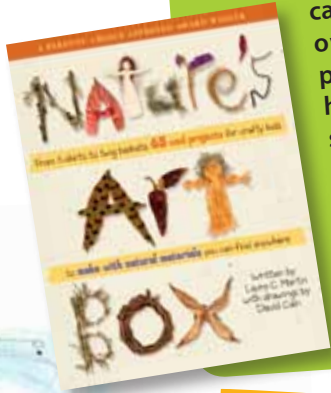
After you read *Flora and Ulysses*, make yourself a cape and pretend you're a hero like Ulysses! It's really easy—here's how to do it:

- Ask an adult for a really big T-shirt that they don't want anymore. (A plain shirt with no words or pictures on it works best.)
- Lay the shirt front side down on a table.
- Using scissors that can cut cloth, cut from the bottom of the left side of the shirt up to the left shoulder. (You might need help from an adult.)
- Turn the shirt over and cut around the neck of the shirt to the right shoulder.
- Turn the shirt over again and cut from the right shoulder down to the bottom of the right side.
- If you want to decorate your cape, draw on your very own superhero logo with markers. (Put newspaper under the shirt as you work so the markers don't bleed through to your table.)
- Put on your cape. Then go do some good deeds!



Nature's Art Box

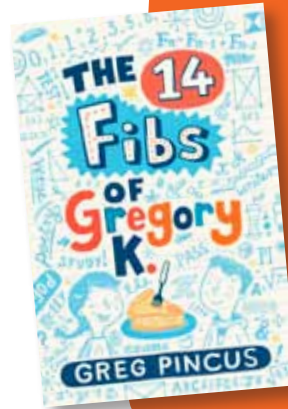
If you enjoy making crafts, you don't need to buy a lot of expensive art supplies—you can find what you need in your own backyard or in a nearby park. This book will show you how to make cool stuff with sticks, stones, seeds, leaves, and other things from nature. You'll find easy instructions for 65 projects—from a tiny pinecone-roof cottage to shell candles to clay fossils and much more! (Storey Publishing)



The 14 Fibs of Gregory K.

by Greg Pincus

Eleven-year-old Gregory is flunking math class. His parents think he loves math. What they don't know—but his best friend, Kelly, does—is that Gregory is a writer. A really *good* writer. He's dying to go to Author's Camp in the summer with Kelly. But if he fails math, there's no way his parents will agree. When telling fibs gets Gregory into a tough spot, entering the dreaded City Math competition is the only way out. (Arthur A. Levine Books)



The LEGO Adventure Book

Volume 1: Cars, Castles, Dinosaurs & More!
Volume 2: Spaceships, Pirates, Dragons & More!

by Megan H. Rothrock

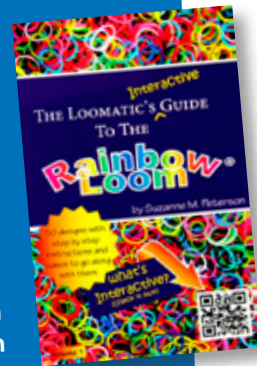
Got a big box of Legos lying around? Whether you like to make up your own projects or follow written instructions, these two volumes of *The Lego Adventure Book* will help your imagination soar! You'll find step-by-step directions for making 25 Lego models, plus pictures of 200 creations from some of the best Lego builders in the world. (No Starch Press)



The Loomatic's Interactive Guide to the Rainbow Loom

by Suzanne M. Peterson

If you're hooked on the Rainbow Loom, you'll love this book. Inside you'll find 50 designs with instructions for using the loom's colored rubber bands to make bracelets and more. Find helpful YouTube videos by using a smartphone or tablet to scan the QR code included with each set of instructions. (Hijinx)



Creature Bookmarks

These bookmarks are easy and fun to make! Use your imagination to make bookmarks that look like monsters, dragons, animals, or other creatures.

What You Need

- envelope, any size or color
- scissors
- scrapbooking paper or construction paper
- optional: wiggly eyes, feathers, or other items that are flat
- white school glue

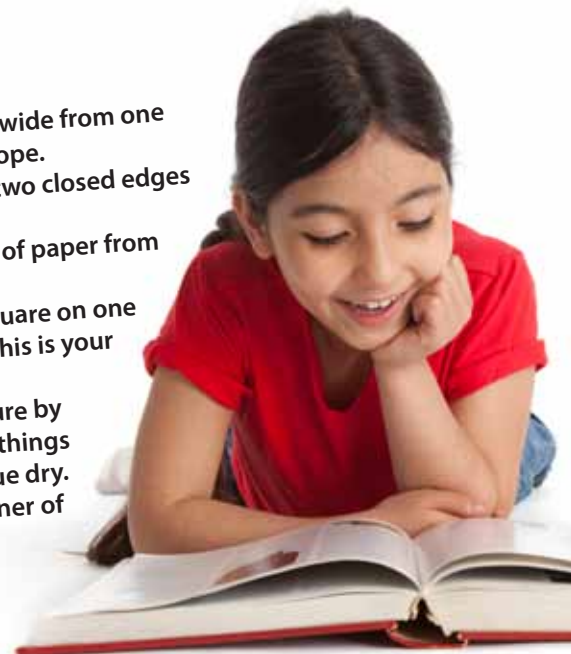
What You Do

- Step 1:** Cut a square about 2 inches (6 cm) wide from one of the bottom corners of the envelope.
- Step 2:** Now you have a little pocket with two closed edges and two open edges.
- Step 3:** With your scissors, cut ONE LAYER of paper from one closed edge to the other.
- Step 4:** Now you have a pocket that's a square on one side and a triangle on the other. This is your bookmark!
- Step 5:** Turn your bookmark into a creature by gluing eyes, ears, teeth, or other things onto the triangle side. Let the glue dry.
- Step 6:** Slide the bookmark over the corner of a book to save your place.



Sandy Swartzentruber is a freelance writer and a member of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Visit her blog at CraftLibrarian.com

for more great books and crafts.





How Evangelicalism Is Getting Its Reformed Groove Back

I GOT MY FIRST HINT that something Reformed was afoot at a major evangelical conference a few years back: a speaker was boosting an “all of life is redeemed” theology and flashed up a picture of Al Wolters’s book *Creation Regained*.

And 5,000 teenagers screamed in unison. Al Wolters, I realized, is a rock star.

Neo-Calvinism, let’s call it “world-reforming Christianity,” has gotten sexy again—and nobody seems more surprised than actual Calvinists. *The New York Times* told us in January 2014, not for the first time, that evangelicals are finding themselves in “the midst of a Calvinist revival.” But where Mark Oppenheimer’s *Times* article gives the usual picture of Calvinists—as depraved little Christians and very, very sinful—it misses one of the causal links that is essential for understanding why this world-affirming, world-reforming Calvinism is making a

big North American splash: its practical, public theology.

Practical Theology

You will notice I didn’t say its politics, which would be both too narrow and off base. Oppenheimer gets that part right: young evangelicals are overwhelmingly disillusioned with fractious partisan politics, more so in the U.S. than in Canada, which has dodged some of the more debased forms of the so-called “culture wars.” No, this Reformed Christianity is not nakedly political, partly because this sort of Calvinism teaches that politics is often downstream of culture, but partly also because the scale of political change, especially in the U.S., is dizzying and mystifying.

Times columnist David Brooks calls these young evangelicals “the Cynic Kids.” He writes that “the harsh events of the past decade may have produced not a youth revolt but a reversion to an empiricist mind-set.” These Cynic Kids, he says,

“don’t like the system—however, they are wary of other alternatives as well as dismissive of their ability to actually achieve the desired modifications. As such, the generation is very conservative in its appetite for change” and “deeply resistant to idealism. Rather, the Cynic Kids have embraced the policy revolution; they require hypotheses to be tested, substantiated, and then results replicated before they commit to any course of action.”

Entitled, in other words, they are not. Just when the world badly needs the affluent, educated young to risk everything on an audacious idealism, something beyond themselves, beyond fear and uncertainty, beyond recessions and terrorism, First World problems are getting deadly serious.

Young evangelicals badly need a Christian theology that makes sense of this orgy of brokenness they are inheriting without turning them cold and cynical. They need, to quote Bob Goudzwaard, “hope in troubled times.”

Enter world-reforming Calvinism—“neo-Calvinism,” some say for short—and its practical theologies. It lacks the triumphalism and the culture-conquering religious wars of the last few decades, fueled as it is by its frank Augustinian confessions of sin and brokenness. Like our postmodern blockbusters—*Game of Thrones*, *Breaking Bad*, pick your HBO/AMC prime time award-winner—this Calvinism is earnest about feeling the painful, terrifying wounds of ourselves and our world.

It doesn't offer escapism, it doesn't offer conquest, at least not by us mere mortals. It is unflinching in its encounter with the world's darkest places because it knows this is not the way it's supposed to be. Calvinism's practical theology answers the painful moral questions of the Cynic Kids while offering real evidence, real foretastes of hope for a better world. It is slow theology, working among the ruins—“proximate justice,” Steven Garber calls it—but it is resilient theology, theology manifest in outcomes, in malaria meds and clean water, in fair loans and growing businesses.

Public Impact

World-reforming Calvinism is finding its followers not firstly in doctrinal debate but through evidence-based practice. People are finding out about Calvin, about Kuyper and Bavinck, about Groen Van Prinsterer, and, yes, even Al Wolters (cue screams) by the *public impact* of their theology, not first by the ideas themselves. They see that slow, world-affirming, system-transforming impact and follow it back to its roots, where they find this unsuspecting cast of public theologians. In short, young evangelicals are arriving at neo-Calvinism by tasting its fruits and only later following it back through the root system.

Take a guy like Gary Haugen, president of the International Justice Mission. He opens his latest book, *The Locust Effect*, with a pure extract of terror and violence:

It was my first massacre site. Today the skulls are neatly stacked on shelves,

Young evangelicals are arriving at neo-Calvinism by tasting its fruits and only later following it back through the root system.

but when we first encountered them, they definitely were not. They were attached to bodies—most skeletal remains—in a massive mess of rotting human corpses in a small brick church in Rwanda.

Gary has been in the dark. He knows it is hard, damnably difficult, to see justice done, and he knows what it looks like when it's not. *The Locust Effect* is a powerful argument, cribbed straight from the pages of Abraham Kuyper in 1889: that wasting disease cannot be cured, no business grown, no right restored apart from a robust *simultaneous realization of norms*.

We cannot end poverty without ending violence. We cannot build business without addressing property rights. We must have not only personal virtue, but also public justice. Kuyper said, “we must courageously and openly acknowledge that the situation calls not only for the physician but most certainly for the architect as well.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pastor and martyr, gave it a more 20th-century spin: “We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”

Bold words, and ones Haugen had in the back of his mind when he wrote the following in *Foreign Affairs* in 2010:

Given even a small fraction of the time and money that have been devoted to fixing roads, improving health systems, providing clean water, and building schools in developing countries, they will begin to enable the poor to retain the benefits of such development assistance. On behalf of the billions of poor people in this world who are made small under the vast shadow of lawlessness, the time has come to construct a shelter of justice.

Public justice is political, but it's also more than that: it's the social, cultural, and religious virtue that makes the political possible. It is, in the words of Mike Gerson, the architect of PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), “the banality of goodness”—of small, repeated, habituated, ritual acts of long obedience.

And it's what Jamie Smith calls “loving faithful institutions” in his bracing manifesto in last fall's *Comment* magazine. He says young evangelicals are dabbling, experimenting with institutions because they see the lasting power of those social forms, both in the destruction they bring when systems behave badly, and in the renewal when systems are restored. “Institutions,” he says, “are ways to love our neighbors. Institutions are durable, concrete structures that—when functioning well—cultivate all of creation's potential toward what God desires—shalom, peace, goodness, justice, flourishing, delight.”

We who are already Reformed have a taste of that kind of good inheritance passed down in the structures of churches, of colleges, retirement homes, aid agencies, think tanks, and more. As it turns out, “they'll know we are Christians by our love” is just a good paraphrase of “they'll know we're Reformed by our institutions.” ■



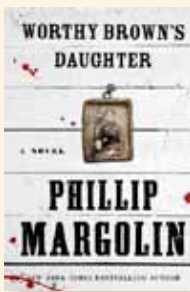
Robert Joustra is a member of First CRC, Hamilton, Ontario. He is assistant professor of international studies at Redeemer

University College, a fellow with *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, and a fellow at the Center for Public Justice.

Book Your Summer Vacation

Worthy Brown's Daughter

by Philip Margolin
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



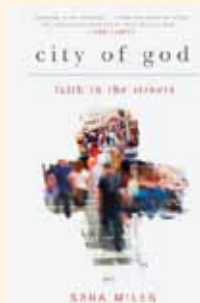
In 1860, recently widowed lawyer Matthew Penny arrives in Oregon. Worthy Brown, a slave, also moves to the new state with his owner, who has promised to free

Brown and his daughter, Roxanne. Worthy is finally emancipated, but not Roxanne. Based on a true story, this novel explores the complex moral choices made by Penny, Brown, and Roxanne, as well as each person's desire to make life-altering sacrifices. Margolin has created deeply moral characters living in a time when many people considered owning slaves their divine right and when vigilante justice often prevailed. (HarperCollins)

City of God: Faith in the Streets

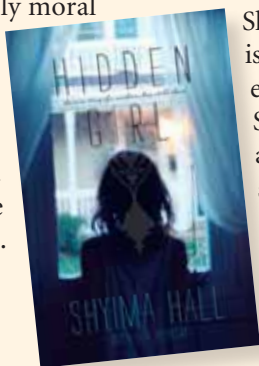
by Sara Miles
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

The "city of God" that Sara Miles writes about is a real city—a city of concrete, of streets and homes, hills and oceans. This book focuses on a very specific time of the liturgical year in San Francisco: Ash Wednesday 2012. On that day, Miles and members of other congregations in the Mission district took to the streets, offering to everyone the sign of the cross on their forehead. What Miles discovered is that everyone yearns to be touched and forgiven. This book will unsettle, challenge, and ultimately remind readers that God is alive in the cities of our world. (Jericho Books)



Hidden Girl: The True Story of a Modern-Day Child Slave

by Shyima Hall and Lisa Wysocky
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



Shyima was 8 years old in 1997 when her impoverished Egyptian parents sold her into domestic slavery. When she was brought illegally into the United States, she survived on one meal a day and slept in a garage while working up to 20 hours daily and suffering verbal and physical abuse. A phone call from a concerned citizen set the wheels in motion for Shyima's rescue. This excellent book, written for young people, includes a detailed chapter on how all of us can participate in the fight against human trafficking. (Simon & Schuster)

All the Light We Cannot See

by Anthony Doerr
reviewed by Kristy Quist

During World War II, a blind French girl and an orphaned German boy each find their lives turned upside down. Marie-Laure must flee her life in Paris with her father. Meanwhile, young Werner, who is to be sent to work in the coal mines, is recognized for his mechanical and mathematical skills and is instead sent to a school for training Nazi soldiers. In the midst of upheaval, both must decide who they want to become in this suspenseful and beautifully written literary novel. (Scribner)



Rose Under Fire

by Elizabeth Wein
reviewed by Francene Lewis

Rose Justice is 18 years old and loves to fly. She leaves her safe home in Pennsylvania to join the Air Transport Auxiliary service in England. She jumps at a chance to deliver a plane to newly liberated Paris, but is captured by the German Air Force and then shipped to Ravensbruck, the horrific concentration camp for women. A compelling young adult story about a woman who fights to retain her humanity in awful circumstances, *Rose Under Fire* confronts readers with human nature in all its complexity. (Disney-Hyperion)



A Prayer Journal

by Flannery O'Connor
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

Southern Catholic author Flannery O'Connor is known for her gothic "Christ-haunted" short stories and novels. As a student, she lifted her vocational desires, spiritual questions, and personal longings up to her Lord in this prayer journal. Although she fills many pages with her fears of pride and laziness, she also burns with the grateful confidence of a young writer who knows she has been gifted by God. This slight but powerful book captures the interior life of a talented artist committed to mastering her craft and doing justice to her Maker through her life's work. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)





Five Days at Memorial

by Sheri Fink
reviewed by Jim Romahn

During the days after Hurricane Katrina slammed into New Orleans in 2005, 45 people died in Memorial Medical Center—some on the very day that evacuation helicopters finally arrived.

A doctor and two nurses were later accused of murdering patients with injections. Fink follows, blow by blow, how the deaths at Memorial were investigated, what witnesses remembered, and how the doctor suffered. The book is highly disturbing in the situations it describes, the ethics it explores, and the politics involved with Katrina, but it is thorough, instructive, and well-written. (Random House Canada)

The Book of Jonah

by Joshua Max Feldman
reviewed by Kate Padilla



Joshua Max Feldman makes his literary debut with *The Book of Jonah*, a modern-day retelling of Jonah. Jonah Jacobstein is a lawyer in Manhattan. He's beginning a major project, but something isn't quite right. He starts to have hallucinations, seeing things that don't make sense. *The Book of Jonah* is not allegorical; rather, it is a modernization of what Jonah might have experienced at the time. Feldman's book includes some strong language, but the writing is tight, bringing readers deep into the psyches of all of the characters involved. (Henry Holt)

The Dove in Bathurst Station

by Patrica Westerhof
reviewed by Joanne Booy

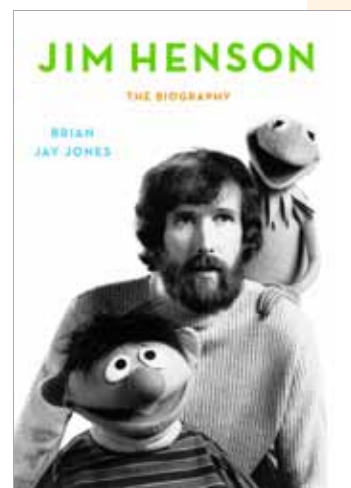
Set in Toronto, *The Dove in Bathurst Station* features Marta Elzinga, a high school guidance counselor who is seeking direction in her life. A fleeting glimpse of a mink and the sight of a curious pigeon hopping aboard the subway are surely signs, but what do they mean? Marta embarks on a sometimes gritty urban exploration; at the same time, the author explores what lies beneath the surface of our spirituality and emotional health. Westerhof has crafted an engaging, multi-layered novel about hope and reconciliation. (Brindle & Glass)



Jim Henson: A Biography

by Brian Jay Davis
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr.

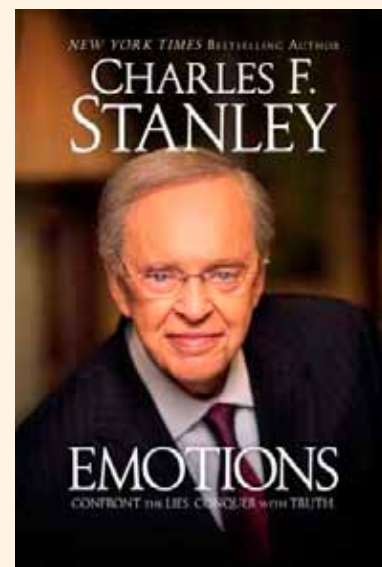
Ongoing rights problems have, for years, prevented a full DVD release of "The Muppet Show," and the intermittent good feelings generated by the recent Muppets films only temporarily stave off one's mistrust of Disney ownership. In the meantime, though, we have those first three seasons to savor. And now we have this exhaustive but well-paced biography, which marshals the Gonzo-like disorderliness of a life's facts into a readable narrative with an aplomb that even Kermit—that still point in a turning Muppet Theatre might envy. (Ballantine Books)



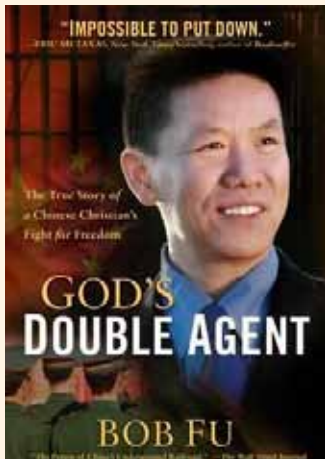
Emotions: Confront the Lies. Conquer with Truth.

by Charles Stanley
reviewed by Paul Delger

Pastor Charles Stanley's book *Emotions* offers a solid mixture of biblical truth and practical ideas for dealing with damaged emotions. He discusses four specific emotions—rejection, bitterness, guilt, and despair—pointing readers to specific lies the devil throws at people and offering Scripture passages to combat the lies. This easy-reading book is filled with encouragement and challenge. (Howard Books)



MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE



God's Double Agent: The True Story of a Chinese Christian's Fight for Freedom

by **Bob Fu and Nancy French**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

After Bob Fu participated in the student uprising in China's Tiananmen Square, he was registered as a counter-revolutionary. When an American teacher introduced him to Christ, he became a believer. In an ironic twist of circumstances, Bob became an English teacher to communist leaders; meanwhile, at night he and his wife, Heidi, trained members of the underground church. Bob and Heidi were sent to prison when they were discovered. *God's Double Agent* reads like fast-paced fiction. The harrowing story is a real reminder of the plight of China's persecuted people. (Baker)



The Inconvenient Indian

by **Tom King**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**

The Inconvenient Indian is both a history and a hilarious story about relationships between whites and Aboriginal peoples across North America. It is a tragedy, which is why, according to author Tom King, he decided to present it with humor. Despite the humor, King arrives at a distressing conclusion—that the Canadian government is implementing legislation and policies that will destroy what remains of First Nations lands and culture, and that the United States will probably be inspired to do the same. There are a lot of inconvenient truths packaged into *The Inconvenient Indian*. (Doubleday Canada)

Pay Attention to Poetry



This Day: Collected and New Sabbath Poems

by **Wendell Berry**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

Wendell Berry, who turns 80 on August 5, is an author, activist, and farmer. He has been described as “a prophet of responsibility” who lives and works on his Kentucky family farm. Solitary Sunday walks around the farm for the last 35 years have given birth to *This Day*. True to Berry the eco-prophet, the almost 400 poems reflect an organic connection between earth and our human community. “If tonight the world ends, we’ll have had this day” (XVII, 2012). (Counterpoint)



Brilliant Falls

by **John Terpstra**
reviewed by **Adele Gallogly**

One poem in John Terpstra's latest poetry collection is the story of a “holy raving protester” who climbs a tree to oppose the building of a highway. The poem begins with the often-quoted first verses of Revelation 21. However, the whole collection demonstrates Terpstra's brilliant ability to see the “new heaven and the new earth” in both the beautiful and the troubling moments of the here and now. This is a collection written by a master poet for anyone seeking to celebrate the sacred edges of everyday life. (Gaspereaux)



Dog Songs

by **Mary Oliver**
reviewed by **Adele Gallogly**

Prolific poet Mary Oliver has always displayed an unabashed love for animals and a special talent for pondering affection, beauty, and grief through the world's small creatures. Her recent collection honors the canine companions that have brightened her life and work. You don't have to be a pet owner to appreciate *Dog Songs* as a unique and moving portrait of how our relationship with animals can remind us, as Oliver says, “how rich it is to love the world.” (Penguin)

The Terror of Pentecost

IT'S BEEN ALMOST TEN DAYS since Jesus ascended into heaven. The disciples and others of Jesus' followers—120 in all, according to Acts—are huddled in the upper room in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Even at this time, Pentecost was an ancient Hebrew festival that celebrated the giving of the law on Sinai 50 days after the Exodus, or Passover.

Jesus had told this little band to wait there for the Comforter he would send, so they've made themselves ready for whatever he is going to send by living, eating, and praying together after his ascension.

As the Holy Spirit was revealed to these men and women, the sound of a strong wind and tongues of fire was surely, in and of itself, terrifying. And hearing dozens of other languages being spoken by people with whom they had spent the last three years was undoubtedly perplexing. You can imagine James thinking, "Hey, I never knew Matthew could speak Persian!" Or Bartholomew saying, "Where did Mark learn Parthian?" When did the disciples realize that they themselves were speaking something other than Aramaic or Hebrew?

The babble of tongues, each with its adherents listening raptly, is the first clue about what Pentecost—that fulfillment of the law—really means. Peter starts to figure it out when he refers his listeners to the prophet Joel quoting God's words: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (2:28).

That, precisely, was the terror of Pentecost for the early church. Not that the sound of a strong wind took them by surprise. Not that tongues of fire appeared on top of their heads. Not even that they could suddenly speak fluently in languages previously unknown to them.

The terror of Pentecost was the realization that this new church was going to take a form they were totally unprepared for. It was going to mean accepting women and slaves and Gentiles. It was going to mean totally leaving their religious comfort zones for the sake of the gospel.

Of course, that realization didn't sink in immediately. After Pentecost, Peter still struggled with the notion of "unclean" foods. The early church still argued about whether new Christians needed to be circumcised. Old ways die hard.

**When the Spirit works,
we step back, watch,
and then get out of the way.**

That is still the terror of Pentecost for us today. We're no different from that early band of 120 people who were not so subtly hit over the head by the Spirit and had to figure out a new way of "doing synagogue."

When the Spirit is poured out among believers, it's up to the church to mold around the Spirit, not the other way around. We can't shoe-horn the Spirit into whatever customs or rhythms we already have going. Surely the disciples remembered Jesus' words: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

That is a terrifying prospect.

When the Spirit works, we step back, watch, and then get out of the way as we see how that same Spirit will work in us in response. When the Spirit chooses "undesirable" people, it's not our prerogative to say, "We don't want them." When the Spirit brings in those from other countries, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, and socio-economic backgrounds, we do not have the choice to say no. When the Spirit rips the doors off the church and blows in a freshening wind, we can do nothing other than bow in obedience and say yes.

That's what it means to be Reformed and reforming. That is the true terror of Pentecost. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Valerie Van Kooten is a former *Banner* news correspondent as well as a freelance writer and editor. She teaches technical writing at Central College in Pella, Iowa, and writes grant proposals. She attends Trinity Reformed Church in Pella.

The Psalms of Ascent

NINE OF US GATHERED in the student center of the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus on a sunny Saturday morning in late March. We were all sporting similar equipment for the daunting yet exciting journey that lay ahead: backpack, brown-bag lunch, clean socks, sturdy walking shoes, and a memorized psalm tucked safely inside our hearts. We were about to embark on a pilgrimage—a four-hour walk from the center of campus to the top of a nearby mountain.

For the past three weeks we had been preparing for the journey together by studying the psalms of ascent—Psalms 120-134. We learned that this little collection of psalms was recited/sung by ancient Jews as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the three big festivals commanded by God in Exodus 23: Passover (Unleavened Bread), Pentecost (Harvest), and Tabernacles (Ingathering). In addition, each of us drew a psalm of ascent out of a hat that was ours to memorize. Some drew two psalms out of the hat so that all 15 would be covered.

Pilgrimage, we discovered, played a significant role in what it meant to be the people of God. In fact, the more we studied and discussed, the more we became convinced that pilgrimage was one of the key tools that God used to shape his people. These journeys to Jerusalem were regularly occurring rhythms that bonded the people of God together in deep and significant ways.

To get a sense of the formative power of pilgrimage, think of it as an extended church campout three times a year. Many churches hold annual church campouts because of the community building that can happen in such a short amount of time. There is something about roughing it together that deeply bonds people. There is also something formative about walking long distances together toward a common destination.

So, as an attempt to get into the hearts, minds, hands, and feet of those early Jewish pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, the students and I started walking. With excitement we hiked past horses, llamas, ducks, a lake, a few parks, and countless houses as the university faded behind us. We weaved our way through countryside, suburbs, playgrounds, and mountain trails. Along the way we experienced fatigue, joy, laughter, and surprise.

As we made our way to the top of the mountain—our symbolic Jerusalem—we paused on the side of the road for each student to recite the psalm of ascent he or she had memorized. Students were then given the opportunity to share with the group what the psalm had meant to them and how God had spoken to them through his Word.

When we finally reached the top, everyone was given time to be alone with God. Afterwards we gathered, held hands,

We were about to embark on a pilgrimage from the center of campus to the top of a nearby mountain.



PHOTO BY AMISH PATEL/FICKR

and recited together from memory Psalm 134, the final psalm of ascent. Then we descended down the mountain into the valley below.

We plan to make our Psalms of Ascent Pilgrimage an annual event. But even if you can't walk very far or can't afford to spend a whole afternoon hiking up a mountain, I encourage you to consider that every Sunday many of us leave our homes and "pilgrimage" by way of car, bike, bus, or foot to a designated house of worship.

This week, try memorizing Psalm 134—and as you travel to your faith community, recite it. As the words pass from your heart into the world, pause for a moment and imagine what it must have been like for those ancient Jews—the people of God—as they journeyed to Jerusalem to worship the living God. ■



Sam Gutierrez is ministry director to students at the University of British Columbia—Okanagan. He attends The Well, a Christian Reformed church plant in Kelowna.

ADS

Deadlines: July issue is 6/9/14; August issue is 7/7/14. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

PROVIDENCE CRC The Council of Providence CRC in Beamsville, Ontario, heartily recommends Rev. Dr. Richard Loerop for call to the churches. Upon the disbanding of Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines, Classis Niagara honourably released Rev. Dr. Richard Loerop from ministerial service according to Article 17 of the Church Order. He can be contacted at (905)397-7237 or (616)822-1008 (cell)

REV. SHAUN M FURNISS of Trinity CRC, Sparta, Mich. to North Street CRC, Zeeland, Mich.

Available for Call

FIRST CRC OF ARTESIA, CA The council of First CRC of Artesia, California announces the Rev. Petr Kornilov is completing a term call. We thank him for his service and recommend him for further ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. We wish him and his wife the Lord's blessings as they seek to follow His leading. He can be contacted at 616-808-6676 or petrkornilov@gmail.com. References available, please contact Rich Boersma, President of Council, 562-860-6079, or richshyb@gmail.com.

Meetings of Classis

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

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

HIGHLAND CRC! Please join Highland CRC, Marion, MI for our 100th Anniversary Celebration Weekend July 26 & 27, 2014. Saturday activities 3:00, dinner 5:00, and Praise Band 7:00. Sunday Celebration service 9:30 a.m. We invite friends, former members and pastors, to join us in giving thanks and praise. Details 231-825-2171 or highlandcrc.org

LAKEVIEW COMMUNITY CRC with thanks to God will celebrate its 100th anniversary on July 4-6, 2014. For more information call the church at 605-429-3338.

CHURCH'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY Second CRC of Fremont, MI, will be celebrating 100 years of God's unfailing faithfulness on July 12 & 13. Special events are planned for both days with a 5 pm picnic/pig roast followed by a time of reminiscing with former pastors and youth leaders. A Sunday celebratory worship service will be led by former pastors followed by a time of fellowship. All former members and

friends are cordially invited to attend. For further information, call the church office at 231-924-0170.

Church's 75th Anniversary

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.

Announcements

Retirement

CELEBRATION We are celebrating 45 years of ministry for Merle and Carol Buwalda. They have served churches in DeMotte (IN), Portage (MI), Lake City (MI), and Caledonia (MI). Come join us for a celebration program at 2pm on June 21 at Caledonia CRC church with an open house to follow. RSVP to rebajezell@gmail.com

RETIREMENT With thankfulness to God for 40 years of service to the Christian Reformed Church we are pleased to announce the retirement of our pastor, Rev. John A. Byker and his faithful wife Kathy. After receiving his M. Div. in 1974 from Calvin Seminary, he was a Bible teacher and helped found Unity Christian High in Fulton, Illinois. They also served CRC churches in San Antonio, Texas; Mount Vernon, Washington; Jacksonville, Florida and Hamilton, Michigan. A farewell service will be held on June 15 at 9:30am at Hamilton Christian Reformed Church. For more information call 269.751.8877 or email: hrc3596@gmail.com

General

COMMISSIONED PASTOR RETIREMENT Classis Yellowstone recognizes and announces the retirement of Commissioned Pastor Don Jabaay, effective April 30, 2014; in thanks for his faithful service, Classis confers

on him the status of "Commissioned Pastor Emeritus" upon his effective retirement date. By this status we allow him to serve congregations in our Classis with a ministry of pulpit supply and leading of sacraments, parallel to the ministry of Ministers of the Word emeritus. By this Declaration we also recommend Donald to churches and Classes in the rest of the CRCNA where Donald may live in retirement, encouraging them to offer Don these privileges and responsibilities, under the supervision of whichever local CRCNA holds his membership papers.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



LULA (ARTZ) RINGERWOLE turns 100 years on June 17, 2014. She resides in her home at 6248 Summerhill Dr. Hudsonville, MI 49426 with her caregiver daughter, Joan. Her grateful daughter gives thanks to God for her alert mind and a life of service and faith.

95th Birthday

CARL EGGBEEN will celebrate his 95th birthday on June 16. His extended family praises God for his faith, love and thankfulness. He lives independently at 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, Unit 3018, Grand Rapids MI 49512.

90th Birthday

LOIS (VANDER KLOK) VENEMA, 1427 Holes Creek Trace, Centerville OH 45458, wife of late Harry Venema, will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 28. Her 5 children, 13 grandchildren and many great grandchildren are grateful for her love.

Stuck?

CRC Disability Concerns can help your church get unstuck and move forward in its journey with people with disabilities. Contact us by phone (888-463-0272) or email (disabilityconcerns@crcna.org).

Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR New Life Fellowship CRC of RedDeer Alberta, is seeking a pastor with strengths in preaching, leadership, and relational gifts to join us as we together serve and grow in our relationship with God, each other and our world. For more info, please contact John Langelaar at johnlangelaar47@gmail.com

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 or call Leroy Nugteren, chairman, at 641-626-3704.

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@vyefield.ca. Church profile available from the Ministerial Information Service at CRC's Pastor Church Relations.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Heritage Crc of Byron Center, MI is seeking a full time youth director to oversee our middle school, high school, and post high ministries. Candidates are preferred to have a college degree. Job description available upon request. Visit HeritageCRC.net. E-mail for more information at Heritagecrcyouth@hotmail.com

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

LEAD PASTOR Connections Community Church, located in London, Ontario, is an emerging church plant founded in 2006 and is interested in hearing from you about your abilities to lead us into our next phase! We are a community of believers, committed to the call God has placed on our hearts to connect North London with the love of Christ! For more information visit www.connectionschurch.ca. Please send inquiries to machieltalsma@sympatico.ca 519-520-3634

YOUTH DIRECTOR. Faith CRC in Elmhurst, IL seeks a full-time Director of Youth Ministries to lead our Middle, High School, and Young Adult ministries and give support to our Children's Ministries. A degree in youth ministry is preferred. Inquiries: office@faithelmhurst.or 630-279-1776

CENTRAL REFORMED CHURCH Central Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, IA Position: Senior Pastor Website: www.centralosky.com Contact: Don Morrison, Chair of Search Team Central Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, IA, seeks its next senior pastor who will lead this quickly growing congregation in its efforts to advance its mission of discovering personal passion for God and demonstrating its compassion for his people. This ministry is carried out in multiple ways at Central Church and we are looking for a pastor who is not afraid to embrace risk for kingdom growth, is able to creatively lead a gifted staff, and is called to preach and teach the full counsel of the scriptures to all who will hear. Our next pastor will be an energetic leader, enthusiastic in leading both blended and contemporary worship, and marvelously skilled in relating to various people groups. He/she should have a good sense of humor, a loving and caring presence, and a willingness to share the load of ministry opportunities that arise. Experience in capital campaigns or building projects may be helpful. Now in its second century of ministering in this setting, Central Church is looking to take the next step in living into all that God has called it to be – in mission, in local and global outreach, in discipleship, in loving care for one another and others, and in proclaiming the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are diligently seeking the next person who will join with us in this exciting ministry. For more information or to submit a profile, contact churchsec@mahaska.org or call 641-673-3843.

PASTOR TRINITY CRC, located in the western suburbs of Philadelphia, PA, is seeking a pastor to lead our small, intergenerational, caring community. Trinity is known for a high level of unity and commitment to Christ and an appreciation of strong preaching and blended worship. For more information, contact the search committee chair, Dennis Barbee at 484-450-6787 or dibarbee@gmail.com. (www.trinitycrpa.org)

VISITATION PASTOR Prairie Edge CRC in Portage, MI is seeking a part-time (10hrs/wk) pastor of visitation. Candidate should be an ordained pastor in the CRC/RCA (possibly retired) and live in the Kalamazoo area. Job description available upon request; call 269-327-1570 or email pecoffice@charter.net.

CO-PASTOR Woodynook CRC, a multi-generational, large church located outside Lacombe, Alberta, is seeking a co-pastor to lead alongside the current senior pastor. This full time position encompasses many aspects of pastoring and church life including preaching, pastoral care especially with our many young families, and creative leadership. Candidates applying for this position should be ordained or on their way to being ordained. For more information please go to www.wncrc.ca. 403-885-4427

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Inglewood CRC of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada is seeking a part time worship director to coordinate all aspects of worship services. Interested candidates can visit our website for more details: <http://inglewoodcrc.org/careers>.

SENIOR PASTOR: Pathway Church (St. John, IN) has begun a search for her next Senior Pastor. For more on this exciting opportunity, contact info@chapter-next.com.

THREE POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Fleetwood CRC is a multi-generational, large congregation in beautiful Surrey, BC. We value our roots as we continually seek new ways to show God's love to a growing area. We are seeking people to join us in these roles:

Co-Pastor: an energetic, creative, team player will share in all aspects of ministry as well as take a clearly-defined leadership role in the four priorities we've set as a church. This is an ordained, full time position.

Campus Chaplain: New Position of a chaplaincy at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey. The half-time chaplain will work with the Multi-faith Centre on campus.

Worship Director: a creative servant leader to help plan and lead worship services. This could be up to a half-time position.

Job descriptions: www.fleetwoodcrc.org.

Email info@fleetwoodcrc.org

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES First CRC in Hanford, California has begun a search for a full time Director of Youth Ministries. This gifted individual would be responsible for developing and overseeing all youth and young adult ministries of our congregation. The ideal candidate for this position will be a dynamic leader and skilled communicator with a working knowledge of the Reformed tenets of the Christian faith. That skill set will be supported by an entrepreneurial aptitude and a strong work ethic. Prior experience leading youth groups is desired. To see the job description, go to: www.hanfordcrc.org/#/news-and-updates/job-openings or e-mail Pastor Justin at justin.g.carruthers@gmail.com

PASTOR Smithville CRC, located in a growing community in the heart of the Niagara Region in Southwestern Ontario, is seeking a full time pastor to shepherd our 500+ member church. We are a young, active congregation, committed to living out our faith. We are seeking a humble leader; one who is gifted in congregational care and preaching. We are looking for someone who will challenge us spiritually, promote and help us live out our vision, provide leadership development to the staff, council and ministry leaders, and equip us all in what it means to be true followers and disciples of Christ. Enquiries and resumes can be sent to office@smithvillecrc.ca

WORSHIP DIRECTOR West Leonard Street CRC in Grand Rapids seeks a worship director to coordinate 4-6 services per month. Details of ministry description after making a contact. \$15-\$18/hour, eight hours per week. Email: wleonardcrc@gmail.com

SYNOD 2014

NEWS

June 13-19
Central College
Pella, IA

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Church



RUTH BAAS will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 26, 2014. Her nephews and nieces thank her for her wonderful Christian example and the love she has shared with us over these years. Well wishes can be sent to 2920 Crystal Lane, Room 427, Kalamazoo, MI 49009.

HELEN VAN GELDER (Hubers) celebrated her 90th birthday on April 24. For the past 5 years she and her husband Dick have been residing at Dow Rummel Village in Sioux Falls, SD. She spent most of her life in Orange City, Iowa. Her five children are: David (deceased) and Ardyth of Denver, CO; Harvey of Belgrade, MT and Carol Van Gelder of Manhattan, MT; Beverly and Scott Herrema of Highlands Ranch, CO; Evan and Krista of Pella, IA; Judy and Mick Vanden Bosch of Brandon, SD. They have 16 living grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

85th Birthday

CLARENCE POST of Oostburg, WI, formerly of Cicero, IL, will turn 85 on June 26th. A celebration will be given by his children John (Dorrie), Tom (Sandi), Clarissa (Jake VanBelle), Carol (Kurt LeMahieu). Grandchildren: Paul & Kristy Post, Laura & Bart Visser, Joel & Tami Post, Ben & Susan Post, Julianna, Lori, Jennita Van Belle, Sarah, David LeMahieu. Great grandchildren: Wyatt, Alli, Tara, Faith, Chloe. Cards may be sent to 1418 B Meadow Ln, Oostburg, WI 53070.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary



BULTMAN Roy & Tena (Bouwer) of 2121 Raybrook SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546 celebrate their 70th anniversary June 28. Both are 94. We thank God for these years together, for our family, extended family, & many friends.

VERBEEK Clarence (Klaas) and Lois (Boonstra) of Dyer, IN will celebrate 70 years of marriage on June 12, 2014. Their children are Gordon (Cathy), Gwen (Duane) Recker and the late Barbara Verbeek. They have 6 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!



VOS Jeanne (Bokhoven) and Clarence will commemorate their wedding on June 1. They, their children, Tim and Mary (Verstrate), Paul and Kerri (Roobol), and Carol and Jeff Bremmer, and grand children thank God for 70 years of blessing, joy and happiness.

65th Anniversary



ARNOLD Dr. Harry & Kathryn (De Nooy) celebrated 65 years of marriage on June 29, 2014. Their children (Becky & Bob Furlong, Tom & Cathy Arnold, Sarah & Bob Douma, Steve Arnold) and families thank God for His faithfulness and blessings. I Corinthians 13:13.

HUYSER William and Alvina, 4220. RedBush, Grandville, MI 49418. Celebrating 65 years of Marriage, June 3, 2014. Praising God for His faithfulness. Sons, Mark(Sally), Tom(Paula), David(Betsy), Steve(Friend-Linda), Rick(Faith), 9 Grandchildren and 11 Great Grandchildren

VANDEBOSCH Al and Rose (Brink) 330 W. Rock River Dr. Edgerton MN 56128, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary in June. Thanks to God for the gift of love.

60th Anniversary

BERGER Joe and Jean (Ebbers) celebrate 60 years of marriage on May 19, 2014. Praising God for His faithfulness! Love from your children: Tym and Sharon Berger (Josh, Carissa, Justin and Jae-Lynn), and Karen and Brent Vinnege (Rhianna and Jordan).



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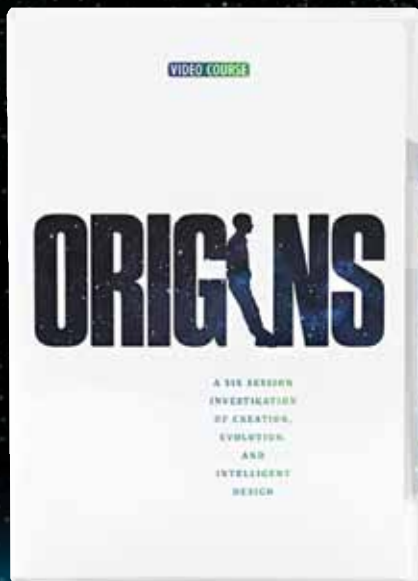
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Only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.



In the new six-session video companion to the book *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, professors Deborah and Loren Haarsma explore what God's Word and God's world teach us about the way the universe began. The videos are available for free viewing on the *Origins* website, or for purchase on a DVD including a small group discussion guide.

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KARSTEN, Rev. Henry & Evelyn (Petroelje) of 5122 W. Dorothea Ave., Visalia, CA 93277 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 10. Their children are Dr. Mark (deceased - widow Sheri Laninga), Mary (Arnie) Sybesma, Paul (Dr. Julia), Ruth (Daren) De Boer, 13 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren. All praise and glory to God!



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.



LOS Rev. Gene and Shirley (Deur) of 196 Park Lane, Zeeland, MI 49464 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 2, 2014. We thank God for His love, joy, and faithfulness! Children: Bruce & Deb Los, Jill & Rod Unema, Mark & Linda Los, Scott & Wendi Los, 13 grandchildren, and 4 great grandchildren.

VAN PROOYEN Raymond and Phyllis (Monsma) have been blessed to enjoy 60 years of marriage as of May 14. Celebrating with Ray and Phyl are: Phillip Van Prooyen and daughters Laura and Sarah; Christi (Ed) Rogala and daughter Megan (Mitch) Malecki and Brady; April (Rogala) Campbell (Jeremy) and their children Cameron and Cadence; and Adam Rogala; all in the Dyer Indiana area. 801 Swan Drive 46311 Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

50th Anniversary

BYLE Kenneth and Ellen (Mulder) of Kalamazoo, MI, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 10. Celebrating with them are children Kathy and Jason Westendorp (Andrew, Megan, Mitchell), Kenneth Jr. and Erin Byle (Adam, Isaac), and Kevin Byle. Thank you God for your faithfulness!

DE VRIES Rev. Gerald and Eileen (Rysdam), married June 12, 1964. Children: Philip and Kristen DeVries, Alan and Karen DeVries, Steven and Dawn DeVries. Grandchildren: Jodie, Thomas, Ben, Jeff, Seth, Miriam, Brin, and Ryan. Address: 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE #3072, Kentwood, MI, 49512.

Obituaries

BOELKINS Wally, Age 82. Died in his home in Grand Rapids. Wally was a lifelong member of the CRC, and a supporter of refugees, missions, and numerous other ministries. Brother of Windi and Stan, father of six, grandfather of 22, great-grandfather of three. Married to Marge Betten for 54 years, and after her death, to Helen Mellema for three years.

DEN OUDEN, Dorothy, Age 91, went to be with her Lord on March 31, 2014. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev Bernard Den Ouden in 1995. She is survived by her brother Rog (Marcia) Dekker, her children Bev (Ben) Becksvoort, Dave Den Ouden, Gord (Cindy) Den Ouden, Evonne (Doug) Wesseldyke, 7 grandchildren and spouses and 3 great grandchildren.

DE RUITER Anne (Voshol), age 95; April 18, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her parents: John and Catherina Voshol; husband d: Otto; son-in-law: Junior Bruns; granddaughter, Bonnie Bruns. Anne is survived by her children: Elaine Bruns, Judy and Bob TePastte, Joyce and Harv Brinks; 7 grandchildren; 6 great grandchildren; sister: Bertha Vander Velde; many nieces, nephews and friends; and by her relatives in the Netherlands.

HARTGER Harold, aged 95; April 19, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 67 years, Bette (Lautenbach) Hartger. He is survived by his children: Marybeth and Bill Haverkamp, Jim and Ginny Hartger, Harold and Susan Hartger; 7 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren.

HEDMAN, Dorothy, age 88; of Rice Lake WI, entered glory on Good Friday, April 18, 2014. Survived by 2 sisters, Harriet Lampers and Beatrice Hedman; nieces and nephews; foster children; and members of her husband's family. Preceded in death by her husband, Phillip Hedman; her parents, Richard and Agnes Terpstra; and 2 sisters, Theresa Terpstra and Helen Van Someren.

KOORNNEEF Judith Kay; April 15, 2014; 1266 Katrina S. E., Kentwood, MI 49508; She will be deeply missed by her husband: Bob; children and grandchildren: Ken, Beth, Rudi, Rachel, and Aidan Koorneef, NH; Larry, Julie, Caleb, Jordan, Jessie, Abby, Josiah and Micah Koorneef, CO; Todd, Lori and Joshua Koorneef; MI; and her mother: Florence Solle.

MEETER Martha, age 93 of Munster, IN was welcomed into heaven on April 23. She was preceded in death by her husband of 68 years Sylvester in 2008; children Edna (late Robert) Standland, Les & Gloria Meeter, Nancy & Jerry Brouwer, Elaine & Richard Vandenberg, 9 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren.

SPYKMAN Eleanor (Hendriksen), 86, of Grand Rapids, MI, died peacefully on March 31, 2014. She is survived by her children, Steve & Nancy Spykman, Rick & Rhonda Spykman, Don & Chris Spykman, Gary & Sarah Spykman, Eve & Peter Clayton; 11 grandchildren; 1 great-grandson. Preceded in death by her husband, Gordon J. Spykman, and an infant son, Daniel.

VAN NOORLOOS Abraham (Abe) age 91 passed away on Mar. 15 2014 in Ripon, CA. Loved and missed by family and friends.

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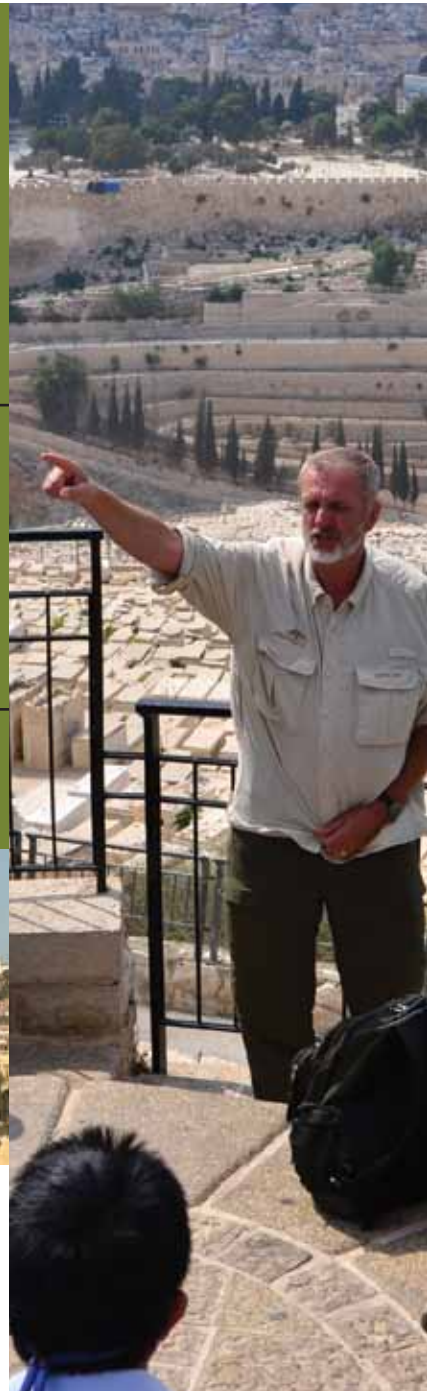
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WALPOT Betty ("Bep") (nee Van Den Top) May 25, 1938 - The Netherlands- April 12, 2014 - Calgary, Alberta. Betty will be missed by Bill (Willem), her best friend and husband of almost 56 years; children, Carla Geelen (Eric), Monique Nikkel (Philip), and Brian (Erika); thirteen grandchildren;

thirteen great-grandchildren, and special pet Muru. She also leaves behind extended family and many friends in Canada, Europe and around the world

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

CHRIST CHURCH PCA GRAND RAPIDS seeks Office Manager. General office functions, assist pastors, produce bulletins, coordinate social media/web pages. Flexible 24-hr/week position. Salary dependent on experience. Contact Bob La Fleur 616-243-8026

CHURCH MISSION CATALYST Crossroads CRC in San Marcos, CA has an opening for a full time Church Mission Catalyst to help us live out our mission of being "bold Jesus-proclaimers & active world-changers." Email catalyst@crossroadscrc.com for more information.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Position at Criminal Justice Chaplaincy, Grand Rapids, MI; www.cjministry.org. Send inquiry to cheryl@sbcbglobal.net for job description and qualifications.

RN SUPERVISOR Every other weekend opening on 3-11pm shift at nursing facility. Apply at Christian Rest Home, 1000 Edison Ave NW, Grand Rapids or visit www.christianresthome.org.

SEEKING SENIOR PASTOR Providence CRC in Holland, MI, is a mission-oriented, grace filled, multi-staffed congregation of 800 near Lake Michigan, seeking a senior pastor. This individual must be a sincere follower of Jesus, a gifted communicator, and a capable leader who can lead those of all faith levels into deeper discipleship. Please forward cover letters and resumes to search@providencechurch.net.

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

EXECUTIVE COTTAGE on skootamata lake north of Kingston for rent 4 bedrooms 2 bath+ fishing boat avail last two weeks of July or august \$1000. a week contact 613 966-2040

ANNA MARIA ISLAND, FL CONDOS pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. rederkercondos.com

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TURKEY, SEPT 29 – OCT 11 Join Pastor Bill and Lyn Vanden Bosch on A Pilgrimage to sites of New Testament Churches in Turkey, September 29 – October 11, 2014. Having led numerous trips to Biblical sites, their focus in Turkey will be on the churches of Revelation, key sites in the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and insights into Turkish history and culture as seen in Cappadocia and Istanbul. For more information, contact Bill at (616) 826-1927, william.vandenbosch@gmail.com, go online at www.regonline.com/Turkey2014. Arrangements by Witte Tours, a leader in spiritual journeys since 1975.

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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. Thanks!

A mother was teaching her 3-year-old daughter the Lord's Prayer. For several evenings at bedtime, she repeated it after her mother. One night she said she was ready to try it on her own.

The mother glowed with pride right up until the end, when her little girl prayed, "... and deliver us some e-mail. Amen."

—Dick Bylsma

When asked by a young patrol officer, "Did you know you were speeding?" the 83-year-old woman gave him an ear-to-ear smile and said, "Yes, but I had to get there before I forgot where I was going!" The officer put his ticket book away and wished her a good day.

—Cyndi Boss

People of all faiths should remember these four great religious truths:

1. Muslims do not recognize the Jews as God's chosen people.
2. Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
3. Protestants do not recognize the Pope as the leader of Christianity.
4. Christian Reformed and Reformed people do not recognize each other at the liquor store.

—Herm Kelderman

When our second daughter was very young she wondered why her older sister, Roxanne, was featured in a hymn and not her. Then she proceeded to sing the following line from "This Is My Father's World": "... of roxanne trees and skies and seas."

—Margaret Rupke

A preacher accepted a call to a small-town church. As he was getting to know his new congregation, he noticed that they seemed a bit lukewarm in their faith.

One Sunday he announced that the following week the sermon would be about lying and dishonesty. He invited the congregation to become familiar with the topic by reading and studying Hebrews 14.

The next week he asked people to raise their hand if they had read the chapter. To his surprise, about two-thirds of them put up their hands.

"I think you are ready for my message," he told them. "You see, Hebrews only has 13 chapters."

—Gerrit Feyer

Our 5-year-old granddaughter, Lily, was having a conversation with her daddy about Ash Wednesday. Lily suggested that if they had a service at her Catholic school in Ireland, where they were living at the time, perhaps they would use glitter instead of ashes.

—Jake and Dena Prins

Kids on angels:

"I only know the names of two: Hark and Harold" (Greg, age 5).

"My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much good for science" (Henry, age 8).

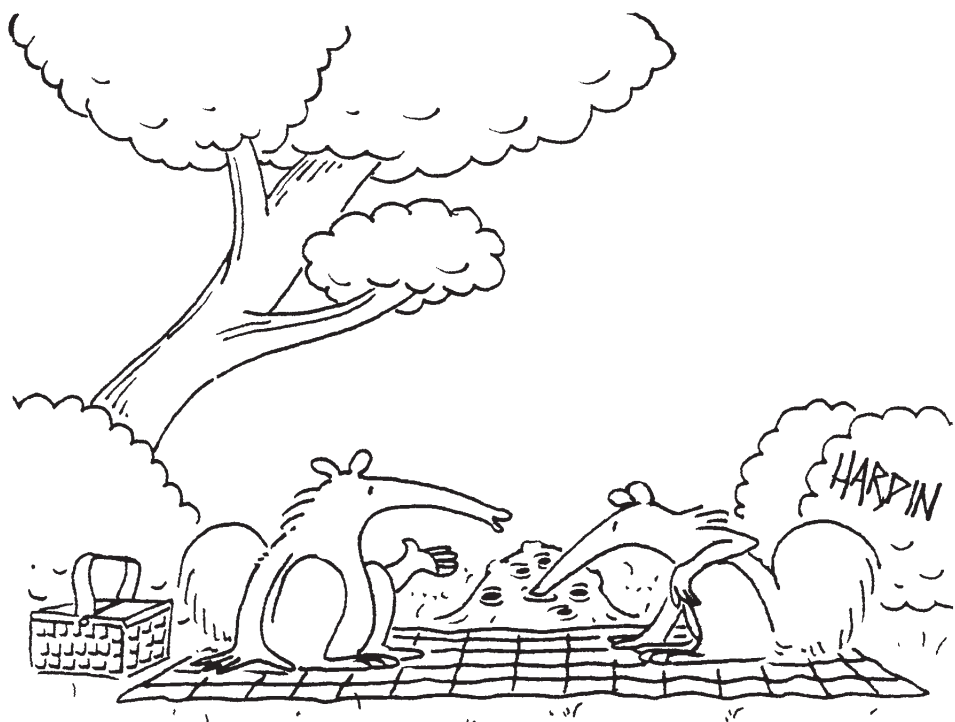
"Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his son, who is a very good carpenter" (Jared, age 7).

—Sue Lauritzen

When my son returned to school after being sick, I wrote a note for his teacher excusing his absence. That evening, my husband asked him if he'd given his teacher the note.

Shrugging, he replied, "She already knew I was gone!"

—Eliza Anderson



"What's a picnic without ants?"

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