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²⁰ **Growing in Virtue**

⁵⁰ **What's the Best Fit?**

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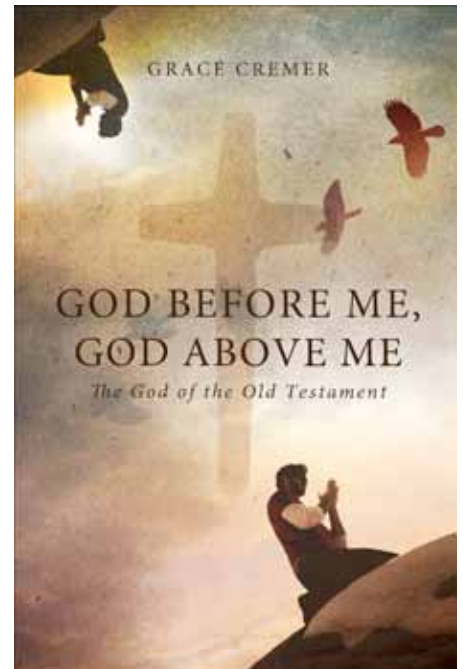
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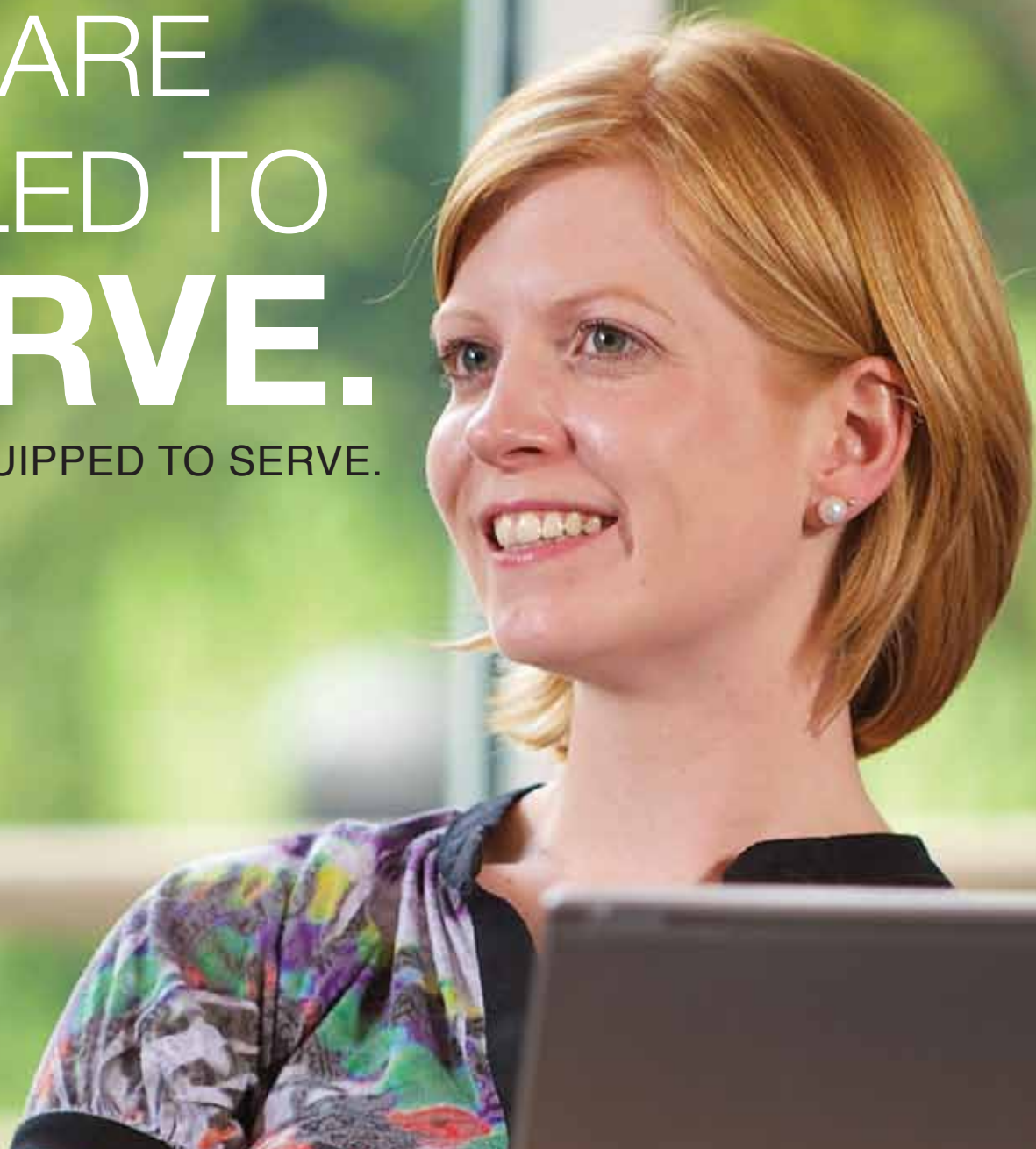


A number of years ago I became concerned about the amount of Biblical knowledge that was being passed on to the next generation. I was especially concerned about my grandchildren. Listening to them talk about the Bible characters they studied and then about the super heroes they identified with, I wondered if they understood the difference. I decided to write an overview of the Old Testament as it relates to the character of God and his purpose for this world. I wanted them to see God true to his word, faithful in his promises, patient and loving with his children; even though they are sinners; yet angry at sin, injustice and evil. It is an easy to read overview of the Old Testament aimed toward teenagers, but can be enjoyed by adults as well.

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Cover: Synod 2014 appointed Steven Timmermans as the new executive director of the Christian Reformed Church. Here is Steve on the podium at synod, with his wife, Barb, and sons (l-r) Getenet, Fekadu, and Paul. The Timmermans family also includes Katie, Becca, Jessica, and Yaineabeba.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KAREN HUTTENGA

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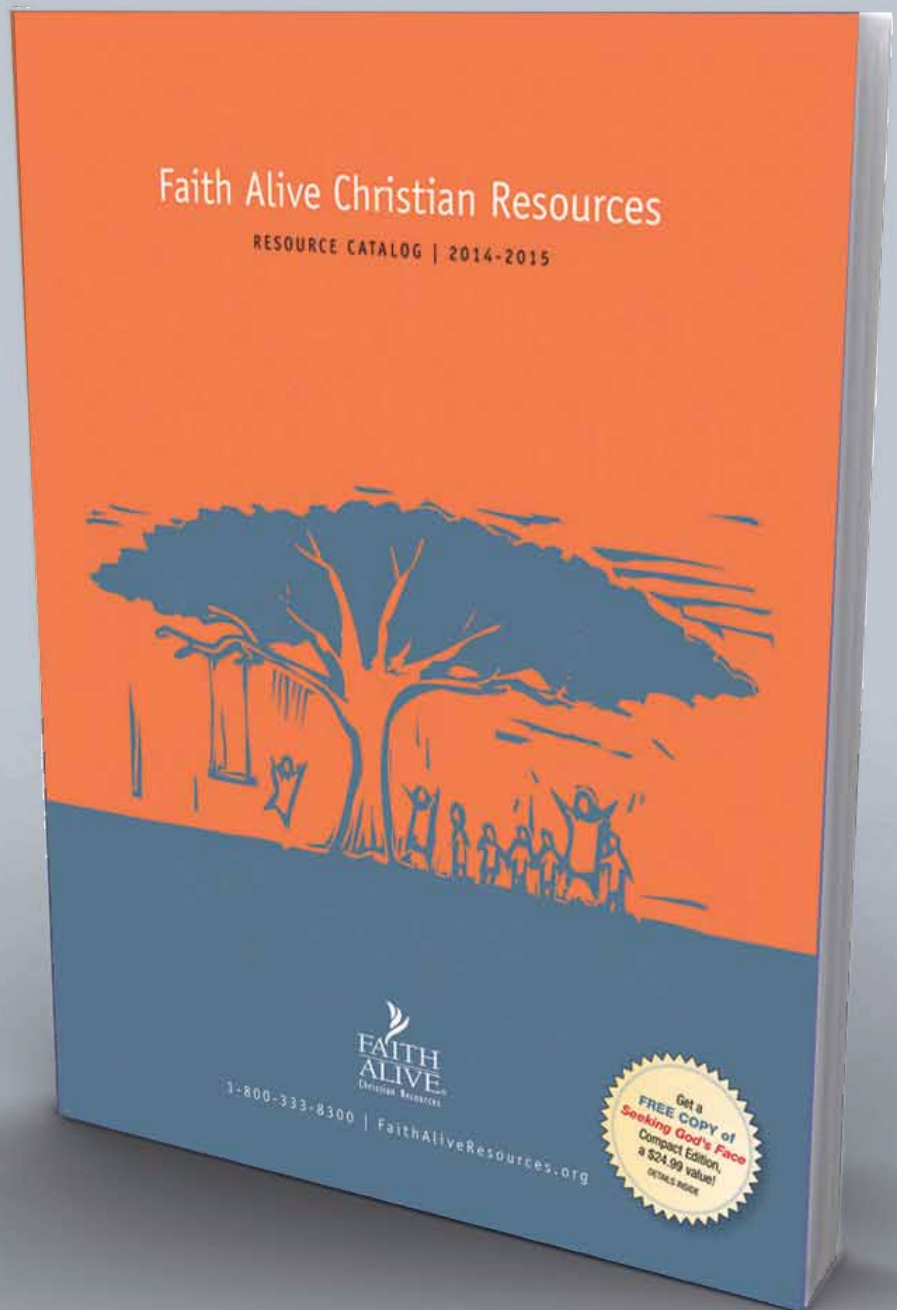
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Dating Denominations

IN JUNE THE SYNOD (annual leadership meeting) of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) met briefly to approve a historic joint agreement. While denominational leaders emphasized that the agreement was about enhanced ministry, not merger, many of us dare to hope for the latter.

The agreement brought our denominations a baby step closer. Both synods agreed that from now on the guiding principle is that the CRC and RCA “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately” (see p. **.) Hardly an unconditional vow of marriage! But at least now we’re sort of going steady.

Apart from that joint session and some combined worship services, there was not a great deal of interaction between the synods and/or their respective delegates. Even at shared meal-times, both communions tended to keep to their own. It will take time for the rest of us to catch up with our denominational leaders—those who have come to know, respect, and genuinely like their colleagues from the other shop(s) as they work together for the common good. To really warm up to each other and develop personal relationships, we need to interact regularly on the grassroots level. Dating is about getting to know each other better so that mutual commitment can grow.

The best way to rebuild our unity in Christ is not by attempting initially to negotiate away our doctrinal differences but to join hands and hearts in our common mission of sharing the gospel and showing Christ’s heart to the world. It was not ministry that forced our separation in the first place—it was our beliefs. When it comes to working with the RCA in providing disaster relief in High River or setting up a church plant together in the heart of Seattle, it doesn’t much matter what we believe differently about the compatibility of church membership with lodge membership. Or about whom to invite to the Lord’s table, or whether Christian day schools are the preferred option for educating our youngsters. What matters is that by working in concert we discover in one another the heart and mind and hands of Jesus.

Besides the merging of denominational agencies, the sharing of some ordained ministers, and a handful of church planting ventures, how can we move this relationship forward?

Our colleges and seminaries could work toward synchronizing their offerings to allow for greater specialization and mutual coordination of programs and courses of study. That way a whole new crop of leaders would have classmates they know, trust, and like from the other denomination.

Our classes could plan regular joint meetings and ministries such as chaplaincies, prison ministries, and workshops for church leaders.

On the local level we could plan joint worship services, routinely exchange pulpits, and participate in joint outreach and mission projects. And ministers could invite colleagues from “across the pond” to each other’s study meetings and social events.

Unless CRC and RCA members come to know each other personally, this can only ever become an arranged marriage. While those can work, we can and should do better. ■

Dating is about
getting to know
each other better.



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

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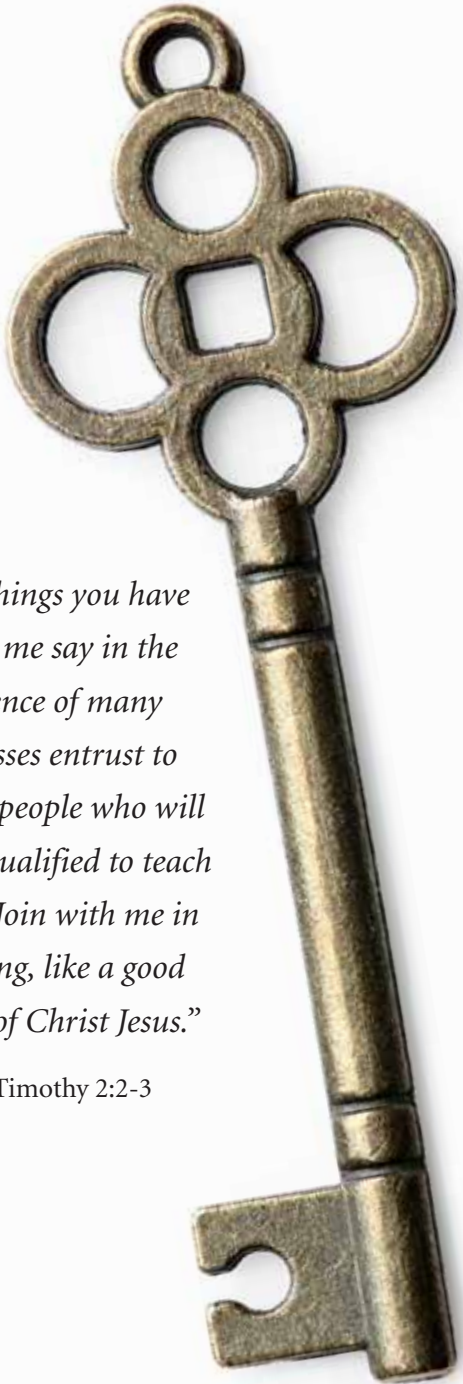
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2014 Candidates for the Ministry



“The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

—2 Timothy 2:2-3

**Asterisks indicate candidates who are not eligible for call until they have completed all requirements.*

O **N THE FOLLOWING PAGES** you will find photos and information about those approved by Synod 2014 as candidates for Ministry of the Word. These are the persons who will join elders, deacons, song leaders, worship directors, church school teachers, and a host of others to lead our churches and ministries in the coming years.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy to “entrust” the things he learned from Paul to “reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors are persons entrusted by the church for pastoral leadership and service. They play a vital spiritual role in our lives in order that we can play a role in the lives of others.

Paul went on in the next verse to encourage Timothy to join with him in “suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” The image of a soldier of Christ Jesus may not resonate as much for us as it did in Paul’s day, but we all know that discipleship and ministry are difficult. We need teachers, encouragers, spiritual guides, and even persons who will protect us with ministries of prayer and accountability.

The persons on the following pages have been well schooled in biblical, theological, and practical pastoral matters. They have been shaped intellectually, spiritually, and professionally by those who have been entrusted with the task of preparing candidates for ministry. They will continue to be shaped as they serve alongside us in positions of ministry. And, by God’s grace, they will shape us, and the next generation of the church, into the image of Christ.

Review these pages with a prayer of thanks and with a heart that is ready to partner with these men and women in ministry. Thank God for our seminary and its faculty, and thank God for the hard work these candidates have completed in preparation for candidacy. May it be, by the grace of God, that the church will transform the world as it presents the Christ who has called and appointed us. And may each of these persons find their place in ministry as they become candidates.

For more detailed information on any of these candidates, visit the Candidacy Committee website at crcna.org. ■

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Director of Candidacy



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Bittersweet



A **S I SEE IT**, a lot of the Christian life is spent coming to understand who I truly am and who God truly is. I've been a pastor's kid and a seminarian, but most important I remain a son of God. As I near the completion of the candidacy process and, Lord willing, the beginning of my ministry this year, I wonder how the future will look. I wonder what people will say at the end. And I sometimes pause to think about the end of my father's first term in ministry; Dad, who has now been in ordained ministry in the CRC for 21 years, wept.

I was 10 years old. It was Sunday morning, and Dad stood in front of "my" church for what would be one of the last times. As he announced that he had taken a call to another Christian Reformed church, he broke down and asked Mom to come and stand with him so that he could finish what he had prepared to say.

I don't remember the words, but along with his tears, I do remember looking around and seeing the faces of people

whom I loved—friends, Cadet counselors, the many adopted grandparents—and I remember seeing tears in many of their eyes too. Leaving wasn't easy or fun, but following God's call led to blessings both for our family and for that church.

As I begin in a new community, I wonder how to cultivate a ministry like that—one that, in the end, is bittersweet for all the right reasons.

It strikes me that the life of a ministry candidate is no different from the whole of the Christian life. You pray. You ask for the Holy Spirit's leading. And you wait for God's peace and his leading, often longer than you would like. Standing on my father's shoulders—and on the shoulders of many other great Christians who have come before—I'm consistently reminded that the Christian life doesn't happen by accident. It's never without intent, without planning, without work. But most of all, it's impossible without God; without God calling and without God leading.

Why else would I leave my comfort zone? Why else would I go from "here"

to "there" in the first place? The better I know God, the better I know myself. And the better I understand why I continue to do the things to which he calls me.

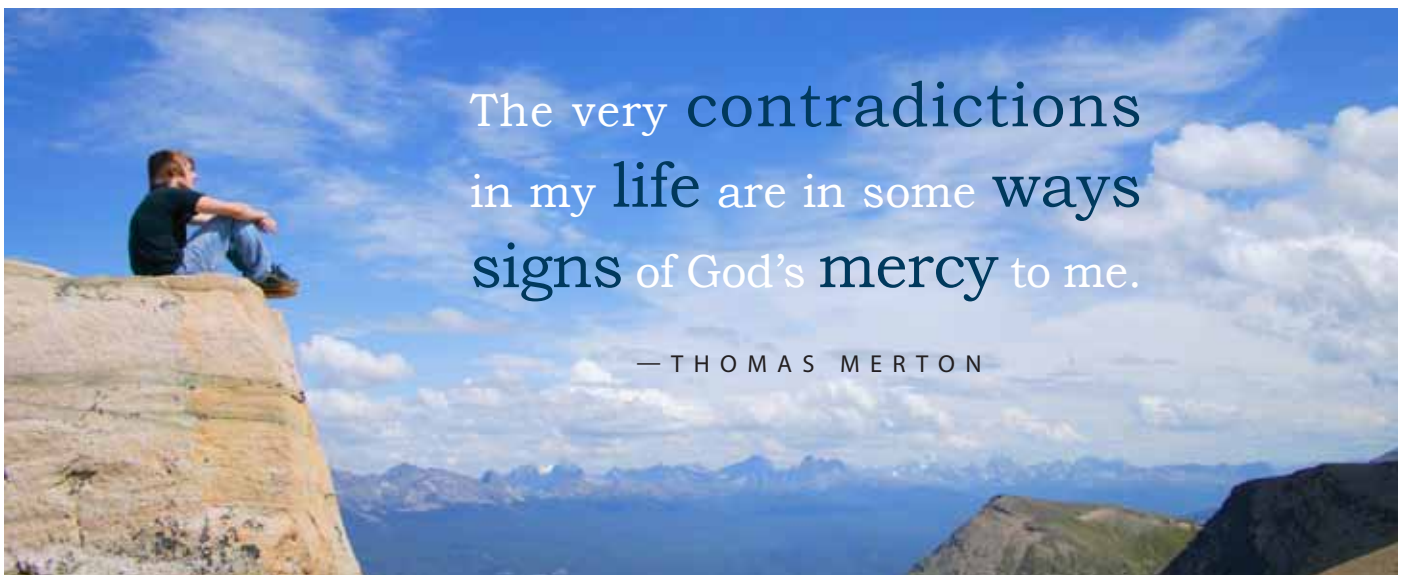
So as I stand on the edge of candidacy, I don't just want to begin with the end in mind; but rather to begin with God in mind. It's funny how easy that is to forget. Life with God—truly knowing God—leads to the kind of intentional life of blessing that I see my parents and so many other Christian Reformed folks pursuing.

As my generation rises up to serve and lead the next, it's my prayer that all of us continue our lives and our ministries not only mindful of the tears but also mindful of the God who wipes away tears and who is leading us all into new life. ■



Adrian de Lange is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and a candidate for ministry in the CRC. He and his wife, Kaylee, are looking forward

to following God's leading wherever he calls them. When he's not studying, reading, or spending time with friends, Adrian loves to cook, to exercise, and to play board games.



The very contradictions
in my life are in some ways
signs of God's mercy to me.

— THOMAS MERTON



the gift of presence

eMMANUEL, *God with us*. This isn't usually a phrase I think of in the middle of summer. Still, the phrase permeated my mind in a new way that July.

Emmanuel, God with us. It's the greatest Christmas gift ever. But Christmas was a long way off. So was the due date of our son. And yet, there he was, four months early, a week old, a foot long, and 17 ounces small.

When he was born we named him Jonathan, "God's gift." We knew that every day with him was a gift. We hadn't been sure he'd make it to that point. When I went into labor a day shy of 21 weeks, we were fairly certain we were losing our child. The doctors had stopped the contractions for two weeks, and then the labor pains came back. We hadn't hit medical

viability, but at a gestational age of 23 weeks, we'd gotten as close as we'd get.

It was an odd spot to be in—encountering life and potential death simultaneously. At the announcement of his birth we didn't get cute baby outfits, toys, or diapers. He was too small, and no one was sure he'd ever grow big enough for them. A few friends bought stuffed animals or blankets, but mostly we got food and cards and prayers. The latter were the gifts we needed most.

We learned something about presence that season. Our son spent five months in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). He beat the odds; he lived—but his was a hard road of uncertainty. On his due date he was recovering from his fifth surgery. A week later he had a sixth surgery.

Through it all we were surrounded, and that meant everything to us. Beginning the day I went on bed rest, we had an international and ecumenical group of Christians praying for us. We knew we weren't alone.

In the still of the night at only 21 weeks pregnant, I silently shouted toward fluorescent hospital lights, "Why, God?" After many moments of struggle, I surrendered my unborn son to him. It was tough to do, but who was I kidding? I wasn't in control. I had no idea why my body thought this pregnancy was over. I so desperately wanted to be only halfway there. Every parent at some point learns to give up their child to God, to trust that they've done the best they can and let go. That point just hit a lot sooner for us than for most.

As I prayed and screamed and surrendered, I felt God's presence: his hands on my beating heart and spinning head and his words: "I'm here."

I didn't hear "It'll be alright" or "I've got this one." I didn't hear any of the assurances I wanted to hear. Just "I'm here." And love. An outpouring of love—"I'm here, I get it; this is hard." He'd gone through this before too.

Then I understood his gift anew. Emmanuel. God with us.

Over and over again that first half year, through renal failure, heart surgery, and bowel perforation, God was there.

I didn't hear any of the assurances I wanted to hear. Just "I'm here."

He didn't tell us that our son would live. But he did tell us that he was there, walking with us. And somehow that made all the difference.

Our friends struggled to find the right words to say as they walked with us. Some quoted Scripture, some said they were praying. Some said just, "We don't know what to say, but we're sorry."

Often the wisest-sounding words didn't comfort. Instead they felt like a pill we were meant to swallow. "See, it says *here* that it will all be OK, so stop your fretting and just trust God." Or "If you really believe that God has a plan to prosper you and not to harm you, your son will live." No one said so outright, but this was the undertone I felt in the sage wisdom passed on to me by friends.

The problem was, I knew it wasn't up to me. I knew I couldn't "faith" my son into living because faith isn't a verb. It's a noun. A non-count noun, at that. I can't have one faith or two faiths, I can just have faith. Even the smallest amount can move mountains, Jesus said. The rest was up to God in his mercy. I could weep and mourn and cry, and I was blessed when I did so, but in the end that was all I could do. We trusted that God knew best.

I wish I could say that all this experience with grief and uncertainty has given me better words so that I can in turn

comfort those in mourning, but I am as awkward as my sage friends. As my heart bleeds for church members who have lost their loved ones or found themselves without a job or hurting in so many other ways, I have no words. I have foolish, well-worn sayings and Scripture verses that may or may not apply, but those seem so thin.

The words that meant the most to me in that time of uncertainty and fear came most often in stumbling and halting sentences. Those sentences said something that wise words could not. Those words said, "We are here. We can't fix it, so we won't try. But we will walk with you. If you mourn, we will mourn too. And if you rejoice, our joy will join with yours."

"I am here," God said to me as I stared at industrial beige and pink in the maternal fetal medicine wing of the hospital. I felt his peace again when peace made no sense, as we watched our swollen son be packed into a coffin-like box to be transported for gut surgery, uncertain how much bowel had died or if he would live. I am here. Emmanuel.

"We are here," his church echoed. "We will walk with you in good and bad. We will pray with you. God will put us in your life just when you need us most—in the family room of the NICU as your son is prepped for heart surgery. In the hospital cafeteria as you muster strength to eat, uncertain of

his future. In our nightly prayers we will walk with you. When you don't have the strength to hold up your arms to God, we will hold them up for you."

My pastor was preparing to move, to take a call in a different country as I was put on medical bed rest. He kept baptism rites in his car with him, in case he got a call from us. He wanted to be able to get to our bedside to baptize our son while he was alive, if he could.

On Jonathan's date of birth, my friend Katie wrote his name in pencil on her calendar so that she could remember the anniversary of his birth with us, in bereavement or in celebration, even if he didn't make it to his first birthday.

I didn't know these things until a summer later, when a happy Jonathan was bouncing on my knees, but these thoughtful friends brought tears to my eyes. They would have been there for me, would have sat with me, even if doing so was hard.

"I am here," was all God said. And it was enough. When those around me mourn, sometimes all I have is my presence. And you know what? I think that may be enough. ■



Laura Maikata lives with her husband and three children in Holland, Mich., and attends Shawnee Park Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. She speaks and writes about premature birth and disabilities, and volunteers in the NICU where her son spent his first five months.

Milkweed, Monarchs and More



It's the perfect time to look for monarch butterflies. In a few more months you'll hear about them migrating long distances. And you'll probably see lots of butterflies. But you won't be able to spend time with them as they're fluttering by.

Right now many monarchs aren't even butterflies: they're still caterpillars! They're munching

on milkweed, fattening up for the trip to come. That means you can watch them easily, handle them—carefully!—and later watch their awesome transformation into butterflies.

So take these pages, head outside to a park or field, and begin your hunt for milkweed, monarchs, and more small wonders of creation.

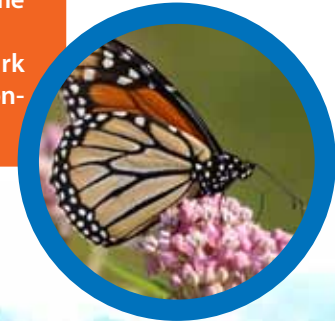


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Got Milkweed?

Got a milkweed plant? Good. Don't pick it—just look at it. Look at one of its flowers. See how one blossom is really lots of tiny flowers bunched together? That makes the blossom visible to flying bugs. If they're looking for nectar, they'll see this flower and come in for a drink.

Take a closer look at one tiny flower in that blossom. It's made up of four nectar cups. Can you see them? Insects "know" there's nectar in those cups. They'll straddle a cup, stick their straw-like mouthpart into it, and suck the sweet juice.

Now look very closely at the sides of those cups. Can you see small slits in the blossom? That's where the insects place their feet when they straddle a cup.

Inside those slits are tiny bags of pollen tied to tiny springs; two pollen bags on each spring. When a bug leg slips into a slit, the pollen bags clamp onto the leg. Each drinking bug leaves the milkweed blossom carrying pollen bags on its legs. When it visits the next blossom, it drops off the bags and picks up more. The clamping and unclamping of the springs is very complicated. Scientists write long papers about it. It's just one of creation's small wonders.



T-shirt Superhero Cape

The "T-shirt Superhero Cape" (Just for Kids, June 2014) may pose a risk of strangulation if not modified. You may want to consider cutting the neck portion and using Velcro to bring the two ends together or not allowing your child to use the cape at all.

Young Monarchs

Now check the plant for monarch caterpillars. They're yellow, black, and white striped, and they have black antennae. And—biggest clue—they're munching on milkweed leaves.

Watching monarch caterpillars eat is not very exciting. But you can keep track of them from day to day and watch them grow. They'll stay on the milkweed, so once you've found them you can visit them again.

The really cool part of watching the caterpillars every day comes later when you find a chrysalis. A chrysalis is a butterfly's cocoon. It hangs from a milkweed branch. It's a beautiful light green. The shell is almost transparent, and it has tiny gold dots "painted" around the top.

If the milkweed is nearby, you can go outside daily and keep track of the chrysalis.

Or you can carefully cut off the milkweed stem with the chrysalis attached and put it into a jar. Set it someplace where you can keep close track of it. If you're around when the butterfly hatches, you can watch it pump blood into its wrinkled wings and prepare for flight. That's a sight no one forgets!



Got Milk?

Ever wonder how milkweed got its name? There are two reasons:

1. Many people consider this plant a weed. A weed is something that grows where it's not wanted. To monarch caterpillars, this plant is not a weed!
2. The milkweed plant has a milky juice inside the stem. That's part of its defense, so be careful. That juice is poisonous. If you ate this plant, it would make you sick!

But the juice isn't poisonous to all creatures. Take a glance at the rest of the plant. Do you see other bugs on it? Some of them are eating, aren't they? So milkweed juice doesn't harm them. But it's not good for humans and some other creatures.

That's why many creatures that eat milkweed are colored red and black. In creation, red and black shouts, "I'm poisonous, don't mess with me!" Even orange and black—like the monarch—is a warning to predators.

More to Explore

If you've found milkweed but not monarchs, don't worry. Your trip is not in vain. There are usually lots of interesting residents on a milkweed plant. The bugs that feed on milkweed are usually orange and black—you know why. There also should be bugs that prey on bugs that feed on milkweed.

Milkweed bugs are small, and they're orange and black. Look closely at their wings folded over their bodies. The very back end of each wing is soft and black. Together they make a black triangle on an orange-and-black back. They eat milkweed.

Green lacewings are flimsy green insects that fly slowly. They look fragile but are actually fierce predators. They eat other flying insects that have come for nectar.

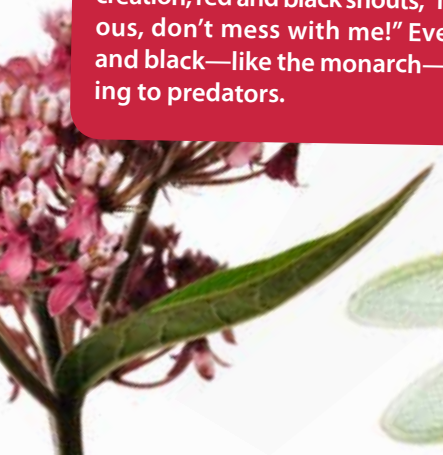
Wasps and hornets are easy to identify by their hairless yellow and black bodies. Like the lacewing, they prey on other insects. Often they eat part of an insect and then take part back to the nest to feed their young larvae. In that way they act like birds feeding their young.

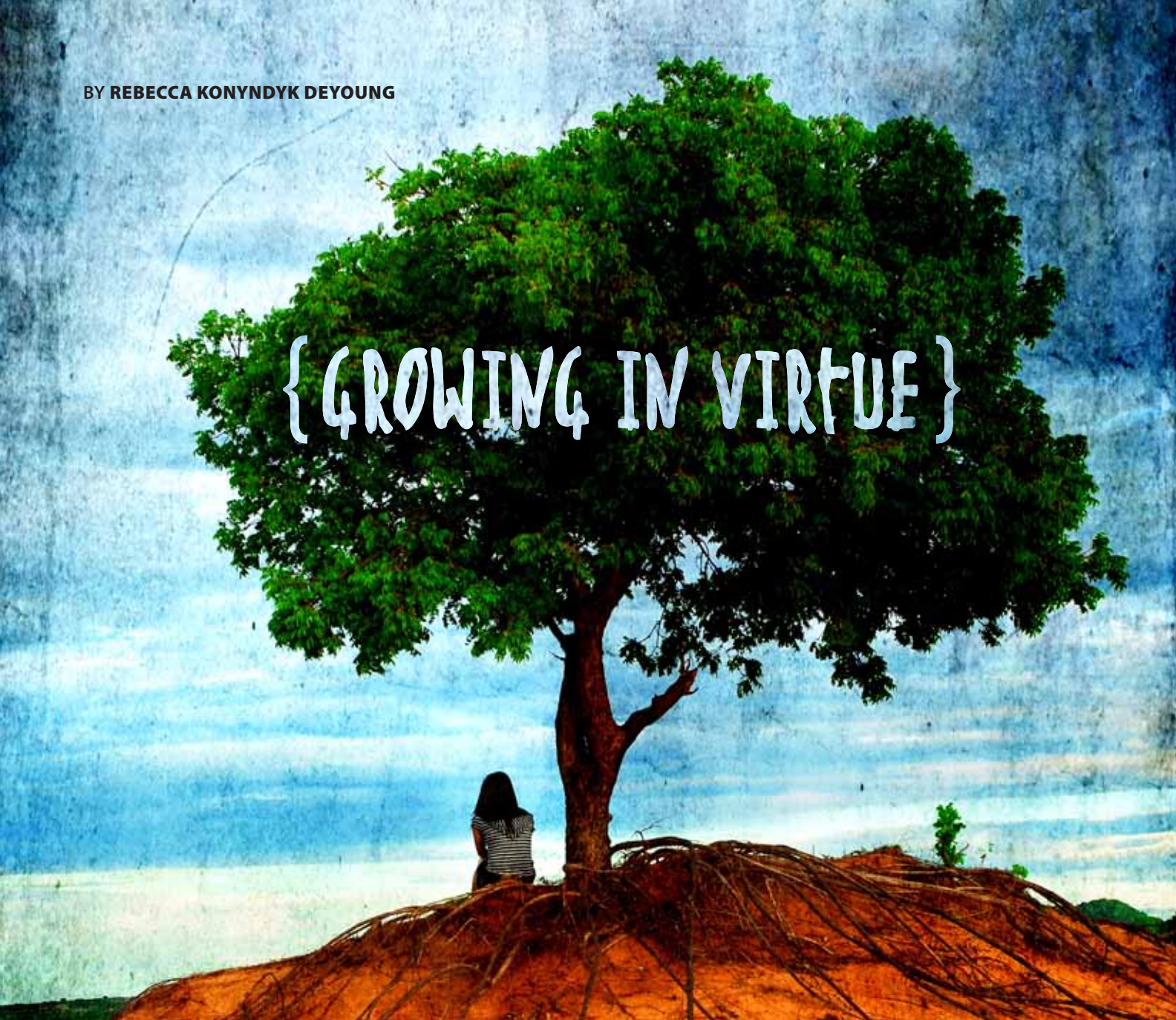
Other **butterflies** visit milkweed because it has so much nectar. Most butterflies are nectar feeders, so milkweed is a rich feast for them.

There are many more insects than those listed here. There's also much more action at a milkweed. So go outside, find a milkweed, and enjoy some of the small wonders of God's creation.



Joanne De Jonge is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park Ranger. She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.





{ GROWING IN VIRTUE }

DO YOUR CHILDREN FORGET to make their beds or put their dishes away? Do they slam doors and dump their shoes and jackets in the back hallway? As a parent, I am always reading advice on how to deal with such problems. One day I heard this suggestion: for every door slammed, the slammer must close the door quietly 10 times. If a dirty dish is left on the counter, the one who left it there (not always a child!) must put the dish in the dishwasher 10 times. Is there a coat dumped on the floor or draped over a doorknob? Hang it up 10 times.

This sounded much more intriguing to me than, say, yelling my head off. So we tried it. It worked pretty well. Even better, it was hilarious. How many families can keep a straight face watching the offending family member put a dirty plate in the dishwasher, sheepishly bring it back to the table, put it back in the dishwasher, and then repeat the process nine more times? Trust me, 10 times is usually enough to make the point!

As a philosopher who teaches the history of ethics, I had other reasons to think this parenting advice had potential. All the ancient philosophers agreed that we need practice to become certain sorts

of people. They called this process “habituation.” The idea is that if you practice eating healthy foods and managing your portion sizes, it gradually becomes a habit to eat temperately. Or if you practice giving gifts or money to others on a regular basis, it will eventually feel more natural to you to be generous. Some habits are harder to build; some are easier to break.

But the point is that your habits cumulatively build into a psychological profile. Moral habits in particular say something about what goals and goods are important to you; together, they speak volumes about who you are as a person. We call

this “character.” Philosophers describe character in terms of *virtues*—good traits of character—and *vices*—bad character traits. Most of us are a pretty mixed bag.

Virtues and Vices

Despite the ancient pedigree of building good habits as a crucial part of our character formation, it’s common nowadays in both churches and workplaces to talk about morality mostly in terms of rules and codes of conduct. What actions are permitted or prohibited? Did I do something wrong?

It’s common in economic circles to evaluate what’s good in terms of cost-benefit analyses or consequences. What are the trade-offs we need to make to achieve a desired outcome? What policies or distribution of resources produce the best results?

It’s less common, however, to use the language of character. Sometimes we need to establish a person’s character in the courtroom to know whether that person is a credible witness. Other times, we use “character talk” to sum up the lives of those we love at their funerals. “He was gentle and patient,” we say, and then we tell a story to illustrate a time when his gentleness blessed us personally. Or we describe someone as “a faithful wife and devoted mother.” At a funeral, we are trying to think about a person’s life as a whole. That means paying attention to the patterns and priorities that emerged through the way a person thought and showed emotion and behaved over a long period of time. Unfortunately, at your funeral it’s too late to make changes in your character.

Throughout history, Christian thinkers have used organic metaphors to describe the cumulative power of habit formation, both good and bad. They have pictured the virtues and vices as trees. For example, the tree of vices had its roots in pride, while the tree of virtues was rooted in love or humility.

What we learn from these pictures is that our greatest loves will shape the rest of our life—our thoughts and feelings, our actions, our friendships, the images

we find appealing, and our daily priorities in both work and play. Our character may develop too slowly for us to notice, but it does not stay hidden underground. It grows, it branches out, it bears fruit.

It’s one thing to be occasionally tempted by a fleeting lustful thought or a twinge of envy. It’s another thing to let greed become so deeply anchored that we don’t even realize that we have become more hard-hearted or restless or manipulative—all “offshoot vices” that have been linked to a heart sold out to greed. And while a few random acts of kindness

Our character may develop too slowly for us to notice, but it does not stay hidden underground. It grows, it branches out, it bears fruit.

when we are in a cheerful mood are certainly worth doing, if kindness is not our default mode of reacting to others, we don’t yet have this virtue as a stable feature of our character.

In *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, N.T. Wright argues that Christian discipleship includes caring about our habit formation and intentionally cultivating Christ-like character. In doing so, he’s following the example of many others before him. Passages in Scripture such as Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4 instruct us to take off our old sinful practices and to put on the new self, created to be like Christ Jesus. Paul summarizes this Christ-like character using a list of virtues: “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,” unified by love (Col. 3:12-14). Early Christians called this task “spiritual formation,” “soul care,” and “the imitation of Christ.”

The desert fathers used a list of capital vices (now known as the seven deadly sins) to describe their struggles against the most typical recurrent temptations

and disordered desires in sinful human nature. Augustine adapted the four cardinal virtues—practical wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance from Greek and Roman philosophy (and echoed in Wisdom 8)—and added three more theological virtues—faith, hope, and love (from 1 Cor. 13). Benedict gave monks step-by-step practice of the virtue of humility in his *Rule*. Aquinas organized his entire theological ethics in the *Summa theologiae* around the virtues, with Jesus Christ as the model of perfected human character.

The Heidelberg Catechism also uses virtue language. It describes the commandments as prohibiting not only outward behavior like murder but also its “roots” in inner dispositions and attitudes such as “envy” and “hatred.” It goes on to commend being “patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly” as a way to show love to our neighbors.

In 2 Peter 1:3-10, we read that since God has given us power to participate in the nature of God and escape the corruption of the world, we should “make every effort to add to our faith” goodness and knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. “If you possess these qualities in increasing measure,” Peter writes, “they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Cultivating Christian Character

How do we go about possessing these virtuous qualities in increasing measure? How should we think about cultivating Christian character? »

It's clear from Scripture that this is *not* another self-help program, this time with a Christian label slapped on it. We can't just follow the advice of the ancient philosophers and invest more human effort in moral education. If we grow, we grow *in grace*. Our growth in godliness is a result of God's "divine power" working within us (2 Pet. 1:3). Only if we remain in Christ, the true Vine, will we bear much fruit, showing ourselves to be his disciples (John 15). What does this look like in practice?

Many of us are already good at intentionally developing Christian character; we just don't use these terms to describe it. For example, we might regularly join Bible study groups at church to grow in our knowledge of and love for God's Word. We have daily habits of prayer and devotion to cultivate intimacy in our relationship with God. We attend church weekly to worship with the people of faith.

What if we extended these rhythmic heart-shaping and habit-forming practices to the rest of our lives? What other virtues and formational activities can we also be intentional about? Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, for example, invites us to make truth telling, rest, creation care, detachment (both from the opinions of others and

from possessions), gratitude, solitude, fasting, and hospitality habitual Christian practices that mark our lives and character. How is our use of technology habitual? Does our use of Facebook and cellphones and television help us grow in virtue or tempt us toward certain vices? How do unplugging or taking a spiritual retreat or keeping Sabbath help guide us toward better habits in this area?

Likewise, are our eating habits forming us to become people who steward creation with compassion and honor our bodies as temples in which God dwells? Many of us need some discipline here, as well as in our patterns of work and rest, sharing and silence, submission and leadership. The point of such practices is to bring every aspect of our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and to become like him through and through.

"Discipleship" and "discipline" are based on the same word. Both involve daily practices of penitence and patterns of regeneration. Put another way, they describe ways of being in the world that form us in virtue. If we are rooted in Christ, the true Vine, we can expect our character to be changed. If we sink our roots deep into his love and power, we can expect to grow. If we give the Holy Spirit a loud, grateful *yes*, we will find ourselves bearing new fruit.

Two words of caution here. First, you should not only expect to grow—you should expect the unexpected. These are *graced* disciplines, not merely valiant human efforts to be better. Fasting is not a spiritual diet plan fueled by your willpower and by high fiber, low-calorie snacks. Fasting is really a way of saying to God, "Something as everyday as my eating is part of a life of discipleship too. I want to open my desires and habits of consumption to your transforming power. This discipline is my way of saying that my desires are damaging and deformed in ways I probably don't even understand, but I want you to be at work helping me grow more like you in this area of my life."

Second, the disciplines are just that—*disciplines*. They are *daily* practices, habit-

building exercises, "doing the drill." It's not always exciting. You might wonder along the way what the big deal is and why these apparently little things, however boring or difficult they are in the moment, are supposed to be so wonderfully transformative. But as days turn into weeks, and weeks turn into months, you may well find yourself turning too—turning into someone new. You might find that it takes years of faithfulness in a practice before you "get" what's already happened to you, and what's still happening in you.

I'm using the passive voice on purpose. Initially the spiritual disciplines often feel like something we're doing. "I'm fasting"; "I'm keeping Sabbath"; "I'm practicing silence." But this is only how things look on the surface. Jesus says, "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain on the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

Naming the virtues we want to put on (and the vices we long to cast off) is a way of being aware, intentional, and discerning about the cultivation of our character. A desert father once described the lists of virtues and vices as a mirror that gives us a clearer look at ourselves—both our individual qualities and the whole picture they make in combination. What sort of character portrait do we see? What sort of portrait does God want to show the world through us?

N.T. Wright notes that God has saved us by grace for a purpose—to participate in Jesus' mission to inaugurate the kingdom and show the world a glimpse of what *shalom* looks like. Not only our deeds and accomplishments, but our very person and character matter for this task. If we are to be salt and light, we will need to grow—and keep growing—in grace. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung teaches in the philosophy department at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. She is the author

of *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*.

Digging Deeper

- *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* by N.T. Wright (HarperOne, 2010)
- *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life* by Michael Austin and R. Douglas Geivett (Eerdmans 2012)
- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster (HarperOne, 1998)
- *Glittering Vices* by Rebecca DeYoung (Brazos 2009)
- *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (Vintage Spiritual Classics 1998)
- Inner Compass interview with Rebecca DeYoung on the seven capital vices and spiritual formation: calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/faculty/deyoung

Worship in Action

MANY SUNDAYS I find myself serving with the worship team at my church. This gives me a unique perspective on the congregation. I get to see the body of Christ worshipping God. Through this I've grown to appreciate how God has created us wonderfully and individually, each person worshipping according to how he or she was created. Some are more expressive, others are quiet and reflective.

I consider myself a rather quiet and reflective person. Often I wonder if I am not grateful or excited enough about my relationship with God. Does that mean I am not “entering into” worship? Many of us who've grown up Christian Reformed struggle with this in a time when the church is focused more on the message and teaching. We need to ask ourselves, what does it really mean to worship God?

The Bible talks a lot about worship. It's pretty clear that we are called to worship God. It's also clear that there isn't just one way to worship God. “Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling,” says the psalmist in Psalm 2:11. And in Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul writes, “Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

So what does that mean for me? If I am not comfortable raising my hands or clapping, how should I be worshipping God?

God wants us to be sincere, to be ourselves, in our worship. And we need to recognize that worship doesn't happen only in church. Sometimes the opportunity to worship comes in unlikely situations.

Two years ago I was asked to help with the design of an addition to our church building. At first I wasn't sure I was qualified to take on this project—I had



Sometimes the opportunity to worship comes in unlikely situations.

never taken on the design of a large public building. Needless to say, I had a “Moses moment.” Feeling inadequate and fearful that I would let the congregation down, I was hesitant. But after prayer and careful consideration, I sensed the Holy Spirit leading me. I just needed to trust that God was going to be there. He'd give me the tools to be successful. By trusting in him I'd be able to experience God working through me for his church. So I agreed to take on the project.

A few months into the design, something unexpected happened. I discovered worship in a wonderfully unexpected way. Sitting at my computer, I felt the strong presence of the Holy Spirit fill me; I felt

the presence of God. In that moment, I knew I wanted to offer all of my creative energy as an architect to the glory of my God, who was right there beside me.

I knew that singing in church isn't the only way to worship, but I needed to experience this for myself. God is present in all that we do, in every part of our lives. Our whole lives can be an act of worship. While most of us aren't called into formal roles serving in the church, we are called to worship God wherever he has called us to serve. As I worked on the building plans, I felt a sense of awe and wonderment that God had personally called me.

And because of that I praise God.

Wherever he's called you, remember that God is there. He wants to be a part of your whole life: your work and your play. He loves you and loves to receive your worship and praise. ■



C. Paul Horsman is a senior designer with the Landmark Group of Builders in Edmonton, Alberta. He attends Bethel Christian

Reformed Church with his wife, Susan, where he enjoys serving with the worship team.

Who's Your Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Granddaddy?

THE KIT FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S Genographic Project is just two simple swabs and a couple of test tubes—but what it can reveal about your genetic background is amazingly complex.

When the kit arrives, all you do is take a cheek swab, insert the swab into the tube, and send it to a lab that compares your sample with DNA from thousands of people around the globe.

Researchers look for mutations in your chromosomes—like spelling mistakes in the genetic code—and trace them back to where and when those mutations were present.

If your ancestor had a mutation in his or her chromosomes, that marker is shared by all the descendants who come afterward. Men, who have both X and Y chromosomes, carry markers for both their paternal and maternal lines. Women, who carry two X chromosomes, can only receive test results for their maternal line.

My son got the kit for Christmas. We only had to wait for six weeks before we got results. The researchers warn you to be prepared for surprises—and they were right.

My son's paternal line (the Rang side) showed that our ancestors had moved

The researchers warn you to be prepared for surprises—and they were right.

out of Africa, through Saudi Arabia, had settled in northern India and then back west through Russia before arriving in Northern Europe. Interestingly, my dad had always claimed we had a distant Asian heritage stretching back beyond the written records. Turns out he was right.

And boy, does the time scale *ever* go far back. For example, the results say my

earliest genetic paternal ancestor lived in Africa 75,000 years ago. The group scientists call “branch M45,” which moved into central Asia, did so 35,000 years ago. Even my first European ancestor—branch M343—wasn't on

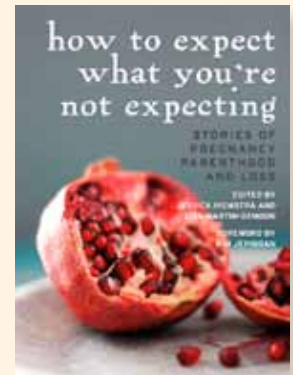
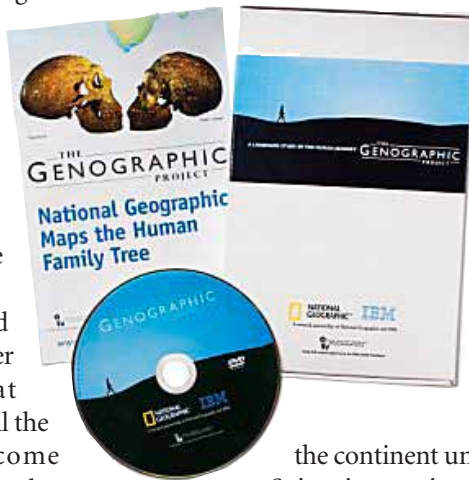
the continent until 17,000 years ago.

Scientists arrive at this data using what's known as the “molecular clock,” which is the rate that molecules are transmitted in DNA.

This is where the science of molecular genetics would seem to contradict faith. So the challenge for any Christian taking the test will be trying to reconcile these two stories—the one written in Scripture, and the one written in our DNA. It requires that we square the data—sembled using our God-given powers of reason and the records of natural history—with the story of creation and salvation. ■



Lloyd Rang is communications director at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto and a member of Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville, Ontario.



How to Expect What You're Not Expecting: Stories of Pregnancy, Parenthood, and Loss

edited by **Jessica Hiemstra** and **Lisa Martin-DeMoore**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

The editors and contributors of this anthology shared a college friendship and award-winning writing careers. They also shared the loss of yet-to-be-born babies. For both women the emptiness and sadness gave way to expression in words and images. They call it “the ecology of loss.” They embarked on a journey of collecting the stories of others who had great expectations only to be delivered something not promised in the manual of expectation. These are personal stories of anticipation and hopefulness, fear and grief, joy and beauty. (TouchWood Editions)



The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence

by Gary A. Haugen and Victor Boutros
reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

In this global justice opus, Haugen, of the International Justice Mission (IJM), and Boutros, of the Department of Justice, argue that the daily threat of predatory violence against the poor worldwide undermines and even reverses efforts to lift people out of extreme poverty. *The Locust Effect*, with at times mind-numbing statistics, portrays public justice as “the most fundamental and the most broken system” in a developing world full of struggling systems. But light ultimately comes as they explore concrete examples of real hope emerging today. (Oxford University Press)



The LEGO® Movie

reviewed by Otto Selles

This spoof of every action and adventure movie ever made, combined with a broad critique of our consumer society, will keep parents amused. But the eye-popping, frenetic animation really holds the film together and keeps kids glued to the screen. The movie prompts viewers to wonder, how can you strike a balance between anarchic creativity and bland, rule-bound predictability? The ending provides a pat answer that viewers of all ages should debate. Directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller succeed in constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing LEGO into a plastic-brick-solid animated feature. Now available on disc. (Warner Bros.)

Nest

by Jorey Hurley
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

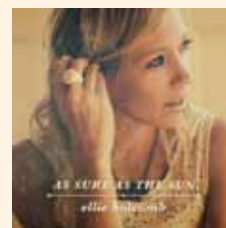
This exquisite picture book shows and tells—in just 15 words—the story of a family of robins as it changes and grows throughout the seasons. Vivid illustrations depict spring rain and blossoms, summer sunshine and berry-laden bushes, autumn leaves falling, and winter snow, barrenness, and starry nights. Christian parents can point their children to God the Father, Creator of all, including the robins building intricate nests, laying eggs, hatching from eggs, finding food, and surviving threats from one generation to the next. Ages 3-7. (Simon and Schuster)



BOOK CLUB BRAINSTORMING

Are you in a book club? What recent titles do you recommend? What do you do that is just a little different? We would love to hear from you!

Email your booklists, your best ideas, or your favorite moments to us at editorial@thebanner.org. You can also find recent book reviews that might be good for book clubs by clicking the “Tuned In” tab and then “See Book Club Suggestions” at thebanner.org.



As Sure as the Sun

by Ellie Holcomb
reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

“There is good news, there is good truth that you could never change, no matter what you do. You are loved more than you know, more than you could hope for, after everything you’ve done.” These words open Ellie Holcomb’s beautiful first full-length solo album, *As Sure as the Sun*. Holcomb has woven together 11 Scripture-inspired songs that focus on grace and the fact that God knows us for who we are but loves us anyway. It will nourish and encourage you. (Full Heart Music)



Talking Bibles

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Originally known as Audio Scriptures International, Talking Bibles is a ministry that makes solar- and battery-powered audio Bibles—produced in durable, portable gadgets for over 70 languages—available to nonreaders around the world. Almost all of these are available for anyone to hear just by clicking on the “Listen” tab of their website. If you know immigrants who don’t yet have a full grasp of the language of their new home, consider sharing this site, which provides an opportunity for them to listen to Scripture in their native tongue. (www.talkingbibles.org)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

All photos were taken by Karen Huttenga unless otherwise noted.

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Synod 2014: A Church in Transition

If last year's synod was one of longing to move forward, this year's synod showed a church taking confident steps into the future. The face of synod, new leaders approved, letting agencies and institutions do what they do best, moving closer to a sister denomination that shares our views, as well as moving closer to yet another denomination with which we have stark differences, all showed Synod 2014 leading a church in transition.

Synod 2014 had a light agenda, allowing it to end a day earlier than planned. But its steps were not taken lightly.

A glance over the floor of Synod 2014 showed just how much transition has already happened. There were more delegates from ethnic minorities than ever before. The result was that for the first time since 1997, no ethnic advisors were appointed. However, the role will be retained if needed in the future (p. 35). A symbol of that progress was embodied in the report from the Board of Trustees,



Rev. Tom DeVries, general secretary of the RCA (left), and Rev. Joel Boot, executive director of the CRC, share the podium at a joint session of the two synods.

ees, delivered by Rev. Sheila Holmes, the first woman and the first African American to serve as board president (p. 36).

On the other hand, the number of female delegates dropped to an historic low in the seven years that female delegates have been allowed (p. 34).

Also this year, for the first time deacons served as advisors to synod (p. 42). Their presence is perhaps a foretaste of what is to come. Synod 2015 will debate a report from the Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon, which could lead to having deacons as delegates to synod starting in 2016.

Synod 2014 approved two new leaders after three years under interim leadership in both the U.S. and Canada. The interview with Dr. Steven Timmermans, enthusiastically appointed to be the Christian Reformed Church's new executive director, was a highlight of the week (p. 37). Synod also ratified the Board of Trustees' appointment of Rev. Darren



Roorda as Canadian Ministries director (p. 35).

Another big delight, judging from delegates' reaction, was the interview with Sarah Schreiber, characterized by some as an impromptu class on the Old Testament (p. 39). She was appointed associate professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary on the same day she was declared a candidate for the ministry along with 48 others (p. 39).

Synod 2014 showed confidence in the way its agencies and institutions are moving forward. After last year's synod learned that Christian Reformed World Missions is moving toward having its career missionaries raise 90 percent of their own support, causing concern in some parts of the church, Synod 2014 affirmed that direction (p. 32). Faced with a request to appoint a committee to study theologies denying the historicity of the Genesis account of creation and asserting that Adam and Eve are literary figures, Synod 2014 declared its confidence in the work of scholars at Calvin College and other Reformed colleges supported by the CRC (p. 41).

While Synod 2014 accepted the ongoing work of *The Banner's* staff and the Board of Trustees of adapting the magazine to address today's issues, its lament over two controversial articles, followed by the apology of the *Banner* editor, showed a church unwilling or unsure of how to handle the magazine's synodical mandate to stimulate critical thinking in the church. It ordered a review of that mandate (p. 30).

Synod 2014 was a celebration of increasing cooperation with the Reformed Church in America. The



The number of delegates from ethnic minorities reached a record high.

RCA synod met at Central College in Pella, Iowa, at the same time as the CRC synod. From delegates all wearing lapel pins that said "Together [again]" to combined worship and shared meals, the togetherness of the two denominations was an overarching theme. The delegates of both churches simultaneously and unanimously adopted a policy that made working together in ministry the default mode of both churches, except in cases where deeply held beliefs keep them from doing so (p. 28). The display of unity of the two denominations was carefully orchestrated and included an extensive recounting of the many ways the two churches already work together. But there was no opportunity given to also note differences, such as differing perspectives on Christian education.

Working together with a denomination that shares much of our theological view is easier than working with a denomination that has sharp differences. But the CRC showed itself confident enough in its own theology to return to close ecclesiastical fellowship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, where starkly different views are held on some issues, including same-sex marriage and ordination of gay

persons. These differences were noted by synod delegates (p. 45).

A subtle, almost unnoticed, change showed that synod is no longer just about policy but also about ministry on the ground. For the first time, the synod agenda included a slate of ministry workshops available for delegates, which many appreciated (p. 42).

Synod 2015 will be faced with some possibly difficult choices regarding how the denomination's leadership will be structured

administratively (p. 40). And it will have to decide on bringing deacons to synod as delegates. It will have a much fuller agenda than this year's.

But if this year's synod is any indication, Synod 2015 will show a church that continues to move forward in the confidence that, while it doesn't know what the future holds, it knows Who holds that future.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Correction

We apologize for the following editing errors in the "In Memoriam" for Rev. Peter Van Egmond (April, p. 11): Van Egmond was at Holland Homes for 20 years and is survived by five children.



Synod 2014 Served by Binational Executive

Synod 2014 elected an executive that represents the binationality of the Christian Reformed Church: half of the members are Canadian and half American. They were (l-r): Revs. Jerome Burton, Classis Grand Rapids North, second clerk; Scott Greenway, Classis Thornapple Valley, president; Jake Kuipers, Classis Quinte, vice president; and John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto, first clerk.

—Gayla R. Postma

CRC and RCA Synods Unite for Historic Joint Session

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) made history on June 14, 2014, when delegates from the synods of both denominations held a joint synod session to debate and adopt a resolution. It is the first time that has happened since the CRC seceded from the RCA in 1857. [In 2011, delegates from the two churches held a session to ratify a resolution about translations of the Reformed confessions that had been previously adopted separately by both synods.]

Delegates from both denominations voted simultaneously and unanimously to adopt a resolution declaring that “the principle that guides us, 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.’” Additionally, the resolution included instructions to the CRC’s Board of Trustees and the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America that the future relationship between the two denominations be guided by this principle.

Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary emeritus of the RCA, placed the historic division between two denominations into a more global context. “The idea that any group with a slightly different understanding of the truth can separate itself from a denominational structure has been so commonplace, we barely give it a thought,” he said. “What we confess as the one holy, catholic church has become end-



Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, emeritus general secretary of the RCA: “What we confess as the one holy, catholic church has become endlessly divided. Our proper response should be confession and repentance.”

lessly divided. Our present shameful, sinful state of affairs is that there are 43,800 denominations in the world. Our proper response should be confession and repentance.”

Rebecca Warren, chair of the CRC’s ecumenical and interfaith relations committee, delved into the history of the two churches,

noting that their roots stretch back more than 100 years in North America. But “the churches decided that what divided them could not be bridged,” she said. “They parted ways, creating separate agencies and churches.”

However, Jeff Japinga of the RCA’s Commission on Christian Unity noted that in recent

decades, an increasing set of cooperative efforts between the two denominations is changing the landscape. “What we have done together has advanced the gospel in so many ways,” he said.

The list of those cooperative efforts continues to grow. There are congregations that belong to both denominations. Church multiplication efforts of both denominations are combined in Kingdom Enterprise Zones. Pastors from either denomination may receive calls to churches in the other. The Disability Concerns ministry operates within both denominations. World Renew provides domestic disaster response for both denominations. The Reformed Benefits Association administers the U.S. insurance plans for both churches. The new *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal was produced as a partnership of the CRC and RCA. The IT departments of both churches have joined forces. The list goes on.

Cooperation also happens in local communities. Doug Van Aartsen, an RCA delegate from Ireton, Iowa, recounted a time recently when he worked together with the CRC pastor in the same town. He said that a trailer park in Sioux Center, Iowa, that housed a number of Hispanic families was being closed, and the families were being relocated in Ireton. “The town, to its shame, was opposed to this,” Van Aartsen said. “The CRC pastor and I stood against them. There is now a group of Hispanic people in Ireton, and we have a good relationship. It was an example of two congregations working together at a

local level. I'd like to think we made a difference."

As Dutch references abounded, including references to the historic rivalry between the two denominations' schools (Hope College and Calvin College), one delegate noted that it seems that the issues are only between folks with Dutch backgrounds. "There is no consideration for ethnics," said Rev. Ron Chu, a CRC delegate from Classis California South. "I came [into the CRC] in 2001, and I've been treated

really well. I hear the same thing from Korean pastors in the RCA. You are willing to embrace people from other ethnic groups, and I hear that you guys are arguing among brothers and sisters. That is something to think about."

The adoption of the resolution was concluded with cheers, hugs, handshakes, and applause as delegates from both churches joined hands to sing together the doxology.

—Gayla R. Postma



Ecumenical guests from other denominations at Synod 2014 included Rienier Noppers, Christian Reformed Church of Australia; Rev. Laura Smit, Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians; and Gustavo Garcia Escardo, Reformed Church in Argentina.



CRC synod president Scott Greenway embraces RCA general synod president Carl Boersma.

Calvin College president **Michael Le Roy**: "I've been celebrating the unity of the CRC and the RCA by visiting both bakeries here in Pella."

Synod 2014 Sends Message of Support to CRC of Nigeria

A day after learning of the recent deaths of three members of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, Synod 2014 sent a resolution of support to church leaders in the violence-torn country.

The CRC has historic ties with the CRC of Nigeria, where it has long been engaged in mission, relief, and development work. Synod 1969 sent a resolution of concern to churches in Nigeria near the end of the Biafran War.

The resolution was addressed to Rev. Caleb Ahima, president of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria and a Calvin Theological Seminary graduate. It referred to Ahima's previous report of "the very challenging and trying times in which our Lord has called you to serve him."

"We grieve with you and all in the CRCN the loss of a pastor, your finance director, and others close to you but unknown to us," the resolution read. "We promise to continue calling God's people within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, all across Canada and the United States, to stand with you in prayer, imploring our heavenly Father

- to bless your nation with justice, peace, and mercy, and to end the mayhem you now endure;
- to comfort all who have lost people dear to them;
- to restore the basics of life to those who have lost homes and properties;
- to enable you to stand firm in the faith and to live for him in the challenging and trying times in which he has placed you."

—Charles Honey

Synod 2014 Critiques *Banner* Articles, Calls for Review of Mandate

After impassioned debate about the direction of its denominational magazine, *The Banner*, Synod 2014 ordered a review of the magazine's mandate and expressed "lament" about its publication of two controversial articles ("Tomorrow's Theology" by Edwin Walhout and "Sex, Intimacy, and the Single Person" by Harry Van Belle).

The articles in question, published last summer, called into question traditional Christian doctrines in light of modern science and suggested that the Christian Reformed Church consider dropping its opposition to premarital cohabitation. Synod unanimously adopted a resolution saying the articles "have caused harm and created confusion" in the CRC.

"Synod has higher expectations of discernment, insight, clarity, and direction through difficult and complex issues of our time," synod declared.

However, delegates turned down requests from two regional church groups and one congregation to remove *The Banner's* long-time editor, Rev. Robert De Moor. De Moor did not write the articles but had apologized, in print and to the Board of Trustees, for how he presented them. He did so again to synod and received a



Banner editor Rev. Bob De Moor: "I do not get tired of saying 'I'm sorry' because, brothers and sisters, I love you."

standing ovation from the delegates.

"I do not get tired of saying 'I'm sorry' because, brothers and sisters, I love you," said De Moor, referring also to the CRC's creeds and confessions. "So I offer to you once again my deep and heartfelt apology for the way I allowed those two articles to be published in *The Banner*.

"I have not served you well in the kind of editorial direction I gave," he added, saying he should have worked more closely with the writers to shape more helpful articles. "And so I'm sorry, I really am, and I ask for your forgiveness."

Delegates directed the CRC Board of Trustees (BOT) to ensure a review of the magazine's mandate, approved by synod in 1998, which calls on it to "edify and encourage Christian living" and "stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith

and the culture of which we are a part." The review instructs the BOT to clarify how the magazine can fulfill such aims "while affirming Scripture and our confessions" and report back to Synod 2015.

The Board of Trustees previously approved a revised oversight process after meeting with De Moor last fall. The *Banner* Advisory Council's role has been strengthened to advise the editor on magazine content as well as resolve conflicts about *Banner* content between the editor and the CRC executive director. Synod called those moves "appropriate first steps" for addressing concerns about the articles.

Delegates' actions were recommended by an advisory committee that met with De Moor and two trustees. Committee reporter Rev. Michael Johnson said members also studied six formal requests (overtures) and two letters objecting to the articles, as well as one letter from Classis Eastern Canada supporting De Moor and affirming *The Banner* as a safe place for such discussions.

In more than two hours of debate, many delegates strongly criticized publication of the articles, while some defended the magazine's right to do so. Critics charged that such articles have alienated and even chased away church members. Some called for an official retraction.

Glenn Palmer, an elder from Classis Hackensack, said his congregation has discussed whether to leave the CRC, and one family has done so. He said one of the articles, "Tomorrow's Theology" by retired CRC minister Edwin

Rod Hugen, Classis Arizona, lamenting that he wasn't chosen as sergeant-at-arms because he is "burly and hairy": "We should love on burly and hairy people."

Scott Greenway, synod president: "I trust the minutes will reflect that."



Randall Raak, Classis Minnkota: “The way the articles addressed the issues led to feelings of betrayal by many of our members—betrayal by their church of their values, of their beliefs.”

Walhout, contradicts confessions that say Adam was a historical person.

“Which CRC is the true CRC?” Palmer said. “The confessional CRC or the *Banner* CRC?” He charged the magazine with “a pattern of misconduct” beyond the two articles.

A minister from Classis Minnkota, which requested De Moor’s removal and repudiation of the articles, said they had caused church members to mistrust denominational leaders.

“The way the articles addressed the issues led not just to shock but to feelings of betrayal by many of our members—betrayal by their church of their values, of their beliefs,” said Rev. Randall Raak.

But other delegates and officials strongly defended both the magazine’s editorial content and

De Moor’s leadership. Elder John Venema of Eastern Canada asserted that vigorous questioning is part of the CRC’s own rebellious history.

“Remember the reformers were going against all the established doctrine of the church,” Venema said. “Yet they spoke up and created a dialogue. Through that dialogue we found a way to the truth.”



Gary Bomhof, Classis Alberta North: “Isn’t this the way things are supposed to work, that we stimulate some thinking?”

While the articles had “a certain shock value,” that’s not necessarily bad, said Rev. Gary Bomhof of Classis Alberta North. “Isn’t this the way things are supposed to work, that we stimulate some thinking?”

Peter Borgdorff, deputy executive director of the CRC, stressed De Moor’s theology is not on trial and that the Board of Trustees stands with him “in support of 10 years of excellent service.”



Glenn Palmer, Classis Hackensack: “Which CRC is the true CRC? The confessional CRC or the *Banner* CRC?”

De Moor said he welcomes a review of the 1998 mandate to clarify the denomination’s expectations of *The Banner* and provide direction for editors. He also said he would “prayerfully consider” whether he should remain as editor. “Perhaps I would like to serve a wee bit longer,” he told delegates.

—Charles Honey



John Venema, Classis Eastern Canada: “Remember the reformers were going against all the established doctrine of the church. Yet they spoke up and created a dialogue. Through that dialogue we found a way to the truth.”



Synod Upholds Missionary Support-raising Policy

Synod 2014 declined two requests (overtures) for the denomination to reexamine or retract a policy that Christian Reformed World Missions career missionaries must raise 90 percent of their support by 2020.

Delegates heard that previously each missionary raised 60 percent of an *average* agency missionary budget. As of July 2013, fund-raising has become more personalized: missionaries must aim to raise 90 percent of their own *actual* budget. As a result, many missionaries will need to increase their fund-raising—but others actually have a lower requirement than before.

"I agree that the denomination needs to facilitate ways for missionaries to develop stronger relationships with local congregations," said Rev. Andrew Beunk, Classis British Columbia Northwest. "Congregations will be more engaged with missionaries when supporting them at greater levels."

Rev. Derek Bouma, CRWM's board president: "We should have done a better job of explaining this to the churches and the congregations."



Rev. Nathan Gritter, Classis Lake Erie, concurred. "We're going to get more money with this new model for [Christian Reformed] World Missions. My generation will give more money with this new model because of the [personal] connection to their missionaries."

In response to this funding change, "donations at our church are up overwhelmingly," said Elder Syd VanderWilp, Classis Quinte. "We have been so blessed to support our missionaries."

Some delegates raised concerns about the new funding model. "I think what we're asking of our missionaries is an awful lot," said Rev. Jake Kuipers, Classis Quinte. "We don't ask the director to raise 90 percent of his salary."

"There are numerous people I have met who felt called to ministry but the fund-raising not only scares them, they see it as nearly impossible," said Rev. Josh Van Til, Classis Columbia.

The denomination's 102 career and associate missionaries have been given until the year 2020 to fully adjust to the new support-raising model. At the same time, CRWM has set up a new fund—named in honor of Johanna Veenstra, the first CRC church member to serve abroad—to support those who

Rev. Nathan Gritter, Classis Lake Erie: "My generation will give more money with this new model because of the [personal] connection to their missionaries."

struggle with the requirement. Most current missionaries are agreeable to the new model, though a few have expressed their discomfort, said Kris Vos, reporter of the advisory committee to synod.

"We recognize that this is a work in progress, and we should have done a better job of explaining this to the churches and the congregations," Rev. Derek Bouma, president of CRWM's board, told delegates. "This provides a wonderful opportunity to explain why and how we made the change. . . . We are already seeing the fruits of an expanded kingdom ministry."

Rev. Rod Gorter, Classis Hudson, said he had raised full support as a missionary to Ukraine with another agency. "World Missions needs to take seriously the need to provide guidelines to go through this process because for some [missionaries] it will really be challenging."

Bouma agreed. "The reality is that we at World Missions do need to work with our missionaries to help them accomplish this. It was

never our intent to say 'do this,' and walk away." The fund-raising will come more easily to some missionaries than others, he added, and churches have a responsibility to help their missionaries make the needed connections.

The reality, said those representing World Missions, is that the missions agency was forced to change its funding structure to avoid shrinking, since so many churches are not paying their full ministry shares (giving goals set by the denomination).

"The only realistic alternative to the 2020 missionary support goals is the continued shrinkage of our career and associate missionary force that we have been experiencing for the past quarter century," stated World Missions' report to synod.

But with the 90 percent requirement, the agency plans to send out four new missionaries—and potentially double the number of



Rev. Jake Kuipers, Classis Quinte: "I think what we're asking of our missionaries is an awful lot."

career missionaries in the next decade, CRWM's director Gary Bekker said.

Already the new fund-raising model is having the desired effect, Bekker told delegates. "God's people have been incredibly generous. Many churches and individuals have stepped up already. For some missionaries, these changes will mean fewer congregations supporting them at a higher level."

"The Great Commission is to go into all the world and preach the gospel," said elder Murray Ritsema, Classis Huron. "This is a bit of a rebuke to the churches: before you patch up the roof or repaint the nursery, how about you pay 100 percent of your ministry shares? Then we wouldn't have this problem."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Synod 2014 Ends with Travel Nightmare

After a relatively smooth week at Synod 2014, getting home was anything but smooth for many delegates. Despite synod ending early on Wednesday evening, some delegates did not get home until Friday night.

When thunderstorms swept through the midwest, air traffic control at Chicago's O'Hare Airport brought the airport to a "ground stop" a couple of times, halting all flights in or out. That caused a ripple effect in airports across the country, including Des Moines, Iowa, where many delegates were hoping to fly home.

Several delegates who caught the first shuttle busses from Pella to the Des Moines airport arrived to find out their flights were outright cancelled. Some of them managed to find seats on alternate flights. But as *Banner*

reporter Roxanne Van Farowe found out when she reached the front of the line, airport personnel were "all out of miracles." Several people in that group repaired to the nearest Holiday Inn, where they waited until Friday.

Others arrived in Des Moines to find their flights were delayed, but still scheduled. As they waited, flights continued to get delayed. Some were on planes that made it out to the tarmac, only to get sent back to the gate. Eventually the plane that held several people from Alberta and Ontario did manage to get to Chicago. The Edmonton-bound group managed to make their connection, only to be returned to the gate. They subsequently spent the night in the O'Hare airport. According to delegate Rev. Rich deLange, they were



For many delegates, traveling by golf cart might have been faster than trying to get home by air.

eventually flown to Newark, N.J., on Friday, where there was such a long wait that they went to visit the Ground Zero memorial in New York City. They finally made it to Edmonton at midnight on Friday.

The people who got home the soonest were those who decided to drive. After spending six hours in the airport waiting

for their flight, the delegation from Classis Huron, and some from Classis Hamilton, rented a vehicle and drove back to Ontario. The 13-hour drive got them home well ahead of those who tried to fly.

As one of those travelers said, "Next time we'll just drive and spare ourselves the drama."

—Gayla R. Postma

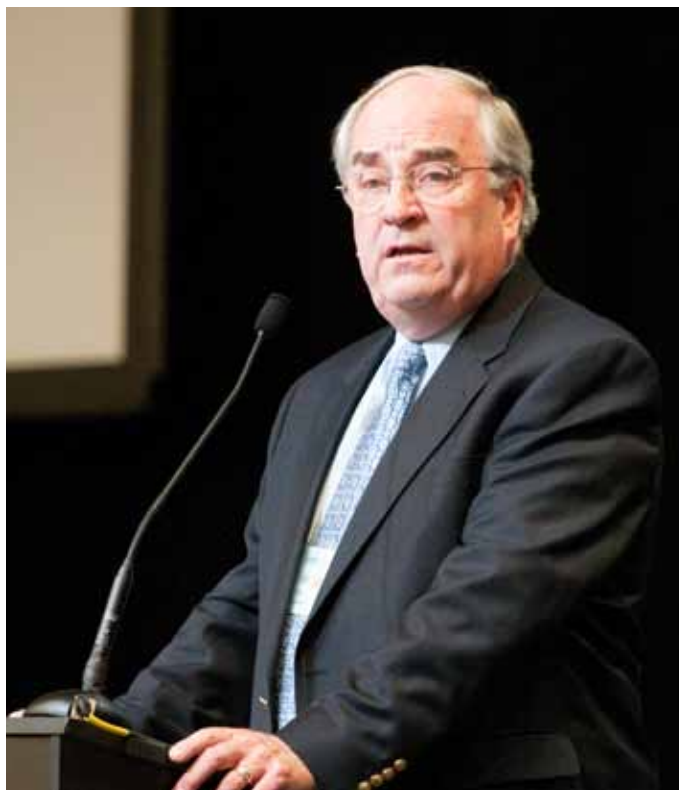
Outgoing Director Urges Church to Put Faith in God, Minister to 'Broken World'

Rev. Joel Boot celebrates gains, challenges church to do more

In an emotional speech, Rev. Joel Boot delivered his last "state of the church" address as executive director of the Christian Reformed Church. He both celebrated the church's progress during his three-year tenure and challenged it to do more.

Boot was appointed interim executive director in 2011 and extended his stay last year after a nominee withdrew. He placed the arduous search for a new executive director in divine context as well: "While we looked, God led. And though patience sometimes wore thin, and hope was frequently wounded along the way, the wait was worth it, and we are better for it."

Boot wiped away tears as delegates gave him an extended standing ovation at the end of his talk. Synod president Rev. Scott Greenway fought tears of his own as he praised Boot's handling of



Rev. Joel Boot delivers his last 'state of the church' address before stepping down as the CRC's executive director.

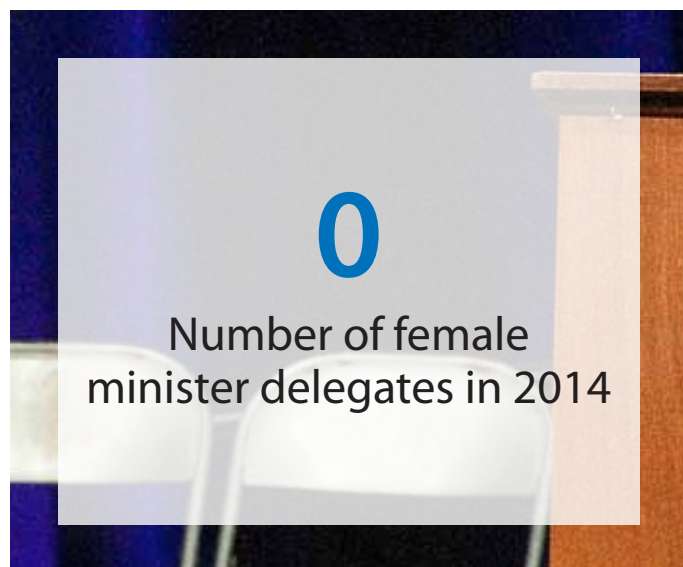
a difficult transition after the previous executive director stepped down.

"You have served well," Greenway said. "You have sought to be transparent and you have always been honest. It's just been a joy watching you serve."

An abridged version of Boot's speech can be found in his last "The View from Here" column ("In the Arms of God," p. 54). Next month's "View" will be written by incoming executive director Steven Timmermans.

—Charles Honey

Terry De Young, RCA coordinator for Disability Concerns: "If you've never met Mark or me in person, or if after our presentation you'd like to keep it that way . . . we still hope that you will go to our Facebook page and like us!"



Female Delegate Count Lowest in Six Years

Of the 185 delegates at Synod 2014, only 13 were women. That's 7 percent of delegates, the lowest percentage since the role was opened to women in 2008. No minister delegates this year were female.

Synod 2008 had a record 13 percent women, and Rev. Thea Leunk served as vice president. Women served as officers of synod from 2008 to 2012. No women served as officers in 2013 or 2014, and synod has never had a female president.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Rev. Darren Roorda, new Canadian ministries director of the Christian Reformed Church.

Roorda Ready to Serve Canadian Churches

"I love Jesus, and I want everybody to know about him," said Rev. Darren Roorda, introducing himself to Synod 2014. "That's who I am, but the way I do it is about to change."

Roorda, a self-described "proud Canadian," is leaving his role as lead pastor of Community Christian Reformed Church, a 900-member congregation in Kitchener, Ontario. Synod 2014 ratified his appointment by the CRC's Board of Trustees as the new Canadian ministries director.

"I am terribly enthused about the excitement of serving more people and more churches," Roorda told delegates. "I'm also terrified."

Roorda said he and Steve Timmermans, who will step into the role of executive director, are both "fools for Christ": "It's a temptation to say 'Look how ready we are,'" he said, "but there's something about being a fool for Christ."

He said he is also aware of the challenges that the church faces, such as declining membership. "I'm aware of what's going on. I want to spend my life dying, living, and working for this cause."

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Synod Retains Ethnic Adviser Role

Synod 2014 acted to ensure that "the perspectives of ethnic minorities in the [denomination will] be expressed" at future synods.

Synod reinstated the practice of having ethnic advisers, which delegates had learned earlier would be discontinued. This year, for the first time since ethnic advisers first were invited to synod in 1997, a threshold of 25 delegates of diverse backgrounds was reached. Synod 1996 had decided that once that threshold was met, ethnic advisers would no longer be necessary.

But the grounds for the new resolution adopted by this synod state: "The makeup of one particular synod does not necessarily constitute a trend toward increased diversity in the [Christian Reformed Church]."

Going forward, synods will continue the practice of only convening ethnic advisers as necessary to reach the benchmark of 25 persons of ethnic minority.

"This is about the spirit of the thing," said Rev. John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto. "We trust that the process will be blessed, and that in time we'll get out of having to socially construct things this way. . . . But we need to make certain we have a joyful diversity."

"Thank you for your obvious support of ethnic advisers," said elder

Delegates from Ethnic Minorities by the Numbers

This year, there were 28 delegates from ethnic minorities:

- Hispanic: 7
- Native American: 3
- African American: 7
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 11

Mack Randall, Classis Grand Rapids North. "The heart of God is being shown at this synod. If things keep going the way they are at this synod, there will come a time when the minorities here will say 'We are well-represented here.' . . . I have no doubt that day will come soon."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Rev. Scott Greenway, when synod acknowledged the retirement of associate professor of Old Testament Studies Carl Bosma: "I've been Carl's pastor the last several years. I've preached mainly from the New Testament!"



Elder Mack Randall, Classis Grand Rapids North: "The heart of God is being shown at this synod. If things keep going the way they are at this synod, there will come a time when the minorities here will say 'We are well-represented here.' . . . I have no doubt that day will come soon."

Board of Trustees President: God Has Allowed Us to Grow Together



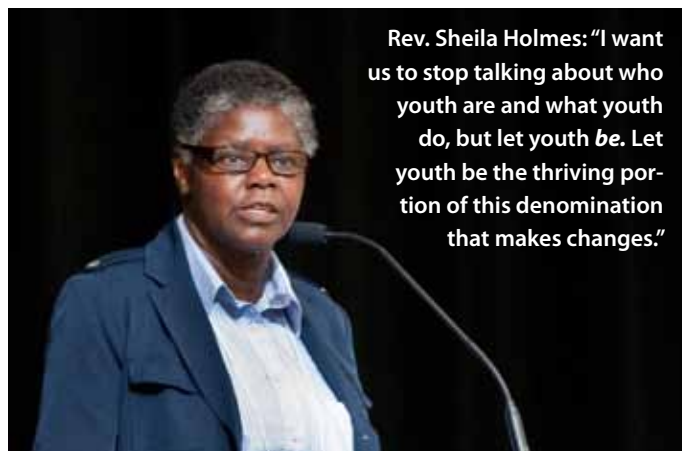
Executive director Rev. Joel Boot thanked Ben Vandezande (above) for his service as interim Canadian ministries director. "You stepped into a difficult situation and conducted yourself with honor and integrity. You are a master at what you do because you do it for your Master, and we thank you."

For Rev. Sheila Holmes, it has been a long journey from first arriving in a Christian Reformed Church chapel at age 11 to becoming the first woman and first African American to serve as president of the CRC's Board of Trustees. In an address to Synod 2014, Holmes exhorted delegates to continue the church's journey toward becoming a more diverse and active body of Christ.

"I challenge you to move to a place where we are not just doing things because we can intellectually do it, but because the Spirit of God is compelling and moving us to do it," Holmes said in her Board of Trustees report.

Having completed her six-year term on the board, including the past year as president, Holmes said it has been a great year but that greater challenges lie ahead.

She pointed to the appointment of a new executive director, Steven Timmermans, and a new Canadian ministries director, Darren Roorda. She also noted—though with a caveat—that the percentage of ethnic minority



Rev. Sheila Holmes: "I want us to stop talking about who youth are and what youth do, but let youth *be*. Let youth be the thriving portion of this denomination that makes changes."

delegates was high enough this year that ethnic advisers were no longer needed.

"As we come to be the body of Christ, it is not enough for us to have just 25 people of ethnicity at synod and say we've done our job," Holmes said. "There's more that is needed."

More is needed too, she said, to put flesh on the bones of new initiatives such as the Task Force to Review Structure and Culture, closer work with the Reformed Church in America, and increased emphasis on being a binational church.

"Just because we put it on paper and say this is the way it is, is not enough," she said. "We will not get anywhere but just have new paper and new things we can quote and say. But it will not change our lives."

Likewise, the church needs to do more than just pay lip service to greater participation by young

people, she added. "I want us to stop talking about who youth are and what youth do, but let youth *be*. Let youth be the thriving portion of this denomination that makes changes."

She gave thanks to CRC administrators and trustees for their work and support of her, as well as those who encouraged her to find a faith home in a mostly white church in Paterson, N.J. She went on to become a minister and served on the board of Christian Reformed Home Missions before joining the Board of Trustees.

"I can say to you I am not Dutch, and I'm happy about that. But I want to say to you, I am worth much," she said, to laughter and applause.

"There's been rough years and there's been good years," she said of the CRC. "As we are coming through the good years, God has continued to allow us to grow together."

—Charles Honey



8
Percentage of delegates younger than 35

Rev. John Tenyenhuis, announcing that elder Diane Plug would be synod's sergeant-at-arms: "Diane was my Sunday school teacher. You don't want to cross her. It's grace with law."

Plug: "I was his Sunday school teacher when I was 13. He was terrible. It's only by the grace of God that we're both still here."

Timmermans Appointed Executive Director

When Synod 2014 voted to appoint Steven Timmermans as the new executive director of the Christian Reformed Church, it was clear that the delegates had heard the heart of a man who, when asked to describe himself, listed several possible descriptions, closing simply with “a child of God.”

The former principal, psychologist, professor, dean, and college president indicated his



Steven Timmermans was joined on the podium by his wife, Barbara, and three of their seven children, (l-r) Getenet, Fekadu, and Paul. The Timmermans also have four daughters.

Steven Timmermans, executive director-elect of the CRC.



need to “learn more and more” while avoiding distractions. The gifts he brings to the position, he said, are humility . . . and the ability to juggle a number of things, while acknowledging the need to be grounded in the Word and the body of Christ. “I’m not all that gifted,” he said, “but I am suited temperamentally for this kind of role.”

Timmermans comes to his position after spending the last 10 years as president of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill. This is the first time an executive director of the CRC is not an ordained minister.

being ordained simply by saying, “I feel called to this position.” Delegates saw Timmerman’s experience, sensitivity, and concern for all God’s children as someone who’s dealt directly with people with special needs.

Timmermans has already served as an elder and a deacon and in other capacities within the church. He anticipates being ordained as a commissioned pastor. “My vocational pursuit has aligned me with ministry, all forms of ministry,” he said. “That means working as a team, leading together, and working with

ordained leaders and all members of the church.”

Key to his view of living out discipleship daily, he said, are words from John Perkins on “reconciliation and relocation.” This has led to his family’s living in different neighborhoods as well as his involvement in a variety of hands-on ministries. He described himself as a child of God and of the Christian Reformed Church. His motivation, he said, is reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism’s “sin, salvation, service/gratitude” theme. He testified, “God is my loving Father, and I owe him a debt of gratitude.”

Timmermans likened the affirmed resolution of cooperation between the Reformed Church in America and the CRC to the unity

Rich DeLange, reporter for Advisory Committee 2: “I don’t think we need to vote on prayers, do we?”

candle at a wedding. The central candle represents the new cooperative efforts as the church fulfills its mission, while keeping the original candles burning.

Timmermans said there is an increased need for church members to challenge each generation to share its love for Christ and then step outside to share that in meaningful ways. “We need to be mindful about discipleship and spiritual formation.” For him this has meant being involved in various Bible study groups involving vulnerability and commitment. “It will take everyone’s owning the vision,” he said.

Specifically addressing young adults, Timmermans spoke passionately about linking arms with them in doing ministry without first appointing a committee to study how to do what. “If young adults want to build a well, they just go out and do it!”

He noted that cultural idols facing the church are individualism and materialism. “It’s our focus on ‘me’ and ‘things.’”

He also said renewing trust in denominational leadership will take time. He confidently and expectantly assured synod that goals are in place but need working on together.

Synod’s vote judged that Timmermans is ready to lead the effort.

—George Vink

Calvin College Professor: Science, Biblical Confessions Not Incompatible

The challenge of pursuing scientific truth while being true to biblical confessions is one the Christian Reformed Church cannot ignore, a Calvin College scholar told a group of Synod 2014 delegates. The setting was an optional lunchtime forum for delegates.

Loren Haarsma, an associate professor of physics, said Christian doctrine is compatible with biological evolution but that questions and possibilities abound within that framework.

"In the church we have a range of views on biblical hermeneutics, the age of the earth, and biological evolution," Haarsma said at a luncheon hosted by the college. "How do we deal with that as a church and as a Christian college?"

The answers are far from simple, but scholars like Haarsma are exploring them with integrity, Calvin president Michael Le Roy told the group.

"This is an example of a scientist being rigorous about the science and being faithful about the confessions," Le Roy said. "You can see it's far more complex than the oversimplified views that often get portrayed."

The forum aimed to help delegates gain insight into a Calvin-produced report on "confessional commitments and academic freedom." Synod had earlier accepted the report, which was requested by Synods 2011 and 2012 out of concern about college teachings on human origins and evolution. The report is not a position statement but an explanation



Dr. Loren Haarsma of Calvin College: "Christian doctrine is compatible with biological evolution, but questions and possibilities abound within that framework."

of the context in which the college does its work, officials said.

Calling confessional commitments and academic freedom "indispensable and interdependent elements" that shape the school's teaching, the report acknowledges that many Christians are "disturbed" by apparent conflicts between modern science and the creation accounts of Genesis. It also asserts that it is "critically important" for Calvin faculty to "engage fully and deeply in the study of evolution and origins."

Haarsma, who gives presentations to churches and runs a seminar series on Christian perspectives on science, gave no definitive answer to the contro-

versial questions. Instead he offered a range of scenarios that have been proposed as to who Adam and Eve were. They included being specially created about 8,000 years ago, selected as representatives from among many humans, and symbolic of many revelations from God in the ancient past.

Haarsma also presented different views of the historical origins of original sin, the scientific evidence on human origins, and what Scripture reveals about such issues. He stressed that scientific findings don't rule out God or miracles, and that evolution doesn't rule out God.

"If we can see gravity as God's way of keeping things going in the universe and tectonic plates colliding to form mountains as God working naturally, we can see God working through the evolutionary process," Haarsma said.

Asked by a delegate how confident he is in the theory of evolution and humans having common ancestry with other life forms, Haarsma said "the science is really good" from "multiple streams of evidence." Other delegates questioned how the possibilities he posed relate to Scripture.

"How does the wrath of God against a sinful humanity play into these scenarios?" asked Rev. Jeffery Scripps of Classis Georgetown.

Rev. Paul Vander Klay, a pastor from Classis Central California, told Haarsma afterward he appreciated that he was addressing the issues.

"Part of the problem we have in the denomination is we're not talking about this in a helpful way," Vander Klay said. "I appreciate your courage. The church needs it."

—Charles Honey

New Calvin Seminary Prof Has ‘the Heart of a Teacher’



Sarah Steen Schreiber, appointed assistant professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary: “I don’t want my students to remember me. I want them to have an encounter with God’s Word. I want to get out of the way.”

The new assistant professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary put on a bit of a short course for Synod 2014 delegates during her interview.

Delegates peppered Sarah Steen Schreiber with questions about her area of expertise before approving her as an assistant professor at the Christian Reformed seminary. Her ready responses and youthful charm seemed to solidify her qualifications in the minds of the delegates.

“This is like a free course in the Old Testament, so that’s why we just keep lining up,” quipped Rev. Dan Roeda of Classis Wisconsin.

Schreiber appeared to delight in the questioning, in keeping with her professed love of the church and of teaching.

“I believe God has given me the heart of a teacher,” Schreiber said during an interview in front of delegates.

Her appointment came on the same day she was approved as a candidate for ministry in the CRC. Schreiber has a master of divinity degree from Calvin Seminary and is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Notre Dame. The Calvin College graduate has also taught courses at the seminary.

Delegates were impressed by her grasp of Hebrew and eight other ancient and modern languages, her breadth of biblical knowledge, and depth of scholarship. The fact she has just been approved for ministry at age 30 and is the mother of a 2-month-old son seemed to weigh in her favor.

“I believe I can bring diversity to the faculty, both my gender and with my age,” Schreiber said. “I have many years I hope I can serve at the seminary and grow.”

Schreiber grew up in Holland, Mich., attending Park Christian Reformed Church. She said she was “the churchy one” among her friends. “From an early age, I just loved the church.” A trip to Turkey at age 16 through a seminary program increased her interest in serving the church by teaching, she said. Falling in love with the “playful and clever” language of Hebrew solidified it.

She said she wants to excite students about the language and the biblical stories it tells.

“Even though our tradition holds the Old Testament in such

high regard, there’s still some struggle with it sometimes. It feels foreign. I’d really like to help people understand it better.”

When interviewer Rev. Doug MacLeod asked what God seeks to reveal in the opening chapters of Genesis, Schreiber had a ready answer: “God did it, and wow, isn’t it wonderful?” Unlike creation stories in other traditions, she added, in Genesis “the creation of the world isn’t a result of conflict but a result of God’s delight.”

Asked how she would instill her enthusiasm for the text in her

students, she was equally direct: “I don’t want my students to remember me. I want them to have an encounter with God’s Word. I want to get out of the way.”

—Charles Honey

Synod president **Rev. Scott Greenway:** “I hear murmuring . . . this is good! Just remember, the Israelites did the same thing and it didn’t turn out so well!”



Some of the candidates for ministry who were present in Iowa to be congratulated and blessed by Synod 2014.

Synod Celebrates 49 Candidates for Ministry

Synod 2014 approved 49 candidates for the office of Minister of the Word. Sixteen made the trip to Pella, Iowa, to share in synod’s rejoicing that six women and 43 men are now available to be called to a variety of ministries.

Calvin Theological Seminary president Rev. Julius Medenblik addressed those present and those watching on the synod webcast with John 15:4: “Remain in me . . . and apart from me you can do nothing.” He called candidates to remember “who you are and Whose you are,” not only in times of transition but as they face the challenges of obedience in doing fruitful ministry.

—George Vink

Classis Pacific Hanmi Becomes Two Classes

Synod gladly acceded to the request of Classis Pacific Hanmi to divide and form two separate classes (regional groups of churches). Pacific Hanmi is the Christian Reformed Church's classis for churches that are primarily Korean-speaking. The classis has grown from 11 churches to more than 50.

The division means there will be two classes focused on ministering to those desiring to work primarily in Korean. Elder Roger Ryu reminded the delegates that 120 years ago the mission was Korea, and today Korea is one of the largest missionary-sending countries.

Ryu expressed the classis' appreciation for the "prayers, support, teaching, and tears" provided by Rev. David Koll, their advisor,



and Rev. Tong Park, formerly the CRC's Korean ministry director.

As they grow, these classes are committed to learning the "CRC mind, or way of doing things" like the rule of council, not just elders. Rhu promised, "We will work hard."

Korean pastors and elders at synod stood holding hands on the podium as the assembly praised God, praying and singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" in Korean and in English.

—George Vink

Korean pastors join hands as synod celebrates growth in the Korean churches.

Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture Requests Feedback

Responding to a task force that is asking them to "discern but not decide," Synod 2014 delegates considered three options for restructuring the administrative structure of the Christian Reformed Church.

The options were presented by the Task Force for Reviewing Structure and Culture. Synod 2011 created the task force after the executive director and director of denominational ministries resigned that year. Those resignations revealed the need to examine the CRC's organizational culture and administrative structures, according to Synod 2011's statement. The working task force plans to present its final report to Synod 2015.

This year the task force asked delegates to "analyze and address the 'dual authority and accountability' that currently exists between agency boards and the Board of Trustees, which has at times led to confusion, duplication, suspicion and tension."

The problem? Denominational agencies have their own boards with delegated authority from synod but must also report to and be responsible to the CRC's Board of Trustees (BOT).

The three options presented were:

- Option A: Keep things the same.
- Option B: No longer delegate synod's authority to the agencies, only to the BOT, and change agency boards to advisory councils reporting to the BOT.
- Option C: Replace the BOT with a Council of Delegates, with one member elected from each of the 47 classes and 12 to 15 at-large delegates, which would meet twice per year, and an executive of 12 people who would meet more frequently. Boards of some or all agencies would become advisory committees.

After discussion around their tables, synod delegates were asked to email their

preferences, questions, and responses to the task force. Synod voted to extend that process of discernment to "the church, its agencies, boards, and planning groups." Church members can give their input by emailing TFRSC2014@crcna.org.

"The idea is, how can we best structure ourselves to affect the culture to be interactive, supportive, and encouraging," said task force member Joel Boot, executive director of the CRC.

"This is so terribly important—this is a huge deal," said task force member Rev. Scott Greenway. "We need some solid feedback."

Also in response to the task force, synod voted to explore development of a nominating committee to identify candidates for boards and committees and the opportunity to train board members in board governance.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Synod Rejects Request to Study Creation Account

A synodical study committee is not needed since biblical scholars at colleges related to the Christian Reformed Church are already doing the work.

That's how Synod 2014 responded to a request for a new study committee to examine recent theologies that deny the



Calvin College president Michael Le Roy: "The college's confessional guidelines for faculty are succeeding in their purpose."

historicity of the Genesis account of creation and assert that Adam and Eve are literary, not historical, figures.

"The ongoing work of [CRC affiliated colleges] doesn't warrant us putting resources and money into [a study committee] for six years," said Chris De Vos, reporter for the advisory committee to synod.

The overture referred extensively to two former religion professors at Calvin College—Dan Harlow and John Schneider—whose 2009 papers questioned the historicity of Adam and Eve and the historicity of the Genesis accounts of creation and the fall.

Calvin College president Michael Le Roy said that the case of Harlow and Schneider is an example of how the college's confessional guidelines for faculty are succeeding in their purpose. Meanwhile, Le Roy said, other faculty members are working hard to help church members who struggle with how the science of origins fits with their faith.

"For the last 25 years, science has been moving so quickly, and Christians are left with simplistic options that aren't very helpful," said Le Roy. "This is the kind of work that biblical scholars are only beginning now to articulate. It's wise to not yet convene a study committee, but rather trust the process. . . . We hope to assemble sufficient resources to clarify core questions."

Some delegates expressed their trust of this process, while others were not so sure.

"I'm so happy that the college is really looking into it—it's important that we do something," said John Venema, Classis Eastern Canada. "If we older folks think that this is a discussion that isn't happening with young people, we're wrong."

In response to the overture's request for pastoral guidance, synod instructed the Board of Trustees to have Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and other denominational colleges "make available to a future synod a list of resources on the relationship of science and theology, especially as they relate to the doctrines of creation, fall, original sin, and the atonement, and to organize one or more conferences or open conversations on these same topics."

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Elder John Venema, Classis Eastern Canada: "If we older folks think that this is a discussion that isn't happening with young people, we're wrong."



Back row (l-r): Corey Van Dyk, Daniel Gradert, Nicole Veenkamp; Front row (l-r) Ben Li-Madison, Justin Verwoerd, Nicholas Chuba, Ivory Niewenhuis

Young Adult Representatives Cherished at Synod

Synod 2014 welcomed seven young adult representatives, who by their presence and contributions helped delegates be more aware of that segment of the church. They came from the east and the west, from the U.S. and Canada.

Corey Van Dyk said, "I was excited to see how the church makes decisions as it faces the challenges before it." Ivory Niewenhuis observed the passion and relationships developing as all kinds of networking was taking place. That was most important to her.

Nicholas Chuba addressed synod on behalf of the representatives. He said that two words best express their experience: "uplifted" and "cherished." Uplifted because they saw power in the way organizations work together and how appreciative synod was of their input as they sought to represent other young adults. Cherished, he said, because people like Ben Vande Zande smiled at them regularly and Sheila Holmes expressed genuine concern for their well-being.

Chuba ended his remarks by expressing his thanks for CRC executive director Joel Boot's willingness and encouragement that made the representatives feel supported and a part of the church. With deep emotion he added, "We've gained confidence to express our faith. We'll cherish it for the rest of our lives."

—George Vink

Synod president **Rev. Scott Greenway:** "I'm sure (seminary professor) Carl Bosma could teach us much about lament, but he is not here."

Delegate: "Lamentably so."



Synod 2014's deacon advisers (l-r): Dick Van Eck, Mary Osinga, Bernard Feenstra, Trena Boonstra, Tamara Haveman, Jenny Bakker, and Val McWilliams

Synod 2014 Welcomes Deacon Advisers

This was the first year synod invited deacons to serve as advisers. "It's really interesting to see the workings of our denomination," said deacon adviser Mary Osinga, "and to find all these passionate people who care so much about what they are doing."

In their closing comments, two deacons, Tamara Haveman and Bernard Feenstra, thanked the Board of Trustees for appointing them and allowing them the privilege of serving synod in this capacity. They spoke of it being an honor and a historic event to be at synod as there is now the expectation of an expanded role. [Synod 2015 will decide if synod delegations will include deacons starting in 2016.]

"We are impressed to see the work of the denomination in a big-picture way and are thankful for all those individuals who have the gift of attention to detail and help it all come together," they said. "Each of us took something unique from those experiences."

The deacons are excited about conveying what they learned to their congregations and area churches. They observed, "We think the greatest compliment a person can give another individual is to say 'my Jesus is more real to me because of you.' The deacon advisers can say that our Jesus is more real to each of us because we were here. God bless."

—George Vink

Synod Adds Workshops to Agenda

This year for the first time, delegates to Synod 2014 had the opportunity to attend workshops on a variety of ministry topics, such as ministry to people at the margins, the shape of theological education in the 21st century, the value of biblical advocacy, discipling through transitions, and many more.

Rev. Andrew Beunk, Classis British Columbia Northwest, attended



Trena Boonstra: "The workshop on Muslim/Christian relations was exceedingly interesting."

a workshop on ecumenicity. "It was very encouraging, eye-opening," he said. "It broadened my sense of current ecumenical activity. If this kind of ecumenicity is happening with denominational leaders, what a model for local churches!"

Dave Vander Goot of Classis Muskegon attended a workshop about churches being prepared for disaster. "I like it," he said. "We're a long way from what we should have in place, so I'm bringing this back home to talk about with the elders."

Deacon advisor Trena Boonstra attended a workshop on Muslim/Christian relations and found it "exceedingly interesting."

Beunk thought adding the workshops was a great idea. "The hard part was picking which one," he said, "but they should be a regular part of synod."

—Gayla R. Postma



Rev. Andrew Beunk: "The workshops should be a regular part of synod."



Dr. Ronald Nydam



Dr. Carl Bosma

Synod 2014 Celebrates Milestones

Synod 2014 celebrated the retirements of two professors at Calvin Theological Seminary as well as anniversaries of Christian Reformed ministries.

- Dr. Ronald Nydam, professor of pastoral care, and Dr. Carl Bosma, associate professor of Old Testament, retired from Calvin Theological Seminary.
- Indian Family Centre, a Canadian aboriginal ministry in Winnipeg, Manitoba, celebrated its 40th anniversary.
- Calvin Theological Seminary celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Ph.D. program.
- Back to God Ministries International celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Delegates Pray for Missing Minister

Synod 2014 delegates paid painful and prayerful tribute to Rev. George Vander Weit, a retired minister who long served among them and has been missing for nearly a year.

Vander Weit disappeared on July 5, 2013, after going on a bike ride from his home in Rochester, Mich. Several search parties subsequently turned up nothing.

Vander Weit served Christian Reformed congregations for 40 years and was a delegate at more than a dozen synods. He was a champion of women's ordination and an active speaker on the synod floor.

Rev. David Kromminga of Classis Grand Rapids East, who said he often sat next to Vander Weit at synod, called delegates' attention to his absence in a trembling voice.

"I learned so much from George, and a lot of us remember George here at synod," Kromminga said. "George and I had a joke that I would be the bad cop and he would be the worse cop. George deeply cared for this church. And he would speak up even when it was uncomfortable to do so.

"I had this hopeful vision George would come riding his bike here to Pella, Iowa, and have a joyful reunion with us."



Rev. George Vander Weit at Synod 2010.



Rev. David Kromminga, Classis Grand Rapids East: "I had this hopeful vision George would come riding his bike here to Pella, Iowa, and have a joyful reunion with us."

Synod president Rev. Scott Greenway called to mind Vander Weit's wife, Bonnie, and his three sons and daughter. "These things weigh heavy on that family, the church, and his circle of friends and colleagues," Greenway said.

Elder James Jones of Classis Grand Rapids East led delegates in prayer for their longtime brother in faith.

"We come, Lord, bringing your beloved son and his family before your throne," Jones prayed. "It grieves our heart to not know where he is, to not know how he's doing, and to think of what Bonnie and the family are all going through."

"He was such a great teacher. I called him the king of overtures. So he is deeply missed."

Jones asked God to bring peace and comfort to his family and reveal answers to his mysterious disappearance.

"I ask, O Lord, that you might give an answer to where George is at. It would warm all of our hearts for him to come riding up on a bike, to come back home. It's so hard to have closure when you don't know what has happened.

"May you give us all assurance, Lord, that he is in your care and your hands."

—Charles Honey

Synod 2014 Approves Ministry Shares Increase, Declines to Authorize Study of Fiscal Guidelines

The Christian Reformed Church synod approved a 1 percent increase in per-member ministry shares for 2015 to help fund the

denomination's shared ministry. But delegates declined to approve a proposed study of how CRC agencies and institutions

manage and invest their funds, saying current policies and safeguards are sufficient.

Delegates to Synod 2014 approved the ministry share hike to \$336.12 per adult confessing member.

Delegates also received an encouraging report on the CRCNA ministers' pension plan from John Bolt, director of finance and administration. In the past three years, the Canadian plan has increased from 60 percent funded to 84 percent, and the U.S. plan from 67 percent to 89 percent, Bolt said.

A group of churches from Canada had petitioned synod to appoint a study committee to provide guidelines for management of donated funds by CRC agencies and institutions. The request from Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan said more than \$100 million in debt resulting from investment losses was incurred by Calvin College and suggested that a review was needed to prevent "risky investment strategies."

However, the advisory committee report to synod said

Ken Benjamins, frustrated with the speaker line-up system: "I swear I put my name in there."

Vice-chair **Jake Kuipers**: "Well, don't swear, just put it in there."

the request was based on "misunderstandings" and that the issues "did not involve a breach of policy or the use of risky investments." Current investment and oversight policies of the CRCNA and Calvin assure "careful stewardship," the committee found.

Calvin president Michael Le Roy said that the college's financial woes were not caused by its investments but by spending more on building projects than it had raised funds for. "I'm very much in favor of being good fiduciaries, but I feel in this instance the college has fulfilled that," Le Roy told delegates.

—Charles Honey

Delegate: "Who are these Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians? I don't know anything about them."

Vice-chair **Rev. Jake Kuipers**: "You didn't see any running around?"



Ministry Share Allocation:

Back to God Ministries International	\$43.97
Calvin College	\$31.60
Calvin Theological Seminary	\$35.91
Christian Reformed Home Missions	\$46.88
Christian Reformed World Missions	\$60.56
Faith Alive/Banner and Church Resources	\$9.81
Synodical Administrative Services ¹	\$32.28
Faith Formation and Church Support Ministries ²	\$71.42
Special Assistance Fund ³	\$3.69
TOTAL Per Member Share ⁴	\$336.12

Note: World Renew does not receive ministry shares.

Ministry Share Breakdown for Fiscal 2015

¹ Synod Assembly, Board of Trustees, and General Administration

² Includes Chaplaincy and Care Ministries, Disability Concerns, ministries in Canada (Aboriginal Ministries, Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue), Pastor-Church Relations, Race Relations, Office of Social Justices, Restorative Justice, Safe Church Ministry

³ A fund that provides assistance to cover the cost of a pastor's final move at retirement, as well as special needs of retired pastors or their surviving spouses.

⁴ These amounts represent allocation for the \$336.12 ministry shares for the 2015 fiscal year budget (July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015).

Synod 2014 Returns to Close Fellowship with PCN

After a lengthy debate, Synod 2014 voted 90 to 85, with six abstentions, to move into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. That is the closest level of ecumenical relationships between churches. The relationship with the PCN was estranged many years ago because its stance on some issues, such as same-sex marriage, is in conflict with that of the CRC.

Delegate Joshua Van Til, Classis Columbia, expressed surprise at the recommendation. "What is the hope here?" Deputy executive director Peter Borgdorff said that the PCN had indicated its desire for this closer relationship. He explained that Synod 2008 had set the CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee in this direction.

Van Til asked again, "Is it at the grassroots level? Do we have a common ministry with the PCN?" Rev. John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto, stated that we have varying ecumenical relations for different reasons at different levels of relating, reminding delegates of Jesus' prayer in John 17 expressing a desire for unity as the church's testimony to the world. He suggested, "Now is not a time to be sectarian in a world of oppression, hatred, violence. . . . We partner with those who are concerned about justice and peace."

Rev. Rich DeLange, Alberta North, questioned moving into closer relationship. "I don't follow why we need to raise the level of



Rev. Rich deLange, Classis Alberta North: "I don't follow why we need to raise the level of dialogue to ecclesiastical fellowship. [The PCN's theology has not changed.]"



Rev. John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto: "Now is not a time to be sectarian in a world of oppression, hatred, violence. . . . We partner with those who are concerned about justice and peace."

dialogue to ecclesiastical fellowship," he said. "[The] PCN's theology has not changed."

Elder Mack Randall, Classis Grand Rapids North, said, "We excluded them. They did not exclude us. Have we taken care of the problem evident when we excluded them?" Rev. Douglas Bratt, reporter for the synod's advisory committee on this matter, responded, "We can humbly help them with some of their discussions. They're asking us to come alongside of them to be partners in their discussion." Borgdorff added, "We're in a better

position to dialogue now with the PCN regarding their issues than we were in the 90s. We're confident enough of our own theology."

Some delegates questioned the recommendation, quoting information from Wikipedia. "Don't believe everything you read on the media," said Rev. Andrew Beunk, Classis British Columbia North-west.

Borgdorff added, "Remember, those who have worked on this recommendation for years voted unanimously in favor. 'Facts' from the web are statements of fear [that] we know little or nothing about. Please don't make decisions based on such information. Judge the PCN by its written documents. It has the same creeds and confessions we do."

—George Vink



Building Memorials at the Synodical Service of Praise



Rev. Peter Borgdorff: "I propose that we build a memorial."

"I propose that we build a memorial," said Rev. Peter Borgdorff, as 12 people piled up 12 large stones in front of the stage at Vermeer Pavilion in Pella, Iowa.

The occasion was the Service of Praise at Synod 2014. It was attended by 1,700 people, including delegates from the synods of both the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America, as well as members of the community. The service took place about 24 hours after a joint session of the synods of both churches adopted a resolution

pledging to work together in all things except those in which deep differences of conviction compel separate action.

"I want you to think about what the memorial is about," Borgdorff said after the stones were piled up. "Last night . . . the two synods were in joint session, and we passed a resolution that we are committed to be message bearers together. . . . Part of our privilege is to be disciples of the one who is mighty. So often we think it depends mostly on us, that we have to be obedient and devout. The result is that we make

ourselves the center of our reference. If we turn that around, in building a memorial we confess that we are the children of God, called to be his disciples, loved by him, embraced by him, sent by him because he has a message worth sharing."

Borgdorff told those gathered that when we recall the mighty acts of God in the memorials, it is not about what we have done and what we have committed to, but that we want to tell the story of what God is doing. "He loves us, accepts us with our shortcomings, our insensitivities, and also accepts us with our commitments, with our ears listening and our eyes open. He accepts us in that spirit too, so that we can face the future together in the confidence of knowing God cares, and he will lead."

The service was led by people from both denominations. Borgdorff is from the CRC, and the liturgy was led by Rev. Liz Testa, an RCA pastor from the New York area. Worship included a choir made up of RCA seminarians and

CRC young adult representatives to synod.

"I'm grateful to be part of this fellowship," Borgdorff said. "I hope you are too. I'm grateful that together we are part of a multitude that no one can number of generations before us who told us the meaning of these stones, that prepares us to tell the story to our children and our grandchildren. It's a story worth telling, found in the work and sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Blessed be his marvelous deeds."

—Gayla R. Postma



Liturgist Rev. Liz Testa, Coordinator for Women's Transformation and Leadership.



Candidate Joel Klingenberg (center) with his wife, Kelsey, and his dad, Rev. Jeff Klingenberg, Classis Hamilton.



Candidate Jonathan DeRuiter (center), with his wife, Laura, and his dad, Rev. Rich DeRuiter, Classis Pacific Northwest.



Adam Eisinga, Classis Minnkota, standing at the microphone holding an apple: "When Adam brings an apple, things never go well."



Rev. Jeff Scripps, Classis Georgetown (left), enjoyed his first synod with his father, Rev. Stan Scripps, Classis Holland.

Announcement from **IT staff**: "If you brought your own laptop, you may bring it home with you."



Sergeant-at-arms Diane Plug, Classis Chatham: "Kindly think of me as the lady who is ready to scoop you up and get you to work on the task we have at hand."

Armed with a Snow Shovel

Every year, synod elects a "sergeant-at-arms" whose job is to enforce a time limit on delegates' coffee breaks.

In honor of their shared Canadian heritage, John Tenyenhuis presented this year's official with a snow shovel.

"This is a scepter of office," Tenyenhuis told sergeant-at-arms Diane Plug, an elder from Classis Chatham. "It's actually a snow shovel. There is no snow, so you will have to scoop other things. Carry this proudly, and shove people to the meeting on time."

"Kindly think of me as the lady who is ready to scoop you up and get you to work on the task we have at hand," Plug said to the delegates.

Tenyenhuis said that, as Canadians, they were "trying to make this a nonviolent Synod."

Delegate Rod Hugen of Classis Arizona objected. "I was hoping to get elected but was not because I am burly and hairy. We should love on burly and hairy people," he said.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Candidate Adrian de Lange (center), with his wife, Kaylee, and his dad, Rev. Rich de Lange, Classis Alberta North.

Still Preaching after All These Years

Most of these guys hadn't seen each other since their days at Calvin Theological Seminary in the early 1980s. They enjoyed some back-slapping and jokes as they served as delegates at Synod 2014. Seminary grads of 1984 are Verlan Van Ee and Doug Macleod; 1985 grads are Chris de Vos, John Groen, Michael Kooy, Dan Roeda, and Jack Van de Hoef; and 1986 grads are Sid Couperus, Tony Maan, and Stan Scripps.



Candidate John Medendorp

Family Legacy Continues

Candidate John Medendorp is following the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. All four men are or were pastors, and all four share the same name. Medendorp said he gradually discovered his gifts for pastoring. He "never felt pressured at all" to become a pastor—"and I still don't."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Rev. Joel Boot: "My mind is 67 years old, so I can't think of it right now. Peter, can you help me out? Peter's mind is older than mine, but he has more time."

Rev. Peter Borgdorff: "Maybe the chair could contain the [executive director] a bit more."



L-r: Rev. Jay Pruim, Rev. Joel Boot, Rev. Roger Bouman, Rev. Dale Fopma

One Church, Four Synod Leaders

Calvin Christian Reformed Church in LeMars, Iowa, is not a large congregation, but it provided large blessings to four leaders at Synod 2014. Three ministers had their first pastorates there, and for a fourth it was his second.

Rev. Jay Pruim, Classis Grandville, began his ministry in the church from 1967 to 1971. Rev. Joel Boot, the CRC's outgoing executive director, followed in 1972. Rev. Roger Bouwman, Classis Heartland, arrived in 1977. Rev. Dale Fopma, Classis Grandville, had his second pastorate there from 2003 to 2008.

Calvin CRC was a fruitful place to begin ministry, the pastors agreed. "There were good people in that church," Pruim said. "It was a good training ground."

—Charles Honey

3,456

Number of cups of coffee consumed by delegates



Rev. Bob De Moor, editor of *The Banner* (right), and his son Rev. Joel De Moor, Classis British Columbia South-east.



Rev. Sam Boldenow, left, a campus minister from North Carolina, enjoys his first synod with his father, Jim, an information technology manager for the CRC. They spent Father's Day together for the first time in several years.



Ben Stephenson, left, an information technology staffer at synod, spent time with his father, Rev. Mark Stephenson, CRC director of disability concerns.



Oldest and youngest delegate

They are 60 years apart in age, but Rev. Justin Carruthers (Classis Central California) and elder Alice Wisse (Classis Chicago South) were both experiencing their first synod. Wisse is a retired English teacher; Carruthers is “fresh out of seminary,” as he puts it. “I’ve really come to appreciate the process [of synod],” Carruthers said. “It’s not the most efficient process, but it’s definitely the most faithful one.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe



PHOTO BY CAROL RIENSTRA

Some of the cyclists from the Sea to Sea 2013 tour got together at Synod 2014: Gerry Schenk, John White, Marue White, Jay Pruim, Bev Pruim, Albert Kramer, Rich Rienstra, Carol Rienstra, Doug Macleod, Jake Kuipers, Brian Smilde

What's the Best Fit?

by Ron Klimp and Lis Van Harten

Problem: a growing number of pastors and churches are seeing the relationship between them run aground and are parting ways via Church Order Article 17. It's sort of like a no-fault divorce that separates churches and pastors from their commitment to one another.

Solution: create a process that can better match ministry-minded individuals with positions that correlate with their gifts and personalities.

Several Christian Reformed denominational agencies—including Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, World Missions, and Chaplaincy—were doing some assessment or screening, but none of these programs were correlated, consistent, or shared in a way that would help someone move from one field of ministry to another.

Thus was born the Ministry Assessment and Vocational Guidance Committee—Assessment Committee for short—to explore a more coordinated process of assessment or career guidance.

The assessment process is for individuals who are entering seminary and are not yet sure where their education might take them, or for those currently serving a church who are uncertain they have found the right “fit.” It is designed to help individuals determine how their unique make-up might (or might not) correlate with one of many ministry opportunities: being a missionary, church planting, youth work, pastoring a traditional church, or chaplaincy in an institution.

Representatives from Home Missions, World Missions, Calvin Seminary, Chaplaincy, Pastor-Church Relations, Candidacy, and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence came together in mid-2010 to discuss this intriguing possibility.



Taking part in the Pastors on Point backpacking trip were (back row) Tim Kuperus, Mark Van Drunen, Tim Holwerda, Norm Thomasma, John Terpstra, Kent Rottman, Jonathan Anderstrom; (front row) Phil Boender, Jay (guide), Cailee (guide), Joseph Stevenson (assistant guide), Dale Fopma, Mark Stevenson (counselor).



The Assessment Committee: (back row) David Koll (Candidacy), Jul Medenblik (Calvin Seminary), Lis Van Harten (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence), Al Gelder (Calvin Seminary); (front) Norm Thomasma and Jeanne Kallemeyn (Pastor Church Relations), Ron Klimp (Chaplaincy). Missing from the photo are Gary Bekker (World Missions), Duane Visser (Consultant), Ben Becksvoort (Home Missions).

Though all agreed that the idea had potential, none was sure how to design a solution. They began to look for help from those who had expertise in the growing

field of assessment and vocational guidance and found an expert in their midst in the person of Dr. Bryan Dik.

Dik, the son of a CRC pastor, teaches psychology with a special interest in career guidance at Colorado State University.

After some discussion, Dik agreed to act as a consultant. He helped the group formulate a nine-month pilot project to determine what could be learned from existing providers in the field of Christian vocational guidance. The project involved putting a number of individuals through three assessment processes and surveying the results.

The group decided to focus primarily on pastors currently in the parish. It also

““ The group decided to focus on pastors currently in the parish. ””

decided that participants should represent the wide variety of pastors within the CRC (see sidebar “Make-up of Assessment Participants” for details).

Once identified, participants were distributed among three service providers: Christian Career Center, Midwest Ministry Development, and Pastors on Point. Each provider offered a different assessment process, although all began with the pastors completing about six hours of preparatory work.

Christian Career Center’s assessment was done entirely by phone and email. It included career testing and 10 coaching sessions.

Midwest Ministry Development had two different onsite assessments.

The two-day option included a number of inventories and tests as well as sessions with a counselor. The two-and-a-half day option expanded this to include time with a psychologist and additional testing.

Pastors on Point also had two assessment options. One was a week-long backpacking trip in Colorado and the other a one-on-one retreat with a counselor.

All participants completed a pre- and post-assessment survey so that impact and results could be tracked. Each participant was personally interviewed about his or her experience. In addition, the service providers prepared a brief report on each assessment.

All of this data was analyzed by Dik. In mid-March, the assessment committee met to receive Dik’s report, to listen to the experiences of 10 of the pastors who joined them via technology, and to discuss

next steps. A full report on the pilot was completed by late June.

The following are some examples of how the assessment impacted participants and what they are doing with the results:

- Three pastors are promoting assessments when connecting with other pastors. Pastors need to do this regularly, they say.



Bryan Dik

- One pastor is following up with a chaplain since he wants to continue to learn and benefit from the assessment.

- One pastor is considering creating a group within his congregation in which he can process the report for the purpose of sharing and accountability.

- One pastor wondered about the service provider writing something up that

could be used in his profile when looking for a new church, so that the church would have a clearer sense of who he is and what his gifts are.

- One pastor took his summary report to his spiritual director to continue to process it.

- One pastor is going through the summary report with his copastor as they look ahead to the ministry of their church.

- One pastor took her summary report to her council. As a result, the council understood her better, a job description was created, and her husband (a copastor) was encouraged to use his wife’s experience in his own ministry.

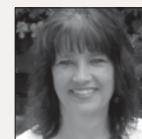
- One pastor is seriously considering changing his pastoral role based on the assessment and discussion with his service provider.

Make-up of Assessment Participants

- 31% from Canada
- 66% from the United States
- 18% women
- 82% men
- 18% persons of color
- 50% pre-selected
- 50% self-selected
- 43% second-career pastors
- 31% new to ministry (7 years or less)
- 5% had gone through an Article 17
- 34% healthy pastors in healthy setting*
- 34% healthy pastors in challenging setting*
- 6% stressed pastors in healthy setting*
- 11% stressed pastors in challenging setting*
- 29% pastors considering chaplaincy/missions
- 54% seasoned pastors
- 46% wondering about fit

*based on self-assessment

The pilot project has concluded, but the energy around the idea of assessment is continuing to grow—so much so that we hope to arrange a follow-up pilot to look at additional tools and service providers. ■



Ron Klimp is director of Chaplaincy and Care; Lis Van Harten is program director of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence/Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SPE/SCE) for the Christian Reformed Church.

A Look in the Mirror

“**W**hen our council decided to take action toward church renewal, we recognized that if the next five years looked like the previous five years, we would be closing our doors. Something had to happen,” said Pastor Bill Wilton of Sunrise Christian Reformed Church in McMinville, Oregon.

Sunrise is a small church with about 60 members who meet faithfully each Sunday.

In the summer of 2012, Sunrise received a Health and Renewal grant from Sustaining Congregational Excellence to engage in a church assessment that would help the congregation become healthy and vital.

The assessment was conducted by West Coast Church Resourcing (WCCR)—a joint CRC/RCA program. Pastor Carl Leep from WCCR worked closely with Sunrise throughout the assessment.

Wilton said, “The assessment process was a clear and stark look in the mirror. The immediate need to begin the journey



Sunrise CRC remodeled its children's ministry area.

toward church renewal could not have been made clearer through the assessment experience.”

During the assessment, nine ministry areas were reviewed. Strengths and weaknesses were identified and recommendations were made. The council adopted the recommendations, and the congregation immediately began to show support and commitment.

One recommendation concerned the children's ministry space, which was in need of some refreshing. Within a few short months, enough money had been raised to do a full remodel. “It has been rewarding to see people excited about the

ministry and physical surroundings of our once-tired building,” said Wilton.

Other changes include an updated, user-friendly website; the community using the church building for gatherings; the restart of middle school youth ministry; a sabbatical for the pastor; changes to the budget format; and new A/V equipment.

The congregation continues to work on recommendations that came out of the assessment. This summer, a retreat is planned that will include evaluating how well the church is reaching its goals and identifying any changes that still may be needed.

In addition to the visible changes, there have been significant changes within the congregation itself.

“I believe the greatest reward has been the sense of unity of purpose and ownership of ministry,” Wilton said. “Recognizing our weaknesses made us more aware of our strengths and values. This has increased the sense of ownership and gratitude within the congregation.

“There is no doubt that had we not committed to the assessment process we would be steadily marching toward decline and closure,” Wilton concluded. “We believe that God used the assessment process to not only sound the alarm but to reveal a new specific direction.” ■

—by Lis Van Harten

Pastor-Church Relations

- Advocates for healthy relationships between congregations, pastors, councils, and staff.
- Manages ministerial and church profiles in the pastor search process, credentialing for non-ordained staff, and endorsement of Specialized Transitional Ministers.
- Provides direct consultation for pastors, councils, and congregations in times of crisis.
- Oversees the Continuing Education Fund for pastors and church staff.
- Distributes educational and resource materials for congregations, councils, pastors, and staff.
- Works with and through Pastoral Mentors, Regional Pastors, and Church Visitors to provide support, encouragement, and counsel to congregations and staff.

Please pray

- for PCR staff as they respond to organizational changes and new ministry opportunities.
- for the 15 endorsed Specialized Transitional Ministers (STM) who are serving congregations through a time of significant transition, and for the eight pastors who are pursuing endorsement as STMs.
- for congregations that are exploring the possibility of using an STM during their pastoral vacancy.

A Chaplain's Story

Over the past year, I had the chance to participate in a pilot program for CRC pastors involving vocational assessment.

My understanding of the program is that there were several objectives to it. The first was to find out if you truly have a calling for your present job. The second purpose was to get a sense of whether you are a good fit for your present position, and the final purpose was to cast a vision as to what your future jobs and activities might be after your current job comes to an end.

I decided to sign up for the program because I figured that this would be one more way to affirm my calling to my present position as an Army chaplain. I also wanted to know if I was truly a good fit for my job and consider how to maximize my strengths for the greatest effectiveness. Finally, I wanted to find out what my future plans might look like.

I took several personality and occupational tests and then met by phone with Ken Brennfleck from the Christian Career Center just about every week for 10 weeks. I also had the opportunity to read and apply the helpful information in the book *Live Your Calling*, co-written by Ken and his wife.



Jonathan Averill

All in all, I was gratified to have my calling to my present job confirmed through this process and to see that I am a good fit for the job. However, what helped me most was that I was truly able to visualize what my future after Army chaplaincy might look like.

I am truly grateful for this opportunity, and I would recommend this type of assessment to pastors throughout the CRC.

—by Jonathan Averill,
chaplain, U.S. Army

Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE)

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) seek to foster health in pastors and smaller congregations so they can flourish. They specifically focus on the denominational priority to create and sustain healthy congregations.

Programming includes grant opportunities, learning events, and conferences. Sixty-eight percent of all CRCs are eligible to participate in SCE. To date, 66 percent of them have done so. Seventy-seven percent of all CRC ordained pastors have been a member of an SPE peer group.

Please pray

- for smaller congregations as they engage in ministry in their communities.
- for pastors who are called to minister in many situations—some of which are very challenging.
- for the health of congregations, their pastors, and their pastors' families.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

- Enlists future chaplains by visiting Christian colleges and seminaries to talk with interested students about opportunities in the world of chaplaincy.
- Engages with students or pastors who are interested in moving toward chaplaincy; helps them find appropriate training and provides grants for the cost of that training.
- Endorses those who have completed their training and sustained a committee interview; provides letters of endorsement for potential employers.
- Encourages current, retired, and prospective chaplains through bimonthly newsletter, annual conference, incidental communications by phone/email, and occasional on-site visits.
- Enfolds chaplains into the broader church by encouraging them and their calling churches to maintain a close relationship; encourages the broader church to own, celebrate, and pray for this extensive and exciting outreach to the institutional world.

Please pray

- for our nine CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) supervisors who, in addition to serving as chaplains, engage in training and/or supervising many other chaplains from a variety of faith traditions.
- for chaplains whose ministry places them in situations of possible personal injury and/or requires them to spend time away from their home and family.
- that our 124 chaplains will have the wisdom to know how to faithfully represent the truth and love of Christ even where they may not have the opportunity to speak his name.

In the Arms of God

Addie is my 7-year-old granddaughter. She was born with an extremely rare syndrome that renders her susceptible to unusual and unpredictable complications. And because she was born also with rheumatoid arthritis, she is in constant pain.

I introduced Addie to Synod 2011 when I was appointed to this position. I now pay tribute to her as I prepare to step down. You see, I was her pastor too when I took this call. And when I told her I was going to leave the church she attended, she drew me a map to help me find my way back.

I had been her pastor all her life. But she has been my pastor too—probably without knowing it.

When I began my service at Ridgewood Christian Reformed Church in Jenison, Mich., in May 1992, I chose as the text for my first sermon Deuteronomy 33:27: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

When I preached my final sermon at Ridgewood in September 2011, it was on the same text. My wife and I gave every member of the congregation a bookmark with that text printed on it beneath a picture of hands representing us in the hands of God. Addie keeps hers in her Bible.

Recently Addie and her many fans were preparing to walk in an Arthritis Foundation fundraiser. Team Addie needed to design a shirt. Addie and her mom were talking about putting a Bible verse on the front of that shirt. Suddenly Addie said, “I know which one, Mom!” She ran upstairs, grabbed her bookmark out of her Bible and said, “This is what I want my shirt to say.”

“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Picture those hands. It’s where we all are.

We are not a large group, we who constitute the Christian Reformed Church in North America. But there is within and

among and between and around all the hurt and friction and misunderstanding and brokenness that afflicts all of humanity.

And then look around. What will become of Ukraine, Sudan, Central African Republic, Mali, and Nigeria? What became of Flight 370? What of the millions who wish to be legalized citizens of the U.S. or Canada? When will the shootings stop? What of those whose orientation is being judged? What of those who are convinced the life of this created order is being carelessly shortened—and those who believe it just isn’t so?

Our sheer humanity makes it difficult to believe that, while all of this has been placed in some respect in our hands, we are still in God’s hands. Job was right: “In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind” (12:10).

We have been working as a denomination toward more inclusion. As of the end of the first quarter of 2014, the CRCNA employed

20 percent people of color and 20 percent women in upper leadership positions within the denomination. We are working toward increasing that percentage across the board. We are not there yet, but we are on the way.

We have also made progress in binational inclusion. The border has sometimes come between us. At times we have misunderstood one another, failed to listen well to each other, been at odds with each other.

This past year a significant report on binationality was adopted by the Board of Trustees. It revealed a conviction that binationality is worth understanding and pursuing, not only for the sake of the two nations involved but as a vital part of our witness to the world that there is a loving God in whose hands the likes of even us can actually become one.

We are affirming the truth Paul spoke on Mars Hill and acknowledging that God can use us and our binationality to encourage others to “seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).



“I thank God for the many whose dedication and devotion I have come to know and appreciate.”

This past year I was part of a team of five who visited 12 cities in the U.S. and Canada and made 23 presentations to a total of about 1,000 persons from the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church to talk about our joining together in mission.

It was a privilege I will not forget. The Body of Christ is much bigger than we are.

The CRCNA has added a new word to its vocabulary: *experiment*. We are truly depending on God to lead, not just waiting to see where he goes next. We are people on a journey. These are honest, sincere efforts to present the Good News to the 21st century in terms and ways it can be best understood. And over each and all of them we offer the prayer of Moses: “May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands” (Ps. 90:17).

We have engaged in significant searches over the past two years. God has led us to a new executive director. In the process, lengthened unexpectedly by a full year, I can see the hand of God unmistakably leading in a host of ways too numerous to mention. While we looked, God led.

A new Canadian ministries director has been appointed by the board, another experience of God’s leading and his provision for the church.

Please receive Steve and Darren as gifts from God. Pray for them, and through them let God lead us all toward greater obedience to him. Know that not only *to* them, but *through* them, God says to us: “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa. 40:10).

We inhabit a world that cries out for justice. Justice and the responsibility of stewardship demand that we care for God’s garden and not let arguments about the cause and extent of the damage get in the way of repairing that damage.

We have to remember also that not only suffering Christians in Syria but penniless Palestinians on the West Bank belong to

God. So do not only those who came to our countries and pulled themselves up by their bootstraps but those whose parents or maybe even who themselves sneaked across the border during the dark of night and are here illegally.

In a broken world filled with broken people, the initial stance must be a broken heart and not an argument about a broken law. The world and all who live in it are the Lord’s!

Three years ago about this time, I walked into the office and asked myself, “What have I done?” Now I can much more clearly stand amazed and say, “Thank God for what he has done!”

I commend to you and to the loving hands of Almighty God the leaders of the CRCNA. I thank God for the many whose dedication and devotion I have come to know and appreciate. I thank God for the upheaval he has brought to the CRCNA in the past few years—for new leaders and new organization and new plans and new understanding and new interest in prayer.

I thank God for the privilege of not only witnessing these changes but participating in them. I have come so far in the past three years that it is a little difficult to think about letting things go. But I take comfort in words I read just a few weeks ago from Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest*. He was reflecting on John’s experience on Patmos when the Lord “laid his right hand on” him (Rev. 1:17). Chambers wrote:

When once His touch comes, nothing at all can cast you into fear again. In the midst of all His ascended glory the Lord Jesus comes to speak to an insignificant disciple, and to say ‘Fear not.’ His tenderness is ineffably sweet. Do I know Him like that? . . . I delight to know that there is that in me which must fall prostrate before God when He manifests Himself, and if I am ever to be raised up it must be by the hand of God. God can do nothing for me until I get to the limit of the possible.

So right here, at the limit of the possible, remember that “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” ■

This is an abridged version of Rev. Joel R. Boot’s combination farewell address and state-of-the-church speech to Synod 2014.



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

The Difference a Day Makes



World Renew and partners help farmers in Guatemala.

Santos, 43, and her husband farmed a small plot of land in Canguachá, Guatemala, to support their family. But they struggled to survive.

God's provision of rain one particular day charted a new course for their lives.

Santos said her father-in-law had given them the land so they could build a house and cultivate crops, but the land was very poor.

Because they could not grow enough food and needed additional income, they had to migrate to Petén every year for temporary work as laborers on other people's farms.

In May 2013, the couple planned to leave for Petén but postponed leaving because it was raining.

"That day, I was visited by the health promoter who works for World Renew's partner, ADIP," Santos recalled.

Explaining that they could invest in their land instead of traveling to earn income, the ADIP staff member convinced them to stay and participate in agricultural trainings supported by World Renew through the Foods Resource Bank. They began to grow crops using new skills they learned.

Their first harvest of crops, says Santos, "was not very good because of soil infertility."

But after a year of incorporating organic compost into the soil, they were able to earn \$77 USD from their garden, roughly equal to what they would have earned as laborers elsewhere.

"I thank the Lord for that rainy day when the health promoter stepped into my home and convinced me that I could change my way of life," Santos said. ■

—by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, World Renew

Peer Groups Ponder Good Preaching

Across the United States and Canada, 10 peer groups of pastors are meeting to discuss vital questions related to preaching.

Convened by Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching and sponsored by a Lilly Endowment grant, these groups are tackling a range of contemporary communication challenges.

Marc Holland, a peer group leader in the Sacramento/Bay Area, is considering what group members can learn from watching popular forms of public speaking.

Randy Engle of North Hills CRC in Troy, Mich., is having his group listen to some leading voices in contemporary homiletics. They may also attend The Moth Radio Hour show, hoping to learn from skilled storytellers.

After a year, peer group leaders will share what they have learned with Calvin Seminary professors and students.

The goal is to have a shaping influence on how preaching is taught at Calvin Seminary and for students to gain a better grasp of the challenges they face when they become pastors.

—by Scott Hoezee, Calvin Theological Seminary



A meeting of Marc Holland's peer group.

A Church of Their Own

Although Bernardo Perez has served as a pastor of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic (DR) for more than 30 years, the congregation has never had its own building.

However, with help from a short-term Christian Reformed World Missions mission team, the congregation recently built a church.

Perez and members of his congregation migrated from Haiti to the DR to work on a sugarcane plantation, living and worshipping in a company-owned area known as Velazquez Batey.

As the sugar crop lost value, they needed to find work and new homes.

Perez says many members of his church moved to a nearby village where they built the church with help from CRWM.

The CRWM team ended their time in the Caribbean worshipping at the new church that, just one week earlier, had only been a foundation. ■

—by Brian Clark, Christian Reformed World Missions



Bernardo Perez speaks with Duane Postma, service and learning team coordinator for the Dominican Republic.

You add.
God multiplies.

Mentoring Across the Ocean

Using Skype from his computer at home in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Peter Haagen started out hosting nine students from a Southeast Asian country in October 2013.

These students had signed up to be part of a Spotlight English Club. As they told their friends about the club, the group became two clubs.

After students posted information on Facebook, another group began in April 2014, bringing the number of participants in three clubs to nearly 50.

A retired baker, Haagen was looking for a way to volunteer when he read an article about hosting Spotlight English



Clubs via Skype for overseas English learners.

Spotlight programs are produced by Reframe Media, the English language outreach of Back to God Ministries International.

After a short online training course, Haagen chose to host the Bible study in South-

east Asia because, he said, “we have a heart for this culture.”

Most of his students are Buddhist or agnostic. But he doesn’t shy away from faith issues. Whenever appropriate, he brings up examples from Jesus’ life.

Recently, one student asked for spiritual resources, so Ha-

gen emailed him the *Today* devotional. “I hope that I am sowing a seed,” said Haagen.

In addition, each week he writes each student a personal email and says he hears from at least one student every day. He has even become friends with them on Facebook.

“I feel like a counselor, mentor, and trusted friend,” he said.

—by Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International

You can find longer versions of these stories, as well as additional stories, online at thebanner.org/together.

Clustering in Philadelphia

Spirit and Truth Fellowship in Philadelphia has planted eight churches in 10 years, said Drew Angus, a pastor at the church.

These churches have formed a cluster in which “everyone wins because it creates a climate and expectation of mission for both the established church and its daughters,” said Angus, Eastern U.S. regional director for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Formation of this cluster was commemorated in a service last year in which members of each congregation helped to lead the music, and testimonies abounded.

Robert Whitmire, pastor at Grace and Peace Community Fellowship, said, “It was an awesome and powerful time of the Lord.”

Most of the churches involved in the Philadelphia Cluster are in multiethnic, low-income neighborhoods. Mercy ministries and community-development ministries are very important.

“The best part of clustering is the fellowship, the community that we have. You never feel like you are alone as you are learning what it means to be a shepherd,” said Whitmire.

—by Rachel Gabrielse,
Christian Reformed Home Missions



A service celebrating the formation of a church cluster 10 years ago.

ADS

Deadlines: August issue is 7/7/14; Sept. issue is 8/4/14. 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

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HEARTLAND will meet September 26-27, 2014, at Northern Lighthouse CRC, Lincoln, NE. Items for the agenda must be submitted to the stated clerk by August 15: Rev. Robert Drenten, 1405 Albany Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041.

WESTWOOD CRC At its May meeting Classis Kalamazoo voted to place Rev Kevin Heeres under C. O. Article 17a. This designation assigns no fault to Kevin as the church he was serving concluded its ministry. The Council of Westwood CRC of Kalamazoo, therefore, heartily recommends Pastor Kevin to the churches for pastoral ministry.

Financial Aid

CLASSICAL STUDENT AID - CLASSIS NORTHERN ILLINOIS is now accepting student aid applications from students pursuing word-related ministries. Contact Committee Chair, Mark van Stee, Western Springs CRC, 5140 Wolf Rd., Western Springs IL 60558 (email: office@crcws.org). Application deadline July 31. 708-246-4638

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY CHURCH formerly known as 1st Christian Reformed of Los Angeles will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness September 20-21, 2014. We invite all friends and former members to join us in giving thanks and praise. Please RSVP for the Saturday Sept 20 Open house from 12-5 to lacomunitychurch@att.net

Announcements

VACATIONING IN LUDINGTON this summer? Beginning July 20, Lakeside Church is moving our worship service to the Ludington State Park amphitheater. Please join us Sundays at 10am! For more information see Lakeside Church Ludington on Facebook.

WEST PARK CRC after 142 years of faithful ministry in Cleveland, Ohio has closed as of June 2014.

POSITION WANTED: The Escalon CRC highly recommend Pastor Mark Humphrey to the Church for Staff Ministry. He is especially gifted in discipleship and congregational care. After 15 years of church planting he is now looking to work in an established church context. More info

can be obtained from the Escalon CRC 209 8387223 or email: Mark277@sbglobal.net

PASTOR AVAILABLE: Dr. James C. Busscher has been serving congregations within the CRC as a trained Interim Ministry Specialist for the past 12 years. His ministry at the Montello Park CRC of Holland, Michigan will soon be completed. If you are looking for a seasoned pastor during your time of vacancy then feel free to contact Pastor Busscher at 616-460-1811 or e-mail him at jcbusscher@gmail.com. He is also available for call.

Birthdays

95th Birthday



FRED HOLLEBEEK will reach his 95th birthday on August 8. A celebration will be given by his children Mart (Mary) Holebeek, Lois (Ken) Schepel, and Ruth (Gord) Bylsma. It will be held at the Christian Rest Home on Wed., August 6 at 2 PM. Fred was married to Dorothy (Krikke).

Cards may be sent to the Christian Rest Home, 1000 Edison NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

HERMAN SCHUTT turned 95 years on June 18, 2014. Formerly of Chicago and Sayner, WI, Herman now resides in his home with his wife, Louise, at 6055 Elmwood LK Dr Hudsonville, MI 49426. His children, grandchildren and great grand- children are grateful for his love and devotion.

90th Birthday

TENA KRAMER will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 16, 2014. Her sisters and brothers are thankful for her example of faithful and loving service in countless ways. She is a special aunt to her many nieces and nephews. She resides at 2432 Mable Ave., Modesto, CA, 95357.

EDWARD J. RUDENGA celebrated his 90th birthday on May 17. His family gives thankfulness for his Christian example and faithfulness. Loved by Jack and Liz, Russ and Elizabeth, and Joan and Adam and families. 401 E. US30 Apt 201 Schererville, IN 46375

DAVID B ZYLSTRA Your wife, children and grandchildren wish you a Happy 90th Birthday! Friends and family are invited to join us in an open house celebration between 1 and 3PM on Saturday, July 12 at Raybrook Estates II Dining Room.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

BUIKEMA Ralph and Florence, 10529 Utah Court, Orland Park, IL 60467. Ralph & Flo will be celebrating 65 years of marriage on August 19. Children: Cindy & Kevin Bos, Bill & Jan Buikema. Five grandchildren and two great grandchildren. We thank God for the many years He has given them.

PONSTINE Lambert and Kathleen celebrate 65 years of marriage on July 8. They thank God for each other, their children (Jim and Judy, Jack and Kris, and Rick), their grandchildren (Mark and Laura, Scott and Betsy, and Lisa and Mark) and their great-grandchildren (Hannah, Abi, Isaiah, Dominic, Karis and Moriah).

60th Anniversary

ESSELINK John and Linda (Wielinga) from Emo, Ontario rejoice in the gift of 60 years together, June 15, 2014. Their children, Ralph and

REDEEMER

A Christian University in Hamilton, Ontario

“The small classes at Redeemer allow my classmates, professors and I to explore how faith can be integrated into whatever we're studying.”

- Jake K. Math major; minors in physics, business and religion”

READ MORE at

MyRedeemer.ca/Jake



Liz, Jack and Wilma, Gary and Betty, Duane and Grace, John, Kryn and Irene, 19 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren thank God for his faithfulness. We love you!



HUTT Ralph and Nellie G. (Aukeman) will celebrate their marriage of 60 years on May 26. Their family is grateful for an example of faithful love and service.

LAGESTEE John G & Evelyn (Hoekstra) Celebrated 60 yrs of Marriage June 25th. Celebrating with John & Evelyn were Son John Jr. & Laura, Son Timothy & Sue, Daughter Terri, 10 Grandchildren & Their Spouses & 10 Great Grandchildren. We Thank God For His Love and Faithfulness.

VAN EEK Arie and Ellen celebrated 60 years of marriage on June 3. Their children Calvin and Gloria, Jane and George, Esther and Simon, Shirlene and Mike, John and Julie, and their grandchildren give thanks to God for their life of grace-filled and loving service.

55th Anniversary

SLACHTER Marv & Marilyn (VanderWal) of Jenison, MI celebrated 55 years of marriage on June 12. Celebrating with them are their children and grandchildren. God's love endures!

50th Anniversary

DYKGRAAF, Dave and Jan celebrated their 50th year of marriage by touring Guatemala with daughters Annelies and Jayne with Jayne's family- Commander Robert Bahr, Aaron, Gabriel, and Micah. We thank God for this love and all the blessings.

FLETCHER Ken & Judy (Oosterhouse) Fletcher of Kalamazoo, MI, married June 13, 1964. Children: Dan & Lori Fletcher, Jimmy & Sara Patterson, Paul & Mary Schuurmans. Grandchildren: Paul, Lynn, Jim, Kari, Ken, Jimmy, Fletcher, Sophie, Anneka, Liam. Great-grandchildren: Isaac, Joey.

HOEK Jim and Bea of 1978 Kingston Dr SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508 married June 12, 1964. Children: Jon and Laureen Hoek, Keith and Jayne VerBeek, Larry and Jackie Crawford. 12 Grandchildren, 1 Great-grandson. With Joy and Thanksgiving to God!

KERSIES John and Joyce (Huizenga) 702-109 King St. E. Brockville ON K6V1B8 were married 50 years ago on June 6, 1964. Children are Sonja (Eric) Verwijs and Heidi (Albert) Blokland and their four grandchildren. Praise the Lord for his faithfulness.



SCHAAFSMA Peter and Joan (nee Horlings) are celebrating 50 years of marriage on July 4, 2014. They have three children and six grandchildren. Though there have been some rough times, God has richly blessed them through the years. Happy Anniversary Mom and Dad. Lots of love, Dave, Michelle, and Dan.

WALTER Rev. Bob and Donna, June 20, 1964. 7961 E Coronado Road, Scottsdale, AZ, 85257. Children: Tim Walter (CO), Chris and Karna Walter (AZ), and Ted and Molly Walter (TX). Grandchildren: Mckenna, Isaac, Annika, and Abigail. We thank God for our family and His faithfulness

Obituaries

ANDREE Kenneth, age 73; of Grand Rapids, MI; passed away on May 13, 2014. Survived by his wife, Jean (DeKryger); children, Ned (Sharon), and Tonya (Michael) Davies; grandchildren, Gabriel, Michael, and Joy; sister, Karen (John) Beaudoin; preceded in death by sister, Mary Vos.

AUKEMAN Hilda, age 95, Jenison, MI passed away May 10, 2014. She is survived by brothers Mark (Elizabeth) and Nelson (Norene), sisters Grace (Ralph) Hutt & Elsie Heyboer, sisters-in-law Bonnie and Donna, nieces and nephews.

CLAUSING Mr. James G.; aged 76; May 9, 2014; 2469 Autumn Ash Dr. SE, Kentwood, MI 49512; He was preceded in death by his parents: James and Alice Clausing; sister: Evelyn Malefyt; granddaughter:

Jessica Stout. He is survived by his wife of 52 years: Karen Harkema Clausing; children: Stacy (Aaron) Robinson, Jodi Stout, and Corwin (Kristin) Clausing; grandchildren: Jenna and Tara Robinson, Kayla Stout, David, Jonathan, Nathan, and Caleb Clausing; brother: John (Carole) Clausing; sisters: Lois Jessup, Janet (David) Wielhouwer and Audrey Kimble; mother-in-law: Mildred Harkema; brother and sisters-in-law: Peter and Jill Harkema, and Nancy Nielsen.

DEBOER Jeanette, age 88, went to be with her Lord on May 16th, 2014, 1030 Crescent Blvd, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137. Beloved wife of the late Edward DeBoer; loving mother of Linda (the late Rev. David P.) Breen, of Hudsonville, MI, Edward J. (the late Barbara) DeBoer of Holland, MI, Patricia (Rick) Van De Burg, of Holland, MI, and Paul (Pamela) DeBoer of Glen Ellyn, IL; devoted grandmother of Leah (Kent) DeYoung, Rachel (Chad) Chapman, David J. (Heather) Breen, Julie

(Randy) Huisman, Chad (Jennifer) DeBoer, Jamie (Randy) Terpstra, Heather (Kyle) Yonker, Stacy VanDeBurg, Erick (Sheri) VanDeBurg, Ryne (Heather) DeBoer, Brittany (Robert) Voss; great grandmother of 22; fond sister of the late Ann (the late Henry) Deters, the late George (the late Audrey) Van Dahm, Evelyn (the late Frank) Landis, Eleanor (the late Chuck) Keizer; sister-in-law to the late George (the late Ruth) DeBoer, the late James (the late Arthea) DeBoer, Richard (the late Edith) DeBoer, the late Florence (Bill) Bolt, Christine (the late Robert) Nicodem; dear aunt to many nieces and nephews. nieces and nephews

DYKSTRA Angeline "Ange", nee Stoit, age 86, beloved wife of Benjamin, passed peacefully on 05/01/14. Loving mother of William J. (Kathy), Jerrold (Pat), Benjamin Jr. (Linda), Thomas (Karen), John (Deanne), James (Mary), and Beverly (Wayne) Thoren. Cherished grandmother of 19 and great-grandmother of 26.

Church Position Announcements

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

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.

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 dfbarbee@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 half time worship director to coordinate all aspects of worship services. Interested candidates can visit our website for more details: <http://inglewoodcrc.org/careers>.

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.

PASTOR Mount Hamilton CRC is seeking a dynamic and effective preacher and compassionate pastor who will help us to grow in Biblical knowledge and surety of faith. Mount Hamilton was established in 1952 and serves many senior members. We are looking for a pastor who is gifted in church growth and community involvement, and is skilled in planning and leading programs. For more information please contact John Demik at 905-679-4869 or forward your CV to office.mthamil@bellnet.ca

PASTOR TO YOUNGER MEMBERS: Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, British Columbia, located in the heart of the beautiful Fraser Valley, is looking to fill a fulltime Youth Pastor position. The successful candidate will be expected to advise, encourage and support the congregation via its youth ministries leaders and coordinators as the Pastor to Younger Members. For a position description and church profile please email Jerry Delange: jntdelange@shaw.ca or the church office: office@cornerstonecra.ca.

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.

CHOIR DIRECTOR The Metropolitan Choir of Praise, a 45 voice Christian Community Choir in Grand Rapids, seeks a new director for the coming season. Its repertoire includes classic to contemporary anthems. Refer to our website www.metropolitanchoir.org for a job description. Contact Gord Vander Ark at gsva@i2k.com or 616-455-9647 for further information. Resumes with references accepted until July 15.

PASTOR Do you have a love for God's word and a heart for serving His people? Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church, Salmon Arm, in the beautiful Shuswap region of British Columbia, is seeking a full time pastor to lead our congregation. Our pastor would be strong in the Word and in the growing and sharing of our faith. If you count enthusiasm and self-motivation among your gifts, we would love to hear from you! For more information and our church profile, contact our search committee at CornerstoneCRCSearch@gmail.com

YOUTH DIRECTOR Shalom CRC, Sioux Falls, SD. A growing Youth Ministry program is seeking a dynamic full time Director. This person must display a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ to nurture this passion in each young person. The Youth Director needs to exhibit a vibrant leadership in the church that enhances the worship, outreach, and fellowship of each young person attending and will provide accessible authentic support for families with youth. Qualifications: A four year college degree in Youth Ministry or related field. Prefer three or more years of experience working with youth. Required to believe in and teach the Reformed faith. If interested please submit your resume to: office@shalomcra.org

DE HAAN Lippe Catharinus II, Born October 8, 1933, Lippe Catharinus de Haan II died peacefully at his home in Exeter, Ont., on May 6, 2014, at the age of 80 after a resolute, grace-filled battle against cancer. He enjoyed life fully, but knew too that death would not have the final word, thanks to the promises of Easter and Ascension Day. Lippe immigrated to Canada with his family when he was 18 years old, having lived through World War II, the occupation of the Netherlands and its liberation. He worked for eight years as a machinist in Owen Sound to earn enough money for college and then graduated from Calvin in 1964 before a 30-plus year career as a teacher. He was a church organist and church choir director for many years, a top-notch flier of homing pigeons and an inveterate crossword puzzler. Lippe is survived by his wife Catharina (de Rijk) de Haan, children: Phil and Sue de Haan of Grand Rapids, Joanne and Mark Abolt of Grand Rapids, Derek and Lorissa de Haan of London and Tess de Haan and Bryan McDonald of London. Also by nine grandchildren, brothers Harold (Betty) and Bob (Trudy) de Haan, sisters Stien (d. Hans) Nusselder and Rolina (Henk) Hultink, brothers-in-law George (d. Trynie) Mackowski, John (Susan) Derijk and Dick (Faye) DeRyk, many nieces and nephews. Those planning an expression of sympathy are asked to consider donations to Habitat for Humanity Huron County or the new L. C. de Haan Scholarship Fund in the English department at Calvin.

DEHEER Marguerite, 92 of Grand Haven passed away May 21, 2014 at Heartwood Lodge in Spring Lake. She was preceded in death by her husband, Adrian DeHeer and also Judy Lyles. She is survived by two children, Robin Francis of Six Lakes and Rick (Marty) DeHeer of Grand Rapids; eight grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. She is survived by one brother Don Katt. She was preceded in death by two sisters, Swannie and Stella and five brothers, Edwin, John, Gerritt, Claude and Harold. Memorials can be given to Hospice of Grand Haven or Christian Reformed World Renew.

HOEKS Henry James (89), 28 Geneva Ct, Visalia CA 93277, went to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whom he loved, on June 2, 2014. He will be missed by his wife of 66 years, Jeneva (Vanden Bosch) and their children, Jeanne Dykstra, Sharon (Jim) Van Foeken, Mark (Dorey), Tim (Patti) and Paul (Trudy), 13 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

HOEKSTRA James V.; aged 74; April 30, 2014; 7390 PO Box 619, Ada, MI 49301; He is survived by his wife: Joady; daughters: Michelle and John Schat, Jamie and Jonathan Van Hecken; grandchildren: Johnny and Sam Schat, Ally and James Van Hecken; sister: Yvonne and William Van Ee, and brother: Philip and Sharon Hoekstra.

KEEGSTRA Angelyn (Euwema), 95, passed away May 11, 2014 at Sunset Manor, Jenison, MI, 49428. Survived by her husband of 71 years, Robert. Loving mother of 3 children, Judith (Gary) Hiner, Nancy (Earle) Bolks, James (Gwynne), fine grand daughters, one grand son, three great grandsons, one great granddaughter, ten great, great grandchildren. Three sisters in law, Ruth Walton, June and Rose Hollemans. She was predeceased by a brother and sister in law George and Henrietta Euwema.

MAATMAN John, 86, of Saskatoon, SK, passed away peacefully at home and went to meet his Lord on May 29, 2014, Ascension Day. Dad is survived by his loving faithful wife of 59 years, Johanna, and by his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

RIETMAN, Ruth (Boss) nee Kooima, age 87, passed away on May 13, 2014; La Mesa, CA (formerly Oak Park, IL) Beloved wife of Herman Boss (deceased) & Marvin Rietman (deceased), Children Beverly Hiskes, Ken (Cyndi) Boss, Donald Boss, grandmother of 6, & great-grandmother of 11.

ROONEY Dena (nee Van Tholen) age 93, went to be with her Lord, May 5th, 2014, 229 Norwood Ave, Holland, MI, 49424. Beloved wife of the late Joseph J. Rooney; loving stepmother of Bonnie (Dennis), and Jay Rooney; fond sister of Grace (the late Peter) Bolt, Marge (George) Slater, and preceded by 3 brothers and 1 sister; aunt of many nieces and nephews.

ROZENDAL Margaret, age 95 of Zeeland died May 10, 2014, a member of the First CRC. She was predeceased by her husband Rev. Anthony Rozendal (July 1998), her parents Louis and Marie Van Someran, three sisters, three brothers, and one great granddaughter. She enjoyed reading, entertaining and time with her family. She is survived by her children Fred (Barbara), Phyllis, and Jim (Cherie) Rozendal, her grandchildren Michael (Kathryn), Jennifer (Brian) Harris, Peter (Jeanne), Debbie (Arron) De Hoog, Eryn (Brian) Alphaenaar, and eight great grandchildren.



SWIERENGA Joan (nee Boomker), age 79, 1918 Erin Isle Dr., Holland, MI, 49424, met her Savior on May 8, 2014. She is survived by husband Robert; children Robert Jr, Sarah, Celia (Mark) Groenhout, Daniel, and Suzanna (Brent) Breems; grandchildren Sydney Swierenga; Jacob

(Katie), Trent, and Jillanne Groenhout; and Henry, Louis, and Kathrine Breems; sister Celia Boomker De Boer and brother Ted (Ruth) Boomker; in-laws Raymond (Cynthia) Swierenga, Alyce (Dick) Houskamp, Donald (Mary) Swierenga, Grace (Gary) Nyland, and John (Virginia) Swierenga.

TRIEZENBERG, Ted, age 61, of Rock Valley, IA, died on May 14, 2014. He will be deeply missed by his wife, Rhonda; children and grandchildren, Joni (Tim) DeJong, Taylor, Madison, Easton, and Jaxton of Larchwood, IA, Abby (Jason) DeGroot, Harper and Reese of Rock Valley, IA; as well as beloved extended family. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ted and Wilma Triezenberg and father-in-law, Bud Termaat. Ted was a member of Trinity CRC in Rock Valley.

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR The Calvinist Cadet Corps is a ministry dedicated to building relationships between Christian men and boys to help boys become more Christlike. We are searching for a new executive director who has dynamic skills for promoting the Cadet ministry worldwide. Our ministry is looking for a visionary leader with good communication and organizational skills. Editorial experience along with program development and non-profit work is beneficial. For more information, see www.calvinistcadets.org

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

RENTAL NEEDED Calvin college couple looking for house or apartment to rent in Bozeman, MT while wife attends Montana State University for a masters. Katie: 616-307-0007 or katiepotts@comcast.net

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

HOME TRADE Want to trade homes from Christmas to New Years 2014? Would like a home within 30 miles of Pasadena, CA. Our 3 bed, 4 bath newer home is available in Grand Rapids, MI. Contact lavonnez@gmail.com

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

FL E COAST DIRECT OCEAN CONDO Furnished 3-bed 2 bath luxury condo in Cocoa Beach. Monthly rental. 40 min to Orlando. Minutes to Port Canaveral. 774-239-6859

KISSIMMEE HOME FOR RENT Beautiful gated 6- bedroom, 4-bath vacation home 3 miles from Disney. Private pool plus clubhouse with rec. room, theater and pool with slide. floridavacahome.com 708-372-2855

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Newly built Lake Michigan family guest house, 2br, loft w/ 2.5ba - sleeps 8. Lake Mi view & private beach. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com

CUTLERVILLE HOME FOR RENT - 3 Bedrooms, 1 1/2 Baths, Attached Garage, Appliances and Some Furniture, starting September 1 for 8-12 months. Off 72nd street near Crystal Springs. deepw@msn.com, or 616-308-3438

GRAND HAVEN weekly rental, 3 BR, 3 BA, sleeps 11. 2 blocks to beach access & conference grounds. Dog friendly. \$1500.00 per week. Call Doug at 708-813-0754.

SPACIOUS WATERFRONT RENTAL Newly built, 6 bedroom cottage on beautiful Green Lake. 20 min south of Grand Rapids. \$3500 per wk. Excellent sandy bottom. Fenna 616-292-5852

COTTAGE FOR RENT Big Star Lake Limit 8 people no pets \$1200 per week 616-786-4338

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NIAGARA FALLS Trillium Bed & Breakfast. 3 rooms all on the main floor and all with a/c and private bathrooms. Book online at www.Trilliumbb.ca or call Brian & Mary 905-354-3863

ISRAEL, OCT 16-28, 2014 Experience the "greatest story" in the land where it was lived with Jeff & Karen Blamer. Having traveled to Israel 10 times, their focus will be on the places where Joshua, David and Hezekiah served God. Experience the desert of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the desert metaphors of the Psalms. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus in Galilee and Jerusalem. Limited availability. For more information, contact Jeff at (269) 664-4849, jkblamer@yahoo.com, go online at www.regonline.com/2014journey. Arrangements by Witte Tours, a leader in spiritual journeys since 1975.

Products and Services

ABSOLUTELY BEST PRICES paid for religious books. Contact Credo Books, 1540 Pinnacle East SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, ph. (616) 249-9291. gvsbooks@gmail.com

BOERS' TRANSFER & STORAGE, INC Offering professional moving services within the United States and Canada. EXCELLENT CLERGY DISCOUNTS and an approved mover for retired CRC clergy! 13325 Riley Street, Holland, MI; 1-800-433-9799 or 616-399-2690 email: larry@boerstransfer.com; www.boerstransfer.com Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.

CARING FOR AGING PARENTS? Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

CASH PAID FOR LIBRARIES -large or small. Contact us to sell your new, used or out of print books. Baker Book House, 2768 East Paris Grand Rapids, MI 49546 e: greg.stevens@bakerbookstore.com p: 616-957-3110

VANDEN BRINK HAMS Ham Hocks (meaty/whole) \$1.99/lb) great for pea and bean soup. Dried Beef available. VandenBrink Hams, 1330 Leonard NW., GR, MI (616)458-1819

CRYPT AT OAKLAND Hills Memorial Gardens in Novi, MI call 616.550.7547 or email bruceuekert@comcast.net. Owner assistant for J. Eaton asking \$4,500

INVACARE HOME HOSPITAL BED Brand new in home hospital bed. Includes mattress, table with wheels for meals, etc. It also includes railings and a push button control to control height, back and legs levels. Please call 616 490-5215.

Miscellaneous

URGENTLY NEEDED Loving, stable Christian home to provide long-term, full-time care for preteen boy with FASD developmental disabilities. Respite help, community support, education and financial compensation are available. Family lives in southwestern Ontario. For more information contact Peace Haven Free Reformed Association: Director Margaret Heemsker: 905-746-0505; 519-770-8816; mheemsker.peacehaven@gmail.com or Chairman Paul Vandenberg: 519-647-3665(home); 519-720-9464 (work); paul@trisonartps.ca.



Faith Hospice provides faith-based comfort care at the end-of-life

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with a life-threatening or life-limiting illness, you are not alone. Faith Hospice is here to help.

Our team of medical professionals bring care and symptom management to wherever you call home and also provide family support.

If in-patient care is needed, Faith Hospice offers a warm, welcoming hospice residence, Trillium Woods, in Byron Center.

Call (616)235-5113 today for a free consultation with a Faith Hospice nurse.



Boll Weevil Blessings

WHEN I ASKED FRANK FREED about losing his right arm at the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, he eventually concluded that it was one of the best things that had ever happened to him. He hated living with an artificial hand, he admitted. But then he used words like *spiritual growth*, *wisdom*, *depth*, and *sensitivity* to describe the benefits he had realized.

Another WWII veteran, Joe Pardini, had his right arm nearly shot off on the sands of Iwo Jima, one of the most bitter battle-grounds in the Pacific. Reflecting on that terrifying event, he came to the same bottom line as Freed had. The Purple Heart he earned was only a small part of how he grew and matured through what had happened to him.

The reason for this, I strongly believe, is because God is especially present with us in the process of healing, restoring, and recovery in the tragic circumstances of our lives.

In 1989 a ferocious hurricane swept through the Caribbean Islands, resulting in the total destruction of the Caribbean National Forest. Thick with centuries-old trees, the wooded island was literally blown clean. The magnificent trees were all destroyed.

Then something happened. Flowers began growing where the trees had once stood. The forest had been so thick that nothing had grown beneath the trees. But now beautiful flowers—some never seen before—were coming to life. Those flowers were a gracious gift given to grieving forest-lovers by a loving God.

Such flowers spring up in many places after loss and tragedy.

In the center of a neighborhood park in Enterprise, Alabama, stands a monument to a damaging pest: the boll weevil.

Decades ago in the southern United States, cotton was planted every spring with high hopes for an abundant crop. In timely fashion the seeds germinated; plants popped up and began to thrive. And every year, the boll weevil moved in, causing heavy damage to the crops.

Eventually the cotton growers decided to make a change. They diversified, planting other crops along with the cotton. The boll weevil had awakened them to other possibilities that ended up making their lives more secure and profitable.

In such crises and dilemmas we see a loving, wise God at work. We see the Lord Jesus bringing healing, growth, and goodness out of heartbreaking circumstances.

There are many inspiring symbols of this principle. The Royal Palace in Tehran features one of the most beautiful mosaics in the world. Originally enormous sheets of mirror were going to be placed on the walls. But the mirrors arrived from Paris broken. Horrified, the contractor ordered the shattered



pieces to be thrown out and informed the architect of the disaster. The architect, however, ordered all the broken pieces to be collected and smashed into smaller pieces. These tiny sparkling pieces were glued to the walls, creating an effect beautiful beyond what had been planned.

God can reshape our broken lives into something worthwhile, valuable, and beautiful. The apostle Paul hinted at this truth in Romans: “[S]uffering produces perseverance . . . character . . . hope” (5:3, 4). Those three valuable qualities can flow out of tragedy through the Spirit of God.

Disasters happen. Destruction is part of life. But the way people grow, survive, and even blossom after being smashed is evidence of the loving power and presence of God. The Lord Jesus is there for the healing. And our care and kindness is part of his love. ■



James Kok is a clinical pastoral education supervisor and the author of several books, including *90% of Helping Is Just Showing Up*.

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!

At church our 3-year-old daughter heard the story of Jesus bringing a dead girl back to life. One night she was playing horsey on her dad's back. After he laid her down for a rest, she exclaimed, "Come back to life, horsey! I am Jesus. Getty up!"

—Xiaohong Zhou

A few years ago my husband and I went to California for our grandson Trevor's third birthday. We took along gifts from his other grandmother who had lived out of the area for a few years. I wanted to be sure he remembered who she was, so I said, "The turtle that floats in the pool is from Grandma Debbie." He looked puzzled, so I said, "You know who she is, don't you?" He looked up at the sky, placed his finger on his chin, and then replied, "I think I do."

Then came this grandma's big mistake. I said, "Tell me who she is." Trevor replied, "She's the one without the wrinkly neck!"

—Pat Van Dyken

I have good news and bad news," announced the pastor to his congregation. "The good news is that we have enough money to pay for our new building program.

"The bad news is that it's still out there in your pockets."

—Peter Haagen

My wife and I attended a church league basketball game at our church. During the game, our 2-year-old great-granddaughter, Kendra, played with my wife's iPad. When we got home, my wife noticed that all the pictures were skewed 90 degrees from normal. I emailed my daughter, explained the situation, and asked, "What should she do?" Her answer: "Ask Kendra."

—John Bell

Out of the mouths of babes: "The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple."

"Solomon had 200 wives and 700 cucumbers."

"Joshua led the Hebrews in the Battle of Geritol."

—Jack Bloem

A pastor in a small country church confronted his wife with the receipt for a dress she had purchased for \$250. "How could you do this?" he said.

"I don't know," she wailed. "I was standing in the store looking at the dress. Then I found myself trying it on. It was like the devil was whispering, 'Wow, you look great. You should buy it.'"

"You know how to deal with the tempter," said her husband. "Just tell him to get behind you."

"I did," she replied. "But then he said, 'It looks great from back here too!'"

—Dick Bylsma

One particularly exuberant kindergartener has given me reason to say the strangest sentences. At snack time, he and the rest of the class went out in the hall to get snacks from backpacks. "Aiden, please don't put your carrots in the library book drop slot," I said.

"But Mrs. Anderson," he exclaimed, "I already did, and I can't get them out."

—Eliza Anderson



"Which license do you wish to see?"


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