

32 The Role of the Church
in Society

35 Shopping with a Checklist

22 Rain Falls
on Cue
in Ghana



18 Abraham Kuyper
**Conscious
Christianity**



A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



INTRODUCING The Solar Talking Bible

The new Talking Bible is built to work in the most difficult of overseas field conditions. Solar powered, it charges in less than four hours and plays for up to two hours continuously. The high quality speaker is loud enough for as many as 200 people to hear the message of the Gospel—in their heart language. People with vision and hearing loss love listening, too!



Pastor David shares the “Good News” despite persecution.

India: In one of the idol worshipping areas of India, known for violence against Christians, Pastor David (a pseudonym) knows persecution. In the past, people opposed to Christianity destroyed a church building which had taken years to build. Multiple times the pastor has been beaten, jailed and had his life threatened. But, he remains to care for several small and dispersed non-reading followers of Jesus who gather to listen to the Talking Bible and be encouraged.

Since the distribution of the Talking Bible, these non-reading, new believers are better equipped to face the trials of persecution—which is increasing. “There are so many areas with no pastors and no churches where they can meet, but people are learning about salvation through Jesus Christ by hearing His words with the aid of the Talking Bible,” he said.

Will you pray about supporting the placement of Talking Bibles with the poor, non-readers in areas of persecution throughout the world? Please go to our website to learn more about how you can make an impact for Jesus with unreached people who have never heard the Word of the Lord. Please donate today at: www.talkingbibles.org.

**Talking Bible Sunday
In your church
October 26, 2014**

**Order your
Free information
Packet today**



Enhancing Trust

www.TalkingBibles.org

Talking Bibles International · 419 East Grand Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025
Telephone: 855-55-BIBLE (855-552-4253) or 760-745-8105

I AM THE FUTURE



Whether she becomes a tennis superstar, the next Picasso, or a farmer like her parents, Grace knows that God loves her and has great things in mind for her future. Unfortunately, poverty can sometimes get in the way of children achieving their dreams. Poor health, hunger, and lack of access to schools or job opportunities can keep children stuck in a life of poverty.

You can help. Give the gift of freedom from poverty to a child and her family today. Give your first \$22 monthly Free A Family® gift at worldrenew.net or call World Renew at the number below.



See what's new at World Renew—sign up for our monthly eNewsletter at worldrenew.net.

worldrenew.net/freefamily

1700 28th Street SE • Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407 • 800-552-7972
3475 Mainway • PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1 • Burlington ON L7R 3Y8 • 800-730-3490

World Renew is an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) that depends on the generous support of God's people and does not receive CRC Ministry Shares.

COURAGE

to think deeply to act justly to live fully

“

When I arrived at Calvin, I knew what it meant to love God with my heart. When I left Calvin, I finally grasped what it might mean to love God with my mind as well. My classes and mentors paved the way for the whole-mind work I'm doing at *Christianity Today*.”

Katelyn Beaty '06,
first female managing editor
of *Christianity Today*

It takes courage to be a leader, to influence the world in ways that grow God's kingdom here on earth. At Calvin College, that kind of courage is cultivated in a learning environment that pushes students to think deeply, act justly and live fully in all things.

The results of this heart-mind education are astounding: over 60,000 alumni are using the tools they received at Calvin to influence global disaster relief policy, prison reform, sustainable farming practices, Alzheimer's research and much more.

Explore what it means to think deeply, act justly and live fully at www.calvin.edu/go/courage.

CALVIN

College™

www.calvin.edu

Calvin College admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.

BANNER

Volume 149 | Number 08 | 2014



FEATURES

18 **Conscious Christianity: The Life and Legacy of Abraham Kuiper**
A conversation with historian James Bratt.
by James Bratt

32 **The Role of the Church in Society: Two Perspectives** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE
What's the best way for the church to engage "every square inch"?
by Doug Vande Griend and Kathy Vandergrift

DEPARTMENTS

Editorial: A Lamp unto Our Feet by Bob De Moor **6**
How should God's people disciple the nations?

Catch Your Breath: Letters by James Calvin Schaap **7**
My great-grandmother's letters tell a story that's mine—for good or ill.

IMHO: Renewal by Clayton Libolt **8**
The language of organizational consulting may be the wrong tool of analysis for the church.

Letters to the Editor **8**

News: A small group with a powerful message. **10**

Next: A Great Cloud of Witnesses by Aleah Marsden **21**
How do Millennials live out their faith? Grace is the core.

Just for Kids: Animal Similes by Sandy Swartzentruber **30** ▶
Fun similes for eager beavers and more.

Reformed Matters: Shopping with a Checklist by H. David Schuringa **35** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE
The benefits of holistic shopping.

Tuned In: Graphic Church History: An Interview with Gene Luen Yang by Otto Selles **36**
Yang brings history to life in his graphic novels.

Relating: A Church Pew Friendship by Elizabeth Drummond **38**
Deep friendship may come in the unlikeliest form or place.

Frequently Asked Questions **40**
Does Christian freedom allow us to use pot?

On the Journey: Heaven Bound by Laura Bartleson **41**
Heaven is getting very near, and I have a lot of questions.

Punch Lines **47**

TOGETHER DOING MORE

Rain Falls on Cue in Ghana by Matt Kucinski **22**
Calvin students studying in Ghana witness a miracle arising from their community theater project.

The View from Here: Family Portraits by Steven Timmermans **26**



A Lamp unto Our Feet

KATHY VANDERGRIFT'S AND DOUG VANDE GRIEND'S CONTRIBUTIONS on the role of the church in addressing societal issues (pp. 32-34) are intriguing. Their differing perspectives help us think through how God's people should disciple the nations (Matt. 28:19).

Some argue that the institutional church should never speak out on political issues. I hope you're not one of them. Abortion, for example, is clearly a political issue. So is the use of nuclear weapons. I hope we can agree that these are politicized issues that, nevertheless, our churches should address—as they have.

Vandergrift urges the institutional church to step up and address governments and other community leaders on important issues. She says the church needs to add a strong biblical voice to the many others advocating for the public good in our respective democracies.

Vande Griend, however, cautions that we need to respect the God-given boundaries of the institutional church within our differentiated society. The church as institution has neither the authority nor the know-how to speak out on divisive issues, and doing so may well fragment or polarize our church(es).

I'll leave it to you, reader, to mull this over. Both authors do us a real service in giving us a common framework in which to discuss this.

Personally I believe that the institutional church can and should speak out on any number of significant societal issues. But we need to take Vande Griend's warnings to heart: don't say more than we should, don't pretend to speak for all, and don't get in over our heads. The institutional church is a *worshipping* community, not a public soapbox or a think tank of refined social analysis.

When Abraham Kuyper posited sphere *sovereignty*, he also posited sphere *universality*—the interweaving of the many spheres of life. I take this to mean that the institutional church must proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ within its walls but also beyond them.

It must do so in keeping with its own area of authority and insight: clearly and boldly proclaiming biblical principles and leaving the specific working out of those principles to others. It must speak *confessionally* and only confessionally, meaning that it should only speak to power if and when we can “testify together” with one voice.

On some societal issues we should say lots, because Scripture and the confessions (including our contemporary testimony) say lots. On others we should say little or stay mum altogether—because Scripture and our confessions are silent or because we are too divided in our opinions.

Our denomination should not push specific policies, political agendas, or programs. Let's let the church as organism sort that out. But as a confessing community, let's communicate clearly and succinctly what is preached regularly from our pulpits.

Our denomination has received appreciative responses from politicians and bureaucrats because, unencumbered by party politics, we could clearly place our finger on the heart of an issue by allowing the light of Scripture to illumine it. Biblical conviction and simplicity still speak to power.

My sincere appreciation to both authors! I hope you will find them as instructive as I have.

And let's keep talking. ■



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

Biblical conviction and simplicity still speak to power.

Bob De Moor Editor

Judith Claire Hardy Associate Editor

Gayla R. Postma News Editor

Henry Hess Editor,
Together Doing More

Kristy Quist Tuned In Editor

Dean R. Heetderks Art Director

Pete Euwema Graphic Design

Frank Gutbrod Graphic Design

Contact Us

1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids,
Michigan 49508-1407

Address Changes and Subscriptions
800-777-7270 or visit our website at
www.thebanner.org

Classified Advertising
616-224-0725 classifieds@thebanner.org

Display Advertising
616-224-5882 ads@crcna.org

Editorial
616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News
613-330-3145 news@thebanner.org

Published monthly (12 issues per year). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: The Banner, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: The Banner, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8.

Copyright 2014, Faith Alive Christian Resources, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 149, No. 08, 2014.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

Letters

IN THE FLURRY OF ACTIVITY surrounding my mother's death and funeral, I don't remember how her letters ended up in my laptop case. But that's where they were until, weeks later, I pulled out the case.

There they were, jammed in the bottom. Some letters run back generations, the writers long gone. "It is Sunday afternoon so I thought I would write you a few lines," writes Great-grandma Harman. This one, dated June 21, 1903, is addressed to "Deric," my great-grandfather.

"We went to church this morning. It was a lovely day, only I wish you could have been home. Edgar and Mabel are out picking strawberries," she says of her children. Fourteen years later Edgar would be killed somewhere in France at the end of World War I. Mabel was my grandma.

I know this much from family stories: Great-grandpa Deric was not kind to his wife, not at all. What's unmistakable within the lines of her letters is her anxiety: "If I had been sure you were not coming, I would have gone into Sheboygan over Sunday. . . . I did not feel able to go . . . had pain all week but feel some

better today. . . . It is so lonesome and we are afraid to be alone nights."

There's brokenness in the sentences, brokenness in her life.

"I get so nervous sometimes and do not sleep well all night. I wish you would go in business again so you could stay at home."

My great-grandfather was a traveling salesman—farm equipment—obviously not home often. Mom told me that one of her earliest memories was going into a tavern on Indiana Avenue and watching her mother retrieve her father from a stool.

"Brother is still in Iowa," my great-grandma wrote. "He wrote me a letter this week asking me about the auction and how much the land brought and who bought it but I did not answer." The Iowa relatives say that "brother" was steered from Wisconsin by his wife, who would not allow her husband to work for or with "brother" Deric.

There's another letter too, this one from little Mabel, my grandma, also dated June 21.

"Dear papa," it begins. "It is Sunday and I will write you a few lines to tell you that I went out strawberry picking and I found a quart box full don't you think

that is pretty good mama thought it was good for me to pick that much."

A little more and then: "My hand is so tired I cannot write any more so good bye write soon," and "From your little girl, Mabel."

These notes were probably never sent, a fact which carries as much brokenness as any sentence therein. Then again, my great-grandma kept both—as did Mabel, my grandma; as did my own mother, who wouldn't be born for another 15 years. Now, more than a century later, those notes are here in my hands.

Reading my mother's letters is a treasure. There's a story here, a story that's mine, for good or ill. I'm humbled to know that in joy and in sorrow, I'm not alone, none of us are. It's like the psalmist says. We're all alike, we're all human, we're all looking for love. We all need a Savior. ■



James Calvin Schaap taught at Dordt College for 36 years before retiring. He and his wife, Barbara, live in rural Alton, Iowa. His collection of folk tales, *Up the Hill*, will be published this month by New Rivers Press.



"I think we're all pretty crazy on this bus. I'm not sure I know anyone who's got all the dots on his or her dice."

— ANNE LAMOTT

Renewal

THE BANNER

What we need is clarity about who we are and what we proclaim.

IN MAY, THE BANNER PUBLISHED an advance report on the work of the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT). This group is one of several working on reorganizing the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (see p. 24). The group plans to submit a full report to the Board of Trustees later in the year. Their analysis and recommendations are based in part on conversations between the members of SPACT and “key leaders and stakeholders throughout the denomination.”

My concern is the language that SPACT has brought to this process. The advance report makes quite a lot of a term of analysis that also appears in the group’s official name: *adaptive*. “Adaptive challenges” are contrasted with “technical problems.” Technical problems are problems we know how to fix; adaptive challenges are problems that are less easily defined and harder to fix. Fair enough.

What the SPACT report does not tell you (nor does the SPACT website) is that this language is borrowed from an organizational consultant, Ronald A. Heifetz, who has written (with collaborators) several books on the subject of change. A footnote crediting Dr. Heifetz might

have been in order. But that’s not my concern.

My concern is that the language of organizational consulting may be the wrong tool of analysis for the problems facing the Christian Reformed Church. The problems facing the CRC are deeper, and, yes, they are “adaptive” in the Heifetzian sense. We have lost our way—not organizationally but theologically. We have lost our message, our identity, and our contribution to the larger Christian community.

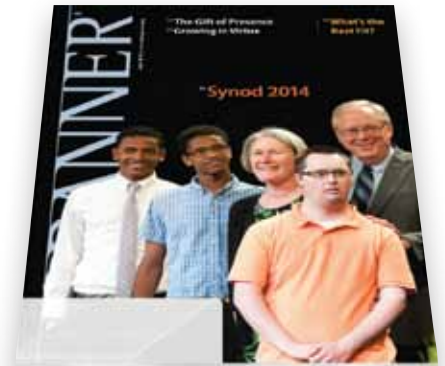
Our denomination has gotten stuck theologically in old language and old controversies. As a result, our message has become muddled and our mission is often ineffective. Our congregations grasp at ideas that neither fit us nor help us. What we need in this environment are not more denominational reorganizations. What we need is clarity about who we are and what we proclaim.

This requires the courage on the denominational level to rediscover the core of who we are. We are, I think, people of the Bible but not fundamentalists, not those who would reject science in order to hold up a (false) idea of Scripture borrowed from the conservative Christian culture. We are, I think, people who believe that God acts first, not those who would put the burden of our salvation on ourselves.

These things must be said and more, not in language mired in 17th-century controversy or in the language of organizational consultants but in language that communicates clearly to those to whom we are called. ■



For more than 20 years, **Clay Libolt** was the senior pastor of River Terrace Church in East Lansing, Mich. In 2011 he retired and now lives in the Pacific Northwest. He is presently interim pastor at Sonlight CRC in Lynden, Wash.



No Stereotypes, Please!

As a 17-year-old girl, I enjoy browsing Punch Lines. I am writing to explain my disappointment in the cartoon selected for your May 2014 issue. It depicts a woman holding a wrench with a bow on it, saying to a man: “I know it’s the thought that counts—what were you thinking?”

My mother and I both very much enjoy working with tools. Since I can remember, my mother has done all of the handiwork around the house. I plan to pursue a career in engineering. We both love to receive tools as presents.

Seemingly harmless jokes and comments like this perpetuate the entrenchment of gender roles and prevent progress in the realm of equality. The stereotypes in the comic serve as a poor representation of our stance as a denomination.

—Christina Wyngarden
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Ed: You’re absolutely right, Christina. Thanks for calling us on this one!

Old Testament God

I don’t believe that our Old Testament God is scandalous at all (“The Scandal of the Old Testament God,” May 2014). Our just God gave the Amorites or Canaanites 400 years to repent. Even after his miraculous signs in Egypt to free Israel, they failed to

TTERS

turn from their extreme wickedness. God is just in punishing sin, but he is extremely patient with his rebellious creation. He is also merciful to repentant sinners like Noah and Lot.

If the Old Testament God is scandalous, then the New Testament God is also just as offensive. For example, Paul in Romans 1:18-3:20 says that God's wrath considers everyone guilty and worthy of condemnation. However, we cling to his amazing love in Jesus to deliver us (Rom. 3:21ff).

—Bruce Leiter
Hudsonville, Mich.

Moving On

Just read your May 2014 Editorial "Time to Move On?" with its suggestion for improving the minister calling process. When we retired to the Outer Banks of North Carolina there was no CRC, so we joined a Methodist church. Their selection process involves the bishop, who decides when a pastor should move, with input from a church committee that establishes what that church requires from a new pastor.

We were there for two of those pastoral changeovers. We dearly loved our first pastor and couldn't believe the new pastor would be able to fill the vacated position. We were wrong, as we loved the new pastor and the one that replaced him when he left. The process is much better than the CRC process.

—Ken and Melva Greenwood
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Facing Our Fears

Looking ahead into uncertainty often produces anxiety ("Facing Our Fears," Apr. 2014). This article reminds us of our assurances, not only in uncertainty but also in rebirthing from events that seem to be an end, not a possible begin-

ning. Thanks to Parchment Church in Kalamazoo for rebirthing many other ministries as they closed their own doors. God can use unusual events in our lives for his kingdom.

—Scott Wagner
Kentwood, Mich.

When a Church Closes

After reading the article "When a Church Closes" and your editorial (Apr. 2014), I was inspired to send you the following. Having been a CRC member for over 25 years [until the folding of the local CRC], and then having attended for the past 20 years United Brethren and United Methodist churches, my family seems to have a background similar to the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

I find myself wondering what I might do to keep a CRC connection and, just maybe, what the CRC might do to keep the connection with me. Lacking such effort, is the CRC relegated to smallness by not somehow including those of the "diaspora"?

—Jon H. Ringelberg
Clare, Mich.

New Mandate?

A "beefed-up" *Banner* council for ongoing and improved communication, collaboration, and coordination should exist, but to do this in part because of concern about articles that may potentially cause fear and dissension is insufficient ("New Mandate for *Banner* Council," Apr. 2014).

I welcome in our denomination open discussions and debates about issues in our society that challenge us while maintaining the solid foundation of Christ on which our faith is built.

—Henry Numan
Vancouver, British Columbia

Progressive Christianity

Mr. Berghoef's effective description of the "social gospel" in his answer about "progressive Christianity" (FAQ, Apr. 2014) may sound pluralistically attractive. But just as moralism is not the gospel of Christ, this social gospel is also not the gospel of Christ. Only from a proper doctrine that results in the regeneration of a sinner's heart can good works arise that truly please the Lord. God's elect throughout the history of the church have sacrificed immensely for such doctrine.

—Wesley Kwong
Portland, Ore.

Reimagining Faith Formation

My church too has opted for this latest theory of doing and being church ("Reimagining Faith Formation," Mar. 2012). I agree that faith formation, modeling, and practicing are vital aspects of attaining Christian maturity and that they should take place intergenerationally.

Traditionally that has been seen as the role of the family, not the church. The church is charged to teach and preach so that families will be empowered to act as living centers of faith formation.

It's not either cognitive training or faith formation, as the article implies—it's both. The family and the church need to work hand in hand to bring people to full spiritual maturity—something that cannot be achieved by faith formation only.

—Ed Grootenboer
Waterloo, Ontario

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

For correspondents' email addresses, see www.thebanner.org.

Gayla R. Postma News Editor
Email: gpostma@crcna.org

Anita Beem
Classes Lake Erie, Kalamazoo
248-559-2806 • 248-645-1990

Anita Brinkman
Classes Chatham, Huron
519-354-9126

Gregory Chandler
Classes Georgetown, Grandville
616-392-8434

Shashi DeHaan
Classes Arizona, Red Mesa, Greater L.A.
623-418-6705

Estefania de León
Classes Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone
512-736-3939

Callie Feyen
Classes Atlantic NE, Hackensack, Hudson, Illiana,
Southeast U.S.
240-422-1171

Janet A. Greidanus
Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/ Saskatchewan
780-484-3370

Melissa Holtrop
Classes Central Plains, Chicago South, Northern Illinois
708-217-7197

Kyle Hoogendoorn
Classes Heartland, Iakota, Northcentral Iowa
712-476-5955

Jonathan J. Kim
Classis Pacific Hanmi
626-616-0411

Jose Luna
Classis Toronto
416-907-4895

Mavis Moon
Classis Central California
408-268-1792

Ron Rupke
Classis Quinte
905-349-2336

Kristin Schmitt
Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids South,
Thornapple Valley
616-818-6673

Amy Toornstra
Classes Columbia, Lake Superior, Pacific Northwest,
Wisconsin
503-399-9165

Krista Dam-VandeKuyt
Classes Eastern Canada, Hamilton
905-977-9855

Susan Vanden Berg
Classes Holland, Zeeland
616-212-7281

Alissa Vernon
Classis Niagara
289-214-2025

Tracey Yan
Classes B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, California South
604-420-3030

Louis Tamminga
In Memoriam articles
616-949-4539

If your region is not listed here,
please contact the news editor.

Shore2Shore riders took part in the
Canada Day parade in Chatham, Ontario.



ANITA BRINKMAN

A Small Group with a Powerful Message

A small group of Christian Reformed people with a powerful message traveled around southern Ontario and across Michigan this summer to raise awareness of the effects of pornography on lives and communities and to encourage discussion about it.

The Shore2Shore with a Roar motorcycle tour took riders 2,369 kilometers (1,480 miles), with stops at 14 churches in two weeks, to break the silence about this issue. Brought together by a common desire to bring healing through discussion, bikers came from as far as Prince Edward Island to join the tour.

The core group of seven riders was joined by “day-trippers” riding along for part of the tour in support of the effort. Originally envisioned as a longer tour with a larger group, the ride was shortened when initial response was less than organizers had hoped. “We’re seeing it as more of a pilot or seed project [this year],” said Janette VanderZaag.

Riders shared personal stories of the damage that pornography can bring to marriages and families, discussed the ease with which pornography can be found—even stumbled upon—and urged people to deal with the problem through accountability, computer filters, and knowledge. At each stop, the group gave away copies of *Just One Click: Christians, Porn, and the Lure of Cybersex* (Faith Alive), and a “Shhhh . . .” brochure from the Safe Church Ministry of the CRC.

At one rally, Pastor Chad Vandervalk of Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) CRC told people, “Don’t give up what you want most for what you want now.”

One rider, Janny, said she was drawn to the tour “first of all [for] bike riding.” She grew more serious as she continued, “Second, my marriage was broken because of this. And third, a lady in my church—her husband has been [using] porn.”

Jake Snieder, who attended the presentation at Grace CRC in Chatham, Ontario, said, “As a man and as a youth pastor, [I realized] this is something we do need to talk about more openly—to take away the power of shame that porn has on people’s lives, just by talking about it. . . . This is a real issue that affects real lives.”

—Anita Brinkman

CRCs Affected by Rock Valley Flooding

Storms and flooding in June affected various Christian Reformed churches and communities along the Rock and Sioux Rivers in northwest Iowa. Heavy rain over several days washed out roadways and caused flooding across a large area.

Matthew Haan is pastor at First CRC in Rock Valley. He said at least 20 families from First were displaced from their homes and at least 20 more had water in their basement. The local Christian school and First Church itself only had "minor backup basement water," Haan said. "We praise God that it was not any worse."

At Calvin CRC, secretary Becky Kooima said one member had to gut the basement and the main floor of his home, as he had water on both floors. The parsonage "was under water and the basement was filled to the top," she added.

Calvin CRC became a meeting place for those who were displaced as well as those who were working during the flood. It was, said Kooima, "a place people could pick up cleaning supplies, rubber gloves, and bottled water, use the restroom, get water for cleanup, and even enjoy air-conditioning and treats brought in by church members."



BRENT KOOPS

An aerial view of the flooding in Rock Valley.

Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, put out the call for alumni and community members to join a clean-up crew. More than 100 volunteers turned out on June 26 to help.

World Renew's Disaster Response Service sent regional

managers to provide early response coordination with local officials and volunteer organizations and determine the need for further work.

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

Study Trip Takes Pastors to Middle East

Pastors from about 17 Christian Reformed congregations in British Columbia were recently absent from their pulpits. Instead they were making bricks out of mud and straw like the ancient Israelites in Egypt, climbing the Mount of Olives in the footsteps of Jesus, and floating on the salty waters of the Dead Sea.

The pastors and many of their spouses spent two weeks on a biblical study trip of Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. The trip was paid for by the DeVries Family Foundation because of the family's desire to bless the pastoral leadership of Christian Reformed churches in the region.

The main purpose of the trip was to equip pastors for ministry in their local churches by learning to read the Bible in its geographical and cultural context and to help forge closer



KEVIN VAN DER LEEK

Pastors' tour group visits the Egyptian pyramids.

relationships among pastors in the province.

That investment appears to be paying off already.

"Theology really is connected to geography," said Wilma van der Leek, a commissioned pastor and facilitator with BC Leadership Development Network. "Walking through the desert landscape of the Middle East, I understood right to my bones

why images of shade and water come up so often in the prayers of Israel."

Participants were asked to prepare for the trip both physically and spiritually; churches were asked to support the trip by providing paid study leave for their pastors. The trip was led by George DeJong of Under the Fig Tree. The group posted a daily travel blog on his website.

"The fellowship with fellow believers was amazing . . . and led to a broad and thorough appreciation of fellow pastors and spouses," said Joel Ringma, pastor of Terrace Christian Reformed Church.

The inclusion of spouses in the invitation was appreciated by Candy Vander Woud, whose husband, Sid, is pastor at Hope Community CRC in Surrey. "It was wonderful to be able to accompany my husband and experience together the land of the Bible," she explained. "Often pastoral spouses take a background role and yet are called upon to be in a leadership role. This experience . . . was an invaluable gift to us as a leadership couple and for our church that we deeply appreciate!"

—Tracey Yan

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Peter Chung Ping Tong

1932 – 2014

Peter Tong's ministry was conducted with vigor, determination, compassion, vision, and understanding. A speaker of four Chinese dialects in addition to Indonesian, he died of a heart attack in Fontana, Calif., at age 81.

Born Tong Chung Ping in Xiamen, China, Tong attended Sunday school with friends and became a believer.

In 1957 he attended Reformed Bible Institute (now Kuyper College) in Grand Rapids, Mich. He subsequently studied at Calvin College and Seminary, graduating in 1964. The California Graduate School of Theology granted him a Ph.D. degree in 1991.

While at Hyde Park CRC in Chicago, Ill., Tong did Chinese language radio and gospel literature translation. He was a church planter in Taiwan and served as president of China Reformed Theological Seminary in Taipei. He retired in 1998.

Tong published 18 books in Chinese that continue to be of help to Chinese pastors and local Christians.

He is survived by his wife, Freda, four children and their spouses, and six grandsons.

MORE ONLINE

—*Louis M. Tamminga*
Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the *Christian Reformed Church's* annual Yearbook and on The Banner's website.

Racing Back to the Future

Young adults from several Alberta Christian Reformed churches held an "amazing race" in which they competed to reach places that reflected Reformation history.

The 25 participants from Edmonton, Edson, Lacombe, and Neerlandia, aged 18 to 30, were attending the fifth annual Classis Alberta North Young Adults (CANYA) Retreat held in Canmore.

"Instead of random countries or places being selected as locations of the challenges," explained Ron deVries, Classis Alberta North's youth ministry consultant, "groups were taken to places that reflected part of Reformation history. One example was when groups were directed to a mass of water representing the ocean separating Europe and America."

The young adults biked around the lake, weighed down with



Teams of young adults compete in puzzle-making at Classis Alberta North Young Adults Retreat in Canmore, Alberta.

knapsacks filled with rocks to suggest the weight of the journey. Once there, said deVries, "the challenge was to build communities using Popsicle sticks and glue. It was interesting to witness that the majority of groups established churches first, not houses. We were inspired by this."

Throughout the weekend, participants made connections to the Heidelberg Catechism, Reformation history, and the present church story through puzzles, stories, challenges, and Scripture. Rick VanManen, a CRC campus chaplain at the University of Alberta, offered three worship and teaching sessions based on Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Participants reflected on the anxieties they experience and where and how they might recognize God's providence in their lives.

Brad VanderWey, 27, was on the planning committee as well as a retreat participant. "I think it is important for young adults to hang out in a Christian environment with their peers to have fellowship and worship with each other," he said. "It is nice to be a part of a group like CANYA and know that when you bring up the topic of religion, you don't feel like you need to be defensive or worry about offending someone."

—*Janet Greidanus*

NOTEWORTHY

Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., reached its goal of raising \$25 million in debt relief three years faster than its 2017 target.

The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta, received the provincial government's permission to drop the word "college" from its formal name.

Maple Avenue Ministries in Holland, Mich.; **First Christian Reformed Church of Detroit** (Grosse Pointe Park, Mich.); and **Third CRC** in Zeeland, Mich., all celebrated their 100th anniversaries.

The girls' soccer team of **Calvin Christian High School** in Grandville, Mich., won the state's Division IV title.

The girls' soccer team of **Unity Christian High** in Hudsonville, Mich., won the state's Division III title.

Tom VanWingerden has been appointed executive director of Friendship Ministries.

Immanuel Christian School in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, hosted Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, during a recent visit in Canada.

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



(L-r) Students Abby McGeoghegan, Grace Lee, Hannah Mowat, and Leila Mann show Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, the hair fascinators they made.

ANDREW VAUGHAN

Hope Centre Ministries Rolls Out the Red Carpet

Most people who walk the red carpet are famous Hollywood celebrities. But in April, the red carpet of inclusion was rolled out for all people—including people with disabilities. The event, called “IN 2014,” was organized by Hope Centre Ministries. Hope Centre, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is supported by the Christian Reformed Church. It provides spiritual support for people living with disabilities.

Approximately 600 people, including men and women with disabilities, caregivers, and pastors representing 14 denominations, attended. The event included workshops, a concert, Sunday worship, and a movie with a red-carpet premiere.

Shellie Power, director of spiritual care for Hope Centre Ministries, said, “We categorize people. We are all in our different groups. This was a day to lay that all down and focus on God’s inclusion. What a beautiful picture!”

People with disabilities participated in the event as seminar presenters, participants on panel discussion boards, food service workers, and background support providers.

This is the second year Hope Centre Ministries has hosted an “IN” weekend. It was supported by Disability Concerns, a CRC ministry that helps churches nurture the spiritual lives of people who have disabilities.

—Amy Toornstra



ANTHONY MARK PHOTOGRAPHY

Shellie Power (right) and Kayla Kiers on the red carpet.

California Church Does Missions Close to Home

Many people go on mission trips far away to serve those in need. Meanwhile, members of Good News Chapel Christian Reformed Church in Walnut, Calif., have been helping the children of their own neighborhood.

For the past four years, a group of about 10 women and men from the church have been meeting monthly with groups of preteen and teenage girls in foster care to show them the love of Jesus. The girls live at Maryvale, a child wel-

fare facility run by the Roman Catholic Church.

“What I love about being involved in Maryvale is that we are able to obey the teachings of Jesus right here in our backyard,” said Angie Oh, one of the ministry organizers. “There are so many children here in the U.S. who need to know the love of their heavenly Father. These girls have so much hope, joy, and love, and it’s an honor to be a part of their lives.”

The program offered by the church includes a wide variety of activities, including craft projects, games, and sports.

“My time there has given me a deeper understanding into the riches of God’s love for us as his adopted children,” said volunteer John Pyun. “It has been an amazing experience to be able to share his love with those at Maryvale.”

—Tracey Yan

Maryvale volunteers from Good News Chapel CRC.



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Allen Hoogewind

1942 – 2014

Allen Jay Hoogewind, age 71, pastor, chaplain, compassionate counselor, and gifted teacher, died on May 7 in a traffic accident.

Hoogewind attended Calvin College and Seminary. He later completed an M.A. at Western Michigan University with a certificate in alcohol and drug abuse ministry.

Hoogewind served three Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan. He also spent several years as a chaplain, serving both people with alcohol and drug addictions and people with disabilities.

Following his retirement in 2007, Hoogewind built his counseling practice. He and a colleague were in Nashville, Tenn., for a work-related conference when he was hit by a car.

Hoogewind was an empathetic caregiver, an encourager, and a welcoming person. A thoughtful extrovert, people felt drawn to him. He was also a man of broad interests. All manner of Christian expressions in society had his attention, understanding, and support.

He knew his way around in the complex world of drug addiction, and people with addictions found in him new hope.

Hoogewind is survived by his wife, Coral, three children and their spouses, and seven grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

New City Kids Celebrates 20 Years of Transforming Lives

For 20 years, New City Kids, a Christian Reformed ministry in Jersey City, N.J., has transformed the lives of at-risk children through its after-school center and its focus on the fine arts. Recently some graduates of the program held a reunion.

"New City Kids was like my second home!" Tonia Young explained. Young, a recent graduate of Howard University, has been a part of New City Kids since graduating from eighth grade. She attended a job fair, hoping to get a summer job at New City Kids, and ended up working there throughout high school. "I was an art teacher, creative writing teacher, dance teacher, tutor, assistant team leader, and a team leader," she said.

Young was a part of the Teen Life Internship program in which teens work eight to 12 hours during the week. They also learn how to prepare for college and receive one-on-one coaching.



Young was also involved in New City Kids X-Change ministry, which allows teens to express their trials, fears, and suffering through poetry, drama, and music in "exchange" for a message on God's love. As part of the X-Change Crew, Young explained that she "helped participants deal with their issues and created a safe place for them to exchange their burdens for the love of God."

Gregg Nelson, who has been involved with New City Kids since he was 2, was also part of the

Linda Rubingh (back row center) and the Teen Support Group at a New City Kids reunion.

X-Change Crew. "We planned, did skits, and prepared a message at the end of the night," Nelson explained. "The purpose was to show teenagers a different route."

Nelson, a recent graduate of Montclair State University, was both a participant in New City Kids and an employee. When he participated in the after-school program, he said, kids did their

homework but also learned to play an instrument. "The city's all about the arts," Nelson said. "New City Kids incorporates music because it's a skill kids want to learn. Performing in front of your peers shows kids they have self-worth and gives them tools to do something besides the norm."

Nelson said he had family issues growing up, and New City Kids was there to support him through his childhood and adolescent years. They also helped him get into college and find a job.

Young agrees that the program supported her spiritually, emotionally, and also financially. "I was able to gain a sense of self, develop an authentic relationship with God, and strengthen my academic skills as well as gain the courage to share my God-given talents."

When Linda Rubingh and her husband, Trevor, started New City Kids 20 years ago, "there was no money, no people, no building—just the call," Linda said. The work was not easy. "Pain and suffering are everywhere, but it's concentrated in high-need areas of the city. Breaking into a hurting community felt like having to break down a brick wall with our bare hands."

Despite the resistance and frustration, the Rubinghs believed God was calling and strove to serve the children of Jersey City. "Learning how to bring the fullness of this reality to the foot of the cross each day, and then allowing God to re-proclaim the power of the resurrection in our hearts, was a humbling yet essential thing we had to learn."

—Callie Feyen

Faith, Farms, and Fathers

What do you get when you put together John Calvin and John Deere? A "Drive Your Tractor to Church" Sunday service, of course. East Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., held this special event as a way to celebrate Father's Day.

"It was a fun time," said member Wayne Becksvoort, who drove his 1941 Farmall on the leisurely four-mile, 26-minute ride to church.

The first-time event was a nod to the agricultural roots of the community, said Wayne Bakker, worship and media director at East Saugatuck. With over 25 tractors driven by members and visitors alike, "it was a good turnout," he said.

Head pastor Gary Luurtsema delivered a sermon entitled "How Christians Are Like Tractors" based on 1 Corinthians 3:7.

After the service, everyone enjoyed a cookout and admired all the tractors, from the smaller antiques to the enormous green machines that lined the back of the parking lot.



Hank and Marcia Belder pose with their 1954 Super MTA Farmall.

—Susan Vanden Berg



Ayden James is baptized at Alger Community CRC while his mom, grandmother, and great-grandmother make profession of faith.

Four Generations Join Washington Church

Four people joined Alger Community Christian Reformed Church in Bellingham, Wash., through baptism and public profession of faith on a Sunday morning in May. But it was not just any four people—it was four generations of the same family.

Carolyn Bradshaw (great-grandmother), Cheryl Janzen (grandmother), Amanda James (mother), and her 4-year-old son, Ayden, all found a church home at Alger Community CRC.

Carolyn, Cheryl, and Amanda all relocated to the Alger area in 2011 and settled less than a mile from the church. They attended immediately and became involved in various ways, including the music ministry. “We love the church and its people. We wanted to be a part of it, so we became members,” said Carolyn.

All four family members have felt hospitality and care from their new church family. “We love the warmth of the church, the way the congregation has embraced us, and the message the pastor brings every Sunday,” said Amanda.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Amy Toornstra

Helping Kids Be Kids

With a reported 2.5 million individuals caught in human trafficking, childhoods are ripped away every day. That is why 18 students from Hamilton (Ontario) District Christian High are striving to raise \$15,000 by the time they graduate in 2015. So far they have raised almost \$9,000 to “Let Kids Be Kids.”

The funds will be matched 3:1 by the Canadian government to assist with World Renew’s efforts in Nigeria and Senegal to support communities through education, employment initiatives, and village savings and loans.

“Let Kids Be Kids” was formed a year ago after several students heard World Renew’s presentation on human trafficking at the All Ontario Youth Convention.

They were challenged by a teacher to write an end-of-year research paper that would lead to a service project. Student Braden VanDyk of Burlington Christian Reformed Church came up with the idea of a campaign to help the children they had just heard about. After completing the research paper, students wanted to propel this idea forward.

What started as a great way to work together as a group of friends became so much more. “We saw God opening more doors and opportunities,” said student Victoria teBrake of Faith CRC in Burlington. For student Erin Kurvits, first-hand experience during a mission trip to Uganda this past March and meeting children who need this help motivates her to reach the goal.

“We commend this group for their creativity and compassion,” said Ida Kaastra Mutoigo, director of World Renew Canada. “The key to preventing human trafficking is to increase people’s ability to improve their financial situation. This is an exciting example of how God can be at work to address social injustice.”

For VanDyk, it is important to advocate on behalf of these children: “We’ve grown up with toys, food, clothes, a home, and no worries of being forced into labor,” explained VanDyk. “Every kid deserves to have a childhood.”

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

(L-r): Students Victoria teBrake, Braden VanDyk, and Erin Kurvits have organized several fund-raisers such as bake sales, car washes, and a spaghetti dinner.



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Gerald Van Oyen

1932 – 2014

Gerald Van Oyen, 81, winsome in all his ways, a faithful witness of his Savior, and musically and mechanically gifted, passed away on May 10 while bird watching in Ohio from an apparent heart attack.

Van Oyen attended Calvin College and Seminary, graduating in 1957.

Van Oyen served Christian Reformed congregations in Minnesota, Iowa, and Michigan, and was a missionary in Mexico. His retirement years in Florida included a multitude of services for church and Kingdom.

Van Oyen conducted his ministry with purpose, resolution, passion, and self-deprecation. Once, when he crossed the border into Mexico with a load of Bibles, border officials had him jailed for seven days. He witnessed to the guards, one of whom accepted Christ.

There were few musical instruments he could not play. He was a fine singer, an accomplished bird photographer, and a splendid wood carver. He loved riding motorcycles.

Van Oyen is survived by his wife, Ellen, four children and their spouses, and 17 grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Rick Warren to Pastors: “There is no testimony without a test”



Sharing how he has coped after his son’s suicide last year, megachurch pastor Rick Warren urged Southern Baptist pastors in June to let their times of suffering be acts of ministry.

“Behind every publicly successful ministry, there is private pain,” Warren said at the Southern Baptist Convention’s Pastors’ Conference. “Pain is God’s megaphone. There is no testimony without a test. There is no message without a mess. There is no impact without criticism.”

Warren’s son, Matthew, 27, who suffered from mental illness, killed himself five days after Easter in 2013.

Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern

California, urged his fellow Southern Baptist pastors to draw close to others when they are suffering. He said a small group of men were on the scene within half an hour to comfort him when Matthew died. They were the same people he had met with in their times of crises.

“Your greatest ministry will come out of your deepest hurt,” he said. “We mistakenly think that the world is impressed by how we handle prosperity, but the fact is, the world is impressed by how we handle adversity.”

—Religion News Service

U.S. Presbyterians Vote to Allow Same-Sex Marriage



The Presbyterian Church (USA) voted June 19 to allow gay and lesbian weddings within the church, making it among the largest U.S. Christian denominations to take an embracing step toward same-sex marriage.

The General Assembly of the 1.8 million-member PCUSA voted to allow pastors to perform gay marriages in American states where they are legal. Delegates also approved new language about marriage in the church’s Book of Order, or

constitution, altering references to “a man and woman” to “two persons.”

This change will not become church law until a majority of the 172 regional presbyteries vote to ratify the new language. But given the lopsided 3-1 ratio of the vote, approval is expected.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee, which opposes same-sex marriage, urged congregations to launch a financial boycott out of protest.

The U.S.’s largest churches—Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, United Methodist, and most evangelical churches—recognize marriage only as between a man and a woman, though many Methodists are pushing for a change. The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Church of Christ all allow same-sex marriage.

—Religion News Service

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



“Jesus Is Love” in Spanish is written on the parachutes.

Minnesota Church Spreads the Gospel with Parachutes

What starts as a simple white bedsheet from a thrift store in Minnesota is transformed by volunteers into a parachute carrying the gospel message to unreached people groups in the jungles of Colombia.

Marianne Koning, a member of Willmar (Minn.) Christian Reformed Church, leads a group of senior citizens who meet bimonthly to make the parachutes for Voice of the Martyrs.

Solar radios pre-tuned to a Christian station with a missionary sharing the gospel are attached to the parachutes, to be dropped by pilots into Colombia. “Most of these [parachutes] are flown over jungles that are not accessible by trails,” explained Koning.

Last year the group sent 175 parachutes to Voice of the Martyrs.

—Amy Toornstra



The Schuurman, Vandenberg, and Koops families arrive at New Life CRC on Bike to Church Sunday.

Bike to Church Day for Ontario Congregation

From around the corner and around the city they came. New Life Christian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario, recently hosted a “Bike to Church Sunday,” encouraging members to cycle to the service instead of driving.

About 50 people accepted the challenge, arriving on 25-speeds, 3-speeds, and tricycles, from down the block and the other side of the city.

The event coincided with the beginning of Ontario’s Bike to Work Week. “But that was totally by accident,” admitted organizer Jake DeBruyn.

“Biking to church,” said elder Tom Bruulsema, “puts us in touch with the fabric of our community—the people, the places, the natural environment. It’s a great way to prepare our heart, soul, and mind for church.”

—Anita Brinkman

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. James Lont
1932 – 2014

James Lont, 84, whose strength lay in the development of youth and education ministries and Reformed ecumenicity, passed away on May 14 following a stroke.

Lont attended Calvin College and Seminary, graduating in 1955.

Lont served Christian Reformed congregations in Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois. He also worked for Young Calvinist Federation (now Youth Unlimited) and Worldwide Christian Schools, retiring in 1996.

The causes of Christian education and Reformed ecumenicity found in Lont a visionary champion.

He was deeply interested in the well-being of the people around him, always ready to help them—but he also had high expectations of them.

Lont’s superbly crafted sermons demanded utmost attention. He loved the Word, owned the Reformed vision, and was loyal to the CRC. He cherished nature and liked to travel.

Lont was preceded in death by his wife, Carol, in 2013. He is survived by sons Stephen and Timothy, Timothy’s wife, Joyce, and five grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Wisconsin Church Digs Deep for Water in Africa

Members of Brookfield (Wisc.) Christian Reformed Church dug deeper to find water for a small community near Nampula, Mozambique. Deeper into their wallets, that is. The church raised nearly \$100,000 for a well-drilling rig for the community where some of the church members had been working for several years.

Approximately eight church members, working through Partners Worldwide, helped the community start a small chicken processing plant that has since expanded to two egg farms and a technical college.

However, according to Brandon Haan, associate pastor of Brookfield CRC, “One of the biggest roadblocks has to do with water. . . . Most people have to walk a kilometer or more in order to get water, and it’s not necessarily safe to drink.”

So for three months this spring, members embarked on a giving project named “Dig Deep.” They raised \$98,604 for a well-drilling rig for the community, surpassing their goal of \$75,000.

Church members organized rummage sales, sold lemonade, and put up signs in their front yards advertising the campaign.

On Sunday, May 4, they circled the church neighborhood on a “water walk.” Members placed water bottles on doorsteps with attached labels advertising the project. Church members established a presence in the neighborhood, and some residents responded with donations.

The church hopes to continue similar giving projects—both local and global. “Really, we want as many people as possible to participate in, experience, and benefit from God’s generosity. He’s



Church members raised \$98,604 for a well-drilling rig in Mozambique, surpassing their goal of \$75,000.

been so generous to us. Now we want to spread that generosity around in word and deed,” said Haan.

—Amy Toornstra

Conscious Christianity

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF ABRAHAM KUYPER

LAST YEAR Calvin College history professor James Bratt published a definitive new biography of Dutch theologian, statesman, and educator Abraham Kuyper called *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Eerdmans 2013). Banner staff recently sat down with him to discuss the man and his influence on the church today.

Banner: This is a big book (499 pages!) that must have taken a long time to research and write. What made you take it on?

JB: It was partly that I had been raised in the Christian Reformed Church, and few people have had more influence on this church than Abraham Kuyper. So I was exploring my own roots. In addition, my graduate school advisor, Sydney Ahlstrom, who knew more about American religious history than almost anybody, read the chapter about Kuyper in my dissertation way back in the 1970s and was quite struck by it. He said that there had never been anyone quite like Kuyper on the American scene and that I should write a biography of him some day. So eventually I did.

Banner: Let's get back to that in a minute. First, can you give a quick snapshot of Kuyper's life?

JB: That's a real challenge, since Kuyper had a long career in many different enterprises. But here are the basics:

He was born in a minister's family in 1837 and received a first-rate education in Leiden. At university he turned against

the generic conservative religion in which he had been raised. But then, while finishing his doctorate, he experienced an evangelical conversion.

In his first pastorate in a small country town, he turned further toward rock-hard Calvinist orthodoxy—only he wanted to update its message for the conditions of modern life. Those conditions included the intellectual challenges of science and secular philosophy and the social conditions of rapid communications, industrialization, and democratic politics. All these things traditionally minded Reformed people had opposed or were afraid of. Kuyper devoted his career to showing that Calvinism was more relevant now than ever, that it offered precisely the healing solutions to modernity's many problems.

Banner: So how did he do that?

JB: He served two more parishes in the big cities of Utrecht and Amsterdam—and there he got intensely involved in the big question of the times: mandatory public education. This led him to start his own newspaper, run for political office, and eventually found a Calvinistic university to educate leaders for his growing movement. Likewise, he organized a separate Christian political party and led thousands of orthodox Calvinist members out of the national Dutch Reformed Church into their own independent denomination.

Once in politics, Kuyper had to give up pastoral ministry, so he spent the prime of his life (1880-1900) as a journalist, political party chieftain, scholar, and professor of theology at his Free University.

Banner: He eventually became prime minister of the Netherlands, right?

JB: Right. He had championed the broadening of voting rights all along. Plus, he forged a bold coalition with the Calvinists' ancient political enemies on the Roman Catholic side. That took him into the prime minister's office from 1901 to 1905, where he hoped to bring in a full agenda of progressive change compatible with Christian values on everything from education to health care, colonial policy, and labor relations. That was short-circuited by his defeat for reelection in 1905. After that he took on a senior statesman role—but not very gracefully. His final years were marked by lots of in-fighting with the rising generation of leaders in his own movement. He was gravely shaken by the outbreak and conduct of World War I and died in 1920.

Banner: A full and active life, to say the least! What held it all together for him? What was the central message that inspired and sustained his followers?

JB: He called them to live out their core conviction as Reformed believers: that God is Lord of *all* things, and that we live unto God's glory. Plus he showed them that, in the modern world, living by these convictions meant more than being faithful in the traditional areas of church, family, and personal life. It entailed politics and higher education, too; it meant paying close attention to how "God's sovereignty" applied to labor conditions in factories, international trade, the claims of rival ideologies and visions for society. It meant revisiting and holding yourself accountable to the core principle of loving your neighbor as yourself in a new world where you suddenly had a wider expanse of neighbors living in unprecedented conditions.

Banner: His movement's slogan was "being Christian in all areas of life."

JB: Right. And it's come down to us today as being "agents of renewal," "seeking shalom," and so forth. On top of that, Kuyper regularly repeated that, while the strange new modern world had plenty of features to cause fear, it also offered plenty of opportunities for this holistic Christian witness. Ultimately, God remains in charge and provides for those who seek God's will, even in uncharted territory.

Banner: How would the ordinary believer set out to do this?

JB: Through the traditional means of worship, prayer, and Bible study. But also by paying active attention to national and world affairs. Kuyper wanted believers to follow the news and read the studies on society and culture and economics that were coming out of the Free University faculty. All of this,

furthermore, had to be framed by a comprehensive and consistent "Christian worldview." Kuyper was big on boring down to first principles—uncovering the unspoken assumptions we bring to our thinking and practice. He wanted his followers to become *conscious* of these and conform them more and more to biblical principles and the "ordinances" (laws) that he saw stemming out of God's original creation of the world.

Banner: Sounds like the old catechism lesson about special and general revelation.

JB: Right. Kuyper pushed people to apply those sources of teaching rigorously to understand the whole world around them through Christian lenses. It's also important to note that he saw everybody in the world, not just religious believers, as having such a framing grid of presuppositions that organized their thinking and behavior. This is the flip side of "all of life is religious": so-called secular people had, and lived by, their own fundamental commitments. It's not that secular people are "rational" and believers are "faith-based." We're *all* faith-based.

What we're privileged and called to do is bear witness to the presence of God's kingdom among us.

Banner: Well, whose faith wins when there are so many around?

JB: This was a hard message for Kuyper to get across; it took him a while to understand it himself, in fact. But ultimately he said it is not just fair play but God's will that we *not* try to impose our convictions or our rules on people of other faiths by force. His was a *principled pluralism*; it's not just that we can't but we shouldn't want to use the force of law to privilege our convictions. Rather, we try to persuade others that the fruit of Christian convictions will serve the common good that they and we share together. This is possible because of Kuyper's famous and quite expansive concept of *common grace*.

Banner: Can you explain that concept in a nutshell?

JB: That God, though not saving all people, does shed abroad for each and all a restraint of the full effects of sin, plus a capacity for everyone to come to a certain measure of ordinary ("civic") virtue and perceptive truth. Common grace not only makes society possible but makes it possible for Christians usually to live in society alongside people who don't know or outright reject Christian teaching. »

Banner: What happened to full and consistent living out of obedience to our sovereign God?

JB: A tension is what happened! Kuyper talked a fine line—better, oscillated back and forth—between the strong demands of biblical faithfulness and working for incremental change in a positive direction.

Banner: “Common grace” over against “the antithesis,” right?

JB: Sort of. Kuyper said that living as regenerate people would bring us into all kinds of conflict, both in thought and practice, with unregenerate people. In those cases we dig in and testify as to our convictions. But “the antithesis” ultimately runs not between different groups of people but right down the middle of each human heart—of the Christian’s heart as well—in the struggle of the new person a-borning within us against the lure of the “old person” we’re trying to shed. Romans 7, in short.

Banner: Kuyper was a politician. Where would he land on the political spectrum of our day?

JB: Well, to hit the flashpoint of United States politics, he was for compulsory medical insurance with a public option. He would be horrified by the power of banks and finance: “too big to fail,” he would instantly recognize. U.S. Supreme Court decisions on campaign finance? He’d consider that the doom of democracy. On the other hand, he was always suspicious of the “big state,” of government intervening beyond its competence. In short, today—and also in his own day—he would aim at not being defined by the existing spectrum but at rising above it to take a distinctive and consistent Christian position on the issues of the day.

Banner: Can you explain his famous principle of *sphere sovereignty* in this context?

JB: As Kuyper saw it, the various domains of human life—economic, political, educational, religious, etc.—were each endowed by God at creation with their own native genius. They flourish, as does society as a whole, when they are left alone to follow their own compass. Interference by an outside agent tends to push them off course. Kuyper was especially concerned with government intrusion in his day, but we can extend that principle to other problems in our own time. Churches and universities being run as businesses. Diplomacy and economic development being carried out by the military. Everybody obeying the market’s bottom line. These divert people and institutions from their true and healthy purpose in life.

Banner: But people aren’t a collection of different “spheres” or facets. They’re whole people living with other whole people. How did Kuyper deal with that?

JB: By means of his other principle, which hasn’t been noticed as much. Kuyper was a strong *communitarian*. Each individual

has rights and liberties, yes, but society (and churches) must not be regarded as a collection of individuals, he’d say. We find our meaning, our health, our safety, our opportunities as parts of living social bodies. So Kuyper was suspicious not only of “big government” but also of “free market individualism.” He wanted local communities and intermediate institutions empowered over against both of those.

Banner: These are fine-sounding principles. Where could Kuyper’s project go wrong?

JB: Now you’re asking for a whole ‘nother interview! Let me cite three danger spots. First, the oft-repeated mantra that “every square inch” of human existence belongs to God can be invoked to ratify whatever ambition we want to pursue. It’s all “God’s work,” right? Actually, no. What is the strategic necessity of our time and situation? All talents come from God, but how would God have you use that talent for the healing of the nations, to reflect luster back upon the divine giver?

Second, Kuyper’s followers have sometimes imitated his devotion to thinking and activism—head and hands—without remembering that his most common form of writing was the weekly devotional meditation he published in the Sunday religious issue of his paper. Our *hearts* need to regularly draw “Near unto God,” per the title of his most famous collection of these pieces.

Banner: And third?

JB: The third danger is the often-cited trait of “Kuyperian triumphalism.” The idea that we, and we only, fathom the mandates of God, and that our theory and action will bring in the kingdom. Kuyper always knew better than that, though his need to mobilize and sustain a movement sometimes led him to forget. In fact, *we* do not bring in the kingdom. God has already done that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we do, what we’re privileged and called to do, is bear witness to the presence of that kingdom among us, and so to give those around us—Christian or otherwise—cause to bless the name of the Lord.

Banner: What’s the one take-away you hope readers get from your book?

JB: Not to repeat exactly what Kuyper said and did back then but to use him as a resource and inspiration to imagine how to think and act as Christians in our own time. Kuyper was so perceptive and creative in transforming old principles for new circumstances. What would be the “dynamic equivalent” of that for us today? ■



James Bratt is a professor of history at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and the author of *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. He attends Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

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

PEOPLE OFTEN MAKE THE MISTAKE of approaching the Millennials as a group. The problem is that we are not easily classified in any grouping other than our birth years.

I am a 28-year-old married mother of four who never finished college. My best friend of over 10 years is a 29-year-old believing single college graduate working in her dream career. My newly believing younger sister is married to an unbeliever; she's a 25-year-old hairstylist with a stepson. Another close friend is 26 years old, single, an unbeliever who works in Boston's financial district and was just accepted into Massachusetts Institute of Technology's MBA program. Some of the people I'm closest to in my life have, on paper, almost nothing in common with me.

Living out my faith in the incredibly diverse sphere of "Millennial" has challenged me to thoroughly evaluate why my life is better because Christ is in it. With so many paths to finding meaning and purpose, Millennials need to know why following Christ holds a value above career ambition, global consciousness, philanthropy, or morality.

Perhaps this is why the traditional stereotype of the institutional church model doesn't appeal to many of my generation. When being a Christian is equated with church attendance and upholding a rigid moral standard, it doesn't look any different from any other path being presented by the world. It's just another way to find personal fulfillment. Worse, the church looks hypocritical when its members don't seem to live up to what is being preached.

This is why grace has to be the core of the message, especially when relating to Millennials. The world we have inherited is

a difficult and different world than that of our predecessors. We need to be shown grace while we weed through the influences growing ever louder all around us that are vying for our attention and allegiance. We need to see how the voice of Christ rings out in contrast to the cacophony with a message of love in spite of our shortcomings and hope in spite of bleak prospects.

Direct discipleship with someone a stage ahead of me in the journey helped keep me grounded. A multigenerational congregation and a Bible study group of women who ranged in age from 25 to 90 years embraced me.

All of these people showed me that when it comes to the basics, my life isn't so different from those who have gone before me. They are the great cloud of witnesses I feel cheering me on as I run my personal race of faith. I am encouraged to live my life openly and authentically; grace abounds. These people inspire me to better know the Savior they credit with their stories more than any theological debate or culture-centric ministry ever could.

You want to know Millennials? Stop trying to categorize and contain us. Give us grace while we grow. Seek us out and embrace us in your multigenerational ministries. Draw us in with the unconditional love of Christ as it authentically plays out in the life of the congregation, not the trendiest worship or high-tech service that will eventually leave us seeking the next new thing. Remind us gently that nothing apart from the love of Christ, which transcends time and trends, will provide true fulfillment.

Show us the Church as an imperfect work in progress. Because that is how we see ourselves. ■

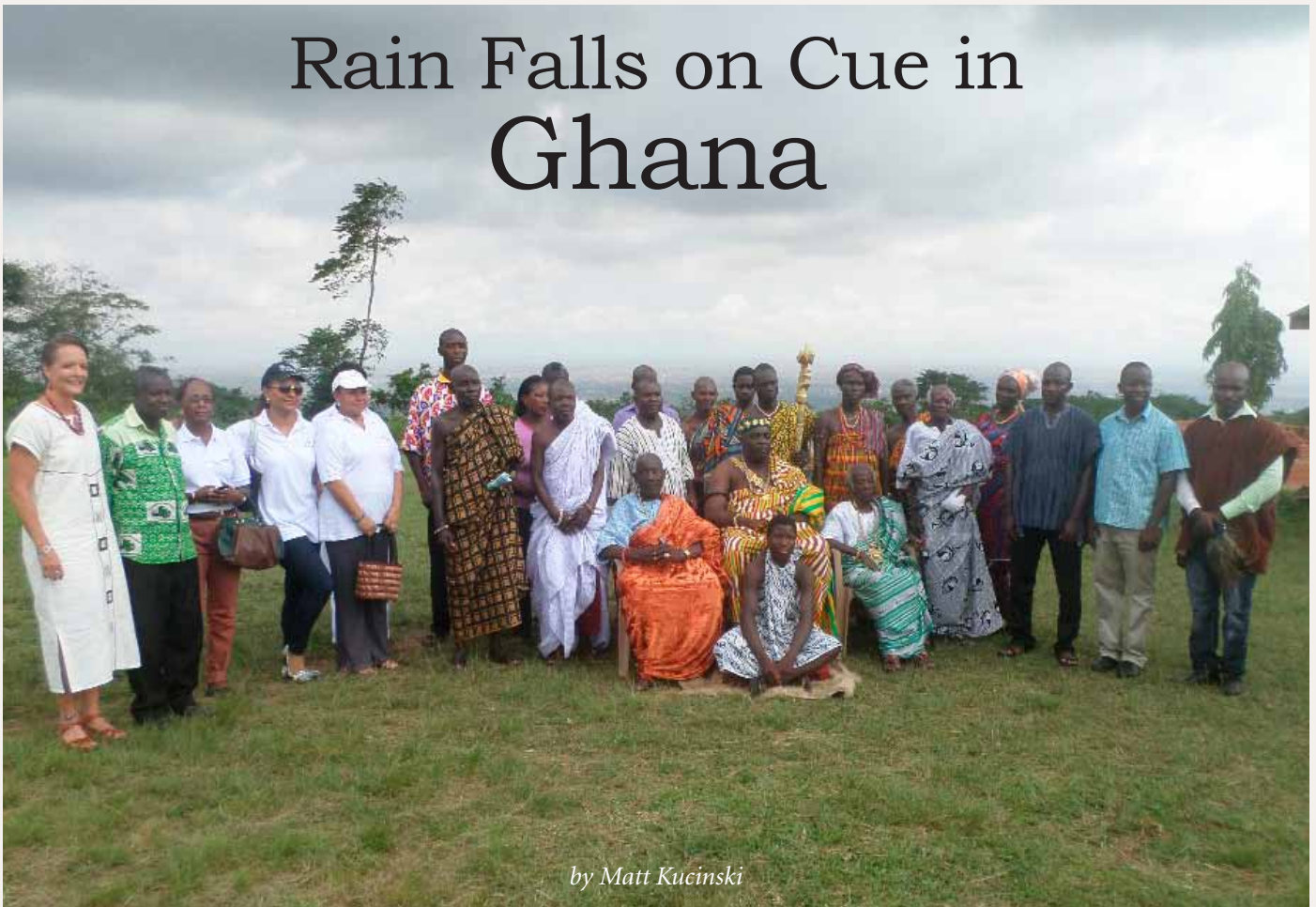
Aleah Marsden is a stay-at-home mom of four children. She attends Fairfield Christian Reformed Church in Fairfield, Calif. She blogs about her experience digging deeper into the riches of the Word at depthoftheriches.com.

NEXT



Show us the Church as an imperfect work in progress.

Rain Falls on Cue in Ghana



by Matt Kucinski

“It’s just a miracle. But it all happened. And that community will remember this forever.”

The miracle that Calvin College communication arts and sciences professor Stephanie Sandberg was referring to involved two students who were 5,700 miles from campus on a semester abroad in Ghana.

Maggie Ferntheil, a theater major, and BeAnka Mushenkye, an interdisciplinary major, said they used theater as a unique way to ask people to donate funds to build a health clinic in the small village of Adenkrebi.

Working with middle school students, they put on a performance of short, real-life plays on Friday, November 22, 2013. And that is when the miracle, which included a downpour, happened.

Outside of the theater production, Ferntheil and Mushenkye’s experience was quite similar to the other 15 students on their semester abroad.

The two spent the majority of their time in Ghana learning about the history and culture of the country and taking classes at the University of Ghana. Like the other students, Ferntheil and Mushenkye spent the final three weeks in Ghana participating in a period of intense service learning.

“We set up these situations for students where they could go in for an extended period of time and work with a community group or an NGO or a service organization or a clinic,” said Sandberg.

“Wherever they had vocational gifts, we tried to match them or find them a place where they could work.”

Some of the audience, including the local chief.

Students worked in various villages surrounding Ga East, which is a sister city to Grand Rapids, Mich. A few students worked on documentary films, a few more helped with publicity efforts for special projects, and another student worked in a speech pathology clinic, which in Ghana, Sandberg said, is “a rare opportunity.”

Ferntheil and Mushenkye were assigned a project up in the hills in Adenkrebi, which is situated on a ridge overlooking the sprawling metropolis of Accra.

The students’ project came out of a previous visit to Ghana, where Sandberg and Roland Hoksbergen, Calvin’s director of international development studies, had

“If whoever is performing, writing, directing, or producing is passionate about their work, it can bring change.”

joined with representatives from MAP International—a global Christian health organization—to meet with the chief and others in the village of Adenkrebri to ask them, “What are your biggest needs?”

The theme that emerged from those conversations was knowledge about and access to better healthcare.

The people in the village determined that building a health clinic and living facilities for the workers would most effectively address these issues. The price tag would be about \$50,000.

With this in mind, Sandberg asked her students to work with the people of Adenkrebri to make the case to donors for this need. And she asked them to do it through theater.

“Anyone can go up to a podium and speak about how we should raise money to help out this charity or this village,” said Ferntheil.

“But in theater, you are shown what the story is and why it would be great to help out.”

So Ferntheil and Mushenkya set out to tell the stories of the villagers in a handful of five- to seven-minute plays.

The two started the project by listening to the stories of people in the village, hearing about the health issues that had affected their loved ones. While malaria, broken bones, tropical diseases, and a host of other issues were brought up, it was access to healthcare that seemed to be the biggest problem.

“They were having people seriously injured. They were having people die unnecessarily. There was a high infant mortality rate; it was problematic across the board,” said Sandberg.

“The people were registered with the national health insurance in Ghana, but they had no access to that healthcare.”

A major factor playing into that access was the dangerous path to the nearest clinic.

“The roads are atrocious; people die on those roads because of how dangerous they are,” said Sandberg.



A traditional dance during the performance.

The two-mile dirt road is ungraded, full of potholes, and hasn't been repaired for years. There's a steep, dangerous hill to get up to the village, and many cars have toppled backwards down the hill.

The students realized that a story about the road and its impact on healthcare was necessary. So they included a story about a woman in the village who got sick and needed urgent care.

In the story, another person in the village bypasses the road and carries the woman down the other side of the mountain. But before they reach the clinic, the woman dies.

The other plays told stories of people's experiences with a broken leg, a pregnancy, and a tropical disease. Ferntheil and Mushenkya wrote and produced the stories and worked with middle school students in the village who acted the stories out on stage.

“I saw the joy in the children's faces when we were telling them about our project,” said Ferntheil. “I think if whoever is performing, writing, directing, or producing is passionate about their work, it can bring social change.”

The two Calvin students' connection to their subject matter became very real during the project when BeAnka Mushenkya lost her appetite and spiked a high fever. She was taken to the clinic and diagnosed with malaria, eventually ending up in the hospital for a day.

“If I had not gotten access to a clinic in a certain amount of time and [received] decent healthcare, my results could »



Maggie Ferntheil with students.

Supporting Calvin College in Prayer

- Pray for wisdom for the leadership of Calvin College as the college continues to look ahead at some of the opportunities and challenges facing higher education.
- Pray that each of the nearly 900 students in the most recent graduating class will find meaningful work and serve God as agents of renewal wherever they are.
- Pray for the incoming class of students who will be joining us later this month to arrive safely, and that they will grow closer to God during their journey at Calvin.
- Pray for Calvin College's mission to remain clear, compelling, and relevant to the next generation of students.
- Pray that all faculty and staff will remain committed to integrating faith into every learning opportunity.

have turned out differently,” said Mushenkye.

“It made everything that was distant, the stories we heard and collected during our production, real. I was in it. I went through it. And it created in me even greater humility, remorse, and desire to work hard on this project.”

“It was ironic because here we were dealing with healthcare issues, and in a lot of ways BeAnka's situation, getting her up and down that mountain, for example, gave us a true empathy for what the people were going through,” said Sandberg.

“So I believe that even the illness, the suffering BeAnka was going through, played into the success of the project. That's just the way God works—all of these things converging at the same moment. And then, of course, the performance itself. . . .”

On Friday, November 22, the project Ferntheil and Mushenkye had been work-

ing on for the past three weeks had reached its pinnacle. The actors were ready. The stage was set.

But the audience would determine the success of the project. Would they come? Would they be moved to help out? The two had invited the entire village, including the chief and the municipal authorities, and they also invited those who had showed interest in donating to the project.

“We needed a way to convince the donors that the community was invested in this, that these are real stories about needs in healthcare,” said Sandberg. “We needed them to come to say, ‘Yes, we are going to give you money.’”

After waiting and waiting, Sandberg said the donors arrived in a big van. “It took them forever to get up that hill,” she said.

That van full of people was just the start.

“The entire village came,” said Sandberg. “The chief rarely goes to things like this. He came. He was there in his full regalia.” His entourage accompanied him.

The middle school students performed their hearts out, acting out stories of people in their village.

Even a short downpour couldn't stop them from performing. In fact, rain was included in the script.

“During a part of the play, it says it starts to rain—and it started to rain,” said Sandberg. “The students stayed out there and kept performing while it was getting worse and worse.”

“Then, as a sign from heaven, as that part of the play ended, when it ceased raining in the play, it ceased raining in Adenkrebi!”

“I was pretty speechless after the whole thing happened,” said Ferntheil.

The donors agreed to fund the clinic that day. And the chief agreed to give eight acres of land to the project. The clinic will serve more than 5,000 people, includ-

You add.
God multiplies.



The dangerous road.

ing the communities surrounding Adenkrebi.

Sandberg said most people would probably consider different approaches when seeking to raise \$50,000 for a health clinic. But those who took part in the project said the plays, arising from the life of the village itself, had the greatest impact.

“You know, theater is a great catalyst for human action. A performance can bring people together in a way that other types of events can’t,” said Sandberg.

“Yeah, you can have a dinner or a party, but a performance that people have invested their time and their energy into really works as a catalyst for action, and it also helps us on this journey that we are all on together,” she added. ■



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

A Passion for Telling People’s Stories

Calvin College communication arts and sciences professor Stephanie Sandberg has a passion for using ethnography—a research method that explores cultural phenomena through the point of view of the subject of the study—within the context of theater.

“It raises the human problem to a level where you can listen to it, ask questions about it, and then find a solution to the problem,” said Sandberg.

Sandberg’s interest in ethnographic theater was piqued in graduate school in a verbatim theater course. “I realized that it was rooted in anthropology, so I just took a bunch more classes in it,” said Sandberg.

Ethnography is the branch of anthropology that deals with the scientific description of individual cultures, while anthropology is the science that studies the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, and social customs and beliefs of people.

Sandberg didn’t use her knowledge of ethnography for a while, she said, until projects involving this field of study started falling into her lap.

Now ethnography is Sandberg’s primary area of research, and she presents regularly on the subject at conferences.

“It is happening around the world, so people are using it,” said Sandberg. “I have invested in having students know what it is, how it works, and how they can create projects that will address the human needs they encounter.”

Sandberg has produced and directed ethnographic plays many times before, but what happened in Adenkrebi broke new ground.

“I had done a lot of projects in the United States like this, but I had never done one in Africa. I grew up in West Africa, in Liberia, so I felt like this was the first time I was bringing together my upbringing and my knowledge of Africa with my vocation,” said Sandberg. “It was really exciting, and it gave me lots of ideas for further work.”

Sandberg said that seeing the success of this project helped her work up the courage to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship to go back to Ghana to work on a piece on human trafficking.

If she’s awarded the Fulbright, she hopes to work with the University of Ghana and some NGOs that are doing anti-trafficking work, one of those NGOs being Challenging Heights, which is connected to the International Justice Mission.

“They’re working on human trafficking in Ghana really seriously. I would go live with those kids who have been rescued from slavery and talk to them about their experiences. And then we’d create a performance piece around their experiences that we would eventually play at the National Theatre of Ghana and at the university and places like that. And we would share it with the world too.” ■

—by Matt Kucinski, Calvin College



Stephanie Sandberg

Family Portraits

One of the books that sits on a shelf at home is James Schaap's *CRC Family Portrait: Sketches of Ordinary Christians in a 125-Year-Old Church*.

Recently I reread these stories and was struck by the breadth of our shared stories, already more than 30 years ago. Yet as officers of Synod 2014 looked out over the delegates, I'm sure they saw an even more vibrant mosaic of the CRC. The number of delegates reflecting ethnically diverse backgrounds was the greatest ever.

Our CRC family portrait continues to change, and I'm grateful to be included in my new role as executive director. I decided to use this opportunity to introduce myself and my family—ordinary Christians in a now 157-year-old church.

If my portrait were a montage of still shots, I could include a picture with my parents and sister of my baptism at South Grandville CRC and then, over time, a series of pictures of me in Sunday school, catechism, youth group, and finally in front of the church for profession of faith.

The next series might include snapshots from my college days—serving Calvin College's KIDS program, counseling at Camp Roger, student teaching at Pine Rest, and going on a first date with my wife after our fall Campus Choir concert.

At this point, selecting the pictures becomes overwhelming. Some of the pictures could be drawn from my career journey: starting as teaching principal at Christian Learning Center in Grand Rapids, Mich.; attending the University of Michigan for graduate studies; serving children and families as a psychologist in a rehabilitation setting; and then moving into Christian higher education in a variety of roles, concluding with serving as president at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Ill.

Another set of pictures could show where we've lived: Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor, Mich.; Rehoboth, New Mexico; metropolitan Chicago, and the Christian Reformed churches we attended in each place. Each of these pictures would show a growing family filling a pew: Katie, Paul, Becca, and Jessica, and then, via adoption, Getenet and Fekadu, and finally Yaineabeba.

Schaap's writing reminds me that telling one's story is helped by focusing on one or two significant events. For my wife, Barb,

and me, our family portrait becomes a testimony particularly because of our son Paul and our adoption story.

Paul is 28 years old. One look at him signals Down syndrome. Like all new parents of special needs children, our initial reaction was shock and uncertainty. Yet after 28 years of being Paul's parents, we've learned that he often understands things more clearly than we do—and he always leads us in showing how to be accepting of others. We see his growth into young adulthood as testimony of God's faithfulness. Those whom the world

might consider as least can be great in God's kingdom.

Four years ago, we adopted Ethiopian brothers Fekadu and Getenet, now 15 and 19, and later welcomed their older sister Yaineabeba into our family in a more informal sense. Even though their lives were thrown into disruption and

uncertainty when their parents died, God's promises endured. And while adoption didn't result in anyone's name being changed, our initial uncertainty and lack of confidence has been transformed, through God's grace, into gratitude and thanksgiving for a family rich in love, despite our differing backgrounds, abilities, and ethnic identities.

I'm grateful that our family portrait belongs in the CRC story, as does yours. In some respects, our family—with Barb and me and seven kids between 15 and 29, as well as those being added by marriage—is a microcosm of the CRC. It's a portrait that keeps needing to be updated since the group keeps growing in number, in diversity, in its impact, and, most of all, in faith.

Perhaps you remember the "Psalty" children's video series of two decades ago. From this series comes our son Paul's favorite song—a song aimed at children, but helpful for us all:

"Welcome to the family. We're glad that you have come to share your life with us as we grow in love. And may we always be to you what God would have us be: A family always there to be strong and to lean on. May we learn to love each other more with each new day. May words of love be on our lips in everything we say. May the Spirit melt our hearts and teach us how to pray that we might be a true family." ■



The Timmermans family

Our CRC family portrait continues to change.



Steven Timmermans was appointed by Synod 2014 as executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

You add.
God multiplies.



A Christian Reformed World Missions leadership cohort meets in Costa Rica.

Banded Together in Missions

Young adults in Costa Rica sit in a circle and discuss their recent adventures. Jim DeBorst, a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary, shares insights gained from years of working in Central America. The Cohort of Missioners is underway.

As the name “cohort” suggests, young adults known as “missioners,” who take part in CRWM’s newest program, are banded together with others who are considering careers in missions. Together, these missioners from both North America and Central America learn effective ways to serve people in a new context.

“There are many young adults with a passion for missions,” said Joel Huyser, CRWM’s director for transformational networks. “Our hope is that missioners have a lifelong vocation for serving.”

Joel believes that bringing together both North and Central Americans to learn more about missions allows young people to discern their next step—whether at home or abroad.

“We have begun to see ourselves as global Christians,” said Rachel Beveridge, a missioner from California.

Missioners receive theological training and assist in community development events, but they stress that their biggest takeaways come from observing the work of others.

“This experience is about being humble enough to say that there’s something to learn from another context,” Rachel said. ■

—by Brian Clark,
Christian Reformed World Missions

Combating Human Trafficking

When a stranger arrived in the village of Pho in Laos and promised young people jobs on a sugarcane plantation in Thailand, the offer seemed too good to pass up.

Lured by the stranger’s promise, 27 people left in December 2012 for Thailand.

Pho is one of 29 rural communities in Laos that World Renew has been working with to build up local leadership and improve agricultural production, health, literacy rates, and family incomes.

Despite these interventions, young people remain vulnerable to human traffickers who promise big money and jobs outside their poor communities.

After leaving, says Sang (not his real name), “A man took us on a bumpy, eight-hour trip by truck to Sop Lao, where we spent the night.”

They drove the next day to a village on the Mekong River. After staying the night, a boat took them across the river. Another truck then drove them several hours to the plantation, where they worked long days clearing land and planting and harvesting sugarcane.

Although they were promised \$10 to \$15 per day, they also had to repay for food, lodging, and supplies.

“After three months, I had earned over twenty thousand baht (\$600 USD), but the people over us took some of the money for our transport, housing, and their ‘finder’s fee,” said Sang.

By that time, several people wanted to return home. Their employers agreed but charged an additional fee for transportation costs. By the time he arrived in Pho, Sang only had \$35 left.

After learning what had happened, World Renew held an anti-trafficking event where Sang shared his experience and encouraged others to not make the same mistake.

“Having Sang and those who were trafficked share their stories



Telling the story of going to Thailand.

was an excellent way to raise awareness about the risks,” said Mike Fennema, World Renew’s country consultant in Laos. ■

—by Kristen deRoo Vanderberg,
World Renew



Giving Back by Washing Windows

Emmanuel Bileya, a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, came to Calvin Theological Seminary to learn about worship practices and resources, especially the lectionary of weekly Scripture readings for sermons and the seasons of the church year.

Such practices have faded from use in Nigerian churches in recent years.

Equipped with a master of theology in worship, Bileya will return and help train worship leaders for the churches of the CRC's sister denomination.

Pastor Emmanuel would not have been able to earn his degree without scholarship funds provided for him and other international students, he wrote to President Jul Medenblik.

"I am very thankful to the school for providing me with financial aid that took care of all my fees and living expenses. If the school had not done so I would not have been able to study at Calvin Seminary."

He went on to describe how he decided to show his gratitude by cleaning windows at the seminary for free. He never kept track of his hours—he just kept cleaning until the job was done.

Through his relationships with his seminary professors and experiences in his local church, Woodlawn CRC, he said he was inspired by finding in North America Christians "who serve God from their hearts." ■

—by Jinny De Jong, Calvin Seminary

Emmanuel Bileya

Equipping Leaders in New Mexico

Run by local pastors and teachers, the Red Mesa Leadership Development Network has been seeking to discover potential leaders, develop ministry skills and Bible knowledge, and deploy leaders into ministry roles since 2008.

Rob Byker, pastor of Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Rehoboth, N.M., and an instructor of Old and New Testament for the network, said the program fills a need.

"Our churches are getting older. If we don't purposefully try to work on leadership development, then the bright witness of some precious churches might go dim," he said.

Beginning in 2008 with a class of 10, the Red Mesa Leadership Development Network

has seen dozens of graduates, with 24 enrolled last year.

In the past, when CRC congregations experienced vacancies in pastoral roles, churches called on other denominations' leaders. Now leadership development networks in Red Mesa and elsewhere are providing leaders.

In addition, the leaders of this network are working to develop an accredited program for graduates wishing to become commissioned pastors.

Caleb Dickson was a member of the first class to graduate from the Red Mesa Leadership Development Network and is serving as temporary pastor at Naschitti CRC.

"Receiving a license to exhort was definitely a milestone in my life. The opportunities and blessings of



Meeting of Red Mesa Leadership Development Network.

preaching were the direct result of this program," said Dickson. ■

—by Rachel Gabrielse, Christian Reformed Home Missions

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

You add.
God multiplies.



Aida credits prayer with saving her marriage.

Aida's Testimony

As a young woman in Guatemala, Aida was living with a husband who spent what little income they had on alcohol.

Although she was raised Christian, she had too many questions to call herself a believer. Discouraged, Aida turned to Christian radio, hoping to find answers.

Aida discovered *La Hora de la Reforma* (The Hour of Reformation), produced by Back to God Ministries' Spanish outreach team.

Encouraged by the messages, she kept listening and visited a church mentioned on the radio. That was more than 20 years ago.

She ended up committing her life to God and volunteering at her church and the radio station.

Her life at home was not easy, but she prayed faithfully for her husband.

Several months ago, he joined her in listening to Christian radio. Then he agreed to attend church and gave his life to the Lord.

The couple recommitted their lives to each other and were married in the church. ■

—by Nancy Vander Meer,
*Back to God Ministries
International*



Brett found faith through a church and disabilities concerns ministry.

Reformed Collaborative at Work

Dan De Vries grew up in the Reformed Church in America and served as a missionary with the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines.

He now works for Hope Haven, an organization founded and supported by members of both denominations who are working together in a range of efforts called the Reformed Collaborative.

Given his background, De Vries said, it makes sense for him to serve as a regional disabilities concerns advocate in Rock Valley, Iowa. Dis-

abilities concerns is one area in which the denominations are collaborating.

Working in one CRC classis and two RCA classes, said De Vries, he seeks to include individuals with disabilities in belonging to and serving in their church.

He has a similar goal at Hope Haven ministries, where he works to help people such as Brett grow in faith.

“When I was younger, I had heard of Jesus Christ from radio and TV, but there was no Christianity in my home growing up,” Brett said.

One week after graduating from high school, Brett made profession of faith at Faith Reformed Church in Rock Valley, Iowa.

“The pastor clearly communicated that following Jesus was a choice,” Brett said. “I decided to put my past behind me and follow Jesus.” ■

—by Brian Clark

Animal Similes



When Jesus sent his disciples out to spread the gospel, he told them, "I am sending you out like a sheep among wolves. So be as wise as snakes and as harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Kind of a strange thing to say, isn't it?

Jesus knew that his friends would be in danger sometimes. He wanted them to be smart but gentle. He wanted them to protect themselves but not hurt others.

When we use the words "like" or "as" to describe something, like Jesus did when he said "harmless as doves," that's called a simile (say it SIM-il-lee).

In the English language—and in the Bible—there are lots of animal similes. Let's take a look!

P.S. Can you say "animal similes" five times fast? Try it!



Eager Beaver!

"You're an eager beaver!" If anyone says that to you, it's a compliment. Beavers are very hard workers.

Here are some fun beaver facts:

- One beaver can chew down more than 200 trees in a year.
- One reason that beavers build dams is because they can't stand the sound of trickling water. It's true! If a beaver hears water running, he thinks his dam is leaking, so he starts to do whatever he can to fix it.
- You can find the world's largest beaver dam in Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta, Canada. The dam is about 2,800 feet (850 meters) long. Astronauts can see it from space!
- In the 1800s, people liked to make tall top hats from beaver fur. The hats were so popular that beavers were in danger of becoming extinct. These days fashions have changed, and beavers are making a good comeback.

Want to see a beaver in action? Watch this video from Animal Planet: www.tinyurl.com/beaverbuilding.

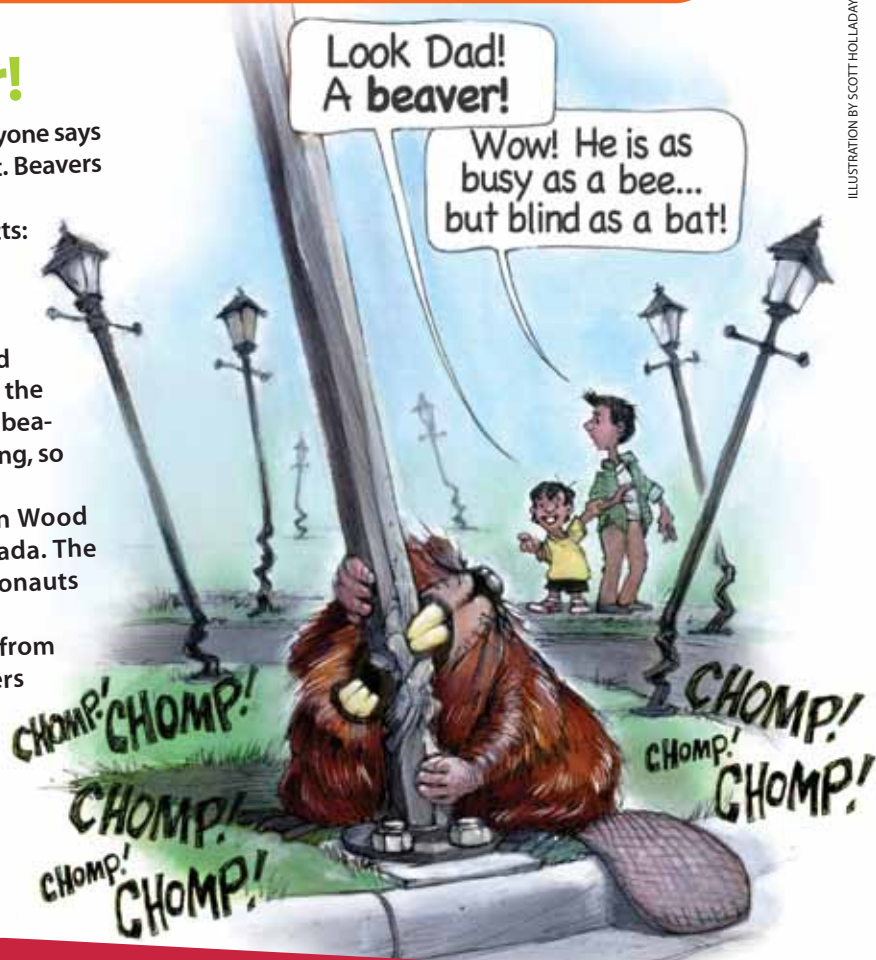


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



Blind as a Bat

Someone who wears glasses might say, "Without my glasses I'm as blind as a bat!" Because of this simile, many people think bats are blind. But they're not! All bats can see. Their vision is best when it's just getting dark outside and worst in bright sunlight.

Even though bats don't have the best vision in the world, they can catch and eat up to 1,000 insects in just one hour!

Bats are fascinating creatures, but many kinds of bats are in danger. A disease called White Nose Syndrome has killed millions of bats in North America. Some types of bats are even in danger of extinction.

Sick as a Dog

Dogs love to eat things. Some of those things are food, and some definitely are not. (If you have a dog, you know what I mean!) When dogs eat something that's bad for them, they often throw up. That's why people who get the stomach flu might say they're "sick as a dog."

Do you know what foods are harmful for dogs? Test yourself!

Five of these foods are OK for dogs, and five are dangerous. Cross out the five dangerous foods. You'll find the answers at the bottom of the page.

chocolate chewing gum rice bread
dough grapes baked bread onions
oranges watermelon peanut butter



Strong as an Ox

Since about 4000 B.C., people have used teams of oxen to help them with hard work. Some scientists think oxen helped pull the stones used to build the great pyramids of Egypt!

Oxen are good at pulling things because they are very strong. Horses are faster, but oxen are slow and steady and calm. They can work for a long time without getting tired.

Oxen usually work in pairs. They are connected by a wooden yoke that fits around their necks. The yoke helps the oxen work together well. In Matthew 11:20, Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me. . . ." Jesus wants us to work with him like a team of oxen working together. Are you ready to work with Jesus?



Sandy Swartzentruber is a freelance writer and a member of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. She blogs about picture books and crafts at CraftLibrarian.com.

Busy as a Bee

Next time you're in a garden, try watching a bee buzzing in and out of flowers. (Bees won't sting you if you're just looking at them. They only sting when they feel threatened.) "Busy" is the right word to describe a bee at work.

- A honeybee can visit up to 2,000 flowers in one day.
- The queen honeybee lays up to 1,500 eggs every day. Since queen bees can live up to four years, one queen could lay up to 2 million eggs in her lifetime.
- Honeybees fly at a speed of about 15 miles (24 kilometers) per hour, and they often travel 3 miles (almost 5 km) from home on one trip.
- Honeybees pollinate about 80 percent of all fruit, vegetable, and seed crops in North America.

Just reading about a busy honeybee is enough to make you feel tired!



Fill in the Similes

Here are some common animal similes! Fill in the blanks below. Stumped? See the answers at the bottom of the page.

1. _____ as a **PEACOCK**
2. _____ as a **MOUSE**
3. _____ as a **LOON**
4. _____ as an **OWL**
5. _____ as an **EEL**
6. _____ as a **MULE**
7. _____ as a **FOX**



Answers: Dogs should never eat chocolate, grapes, onions, raw bread dough, or chewing gum. Those foods can make dogs very sick.
Answers: 1. proud; 2. quiet; 3. crazy; 4. wise; 5. slippery; 6. stubborn; 7. sly

The Role of the Church in Society

TWO PERSPECTIVES

BY DOUG VANDE GRIEND

Sphere Sovereignty: Engaging All Square Inches of Life in the Right Way

HOW WOULD YOU REACT if your local church council told you

- which political candidates to vote for in an upcoming election?
- to tell your legislators to vote against House Bill 2642 and for Senate Bill 954?
- not to use Roundup® weed killer at home because doing so mistreats God's creation?
- that your child may play baseball but not football because football causes injuries and encourages aggressiveness?

Or what if the school board told you not to exceed 200 cows on your dairy farm to avoid damaging the ecosystem and lobbied the state legislature to enact that limit into law?

Or what if your city's mayor told you to become Roman Catholic because it was the only true church?

Or what if your employer told you to give your children two years of piano lessons because of their musical gifts?

Confronted with any of the above scenarios, I would ask two questions—hopefully with grace: “What makes you an authority on this?” and “What business is this of yours anyway?” If you understand why I'd ask those questions, you have a sense for an oddly named social doctrine called *sphere sovereignty*.

The core idea within sphere sovereignty is not exclusively Reformed, although the phrase did come to us from Abraham Kuyper. Sphere sovereignty has to do with *differentiation* in society, something James Skillen talks about in his book *The Scattered Voice: Christians at Odds in the Public Square*. It says the societal structures we call government, family, business, church (as institution), school, individual, and so on, are differentiated institutional spheres within society.

Differentiated Spheres

As history progressed, greater societal differentiation developed, each differentiated sphere deriving from its unique character and purpose (1) an area of authority or competency, that is, the scope of concern where it claims the right to “tell others what to do”; (2) an area of responsibility or jurisdiction, that is, the duty to act, particularly if something amiss happens in its sphere; and (3) governance structure, that is, particular protocols for how an institution within the sphere applies its authority or competence to the area of its jurisdiction.

For example, if a pastor spouts heresy from the pulpit, the sphere of the institutional church, acting through its governance structure (in the CRC, the council), has the authority and responsibility to respond. The school and government should not.

In reality, the authority or responsibility of multiple spheres often intersect. For example, had that heretical pastor also seriously abused a parishioner, action might be expected from

- the (institutional) church, which might remove the pastor;
- the government, which might criminally prosecute the pastor;
- the abused individual, who might consider civil action; and
- the family of the victim (spouse, parents, children), who might support and advise.

Individual people always engage in multiple spheres. A local judge (government sphere) may have a husband and children (family sphere) and sometimes volunteer in her child's classroom (school sphere). Within those spheres, her responsibility varies. She would wield great power as a sentencing judge, but only have partnership authority with her husband as to household matters. And when volunteering as an aide to the teacher of her child's classroom, she'd be appropriately subordinate.

Violations of sphere sovereignty boundaries result in varying degrees of harm. If your child's teacher directs your daughter to brush her teeth four times a day, not much harm would result. But when government and institutional church joined forces to ignore their sphere boundaries in the 16th century, many Christians, including Guido de Bres, were put to death. No doubt de Bres opposed the institutional church demanding doctrinal adherence by threat of death and the government's requirement that all be Roman Catholic.

The United States' founding fathers thought a lot about sphere sovereignty, even if they never used the phrase. Their special focus was defining boundaries for the state (government) and creating a structure to execute government's authority (the Constitution). By properly bounding the government, they »

My local church council shouldn't tell me which political candidates to vote for.



BY KATHY VANDERGRIFT

The Ecology of Kingdom Witness

THE DISTINCTION between the church as institute and the church as organism is a useful gift from the legacy of Abraham Kuyper, a giant in Reformed social thought and a former prime minister of the Netherlands. The church as organism refers to the body of Christ, which lives out its faith every day, everywhere, and in every way. The church as institute refers to organized churches—defined by doctrines, liturgies, church programs, and church rules, from local churches to global denominations.

While the organic church is called to claim “every square inch for Christ,” to use another favorite Kuyperian concept, the institutional church has a more specific role in the larger kingdom vision. The boundaries of that role come under question when societal issues need attention. May the instituted church speak out on societal issues, especially contentious ones? Should it? If so, how? And when? Is this activity only for individuals and groups within the organic church?

There is no easy rule to follow. The distinction between these two aspects of Christ’s one church is helpful when it is used to advance renewal of God’s world. It can also be misused to stifle Christian witness in our society.

In my experience, misuse results from misinterpretation, such as making an “either-or” choice between the organic and institutional church, or ignoring an equal emphasis on the interdependence of the two. In addition, our context is different; if Kuyper were alive today, I suspect he would formulate yet another version of this “square inch” concept, which evolved along with his highly effective social movement.

Preventing misuse and strengthening kingdom connections are two keys to resolving the stalemates that often develop when this concept is used to block emerging social justice initiatives.

“Both-and” instead of “either-or.” In Kuyper’s day, gatherings within the institutional church, such as Bible studies, men’s societies, young people’s meetings, and even sermons included research and robust deliberation about how Christians should engage and shape their society. James Bratt’s biography of Kuyper, entitled *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, tells an inspiring story of Christian witness in society. By comparison, engagement with societal issues in the Christian Reformed Church in North America is anemic.

Discernment is a shared responsibility of the institutional and organic church. When the distinction between them is used to shut down discussion of societal issues in the gathered church, it contributes to the low capacity of members to bring a well-informed Reformed witness in public affairs. Making space for robust discussion about what the Bible means when it calls us to do justice and care for creation is a major need in the CRC today.

Interdependence. The institutional church exists to enable the organic church; they are interdependent. Current applications of Kuyper’s concept in the CRC tend to isolate the church behind a protective wall. One motive is to keep it pure. Another may be withdrawal from society. Both hinder an effective witness by the denomination in today’s context.

When local congregations welcome and help migrant workers who are suffering harm from unjust immigration laws, the church needs to act in solidarity with its members to seek justice and change in the laws. If Christian Reformed churches preach about care for creation as a biblical calling, credibility requires also speaking about societal practices that are causing the most harm to God’s world. The church speaks differently than scientists, farmers, migrants, or politicians; it adds a unique voice to public discussions that shape our society.

Silence speaks loudly. Silence is not neutral. The institutional church cannot avoid being part of society. Too often in history, silence by the church became complicity with unjust social structures and practices. While the church no longer has a privileged position in society, a fact that limits the influence of church proclamations, it can have a positive impact by speaking with credibility from a servant position out of concern for the common good.

To speak publicly or not to speak: both are choices. Making wise choices requires broad engagement in a process of discernment that draws out the strengths and skills of church institute and organism. »

Effective Christian witness today requires a stronger focus on connectivity.

Sphere Sovereignty

» also allowed for other spheres to properly exist, thereby creating political pluralism.

Institutional Church

The CRC needs to consider its own sphere boundaries as an institutional church. We may all agree that the organic church (all believers) is called to engage every square inch of God's creation, but that doesn't mean each institutional church must—or should.

My local church council shouldn't tell me which political candidates to vote for. Nor should it set a limit on my dairy herd or demand I not use Roundup®. Nor should classis or synod (derived from local councils) tell us who is right and who is wrong about climate change. Nor should a CRC agency (ultimately derived from local councils as well) tell the government that the CRC opposes the House Farm Bill and supports the Senate version. The CRC, an institutional church, should stop acting beyond its sphere boundaries.

But who says so? you might ask. How can we know the CRC's boundaries are so limited?

In three ways. The first is by checking for competency. Delegates to classis and synod aren't chosen for competency in law, political theory, economics, climate physics, or dairying. Half of synod's delegates have degrees in theology and experience in pastoring churches. These are good degrees and valuable experiences, but they create competency in only *some* square inches of life.

Second is to check your general sense for jurisdiction. Should we not feel invaded, for example, if our denomination decides which version of the Farm Bill should pass and lobbies for that in our institutional church's name? We are responsible to engage political matters, individually and working with others in parties and advocacy groups, but which of us have given our political proxy to the denomination? Do we want visitors to our churches to have to review denominationally issued political positions before deciding to become members?

Third is to check our own longstanding rules. Our Church Order says, in Article 26, "The assemblies of the church are the council, the classis, and the synod," and then in Article 28(a), "These assemblies shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner." I suppose Article 28(a) could have been a bit more detailed, but until 25 years or so ago, who in the CRC would have dreamt they'd be competing with their denomination's lobbying on political issues?

People instinctively want their perspectives, whatever the topic, to prevail over those of others. But that want can be sinful. An appropriate sense of humility should restrain us from trying to "lord it over" others (Church Order, Art. 85). May we pray for that sense of humility. ■



Doug Vande Griend is engaged in the private practice of law and has done work in various capacities for a number of nonprofit organizations. He is a member of Sunnyslope CRC in Salem, Oregon.

The Ecology of Kingdom Witness

» **Stronger kingdom connections.** In today's language, Kuyper might have used the concept of the social ecology of the kingdom. The emphasis in ecology is on connectivity between parts that have different functions and roles within a system that recognizes its interdependence.

Note the focus on joints in the description of the body of Christ in Ephesians 4:15. A networked church makes connections across organizational boundaries, enabling both the gathered and scattered church to engage culture within a shared context. Effective Christian witness today requires a stronger focus on connectivity rather than on dissecting the body of Christ into its parts. We can only imagine, for example, how Kuyper would use the potential of today's social media to mobilize people for action.

Fear of becoming enmeshed in partisan politics is a legitimate caution. Churches have, rightly and wrongly, been labeled "liberals at prayer" or "the Christian Right." Political partisanship, right or left, damages the credibility of Christian public witness. Silence can also be partisan, and it can damage our public witness. A greater danger today, however, is that political illiteracy leaves church members vulnerable to the kind of political demagoguery that is eroding democracy in Canada and the United States.

Making space in the gathered church for deliberation and discernment is important in our context for two reasons. The church is one place where deeper values intersect with current trends, in contrast to the short-term pragmatism of most public discussion. The church also brings together voices from different segments of society who are increasingly polarized as the gap between the interests of elites and the rest of society widens in North America.

Worship and just social relations. Throughout Scripture there is a strong link between worship and just social relations. The prophets warned worshipers that if they wanted God to accept their praise they should leave the temple, repair social ills, and then come back. One of the few times Jesus showed anger was in his response to exploitative trade just outside the sanctuary, and he rebuked the Pharisees for inconsistency between practice and worship words.

True worship and integrity unite the gathered and scattered church in the pursuit of just social relationships and creation care in the context within which we worship. ■



Kathy Vandergrift, a policy analyst, has more than 30 years of experience in advocacy for justice, working within and outside governments and faith-based organizations. She lives in Ottawa, Ontario.

Shopping with a Checklist

WHILE I WAS STUDYING IN THE NETHERLANDS, our family learned some things about shopping that shocked us.

There people don't race like rats across town to scrounge for the latest deals. There you establish relationships with particular shops nearby. You know the names of your butcher, baker, and bicycle repair technician, and they know yours. You don't haggle over pricing.

You are loyal to the locals because they are your neighbors working to make a living, like you. Holistic and communal, shopping in the Netherlands was more than a raw economic exchange. It reminded me of my boyhood neighborhood on Chicago's south side where my dad owned a grocery store.

Here's a checklist for shopping that you can use to help your own community flourish:

Is the business in your community?

On limited budgets we need to spend wisely. But when you travel the highways for the latest bargains, you might not be saving as much as you think. Yes, it's convenient shopping the Internet (there's nothing new about mail-order catalogs), but don't neglect your community.

When you shop locally, you not only build relationships and provide local jobs, you and the owner also pay taxes that are invested where you live. Abandoning community shopping has contributed to downtowns becoming ghost towns and to inner-city blight.

Bustling business districts are crucial for healthy communities.

How are employees treated?

If you shop at a store that mistreats its employees, you are encouraging them to continue. Also consider whether the employer makes room for citizens returning from prison, persons with disabilities, and minorities. Your community is stronger when everyone has a fair shot at employment.

Stop and chat with staff. Learn their names. Are they happy? Do they feel respected? Don't just buy a product—treat employees like your neighbor. You might learn something about that business and find shopping there a more pleasant experience.

Is the owner investing in the community?

Do you sense that an establishment is in business just to make a buck, or is it also helping the community? Owners who live nearby probably spend some of their profits there.

Sure, the jobs are putting food on tables—but is there other evidence the owner is involved in the community? Does he or she sponsor sports teams or educational seminars? Serve on the city or church council or promote community events?

Reward community-minded owners with your business.

Products and services
spring from worldviews.
What do your purchases
say about yours?

Does the merchandise match your values?

Do you care if the products you buy are produced in developing world sweatshops? If they are of good quality? If they are environmentally friendly? If they are produced locally and advertised with integrity? Make sure the products you buy contribute to a flourishing community.

Beware of mechanics and contractors with bargain pricing. They may be selling inferior products or providing shoddy services, costing you a ton later and perhaps taking advantage of that single mom down the street.

Products and services spring from worldviews. What do your purchases say about yours?

Not every store or service you patronize will meet every criterion on your checklist. We do need to balance our checklist with our checkbook. But you can start thinking about shopping in a new way.

Back in Chicago, my dad and I were driving along and noticed two kids beckoning passersby from behind their makeshift lemonade stand. Dad pulled over to the curb and we drank lemonade. Later I probed a bit. "Dad, that was kind of expensive."

"I know," was his reply.

Let's shoplift a page from the Dutch playbook and return to how we used to shop on our side of the pond. The benefits of holistic shopping for building community are numerous. And by using your checklist, you will be loving your neighbor as yourself. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



H. David Schuringa is the president of Crossroad Bible Institute, Grand Rapids, Mich., an international discipleship and advocacy agency for people in prison and their families.

Graphic Church History: An Interview with Gene Luen Yang



IN RECENT YEARS, the humble comic book has transformed into the “graphic novel,” presenting in book-length format topics usually reserved for literary writing. While Gene Luen Yang still considers himself a comic book author and artist, he has been at the forefront of pushing the graphic novel’s boundaries.

In 2006, he published *American Born Chinese*, an imaginative reflection on racism and “fitting in” that has become a staple in high school English classes. Yang’s recent *Boxers & Saints* (First Second) traces the 1898-1900 Chinese “Boxer Rebellion.” The first volume presents the Boxers, the poor rural teenagers who fought against Western domination in China. The second volume offers the perspective of the “Saints,” the Chinese Christians who struggled to survive the Boxers’ violent attacks. Yang asks readers

The more I read about this war, the more fascinated I became.

to take both perspectives seriously in order to understand their deep-seated call for compassion. These books are best suited to readers in high school and older.

I had the opportunity to interview Yang during Calvin College’s Festival of Faith and Writing.

Q. Why did you decide to focus on the Boxer Rebellion?

A. There are a number of reasons. First, in 2000 John Paul II canonized a group of Chinese Catholic saints. That was the first time that the Roman Catholic Church had ever recognized Chinese citizens in this way. I grew up in a Chinese Catholic community, and my home church was really excited about it. They had all sorts of celebrations for it—and then these celebrations led me to look into the lives of these saints. I discovered that many of them were martyrs. They were martyred during the Boxer Rebellion, specifically because they were seen as traitors to their own people.

Their canonization was also controversial. After the Vatican made the announcement, the Chinese government actually issued a letter saying that they disagreed with it, that the Roman Catholic Church was honoring a group of people who were traitors to China. The more I read about this war, the more fascinated I became with it. I felt like it really mirrored this conflict between Eastern and Western ways of thinking that I experienced in my own life. It was like an embodiment of a struggle a lot of us feel.

To find out what that “struggle” is, and to read what the Reformation might have to do with the way we view comic books, see the fascinating full interview at www.thebanner.org. ■



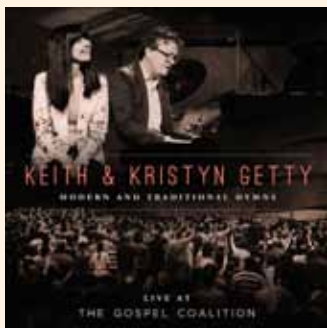
Otto Selles teaches French at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church.



The Railway Man

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

Colin Firth is quietly intense as Eric Lomax, a British POW treated brutally by the Japanese military police while forced to work on the Burma-Thailand railway during World War II. The trauma he endured there had long-lasting effects on his life. This thoughtful film swings from a sweet romance to horrific flashbacks as Eric’s new wife, Patti, finds herself in an incomprehensible situation. Eventually, Lomax faces a decision. Will he live in the pain of the past and take revenge or move on to forgiveness? *The Railway Man* offers fodder for discussion both of forgiveness and of wartime ethics. On disc August 12. (Weinstein)



Live at the Gospel Coalition

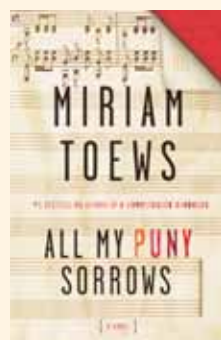
by Keith and Kristyn Getty
reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

Over the past decade the Gettys have not only become seasoned composers but also outstanding performers and worship leaders. Getty events are equal parts worship service and concert. *Live at the Gospel Coalition*, their fifth album, is an excellent example. While it features many of their most-loved songs (“In Christ Alone,” “Power of the Cross”), it is more than a greatest hits collection because they build their concerts to tell the story of the gospel of Jesus. This album does just that. (Getty Music)

For the Benefit of Those Who See: Dispatches from the World of the Blind

by Rosemary Mahoney
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

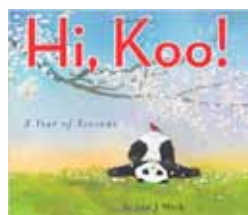
Rosemary Mahoney travelled to Tibet to write about Sabriye Tenberken, who founded Tibet’s first school for people who are blind, and then to India to teach at Tenberken’s international school for social entrepreneurs. With humor and vivid attention to detail, this master storyteller shares the participants’ wrenching yet heartwarming narratives. Interspersed throughout reports of her personal experiences she relates stories of people throughout history who had visual impairments, as well as fascinating scientific evidence that “the experience of newfound sight is extremely difficult.” (Little, Brown)



All My Puny Sorrows

by Miriam Toews
reviewed by Jim Romahn

Only Miriam Toews could write a novel so lovely, so sad, so true—and yet incorporate quirky humor. It’s about the love of sisters and family, about striving for improvement, and about suicide. This last subject fascinates some readers because the author’s father and sister both committed suicide; it also brings to light some anger with God. Strands from Toews’s Mennonite roots permeate the book, yet be cautioned that some sex and profanity show up as signposts pointing to deeper issues. (Knopf Canada)



Hi, Koo! A Year of Seasons

by Jon Muth
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Jon Muth treats us again with his latest picture book, which features the return of his lovable panda named Koo. Here, Koo and two young children play their way through the seasons. The text is written in haiku, capturing moments in time with Koo and his playmates. An alphabet path is woven through each of the haiku as winter follows fall and spring becomes summer. Inspired by his own twins, Muth’s delicate watercolors express childlike delight, discovery, and concentration. Ages 4-8. (Scholastic)

THE LOWDOWN



Released: Lois Lowry’s young adult novel, *The Giver*, is a modern dystopian classic. The movie version will be coming to a theater near you on August 15.



Tough Love: Chuck DeGroat’s new book, *Toughest People to Love*, will give readers insight into how to deal with difficult people, including themselves. (Eerdmans)



Perfect Match: For some of the better drama writing on network television, you can’t beat *The Good Wife*. Season 5 will be available on disc August 19. (Paramount)



Poetic Times: For an unusual source of “found poetry,” go to haiku.nytimes.com, where you can find sentences from the day’s news turned into haiku.

MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE

A Church Pew Friendship

WHEN MY FAMILY began attending the local Christian Reformed church, Mr. de Zeeuw was one of the first people I remember, though I wouldn't really get to know him for years to come. He was an older, white-haired man who spoke with a thick Dutch accent and used a walker. Most days, we sat in the pew behind him.

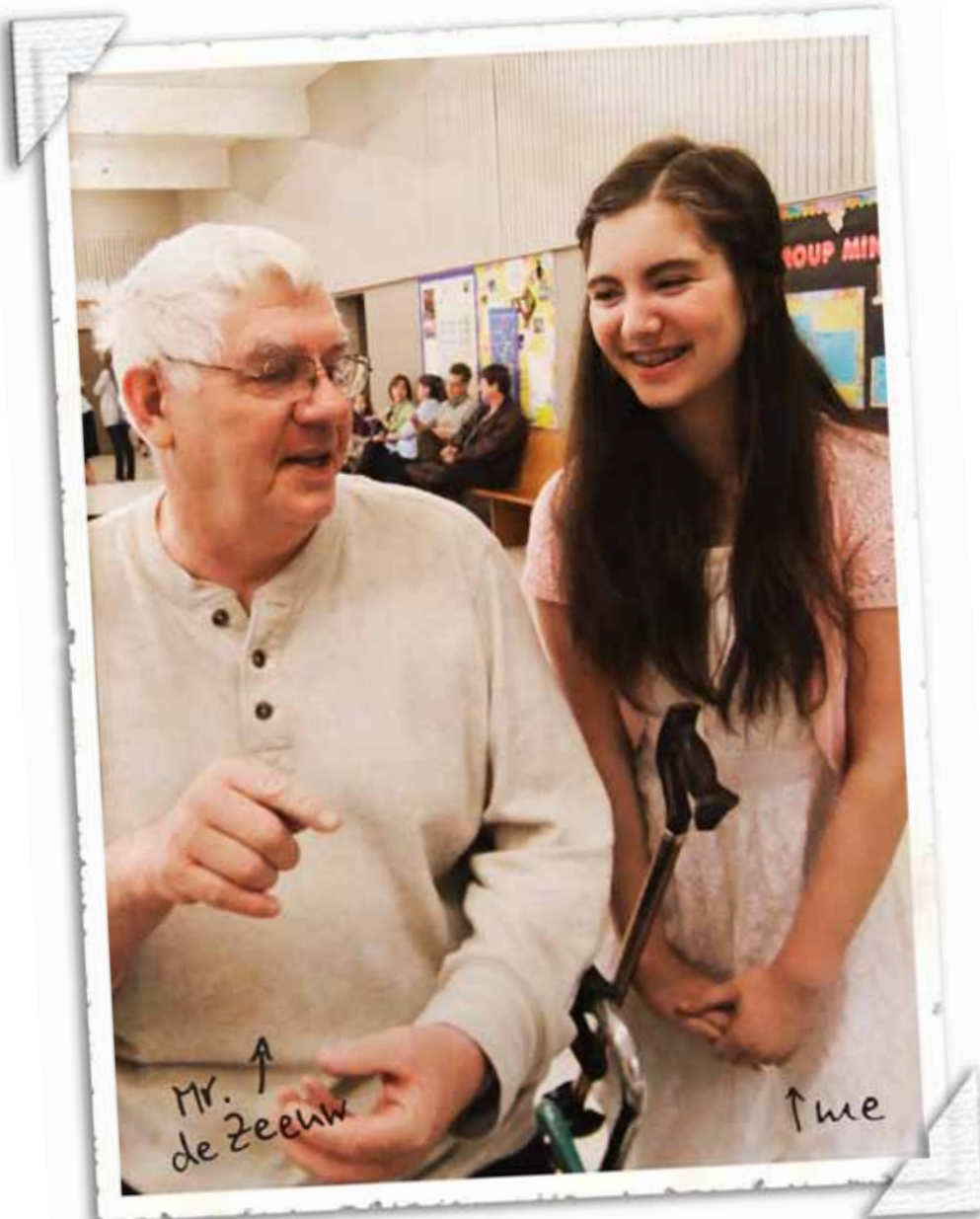
Back then I was a moody 10-year-old harboring a newfound hatred for church. It wasn't because of a lack of faith or resentment toward singing the same type of songs every week. No, I believed in God and I loved to sing. But I also really loved my former church—a small, Evangelical Free church where everyone knew my name, and where I felt comfortable being myself. This very large, ethnic church where no one at all knew me just wasn't cutting it.

I especially disliked the beginning of the service. That's when everyone was supposed to shake hands and greet each other. I constantly hoped we'd be super late and miss it. Sometimes I even went to the bathroom just to get out of this horrid meeting.

These deep feelings came out of an even bigger yearning. I longed for relationship, fulfillment, and community. But I thought those things were impossible among a church full of strangers, a church with few fellow 10-year-olds.

When we sat behind Mr. de Zeeuw, he greeted us fondly each week and tried to remember our names. I had no idea who he was. Each week I smiled in spite of myself and continued to hate Sunday mornings with a passion.

But as the Sunday mornings passed into years, things gradually changed. And by the time I was 15, I'd even begun to like this hand-shaking routine. However,



having expected community to just happen, I was disappointed at my continued lack of connection. I wanted a good friend at church, and after five years of shaking hands with acquaintances, I felt there was no real hope for friendship here.

That Christmas I played the role of Mary in a series of short Advent mono-

logues. Decked in a long purple and blue robe, I shared my passion for theatre with the congregation, letting the story of Jesus' mother roll off my lips.

Afterward, Mr. de Zeeuw approached me and relayed how much my monologue had blessed him. I took his compliments with a smile and a gracious, "Thanks," as

I did with everyone else. Mom told me Mr. de Zeeuw's praise should be taken seriously as he was known for speaking his strong opinions truthfully. His thoughtful compliments continued, and I began to smile more.

Sundays passed into months, and it was Christmas no more. Sometimes—quite often, actually—Mr. de Zeeuw and I would talk before or after the service.

Somewhere along the way he asked about my dad, who didn't attend church with the rest of my family. Although I'd always dreaded this conversation, it was a relief to me when it finally happened.

"My dad's not a Christian," I explained.

Somehow, Mr. de Zeeuw knew that would be hard for me, and he promised to pray for my father.

Then he told me about his family. About how he'd been without them for a lot of years. It made me sad to think of.

One Sunday I had three people track me down after a lengthy conversation with Mr. de Zeeuw. They wondered if I was all right.

"Yes, why wouldn't I be?" I asked, thoroughly confused.

I suppose they wondered what we'd have in common, since he was older, traditional, and sometimes blunt, and I was a teenage girl. Yet he told me nothing but testimony from his life and praise and encouragement for my own. A surprising love for Sunday mornings began to transpire in my heart.

It turned out that Mr. de Zeeuw wasn't just a Sunday morning friend. He attended every one of my plays from then on, marking each with thoughtful praise.

"Your art," he'd say, referring to my precious theatre experiences and giving it utmost importance in the kingdom of God.

He was thrilled when I professed my faith in the presence of the entire church

and promised to pray when I headed off on a mission trip to Mexico.

One Sunday morning after the service, during coffee time, Mr. de Zeeuw said, "Something seems to be wrong. What is it?" His words were the only ones I cared to acknowledge that day, through my red-rimmed eyes and angry heart.

"My grandma's dying," I told him.

Mr. de Zeeuw became a constant source of peace in my time of grief and an even greater friend when I stepped back into peaceful living again.

Back then I was a moody 10-year-old harboring a newfound hatred for church.

All these years later, it seems funny that the friend I'd prayed for came in a form I had never expected. From a man likely four times my age, a man of a different ethnic background and life experience. It still surprises me.

But then again, many people did not think that the Messiah would come as a carpenter's son and be born of a virgin, so I guess it's fitting.

Willem de Zeeuw passed away a year ago this past April. Who would have thought that I'd miss him every Sunday in my church pew?

I've come to realize that quite often God plants beauty where we expect to

find weeds. He pulls joy out of the ordinary and grows relationship through the unexpected. He is a surprising God, confusing at times, but he knows what we need when we need it.

I've learned that God fulfills us through each other. That's one of the reasons church is important; it's an open community of people like us, searching to be loved.

Sometimes I get angry again as I sit in that church pew during the morning greeting. At times I've been so caught up in missing my friend that I have to leave the room while everyone else shakes hands. Mr. de Zeeuw sat in front of me for eight years, but I never really knew him till the last three, and now the chance to know him is gone. I would give so much to shake his hand just one last time and say *I care about you* instead of just *Good morning*.

But peace fills me at last, as I sit in that pew and think about those three years. I yearned for friendship, and now I see that God gave that to me in a way I never expected.

I still miss my friend, yet I've learned that his friendship is a blessing even now. Mr. de Zeeuw taught me that community is not impossible, nor does it just happen thoughtlessly. Rather, it is a divine act of the Holy Spirit. I've learned that trust in the Father brings bountiful connection. I've found that deep friendship may come in the unlikeliest form or place.

So remember to look everywhere. Cherish what and who you have now. ■



Elizabeth Drummond attends Maple Ridge Christian Reformed Church in British Columbia. A student at Trinity Western University,

Elizabeth is halfway through completing a BFA in acting. She loves to write in her spare time.

FAQs

Ethics

Q Does Christian freedom allow us to use pot?

Marijuana is now legal in two U.S. states. I know of some Christians who use it recreationally at parties as an alternative to alcohol.

A Marijuana's medicinal properties have been scientifically documented. In fact, since 2001 Canada has legalized its medicinal use for those suffering from specific ailments with a doctor's clearance. However, this does not mean people should abuse its hallucinogenic properties for recreational use.

Like any other drug, its abuse, especially long term, can cause physiological harm. There's also the potential danger caused by impaired judgment when under the influence: there are countless documented cases of people accidentally hurting themselves or others while high on pot.

Like most drugs, marijuana can be addictive. And research shows that pot users often graduate to stronger, illicit drugs like heroin. For these reasons, it is unwise to abuse marijuana, or any drug for that matter, for recreational purposes. God's good gift of medicine should be used under proper supervision and guidelines and within the law.

Christian freedom is not an excuse to smoke pot. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another" (Gal. 5:13, NRSV). Even where it is legal to smoke pot, it is not spiritually beneficial. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial" (1 Cor. 6:12, NRSV). Remember that the fruit of the Spirit includes self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). If the Bible views drunkenness as a "work of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21), I suspect it would frown on getting high on marijuana simply for self-gratification.

Let us, instead, get intoxicated with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)!

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

Christ calls each of us individually to faith in him.

Church

Q The CRC's administrative costs seem really high. We read that these costs are approximately 15 percent of the total budget. How is this money spent? Is this because of synod and board expenses?

A According to John Bolt, the CRC's director of finance and administration, the denomination reports its total administrative costs according to generally accepted accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. These include all costs relating to support services: senior leadership, business management, all financial services—including accounting, budgeting, and treasury—and all administrative costs related to these.

It also includes fundraising and membership development. The latter is very limited because it is a "denominational given." This total does not include expenses for synods and boards. Although these bodies and its study and long-term committees can cost us an average of roughly a half million a year, says John Bolt, these costs don't sway the 15 percent figure very much, and we constantly seek to keep those numbers down. Meeting at Calvin College really does save us a bunch.

John also reminds us that some not-for-profits' support services can be kept "artificially" low. A well-known charitable organization, for example, receives a great deal of revenue from in-kind donations, resulting in very low administrative costs. Others go well beyond the 15 percent level, so ours is very respectable. He'd like us to consider this question: would you give to an organization that has only 1 percent overhead? Or would you be concerned about that group's ability to be good stewards of its donations?

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

Relationships

Q Has the church community failed our children? What can our church family do now to prevent more young people from leaving the faith?

A The most difficult thing for any church community is to live in freedom through love rather than trusting in obedience to the law. When we and our children know God only as a rule-giver rather than as a loving father, and if we have not gotten to know Jesus as a friend of sinners, we have a difficult time living up to a faith that essentially depends on our right behavior.

And when the culture our kids are part of has a different and seemingly more humane set of rules to live by, it becomes even more difficult to hang on to a faith in a God who appears to have more in common with a judge than a loved parent. If your church teaches reliance on obedience to the law to feel secure in your relationship to God, then yes, you are failing your children.

Christ calls each of us individually to faith in him. The Holy Spirit helps us find and know him and teaches us how to obey through loving and comforting us in times of trouble. Our children too are challenged to find the Christ of the Scriptures and to respond to the Holy Spirit's wooing of their hearts.

These are complex questions that require much soul searching. Christ asks each church community to "humble themselves and pray" in order to discover how we might have "forgotten our first love." He invites us to open the door of our hearts to him anew, and to show our children the way.

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

Heaven Bound

I READ THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER differently these days. Yes, I still scan the headlines and pull out the supermarket ads to make my grocery list. But then I head straight to the obituaries. Who do I know who's left the land of the living in the past week? Former classmates . . . members of my congregation . . . contemporaries in their 70s. Heaven is getting very near, and I have a lot of questions.

It seems many people do.

When Dr. Stan Mast asked our church's youth group what kind of sermons they wanted to hear, he got a dozen variations on the question "What is heaven like?" In his sermon "Heaven Now: The Place for You," he describes heaven as a place that exists right now. Jesus himself said, "In my Father's house *are* many rooms."

In my mind's eye, I'm trying to imagine what that "place for me" looks like. Is it a community of condominiums? A cottage on a lake or a ranch with rolling pastures? Although I never get a clear answer to what those "many rooms" look like, I do get a glimpse of what it feels like to be there. I'm safe, happy, free of anxiety. I'm with Jesus and unconditionally loved.

But what do we do in heaven? Christian theologians agree that anything of value on this earth will not be lost in heaven, just perfected. How many things of value on this earth are on your list: fulfilling work, friendships, music, art, literature, sports, animals, biking, nature, health—even chocolate?

Many theologians agree that we will know our loved ones in heaven. Peter Kreeft addresses a list of 20 questions people often ask (*Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven*). Among them: Will we know everything in heaven? Do our loved ones in heaven see us now? Will we have emotions in heaven? Will we be reunited with our pets in heaven? In answer to those questions he writes, "We were meant from the beginning to have stewardship over the animals. And what better place to begin than with already petted pets?" Could that mean I will someday get to snuggle with my beloved Australian Shepherd, Marmalade, who is buried in my front field? (Of course, that assumes that heaven will also remove my allergies to dog hair!)

In his book *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth* Nathan Bierma suggests that God teases us with little glimpses of heaven right here on earth. Amidst all the sorrow and pain, he lets us taste what goodness is. Are we alert enough to spot it? It seems easier to imagine heaven when we are able to recognize real glimpses in our everyday lives.

But after reading the thoughts of theologians and philosophers, as a retired elementary teacher I confess that I am still



"Can I choose my job in heaven?"

more comfortable listening to children. I have a new understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 18:3: "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." In my first grade classroom, I heard the language of heaven often.

Children have a way of seeing, wondering, thinking, and speaking that is so matter-of-fact. Their questions and observations are direct. They don't care how long it took to create the world. One student asked, "Did God laugh when he did it?" Another asked, "Can I choose my job in heaven?" After hearing the story of Daniel in the lion's den, a 6-year-old, diligently coloring her lion's mane, said with a smug smile, "You know, lions won't bite in heaven."

But my favorite memory came after telling the story of David and Goliath. We sat in a circle on the rug, and as I looked at those precious faces, I asked, "Won't it be fun someday when we get to heaven and meet David? We can ask him what it was like when that little stone hit just the right spot and Goliath went crashing to the ground." John's immediate response was, "Teacher, you're lucky. You'll get to do it first." ■



Laura Bartleson is a mother of eight and a retired elementary school teacher. She has volunteered to teach in New Zealand; Rehoboth, New Mexico; Honduras; and Sierra Leone.

ADS

Deadlines: Sept. issue is 8/4/14; Oct. issue is 9/8/14. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

PALO ALTO CRC Matthew Burns has accepted a call to serve as the pastor of the Palo Alto Christian Reformed Church in Palo Alto, California.

Retirement



RETIREMENT CELEBRATION With thankfulness and praise to God for 40 years of service in the Christian Reformed Church, we are pleased to announce the retirement of our pastor, Pastor Jack Huttinga, and his faithful wife, Evelyn. After receiving his M.

Div. in 1974 from Calvin Seminary, Jack and Ev ministered in Argentina with CRWM. Since that time they have served CRC churches in Alameda, CA, Hanford, CA and Manhattan, MT. A special service of celebration is planned for Saturday, August 23 and Pastor Jack's farewell service will be on August 24 at 10:00am at Manhattan Christian Reformed Church. If you would like more information please email: office@manhattancrc.org. To send a card of congratulations, please send to 7950 Churchill Road, Manhattan, MT 59741.

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

MADISON SQUARE CRC 100TH CELEBRATION Please join Madison Square, Grand Rapids, Mi. for our 100 year celebration during the month of August 2014. Each Sunday there will be a featured pastor from our history. Our celebration will culminate in a choir concert on August 24th at 6pm at the church 1441 Madison. We invite friends, former members and pastors, to join us in giving thanks, and praise. Details 616-245-7791 or madisonsquarechurch.org

Church's 50th Anniversary

CALVIN CRC-MUSKEGON, MI will celebrate 50 years of God's blessings on Sunday, September 28. Former members and friends are invited to join us for a celebratory worship service at 10:00 and a luncheon at 11:30. Please RSVP by September 20 either by e-mail at info@calvin-crc.org or call (231) 737-5207.

MARANATHA CRC of Bowmanville, Ontario, will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on Sept. 13 & 14, 2014. Former members and friends are invited to join us for a special program and worship service. For details contact the office at 905.623.2192; email: office.maranatha@rogers.com; or visit www.maranathabowmanville.ca.

VALLEY CRC from Binghamton NY, with thanks to God, will celebrate its 50th anniversary on Sept 26 to 28 with activities on Friday and Saturday evening (dinner) and a special worship service on Sunday. All former members, pastors and interim pastors are invited to attend RSV please. More info. will be on the website (www.valleychurchny.org) or call (607) 648-8224

Birthdays

85th Birthday

RUTH TOGTMAN, 12645 Beaver Den Tr. Homer Glen, IL 60491, celebrates her 85th birthday on Aug.10. Her 6 children, (1 deceased), 17 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren praise God for her wonderful Christian example and love for us throughout the years.

90th Birthday

FENNETTA STROUB (nee Doornbos) (Kuiper), 18010 Connecticut Ct, Orland Park, IL 60467, celebrated her 90th birthday on July 11. Her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, step children, step grandchildren, step great & great-great grandchildren give thanks to God for her Christian life, love & faith.



JAMES H. BRINKS will celebrate his 90th birthday on August 10, 2014. He resides in White Cloud, MI with his wife Pauline. He is the father of three sons, whom he is very proud of: Jim Jr. and wife Carole of Wyoming, MI, Dan and wife Donna of Kentwood, MI, Jack and wife Connie of

Belverde, TX. He also has many grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. Jim Sr. is a member of the Woodville Community Church in White Cloud, MI. He has always had a love for fishing and singing. He has fished in the Ocean, and has sang in many churches across the US.

GEORGE EDEMA, SR. will celebrate his 90th birthday on August 25. His children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren give thanks for his godly example. He lives at 8209 Stoney Lane, Byron Center, MI 49315 with his wife of 68 years, Margaret.

HAROLD GEERS on September 2. 725 Baldwin, Jenison, MI. His wife, Elaine, his children, grandchildren and great children are blessed to be able to celebrate 90 years of God's faithfulness to him.

LOUISE MARING will celebrate her 90th birthday on August 18. Her children, Suzanne (Jim) DeJonge and Barbara (Ken) Leep, along with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, thank God for her faith in Him and for her loving guidance. Cards may be sent to 2121 Raybrook St. SE (N), Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

95th Birthday



ARIE RINGELESTEIN of 3019 330th St, Fremont, IA 52561 celebrated his 95th birthday on July 30. He and his wife, Carolyn, are members of Cedar CRC. Loved dearly by John (Judy), Nancy (Lee) Veldhuizen, Keith, and Carroll (Marlene). His family gives thanks for his Christian example and faithfulness.

Anniversaries

60th Anniversary

BAKKER Bob and Mary Ann (VanderLugt) 481 Timberlake, W, Holland, MI 49424 will be celebrating 60 years of marriage on July 16. Children: Keith (Debbie) Bakker, Bob (Lynda) Bakker, Patti (Jim) Wallinga Grandchildren: Dirk (Linda) Bakker, Kent Bakker, Julia Bakker, Bob (Kristin) Bakker, Tony (Bethany) Bakker, Becky (Joe) Schra, Kimmy (Mike) Eling, Krissy (Camren) deWaard, Jimmy Wallinga Great grandchildren: Bailey, Everett, Andrew Bakker, Amelia deWaard. To God be the glory!

FEENSTRA John & Glennys of 225 S. Corse; Corsica, SD 57324 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Aug. 25. Their children, Jerry & Marjo BaanHofman; Delwin & Linda; Tim & Maxine Haagsma; Darcy & friend Renee; Brian & Marcella Nies along with their 15 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren thank God for their faithfulness through the generations. We love you!

HAAK Bernie and Ruth (Klingenberg) of 4746 Charleston Ct, Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 25, 2014. We praise and thank God for his goodness and faithfulness! Children: Cathy and Jeff Potts, Bill Haak (deceased). Grandchildren Brendan Haak, Tim and Haley Potts, Elisabeth, David, Emily and Ava Joy Potts.

Banner on Tape

Don't let visual impairment keep you from enjoying
The Banner!

If you or someone you love is visually impaired, consider signing up for our free Banner on tape service. Each month you'll receive a cassette tape in the mail with the articles and classifieds read aloud.

Sign up today!
1.800.333.8300





NIENHUIS Cor & Pearl (Bruinsma) of #413 6 Michener Blvd., Red Deer, AB, T4P 0K5. Celebrated their 60th anniversary on July 7, 2014. Great is Thy Faithfulness! Love from Cindy, Paul & Corinna Prins, Brian, Pauline, Quinn & Emma Nienhuis, Sandra, Bob, Chris, Lauren & Bryce Blattler.

VANDER ZEE Andrew & Alberta M. (Zylstra) 637 E. 161st Pl, South Holland, IL 60473 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on August 6. Their children: Deanne & John Dykstra, Marilyn & Tom Fast, Donald & Jackie VanderZee, Alison & Dave Veurink, Janice & Mark DeMars, 17 grandchildren and 3 gr. grandchildren Thanks and praise to God for his faithfulness in our lives.

VAN T LAND Ted and Irene, Praise God for 60 years of marriage on August 26, 2014. They reside at 398 Abbey Mill Drive SE, Ada, MI 49301. Your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren give thanks to Our Father for your consistent Godly example in our lives.

50th Anniversary

BOUWKAMP Rev. Ronald and Marlene, of 2531 24th Ave Hudsonville, MI 49426, celebrated 50 years of marriage on June 26. Celebrations were held at Peoria CRC (Iowa) in June and at Hillcrest CRC and Oakland CRC (Michigan) in August. They, their children, Dave & Rachel, Daryl & LeAnn, Brian & Janna, Amy & Brian Netz, and 16 grandchildren, thank God for His faithfulness to them through the many congregations they have been blessed to serve.

GOSMAN Arvin and Marilyn (Pranger) Gossman will celebrate 50 years together on August 22. Their family celebrates with them and thanks God for his blessings: Brad Gossman; Lisa and Craig Lohmann; Lori, Chris, Alex and Grace Casselman.

GRIT Nelson and Betty (Vander Haak) of Grand Rapids MI will celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 7. They thank God for his many blessings including their children Susan (Mike) Vreman, Laurel (Steve) Falvo, Cheri (Curt) TerHaar and 20 beloved grandchildren.

MEYER Rev. John and MaryAnn (Uken) of 2709 Danton SW, Wyoming MI 49519 will celebrate 50 yrs of marriage on Aug 18. Children and grandchildren: Lauri & Brian Bartels (Ben, Anna, Allison), Pam & Edward Postma (Sam, Will, Lucy), Sheri & Rev. Doug Bouws (Ellie, Sophia, Katie), and Amy & Rev. Ben Meyer (Grace, John, Luke, Abraham, Zachariah). We thank God for his faithfulness!

SIKKENGA Rog and Joan celebrated 50 years of marriage with a trip to Israel. We give thanks for our children: Mark & Dawn Feddema, Scott & Cheri Sikkenga, and Dean & Jessie Sikkenga, as well as our 11 amazing grandchildren. To God be the Glory!

Church Position Announcements

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>.

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.

WORSHIP COORDINATOR POSITION Community CRC in Oakdale, CA is seeking applicants for our part-time Worship Coordinator position. If you're passionate about welcoming others into meaningful worship along with a gifted team of volunteers, please contact our office for more information at: oakdalecrrc@sbcglobal.net

Obituaries

BLOM John Roger, aged 89, went to be with his Lord on Father's day, June 15, 2014. He was predeceased by seven siblings. He is survived by Ann (Mesman), his loving wife of nearly 66 years; sons Gord (Gert) Blom (Dan, Steve, Sara), Myron Blom, Rod (Thea) Blom (John, Conrad), and Stan (Anita) Blom (Andrew, Eric); daughter Bev (Ron) Bennett (Aaron, Adam); brother George (Liz) Blom; brother- and sister-in-law Pete and Joyce Mesman; sisters-in-law Elsie Van Essen and Nell Mesman; seven great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews. He has finished the race set before him. 2 Tim. 4:7-8

FEENSTRA Dr. Laurence; age 86; June 25, 2014; He was preceded in death by his wife: June Nykamp Feenstra; brother: Ted; sister: Trudi; brother-in-law: Carl Dykstra. He is survived by his children: Rick and Lori Feenstra, Lori and Keith Vander Laan, David and Diane Feenstra, Cheri and Mark Swets; grandchildren: Lindsey and Tomas Lugo,

Daniel Feenstra, Jeffrey and Nadia Feenstra, Scott and Julie Vander Laan, Alisha Vander Laan and Levi Bouwkamp, Nathan Feenstra, Nicole Feenstra, John Swets, Jenna Swets; great grandchildren: Gabriela, Ryann, and Sam Lugo; fellow family member Elaine Hekman; sisters: Esther Dykstra, and Dorothy (Al) Vegter; sister-in-law: Judy Feenstra.

HUGEN; Gerlene Ann, age 92; June 17, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; She is survived by her children and grandchildren; Marla and Jan DeRoos (Erin and Jeff Cassidy, Bryce and Holly DeRoos, Kyle and Anna DeRoos, Brittney and Seth Kramer); Beryl and Marlene Hugen (Kara and Joel Kits, Cory and Marcia Hugen); Janna and John Grimberg (John and Damien Grimberg, Janelle and Steve Molenhouse, Jill and Tyrel Stevenson); Joel and Judy Hugen (Sarah and Jarrod Johnson, Angela Clark, James Clark); 19 great-grandchildren; brother-in-law: Ray (Lois) Klyn; sister-in-law: Bernice Kredit; and sister-in-law: Marjorie (Bill) Schimmel. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Bert Hugen and Bill Hugen; parents, Lewis and Martena (DeJong) Ozinga; sister, Angelyn Klyn; brothers-in-law, John Hugen and Ray Hugen; and sister-in-law, Wilma Hugen.

NOW is the best time to go to EGYPT!
It's SAFE! It's CHEAPER and it's UNCROWDED!
It's easy AND you will come home with a deeper and richer view of the Bible

Next Tour: Sept. 28-Oct. 9, 2014

Spiritual Journey With Steve and Frankie Wunderink

Can you picture yourself HERE?

There is still room for YOU!

www.TourEgyptWithMe.com

Let the Nations Be Glad!

In the past year

- More than 24,000 people committed their lives to Christ
- Nearly 3,420 new worshipping communities were established
- Over 18,500 people participated in leadership training programs

With your support, God is doing amazing things through World Missions!

Christian Reformed World Missions
www.crwmm.org



REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**invites applications for
tenure-track positions
in Business, History and
International Studies,
Kinesiology/Physical
Education and
Sociology/Social Work.**

For complete details on the
positions, visit
www.redeemer.ca/employment.

Direct applications to:
Dr. Doug Needham
Provost and Vice President,
Academic
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East,
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada

Email:
facultysearch@redeemer.ca

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



Be Yourself at MapleCreek

MapleCreek is a vibrant senior community that offers housing options, social events and care at every stage of the aging process; from total independence to complete care.

Visit www.maplecreek.org or call
(616) 452-5900 to set up a tour.



2000 32nd Street SE | Grand Rapids, MI 49508
(616) 452-5900 | www.maplecreek.org

HUIZINGH; Marvin Henry age 90; June 29, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; He was preceded in death by his first wife and mother of his 5 children: Alice (Huiner) Huizingh; second wife: Josephine (VanHouten) Huizingh; grandson: Bradley William Boorsma; siblings: Judy Datema, Marilyn Sikkenga, and Willard Huizingh. He is survived by his very dear and much-loved friend: Sue Grassmid; children: Mark and Barb Huizingh, John and Lorel Baatenburg, Dan and Jeanne VanPernis, Ed and Luanne Boorsma, Steve and Lynn Huizingh; 14 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; sister: Shirley TenHave; sisters-in-law: Ruthe Toonstra, and Linda VanHouten; sister-in-law and brother-in-law: Eleanor and Art Sluis.

KALLEMEYN Harriet age 94, late of Sun City Az. passed away peacefully on June 16. She is survived by her husband of 70 years H. Earl Kallemeyn. Loving mother of Scott (Catherine), Kaye (late Robert Nossen), Linda (late Tom Mizutowich), Mark (Cynthia), Cheryl (Kenneth) Clark, Kristine, and Todd (Rebecca). Cherished grandmother of 15, great-grandmother of 26, and great-great-grandmother of one. Interment was at Chapel Hill Cemetery, Oak Lawn, IL.

MYROUP C. Fernella "Fern", nee Munn, age 96 went to be with her Lord on July 1st, 2014, 1344 S. Sumner Ave, Wheaton, IL, 60189. Beloved wife of the late Cornelius "Neil" Myroup, married for 72 years; loving mother of Craig (Sue) Myroup, Kim (Edward B.) Biesboer, the late Dale (the late Lee) Vandenburg, and the late Charlene (Lou) Sytmas; devoted grandmother of 9, great-grandmother of 9; aunt of many nieces and nephews.

RENZELLA G. (Herron) Curtiss; 78; February 24, 2014; Grand Rapids, MI; She is survived by her loving husband of 25 years: Dr. Eugene Curtiss; sister: Eleanor (Marvin) Alberda; brother: Sam (Corrine) Bosch; children: Richard Herron, Tim (Linda) Herron, Lori (Tom) Helmus, Norman Herron, and Brian (Michelle) Herron; 10 grandchildren; 9 step-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her brother: Melvyn (Kathy) Bosch.

ROSENDAL Ruth, 87 of Baldwin, WI (formerly Evergreen Park, IL) went to be with her Lord on June 22, 2014. Survived by daughters, Cheryl Rosendal, Ruthanne Fick, and Lynette Rosendal; 10 grandchildren; and 9 great grandchildren. Preceded in death by husband, William Rosendal and daughter, Elaine Kooiman.

VANDER BOK Almer, Age 92, went to be with his Creator and Redeemer on June 13, 2014. Born in Rock Valley, Ia and lived in the Grand Rapids area most of his life. Preceded in death by his wife Rose (Koster) in

1957. He is survived by his loving wife Mina (Leestma), 3 children, Arnold (Janice), Shirley (Robert) Wassenaar and Raymond (Carleen), 7 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by sisters Francis (Wm) Vanslooten, Theodora (Wm) Bartman and Grace (Bern) Vanderbilt. His full life will continue to be an example of faithfulness to all who know him.

VAN GRONINGEN, Dr. Gerald (George). Age 93. Taken to his Lord June 20, 2014. Survived by wife Harriet; children Betty (Herman), Jerry (Sherri), Jay (Laura), John (Patti), Bill (Connie), Bev (Bob), Dave (Dawn), and Chuck (Laura); 34 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren.

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

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: Foundation for Eastern Christian School Executive Director - full time, salaried position in Northern New Jersey. Chief executive and fund raising officer providing leadership in comprehensive fund raising and planned giving. Send resumes to Thomas Dykhouse - association@easternchristian.org 973-427-6244 973-427-6244

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

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

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

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

FOR SALE: 1g ocean front condo on Hutchinson Island, FL. 2 br, 2 bath, fully equipped kitchen, screen porch facing ocean, heated pool, tennis courts, shuffle board. Time Share wks 7 & 8 (last 2 wks in Feb) 616-281-4270

Safe Church Ministry



Equipping Churches in Abuse Awareness, Prevention, and Response

Abuse Awareness Sunday: September 28, 2014

Resources are available from your safe church representative or from:

www.crna.org/safechurch

Get ready for fall: Order Circle of Grace Now!

"They will live in safety and no one will make them afraid" - Ezekiel 34:28



NAPLES, FL CONDO RENTAL 2 bed/ 2 bath condo rent monthly, December, January. Newly decorated. Pool, clubhouse, golf course, \$2,500/mo. 616-741-5300

BAR HARBOR ME, RENTAL Oceanfront cottage near Acadia National Park. Spectacular fall foliage, Sept.-Oct. <http://www.homeaway.com/vacation-rental/p3565619>. Additional info 603-401-0365.

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

ROOM FOR RENT Young Christian female professional looking to share 2 BR apt. Very nice! washer/dryer in apt. Hudsonville Contact 708-204-9014/reader51587@gmail.com

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

Travel



HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours. www.chestnutlane.nl

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

WITTE TRAVEL & TOURS AND HOLLAND AMERICAN LINE proudly present ON STAGE ALASKA, Tuesday, August 12, 6:30pm, at the Prince Conference Center at Calvin College. This refreshingly different presentation by a couple who have lived and worked in Alaska, will provide a glimpse into Alaska's history, its spectacular scenery and wildlife, and the local hospitality. The program includes a stunning Alaska film with highlights of Holland America's Alaska and Yukon Territory cruises and cruise tours, valuable planning tips, exclusive offers for 2015 and more! Reservations required. RSVP to Witte Travel & Tours, 616.942.5112, 800 GO WITTE or at www.wittetravel.com by August 7.

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.

TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS is an affordable and dependable agency that offers in-home (non-medical) care to seniors. Let us help you stay in your home! We are a small company with a big heart. Learn more about us at: truebluecaregivers.com or call (616)406-6819. We are owned by Calvin grads and serve the greater Grand Rapids Area.

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

100%
OF STUDENTS
PARTICIPATE IN FIELD
EDUCATION OR AN
INTERNSHIP.

TRINITY
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Be Prepared
to Succeed

Learn More
About
Brooke's
Chicago
Experience

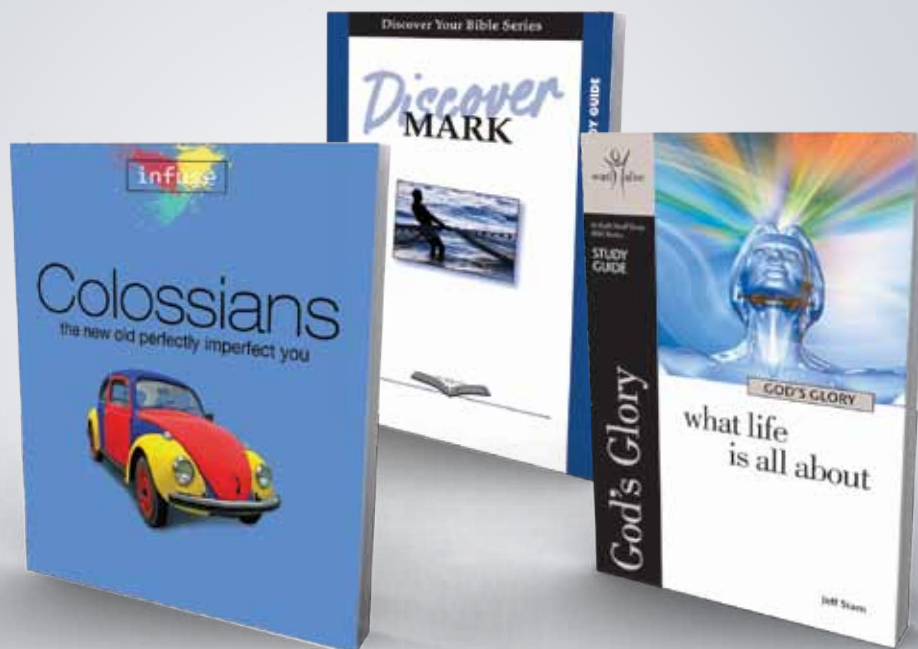


Have a group?

Find a study. *Take a look at a selection of Bible studies from Faith Alive.*

Choose from a variety of studies on specific books of the Bible or topical studies. Find studies appropriate for newcomers to Bible study, and for the more experienced.

View a study comparison chart and download samples at FaithAliveResources.org/BibleStudy.



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 15 years old, I was a skinny lad needing something to occupy my time. My uncle took pity on me, putting me to work as a helper for his construction crew. The first day on the job, we stopped at a lumberyard. I was told to go to the clerk inside and pick up a 4x2.

I did as I was told, and the following conversation ensued:

"Hi, what can I do for you?"

"Hi. My uncle sent me in for a 4x2."

"Don't you mean a 2x4?"

"I'll go check."

I ran out to the truck and came back.

"Yes, a 2x4."

"OK. How long do you want it?"

"I don't know. I'll go check."

I ran out once more and came back with the answer:

"Oh, we will need it for a very long time. We're building a house!"

—*Cornelius Witt*

While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish horse-drawn carriage.

Attached to the back of the carriage was this hand-printed sign: "Energy-efficient vehicle: runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust."

—*Peter Haagen*

During the children's message, Mr. Norm was discussing Jesus appearing to the disciples after his resurrection. He asked the kids, "Why could Jesus just appear through the locked door to the disciples?"

Our son Sam answered, "Because he is basically God."

To which Mr. Norm replied, "At this point, Sam is a notch ahead of the disciples!"

—*Jen Schoenherr*

Our 3-year-old, Sophie, always requests three things for herself—such as reading three books before bed—and she thinks her 1-year-old brother, Tommy, should have just one. Her reasoning is that she is 3 and Tommy is 1.

Using this logic, I thought I'd found a good way to deal with her picky eating. I suggested, "Why don't you eat three bites of food for every bite Tommy eats?"

She pondered this for a moment, and then replied, "No. But I can have three bites of chocolate while he has one."

—*Xiaohong Zhou*

Our 4-year-old granddaughter, Rachael, told us that her teacher had told them the story of Adam and Eve, and how they disobeyed God, who had told them not to eat the apple from the one tree.

After that, she said, Adam and Eve were still hungry, and God still loved them even though they had disobeyed him. So God made some more apples.

—*Effie Bierling*

My 3-year-old granddaughter was continually mimicking the action of throwing a ball, so my son asked her what she was doing. To this she nonchalantly replied, "I'm throwing a tantrum!"

—*Laurie Vonk*

A visiting pastor was preaching a very lengthy sermon. After the service, Gladys noticed a visitor and approached to welcome him to the church.

"Hello!" she said. "I'm Gladys Dunn."

To which the visitor quickly replied, "You can say that again!"

—*Dick Bylsma*

At his check-up, an elderly man said, "Doc, I have chest pains, headaches, back pain, nausea, earaches, constipation, burning in the eyes, congested lungs. . . ."

"Sir," said the doctor, "you complain you have so many things. What *don't* you have?"

The man answered, "Teeth!"

—*Jan Veltkamp*



REDEEMER

A Christian University in Hamilton, Ontario



Working at Crossroads Christian Communications and CTS (Crossroads Television Station) has helped me apply the skills and theories I learned in my classes at Redeemer. I now have a clear picture of what working in a finance office is like. This co-op work experience truly brought my learning to life!"

-Jillian DeLeyer '16
Co-op Accounting Student
Spruce Grove, Alberta

READ MORE at

MyRedeemer.ca/Business



REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE