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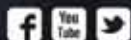
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Selective “Deafness”

REV. HENRY NUMAN’S ARTICLE “FINISHING WELL” (p. 32) describing some of the faith milestones of our senior years reminds me of something a friend told me about her aging father. Dad had become a touch hard of hearing—something he put to good use. She described this exchange between her young son and her father:

“Opa, will you take us to the park?”

No response from her dad.

“Opa, will you take us to the park, pulleeeeee, Opa?”

Dead silence.

“Opa . . .”

“Fahgedaboutit,” Mama told the supplicant, “Opa can’t hear you. . . .”

She confided, though, that he never had trouble hearing her softly spoken announcements from the kitchen: “Dad, it’s lunchtime.”

Slightly diminished auditory acuity isn’t always a bad thing—something the writer of Ecclesiastes already knew: “Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others” (Eccl. 7:21-22).

In my younger years, criticism from any quarter would cut like a knife. And if I caught the slightest whiff of criticism I would go and sleuth out the rest of it. Know the feeling? Fortunately, older and wiser colleagues helped me to comprehend the relativity of all that. Developing some “selective deafness” would keep my ears from burning and prevent those barbs from wounding me quite so deeply.

It is not so important that everybody should speak well of us.

“Really now,” observes the Ecclesiast. “Don’t you do the same yourself: bad-mouthing others behind their backs? So don’t be surprised when you yourself end up at the business end of somebody else’s sharp tongue.”

Not that we should become completely calloused to what others think. We should still let criticism, especially well-founded criticism, sting a little; it may do us good. But we should not concern ourselves unduly with maintaining a sterling reputation. It is not so important that everybody should speak well of us. What we are to consider of first importance as Christ-followers is our Father’s reputation, not our own. We pray, “Hallowed be thy name,” even if heaven’s answer to that petition sometimes recoils, giving us a bad name in this messed-up world.

Practicing sanctified selective deafness helps us to stop polishing the shiny image of ourselves we put out there to fool others. By genuinely sharing who we are, warts and all, we can more lovingly, honestly, and humbly bless each other more and “curse” each other less.

This willingness to be ourselves is a crucial prerequisite for any meaningful small group ministry we might join this coming church season. Participating in those groups requires that we check our images and egos at the door and be there for each other in all honesty, sincerity, and humility—sharing our failures as well as our successes, our hurts as well as our highs, our questions as well as our answers. Rather than sacrificing honesty and true community to the idol of Image, let’s learn to sacrifice that worthless idol to God. It’s usually when we love deeply enough to share our weaknesses, hurts, and sins that Jesus shows up. ■



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Letting Go

LAST SUMMER, before I set out to move from Grand Rapids to Seattle, my brother gave me a map of the United States. Because I was driving across country and because I had not made many long trips by car, I enjoyed the fact that the map allowed me to look ahead to my next destination and to recognize names and places I saw along the way. Knowing that I was making progress and was headed in the right direction gave me a sense of security.

All of that came to an end when I arrived in Seattle. I was so far from home and from all of the familiar things in my life. I felt lost. Finding a grocery store, figuring out how to negotiate big-city traffic, dealing with having to pay for parking, finding a church I had looked up on the Internet and getting lost two or three times on the way—all of these were challenging. Wandering around in a maze of the unknown, I was frustrated.

But that wasn't the worst of it. This was not just a geographical journey; it was also a spiritual one. After years of trying to secure my life through external things—and failing—I decided to leave everything behind and step out into the wideness of God's mercy. This was not an easy decision because of the risks involved, and it took many years for me to muster the courage to take the plunge.

The trouble was that this kind of journey had a very ambiguous map: something like, "Lose your life to find it." OK—this was not looking good.

After months of trying to master my situation—to secure my boundaries, tie down my budget, land a job, silence the incessant voice of fear—I was spit up on the shore like Jonah. This did not mean the end of the struggle, but it did result in my gasping-for-breath agreement—sort of—to go along with a new and ambiguous plan—one I was still going to have trouble with.

Here's what I heard with the help of author Jim Finley: "I, by my own powers, cannot force my way through into the mystery of the fulfillment that I long for. . . . What I can do is get vulnerable in the messy, intimate process of letting go so that what I am powerless to achieve can grant itself to me in my very powerlessness to achieve it. This is what makes it amazing grace."

I can't tie this story up by saying that I've been swept up into a seventh heaven. Instead I am here on earth, struggling with clinging, letting go, and clinging again. It's a process. But at least I have a map, and I have a sense of my way home with an ounce of faith and the help of those who have gone before me. ■



Joyce Kane is a former *Banner* staffer. She lives in Ellensburg, Wash.



"Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be."

—PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

A Binational Church

COMMENT



May God hit a home run with a crooked bat.

I AGREE with Adrien de Jong that the American Christian Reformed Church gave us Dutch immigrants in Canada a splendid welcome back in the 1950s (“Let Us Go Forth,” Jan. 2014).

I also agree with editor De Moor that we have too much in common to separate.

The 1940s in the Netherlands comes to mind. Our leaders could not agree on some issues related to infant baptism. The people in the pews took sides and the GKN (Netherlands Reformed Church) split. It hurt, but worse was the split in hundreds of families, including my own.

Today, 70 years later and three thousand miles apart, it still hurts.

So we must stay together, not only struggle but sacrifice for our unity too, and have open minds. Let us find our unity in the Giver rather than in his gift of nationality (as we do in the Apostles’ Creed).

But we must do something too, for we are different people. We have different nationalities, each with its own history, different cultures, systems, ministries. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Praise the Lord! Those differences are God-ordained. They keep us all from building a tower of Babel.

I had a dream of how we should change our way of doing things in the

organized binational church. For an almost 90-year-old man, dreaming is very biblical!

1. We should change our synodical meeting format. First we should meet separately—the American and Canadian delegates each dealing with their country’s specific ministries.
2. Next we should meet together and deal with the ministries we do together.
3. We should change our voting system at all our binational meetings from one delegate, one vote, to a system that fairly balances Canadian and American votes. Abandon voice votes and install a digital system.

I hear some of you say that this idea is too drastic, that it is not democratic. But may I remind you that in God’s kingdom, the church is not a democracy. The Bible teaches plainly that the rules in the kingdom of God and in the church are completely different (see Matt. 20:1-16 and Galatians 5).

I challenge a classis in the United States to bring the above plan to synod. Let us debate it, study it, and change it for the better until we feel comfortable with it. The big hurdle is to get it passed at synod under the old rules!

May our God hit a home run with a crooked bat.

Let us joyfully and in peace serve our multinational Lord. ■



Theodore Ferwerda has been a member of the Christian Reformed church for 68 years. He attends Cross-Point CRC in Brampton, Ontario.



Gateway Drug?

Shaio Chong makes scientific claims in his Q&A on Christians and pot (FAQ, Aug. 2014) but fails to provide references like he does for his Bible citations. Specifically he suggests that marijuana is a gateway drug, admittedly without using this term. However, he provides no reference to any specific study. There are persuasive arguments against this, notably the Canadian Senate’s September 2002 report on cannabis.

—Adam Postma
Kitchener, Ontario

Shore 2 Shore with a Roar

All hail to those who came with a roar from the pews of Prince Edward Island’s shore (“A Small Group with a Powerful Message,” Aug. 2014). We are told they are planning stops at 14 churches in two weeks. Why? Because there are no antipornography messages being heard from the pulpits!

—Jake Prins
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Synod Critiques Banner

It was difficult for me to read the article about a review of the *Banner*’s mandate (“Synod 2014 Critiques *Banner* Articles, Calls for Review of Mandate,” Jul. 2014). I’m 33 years old and grew up in the CRC learning about Calvin’s theology and keeping an open heart to the needs and thoughts of people in a quickly changing

TTERS

world. I was disappointed to see that two articles relevant to the minds of younger CRC members were thought so irrelevant by church leaders. It's a small picture of a great problem for the CRC: when you don't feed the flock, the flock looks elsewhere for food.

When will CRC leaders be ready to address real issues for those who are more interested in theology than in the old traditions of an "old" church?

—*Stan Hoekstra*
Schoolcraft, Mich.

Family Ties

The Bible is continually under attack from science trying to prove a very aged earth through evolution, carbon 14 dating, and now molecular genetics (see "Who's Your Great-Great-... Granddaddy?" July 2014). I simply reconcile the Bible and molecular genetics by removing a zero, arriving at a timeline of 7,500, 3,500, and 1,700 years. That "squares" the data for me. God is in charge of the "molecular clock."

—*Allan Stonehouse Jr.*
Englewood, Fla.

I advise caution for anyone using the National Geographic Genographic DNA Ancestral kit ("Who's Your Great-Great-... Granddaddy?"). University of Texas anthropologist Deborah Bonick and 14 coauthors have declared the program "fraudulent."

The Banner should be more careful in printing an article suggesting we reconcile two stories "one written in Scripture and the other in our DNA." Scripture and psuedoscience cannot be reconciled.

—*Mel Mulder*
Banning, Calif.

Dating Denominations

When people date, I hope they ask more than simply, "Can we work together?" I hope they also want to know whether they share the same core convictions

about life, family, marriage, money, beliefs, etc. Although the *Banner* editor suggests that simply working and doing ministry together with the RCA is the best way to build unity ("Dating Denominations," July 2014), I beg to differ. The best way to do so is to find unity in our deepest convictions (doctrine, confessions, beliefs). If it is possible to get unity at that level with the RCA, then we will have tremendous unity (and energy!) for our mission to the world.

—*Johannes Schouten*
Burnaby, British Columbia

Reformed Groove

In his article about evangelicals arriving at Neo-Calvinism ("How Evangelicalism Is Getting Its Reformed Groove Back," June 2014), Robert Joustra rightly has driven a spike in the wheel of the injustice done. The wheel is still turning, but we need to be reminded of the importance of our Neo-Calvinistic institutions of higher learning and the Committee for Public Justice with its biblically rooted approach "not to sanctify poverty but to abolish it." Sadly the majority of CRCs do not realize that it is only through political channels (CPJ) we can expect a change.

—*George Lieuwen*
Langley, British Columbia

Infant Baptism

With regard to the article "Infant Dedication Issue Raised in British Columbia" (June 2014):

In Acts 2:37-39 a man asked Peter what he needed to do to become a Christian. Peter told him to repent, believe, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Then he would receive the Holy Spirit. This is a promise to all who believe. To me, going under the water means dying to sin and coming up means a new life in Christ.

—*Marilyn Zeilenga*
Demotte, Ind.

Truth and Reconciliation

I appreciate your drawing attention to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the fact that Canadian Christians share in the shameful legacy of residential schools ("CRC Members Participate in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Events," May 2014).

The article states that during the residential school era, "children were placed in government-funded, church-run schools." While church organizations originally operated the schools, on April 1, 1969, the federal government assumed responsibility of the residential school system, officially ending church involvement. Some went on to be managed by First Nations bands. The article also states that the residential school era ended in 1996. However, Lebret Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan closed in 1998.

—*Carling Luymes*
Kitchener, Ontario

Healthy Death

Appreciated what you had to say here ("Healthy Death," Apr. 2014). Is it perhaps time to consider that the CRC as a denomination is nearing its time?

—*Jen VanderBeek*
Surrey, British Columbia

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Correction



This is a photo of Don Klompeen, author of "Lessons of a Holy Land Tour" (Sept. 2014). We're sorry that we printed the wrong photo with his article last month.

NEWS

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Dylan, Nathan, Lucas, Darren, and Luke get together to play video games.

A Gaming Frenzy in Ontario

Battling head to head across virtual battlefields is a favorite pastime of today's teen video gamers. Pastor Joe Hamilton of First Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, who calls himself a gamer, created "a gaming frenzy community" for teen gamers. On the last Friday night of every month and special days in the summer months, teens arrive ready to "feed the frenzy"—challenging one another in games such as *Halo* or *Call of Duty*. "Many of the kids play hockey all year long and then go home and play a video game alone. I am getting them out to play video games with others. It's the social aspect of gaming," said Hamilton.

On July 24 Hamilton hosted a 10-hour *League of Legends* tournament. *League of Legends* is a free, fast-paced computer game in which teams battle head to head to take down the ene-

my's base. Ten teenage boys, along with their pastor, formed teams of three and strategized together to achieve victory.

Hamilton started the video game nights as a way to connect with kids "on the fringe." "I like being able to present the image of a pastor they have never seen before. They have come up to me after sermons, and I'm not sure they would be willing to [do that] if I was not playing games with them."

Many of these teens have parents who grew up in the "Atari

age" and are unfamiliar with today's games. Hamilton said there is a genre of games that is notorious for its verbally abusive environment. "Parents are oblivious to this reality because no one in an adult leadership role enters into this space. I know the slang that goes with some verbally abusive things. . . . I can help them think critically about the stuff they are playing," he said.

—Amy Toornstra

Jesse and Luke enjoy pizza and playing video games.



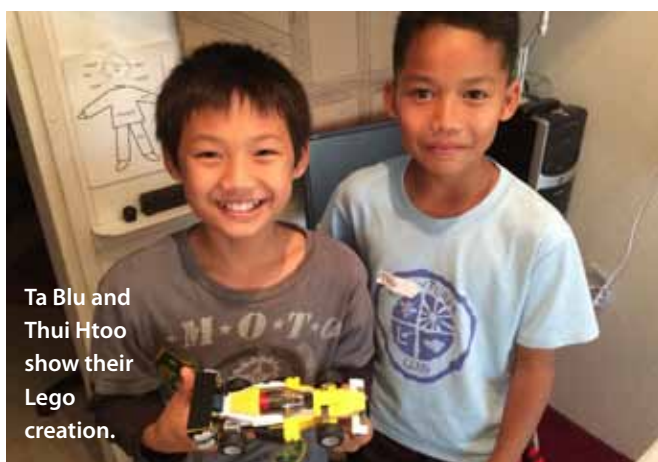
Building Blocks In Washington

Legos are the blocks for building relationships and mentoring junior high boys for Chuck Henager, a member of Family of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Kennewick, Wash. Each week a group of six boys, helped by Henager and Paul Scharold, another church member, constructs a 400-piece Lego set from pictorial directions, builds a Lego robot, or uses computers to rotate their robots.

These boys are Karen refugees who left Myanmar, formerly called Burma, and settled in Kennewick. Henager leads the Lego club at the Family Learning Center, a ministry center started by members of Family of Faith CRC.

"I love to do things with these kids," said Henager. "I find it very fulfilling and stimulating to be with them and help them have fun with some of the opportunities our own children had."

Theresa Roosendaal, head of the Family Learning Center, is



Ta Blu and Thui Htoo show their Lego creation.

CHUCK HENAGER

always looking for ways the children can develop their creative and academic skills. "We thought it would be a natural fit to combine the kids' love for Legos with Lego robotics," said Roosendaal. "It's engaging and it's a good STEM (science, engineering, technology, math) activity."

Recently they learned about rotations and angles for making their robots turn and move. The boys had to practice their long division in order to program their robots. "Really, at this point, it is just being together and having fun," said Henager. "They

would want the robots to fight if they had a choice."

The supplies for the Lego Club were funded by a Sea to Sea grant provided by the Christian Reformed Foundation to local churches with programs that help alleviate poverty. "We're very grateful," said Roosendaal, "for the Sea to Sea funding. A program like this isn't cheap."

Roosendaal would like to start a similar club for older kids open to other refugee children from Somalia or Iraq who also visit the learning center.

—Amy Toornstra

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Donald Van Gent

1928 - 2014

Donald W. Van Gent, 86, characterized by his love and kindness, was drawn to the needy, the suffering, and the lonely. A tireless witness for Christ, he died on July 30 of heart failure.

Van Gent entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1958. He served congregations in Michigan, Utah, Washington, Iowa, California, and Montana. He retired in 1983.

Van Gent was known as a warm, friendly pastor. His overriding concern was for people to be reconciled to God in Christ. To his parishioners he was a faithful shepherd whose ministry was rich in pastoral care. His biblical sermons centered on Christ but never lacked personal consolation. Evangelism and missions were his deepest concerns.

Throughout his life he dealt with health concerns and occasional depressions, but his hope in Christ never wavered. He loved gardening and traveling.

Van Gent is survived by his wife, Joanna, five children and their spouses, 18 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

—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.

Overcoming Fear to Create a Faith Foundation



A climbing wall was part of day camp at Coit Community CRC.

In the middle of August, 152 kids from the neighborhood of Coit Community Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., participated in Spring Hill day camp. Coordinated by Jerome Burton, Coit Community's pastor; Tim Basset, program director of Spring Hill; and Barbara Reed, principal of Coit Creative Art School, it was a place for children to hear and experience the gospel message.

"Most of the kids from the immediate neighborhood have never heard the gospel of Christ, and many of them have never attended church," said Coit Community church administrator Kristin Burton.

In addition to hearing the gospel and learning more about the church, the children were also challenged to learn about trust through camp activities that included archery, bungee trampoline, camp songs, and a climbing wall.

"They were challenged to overcome fears such as heights, fear of failure, and fear of embarrassment," said Burton. "The lessons to follow each activity talked about trusting God when we can't see and fear is all around us."

Burton also talked about the lessons the church and participating members learned from their effort.

"We can learn that God has already gone before us to prepare the harvest field. Therefore we don't have to be afraid to go into our neighborhood," said Burton.

—K. Schmitt

NEWS

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Roger Timmerman
1939 - 2014

Roger G. Timmerman, 74, was a friend of Christ, a man of the people, and an evangelist at heart. Cheerful in spite of prevailing physical discomfort, he died at home on August 6 from complications of pulmonary fibrosis.

Timmerman studied at Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., graduating in 1965. He served Christian Reformed congregations in California, Illinois, and Michigan.

He also served on denominational boards and committees.

Timmerman was as much an evangelist as he was a pastor to the flock. His sermons were crafted with care, biblically based but always addressing people's needs and struggles. He was much appreciated for his sense of humor.

Timmerman was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1973 but never missed a Sunday service. In spite of his physical limitations, he was his family's enthusiastic cheerleader in all events.

Timmerman is survived by his wife, Marilyn, three children and their spouses, and six grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Gardeners Bless Church with Abundance

One of the first things many churchgoers do on Sunday mornings after they pass through the doors of West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, is stop at the Harvest Table. They drop off bags of apples, tiny ripe tomatoes, bunches of Swiss chard, humongous zucchini, green beans, rhubarb, carrots, and other produce from their trees and gardens.

"Each week it is interesting to see what is brought for the Harvest Table," said Willie Renema, one of the organizers. "We are ever so grateful for people's generosity." Some people stop at the Harvest Table simply to admire the colorful arrangement. Many express surprise to see fresh produce in the church lobby, let alone at the opportunity to take some home at no cost. A few are curious about unfamiliar vegetables such as the flying saucer-shaped pattypan squash, asking those behind the table, "What is it? What does it taste like? How do you prepare it?"

The idea for a Harvest Table originated with West End's Creation Care Group, which began in 2012. The group's mandate was founded on the CRC's Creation



JANET A. GREIDANUS

Dixie Vandeborn (left) and Margo De Moor share an abundance of Swiss chard.

Care Report adopted by synod (the CRC's annual leadership meeting) that year. Joining together in study and prayer, the group strives to implement some of the report's suggestions, both in their own lives and in those of the congregation.

The group has done many things, but their greatest success so far is the Harvest Table. "The easiest decision the Creation Care Group had to make was to repeat the Harvest Table in 2014," said group member Andy Renema. In

early spring, Renema encouraged the gardeners in the congregation, "Enjoy planting an extra row and have your kids be 'stewards' of their own little plot."

Throughout the summer months, the Harvest Table has served as a venue allowing gardeners in the church to bless others with the abundance from the seed they have sown. After the service everyone is welcome to take some produce. "For some people," says Willie Renema, "this table represents a time when they were able to have their own gardens. For others, it helps their grocery budget. And for still others, it is an opportunity to try something new." Sharing also ensures that all the vegetables, fruits, and herbs, so abundant at this time of year, will be eaten before they spoil. The Harvest Table will continue until the end of October.

"We hope that next year so much produce will be brought to the Harvest Table, we'll be able to give some to the (Edmonton) Food Bank," said group member Margo De Moor.

—Janet A. Greidanus



(L-r): Creation Care Group members Miranda Bestman, Jetske Konig, Margo De Moor, and Willie Renema.

Noteworthy



Sarah Abma

Sarah Abma, 10, of Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, was one of 36 children in North America to be selected to attend a Discovery Girls Leadership Summit in Northern California. She was selected based on her article for *Discovery Girls* about what it is like to live with and overcome anxiety.

The **Institute for Christian Studies** in Toronto, Ontario, has appointed Doug Blomberg as president. He has been interim president since January 2014.

Highland Christian Reformed Church in Marion, Mich., recently celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Adam Piersma won gold and silver medals in swimming at Canada's Summer Special Olympic Games held in Vancouver, British Columbia, from July 7-12, 2014.

—Banner correspondents

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

Helping In Halifax

It was a week of engaging young people but also of encouraging the people working in the organizations they served. For a week in July during "Hungry for Halifax," All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Nova Scotia's capital city hosted a short-term mission team from several Maritime Christian Reformed churches. Five adults and 11 youths came from Fredericton (New Brunswick) CRC, Faith Community CRC in Milford, Nova Scotia, and Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) CRC.

In choosing to work together within their classis and return each year to this local Maritime city, the team has made lasting connections with each other and with the local organizations they served.

Organized by Albert Huizing, IV, director of youth ministries at Charlottetown CRC, and Elna Siebring, community coordinator at All Nations CRC, the team served meals, worked at Parker Street Food Bank, did some painting at a local Christian school, and helped in various homes in the city.

For the youth, the trip included many highlights. One of these was a trip to Peggy's Cove where they



The "Hungry for Halifax" mission team at the Parker Street Food Bank in Halifax.

studied the Bible and sang in the midst of God's creation, their voices echoing off the rocks. They experienced growth through their work and devotions each night but also through the people they met. "One group worked in an elderly person's garden and found themselves more blessed by her stories of God's faithfulness in her life than their work in the garden," said Huizing.

Likewise, those who were served benefited from this group's enthusiasm and the work they did. When Siebring contacted Halifax

Christian Academy to ask if they needed any help, the principal was overjoyed at this answered prayer, as several repaired areas needed to be painted before the school reopened this fall.

"The value, God's blessing to the community, is for the people who work every day in these organizations," said Siebring. "It's a huge blessing to have this group come alongside and support those on the front lines."

—Krista Dam-Vandekuyt

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Gerard Van Groningen

1921 - 2014

Gerard Van Groningen, 93, was an erudite scholar, accomplished academician, a lover of the Reformed faith, and ardent gardener. He died on June 20 of natural causes.

After serving in the U.S. Armed Forces in Japan during World War II, he entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1955. He went on to earn a Th.M. degree and a doctorate in philosophy.

Van Groningen served a Michigan church before going to Australia, where he was one of the founding professors of Reformed Theological Seminary in Geelong. He taught at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, and at The Reformed Theological College in Jackson, Miss. In 1980 he was appointed president of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill. He continued to teach in seminaries around the world during retirement.

Van Groningen was a man of steady initiative and sheer, inexhaustible energy. He was the author of 10 theological books.

Van Groningen is survived by his wife, Harriet, eight children and their spouses, 34 grandchildren, and 29 great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

It's All About the Call

Being an ethnic minority leader in the Christian Reformed Church—a denomination that is still predominantly white and connected to its Dutch heritage—is no easy role. Although African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanics all represent growing ethnic groups within the CRC, leaders of those groups walk a fine line. They serve congregations of people from one or more ethnic minorities while at the same navigating the customs and assumptions of the dominant culture.

The Banner recently spoke with several of those leaders and discovered that for most of them, their position, poised between two cultures, is part of their calling from God. It's a call they take seriously, even when it feels like a burden, but one that also brings joy.

A Dual Role

Victor Ko is a church planter in Edmonton, Alberta. Prior to that he served a predominantly Anglo church, Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich. "For me, it starts with the calling. God has called me to serve him [as a pastor] but also as a change agent," he said. "Calling is a heavy thing for me. Look at the Old Testament prophets. They stood their post. They were obedient."

Jerome Burton also feels called to a dual role of leading his church and helping bring change to the dominant culture. He has been leading the same small church in Grand Rapids, Mich., for 20 years. "I came to realize early in my ministry that God has called me not only to pastor at Coit Community but also to come alongside my white brothers and sisters to help them understand that people of color have something God has given them to bring to the table," he said.

Not all feel that pull to be agents of change—but they willingly serve in that role if that's where God calls them. Denise Posie is a consultant for the denomination's Office of Pastor-Church Relations. Before that she spent 13 years as pastor of Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., a predominantly Caucasian congregation. "The fact that I am not a member



Pastor Angela Taylor Perry



Rev. Ron Chu



Rev. Jerome Burton

of the dominant culture is not important to my calling. My vision is to serve all people, wherever God opens a door," she said. When Immanuel was intentional about finding an African-American minister to serve in its predominantly African-American neighborhood, she walked through that door, even though she had no prior connection with the CRC.

Challenges and Joys

Walking the line between two cultures is not easy for some. Angela Taylor Perry has served in churches in Grand Rapids and in Holland (Mich). She lives in Kalamazoo, where she is a commissioned pastor in a Reformed Church in America congregation. One of her challenges, she said, is "understanding cultural and traditional ways of doing things so that I don't offend my CRC constituents." She said she is intentional about not falling into people's preconceived stereotypes about [African Americans,] but at the same time remains conscious of not alienating herself from her own culture.

For Jose Rayas, cultural challenges include the religious background of the Hispanic people he serves. A minister and church planter in Socorro, Texas, he has pastored Valley Ridge Community Church since 2002. He also teaches at All Nations Seminary. "One of the biggest challenges comes right along with being a part of the Reformed church," he said. "Among Hispanics you have heavy Catholic and Pentecostal influences that see the Reformed church as an opposite." Another challenge, he said, is convincing members of ethnic churches

to become more involved with the affairs of the CRC despite language barriers.

Some point to challenges within the denomination itself. Stanley Jim was pastor of First Navajo CRC in Tohatchi, N.M. Since 2001, he has served as an Ethnic Ministry Leader with Christian Reformed Home Missions. "Adapting to the rules of the denomination that have been set by a [dominant] culture can at times hinder the ministries of minority churches," he said. A lack of leaders from minority groups makes it difficult to get participation on denominational committees and boards, he said.

Despite these challenges, many of these leaders continue to be drawn to the theology and worldview of the CRC. "The theological stability in the CRC is rich and deep," said Jim. "Having theological conversations with Native American brothers and sisters about our identity in Christ is what keeps me going." Ko agreed. Even though some say the history and traditions of the CRC are a hindrance, Ko said, he believes the opposite is true. "The Reformed worldview has so much to offer to other expressions of the body of Christ."

The real joy comes from the people.

Burton said he enjoys the welcome his church receives in Classis Grand Rapids North. But what moves him to tears is his own congregation. "Being an inner city church in which the majority of the congregation has educational and economic issues has not hindered [members] from reaching out to our neighborhood for Christ," he said. "As hard as it is to do



KAREN HUTTENGA



KAREN HUTTENGA



ton

Rev. Denise Posie

Rev. Jose Rayas

Rev. Victor Ko

ministry [here], my core group of about 35 people are willing to hang in there believing and obeying God. This motivates me." He counts it a privilege to be a pastor in a neighborhood where, he said, most older white Christian Reformed people will not go.

Most of these leaders find the rewards outweigh the costs, especially as they see other ethnic leaders step up, despite imperfect English or lack of education, and when mentoring young people to become leaders in their communities and churches.

"The greatest joy is to see someone you have mentored take the next step in preparing for ministry within the CRC," said Rayas. "The manner in which they approach ministry is awesome and uplifting. . . . The fruit of our labors is seen in their love for Christ."

Hope and Dreams

All of these leaders have hopes and dreams for the CRC. Posie dreams of the CRC leading the world in becoming a diverse denomination in which every person experiences respect, honor, and a sense of belonging. Burton dreams of a church where people of color have the same opportunity as their white peers to pastor in any church in the denomination. Rayas dreams of ethnic churches taking up

responsibilities and leadership in the denomination. Jim dreams of a time when every classis has a First Nations congregation and the Navajo nation's flag flies alongside the U.S. and Canadian flags at denominational buildings. All of them dream of a time when diversity will be a part of the denominational landscape.

Planting more churches is one way Ko sees to bring more diversity to the CRC. He compared trying to change existing churches to trying to turn the *Titanic*. "Plant churches that have diversity built into their DNA right from the start," he said. And look for people who are flourishing in their local context. "If you want healthy diversity at synod and classis, then those people must be doing well in the local context," he said.

Jim said the key to diversity is in relationships. "Don't send mission groups to our communities just to fix things or run our vacation Bible school," he said. "Come with open hearts to learn. Meet with individuals, families, congregations, and leaders for face to face talks about how we deal with things. Stories go a long way."

Rayas agreed it's about relationships. "Get to know the community in the vicinity of the church," he said. "Often the church is a com-

muter church with no contact with the neighbors. The church can start the conversation with the neighbors and give them the opportunity to dream about their preferred future and how to put to the use of the community their God-given gifts."

These leaders see change coming, even if it is slow. Ron Chu came to the CRC from the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1994. He has served in several Korean-American congregations and in multicultural settings. "The CRC is rather young and naive when it comes to diversity and ethnic issues. She has not opened her doors to other ethnic groups until recently," he said. People in the dominant culture have to be able to let go, he said, but there is no need to be afraid.

"Diversity will not ruin all that they have built but will enhance what already is precious," he said. "Dutch heritage is a very important part of this church. Soon other ethnic heritages will become just as important."

In the meantime, these leaders will continue to stand their posts, faithful to God's call. "I believe, like Esther, that I am here 'for such a time as this,'" said Taylor Perry. "I will not leave until God releases me from the call. Until then I must serve with even greater gusto."

—Gayla R. Postma

🏡 God has called me to help my white brothers and sisters understand that people of color have something to bring to the table. 🗨️

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Sanctioned at Two Dozen College Campuses

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship is being denied recognition at almost two dozen California college campuses because it requires leaders to adhere to Christian beliefs, effectively closing its leadership ranks to non-Christians and gays.

California State University, which has 23 campuses, is “de-recognizing” local chapters of the evangelical Christian group. The university system says InterVarsity’s leadership policy conflicts with its state-mandated non-discrimination policy requiring membership and leadership in all official student groups be open to all.

“For an organization to be recognized, they must sign a general nondiscrimination policy,” said Mike Uhlenkamp, director of public affairs for the California State University system. “We have engaged with (InterVarsity) for the better part of a year and informed them they would have to sign a general nondiscrimination statement. They have not.”

InterVarsity, active in the United States since 1947, has been challenged on more than 40 college campuses, but CSU, with 447,000 students, is the largest to ban it so far. Other schools that have challenged InterVarsity include Vanderbilt University, Rollins College, and Tufts University.

InterVarsity policy states membership is open to all, but leaders must affirm its “doctrinal basis,” which declares belief in “the entire trustworthiness” of the Bible. Many Christians who read the Bible literally also argue it prohibits homosexuality.

In a video statement posted to the InterVarsity website, spokesman Greg Jao said the CSU decision means local chapters will lose access to on-campus meeting rooms, student fairs, and other official school functions. He estimates the annual cost of covering those losses will be about \$20,000 per chapter.

But Uhlenkamp said, in effect, the impact will be much less. “We are not disbanding them, they have not been removed from any of our campuses,” he said. “They are just not an officially recognized student organization. They will still have access to meeting rooms, they just will not receive as steep a discount.”

—*Religion News Service*

Washington Church Takes Ice Bucket Challenge

With buckets of icy water and warm hearts, members of Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church honored long-time member Gert De Kruyf. The “Ice Bucket Challenge”—an Internet sensation raising awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)—was the kickoff event for the annual church picnic on August 24 in honor of De Kruyf, who has ALS.

It started when pastor Clay Warren poured icy water on his own head and then challenged the worship team, who in turn challenged council members.

De Kruyf was diagnosed in June 2013 with a rare form of ALS called Brait-Fahn-Schwartz disease that also includes sporadic Parkinson’s disease. Lori De Kruyf, Gert’s daughter, said, “She is on Facebook. Several extended family members had been doing the bucket challenge. It lights her up from the inside to see it.”

Council member Ken Gritter said, “As a council member, it was an honor to

take the challenge in Gert’s honor. During her battle with ALS, she and Tony have never wavered in their faith and have always put their trust in the fact that God is good and has a plan for all our lives.”

“For too long the general public has not known about the challenges people living with ALS face,” said Becky Moore, executive director of the ALS Association chapter that serves Tacoma. She said funds raised by ice bucket challenges help them to provide more free services to people living with the disease.

The De Kruyf family has not only been blessed by the bucket challenge but by the care shown to Gert. Church members have brought meals and asked how they can help with day-to-day care. “It’s been pretty amazing,” said Lori. “They have been blessed by the church family. They have been a blessing to the church family.”

—*Amy Toornstra*



The Council of Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church takes part in the bucket challenge in honor of Gert De Kruyf. Pictured left to right are: Deacons Eric Vander Pol and Mike Ridderhoff; Elders Howard Wouters, Art Tel, and Council President Ken Gritter.

CARLA RIDDERHOFF

FAQs

Church

Q Unlike other versions, the NIV has replaced the word “bless” with “praise”—in Psalm 103:1, for example. The word “bless” honors God by acknowledging his kingdom and authority. Don’t we lose that with “praise”?

A I have asked Dr. Michael Williams to answer your question since he is not only a professor of Old Testament but also a member of the committee that reviews and improves the NIV.

Dr. Williams reminds us that there is no one word in any language that perfectly translates a word in a different language because words have multiple meanings. In English, for example, the word “rock” can refer to a kind of candy, a musical genre, the movement of a chair, a stone, and many other things. The Hebrew three-consonant root *b-r-k* does mean “bless,” but it can also mean “praise” as well as several other things. The context must determine which translation works best.

Over time, the meaning of the word “bless” has changed. It was once synonymous with “praise” but now has come to signify what one with higher authority does for one with lower authority, like the pope “blessing” the crowd. It would be strange to hear the crowd “blessing” the pope. The NIV therefore translates *b-r-k* as “praise” to avoid communicating the idea that the psalmist thought of himself as in a higher position of authority than the Lord. So do other versions, including the NET, NLT, HCSB, CEV, and *The Message*.

Members of the NIV translation committee, Dr. Williams assures us, do share your concern, but do not believe that “acknowledging his kingdom and authority” is lost when opting for the word “praise.”

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

Racism is sinful hearts plus sinful systems.

Ethics

Q Why are only “white people” guilty of racism? Isn’t there such a thing as “reverse racism”?

A Racism is often defined as prejudicial acts committed by a dominant group (in North America, “Caucasians” or “white people”) toward minority or less privileged groups (in North America, “people of color”). When racial prejudice flows in a reverse direction, so to speak—by the minority toward the dominant—that is often called “reverse racism.”

This term assumes that racism is simply prejudice based on race. Prejudice is wrong, sinful, and has no place in our Christian walk. But racism is more than simply prejudice. Racism is prejudice plus systemic power. In Christian terms, it is sinful hearts plus sinful systems. We are not simply talking about individual power to choose between loving or hating. Systemic power is entrenched in how one people group is consistently stereotyped or portrayed; how social habits, assumptions, and practices inherently favor one group over another; and how all these things are framed as “normal,” and few notice what’s wrong with them. Systemic power is a big part of any “ism.” Sinful systems and sinful hearts feed off each other, perpetuating vicious cycles.

Hence, even though people of color can have sinful hearts and commit racist acts, calling it “reverse racism” is incorrect, as their prejudice lacks systemic power. Any prejudice must be corrected. But ignoring the power dynamic in racism or any “ism” is only giving half the cure.

Christ’s work of renewing all things includes renewing both sinful hearts and sinful systems. Rather than play the blame game, let us collaborate together in God’s mission of reconciling all things in Christ (Col. 1:20).

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

Relationships

Q Someone in my church always rubs me the wrong way. I get very annoyed and impatient with the things she says and how she expresses herself. She is not well-liked generally, but other people don’t have such a strong reaction to her. Should I speak with her to try to improve our relationship?

A No. It would not be fair to make your strong negative feelings her problem; she has a right to be who she is and to choose how she expresses herself.

When we experience someone negatively out of proportion to his or her actions, this can mean we are not accepting characteristics we observe in another person that are also true for us. Negative characteristics such as a need for control or selfishness or other self-focused behaviors are difficult to accept and lend themselves to being projected onto other people with similar tendencies. It is easier to hate our own shortcomings in someone else than to face up to them, but facing up to who we are is what following a Savior demands.

Thinking of this in terms of spiritual warfare can be helpful. Each time your sister in Christ does or says something you find irritating, pray to forgive her. At the same time, pray to be forgiven for judging her, and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind anything you might need to be aware of in yourself that requires examination or further prayer. See if over time your attitude toward this person changes to allow you to be more accepting and tolerant of who she is.

Above all, continue to practice patience, long-suffering, kindness, and all the other fruits of the Spirit, not only toward this person, but also toward everyone, including yourself.

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

BY HELEN BONZELAAR



SWING WIDE THE GATES

LORD," WE PRAYED, "these immigrants came to our English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and now they attend our Sunday morning worship. But ecclesiastical 'church' words are not in the first-level ESL texts. What do you want us to do?"

Forty years ago we named ourselves Church of the Servant (COS); the multicolored building where we worship deliberately illustrates the church enfold-ing many people groups. We know that the Scriptures call us to offer hospitality toward the foreigner and welcome the stranger within our gates. We know that Christ is the model of servant hospitality. He asks his followers to help the poor. He models conversations with women and befriends them—like the Samaritan

woman at the West Bank well. Jesus him-self is the immigrant.

Influence of Cultural Shifts

In his new book *From Times Square to Timbuktu*, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, an elder at COS, describes the scriptural focus on hospitality. Further, he notes how cultural shifts in global Christianity influence North American churches.

We recognized these modern forces coming to COS with the arrival of people from various countries needing refuge, needing to learn English as a second language, needing homes and friends. We meet each other in our mobile food pan-try, in ESL classes, in our homes.

And so we asked, What does that mean for worship at COS? With prayer and

daring we tried a unique experiment: offering two kinds of services. One is a standard service for people familiar with the language and its metaphors. The other, which meets at the same time, is a Basic English service—in part for wor-shippers new to the language, and also for people who prefer the spirituality of an international community.

A goal of the Basic English service is to worship in Christian community—to care for each other as Christ's family on earth. To be a Christian, we believe, is to be a community person.

In the Basic English service, relation-ships with newfound friends and under-standing of God's love continue to grow. Pictures embellish and replace words for people with no English. People from as

many as 16 different countries participate in any given service of about 100 Basic English worshipers. The majority are Christians, but some are Hindus, Muslims, or Buddhists considering what it is to follow Christ.

How do immigrants approach that in a new culture? Some attempt to bring the culture of their original country with them and transplant their traditions. Others embrace the new and let go of the old. Most people follow a blend somewhere in between. The Basic English services are home for them.

Unity through One Body

We want to promote unity in the church. So we sometimes plan combined worship services for the whole church in Basic English. Our worshiping together encourages sharing, and sharing enhances worship. Prayers in the whole church become more global; worshipers develop understanding and commitment.

Professions of faith take place in these combined services. In one of those services, Jestina and Ingel Tucker, young girls who are Christian immigrants from Liberia, professed their faith to the whole church. Today they read Scripture, work with children, and assist with the sound system. The combined congregations spontaneously clapped when Prasad and Lal Rai professed their new faith in Christ. Now the brothers have leadership roles in collecting money as well as translating, transporting, and serving on advisory committees.

Fran Mavindi plays African drums. She is a liturgist and leads the intercessory prayer. Rev. Mitogo Opira and Rev. Eric Sarwar, among others, preach.

Still, we wondered how people from different nations could build even stronger relationships with each other at COS. How about in discovering our universal humanness through photos and stories?

In Spring 2014 we unveiled a photography exhibition and collection of stories called "All One Body." This exhibition

encourages and celebrates our unity and our ability to obey Jesus with joy. Dan Davis's sensitive photographs of recently arrived families and their corresponding catalog of stories convey sorrow and humor, energy and community. These pictures of faces, we hoped, would lead to more face-to-face encounters among people who attend either Basic English or standard services. These encounters build the community of believers and allow a foretaste of heaven.

Storywriters accompanied Dan on each photo shoot. I, for one, learned that Kim Siam and Pau Thang are Christians because of the witness of a Christian family who went to Burma 100 years ago. Their story reminds me of the thrilling fact that we trust the same God who helped Kim self-deliver her first baby at home in Malaysia under fierce circumstances.

Open your gates to the stranger, God says, and the King of Glory will come in. Why would Dan want to photograph our immigrant friends in their own homes, doing their own thing? Why would we

post their stories next to their photos for an exhibit in the COS Artery?

When we know and care for each other, we begin to understand our differences and enjoy our likenesses.

Thanks be to God for bringing a prophet-photographer and storytellers to help us swing wide the gates—to open ourselves to new relationships and to let the King of Glory come in!

Amelia's Miracle

Amelia Maleck's strength is evidenced in her miraculous escape from Liberian rebels, in her four children, and in her ability to adapt to the culture of the United States in 10 years. How does she do it?

At her home, the answer is evident. She and her children, Jestina, 16; Ingel, 12; and Lebron, 4, trust in God! An older daughter, Sarah, remains in Africa. Sitting around the neat dining room table with Jestina, Ingel, and Lebron, we shared in the family's happy banter. On the walls »

Left to right: Jestina Tucker, Amelia Malech, Lebron Banks, Ingel Tucker



THE EXHIBITION ENCOURAGES AND CELEBRATES OUR UNITY AND OUR ABILITY TO OBEY JESUS WITH JOY.

hang images of Christ, reflecting Amelia's life in the Catholic Church.

Amelia was only 13 years old when Charles Taylor's Liberian rebels broke into their house, shooting. A cousin standing next to Amelia was shot. Then the one female rebel told the others not to shoot Amelia.

"I believe in miracles," says Amelia. "I wasn't killed but escaped. I walked by myself to Ivory Coast. It was a miracle of God!"

For the next 13 years, Amelia lived in a United Nations refugee camp. After two years she found her mother. At the camp, Sarah, Jestina, and Ingel were born. The family got food brought on UN trucks. These days they sometimes get food

brought by truck from the COS Mobile Food Pantry.

When she had an opportunity to immigrate to the United States, Amelia made the journey with two of the girls. Jestina was 6 and Ingel 3 when they took their first plane ride. Jestina remembers the good-smelling soap in a hotel.

Now the family attends the Basic English service at Church of the Servant. Amelia works in a car parts factory. COS members Dan and Cindy Davis are steady supporters.

Imagine how rewarding it must have been for Adam Van Gelder, on his first Sunday preaching at the Basic English service, to hear Amelia say, "I want to thank God for that good sermon."

Another time, her petition was, "I would like God to help me to come to church every Sunday." Since then we have seen Amelia in church more often.

Ingel and Jestina are loyal worshippers. Ingel attends Ridge Park Academy and Jestina goes to West Michigan Aviation Academy. They frequently read Scripture, help with the microphone, and participate in youth activities. Lebron goes to Little Lambs.

Food from the Table

Dried marigold blossoms outline the doorways to the Rai home. Lachuman Rai was a successful farmer in Bhutan before his family was forced to move back to Nepal. The family walked for a day and a half to a riverbank, where they lived under plastic tents for six months before being taken in by the United Nations in Nepal.

Twenty years later, mother Phul Maya still cooks with food the family grows in their garden—now at their Forest Hills home. She also makes good *chaiya* (sweet tea). Lachuman still collects rainwater from the roof to water the family's healthy garden.

Sons Prasad and Lal were teachers in the camps in Nepal. After four years in America, both have supervisory jobs in local factories and also attend Grand Rapids Community College. And they are worship leaders in the Basic English service. Prasad sings, plays drums, leads prayers, and translates often; Lal helps with video and audio projections and shares advice when asked. They've come a long way from the riverbank!

Prativa, their 12-year-old sister, is a fifth-grader and attends Girls Club at COS. She came to the U.S. with her parents more than a year after Lal and Prasad's arrival.



Left to right: Phul Maya, Prativa, Lal, Prasad, Lachuman Rai



Left to right: Kim Siam, Hnou Pi, Vang Huai, Pau Thang

She giggles when she realizes that she is growing tallest in her family.

Asked what is most different in their lives now living in the United States, Prasad answers philosophically: “Talking with people—and it’s not just language. Here it is a different social life. We are always busy. We don’t have time to be together.

“In Bhutan, we knew everyone. In the countryside, houses were not close together, but people were together. We could just go into a friend’s house and get food from the table even if people weren’t home.”

The Rai family does not borrow food from others’ tables in Grand Rapids. But despite their American busyness, they share the Bread of Life each week with the growing international community at the Basic English service.

Burma to Burton

“Determination” describes Kim and Pau’s activities at Church of the Servant. They come to ESL classes faithfully. Even in the face of the oncoming birth of Mung Pi and the care of her daughter, Vang Huai Pi, Kim boarded two buses each way—even in the dark—to go to ESL classes and to care for the family garden at COS. Then Kim and Pau began coming to the Basic English services.

Kim’s strong singing voice led people to invite her to sing with the service’s lead singers. While Kim sings, Pau lovingly cares for the children. Kim is also a song leader in the Karen worship service the family attends after Basic English service each Sunday. That’s nothing new: she was also a worship leader in her church in Burma.

Pau grew up a Christian in Burma, where his father is still the minister of a church. He married Kim in Burma. In 2007 Pau fled to Malaysia, where he sought refuge from oppression. He sent for Kim in 2009, and she lived in their house for two years. During that time she could not leave the house because she was not in Malaysia legally. In that house their daughter was born. They emigrated to the United States in 2011.

Now Pau commutes daily to his job at a meat processing plant in Plainwell.

In the bitter cold winter of 2014, Kim and Pau bought a house in Grand Rapids, taking classes in the process of home ownership at Inner City Christian Fellowship. So many papers have to be filled out, signed, filed, and kept, says Pau. Chuck and Barbara Hampton of COS helped Kim and Pau face the challenges and expectations of buying that home.

Those who attend the Basic English Service appreciate the Christian background from which Kim and Pau come. One Baptist missionary family introduced the Karen people in Burma to Christianity 100 years ago. Now the Baptists survive among the Christians in Burma. Kim and Pau’s story is an example of what a family working with the Lord can do! ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Helen Bonzelaar is professor of art emerita at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and is retiring as chair of the Basic English Service at Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids.

TOGETHER DOING MORE

WORLD RENEW

Andrew (center in black) is proud to be a farmer.



You add.
God multiplies.

Farming for the Future

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Andrew did not always consider himself a farmer.

Like others in his rural Malian village of Vanekuy, he grew up eating food grown on his parents' land, yet he considered farming to be "a poor man's occupation."

There were simply too many farmers he knew who struggled to meet their families' needs.

Andrew's observations demonstrate a sad reality. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reports that 70 percent of the world's food-insecure people live in rural areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These are farming families who grow food on small plots of land. They work hard every day, yet are unable to feed their families sufficiently.

In many cases, these small-holder farmers have been growing the same crops on the same plot of land for generations. As a result, the land has become less and less fertile.

Farmers sometimes turn to expensive chemical fertilizers as a solution to this problem, but without proper training in how to use these chemicals, farmers can end up burning their crops and further depleting the soil.

Erratic weather patterns complicate matters and make it even more difficult to grow food. As a result, farmers across the developing world are finding it harder and harder to get by each year.

Instead of farming, Andrew aspired to be a builder. As he grew up, he cultivated his construction skills. By the time he was 46 years old, he had a reputation



Andrew's farm includes a compost pile of organic matter.

as an expert house builder and was the preferred builder in his village.

Andrew also raised some food on a small quarter-acre lot, but it was not nearly enough to feed his family. That meant that he had to earn sufficient income as a builder to purchase food for his family in addition to clothing and other items. This was too difficult.

World Renew has been working in communities like Andrew's for more than 50 years. "During that time, we have learned that investing in farmers can be a key to eliminating hunger," said Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew-Canada.

"God was the first farmer who tended the world he created and then made

Adam and Eve to continue this caretaking role," Kaastra-Mutoigo added.

"When we remind people of the good gift of creation that God has given us and give farmers training and support to improve their skills, we've seen that they can quickly improve their lives and better feed their families. They also provide a food surplus to sell at area markets. What's more, these men and women often become leaders who can help their entire communities change for the better."

Andrew's story is a great example. A few years ago, he joined an agriculture training program offered by World Renew's local church partner. There he met Nathan, a man from Vanekuy who had been trained by World Renew to »

“For the first time in my life, I have filled my second grain silo with food for my family.”



A stone and hedge fence marks the perimeter of Andrew's farm.

be a pilot farmer. Nathan used his plot of land to demonstrate new and improved farming methods.

When that year's crop was harvested, Nathan's field showed a significant improvement over the previous year's yield even though the harvest in neighboring fields was poor.

"We all learned through Nathan's training workshops to produce a sustain-

able fertilizer for the soil and wanted to become like him," said Andrew.

Andrew decided to try the new composting techniques on his quarter-acre of land. He was surprised when he harvested more than double his previous crop yield.

"I decided to quit construction work and focus on my farm," he said. "I collected a lot of cow dung and other compostable material and cleared more land to expand my fields from a quarter-acre to six acres."

On this newly expanded farm, Andrew grew cotton and sesame to sell as cash crops in addition to maize and vegetables for his family's consumption. The results were dramatic.

"I have secured my family against hunger," Andrew said of the \$208 profit he made from his cash crops. He added, "For the first time in my life, I have filled my second grain silo with food for my family. I just thank the Lord." ■



Kristen deRoo VanderBerg is communications manager for World Renew.

Mushrooms Help Villagers Dare to Dream

When you live in a remote part of rural India, dreaming about improving your future can seem like a waste of time. For 32 people in Adro Pahar village, however, such dreams recently became a reality—thanks to mushrooms.

Adro Pahar is a tiny village in northern India that is home to eight families—32 people—who make their living by farming on the hilly slopes around their community. Their main crop is cowpeas, but they also grow maize and millet.

"The families in Adro Pahar are very hard-working people, and they do all they can to grow enough to maintain their families," said World Renew staff member Kohima Daring. "They had dreams of increasing their incomes and improving their lives, but no matter



Two women leaders of the Adro Pahar mushroom project.

Pray for World Renew

- Thank God for the farmers who grow our food.
- Thank God for the soil, sunshine, and rain that make that food grow.
- Ask God to be with the billions of people around the world who make their living as farmers, especially small-scale farmers who go hungry for part of the year and who are vulnerable to drought and disaster.
- Ask God for sunshine and rain this growing season to nourish fields and for bountiful harvests.
- Ask God to be with World Renew and its 78 church partners around the world as they work with farmers to help them improve their lives.

You add.
God multiplies.



Left: Preparing the mushroom house for a new crop.

Below: A sign marks the demonstration plot where mushrooms are grown.



what they did, their yields were not enough to change their standard of living.”

All that changed when people decided to take a chance on mushrooms. In October 2013, World Renew’s partner, the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR), went to Adro Pahar to talk to the villagers about their dreams. EFICOR staff suggested that people try growing mushrooms—a crop that could grow well in their challenging environment and could also be sold for a profit in town.

“At first the people were hesitant,” said Daring. “Mushrooms had never been grown in this community, and growing them would take a leap of faith.”

Finally two women came forward and agreed to use part of their income and property to invest in growing mushrooms. EFICOR staff provided them with training to get started, and the women’s mushroom farm became a demonstration plot for others in the village to learn how mushroom farming could work.

The mushrooms grew quickly. Soon people from neighboring villages were

coming to the women to purchase mushrooms. That convinced the women to stick with mushroom farming and dedicate more of their time and land to it.

Recently the women were invited to participate in a farm science fair where they displayed their mushrooms and talked about how the mushrooms were grown. The women learned that there is a huge demand for mushrooms in the regional market. They began transporting their mushrooms for sale, and their income has soared.

Today, the people of Adro Pahar have begun large-scale mushroom cultivation. What’s more, they have found new hope for the future.

“They are beaming with dreams about improving their village and trying new things,” said Daring. “You could say that their dreams have mushroomed!” ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Support Farmers on World Hunger Sunday

World Hunger’s 35th Annual World Hunger Campaign materials are now available. This year’s campaign is rooted in Psalm 34:8: “Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

By participating in the campaign, you and your congregation will be reminded that food is a great gift from God. You will learn from global farmers who can teach us much about being aware of God’s goodness and praising him for the rain, sun, soil, seeds, and tools that make each day’s food possible.

You will also grow in your knowledge of the challenges farmers in developing countries face as they work to produce enough food to feed their families, and you will be inspired to take action to help them.

World Hunger Sunday is November 2, 2014, but churches can choose to participate at any time of the year. To learn more, visit worldrenew.net/worldhunger.

Being Church in a Changing World

While living in Chicago, my family and I were members of Loop Church, a Christian Reformed congregation on the south side of downtown. Begun as a church plant in the late 1980s, it didn't find a permanent space until 2010, moving into a neighborhood teeming with growth and possibilities.

Although the neighborhood had been an industrial area, a dramatic shift in the surrounding blocks happened in the last decade or two. Gleaming towers of condos and apartments were built in the South Loop, making the area primarily residential.

A number of churches have begun to sprout in the space of about five city blocks. Long-time Roman Catholic and Presbyterian (PCUSA) churches are being joined by a host of entrepreneurial new fellowships. In addition to Loop Church, there's a Presbyterian Church in America church plant, a Chinese church, a non-denominational church, a Christian Reformed plant targeting the hip-hop generation, and a Vineyard Church. About 10 blocks further is a satellite of Willow Creek.

This eclectic mix of churches is representative of the North American landscape today: centuries-old denominations, newer growing denominations, networks and satellites, and independent churches.

We hear over and over that denominations are dying. Variations on this theme include recalling times gone by when major denominations were a powerful presence in society. Before jumping aboard that bandwagon, though, we would do well to ask a few questions. Are so-called mainline denominations dying? What about others? Are the perceptions of denominational decline correct?

Membership trends among mainline denominations are disturbing. Between 2012 and 13, for example, membership in the PCUSA declined by nearly 90,000 (about 5 percent); 224 churches either left for other denominations or dissolved. Similar trends are reported by other mainline denominations in Canada and the United States.

But a recent article by Ted Campbell in *The Christian Century* looks at the data from a different perspective. Campbell

notes that during the 20th century, combined membership in a group of nine mainline denominations never accounted for more than 17 percent of the U.S. population. In other words, for more than 100 years, mainline denominations have not been nearly the imposing presence we seem to believe they were.

Other reports show that there has been growth among more conservative evangelical denominations in both Canada and the U.S. as well as among independent churches.

Rather than concluding that denominations are dying, it would be better to conclude that the church landscape is changing and broadening, for it includes not only denominations but also denomination-like networks, megachurches and satellites, and independent churches.

I see this as an era for enterprising efforts and experiments.

Does that five-block area in the South Loop of Chicago need all of those churches? Some might say no. But consider: there are thousands of people in that neighborhood who aren't in any church on Sunday mornings. And if they all started to stream through those doorways, the seats in this handful of churches would be insufficient to handle the deluge. We must be ready for the harvest, and I'm pleased to see a diversity of options through which the Spirit can work.

Also, we need to be aware of trends. The 1914 CRC *Yearbook* lists nine churches that had begun the year before. Three were in cities (Hoboken, NJ; Holland, Mich.; Ogden, Utah); six were in rural areas (including one in Cramersburg, Saskatchewan). One hundred years later, in 2013, 11 churches had begun. All started in metropolitan areas. Why?

According to the World Health Organization, 100 years ago 20 percent of the world's population lived in cities; three years ago the figure passed the 50 percent mark, and it keeps growing. The world's peoples are flocking to cities.

The migration to cities is just one trend. Other trends also demand attention. Closely related to the movement to urban areas is the diversity of people that those areas include.

The world around us is changing. What about us? Are we ready to embrace this wave of newcomers? ■



“The church landscape is changing and broadening.”



Steven Timmermans is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

You add.
God multiplies.

'Floating Souls' in Japan

Megumi Sato and Miyuki Takahashi live in Sendai, Japan, an area devastated by the earthquake and tsunami of 2011.

After the disasters, God gave these women hope through Back to God Ministries' Japanese radio program. They longed to connect with other followers of Christ. But in a country where only 1.5 percent of people publicly profess their faith, it can be difficult to find a community of believers.

"The power of the radio and Internet ministries is great, but listeners may have a hard time making any real connections," said Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) Japanese leader Rev. Masao Yamashita. "If not connected to a local church, they become floating souls."

To equip local churches to disciple these "floating souls," BTGMI began a partnership with Christian Reformed



A venture between Christian Reformed World Missions and Back to God Ministries International is working to bring people in Japan to God.

World Missions (CRWM) and the Reformed Church in Japan to create a leadership training center.

The center will offer leadership training and coaching programs based on the needs of local churches and participants.

Jeong Gho, a CRWM missionary in Japan, and his wife, Misook, lead several training seminars for church leaders in Japan each year. "We have developed many contacts with several churches, even

with different denominations," said Jeong Gho.

During the leadership trainings, church leaders learn the importance of setting goals for themselves and for their congregations.

"These leadership trainings help both the churches in Japan and other Asian countries work together for the glory of God," Gho said.

Currently 30 pastors and 30 lay leaders participate in leadership training programs. Another 70 church leaders are enrolled in Bible study leadership training.

Thanks to this ministry, trained leaders have welcomed Megumi Sato and Miyuki Takahashi to a Bible study for radio listeners in Sendai. ■

—by Brian Clark,
Christian Reformed World Missions,
and Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International

Seminary Graduate Returns to Honduras

Eduardo Gonzalez's journey from Honduras to Calvin Seminary started in the midst of a national tragedy.

Sixteen years ago, Hurricane Mitch, one of the strongest and deadliest Atlantic storms on record, slammed Central America, with Honduras suffering the greatest loss of life and livelihood. Thankfully, God spared Vida Abundante, a multi-site evangelical church headquartered in Tegucigalpa where Gonzalez was a member.

With its facilities intact, the church was used to stage relief efforts.

The church's major partner was the West Michigan

agency International Aid, which helped with recovery and development projects.

Through International Aid, a partnership between Vida Abundante and Covenant Life Church in Grand Haven, Mich., began and exists to this day.

Through the partnership, Gonzalez came to know about the Christian Reformed denomination and its theological heritage, and he decided to enter the ministry.

He chose to attend Kuyper College in Grand Rapids, Mich., for his undergraduate education. Since graduation, he has been earning a Masters in Christian Ministry and Masters in Worship at Calvin Theological Seminary.

After his last Sunday at Covenant Life in Grand



Eduardo Gonzalez and his son smile after dad graduated this May from Calvin Seminary.

Haven, where he worked with youth, Gonzalez reflected on his call to return and serve in ministry in Honduras: "The greatest need for the church in Latin America is for practices that foster the

process of sanctification, for worship that is formative."

He explained that 90 percent of the people in Honduras identify as either Catholic or Protestant—the churches are packed. "But Honduras has more violent deaths per year than countries at war," he said.

Even so, returning to Honduras with his wife and two children, he is excited to be equipped as a pastor who can introduce the heritage of a Reformed Christian worldview to his parishioners. ■

—by Jinny De Jong,
Calvin Theological Seminary



Worship Renewal Begins with Conversations

At the 2014 Vital Worship Grants Program Colloquium at Calvin College, Doug Brouwer, a pastor in Switzerland, gave a message on Ephesians 4, where Paul writes of the growth available to those who live in love and keep the unity of the Spirit.

“In these words is the expectation that we will grow,” he said during the event held in June. “One thing you can never say about Paul is that he sets the bar too low!”

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

Nor was the bar set low for the more than 100 grant recipients from 2013 (those concluding their grant year) and 2014 (those just beginning their grant year) who came to Calvin for three days of conversation about worship renewal.

By the time the colloquium concluded, participants had attended plenaries, worship services, sessions for grant recipients, two workshops, a poster session, and meals, all featuring opportunities for prayer, reflection, and conversation.

“The synergy at this event between old and new grant recipients is exciting,” said Vital Worship director Kathy Smith.

Much learning, she said, “happens through conversations over meals, while viewing posters produced by the concluding grant projects, and in many other venues, both informal and formal.”

People view a poster depicting a 2013 Worship Renewal project.

One critical goal for the annual event is to encourage new grant recipients as their year begins by giving them a chance to learn from Worship Institute staff and other experts, as well as from other churches, schools, seminaries, and more.

All told, grant recipients for 2014 represent congregations and schools from 31 denominations in 21 states and two Canadian provinces. ■

—by Phil de Haan,
Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

You add.

'We Don't Have to Be Afraid to Die'

When Gallatin Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church in Bozeman, Mont., was facing challenges, it received a Sustaining Congregational Excellence grant to participate in a project to discern God's will for its future.

The grant allowed the congregation to explore options through a Healthy Church Team created to oversee the project.

Congregational participation was high. Over 80 percent (37 of the church's 45 regular attenders) completed the Healthy Church Survey and 60 percent participated in the follow-up conversation.

At the project's midpoint, Pastor George Den Oudsten reported, "Members who attended the congregational conversation said they could see God working as they talked. When they gathered around the tables, young and old, everyone spoke, and all the voices were heard."

But the future wasn't what many had hoped. The Healthy Church Team recommended that the church disband. On April 6, a vote of 44 to 1 decided just that.

"In the final service, we celebrated what God had done. . . . We took time to remember our beginnings, confess and lament our sorrows and shortcomings, and remember and celebrate our joys and good memories," said Den Oudsten, who has received a call to a church in Iowa.

When asked what the church had learned from their project, he said, "That we don't have to be afraid to die, because we serve a God who has the power to raise the dead."

—by *Lis Van Harten*,
Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

The sign for Gallatin Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church, which has decided to close.



A group of young people who attended the 16th Annual Urban Youth Convention.

Urban Youth Convention Touches Lives

At the 13th Annual Urban Youth Convention, Rev. Jonathon Brooks of Canaan Community Church in the Englewood community of Chicago preached on the Old Testament story of Joseph, challenging the young people to be "dangerous dreamers" willing to change the world for God.

The conference was held July 30 through August 2 at Jeremiah Missionary Baptist Church in Milwaukee, Wisc. About 160 young people and adults attended.

One of the 35 young people who walked forward in response to Brooks's challenge was Chuckie, who came with his friends Michael and Courtney.

Both Chuckie and Courtney had recently been injured by gunfire. Courtney was wounded in the hand; Chuckie turned when he heard shots, suffering a gash across his shoulder blades from another bullet.

Since Courtney and Chuckie do not have living parents, Michael's mother has taken them in to raise until they graduate from high school.

After coming forward and answering the challenge to be a "dangerous dreamer" for Christ, Chuckie went home and asked Michael's mother if he could go to church with her on Sunday. He had never asked before.

At church he gave a testimony about how the convention team, leaders, workshops, and messages helped him realize that God has a plan and call on his life.

He proudly wore his Urban Youth Convention T-shirt to church and through the neighborhood, saying God had kept him alive for a reason and not allowed the bullet to take his life.

Chuckie's transformation made an impression on Michael's mother.

She vowed to ask her area alderman to donate city funds so more young people from Englewood can attend the next Urban Youth Convention.

—by *Bob Price*,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

October Serenade

It's October. That means it's time to enjoy the October Serenade! Can you hear the sounds of grasshoppers buzzing outside during the day? Have you noticed the chirping sounds of crickets "singing" at night? That's creation's October Serenade.

Those chirps and buzzes you hear aren't just random noises. They're grasshoppers and crickets talking to each other. They're

saying things like, "This is my territory." But this time of year, most often they're calling to find a mate.

Listening to this October Serenade is a lot more interesting if you know what these critters are saying to each other. So read on. Then walk through your backyard or a nearby field on a sunny day. And open your window on a balmy night. Enjoy creation's serenade!



Cricket Thermometers

In October, temperatures cool off in northern countries. It's fall; winter's coming. But do you know exactly what the temperature is in your backyard at night?

Some people say you can figure that out from a cricket's chirps. To do this, you need a stopwatch or a clock with a second hand. You may also want the help of a friend. This activity is easier to do with two people.

For Fahrenheit temperatures, try this: Count the number of chirps a cricket makes in 14 seconds. Then add 40 to get the temperature.

For Celsius temperatures, try this: Count the number of chirps in 25 seconds. Divide this number by 3. Then add 4 to that answer.

Write your answer down on a piece of paper. Then check your outside thermometer to see how close you came!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Cool Songs

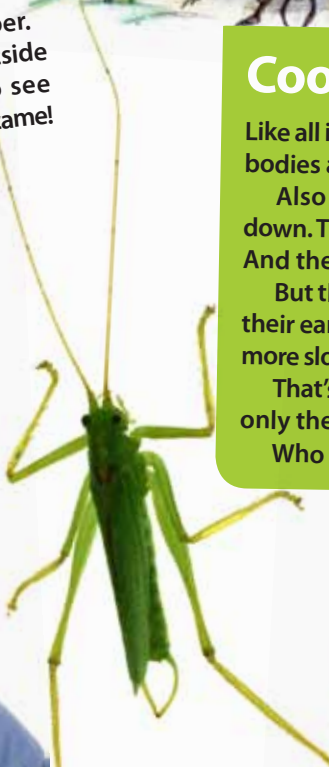
Like all insects, crickets can't keep themselves warm. Their bodies are warmed or cooled by the air around them.

Also like all insects, crickets slow down as they cool down. They move more slowly, and they sing more slowly. And the slower they sing, the *lower* they sing.

But that's no problem for female crickets. As they cool, their ears cool too. They move more slowly and they hear more slowly. And the slower they hear, the *lower* they hear.

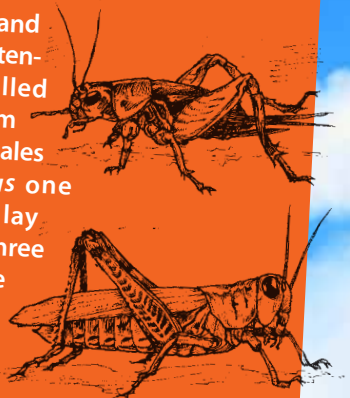
That's how female crickets are designed to always hear only the call of their mate.

Who do you suppose thought of that?



What's the Difference?

Male grasshoppers and crickets have two antennae-like feelers called "cerci" growing from their back ends. Females have two cerci *plus* one spear-like thing to lay eggs. So, if you see three feelers you know the cricket is a female, and females don't sing. If you see two feelers, it's a male. It might sing all night, so put it outside!



Quick Singing Lesson

Generally, only male crickets sing. The song is, after all, a mating call.

Male crickets have rasps on the edges of their wings—a bit like nail files. When they rub their wings together, the "files" rub together. That makes the chirps that you hear.

Female crickets usually just listen. They have "ears" on their front legs. So when a male sings, a female moves around until she can hear the song well. This puts her facing the male cricket—right where she should be!



He's Playing My Song!

Scientists have identified more than 10,000 species of crickets in the world, about 400 different species in North America alone. You probably have several different species in your backyard or local park. All these crickets are singing through each other. But each male is singing a specific mating song.

We hear all these nightly chirps simply as cricket songs. We can't tell that different species are singing slightly different songs.

But each female cricket hears only the mating song of her species. She's simply deaf to all other male cricket songs. She won't respond unless she hears her specific song.

Monotone Mates

Male grasshopper "songs" are not very musical. Those mating calls are just buzzes or rasping sounds.

The next time you hear grasshoppers buzzing out in your yard, try singing on the same pitch that a grasshopper is buzzing. You'll discover that you can't do it! Buzzing doesn't have a pitch. It's just a buzz, one tone.

But that's OK: female grasshoppers are tone deaf. They can't hear different pitches. They hear differences in buzzes.

That male grasshopper "buzz" that we hear really is a series of short stop-and-go buzzes. One type of grasshopper may make a "Buzzzzz buz buzz" sound, while another sounds more like "Buz buzz buzz."

We can't hear the differences because it all happens so quickly. But female grasshoppers certainly can tell one buzz apart from another. Each female grasshopper is created to respond to one rhythm only—that of her kind of male.

Different grasshopper species never become confused. They always find one of their own.

Why the Racket?

Grasshoppers and crickets can't live through a cold winter. When the temperature dips below freezing, they freeze. So God created them to mate and lay eggs at this time of year.

Their eggs, which they lay in the ground, are made to live through the winter.

The following spring, a new "crop" of grasshoppers and crickets is ready to hatch. Year after year, as long as seasons change, springtime brings new little crickets and grasshoppers.

That's why you hear them singing right now. Males are calling females to mate. Females need to lay those frost-proof eggs!

Grasshoppers usually call during the day. That's the buzzing you hear in fields and in your backyard. Crickets usually call at night. That's the chirping you hear through your open window.



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



BY HENRY NUMAN

Finishing Well

Growing older is not the beginning of the end, but in fact the other way around.

EARLIER THIS YEAR I read the following in our local newspaper, the *Vancouver Sun*: “Life is supposed to work this way: happy childhood, awkward adolescence, first love, strong marriage, manageable mortgage, well-adjusted children, mature love, glorious grandchildren, good health.”

And then there’s the oft-repeated phrase “Getting there is half the fun,” which implies that our journey toward old age ends up with “the golden years.” After a successful retirement, many of us anticipate travels to unexplored places, seeing loved ones who live a good distance away; spending time with wonderful friends, generously supporting worthwhile causes we’ve always wanted to endorse . . . and the list for those coming years goes on and on.

Yet we know that for many people, life does not end up this way. Is it fun when your body no longer functions the way it used to? Fun when you end up going to your doctor once a month to review your “organ recital”? Fun when you’re dealing daily with unexpected changes? Fun when more and more of your loved ones leave this life? It’s no wonder so many older folks end up as whiners, always moaning and groaning about the negatives and not seeing much that’s positive in their lives.

Surely people in the next generations must sometimes conclude that the final phase of life—growing old—is not much to look forward to.

But does all this mean our faith life too will grow old and stale in the way that we so often experience living? Is it inevitable that the last third of our life will become a time of stagnation, a time when we’re prone to saying, “We’ve never done it that way before”?

We have to be willing to ask ourselves such questions—because the fact is, the final third of our lives can be a dynamic time of huge significance.

We need to dare to recognize that growing older is not the beginning of the end, but is, in fact, the other way around. It is instead the end of the beginning; the transition of the “now” to the glorious reality in Christ when the mortal becomes

immortal, according to the promise of 1 Corinthians 15.

Our entry into this world as a baby was declared a miracle, but our departure from this life through death is a greater miracle still. In the light of our sharing in Christ’s resurrection, we should make the very most of faith formation for the rest of our lives.

So as we enter that final third of life, the time is *now* to ask ourselves some important questions: What legacy will I pass on? What do I really leave behind? How has my faith, which embraces all of life, shaped me to hand off in the best way possible the baton of my full life to those who are up and coming?

This kind of reflection calls for us to be blunt and honest about our faith—which includes the wonder and the glory of our God-with-us, but also times when we’ve endured doubts and questions and uncertainties. The questions of Job in the Old Testament challenge us to recognize and embrace, as part of our faith experience, the power of Christ the Victorious One to ultimately shape our destiny.

In other words, in our final years we must *live now*, not just in the past—as meaningful and memorable as that past has been. We must live now, not just await the glorious future described for us in the New Testament. We must live in the here and now of Christ’s reality where we can honestly keep our past, present, and future alive in him (Rom. 8:38-39; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12).

So how do we do that? How can this be our reality during our last earthly phase? Do we have to discern and try to learn it on our own?

By no means! As part of the body of Christ, we are in this together. As fellow members of that body, we need each other to stimulate and urge us on, and we must seek to do that for others whenever we possibly can. We need pastors who do not just have “pastor” as a job title but who look after the flock and get to know each person as part of the spiritual make-up of the congregation. We need elders and deacons to exercise faithful care for those who become immobilized and can no longer be regular participants in the life of the congregation.

This taking care of each other needs to be revitalized in our congregations. We need to overcome our present culture’s emphasis on the individual and the self—in order that we may experience once again the corporate body of Christ. We simply and totally need each other.

But does faith formation really continue throughout the finish of our lives? Or is that some kind of wishful thinking? Not at all. There are several things that can enable us to keep growing in faith.

Keep on learning: If you feel yourself getting stale, learn something new. Pick up a new challenge, either by yourself or with others. The time when we want to stop learning is the time when we are dead in more ways than one!

Keep current: The past may have been wonderful, and we may remember with longing the times we felt full of vim and vigor, but the present provides equal stimulus for whatever comes our way.

Keep growing: As long as we live, the heart of our faith beats in a most dynamic way so that we can continue to grow and be challenged by and with all our questions and reflections.

And finally, **keep helping and reaching out** in whatever way you can—for this world is our neighborhood, and we are responsible for it.

No matter what our age or circumstances, the Holy Spirit stimulates our faith and encourages us. We have a firm and solid foundation on which to build, and with such a foundation we progress both individually and together—for that too is the ongoing inspiration of the Holy Spirit for every day of our existence.

With such a Master plan we are not on some dead-end road but rather on a well-traveled one with a super destination in place.

What good are you in this last major phase of your life? Are you a believer who has become sidelined along the way, and as a result has stopped growing? Or are you the faith-filled person you were and still can be, from start to finish? ■



Henry Numan is a retired pastor living in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is still active in volunteer pastoral work in his community and in area congregations.

Pulling the Trigger

#triggerwarning

THIS PAST SPRING, “trigger warnings” triggered a debate in American and Canadian media. A trigger warning is an alert about content that might cause serious discomfort or even psychological pain.

As reported in *The New Republic* (March 3, 2014) by Jenny Jarvie, trigger warnings were initially used in feminist online discussion forums to warn readers about discussions of sexual violence. The use of trigger warnings has spread to social media and now to the university classroom, alerting students to potentially distressing books and films.

Oberlin College published a document recommending that professors make “triggering material” optional. The document gives as an example Chinua Achebe’s classic novel *Things Fall Apart*, which may “trigger readers who have experienced racism, colonialism, religious persecution, violence, suicide, and more.”

Writers have given their two cents on the issue in major publications including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Many criticized trigger warnings as a form of political cor-

The use of trigger warnings has spread to social media and now to the university classroom.

rectness undermining a university education. Like Jarvie, they also saw a form of kind-hearted but misdirected censorship. But some spoke in favor of trigger warnings, recognizing how powerful words and images can be in both positive and negative ways.

At first, I scoffed at the jargon-like sound of “trigger warning.” Don’t people go to college to get more knowledge, not to be coddled by avoiding hard truths? But then I realized I have been issuing my own warnings for many years as a professor at a Christian college.

For example, in my introductory French cinema class, I put a notice in my syllabus saying that many of the films deal with serious moral issues and present potentially disturbing images. Also, in writing for *The Banner*, I regularly discuss with the Tuned In editor whether a book or film review needs a line about mature content.

Such content warnings (to avoid offending someone’s religious or moral sensibility) are not the same thing as a true “trigger warning” (to avoid causing unnecessary psychological distress). I understand my responsibility to be sensitive to material that may be shocking or trigger distress.

But it would be sad if “trigger warnings” caused teachers and writers, along with students and readers, to avoid classic and contemporary works that address serious issues with emotional depth and artistic skill. ■



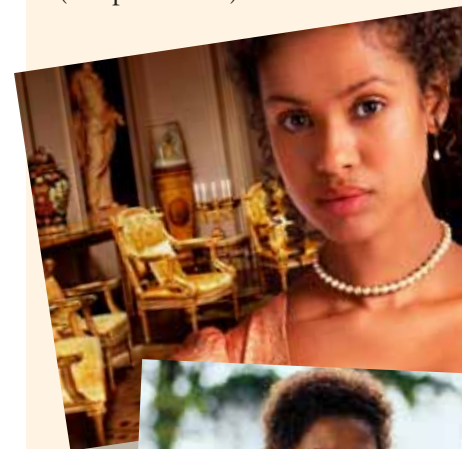
Otto Selles teaches French at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.



The Pearl That Broke Its Shell

by **Nadia Hashimi**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In Afghanistan in 2007, the Taliban rule, and fathers curse the birth of daughters. Rahima’s parents, lacking a son, adopt the Afghan tradition of *bacha posh*. They dress Rahima as a boy and allow her to attend school, run errands, and play on the street until she reaches puberty. When, at 13, Rahima is married off to a brutal warlord, freedom becomes an elusive dream. Throughout her life, she has heard stories about her ancestor Shekiba—stories that now give her the courage to reclaim her freedom. This novel is a shocking and compassionate glimpse into another culture. (HarperCollins)

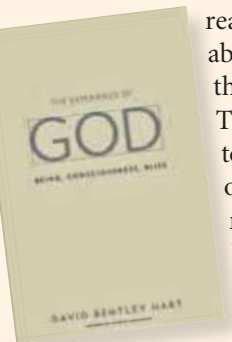


The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss

by David Bentley Hart
reviewed by Philip Christman Jr

There are some basic philosophical ideas that Christians across the board are supposed to know but largely don't. In late-classical cities, every brewer and wheelwright could give a reasonably respectable run-through of the doctrine of the Trinity—while today some pastors of contemporary megachurches belittle theology.

In this context, Hart's clear and beautifully written exposition of what we mean by "God" is not only entertaining—it's necessary. This book is a chance to love God with your mind. (Yale University Press)



A Thirst for Home: A Story of Water Across the World

by Christine Ieronimo
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Alemitu, an Ethiopian girl, walks miles with her mother to a watering hole. She knows that water is more precious than gold and that all people are connected by their need for it. When hunger and thirst stalk the pair, Alemitu's mother gives her up for adoption. An American family adopts Alemitu, renaming her Eva. She never suffers from hunger or thirst. But Eva hasn't forgotten her mother or her homeland. This emotionally evocative picture book celebrates the gift of water while also highlighting the plight of women who give up their children to ensure their survival. Ages 4-8. (Bloomsbury)

Trouble and Love

by Mary Gauthier
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

Americana singer-songwriter Mary Gauthier's latest album, *Trouble and Love*, continues in her forlorn, lovely, soul-baring tradition, with a focus on the devastating end of a romantic relationship. It is a break-up record, but a spiritual journey too—one in which she authentically grapples with



conscience and strains for new hope. Lyrically "Oh Soul" is perhaps the most like a prayer of confession; Gauthier sings about selling her soul and pleads, "Redemption, redemption, have mercy on me." Her low, solemn vocals and tempos often drag on before picking up with striking clarity and force. (In The Black Records)

Belle

reviewed by Kristy Quist

In the 1760s, a girl born to a British Royal Navy officer and a slave woman from the West Indies was left in the care of her great-uncle, the lord chief justice William Murray. The lovely period drama *Belle* offers a fictionalized version of the life of a biracial young woman who had both a family claim to nobility and dark skin. At the same time Lord Murray must make a ruling in a case that will dramatically affect the role of slavery. With its focus on manners, money, women's limited options, and marriage, this is a civil rights movie for the Jane Austen fan. On disc now. (20th Century Fox)



THE LOWDOWN

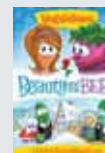


'Tis the Season: Christmas albums will soon be appearing. You'll

find music from all corners, including Chris Tomlin, Michael W. Smith, Aaron Shust, David Phelps, *Frozen's* Idina Menzel, and, yes, One Direction.



Howe Now: *Mr. Hockey: My Story*, an autobiography of famed player Gordie Howe, hits stores this month. (Penguin)



Getting to the Root: VeggieTales moves ever closer to the parent corporation, Disney, with their new release, *Beauty and the Beet*. (Big Idea)



These Are the Days: The big-screen version of the beloved children's book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* will soon be making its way to a theater near you. (Disney)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

Why Church Culture Matters

YOUNG ADULT CHURCH MEMBERS—and by that I mean single folks between 20 and 40 years old who are finishing college or have careers—are often challenged to be involved in their churches: to join Bible studies, find mentors, start groups.

But I'd like to argue that church culture has made being an active young adult member difficult.

Here's one example. When I was 24, I taught at the local high school and was placed on the youth elder's list of members, along with my students. I was denied a place on the list of adult members because I was not married and was not 25 years old. My 20-year-old brother, who was married, was on the elders' adult list.

I worked with international students at Calvin College. These students came from many cultures—Honduran, Bengali, Ghanaian, Korean, and Indonesian. While studying, they were immersed in a Protestant, middle-upper class, Christian Reformed, United States culture.

These students had to negotiate meaning in their second, third, or fourth language. They needed to understand references to pop culture and American history, and to interpret the myriad idioms that pepper the English language. Friendship required navigating social cues such as body language and word choice. Even the food was different. International students had to work hard to be active members of this culture—but the hospitality of professors, staff, and peers made it worthwhile.

What's the connection between these international students and young adults in the church?

Young adults also exist in a different culture. The church's culture is structured around family. Sermons often use husband-wife and parent-child metaphors to illustrate God's relationship with his people. Women's groups like Coffee Break and Bible studies often schedule meetings for weekday mornings when young adults are working. Congregations invite everyone to bring their spouse for a romantic Valentine's Day dinner. Children light Advent candles as their parents

read the required text. Most church activities are focused on preserving family culture.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with providing Christian families with programs and support.

And yet, young adults can find it uninviting to enter this family-focused culture. Joining a group of similar-age married people with children reveals conversations about child discipline techniques, home improvement projects, cloth diapers versus disposable diapers, and crockpot recipes. Such conversations can be difficult to relate to for people who haven't had those experiences. Needing a spouse to be considered an adult church member is also disheartening.

Why does church culture matter? One reason is because the church mirrors God's hospitality. Expanding the culture to make room for marginalized members is hospitable. And a welcoming culture that respects its members retains its members.

Another is that young adults have much to offer their churches. Many have opportunities to travel, study, and work in colorful landscapes, cultures, and jobs. They know that life includes more than mortgage payments, minivans, and making baby food.

So use their experiences and knowledge by adding them to groups and committees. Listen when they share ideas or ask questions. Ask them about their experiences rather than their love life (or lack thereof). Introduce them to everyone rather than just the other single adults in church. Consider them adult members of the church when they reach a certain maturity level: having a spouse or being 25 are not necessarily hallmarks of a mature adult.

And feed them. Breaking bread is an intensely communal act that shouts, "I belong to this group." When we feast together, we are obliged to become familiar with one another. Let's expand the family to integrate young adults and watch our church culture change. ■

Leanne Doornbos Nagel, a former English as a Second Language professor at Calvin College, attends Hillside Community Church in Cutlerville, Mich.



Breaking bread
is an intensely
communal act.

Best Dog Ever

I TOOK A LOT of convincing from my family. They told me that I really needed a service dog. I hadn't ever considered the idea, but I applied and I waited.

We had a rough start, you and I. You didn't like me, and you didn't like my treats. You loved your trainer. Your eyes looked for her in every room, and you listened for her voice. You didn't even seem to realize that I was in the room, that I had your leash in my hand. I cried a lot. You wouldn't eat for me. You wouldn't jump into the car for me. You would only do those things for her.

It was no fairytale, Ross. It was work for both of us.

They put a harness on you and told me to lean on you and take a step up a curb. You hated that harness with a capital H. I didn't trust you. I was scared you would let me fall. You threw up in my rental car because you were stressed. At night in the hotel room you jumped up next to me on the bed. You were tired. I was tired. I stroked your head. You sighed and stretched out on the bed.

Then I brought you home. Rachel said, "He's huge." You are tall, Ross. You were made for me. You loved Rebekah and Rachel and you adored Bryan. You went with me to the bank and to restaurants. You went to church. You went grocery shopping with me. You went with us on an airplane all the way to Texas to check out a college for Rebekah. You went to graduations and weddings and funerals.

You helped me with every step. You saved me from falling, and when I did fall, you lay down next to me. You helped me carry the shame I feel about the way I walk. You were never ashamed. You made



You were
never
ashamed.
You made
me feel
proud.

me feel proud. I came to rely on you, to know you. You watched me. Your eyes were always on me. You were my companion, my battle buddy in my most private wars. You predicted and reacted to every muscle spasm. You are a class act.

You've been at my feet during countless piano and choral performances. If God had given you fingers I'm pretty sure you could play Bach's "French Suite in G Major," and if you had been given a human voice I think you might have been able to sing the Magnificat by heart. You were a proud member of Masterworks Chorus and Manteca Community Choir, and the Modesto Symphony Orchestra Chorus. You have been my partner in every event for eight years. You lie under the table at every meal.

You never ask me why I walk funny. You accept me when I'm crabby or sad or in pain. You've watched my kids grow

up and then leave the house. You've watched me struggle, but you have been there like an unshakable mountain in my life. You have done your job with extraordinary grace.

It has been eight years of fun and work and play and boredom and music. I wish it didn't have to end, but you are declining now. Silently you lie next to me, yet I can hear you telling me that you hurt. So I reach out and touch your head, stroke your ears, and wish and pray.

When you must leave me and this life I want you to know that you've done a most excellent job.

You are the best dog ever. ■



Ruth Valencia is a pianist, composer and musician living in Manteca, Calif. with her husband, Bryan. They have two daughters.

Ross, her service dog, allows Ruth to better deal with the difficulties of cerebral palsy.

Heidelberg-Style Evangelism

LET'S FACE IT. We Reformed folk pretty much stink at evangelism. We sort of admire our fundamentalist sisters and brothers for their boldness.

Whether they are distributing tracts, knocking on doors, or producing scary rapture movies, you have to admit they're pretty darn good at what they do. And they are highly motivated because, well, people are heading for hell.

My colleague recalls a childhood pastor who urged his congregants to patronize unchurched hair stylists. After you secured a decision for Christ, you moved on to a new stylist. The minister was on his sixth barber.

We have tried to get in on the action too—in our own way, because we can't quite swallow the Four Spiritual Laws. But the five points of Calvinism—TULIP for short—doesn't seem to be a great conversation starter, as the church elder in the film *Hardcore* learned.

So we began inviting neighbors to Billy Graham crusades in the hope that something might “take.” Then we threw into gear James Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion method (“If you were to die tonight . . .”). We've tried vacation Bible school follow-ups, men's and ladies' groups, backyard Bible clubs, and a plethora of other programs. Today it's all about latching onto the latest and hottest church model.

In some Reformed circles, travelers knew we were supposed to engage our fellow airplane passengers in spiritual conversations before landing—which put the pressure on.

The conversations were a bit contrived when it came to making our move. Most memorable was a chat I enjoyed with a Jewish gentleman. He put me on to *Constantine's Sword*, an intriguing book about the church's miserable history with Jewish evangelism.

Chasing down decisions for Christ just doesn't seem to be in our DNA. But so far none of our homegrown methods have spiked the evangelism charts either.

The fact is that the Reformed confessions do speak of evangelism. The Canons of Dort state that the gospel “ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people” (2:5). I like the old translation better: *promiscuously*. However, that explains to *whom* it should go but doesn't get at *how* the gospel should go out to bring in those not yet being blessed by the preaching and sacraments.

The minister was on his sixth barber.

The Heidelberg Catechism moves us forward with a mention of the *method*. Speaking explicitly about winning “our neighbors” for Christ (Q&A 86), it tells us that doing so is not about forcing spiritual laws down their throats, cornering them with trick questions, or finding a slick angle to slip in a good word for Jesus.

The Heidelberg's evangelism style is simply to live authentically, compassionately—and let the chips fall where they may. We will win some neighbors for Christ as they see our good works—fruit-bearing—out of gratitude for what Jesus did for the world, including us.

The Contemporary Testimony (41-54) and the Belhar Confession (4) follow the Heidelberg's trajectory. Our “good works,” far from wringing decisions for Christ out of folks, are lifting up the poor, defending the weak, empowering the hopeless, seeking justice for the oppressed, and everything else Jesus commanded us.

Sure, we can—and should—invite folks to events in our church or community, as long as it is out of friendship and not a bait-and-switch. Spiritual chats are great, unless unsolicited. But don't lose sleep over your neighbors' eternal destiny—God's got that pretty much figured out.

The Reformed confessional urgency of missions is to live a life that shows how God's world becomes a better place as we extend his unconditional love to all, promiscuously, especially the least of these.

Maybe we Reformed folk don't stink at evangelism after all. Maybe the Heidelberg Catechism simply intended us to live as an aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15), loving deeply, instructing when requested, and leaving the rest to his irresistible attraction. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



H. David Schuringa is the president of Crossroad Bible Institute in Grand Rapids, Mich.

ADS

Deadlines: November issue is 10/6/14; December issue is 11/3/14. 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

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **Jay Stringer** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Joel Klingenberg** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Luke Wynja** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Richard Braaksma** has completed the academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the Ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Victor Laarman** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Brady Mulder** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HOLLAND At its July 24 meeting, Classis Holland approved the mutual separation agreement between Rev. Gary Luurtsema and the East Saugatuck CRC according to Article 17-a of the Church Order. Rev. Luurtsema is available for Call.

Council of the East Saugatuck CRC, Holland, M

Congregational

Church's 80th Anniversary

GOSHEN CRC in Goshen, N. Y. will celebrate 80 years of God's faithfulness on Nov. 14, 15 and 16. Former members and friends are invited to join us on Fri. evening for praise in music, on Sat. evening for a dinner and time of remembrance, and on Sun. morning looking ahead during our celebration service. For more info. visit www.goshennycrc.org or call (845) 294-5817 Please RSVP for the dinner.

Church's 75th Anniversary

HOUSTON CRC The Houston, British Columbia, Canada, Christian Reformed Church hopes D. V. to observe its 75th Anniversary, November 8 & 9, 2014. The church was organized November 8, 1939 and is the second oldest CRC in British Columbia, Canada. Former members and friends are invited to attend. There is a Seniors afternoon tea on Nov. 8th and later that day an evening banquet and program. Further, on Nov. 9th there is an anniversary celebration worship service at 10 a.m. followed by a soup and bun lunch. Messages or Questions may be directed to our email (houstoncra@telus.net)

General

PALOS HEIGHTS CRC in Palos Heights, IL celebrates with our Senior Pastor, Rev. Greg Janke on the 20th year of his ordination. Pastor Greg has previously served churches in Crown Point, IN, Hudsonville, MI, and as Director of Admissions at Calvin Seminary. We give thanks to God for his years of faithful service.

PHOENIX/SUN CITY, AZ West Valley Christian Fellowship (Reformed Faith) welcomes you to visit this winter. Our services are at 10 AM and 6 PM on Sundays. 12649 N. 105th Ave Sun City, Az. Call 623-810-5201 for more information.

Retirement

LAGRAVE CRC of Grand Rapids praises God for Rev. Ron Nydam and for 40 years of faithful ministry. From 1974-84 Rev. Nydam served as co-pastor of 3rd CRC in Denver, CO. From 1984-98 he started and developed a counseling center, Pastoral Counseling for Denver, Inc. to minister to the front-range churches in Denver. In 1998 he moved to Grand Rapids to teach pastoral care and counseling at Calvin Seminary. Calvin seminary established the Ron and Sugar Nydam endowment in pastoral care as a way to further the pastoral values that Ron has taught over the years in the classroom. After his retirement on August 31, he and his wife Sugar will move back to Denver to serve the front-range church community and begin writing another book on the subject of adoption. We wish the Nydams God's richest blessings.



RETIREMENT CELEBRATION With gratitude to God for 37 years of faithful ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, we joyfully announce the retirement of Pastor Jake Kuipers. Pastor Jake and his wonderful wife Joyce have lovingly served CRC congregations in Ontario in Trenton,

Sarnia, Brampton, and Bloomfield. Please join us in honouring Pastor Jake and Joyce at a Celebration Service on October 26 at 10:00am at Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church. Cards of congratulations are welcome: Ebenezer CRC, 18 Fourth Ave, Trenton, ON, K8V 5N3. Messages can be sent by email to: ecrc@bellnet.ca.

Birthdays

97th Birthday



TINA (JANTINA) HEKMAN (nee Bakker) will celebrate her 97th birthday on October 25. She is a wonderful mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Her children Evert (Sally) Hekman, Ewina (Gary) Whitmore, Debbie (Jack) Howell, and Phillip (Joyce) Hekman give praise to the Lord for her life, her love, and her faithfulness. Tina resides at her home at 1607 Foxway Drive, Lakeland, Florida 33810.

95th Birthday



GENEVIEVE (DE JONGH) HUIZENGA wife of the late Cleo Huizenga, will celebrate her 95th birthday on October 22. Gen resides at Royal Park Place 500 Parkside Dr. in Zeeland, MI 49464. a celebration will be held with her family, Elayne (Arlan) Matthyse, Mary (Dave) Weeber, Dr. Robert (Anita) Huizenga, Rick (Deb) Huizenga, 11 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren. We bless God for His faithfulness in her life and His gift of health and strength.

90th Birthday

GERTRUDE HULST celebrated her 90th birthday on September 28 with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. We give thanks for her life, her love, and her faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. She resides at Resthaven Maplewoods 49 E. 32nd st. Holland MI. 49423



Seeking nominees and applicants for

Director of Ministries and Administration

Responsible for nurturing and implementing a shared and vibrant vision for God's mission of the CRCNA as a member of the senior leadership team and as reflected in the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church.

All nominees and applicants should possess a faithful, vibrant, personal faith, grounded in Scripture and shaped by the Reformed confessions and related CRCNA faith declarations and testimonies. He or she will demonstrate spiritual humility and moral integrity, welcoming challenges with professional maturity and leading others with a servant's heart.

Reporting to the Executive Director of the CRCNA, he or she will lead collaboratively among agency and specialized ministry directors and work cooperatively with the Canadian Ministries Director, cultivating understanding and commitment to the shared mission of the CRCNA throughout the world.

For more information visit www.crcna.org/DMAsearch

To apply send cover letter and resume to Ms. Michelle De Bie, Director of Human Resources, at dmasearch@crcna.org, by **November 28, 2014**.

Position to remain open until filled

JANET KATZMA will celebrate her 90th birthday on Oct. 23. Wife of the late Fred Katzma and mother of 3—Nancy (Cal Scott), Carole (Gene VanderZwaag), and Randy and Sue Katzma—11 grandchildren and 25 great grandchildren. God has been gracious.

ANGENETTE KORRINGA 6297 Misty Pines Ct # 1, Tinley Park, IL 60477 celebrates her 90th birthday on Oct. 11. Her children Jim (Beth), Judi (Don) Ipema, grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God for her Christian life, strong faith and cheerful attitude - Great is His faithfulness!

HELENE LEMMEN 633 Center Street, Coopersville, MI 49404, will celebrate her 90th birthday on October 16. Her family and friends are thankful for the many good years God has given her and for the Christian example she has been to us.

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

PASTOR POSITION at Carmel Reformed in NW Iowa. View our profile: <http://carmelchurch.org/churchprofile.pdf>. For info email randyvw@mtcnet.net

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH Prairie Edge CRC of Portage, MI is seeking a Director of Youth to oversee our Middle School, High School, and Post-High ministries. Candidates should have a degree in youth ministry or commensurate experience. Job description available upon request; please email pecoffice@charter.net.

SENIOR PASTOR Messiah CRC, a thriving multi-generational church with 391 confessing members and 147 families located in Hudsonville, MI, is seeking a Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor, with God's blessings and the congregation's encouragement, is expected to provide spiritual leadership for the church as it experiences God's blessings in achieving its mission - "Messiah . . . A place to belong, Reflecting the Love of Jesus as we are Growing and Serving." Interested pastors can visit our website <http://messiahcrc.org/contactinfo.html>. Interested pastors can also request an information packet which includes a church profile by going to "About Us," "Staff" from Jack Postma, Chair, <search@messiahcrc.org>.

PASTOR Manhattan Christian Reformed Church, located in the beautiful Gallatin Valley in Churchill, Montana, has begun a search for a new leader due to the retirement of Pastor Jack Huttinga after 12 years of faithful service. Our vibrant and committed Christian community of 300 souls joins God in His HARVEST. We are called to Honor God, Accept sinners, Restore broken lives, Value vibrant worship, Encourage one another, Step out to serve, and Teach truth. Manhattan CRC has a long tradition of service in the Gallatin Valley. Our community of long term members and young families are seeking a dedicated servant of Jesus to partner with our community as we seek to serve Him in the 21st century. For more information and a community profile, please contact Mrs. Kathy Eekhoff in our church office at office@manhattancrc.org or 406.282.7442.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR: Fairlawn Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full-time associate pastor to serve our congregation in Whitinsville, Massachusetts. Fairlawn is a community of believers committed to Reformed theology and worship. The successful candidate will share our love for the gospel as it is expressed in the historic Reformed confessions, and will be an effective communicator of that gospel to our multi-generational congregation, as well as to our larger community. Duties will include providing leadership and coordination to our lay ministry teams, teaching and discipling youth and young adults, and assisting the lead pastor with administrative, preaching, and visitation responsibilities. M. Div. or other graduate-

VIRGINIA MEDENDORP (GANZEL) 2710 Spring St. Racine, WI 53405 celebrates her 90th birthday on October 10, along with her 12 children, 40 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren (+4 'on the way'). To God be the Glory. (Was married to Peter, now in Glory)

LEONARD SYTSMA, Park Place of Elmhurst, 1050 South Euclid Avenue, Unit 4303, Elmhurst, Illinois 60126, will celebrate his 90th birthday on October 11th. Friends and family are invited to celebrate with his wife, Hermina, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren at an open house at Park Place of Elmhurst on October 11, 2014 from 1 to 4 PM.

BEULAH ZOMER by God's grace celebrated her 90th birthday on September 7. Her family thanks God for her legacy of faith. Greetings may be sent to 455 N. Dakota Ave., Corsica, SD 57328.

level degree in biblical and theological studies is a requirement. Resumes, references and inquiries to: Executive Committee, Fairlawn CRC, 305 Goldthwaite Rd., Whitinsville, MA 01588, or searchcommittee@fairlawnrc.org.

WORSHIP LEADER - SAN JOSE CRC Worship & Music Leader at a Chr. Ref. church of about 100 in San Jose, CA Plan and lead our worship and singing during the Sunday morning worship service, working with a team of instrumentalists (bass and regular guitar, piano, keyboard, drums) and singers. We also use organ occasionally. Our church's style is a blended worship, with a combination of contemporary and traditional hymns and songs. Experienced musician. Experienced leader a big plus. Send resume and contact us for a detailed job description: mavism@sanjosecrc.org. This is a part-time job.

PASTOR Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church of Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, is searching for a full time Pastor. The Pastor would be required to carry on with all things required of a Servant of the Lord, in accord with the Word of God as interpreted by the Doctrinal Standards and Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church. The applicant must be a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Interested? Contact Dave @ datuinga@hotmail.com

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE Taber CRC, located in Southern Alberta, Canada, is seeking a Pastor of Congregational Life to work alongside our Lead Pastor. The successful candidate must be able to organize and coordinate programs and ministries within our church, pastoral care, be involved in the existing activities of the church, as well as share in preaching duties. Qualified applicants for this position need to be ordained, or be on their way to becoming ordained. For more information please visit www.Tabercrc.org or email the chair person on the search committee, Mike Wind at mike@windianafarms.com

SENIOR PASTOR Messiah CRC, a thriving multi-generational church with 391 confessing members and 147 families located in Hudsonville, MI, is seeking a Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor, with God's blessings and the congregation's encouragement, is expected to provide spiritual leadership for the church as it experiences God's blessings in achieving its mission - "Messiah . . . A place to belong, Reflecting the Love of Jesus as we are Growing and Serving." Interested pastors can visit our website <http://messiahcrc.org/contactinfo.html>. Interested pastors can also request an information packet which includes a church profile by going to "About Us," "Staff" from Jack Postma, Chair, search@messiahcrc.org

ASST. PASTOR AND CHURCH WORKER For Mandarin Ministry at Immanuel CRC, a multi-generational and multi-lingual church in Richmond (Vancouver), BC, Canada. For more information, please refer to www.icrc.ca

SENIOR PASTOR Center Grove Church is in search of a head pastor for our missions-focused congregation. We are an established church, but new to the CRC. Located in suburban Indianapolis, IN. Interested? Contact us at job@centergrovechurch.org



THEA B. VAN HALSEMA Thank God with us for Thea B. Van Halsema's 90th Birthday on October 27. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren praise the Lord for her part in the life of family, church, college and community. You are welcome to send greetings to: 3831 Villa Montee SE, Grand Rapids MI 49512

85th Birthday



JOHN S. HELDER of 2500 Breton Woods Dr. S. E. #1000, Kentwood, MI 49512, celebrates his 85th birthday on October 4. His wife, Gertrude, and his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren praise God for his faithful care, loving support and guidance, and constant prayers throughout the years.



PASTOR LLOYD WOLTERS of 6289 147th Ave Holland, MI 49423 turns 85 on Oct. 29! To honor God's faithfulness and Lloyd's service in South Bend, Sheboygan, Waterloo, Fulton, Des Plaines, Lamont, Saugatuck, and at Audio Scripture Ministries, we invite friends and family to celebrate with us on Sat. Oct. 25 from 1-4 pm at Hillcrest CRC, 3617 Hillcrest St, Hudsonville, MI.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

KOOY John and Dena celebrate 70 years of marriage Nov. 1, 2014 with children Wayne, Beatrice, Brenda, Greg, Garth, Ted and spouses, 12 grandchildren, and 14 great grandchildren. They are the oldest couple in the Bethel church and in former church - Nobleford Alta. Thanks be to God.

65th Anniversary

DYKSTRA George and Anna of 532 2nd St. of Randolph WI will celebrate 65 yrs of marriage on Sept. 2. They and their children thank God for all of his blessings. Lugene & Sharon Dykstra + 4 children, Jim & Susan Reckar + 5 children, Mark & Gloria Siciliano + 2 children, Rick & Mary Donovan + 3 children, and Duane & Wendi Dykstra + 1 daughter and also 21 great grand children.

60th Anniversary

EITEN Harold & Julene (Yonker) 306 N. Shoreside SE, Grapids, MI 49548 will be celebrating 60 yrs. of marriage Oct. 8th. Children: Dan (Mary), Gary (deceased), Keith (Pam), Leisha, Beth (Greg) Miller, Jonathan (Julia), Grandchildren: Erika, Justine & (Zach) Kelm, Matt & Devan, Casey Eiten, David, Katie, Blake Eiten, Cassidy, Fiona, Ian Miller, Arie, Vim Eiten, 1 great grandson Rowen Kelm. God be praised!

MIEDEMA Andy & Jo, 301 Hartford Ave SE, Orange City, Iowa, 51041 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on October 1. Their children Brenda & Mike Winkler, Barry & Lori Miedema, Bonnie & Allan Reinders, Robert & Andrea Miedema, and Bradley & Lisa Miedema, along with their 13 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, 3 step grandchildren, and 6 step great-grandchildren, give thanks to God for His covenant faithfulness.

NOORDHOF Bill and Audrey of Lacombe AB celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 1st, 2014. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God, the Giver of all good gifts for His love and faithfulness to Mom and Dad through the years.



PLAISIER Piet and Ineke of Strathroy, Ontario celebrated 60 years of marriage on June 23. They recently gathered together with their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren at a lakeside retreat to honor their lives of service and adventure. Ps 121:8

50th Anniversary

DEN HARDER John and Sandra (nee Wiebenga) are celebrating 50 years of marriage on Oct.3, 2014. Celebrating with them are children Robbie & Jim Magahey (James & Michael), Sharlene & John Evert (Nicole & Matt) and Kevin & Jena Den Harder. We are grateful to our Lord for his blessings and faithfulness. Aylmer, ON, Canada.

SYTSEMA Casey and Henny (Kuperus) Sytsema of Sussex NJ celebrated God's faithfulness to them during the 50 years since their marriage on August 28, 1964. Joining them were their children Rich, Kim, Don and Lisa Sytsema, Phil and Kristen DeVries, Jon and Sharon Morris, 14 grandchildren many siblings and friends. Great is God's Faithfulness.

Obituaries

CAROLINE Plooster, Rosendale, DeLeeuw, age 79 of Greeley Colorado, entered her heavenly home May 26, 2014. Her faith is now made sight. She is preceded in death by Robert Rosendale (1965) and Jack DeLeeuw (2010). She is survived by her 4 children and 10 grandchildren who thank God for the blessing she has been. (2530 S. Race St. - Denver, CO 80210)

GROSS, Sybeline, nee Buurstra, age 88. June 19, 2014. Beloved wife of the late Robert Gross. Loving mother of Barb (Larry) Van Milligan, Donna (Bill) Lapp, Judi (Dan) van der Kooy, the late Linda (Mark) Barbour; cherished grandmother of 11 and great-grandmother of 18; dear sister of Annette LaMaire. Psalm 121.

HAAN Mabel, age 96, entered her eternal home on May 28, 2014. Preceded in death by husband, Frederick W (1996) and son Frederick W, Jr. (2001). Survived by children Jan (Vickey) Haan, Thea (Eugene) De Vries, Linda (Mike) Pfarr, Mary (Melvin) Elgersma, and Christy (Ken) De Groot; 21 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren.

KLAMER Dr. Bernard, age 85, of Grand Rapids, went to be with the Lord on September 9, 2014. He was preceded in death by his wife, Lorraine (Goris) Klamer, his parents, Dick and Minnie Klamer, and two

brothers, Maynard Klamer and Oliver Klamer. He will be lovingly remembered by his children, Craig (Janet) Klamer and Lynn (John) Morrow; grandchildren Joel (Rebecca) Klamer, Cheri (Andy) Vander-Moren, Laura (Philip) Boonstra, and Jacqueline Klamer, and seven great-grandchildren, his brother Richard (Fritz) Klamer, his sister Bertie (Ed) Roels; sisters-in-law Dorothy Klamer and Grace Klamer; Marcy (Roger dec.) Bonnema, Adeline (John) Verwolf, Gloria (Bill) Stronks, Ginny (Jerry) Rozema; brother-in-law Bob (Jan) Goris; along with many nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends in Grand Rapids, MI, and Racine, WI, where he lived for many years.

ROGER G. Timmerman; December 6, 1939-August 6, 2014. Faithful servant of Jesus Christ, beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend. (Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 1)

SCHAAP Pauline, nee Klompien, age 78; August 2, 2014; Lansing, IL. Beloved wife of Luke Schaap. Mother of Paul (Lori) Schaap, Ruth (David)

Dykstra, Jean (Rodney) Korthals, Mary (Brent) Yurschak. Grandmother of Benjamin, Hannah, Matthew and Jonathan Schaap, Mark and Sarah Dykstra, Scott and Brian Korthals, Nathaniel, Rebekah and Ella Yurschak. Sister of Joan (late Ray) Van Dyke, Rev. Carl (Ellen) Klompien, and Dr. Gerald (Barbara) Klompien, aunt and friend to many. John 14:1-3.

SCHURINGA Jacob, age 96, 111 Village Woods Dr, Crete, IL 60417, went home to the Lord on July 22, 2014. Beloved husband of Alberdine (nee Van Bruggen) for 71 years; father of Nancy (Daniel) Switalski and Arlene (Kenneth) Werner; grandfather of Tina Hill, Steven (Rosy) Switalski, Paul (Sarah) Switalski, David and Andrew Werner; great-grandfather of Brandon, Shannon, Connor, Allison, and Zachary; brother-in-law of the late Annette (Preston) Harris, the late Adele (late Martin) Mulder, the late Jack (Betty) Van Bruggen and the late Charlotte (late Henry) Ipema; uncle of many nieces and nephews. Preceded in death by his parents, Hybo and Tena Schuringa. Jake was a charter member of Palos Heights CRC and a faithful follower of Jesus.

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STOB Henrietta "Dolly" nee Lubben, went to be with our Lord on August 2nd, 2014, 143 Highland Rd, Willowbrook, IL 60527. Beloved wife of the late Delmar; loving mother of Bill (Joan) Stob and Linda Poortenga; devoted grandmother of Bill (Marla) Stob, Eileen (Benjamin) Snodgrass, Trudy (Joel) Munk, Amy Hetzer, Rob (Stacey) Poortenga, Amanda (Matthew) Waddle, and Amber Poortenga; great-grandmother of 15; fond sister of Clarence "Bud" (the late Gloria) Lubben.

TEUNE John, 93, Grand Rapids, MI (formerly of Evergreen Park, IL) died on July 30, 2014. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Carolyn Douma, and granddaughters Justine Teune and Carla Hekman. He is survived by Ruth (Huisenga), his wife of almost 70 years, and children, Ed and Jean Teune, Marjorie Prince, Ken and Marybeth Hekman, Jon and Sue Teune, and Jim and Jean Teune; 16 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. Interment at Yankee Springs Cemetery was led by his son-in-law, Rev. Tim Douma.

TILMA Jean R., August 3, 2014, 7997 Therese Ct. SE, Caledonia, MI, 49316; survived by husband, Robert; children, Scott & Lisa Tilma; grandchildren, Robyn, Nicole & Cameron; sister, Barbara Owen; brother-in-law, Maynard Spaak; brother and sister-in-law, Jim & Lola Austin

VAN DALFSEN, Albert John, age 80, of 300 Homestead Blvd., #204, Lynden Washington, 98264, passed away on July 19, 2014. He will be deeply missed by his wife of 59 years, M. Jean (Kredit) Van Dalfsen; children, Carol Bouma, Cristi and Gary Miles, Gary and Jill Van Dalfsen, 10 grandchildren, and 5 (soon to be 6) great grandchildren. "Great is Thy Faithfulness!"

VAN GENT, Rev. Donald, of Ontario, CA, age 86, was taken home to glory July 30, 2014. He is survived by his wife Joanna, children Dave and Cathy Van Gent, Dan and Tina Van Gent, Judy Noon, Julie Geertsma, Doug and Lisa Van Gent; 14 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren; a sister Margaret Del Parto, sister-in-law Hester Monsma, brother-in-law Steve and Mary Monsma. Thanks be to God for Don's life and service.

VANDE RIET Rose Elaine, age 88, of Grand Rapids, passed away August 27, 2014; preceded in death by parents: Henry and Anna (Koopman) Vande Riet; siblings: Garrett C. (Stella) Vande Riet, Gertrude (Clarence)

Bierma, Alice (Julius) Mellema, Wilma (Henry) Stob, Lawrence Mensink, and Esther Bierma; survived by sister: Deane Mensink (Monona, WI), brother-in-law: Syne Bierma (Hudsonville), many nieces and nephews.

ZWIER, Paul J.; age 86; August 21, 2014; 2111 Raybrook SE, #4015, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; preceded in death by brother: Peter Zwier and sisters: Marcia Zwier and Marilyn Overzet; survived by wife: Eleanor (DeBoer) Zwier; children Jill and Phil Stegink, Paul and Marlene Zwier, Tim and Vicki Zwier, Gail and Tim Villanueva, Joel and Leah Zwier, and Ken Zwier; and grandchildren; in-laws Willis and Gertrude DeBoer, Mary DeBoer, Harold Overzet, and Lorraine Zwier.

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by María Cornou

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SWEDEN & NORWAY TOUR, JUNE 16 -26, 2015 directed by Dr. Debra L. Freeberg, professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at Calvin College. Highlights include the art, architecture and daily life of Stockholm, an authentic Midsummer's Eve picnic, Carl Larsson's home, the spectacular Norwegian fjords, the beautiful coastal city of Bergen, and the country estate of Edvard Grieg. For more information, contact the Calvin Alumni Association at www.calvin.edu/alumni/travel or 616-526-6142. CAA trips are open to all friends of Calvin.

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Punch Lines

What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407; or email it to editorial@thebanner.org. Thanks!

Ever wonder exactly how the people of Hebron knew it was Samson walking in the distance coming back from Gaza (see Judges 16:1-3)?

Probably because he was walking with a very distinctive gate.

—Rob Aukema

The retiring Sunday school teacher left a note for her replacement, warning that the Johnson triplets always started crying during the story of Noah loading up the ark.

—Dick Bylsma

Itold my grandson, a junior at Calvin College, that I had heard in a recent sermon that more people of his generation attribute the Sermon on the Mount to Billy Graham than to Jesus.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"What!!" I said.

"Who's Billy Graham?"

—Jack Dykstra

If you can smile when things go wrong, you're probably thinking of someone else to blame.

—Cornelius Peters

One evening before bedtime, my 4-year-old son, Samuel, asked me what happens to people

when they die. Fumbling for words that would make sense to him, I said that we go to be with God, and that someday we would have new bodies.

"What kind of new bodies?" he asked.

"We don't know exactly what they'll be like, but we do know that they'll be better than the bodies we have now. They won't get sick or feel pain. . . ." I said.

"But what will they be made of?" he interrupted.

"Well," I said, "we don't know exactly, but we know they won't wear out."

Not missing a beat, he suggested, "Plastic?"

—Anita Zandstra

Just before dismissing a group of children to go to church, the Sunday school teacher asked, "And why do we need to be quiet in church?"

Annie raised her hand and said, "Because people are sleeping."

—Clarence Wildeboer

While visiting his 89-year-old great-grandpa who lives in an independent living facility, our grandson, Kaleb, 4 years old, pointed to a large table and asked what it was for.

His dad told him it was a pool table.

Puzzled, he thought for a moment. Then he announced that he was going to check to see if the pool table had water in it.

—Karen Wynia

People want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.

—Peter Haagen

My young granddaughter and I were walking in the park one afternoon. She asked me a question about one of the trees. I had to say, "I really don't know the answer to that, Rachel."

"But Gram," she replied, "I thought you knew everything!"

—Muriel Robertson

I have a very good friend who is Chinese. She sometimes struggles with the English language. One day we were talking on the phone about the Bible, and she said, "God wants us to be detestable. . . . No, wait. Disciple!"

—Kelly Blok



"I'm not really a prince, but I have a steady job with good benefits."

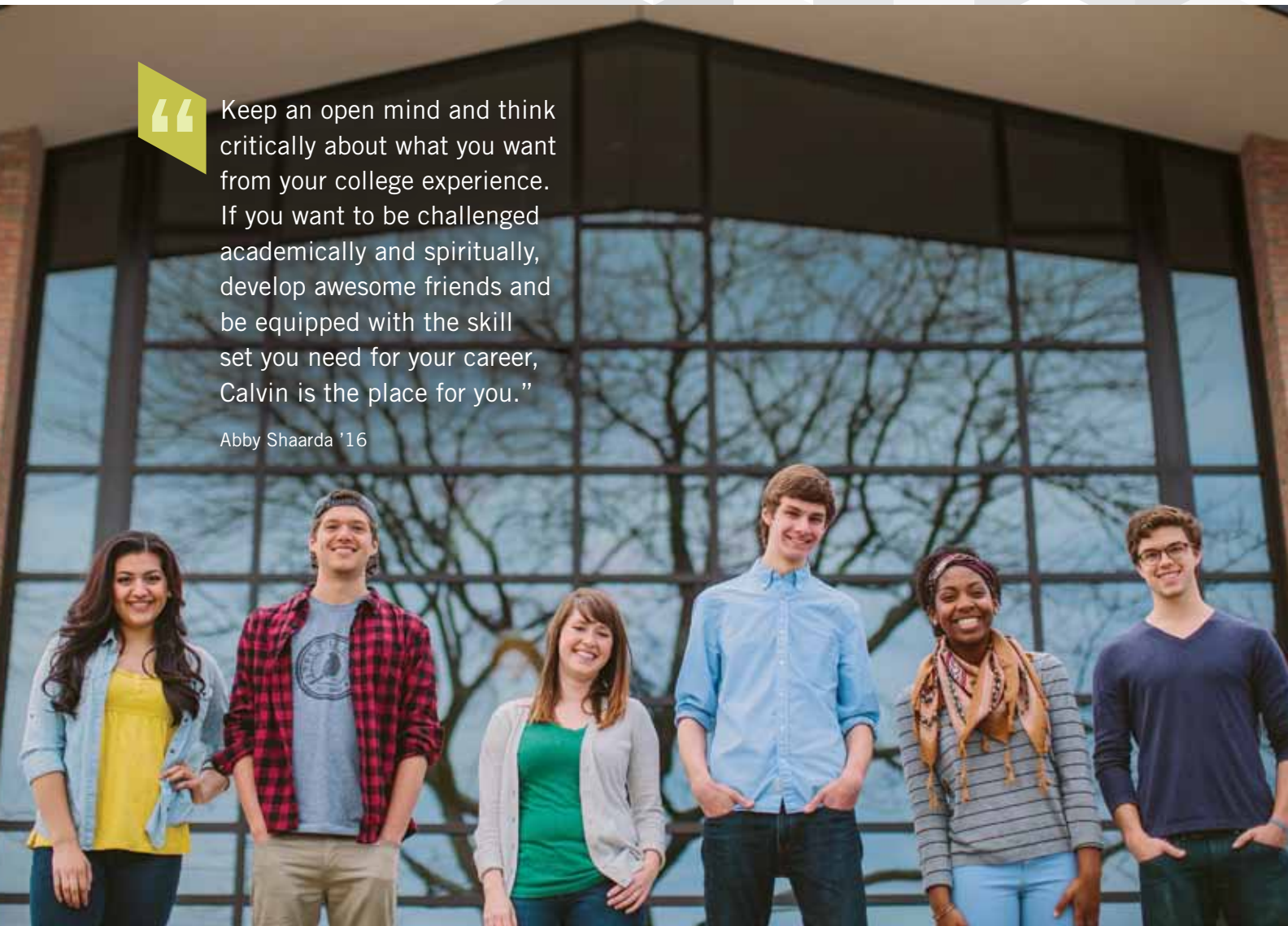
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