

# BANNER

150 YEARS

July/August 2016 | thebanner.org

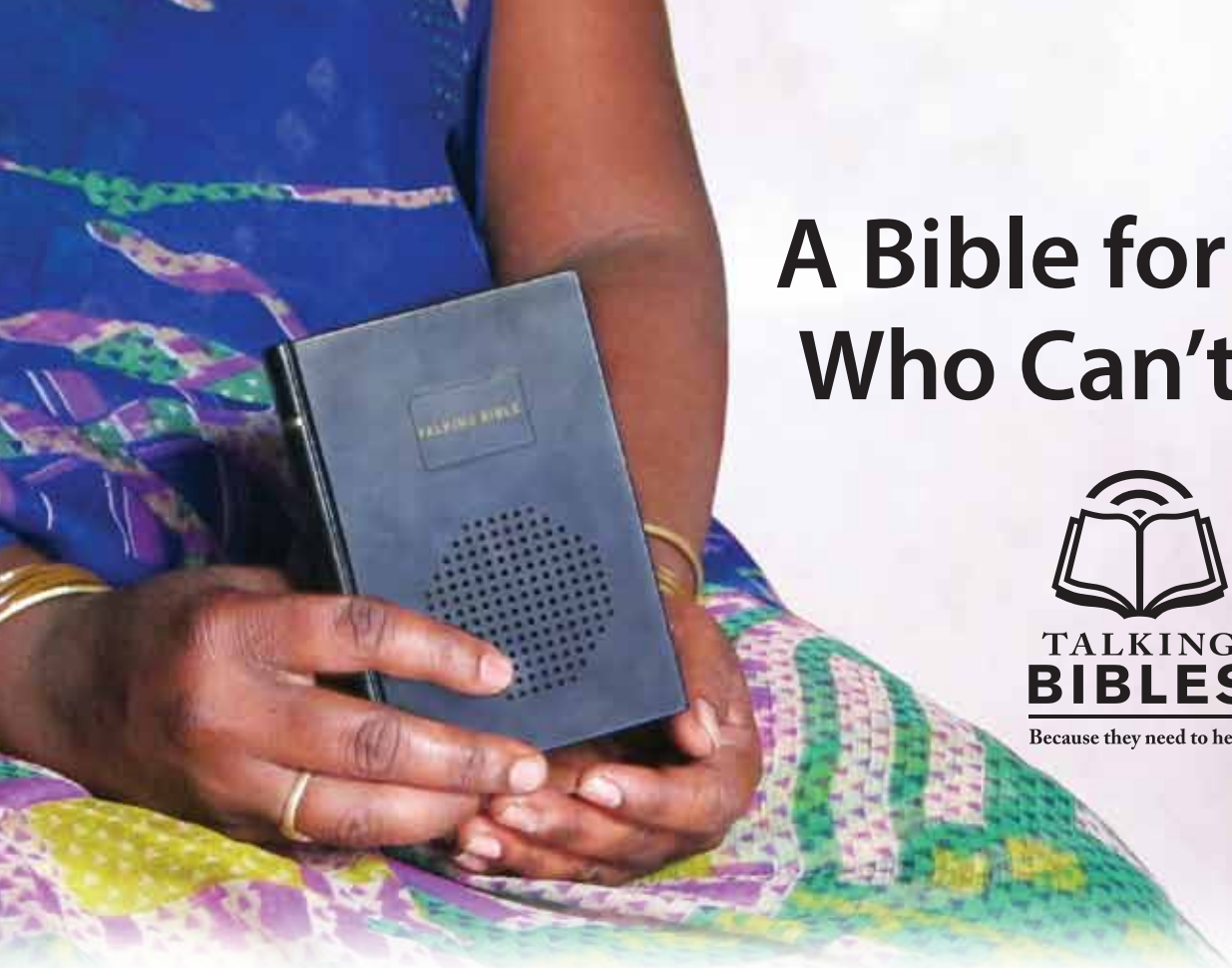
<sup>12</sup> We Are CRC: From Cornfields to Conflict Zones  
<sup>40</sup> Cultivating Christian Civility

<sup>50</sup> A Journey into Ministry

<sup>14</sup> Synod 2016



# A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



## The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered

## The Power of God's Word!

**India:** Anaya recently played her Talking Bible for a friend in the hospital who was very ill and had surgery planned for the next day. After several minutes, a strange voice came out of her friend, "Stop! Turn it off. I don't want to hear that." Anaya did not recognize the voice as the voice of her friend and was not sure what to do. The voice continued, "Take it away. I cannot bear this."

Though she didn't understand what was happening, Anaya trusted God. She arose, opened the window, and turned her Talking Bible louder. Soon the friend again spoke in a strange voice, "Please may I leave? Let me go, let me go!" After several minutes, Anaya's friend awoke. She was confused, but herself again. By the next morning, the doctors could not find anything wrong with her, so they cancelled her surgery and sent her home.

The evil spirit that had possessed Anaya's friend could not stand hearing the Word of the Lord. No one knew she had been possessed by a demon. No one prayed for her deliverance. Only the Talking Bible was played by a friend inside that hospital room. Now Anaya's friend is baptized, and goes to church. God's Word is powerful!

There are still many places where God's light has not penetrated the darkness and countless people who have not heard of His love and forgiveness. Please support Talking Bibles and help us to share God's Word through a Talking Bible with people who can't read.

Give today at [www.talkingbibles.org](http://www.talkingbibles.org)



Enhancing Trust



"Accredited for special offerings"

[www.talkingbibles.org](http://www.talkingbibles.org)

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



# Impacting the World for Christ



Hannah Boer  
Business Leadership

## Making a Difference

Kuyper College is focused on equipping students to make a difference in God's world. And they are doing so successfully, as they use what they've learned at Kuyper to make an impact in the lives of others for Christ.

## Extraordinary Results

As social workers, pastors, teachers, radio and video producers, aid workers, and in many other professions, our graduates are helping to build God's Kingdom in the U.S. and in more than 50 countries around the globe.

## Academic and Biblical Integration Plus Spiritual Maturity

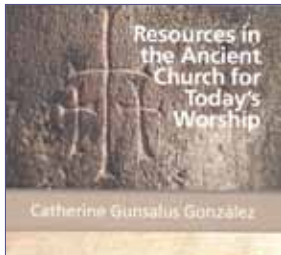
At Kuyper, we center the Bible in the academic experience of our students through the integration of a high-quality academic curriculum and a biblical worldview. This helps them become knowledgeable and spiritually mature, and develop the ability to see and live all of life through the lens of Scripture.

It is all of  
this, plus the  
results-driven  
commitment  
of our students  
to serve others,  
which makes  
Kuyper College  
unique.

KUYPER  COLLEGE

*Bringing God's Grace into Today's Culture*

Grand Rapids, MI 49525 | 800.511.3749 | [kuyper.edu](http://kuyper.edu)



## RECURSOS PARA EL CULTO CRISTIANO

En Calvin Institute of Christian Worship estamos comprometidos a ofrecer recursos sobre adoración que contribuyan a la vitalidad espiritual del culto cristiano y que al mismo tiempo demuestren una fuerte solidez teológica. Aunque gran parte de ellos están desarrollados en inglés, tenemos un número cada vez mayor de recursos disponibles en español a través de nuestra página web, incluyendo:

- Presentaciones de audio y video
- Artículos
- Entrevistas
- Lista de libros recomendados
- Y una publicación bilingüe: *Recursos en la Iglesia antigua para el culto de hoy*, por Catherine Gunsalus González

[worship.calvin.edu](http://worship.calvin.edu)

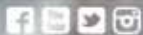
CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

 **TRINITY**  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

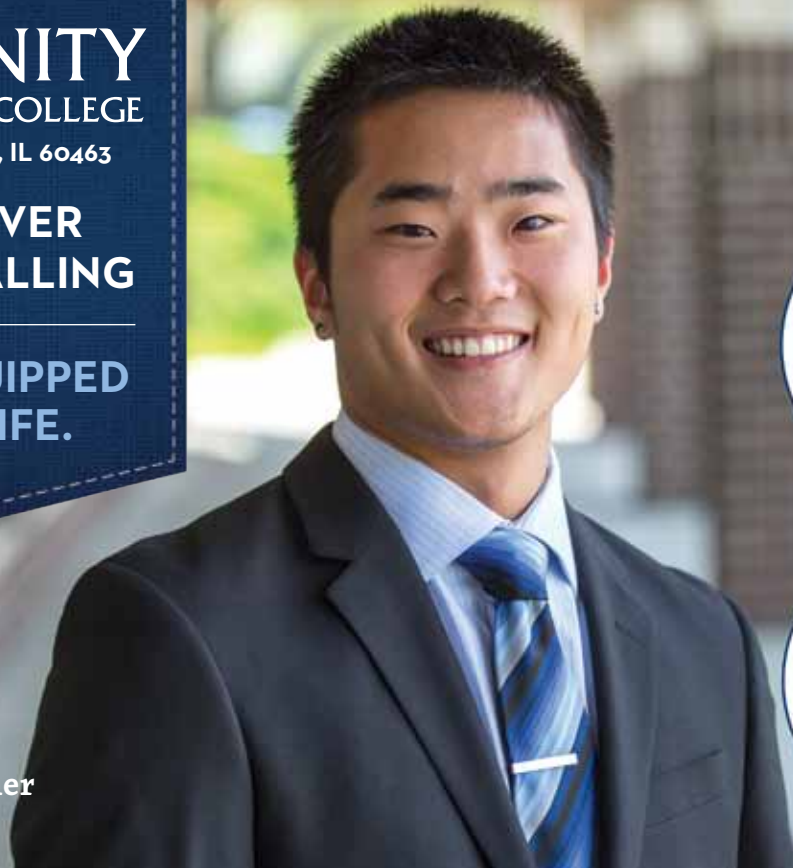
Palos Heights, IL 60463

**DISCOVER  
YOUR CALLING**

**GET EQUIPPED  
FOR LIFE.**



[trnty.edu/banner](http://trnty.edu/banner)





# FALL SEMESTER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## **On-campus courses for credit or non-credit**

- Shalom: Its Meaning and Significance; *Professor Mariano Avila*
- Communities and Crisis; *Rev. Marc Nelesen*
- Women in the History of American Christianity; *Professor Kristin Kobes Du Mez*
- Curriculum & Resources for Christian Education in the Church; *Rev. Dr. Richelle White*
- Theology and Everyday Work; *Professor Cory Willson*
- Cultural Anthropology and Contextual Ministry; *Ms. Ann Kapteyn*
- Bible Survey; *Professor Michael Williams*
- Christian Reformed Church Polity; *Rev. Kathleen Smith*
- Christian Reformed Church History; *Professor John Bolt*

## **Distance-learning courses for credit only** (includes on-site intensive instruction)

- Worship and Culture; *Ms. Maria Cornou*
- Sexuality and Marriage; *Professor Matthew Tuininga*

For course descriptions and enrollment information,  
please visit [www.calvinseminary.edu/ministry-connections/continuing-ed/](http://www.calvinseminary.edu/ministry-connections/continuing-ed/)  
or contact [continuing.education@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:continuing.education@calvinseminary.edu)

3233 Burton St. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4387  
(616) 957-6036

[www.calvinseminary.edu](http://www.calvinseminary.edu)



**CALVIN**  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY





Christian Reformed Church  
**Loan Fund**

For new construction, renovation, purchase, or refinance, the CRC Loan Fund offers churches:

- Competitive rates
- Flexible terms
- Fast approval
- Low closing costs
- No fees or points
- Knowledgeable staff

We've helped churches with more than 200 loans totaling over \$70 million.

Connect with us today.

[crcna.org/LoanFund](http://crcna.org/LoanFund)  
616-224-0829  
[LoanFund@crcna.org](mailto:LoanFund@crcna.org)



Helping

Churches

Disciples

Leaders

Flourish!

**Through Effective  
Disciple Paths**

[www.ascendingleaders.org](http://www.ascendingleaders.org)

In Partnership with Faith  
Formation Ministries of the  
Christian Reformed Church



**CHAPTERNEXT**  
Helping Congregations Turn the Page

**MINISTRY  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**Senior Pastor**  
Delavan (WI)  
Christian Reformed Church

**Worship Leader**  
Bay Area Community Church  
Annapolis, MD

**Pastor**  
Cottage Grove CRC  
South Holland, IL

*For more information on opportunities from ChapterNext, the leader among pastor search firms serving RCA & CRCNA congregations, visit [www.chapter-next.com](http://www.chapter-next.com) or email [info@chapter-next.com](mailto:info@chapter-next.com).*

**START  
CONTINUE  
LIVE } YOUR LEGACY**

[calvin.edu/apply](http://calvin.edu/apply)

**Claim your \$4,000 renewable award when you apply to Calvin College.**

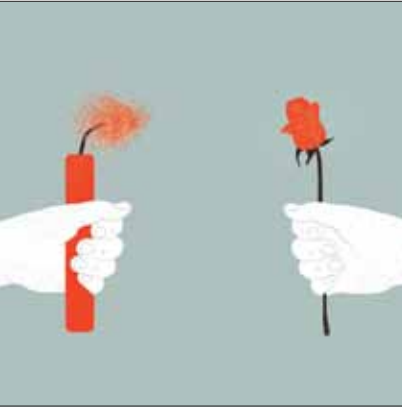
Calvin's Legacy Award is given to first-year students who are Christian Reformed or children of alumni.

**Calvin**  
COLLEGE  
1876



Volume 151 | Number 07 | 2016

# BANNER



**THANKYOU** to everyone who donated to *The Banner* annual donation campaign! Through your gifts we have exceeded our goal of \$300,000, and donations are still coming in. There's still time to donate. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.



**Cover:** Ethnic advisor Darleen Litson, Classis Red Mesa, supported by her husband, James Litson, wept as she listed missionaries who had brought the gospel to the Navajo. "I thank God for them," she said.

COVER PHOTO BY KAREN HUTTENGA

## FEATURES

**12** **We Are CRC: From Cornfields to Conflict Zones**  
*At 13, Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo heard God's call to mission.*  
by Deb Flaherty

**40** **Cultivating Christian Civility** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE  
*As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be pointing our neighbors to a better way of managing conflict.*  
by Richard J. Mouw

## SYNOD 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

**In Our View: Synod 2016: A Growing Divide** by Gayla R. Postma **14**

**Sexuality 16**

**Doctrine of Discovery 20**

**Education 22**

**Ecumenical Relations 24**

**Religious Persecution 26**

**Finance 28**

**Denominational Life 30**

**Engage 2016 34**

**Look Who Came to Synod 36**

**2016 Candidates for the Ministry 43**

## DEPARTMENTS

**Editorial: Making Room** by Len Vander Zee **9**  
*Synod's discussion on sexuality raises serious questions.*

**Catch Your Breath: Growing into Our Calling** by Joella Ranaivoson **10**  
*The seminary journey is one of uncovering callings, gifts, and loves.*

**On the Journey: Daffodils and Delighters** by Meagan Mc Rae **11**  
*Cultivating the practice of delight is part of our stewardship.*

**Just for Kids: Brain Power** by Christin Baker **46** ▶  
*Your brain is the "command center" for your body.*

**Tuned In: Group On! What Will Your Group Study This Year?** **48**  
*Ideas and resources for your small group or Bible study.*

**Punch Lines 63**

## TOGETHER DOING MORE

**A Journey into Ministry** by David Koll **50**  
*One of Sam DeJong McCarron's primary roles is to help pastors find and take vocational assessments.*

**The View from Here: What I Heard at Synod** by Steven Timmermans **54**



# Breaking Barriers

everybody belongs • everybody serves



## We Don't Know, but God Knows

by Rachel Daining  
Calvary CRC, Pella IA

What if she has a seizure in the middle of the night and dies? That question began to worry me about a month before Natalie had her first known seizure. Some 90 percent of people with polymicrogyria have seizures. I am not completely sure why this question did not worry me the first four and a half years of her life. Perhaps we were too busy trying to survive the rest of her medical conditions; plus, I had hoped we were in the “elite” 10 percent.

I wrestled with God in my worry. I wondered if there were precautions we should take or more tests we should run. I feared Natalie dying and feeling like there was something we could have or should have done. The crazy thing was, up to that point I had no reason to be worried, except for the statistics. After these worries tormented me for a couple weeks, I wrote this prayer in my journal:

*Father, if you choose to take Natalie from us, I will trust it was in your timing. I long for heaven for all of us, and if she makes it there before us, I pray you will let me see it as your grace, and not as my fault or anyone else's. Help me to trust you.*

Just 11 days later Natalie had a tonic-clonic, or grand mal, seizure. That night in the hospital I wondered if I would be able to sleep, or if I would stay awake all night staring at her, wondering if she would have another seizure. Then I thought back to my journal. I thought, “God prepared me for this.” I could sleep knowing God



Natalie Daining (front right) with parents Rachel and Steve and sister Eliana

had prepared me not just for what happened that day, but for the worst case scenario.

Natalie already has a lot of developmental challenges, so adding seizures to the list felt very heavy, and we grieved. Thankfully we think her tonic-clonic seizures are under control with medication. However, last December we found out Natalie also has a rare seizure disorder called ESES (electrical status epilepticus of sleep), which occurs while she is sleeping. This additional diagnosis once again brought that heavy feeling, especially since the ESES hasn't been treated successfully.

Though our journey with Natalie is often overwhelming, we are comforted by our Savior in many ways. Psalm 139 says, “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” God knows what each day of Natalie's life will hold, and how many days she has. He loves her so much that he sent Jesus to die for her, so I can rest in knowing her life is in *his* hands, not mine.

### More Online

Thanks for checking out the special *Banner* edition of our award-winning newsletter. On our website ([www.crcna.org/disability](http://www.crcna.org/disability)), find:

- More articles about living with seizures
- Quarterly *Breaking Barriers* subscription
- Monthly Disability Concerns e-newsletter subscription
- Back issues of *Breaking Barriers* on a variety of themes (published in English, Spanish, and Korean).

Email: [mstephenson@crcna.org](mailto:mstephenson@crcna.org) • [tdeyoung@rca.org](mailto:tdeyoung@rca.org)



## Making Room

**I SPENT A GOOD PART OF MY WEEK AT SYNOD**, the annual meeting of the Christian Reformed Church. I was gratified with the respectful, civil, and orderly conduct of the delegates' deliberations on difficult issues. Most of all, I honor the patient presence of synod's president, Paul De Vries, and other officers. The *manner* of the debate displayed the CRC at its best.

I was also struck by how delegates worked hard to make room for other people's ideas and positions. On the Belhar Confession and on the Doctrine of Discovery there was a concerted effort to reach decisions that accommodated a larger share of the delegates.

Sadly, that was not the case with the issues surrounding the report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage. Synod adopted the recommendations of the committee's minority report, even though it was not intended to stand apart from the majority report. Furthermore, those recommendations are, to my mind, unnecessarily harsh and invasive.

They prohibit all officebearers from not only officiating, which is understandable, but also from *participating* in a same-sex wedding. This means, for example, that an elder could be disciplined for offering a prayer at her son's same-sex wedding, a pastor for walking his daughter down the aisle, or a deacon for "standing up" for his sister. All these situations were mentioned. In my opinion, this is less about pastoral *guidance* and more more about *policing*. These are issues of personal conscience for officebearers, and this kind of ecclesiastical interference may cause great pain for families, individuals, and congregations.

## Can we no longer tolerate dissenting voices?

Synod also decided that the CRC needs to give further study to the issues surrounding human sexuality and appointed a study committee to present "A Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality." Of course we need such a study in today's society. But synod then restricted the voices that could be heard in this study. Only those who "adhere to the CRC's biblical position on marriage and same-sex relationships" (the 1973 and 2002 reports on homosexuality), will be at the table.

As far as I can determine, this is the first time synod has applied a litmus test other than Scripture and the confessions in appointing a study committee. It's a dangerous precedent. Synod has determined to silence the voices of all who disagree and to bar them from the table. This raises some serious questions.

Has synod, in effect, declared that there is room for only one biblical and acceptable response to the issues of marriage and same-sex attraction? And what of those individuals, congregations, or classes who have differing views? Will they be silenced and their biblical, theological, and pastoral reasons be unheard and ignored? Will they possibly even be disciplined for expressing them?

Over my 46 years of ministry, my beloved church has courageously, and at some cost, tackled important and divisive issues like racism, women in office, and creation and science. On each of these issues room was made for other opinions, other voices. No litmus test was applied. Can we no longer tolerate dissenting voices in this issue that affects so many lives?

I still hope that we will find ways to make room. I hope that congregations will send overtures pointing out why the pastoral guidelines for officebearers are too restrictive and invasive. I hope that the newly appointed committee and future synods will see the wisdom of a long-standing principle in our denomination by making room for other voices, other viewpoints.

Let's not be ruled by fear but by mutual trust; not by litmus tests but open dialogue; not by excluding other voices but by listening to them. ■

FOR MORE, SEE  
**AS I WAS SAYING**  
at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)



**Leonard J. Vander Zee** is interim editor of *The Banner*. He attends Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Leonard J. Vander Zee** Editor  
**Judith Claire Hardy** Associate Editor  
**Gayla R. Postma** News Editor  
**Henry Hess** Editor,  
*Together Doing More*  
**Kristy Quist** Tuned In Editor  
**Dean R. Heetderks** Art Director  
**Pete Euwema** Graphic Design  
**Frank Gutbrod** Graphic Design

### Contact Us

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

Address Changes and Subscriptions  
800-777-7270 or visit our website at  
[thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)

### Classified Advertising

616-224-0725 [classifieds@thebanner.org](mailto:classifieds@thebanner.org)

### Display Advertising

616-224-5882 [ads@crcna.org](mailto:ads@crcna.org)

### Editorial

616-224-0785 [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org)

### News

613-330-3145 [news@thebanner.org](mailto:news@thebanner.org)

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

Copyright 2016, Christian Reformed  
Church in North America. Printed in U.S.A.  
The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 151,  
No. 07, 2016.

Member of Associated Church Press and  
Evangelical Press Association.

## Growing into Our Calling

**I WAS STANDING** outside the seminary chapel, overlooking the seminary pond, and wondering, *What the heck—why?* The question was to God; the subject, seminary. I'd been prompted toward seminary by questions, behests, and the patient urgings of mentors, professors, and family. Not to mention my own inner sense. It took me a while to see it—a year or so—but eventually I couldn't deny it. But with that certainty came questions. Prime among them was "Why?"

When my cohort started seminary, I heard my peers and classmates' stories. For some, the call to ministry had been clear for some time; seminary was a long-anticipated experience. Others simply knew they were to be at seminary. For what exactly? That was yet to be determined.

This seminary journey has been one of discovery. Or, more accurately, of uncovering—callings, gifts, potential ministries, and loves that were, at best, cloudily visible before this concentrated time of learning and study and community.

I never considered ministry as a vocation until a professor suggested it when

I was 21 years old, a junior in college. A seminary classmate of mine who is a gifted preacher was certain she would not preach—until her first preaching class. Now we all know that she's called to preach. We were all terrified, at worst, and nervously anticipating, at best, Hebrew study—until, guided by our professor, we learned to befriend and read the Old Testament slowly, letting the discipline form our hearts and our minds.

The loneliness of discerning a call to ministry was cured by Wednesday nights at Uccello's over pizza puffs and calamari, meetings with a mentor calling out gifts we hadn't yet named, talking with a professor after a difficult lecture about lingering questions and nagging doubts, and gathering in a living room around a warm fire with friends to debrief our oral comprehensive exams.

A Calvin Seminary alumna described her time in seminary this way: "I'm growing into this calling and this calling is growing into me." I find myself resonating with her statement. From reluctance and bewilderment, to outright anger at God for derailing other life plans with a call to seminary, to grateful thanks offered

on the eve of graduation for such rich gifts as we have experienced—yes, we are growing into this calling, and this calling is growing into us.

A gift. That's what this has been.

Through every day of reading; through each night of group study; through every class discussion, lecture, and assignment; through every iteration of wondering to God, "Is this really what you've called me to? This?"; through the high highs and low lows of each internship; through summer barbecues and fall dinners and winter morning coffees with classmates who become friends and then partners in ministry; through learning more deeply about ourselves, about others, about God—these are gifts. It's not lost on me how remarkable it is that God has given us this time, space, place, and community to learn more deeply with and about God and the world. What a privilege! ■



Joella Ranaivoson is a 2016 Master of Divinity graduate from Calvin Seminary. She is from Madagascar but was raised in Papua New Guinea, the U.S., and Kenya. She's sometimes theologizing, often writing, always singing.



"I'm growing into  
this calling  
and this calling  
is growing into me."

— ANNE ZAKI



# Daffodils and Delighters

**WE WERE OUT** walking in the woods, my friend and I. It was the first snowfall of the season. He ran up to a large cedar tree, stretched out his hands, and exclaimed with great emphasis, “This is amazing!” And it was. We walked slowly. Not just because his legs were small and hindered by snow pants, but also because he stopped to slide on the icy puddles, pick up a crinkled oak leaf, and run off the trail for a better view of the frozen river. But delight is not only for 4-year-olds.

Inspired to live in truth and spurred on by a shadowy history of dominion, the idea of stewardship has nestled its way into Christian circles. We understand that the mandate in Genesis requires our care and cultivation of God’s creation. I am glad of this, yet as an environmental educator and a Christian, I am afraid. I observe that we are becoming burdened by the enormity of the restoration task even as we grow more and more distant from our natural world. Love guides us more fiercely than guilt, and the obligation of stewardship is too small to capture the relationship God meant for us to have with creation.

As Christians we are familiar with biblical stories that include the non-human creation. Adam actively knew and named the splendor of his surroundings. Job’s experience with the mystery of creation helped him begin to know the mystery of God. In the psalms, David reminds us that God is the Creator, and the creation is constantly praising him.

We know that God’s divine revelation is not limited to the Bible. One of the ways God reveals himself is through creation (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:20). “Natural revelation” is what we name that. But we experience it as the scent of fall leaves, the brilliance of a sunset, the feel of a caterpillar’s soft skin. As a Christian, I



Delight is  
a thing  
that needs  
nurturing.

wonder if we are limiting our relationship with God by allowing a growing disconnect between us and the rest of creation. As an educator, I struggle. How can I teach stewardship if the children do not yet love the earth? And how can they love the earth if they do not experience it?

To be clear, nature is not all beautiful. The truth is that nature groans and twists with the pain of suffering and starvation—“wonderful things wasted,” in the words of Annie Dillard. It is worms on the sidewalk, ducklings eaten by snapping turtles, birds with broken wings, maggots in wounds. There is beauty and horror. So what then?

On a brilliant spring day, I was out teaching a group of young children in a field of dandelions. With his 5-year-old arms outstretched and his face cracked in a smile, one of the children exclaimed loudly, “Look at all the daffodils!” And so, perhaps, he was inviting us to delight in what is beautiful and imagine what could be.

The barrier between heaven and earth has been described as a veil. This veil covers the earth, yet in some places it is stretched quite thin. In the Old Testament,

the thin place was over the Holy of Holies. Theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr. suggests that today the thin place is wherever wrong things are being made right. I like to imagine we can pull down this veil in our areas of influence. And I believe that part of the thinning of this veil is the practice of delight.

Delight is a thing that also needs nurturing. I am reminded of that by my young friend’s fascination with the cedar tree, a girl who catches me mid-sentence to show me a buttercup, and the child in the backseat who points and exclaims, “Look!” with his face illuminated by the evening sun. These delighters remind me to set my face in the direction of the sunset, to listen to the voices of delight and imagine the daffodils. God delights in his delighters. Hands muddy, nets full, tumbling delight.

Delight is part of the new earth, a taste of what is to come. Perhaps stewardship follows delight. ■



**Meagan Mc Rae** is an environmental educator and foster care worker. She attends Zion Christian Reformed Church in Oshawa, Ont.

WE ARE CRC

# FROM CORNFIELDS TO CONFLICT ZONES



**A** S A YOUNG GIRL, Ida Kaastra often recited the theme verse of her girls' club at her church in rural Ontario. For her, the challenge of Micah 6:8—"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God"—was mental work, rather than missional. Now that same verse is a daily touchstone in her work as director of World Renew Canada.

But it was a circuitous route that brought her out of the cornfields of Southwestern Ontario to the conflict zones of East Africa and back again.

Let's start this story near Aylmer, Ont., on the Kaastra dairy farm.

Ida, the eldest of nine children, grew up in a family where work was both virtue and necessity. She remembered her stern father teaching her how to work the clutch on the tractor—slowly, slowly press the pedal or it'll lurch and stall—when she was 4 years old.

She recalled hoisting manure into a wagon with a pitchfork taller than she was and stooking bales in the field as the hay clung to her sweaty face and arms. She was short, but wiry.

"I learned that on a farm you work long days; you're part of a team. Everybody contributes."

She attended Christian elementary school and Christian high school. Joined

every sports team she could think of. Excelled at academics.

Then one day, during a rare moment of relaxation on the farmhouse porch, everything shifted. She was 13 years old.

"I noticed that the wind was very odd. It was blowing all around me but where I was was very still. It was like the presence of God was with me at that moment saying, 'Be still and know that I am God.' It was like a voice in my soul saying, 'Ida, I want you to be a missionary.'"

She went inside for lunch and told her parents. Devout twice-on-Sunday worshipers, they nevertheless weren't convinced God spent his time sending messages to teenage farm girls.



# DEVOUT, TWICE-ON-SUNDAY WORSHIPERS, THEY NEVERTHELESS WEREN'T CONVINCED GOD SPENT HIS TIME SENDING MESSAGES TO TEENAGE FARM GIRLS.

To Kaastra, though, the calling was deep and unequivocal. “For all the rest of my life, all my choices were centered around that.”

Whom she dated, what she studied, where she lived—all were predicated on her conviction that her life must eventually lead to the mission field.

But then, when she was 15, just two years after she’d proclaimed her calling to be a missionary, her mother died of cancer.

For Ida, it was a wrenching personal loss. At the same time, she also had extra weight thrust upon her: her father said that as the eldest, she would be in charge of everything in the household—everything except physical discipline.

“It was the classic management dilemma of having all the responsibility but no positional authority,” she recalled.

That forced her as a teenager to negotiate, mediate, collaborate. With 12 years between the oldest and youngest, the siblings decided how to divide and rotate chores fairly. One would wash dishes and another would mop the floor; one would pare vegetables and another would cook. Together they milked the cows and fed the calves and mucked the barns. If one sibling missed an assignment because she or he had a soccer game, for example, someone picked up the slack but the absent person would have to do double chores next time.

The oldest children became a support team for the younger ones.

“As children together, we realized we as a team could support each other in grief and hardship and make the best of it.”

Stories of African anti-apartheid fighter Steve Biko and CRC missionary Johanna Veenstra reminded her daily of her mission, that her job was meant to be more.

“If [God] called young David and Moses, who was a reluctant leader . . . to something that was beautiful, then surely if I’m a willing servant of God’s, I can do this, and not for my glory but his.”

At a time when CRC women couldn’t become preachers, she investigated how farm practices might help build food security and draw people out of poverty.

She studied agriculture and biology at Dordt College in Iowa and earned a bachelor of science degree in crop science from the University of Guelph in Ontario.

That set her on a path to development work, first as an intern with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC, now World Renew) in Grand Rapids and then as a program development consultant in northeast Uganda in partnership with a group called Vision Terudo.

In 1985 a military coup took place, and Ida’s home in Uganda became part of a war zone. Soon after that came cattle raiders who burned huts and shot her neighbor. Then they stood outside her door arguing whether or not to break into her little home to kill her too.

As she wrote years later, “I pray like I am sweating drops of blood. Death is waiting and I am terribly, deeply afraid.”

The men eventually wandered away and God’s words filled her again: “Love me. Love my people.”

She stayed and became Uganda field director for CRWRC in 1989.

There that she met young lawyer James Mutoigo at a Baptist church in Kampala.

Together they worked to embody the mission they had separately been articulating. “He’s a justice guy and I’m a mercy gal, and together we walk humbly with our God,” she said.

Her father, finally reconciled to his eldest daughter’s life as a missionary and

to her love for Mutoigo, flew to Kenya en route to Uganda to give his blessing at their wedding. But days before the ceremony, he suffered an embolism.

Instead of welcoming her father to a wedding, Kaastra found herself planning both a funeral and a wedding.

“I entered marriage with a different platform. It’s not that you’re going to have a life that’s free of trouble. Death is a part of it. Illness, suffering is a part of it. But God is also a part of it,” Kaastra-Mutoigo said. Birth is also a part of it. Their son Bryant (one of three Mutoigo children) was born in Uganda before the family moved back to Canada in 1994.

Ida served as ServiceLink coordinator for five years until, in 2000, the family returned to Africa, where she became team leader of East and Southern Africa through CRWRC.

When the position came up for a new Canadian director of World Renew, ministry leaders urged her to apply. Synodical leaders appointed her to the post in 2006.

World Renew’s aim, she said, is also the intrinsic mission of the church.

And that mission continues to be one in which discipleship is key, where the depth of Micah 6:8 continues to resonate for those working to bring a message of hope for oppressed and impoverished people:

“We are compelled by God’s mercy, by God’s grace, by God’s justice to go out into the world and change the story,” she said. ■



**Deb Flaherty** is a journalist, a member of Talbot Street Church in London, Ontario, and a member of *The Banner’s* Advisory Council.

## Synod 2016: A Growing Divide

**S**ynod 2016 showed a church increasingly diverse and also increasingly divided.

The issue of homosexuality will continue to be divisive in the Christian Reformed Church, much as it has been in so many other denominations. A more subtle but growing divide is the disconnect between the people in the pew and the denominational administrative structure. It is not a distrust of the people in leadership. They seem well appreciated. Rather, it is a lack of connection to shared ministry and a desire to leave more

money in the coffers of congregations to do local ministry.

### Who's In, Who's Not?

Earlier synods have worked very hard over the past two decades to be as inclusive and diverse as possible. And there has been much success. Women, young adults, people of ethnic minorities, and deacons have all been included around the table in the past several years as delegates, advisors, or representatives.

This year 18 percent of synod delegates were ethnic minorities and 21 percent were women. And for the first time, deacons were delegated to synod.

There were other "firsts" too: one of the officers of synod was Hispanic (p. 21). An African American man was appointed to the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary (p. 23). The new *Banner* editor is not of white Dutch ancestry (p. 30).

Inclusion of African American brothers and sisters was further affirmed when synod proposed that the Belhar Confession be adopted as a contemporary testimony rather than leaving it in what one delegate called "confessional purgatory" as an ecumenical faith declaration (p. 24).

Who's not in? People who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. By declining to include a panel of LGBT advisors (p. 19), those voices will not be at the table in the same way as those of women, deacons, young adults, and people of ethnic minorities.

### No Rubber Stamps

Synod has been regarded by some as simply a rubber stamp for decisions already made by the Board



**José Rayas, synod's first-ever Hispanic officer.**

of Trustees, especially since the change 20 years ago from a two-week synod to one week.

But this year delegates pushed back.

For the first time in recent memory, delegates declined to approve a 2 percent ministry shares increase proposed by the Board of Trustees (p. 28). Even as delegates affirmed and gave thanks for the work of various agencies, it declined to increase funding. Denominational leaders will have to go back to the drawing board to rethink the allocations to various ministries that had been planned for 2017.

Synod didn't just refuse to increase funding to those agencies. It wants the whole ministry share system "reimagined." It wants every agency and ministry reviewed to make sure the work being done is what previous synods have specifically asked for. The implicit message was that projects that are no longer needed, or those added by staff instead of resulting from synod instructions, shouldn't be funded. Delegate William Delleman called it "ministry creep."

Delegates also pushed back against proposed new liturgical forms for events such as baptism and communion (p. 19). Instead of a *pro forma* acceptance of forms written by professional staff, delegates discussed the forms at length and did some serious editing of those forms before they were adopted.

Despite producing a very lengthy report, the task force that studied the Doctrine of Discovery had few of its recommendations adopted (p. 20).

As the study committee recommended, Synod declared the



**Rev. Caleb Ahima: "I am stepping over bodies!"**

doctrine itself a heresy; delegates also participated in the Blanket Exercise and learned a Navajo song during devotions. But although the task force requested further investigation of trespasses against Navajo and Zuni people as a result of the CRC's ministry there for more than 100 years, Synod 2016 in fact affirmed the work at Rehoboth Christian School. Navajo people at synod shared stories of thanks and grace for the missionaries.

Synod was also not buying the recommendations of the majority

### For more news

about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).



### Follow The Banner

Magazine on Facebook and *crcbanner* on Twitter.



### Got a news tip?

Visit [thebanner.org/news](http://thebanner.org/news) and use the "Got a Tip" button.

**GOT A NEWS TIP?**

### Or contact the news editor

at [news@thebanner.org](mailto:news@thebanner.org) or 613-330-3145.



report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage (p. 16). Those recommendations included giving pastors some leeway in officiating at a civil same-sex ceremony and suggested that participation in a same-sex religious wedding by ordained leaders is complex and that church leaders should exercise caution and discretion.



Chalk art on the sidewalk outside the building where synod met.

Synod instead recommended the advice from just two members of that committee, advice that draws a much more restrictive line. Its recommendations specify that pastors may not officiate at same-sex weddings, officebearers should not participate in same-sex weddings, and people living in same-sex relationships should not be considered members in good standing.

Synod appointed a new study committee to provide a biblical theology of human sexuality (p. 18). Members of the new committee must express their agreement with the guidelines set out by Synod 1973 and Synod 2002. The committee has five years to complete its work.

### Putting Discussions in a Larger Perspective

The only study committee report wholeheartedly received was from



Members of committees that dealt with same-sex marriage gathered for prayer prior to the discussion.



The gallery was quite full when Synod 2016 discussed same-sex marriage.

the Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty. After just 26 minutes of discussion, synod adopted its recommendations (p. 26).

Having synod spend so little time on religious persecution and so much on same-sex marriage and the Doctrine of Discovery angered Caleb Ahima, ecumenical delegate from the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria. He told delegates, "I'm stepping over bodies. I'm dealing with widows and orphans," he said. "I pray this never happens in North America because you will not have time for these discussions."

In his interview to become *Banner* editor, Shiao Chong

warned against such infighting. "The devil would love nothing more than seeing us spend time tearing each other apart when there are lives to be saved."

### Storms Ahead

Executive director Steven Timmermans said to delegates that he was hearing a lot of "us" and "them" language and reminded them, "We are the church together." One delegate said, "Synod is the voice of the church."

But more than a few delegates wondered if synod's voice was

being heard. They wanted assurance that what synod asked for would actually happen.

Denominational leaders hope that transitioning from a Board of Trustees to a Council of Delegates will help connect people in the pews to denominational ministries, that a new ministry plan will build common cause, and that new initiatives will find traction in local churches.

Whether the CRC can survive the discussion of homosexuality and same-sex attraction that has already rent so many denominations remains to be seen. Perhaps the only way will be if people can look at those they disagree with, and then espouse the words that Christena Cleveland shared at Engage 2016 (p. 34) prior to synod:

"The image of God in me embraces the image of God in you."

—Gayla R. Postma

## All the News of Synod 2016

### Brought to you by:

#### Reporters:

Roxanne Van Farowe,  
Clay Libolt, George Vink

#### Editors:

Gayla Postma, Judy Hardy,  
Len Vander Zee

#### Photographer:

Karen Huttenga

#### Designers:

Pete Euwema,  
Dean Heetderks

## Synod 2016 Recommends Pastoral Advice for Same-Sex Marriage



**Matt Ackerman, Classis Lake Erie:** "The [majority] report offers pages and pages of information to promote informed discussion."



**Chris Kwak, Classis Pacific Hanmi:** "Minority report advice is something I can share with Korean friends and family."

**A**fter a long-anticipated debate on a report from a committee that had for three years studied how to respond pastorally to the legalization of same-sex marriage, Synod 2016 recommended very little of the advice that came from the majority of the committee.

Instead it recommended advice from two dissenting members of the committee, advice that was much more restrictive. Jessica Driesenga, representing the minority position, noted that their disagreement with the main report focused on three areas: whether clergy may in any circumstances officiate at same-sex weddings; whether officebearers, including ministers, elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors, may participate in any other way in same-sex weddings; and whether the members of same-sex couples can be members in good standing of a church. To each of these situations, the majority report did not give a categorical no, whereas the minor-

ity's advice, recommended by synod, drew the lines strictly.

Synod 2013 appointed the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage with the mandate to give guidance to members and clergy about how to respond to same-sex marriage. The committee was explicitly instructed to stay within the guidelines of a Synod 1973 decision that distinguished between same-sex attraction, which was held not to be sinful, and acting on the desire, which was held to be sinful.

It was apparent early on that many delegates were drawn to the stricter guidelines. Brady Mulder, Classis Lake Superior, said that the minority report offers clarity to biblical foundations. "That minority report follows God's Word as highest authority." Andrew Zomerman, Classis Hamilton, said it gives a loving way forward by pointing people back to Scripture.

Chris Kwak, Classis Pacific Hanmi, speaking through an interpreter, said that the minority report offered advice that he could share with Korean friends and family. But, he said, they would find the majority report confusing.

For others, the guidelines from the minority are too restrictive. Jennie Hengeveld-Misner, Classis Northern Illinois, talked about how she had "been blessed by so many same-sex attracted people." She said of a same-sex couple, "They had been the hands and feet of God to me. Recently they visited me and asked if it would be okay to come to my church. I didn't know if I could say yes. . ."

Jack Roeda, Classis Grand Rapids East, brought synod back to Synod 1980, at which time it was decided that divorced people could be admitted to the church. He spoke of belonging, a theme of Synod 2016, and accommodation. Belonging requires accommodation, Roeda said. "We know people who are constitutionally created so that they feel and experience same-sex attraction. Perhaps we should accommodate such people." The minority report, he said, doesn't struggle with that.

For some, it is time to revisit the 1973 decision. Bud Ipema, Classis Northern Illinois, said, "To stick us with '73 and say that we cannot look beyond or before '73 is to give a dysfunctional mandate. We've had 43 years in the Christian community of some of the best biblical and theological study on issues of same-sex attraction. I would hope that synod would see the need to give a really good biblical study." He added, "I cannot figure out in my 50 years of practice how it's possible to give love and see it received in the presence of exclusion. I don't know how that's done. We must learn to love with inclusion."

Rolf Bouma, the chair of the study committee, expressed the fear that in recommending the minority report, synod was setting policy. He said, "The minority report doesn't caution; it prohibits." But what does "participating" mean? he asked. Does it mean dancing at the reception? He asked the synod to "give some freedom, some trust."

The question arose of whether the minority report could stand by itself since it differed from the main report in only three areas.

### Synod Rejects a Complaint about Think Christian Articles

Synod 2016 rejected an appeal from the council of Family of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Monee, Ill., to remove several articles from the Think Christian website. The website is part of Back to God Ministries International, the CRC's media ministry. The articles are part of a series under the title "Agendas Aside," which examine, in some cases critically, the church's stance on homosexuality. Back to God Ministries International responded that it had discussed the matter with the pastor of the church, created new guidelines for handling sensitive issues, and posted on the website a link to the official position of the denomination on homosexuality. Synod noted that the staff and board of Back to God Ministries had handled the matter satisfactorily.

—Clayton Libolt



## Orlando Shooting Mourned by Synod

At its morning worship on Monday, June 13, Synod 2016 paused to mourn the shooting of more than a hundred people in Orlando, Fla. Steven Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, connected the Orlando shooting with last year's murder of the members of a Bible study in Charleston, S.C., which also happened during synod. And he noted the recent shooting death of a young man who was a member of the Roseland CRC in Chicago. As they did a year ago, delegates sang the Kyrie: "Lord, have mercy." Sadness filled the auditorium.



—Clayton Libolt



**Bud Ipema, Classis Northern Illinois:** "I cannot figure out in my 50 years of practice how it's possible to give love and see it received in the presence of exclusion."



**Andrew Zomeran, Classis Hamilton:** "The minority advice gives a loving way forward by pointing people back to Scripture."

Bouma said no. "[I'm] hearing people treat the minority report as a stand-alone report." By not recommending any part of the larger report, Bouma added, "this does a disservice to the church, a violence to the work of the committee."

Matt Ackerman, Classis Lake Erie, who said that 20 of the students in his campus ministry were watching the video feed because they care so much, praised the report for offering "pages and pages of information to promote informed discussion of how we can engage our culture with truth and grace."

By the end of the debate, it became clear that few minds were being changed by

speeches on either side of the issue. After more than two hours, delegates voted 110-71 in favor of the more restrictive advice.

Synod also added a reference to that advice in a supplement to Article 69-c of the Church Order, which specifies that "ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God," offering same-sex marriage as an example of such marriages.

Synod, having not recommended much of its advice or its material to the churches, thanked the study committee.

—Clayton Libolt

## Sexual Counseling Ministry Harvest USA Not Recommended

Synod 2016 decided not to add to its list of recommended causes Harvest USA, a Pennsylvania-based ministry that focuses on people with same-sex attraction. Classis Minnkota, a regional group of churches, had asked that it be added.

In giving its reasons not to add Harvest USA to the list, synod noted that in its official statements, the ministry seemed to have a theological position regarding same-sex attraction contrary to the position of the Christian Reformed Church. The official statement of Harvest USA says that same-sex orienta-

tion is in itself sinful. The CRC distinguishes between orientation, which, is not sinful, and sexual practice, which is.

It was also argued that Harvest USA uses a form of reparative therapy, a therapeutic approach that attempts to change the sexual orientation of a person. This approach has been largely discredited both in the broader psychological community and in the documents of the Christian Reformed Church.

Roger Sparks, Classis Minnkota, disputed whether Harvest USA is engaged in reparative therapy. He said that he had called the director of Harvest USA, and that the director assured him that they did not use reparative therapy. Sparks also said that the differences between the theological position on homosexuality used by Harvest USA and the position of the CRC are only apparent, and that in fact they agree.

Jonathan Assink, Classis Pacific Northwest, disagreed. He said that including Harvest USA on the list of recommended causes would not be perceived as welcoming to LGBT people. He added,

"What is read on that page would be heard as hate speech by some people."

—Clayton Libolt



**Jonathan Assink, Classis Pacific Northwest:** "What is in Harvest USA statements would be heard as hate speech by some people."

**Paul De Vries:** We'd like to recognize any retiring pastors who are with us today. Are there any here with us today?  
[No one stands up.]

**De Vries:** Well, they're retired, so why would they be here?



**Roger Sparks, Classis Minnkota:** "The director of Harvest USA assured [me] that they did not use reparative therapy."



## Synod 2016 Appoints a Committee to Study Human Sexuality

The day after recommending pastoral guidance that advises officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church not to participate in same-sex weddings, Synod 2016 appointed a study committee to study human sexuality. The new committee, which has been given five years to do its work, is mandated to “articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality.”

The members of the committee are required to “adhere to the CRC’s biblical view on marriage and same-sex relationships.” Asked about the meaning of “adhere” in that statement, Peter Hoytema said it meant “stick to it with openness to other options.”

Joel Zuidema, Classis Illiana, pressed the point: “How will this [adherence] be found out?” Hoytema said that when members of the committee are appointed they



**Joe Kamphuis, Classis Red Mesa:** “The denomination is not ready to have this discussion. Five to 10 years from now the denomination may be more ready.”

will simply be asked about it. With that the delegates let go of whether or not requiring members to adhere to the denominational position on the questions to be studied by the committee foreclosed the results before the committee has even begun its work.

Delegate Joe Kamphuis, Classis Red Mesa, said that the

denomination is not ready to have this discussion. He said, “We don’t listen to each other’s stories. We don’t hear what’s going on in the various classes [regional groups of churches].” He said that five to 10 years from now the denomination may be more ready. Better, he said, to pay attention now to ongoing discussions. He referred to a report produced by Classis Grand Rapids East and one by the Returning Church group.

But Khary Bridgewater, Classis Grand Rapids East, said, “It doesn’t matter if we are ready; our members are. We must have this conversation, and we must have it now.”

Ed Gerber, Classis British Columbia South-East suggested that we need such a study because under a veneer of unity there are profound differences among members of the CRC. He used the metaphor of a tree with two quite different shoots coming up. He said, “Let’s take a look at the roots. We keep talking about the symptoms and not the cause.”

Jennie Hengeveld-Misner, Classis Northern Illinois, wanted the study for quite a different reason. She raised the case of a member of her congregation who was in the process of gender transition. Members of the church council wanted to discipline the member, but she asked, “What’s the sin?” She noted that in this case the Bible was much talked about but not actually studied. She thought a study committee could provide councils in churches like her own advice on which to act.

Synod has far-reaching aims for the new study committee. It is “to provide concise yet clear

ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life.” The hope is that the eventual report will provide “guidance that explains how the gospel provides redemptive affirmation and hope for those experiencing sexual questioning, temptation, and sin.”

The new study committee was also asked to decide “whether or not, with respect to same-sex behavior and other issues identi-



**Ed Gerber, Classis British Columbia South-East:** “Under a veneer of unity, there are profound differences among members of the CRC.”

fied in the study, it will be advisable for future synods to consider declaring a *status confessionis*. Such a declaration would make one’s view of sexuality a creedal matter. As such, all persons ordained in the church would be required to assent to the official church teaching.

Chelsey Harmon, Classis British Columbia North-West, was troubled by another possibility entertained by synod: that the new study committee might appoint a team to draft a new confession in the style of the contemporary testimony on human embodiment





**Woman advisor Emily Ulmer: "I'm angry. Any report on sexuality should not be limited to sexuality this body considers disordered."**

and sexuality. Synod changed that to a "statement of faith" but retained the reference to the contemporary testimony.

There were dissenting voices. Emily Ulmer, a woman advisor, spoke of people who are "post-Christian," who no longer care what is happening in synods. "Although I'm advised not to express my emotions, I'm angry." She said that any report on sexuality should not be limited "to sexuality this body considers disordered," but to the whole topic.

Ulmer's passion for those who no longer consider the church relevant was followed by Cornelius Hutt, Classis Atlantic Northeast, who spoke of his fraught relationship with a same-sex oriented daughter whom, he said, "has been led astray by creative readings of Scripture."

Synod said the committee will include at least three ethnic minority pastors and/or theologians, at least three faculty members from Calvin Theological Seminary, a same-sex attracted person, a gender dysphoric person, two pastors, a chaplain, a philosopher, and a scientist. The committee will also include a *promotor fidei*. More popularly known as the "devil's advocate," that person would be assigned to

"raise difficulties and doubts regarding the biblical, scientific, and Reformed validity of all arguments presented during the study committee's work." This person will suggest other explanations and alternative perspectives to those being presented by the study committee.

Ashley Bootsma, a young adult representative, lamented the lack of young adult representation on the committee. She said of the members required, only two spots on the committee could conceivably be offered to people under 25.

Mostly the delegates were happy to have the new committee and placed great confidence in its ability to resolve the knotty issues of human sexuality. Michael Winowski, Classis Wisconsin, reminded the synod that biblical authority is foundational. He spoke of the need for "the denomination to tell the truth to ourselves, to our children, and to the world God loves."

The committee is scheduled to submit an interim report to Synod 2019 and its final report to Synod 2021.

—Clayton Libolt

## No LGBT Advisors for Synod

Synod 2016 advised Christian Reformed churches and classes (regional groups of churches) to invite, as much as possible, the presence and involvement of same-sex attracted members when dealing with matters that affect their lives and discipleship. However, it declined to establish a panel of LGBT advisors to synod.

The request had come from Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, which said, "It is a matter of justice that when the lives and faith journeys of some of us in the church are under discussion,



**Margherita Bierling, Classis Chatham: "Let's invite them to the table."**

that discussion must include the participants of those of us whose journey it is." Charles Kooger, of that classis, said, "It's about hearing the voices. We need to know our neighbor's journey."

Several delegates said that sexuality and sexual identities have moral dimensions that other categories of advisors to synod (women, ethnic minorities) do not.

Margherita Bierling, Classis Chatham, said, "Let's invite them to the table."

Paul Verhoef, Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, pointed out that every statement, review, and assessment since 1973 has lamented how little progress has been made toward this goal, while yet hoping that change is just around the corner. "We invite them to classes and congregations, but not synod."

Delegates were not convinced.

—George Vink

## Synod 2016 Approves New Liturgical Forms

Synod 2016 adopted 13 new liturgical forms for use in the churches but first held an extensive discussion that delved into the Christian Reformed Church's theology regarding baptism and communion.

Delegates approved several edits to the forms, which were written by professors of Calvin Theological Seminary, staff of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the CRC's Worship Ministries, and others.

As delegate Joe Vanden Akker, Classis Minnkota, said, "Words are important, especially as we use them in worship." The extended discussion on wording had some delegates delighted that deep theological discussion was taking place on the floor of synod.

The new forms for communion, baptism, profession of faith, welcome of new members, ordination of commissioned pastors and chaplains, and ordination of elders and deacons will be translated into Korean and Spanish and will be made available online in a user-friendly format.

—George Vink



**Joe Vanden Akker, Classis Minnkota: "Words are important, especially as we use them in worship."**





Autumn Yazzie-Newell explains her drawings to Banner reporter Roxanne Van Farowe.

## Drawing Helps Navajo Delegate Listen

While listening at synod, delegate Autumn Yazzie-Newell drew pictures in her notebook and even decorated the signs at her table.

“Drawing pictures is something I do during long meetings,” she explained. “It’s my way of note-taking. It helps me to take in the meaning of what I’m hearing.”

Elaborate and colorful, Yazzie-Newell’s artistic style reflects her Navajo heritage. Her father, a Navajo, was also her high school art teacher.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Synod 2016 Rejects Doctrine of Discovery as Heresy

Synod 2016 rejected the Doctrine of Discovery as heresy in response to a study report on the topic.

The 68-page report mandated by Synod 2012 states that many Europeans tried to choke out Indigenous culture in North America, beginning with papal edicts during the 1500s and persisting in subtle ways to the present day. In the 1800s and 1900s, authorities used the Euro-superior worldview to place Native American children in boarding schools with the goal of assimilating them, the report states. One of those boarding schools, it adds, was a mission of the Christian Reformed Church: Rehoboth Christian School. The report is particularly critical of the Rehoboth school.

Synod recognized and gave thanks for “the love and grace extended over many years by missionaries sent out by the CRCNA,” but also acknowledged the pain of those who suffered from expe-



periences in boarding schools in the U.S. and Canada, including Rehoboth Christian School.

But synod chose not to adopt most of the actions recommended by the report, such as forming a story-gathering commission, creating a denominational service of lament, or educating CRC members on the Doctrine of Discovery.

“With all respect to the task force, we felt that they had prescribed various actions without necessarily consulting with the Zuni and Navajo people,” said Daniel Zylstra. “We didn’t want to be prescriptive. We felt that it was not right to be dictating a process to a people who do not feel that they have been consulted or engaged in determining that process.”

Taskforce member Mark Charles, who has both Dutch and Navajo heritage, intimated that the lack of consultation was because Native American boarding school survivors are hesitant to dig into their painful past. “That’s the challenge at Red Mesa. There are certain conversations we don’t know how to have. There is a parental dynamic that exists because of the way that [boarding school students] were presented the gospel.”

Delegates participated in the Blanket Exercise to help grasp the emotions around the displacement of Native peoples by Europeans.

That got a strong reaction from the delegates from Red Mesa. “When people from Classis Red Mesa heard that I was coming to synod, over and over they said ‘Please tell the stories of love and grace and goodness that have happened in Rehoboth and Zuni Christian schools,’” said delegate Gail De Young. She proceeded to tell the stories of former boarding school students who had made strong connections with their supervising houseparents.

Ethnic advisor Darleen Litson told delegates that her boarding school experience was very good. “I want to acknowledge the missionaries who came out to the Navajo reservation to bring the gospel to our communities,” she said, weeping as she recited a list of Dutch surnames. “Because they brought the gospel, salvation came to my grandparents’ house, my mother, my children, my grandchildren, so to God be the glory, and I thank God for them.”



18

Percentage of delegates from ethnic minorities





**Ethnic advisor Darleen Litson:** "Because [the missionaries] brought the gospel, salvation came to my grandparents house, my mother, my children, my grandchildren. Thank God for them."

Tim Toeset, Classis Yellowstone, said his 104-year-old uncle who worked at the school in Rehoboth had read the report. "That report pained him significantly because it demeaned his work, because it essentially said it wasn't right. . . . We need to recognize that there's pain there too."

Task force member Mike Hogeterp reminded delegates that the report was not just focused on the southwestern U.S. "In our research and listening we've learned that the Doctrine of Discovery influences us both historically and presently. . . . Many of us in North America live and worship on unceded land," he said. "We don't like to hear these stories, but we drink downstream from them. We cannot change that brokenness today, but perhaps in truth-telling and lament



**Gina Taylor, Classis Hamilton:** "What, specifically, are alleged to be the CRC's sins? What are we apologizing for in Canada?"

as a first posture we can begin to reconcile."

Woman advisor Melissa Van Dyk said she was familiar with the effects of residential schools on Canadian First Nations people. "[Synod is not going] far enough in acknowledging our personal and community response. We do need to acknowledge the cultural genocide that we have been part of and continue to be a part of."



**People from Red Mesa asked Gail De Young to tell the stories of love and grace and goodness that have happened in Rehoboth and Zuni Christian schools.**

Gina Taylor, Classis Hamilton, said she had read the report and wondered what, specifically, are alleged to be the CRC's sins. "What are we apologizing for in Canada?" The CRC did not run any boarding schools in Canada. Hogeterp responded that we also own the corporate sins of the nation.

Delegates asked next year's synod to consider setting a Day of Justice in the CRC in order to lament racial injustices. Afterward they formed a large circle and prayed, honoring the Native tradition of holding a sharing circle. Delegates then recited Lord's Day 40 of the Heidelberg Catechism, addressing the sixth commandment, murder.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Classis Arizona Mentors First-Time Synod Delegates

Long before Synod 2016, first-time delegates from Classis Arizona began their journey. José Rayas, an experienced delegate, prepared the group regarding both parliamentary procedures and the issues to be considered. Dan Kuiper, Samuel Aranda, and Erika



**Classis Arizona Delegates (l-r): Erika Colyn, Samuel Aranda, Dan Kuiper, and José Rayas.**

Colyn kept in touch and had a great deal of discussion to be prepared to participate fully at synod. Rayas served as vice president of synod. All agreed it was worthwhile and helped their appreciation of synod and its workings.

—George Vink

## Ethnic Advisors Serve Synod 2016



Ethnic advisors for Synod 2016 were Darleen Litson, from New Mexico; John Lendein, from Alberta; and Sheila Johnson, from Michigan.

Up to seven ethnic advisors can be appointed to synod, but that number is decreased if the percentage of delegates to synod who are from ethnic minority backgrounds increases. This year 18 percent of delegates were from minority backgrounds.

—George Vink

## Synod 2016 Officers

The officers elected for Synod 2016 had many years of synod experience between them. President Paul DeVries, 52, was at his seventh synod. Vice president José Rayas, 56, had already been to synod eight times.



**(L-r) Elsa Fennema, Bert Slofstra, Paul DeVries, José Rayas**

First clerk Bert Slofstra, 63, was at synod for the eleventh time. And second clerk Elsa Fennema, 72, was at her third synod.

Noting the diversity of the officers, Slofstra said delegates are more sensitive to that than in earlier synods, electing males and females, different ethnicities, American and Canadian.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Seminarian Funding Task Force Formed

Recognizing the need and importance of properly trained ministers, the Christian Reformed Church requires that each classis “maintain a student fund” in order to financially assist those preparing for ministry. Classes (regional groups of churches) have Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams to support and encourage students in their preparation.

Classis Hamilton acknowledged the long-standing practice of classes fulfilling this mandate but noted differences in the level of financial support from classis to classis. Synod 2016 agreed it is an issue and formed a task force to “address equity of classis-based funding, financial challenges faced by students from Canada desiring to attend Calvin Theological Seminary, and the impact of these financial circumstances on CRC members accessing a Reformed preparation for ministry with the CRCNA.”

The task force will bring its findings and recommendations to Synod 2017.

—George Vink

## New Committee Will Encourage Continuing Education for Pastors

Synod 2016 approved a far-reaching new initiative for continuing education for pastors. Synod president Paul De Vries said that the issue of continuing education for pastors has long vexed the CRC, including such questions as who funds continuing education and how pastors and councils should be held accountable. He praised the committee making the new proposal for doing good work.

The centerpiece of the proposal is the formation of a Continuing Education Committee that would include members from existing ministries, including the Candidacy Committee, Pastor Church Resources, and Calvin Theological Seminary, augmented by volunteers.

The new committee is charged with creating a continuing education website with resources for pastors,

**Paul De Vries:**  
Continuing education for pastors has long vexed the CRC.



encouraging councils of local churches to develop learning covenants with their pastors, developing continuing education resources and requirements, and more.

Funding for the new committee would come in part from an existing fund within Pastor Church Resources. Other funds would have to come from sources like the CRC Foundation.

With this proposal, synod hopes to finally address the long-standing difficulty in developing a denomination-wide program of continuing education for pastors that would encourage most, if not all, pastors to participate in quality continuing education.

—Clayton Libolt

## Candidates for Ministry Feted by Synod

Synod 2016 approved 47 candidates for Ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. They are eligible to be called as pastors by congregations. The candidates were joyously received and celebrated by delegates, along with family members and friends of the candidates who were present.

Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, spoke words of encouragement to the candidates. Noting that the synod *Agenda* contains the names of 132 ministers who have served a combined 7,776 years in ministry, he encouraged the candi-



Candidates for the ministry are presented to Synod 2016.

dates—on this their first day—to live “a long obedience in the same direction.” He said, “You received a call from God to go to seminary. Thank you for taking that step of

obedience, and may you continue on the journey of obedience.”

—Clayton Libolt



## Two Pastors in the Family

Reggie and Sharon Smith were jubilant that Sharon was one of the 47 ministerial candidates presented to Synod 2016.

"In 1993, I was presented as a candidate for ministry and [my wife] was on the balcony, and now we've reversed it," said Reggie Smith.

"It took 10 years [to complete my M.Div. studies]," said Sharon. "I've always been called to ministry since I was a child, and God made it clear to me that he wants me to do it more formally beyond being a pastor's wife." She hopes to enter pastoral care ministry and has a heart for pastor's wives, she said.

Reggie was at synod as president of the Back to God Ministries International board.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Reggie and Sharon Smith

## Danjuma Gibson: Pastoral Ministry Isn't about Solving Problems

Pastoral care is not about solving problems but rather listening, according to Dr. Danjuma Gibson.

On Monday evening, following an hour-long interview, Synod 2016 appointed Gibson associate professor of pastoral care at Calvin Theological Seminary.

"In a pastoral course, I want to teach [students] how to listen," Gibson told delegates. "My goal with students is to destabilize the fixed image they may have that pastoral ministry is about solving problems. We focus on how to be fully present, share in people's joys and suffering without trying to solve something that's unsolvable."

Gibson has lived in urban settings his entire life. He pastored an inner-city church in Chicago for 16 years while also working as a banker. He has advanced degrees in pastoral theology, Christian studies, urban ministry, and business administration.

Gibson said a key issue for seminarians is that they need an understanding of pastoral leadership: "I ask my students, Could you be a pastor to your parents, your professor, the president? If the answer is no, why not? Pastoral leadership shouldn't be about a power dynamic. Many of the people you will be pastoring have more life experience than you will. Realign to a servant leadership paradigm. Leadership is about servant leadership. Christ makes it clear, whoever is great among you must be his servant."

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Dr. Danjuma Gibson

## Synod 2016 Approves Vandermolten as Director of Vocational Formation

Dr. Geoffrey Vandermolten described himself simply as "a child of Abba, a husband, and a father." The latter was verified loudly when a cheering team of family shouted encouragement upon his being introduced to synod.

The occasion was the interview by Synod 2016, after which delegates approved Vandermolten's appointment as director of vocational formation at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Vandermolten said that major changes are taking place in theological education. His office would not be one of providing services such as summer assignments or preaching engagements, as had been the focus during his seminary tenure. Defining successful vocational formation now includes giving students a better understanding of their role in the church. He hopes to help shape changes in the educating of pastors toward their vocational engagement.

He believes that seminary students are called to use the tools and personality they've been given. He'll help students see and appreciate their gifts but will place an emphasis on having them listen closely to the prodding of the Holy Spirit in the context of a community of faculty and students.

Vandermolten indicated his awareness of many students not



Dr. Geoffrey Vandermolten

receiving calls right away upon graduation. There are times that God's answer is "No, it's not for you" or "Not yet." He said the world to which students are called may not require full-time ministry as such. These are complexities in the CRC also, as we increasingly understand the reality of change.

For those who had terrible ministry experiences, Vandermolten said he realizes that churches have different expectations. He would ask, "What do you think the Holy Spirit wants you to be or do? What are you wired to be?" He realizes mismatching does happen, but the church must learn to let leaders lead and intercessors pray. He concluded that whatever is done must be done in the context of the body of Christ listening to the Holy Spirit.

—George Vink

**Henk Bruinsma:** You may be interested to know that their website for the Center for Excellence in Preaching has gotten a great increase in the number of hits—and most of them coming in on Saturdays.



## Synod Proposes Recategorizing the Belhar Confession as a Contemporary Testimony

**A**fter a long and sometimes electric debate, Synod 2016 proposed that the Belhar Confession be categorized as a contemporary testimony, giving it a higher status within the CRC. The change would give it the same status as “Our World Belongs to God.”

The Belhar is a confession born in South Africa out of the struggle against apartheid. It affirms that the church is a single reconciled and reconciling community in Christ, and that anything, including apartheid or other forms of racism, that would introduce unbiblical divisions into the body of Christ is wrong and should be condemned. The South African churches that created the Belhar Confession offered it to the worldwide Reformed community as a new confession, drawing a line between what is acceptable among Reformed people and what is not.

Lenore Maine set the stage for the discussion early. She said the Belhar is needed for our collective witness. Even if others don't think they need it, she said, “We in New Jersey need it.” She spoke of her anger at the long legacy of systemic racism, of being denied participation in the American dream. She told a story of being a young black girl bused 21 miles (34 km) to school. One day she was detained by a police officer for jaywalking. By the time she was released, the bus had left. She started to walk the 21 miles home until someone picked her up. These and other racially motivated actions have scarred her.



**Tracie Traylor-Rhodes, Classis Hackensack: “I echo my sister’s pain. My life has not always been easy either. Where is justice in America?”**

Tracie Traylor-Rhodes, also of Hackensack, picked up the theme. “I echo my sister’s pain,” she said. “I must say that my life has not always been easy either.” She spoke of her fears for her son. “Where is justice in America?” she asked.

The Christian Reformed Church has struggled to know what to do with the Belhar. Synod 2012 decided not to make the Belhar a fourth confession alongside three Reformation confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. Instead synod created a new category of faith affirmation called “Ecumenical Faith Declaration,” a category not clearly defined nor recognized by the ecumenical partners in the wider Reformed community.

Classis Hackensack, a regional group of churches, asked Synod 2016 to reconsider the 2012 decision and to give the Belhar the status of a confession.

The synodical discussion was long, often intense, and filled with

the desire to reach a stronger consensus on the role of the Belhar confession in promoting reconciliation and opposing racism.

Synod prayed a prayer of lament about racism and violence in our societies. “O God of the cross and the lynching tree,” the prayer began. “Gunshots ring out under the heavens that declare your glory.” The prayer went on: “The streets and the sidewalks of your dwelling place flow with blood.” To a repeated chorus of, “How long, O God?” the prayer lamented turning mothers and grandmothers into mourners.

Bruce Gritter, Classis Atlantic Northeast, argued that the Belhar had been “consigned to confessional purgatory.” Jei Wilson, Classis Chicago South, said that assigning the Belhar to a separate category with no prior history hinted at “separate but equal.”

Rev. Lisa Vander Wal, the fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in America, said that the

Ecumenical Faith Declaration category, like “an airplane on a road,” didn’t seem to fit. The Reformed Church in America has adopted the Belhar as a full confession.

John Meiboom, Classis Toronto, gave another reason why the Ecumenical Faith Declaration



**Lenore Maine, Classis Hackensack: “Even if others don’t think they need [the Belhar], we in New Jersey need it.”**

category seemed to him to be less than adequate. He said it pointed outward and not to the CRC itself: “I’m hearing today in more clear terms why we need this [moving the Belhar to the category of a contemporary testimony]. We need it for ourselves.” Bert Slofstra, British Columbia South-East, spoke of the need for the Belhar to have relevance to the local church. Situated as it is now, he said, “The Belhar says absolutely nothing to the life of the church.”

Some delegates doubted that changing categories would make any difference for the use of the Belhar confession in the churches, but others strongly suggested it would. Chelsey Harmon, British Columbia Northwest, said, “We as



**Bert Slofstra, Classis British Columbia South-East: “Situated as it is now, the Belhar says absolutely nothing to the life of the church.”**

## CRC and RCA Delegates Share Simulcast, Plan Shared Synod

a synod . . . said that we denounce systemic racism, and this is a way we take action.”

Changing the status of the Belhar does make a difference in the Covenant of Officebearers all officebearers must sign. This covenant now requires officebearers to affirm the contemporary testimony called Our World Belongs to God “as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides [them] in [their] present context.” If the Belhar is moved to the category of a contemporary testimony, it would require officebearers to affirm the same thing of the Belhar.

Bert Slofstra said that “if we give the Belhar the same status as the contemporary testimony [Our World Belongs to God], then every year our officebearers are confronted with the contents of the Belhar.

Some delegates worried whether elevating the Belhar to the status of a contemporary testimony and including it in the Covenant for Officebearers would require them to sign a document with which they could not fully agree, but they were advised that in agreeing to non-confessional statements, the CRC already allows officebearers some latitude.

The proposal to recategorize the Belhar Confession is now referred to Synod 2017, which will make the final decision in the matter.

—Clayton Libolt

Synod 2016, the general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, paused in its work to share greetings electronically with the synod of the Reformed Church in America. Tom De Vries, general secretary of the RCA, and Steve Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, spoke by video link about the Pella Accord. That accord, made during the synods of both churches in 2014, binds both churches “to act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately.”

De Vries and Timmermans spoke of the work the CRC and RCA are doing together already and of their plans to do even more, including holding both synods at the same time at Calvin College in 2018. Synod anticipates sessions in which the two denominations will celebrate together and engage in “strategic planning for current and future collaboration.”

The technology was less than perfect, but the friendship between De Vries and Timmer-



mans—and increasingly between the CRC and the RCA—came through. The simulcast ended with a delegate from each synod praying for the other.

Following the simulcast, Rev. Lisa Vander Wal, a fraternal delegate from the RCA, brought greetings in person. She centered her remarks on the World Communion of Reformed Churches, an ecumenical organization to which both the CRC and RCA belong. The communion is planning a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation next year in Leipzig.

**Rev. Tom De Vries joined Synod 2016 by video link from the RCA synod.**

The theme of the Leipzig conference is “Living God: Renew and Transform Us,” which, Vander Wal said, is a prayer to the living God, a God who is still on the move. “We say as Calvinists,” she added, “that we want to be part of the transformation of the world, but we also need to be transformed and renewed.” In that, she said, there is much to study, much to pray, much to work for.

—Clayton Libolt

## Presbyterian Church in Canada: ‘Grateful for Ongoing Dialogue’

Rev. Douglas Rollwage, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC), brought greetings to Synod 2016. The PCC and the CRC created a formal ecumenical relationship in 2009. One area of shared ministry has been work with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, he said. His church has also been involved in sponsoring refugees and has been discussing matters of human sexuality, as has the CRC. He added that he is “grateful that we have an ongoing dialogue” so the denominations can learn from each other in such matters.

Synod president Paul De Vries thanked God that “as we wrestle with similar issues of human sexuality that can vex us, we have brothers and sisters in other denominations, and we can struggle together.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe



**Rev. Douglas Rollwage, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.**

## Synod Urges Action on Religious Persecution

**W**ith very little discussion, Synod 2016 agreed that the CRC needs to do more about religious persecution and liberty.

To that end, it adopted recommendations that were part of a study committee report commissioned by Synod 2013. In the words of Kevin den Dulk, who headed that committee, the reality of persecution is “crying out for a response from the church.” The committee’s mandate was to propose actions to empower the church to walk alongside those who are subject to religious persecution or who are denied religious freedom at home or abroad.



**Henk Bruinsma, Classis Toronto:** “The Christian community still lacks tools to understand religious liberty.”



**Kevin den Dulk:** “The reality of persecution cries out for a response from the church.”

Henk Bruinsma, Classis Toronto, said his classis had asked for this study committee. He said that the report did not fulfill the mandate given. “The Christian community still lacks tools to understand religious liberty.”

Robert Arbogast, Classis Lake Erie, reminded the body that the prevalence of persecution also reminds us that suffering for Christ is, and will always be, part of our Christian lives.

Synod also encouraged “all members of the CRC to actively live out love for God and for others in every area of life, despite the relative threat of persecution.”

—George Vink

Den Dulk told synod delegates that violations of religious liberty and persecution affect church members in different, even if not direct, ways. A great deal [of these violations] appear more indirectly, and yet we in both Canada and the United States seldom consider any governmental response, he said. The goal of the church must remain, in his words, to seek ways for churches to foster “shalom,” including religious liberty as it affects an increasing number of refugees in the world.

Acknowledging the complexity of the topic, synod recommended several personal, congregational, and denominational actions. Congregations are encouraged to appoint a prayer coordinator who will keep up on religious persecution, advise officebearers, and foster regular prayer for those suffering.

The CRC’s Office of Social Justice will be instructed to expand the practice of urging congregations to participate in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. World Renew and the CRC’s Centre for Public Dialogue are asked to communicate up-to-date information for congregations on issues of religious persecution.

Chris DeWinter, Classis Niagara, urged delegates to be careful about how to speak about suffering from their privileged positions while others are facing death. He called for “pastors to be incredibly prophetic about speaking to their congregations.”



**Synod 2016 worship service.**

## Synod 2016 Worship Service: Keep the Bond of Peace

At the 2016 Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise, Rev. John Rottman preached on Ephesians 4, focusing on Paul’s admonition to “make every effort to keep the unity in the bond of peace” in the face of cultural pressures regarding sexuality.

The culture “rages against the church’s teaching,” Rottmann said. “There is the danger of shipwreck, which could eventually split a church.”

Paul spoke to churches “in danger of being tossed by every wind of teaching,” he added. “Paul points to the deep reality of their life with God. As it faces the storm, the church turns to God and confesses its faith. It stands with the whole church through the ages.”

With synod delegates facing a week that may include stormy debate on the topic of same-sex marriage, he said, “As our part of the church faces storms of the present day, God’s Spirit animates and guides us as we speak the truth to each other in love with the power of the Spirit and the bond of peace.” With such an anchor, he added, “How can we possibly go wrong?”

The service, hosted by North Hills CRC in Troy, Mich., featured Rev. Randall Engle on the organ, the Oakland University Brass, and the Calvin College Alumni Choir.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

**Paul De Vries:** We had a debate over to how to pronounce Simon Tuin’s name. We had majority and minority reports. Simon told us how to pronounce his name and we decided if he wants to be wrong, that’s okay.



**CRC Has New Relationship with Ethiopian Church**

Synod 2016 designated the Presbyterian Church in Ethiopia as a “church in dialogue,” a relationship that allows the CRC to explore ways to be of service to other churches.

The church in Ethiopia had disappeared in the 1980s but has experienced a rebirth in recent years. It now has 160 churches and five schools, according to the CRC’s ecumenical and interfaith relations committee.

Fikre Norcha, a student at Calvin Theological Seminary who was also an official in the Ethiopian Presbyterian Church, thanked synod for inviting his church into fellowship. —George Vink



Rev. Caleb Ahima, Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria.

**Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria Greets CRC in North America**

Rev. Caleb Ahima brought greetings to the Christian Reformed Church in North America from the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria.

Ahima said, “We remember with nostalgia your service of sacrifice” as expressed in the ministry of Johanna Veenstra, the first CRC North American missionary to Nigeria. He recalled divisions in his church where the CRC in North America was a catalyst in achieving the measure of peace and unity the Nigerian church now enjoys.

He noted that Nigeria has endured great loss and great pain but also that a great deal of help has come from North America. He thanked the Lord for the CRC and its World Missions ministry, asking for prayers for God’s protection from harm for both the CRCN and CRCNA so that they may continue to be agents of grace, healing, and peace.

—George Vink



Rev. Peter Azuana, General Secretary of the Universal Reformed Christian Church in Nigeria.

**Nigerian Church Reports Setbacks, Requests Prayer**

Rev. Peter Azuana, General Secretary of the Universal Reformed Christian Church in Nigeria, brought greetings to the Christian Reformed Church at Synod 2016.

The denomination, formerly known as the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv, has over 250,000 members in Nigeria and Chad, Azuana reported.

That region has suffered attacks from roving Fulani herdsmen since 2014. These herdsmen have destroyed about 70 of the denomination’s churches and have killed almost 1,000 people in the last two years, Azuana said.

“This has been a major setback to our church,” he told synod. “Our delivery of health services is also suffering drastically.” He requested prayer for families affected by the attacks, including widows and orphans. He also asked for prayer for the restoration of hospitals and health services, including a hospital that the denomination is raising funds to build.

—Roxanne VanFarowe



Rev. Rafat Fathy

**Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt Planting Churches, Schools**

Rev. Rafat Fathy thanked Synod 2016 for inviting him to share the story of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. His church represents more than 400 congregations and 24 schools. He said that while the situation in Egypt has improved with 40 Christian members in Parliament, there is still a great need to achieve social justice and freedom for the people of Egypt.

Fathy said the church plans to develop three new schools as well as 27 new churches while they also care for refugees. He said they need “our partners in North America to do this ministry in God’s name” because we are all working for the same kingdom.

—George Vink



Dr. Sam Logan, World Reformed Fellowship.

**World Reformed Fellowship Sends Greetings**

Dr. Sam Logan, associate international director of World Reformed Fellowship, brought greetings to Synod 2016. The organization is a group of evangelical and Reformed Christian congregations, individuals, and organizations from 79 countries. The Christian Reformed Church joined the fellowship in 2015.

Logan said the Fellowship seeks inclusivity while maintaining that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches as part of their statement of faith. The Fellowship also works on behalf of believers who are falsely imprisoned or enduring persecution.

—George Vink

# NEWS SYNOD 2016

## Synod Rejects Ministry Shares Increase, Wants System Overhauled

**S**ynod 2016 rejected the 2 percent increase in ministry shares funds proposed by the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees, instead holding the line at the current amount of \$339.48 per active adult member. Ministry shares are the monies collected to support the denomination's shared ministries.

Not only is this the first time in recent memory that synod did not grant a proposed increase, but it also requested an overhaul of the system itself. Faced with a system that has been slowly eroding, with the actual amount collected now at less than 60 percent of full funding, synod decided it was time to "reimagine" the system.

The ministry shares system has long been defended as an efficient and low-cost way of raising necessary funds. Denominational director of finance and operations John Bolt said that there are very few costs associated with raising



**Director of Finance and Operations John Bolt: "[This decision] will amount to \$200,000 less income."**

roughly \$24 million through the ministry shares system. The remaining \$16 million needed for the denominational budget, in contrast, requires \$4 million in fund-raising costs.

The board itself had appointed a task force to make recommendations to improve the system. Synod took its direction from the task force's report.

Synod's first instruction is for the Board of Trustees to "to evaluate and prioritize all existing programs and ministries with the goal of reducing the institutional footprint." Part of that evaluation is to evaluate every denominational ministry to see whether it still reflects the will of synod and therefore, presumably, the people in the pews.

The goal, said delegate William Delleman, Classis Alberta North, is to reduce "ministry creep." Kathy Vandergrift, president of the board, said that the board already reviews programs regularly and that this is the purpose of the denominational ministry plan.

Several delegates thought that the problems with the ministry shares system arise from a failure of communication. Vern Swieringa, Classis Zeeland, said, "The reason we have a problem is that [members] just don't know what we are doing together."

Another piece of the overhaul is to place increased responsibility on the classes (regional clusters of churches) for increasing congregational participation in the ministry shares system. The original language required that classes "intervene with, encourage, and confront churches that do not contribute to the ministry shares system." Delegates objected to this language, pointing out that classes don't respond well to this approach. Matthew Haan, Classis Lakota, said that classes don't like synod to "tell us what to do." Drew Sweetman, speaking for the committee that proposed the changes, responded by saying, "Synod is the voice of the church."

In the end, the language about intervening and confronting non-paying churches was withdrawn. In its place synod used softer language, leaving it to the Board of Trustees to propose just what that process would look like.

Synod also asked the board to "reimagine ministry shares"—to fund the ministries and programs the denomination has agreed upon but with a simplified way to calculate a church's share instead of counting members.

In refusing to grant the ministry shares increase proposed by the Board of Trustees, some delegates suggested the amount didn't matter. Rob Buikema, Classis Wisconsin, said, "The number keeps going up, and it becomes a fictional number," since the amount actually paid into the ministry shares system remains roughly the same, regardless of the number. A chart posted by a delegate showed the amount collected over the past decade as constant while the ministry shares number steadily increased.

**William Delleman, Classis Alberta North: "Reduce ministry creep."**





**Rob Buikema, Classis Wisconsin:** “The [ministry shares amount] keeps going up, and it becomes a fictional number.”

Others spoke of the pain of making cuts, even at the 2 percent level, when ministry budgets have already been established. Bolt said that the decision will amount to \$200,000 less income. Vandergrift said that something will have to give. But delegates voted 112-65 to fund 2017 ministry shares at the same level as they are currently funded.

At the end of the discussion, executive director Steve Timmermans addressed delegates. In listening to the whole debate, he said, he often heard language that distinguished between “us” and “the denomination.” “You *are* the denomination,” he reminded them. He added that he heard

both hope and frustration in the discussion. But, he said, “we are going to get better.” He mentioned the evaluations of ministries that will come with the ministry plan, and he held out hope that the new Council of Delegates adopted at last year’s synod would help bring everyone around the table. He concluded, “We are the church together.”

—Clayton Libolt

**Robert Arbogast:** My system keeps saying there are too many simultaneous invocations. Apparently the system cannot hear all our prayers as well as God can.

## CRC Executive Director Reports to Synod 2016

Christian Reformed Church executive director Dr. Steven Timmermans reported to Synod 2016 his optimism about the state of the church. He noted an increase in the number of congregations by 10, as well as stable financial faithfulness reflected in the giving level. “It’s beyond where we’d hoped to be,” he said. “With God’s grace, our ministry continues across the globe.”

The ministry of deacons continues to be revitalized, as reflected by deacons’ participation as delegates at synod. Progress also continues with the revitalization of the office of elder.

Timmermans talked about the denominational ministry plan called “Our Journey,” which was developed out of a

Executive director  
Steven Timmermans



long series of listening sessions and subsequent discussion. He pointed out that what was formerly called the five streams are now called five callings: gospel proclamation, mercy and justice, global mission, faith formation, and servant leadership. “Naming them call-

ings,” he said, “reflects what God calls us to do or be.”

However we may restate our denominational goals, Timmermans reminded the delegates, “We’re a confessional church. That’s the foundation that puts us into motion.”

—George Vink



## Board President Reports on CRC’s Direction

Cooperatively and responsively, leaders have been resetting the direction of the Christian Reformed Church. That was the report to Synod 2016 from Kathy Vandergrift, president of the Board of Trustees.

“The six years I served on the board of trustees have been a time of significant change,” said Vandergrift. “I am confident that the changes position the CRCNA well for the [future],” she said. “Structure, culture, leadership, ministry priorities—all have been reviewed.”

“We heard from churches that we need a stronger focus on working with the local church,” she said. An example of how this is happening “is the move to make published resources freely available through electronic means so every member of every church can find what we need in our situation or particular work.”

The Board of Trustees is also aiming for collaboration between agencies, she added. “We are opening up silos within the organizations, a need that the board heard over and over again. We are taking a positive rather than begrudging approach to our two-nations character.”

—Roxanne VanFarowe



## Shiao Chong Shares Vision for *The Banner* Editorship

**W**hen Shiao Chong was interviewed by Synod 2016 to become the new editor of *The Banner*, he was quick to exhibit his penchant for precise wording—and his sense of humor. *The Banner* is the official publication of the Christian Reformed Church.

“I prefer to be called Chong,” he told delegates. “My first name, Shiao, and my middle name together mean ‘little wisdom.’ It’s a good thing I didn’t translate that on my resume.”

Chong grew up in Malaysia, the youngest of six children, in what he called a “diaspora Chinese family,” with Buddhist and Taoist beliefs. Some of his siblings became Christians, and after one of his brothers took him to a Plymouth Brethren church in his early

teens, he made a decision to follow Christ. After he came to Canada as a young adult to study at the University of Alberta, he fell into a depression as he struggled with culture shock and spiritual upheaval. A Christian Reformed campus chaplain there guided him in his faith journey and introduced him to great Reformed thinkers.

That was where he connected with the CRC and where he met his wife, Martha Schreiber. They and their three daughters are members of Rehoboth Fellowship CRC in Etobicoke, Ont. Since 2001, Chong has been a CRC campus pastor at York University in Toronto, Ont.

Revealing himself to be a storyteller, Chong created vivid pictures as he answered questions.



New *Banner* editor Shiao Chong

To explain how he will navigate wide differences of opinion as *Banner* editor, he told a story of groups of Jewish students and Middle Eastern students holding opposing demonstrations. Two students quietly wedged themselves into the middle of the conflict, each holding a simple homemade sign reading “Peace.”

“It was like a parable,” Chong explained. “God was telling me to be in the middle, this is my ministry. I’m supposed to go in the middle and proclaim God’s peace. That’s what I have tried to do ever since, to be a bridge builder.”

He acknowledged that it won’t be easy to be in the middle as the CRC faces tough issues. “I feel that that’s where I’m supposed to be. Not that I relish it. I’d be lying if I say that I’m not afraid. In the middle of everyone’s slings and bullets, most likely you’ll get hurt, but I have to follow what I believe God is calling me to do. I’m going to call people to remember our unity in Christ. Whether we like it or not, Christ has united us. That’s a gift of God, and we are accountable to that.”

Chong spoke of the CRC as a denominational house in which

*The Banner* is the kitchen table. He wants to bring more voices to the table, he said, including those of young people, various ethnicities, and women. “The confessions make up the shape of the house,” he added. “As a CRC pastor, that’s something that I’m committed and accountable to.”

“The Bible needs to anchor that discussion,” Chong continued. “We think of authority as a hammer. I prefer to see biblical authority as life-giving authority. When biblical truths are articulated well and explained well, I believe it goes inside us and sparks life in us. That’s where we make biblical truth our own. The trick is, how do we articulate biblical truth well, so that it will get into our hearts?”

Following the interview, delegates enthusiastically approved his appointment.

Synod president Paul De Vries prayed, saying, “[Lord,] you can take the little things of this world and do great works. Thank you for drawing Chong to yourself by your Spirit. Thank you for bringing him into the circle of the CRC.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Woman Advisors Reflect on Their Role at Synod 2016



Seven woman advisors were invited to Synod 2016: Linda Ryks, Melissa Van Dyk, Karen Knip, Emily Ulmer, Jenny Douma, Elaine VanLaare, and Sarah van Breda.

“We’ve been blessed just to be able to participate [in synod],” said Jenny Douma. “Everybody should get a chance to go. It shows you the broader perspective of what goes on in the church.”

The women agreed that serving in this way increased their appreciation for the church.

“It’s not that we change synod, synod changes us,” said Sarah van Breda.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

(Back row, l-r): Linda Ryks, Melissa Van Dyk, Karen Knip, and Emily Ulmer. (Front row, l-r): Jenny Douma, Elaine VanLaare, and Sarah van Breda.

## Synod 2016 Says Sexual Abuse by Officebearers Will Not Be Tolerated

Synod 2016 added specific information to the Church Order Supplement regarding officebearers who confess to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct. The changes were in response to a request to Synod 2015 to differentiate sexual misconduct from sexual abuse and to address the matter of resignation of officebearers in situations of abuse.

The Church Order will now note that a key dynamic in considering abuse of office is the power imbalance between an officebearer and a parishioner. Another addition is a more specific listing of behaviors considered to be sexual misconduct, including unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy.

John Meiboom, delegate from Classis Toronto, asked if a deposed minister can serve as an elder. Faculty advisor and specialist in Church Order Kathy



**Dr. Kathy Smith: "An officebearer deposed on grounds of a pattern of abuse or abuse of a minor is not eligible for reinstatement to any office."**

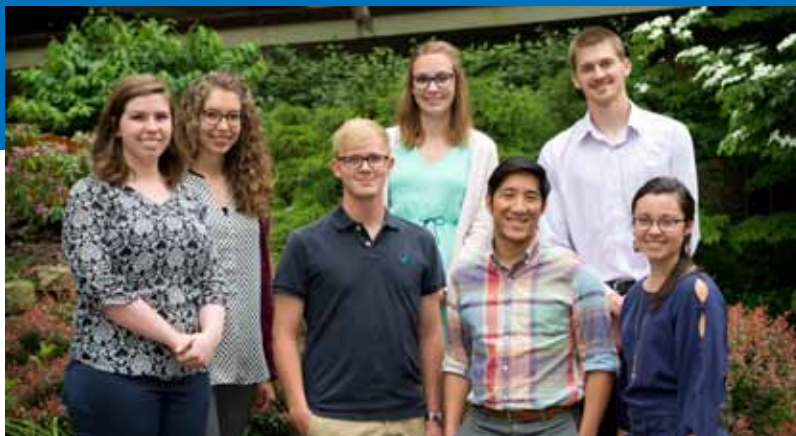
Smith clarified that an officebearer deposed on grounds of a pattern of abuse or abuse of a minor is not eligible for reinstatement to any office.

Another change addressed resignation of ministers who resign to avoid discipline. Church Order Article 84 details situations under which an officebearer may or may not be reinstated.

Synod 2016 decided that those same details now apply to a minister who resigns under discipline or to avoid discipline (Article 14).

The Church Order is the set of rules that all Christian Reformed churches agree to abide by. The Supplement flows out of the church Order as explanatory material adopted by synod. Special discipline of officebearers (suspension and deposition) falls under Church Order Articles 82-84.

—Gayla R. Postma



## Young Adult Representatives: "It's a Crazy Privilege"

Synod 2016 includes not only the old but the young. Seven young adults served synod by adding their voice to those of the delegates in committees and in the plenary sessions. And they had a great time doing it.

Chelsea Dost called her service at synod "a crazy privilege." Aren Plante said that it's "like jury duty." Everyone dreads it, but then it's a great experience.

Service as a young adult representative is not always easy. Sometimes, said Brandon Vander Stoep, it's hard getting getting in one's opinions in the synodi-

**Young adult representatives (l-r): Laura Vander Horst, Chelsea Dost, Aren Plante, Ashley Bootsma, Josh Chen, Brandon Vander Stoep, and Onelee Sneller.**

cal committees. Laura Vander Horst, who served on the committee to which the report on same-sex marriage was assigned, said, "It's hard to know what the future is going to be like," but she was impressed with the way the delegates listened to each other and with their compassion.

—Clayton Libolt



**Rev. Chelsey Harmon and Roxy.**

## Roxy and the Rev

Rev. Chelsey Harmon, Classis British Columbia South-West, was appointed Synod 2016's sergeant-at-arms, charged with herding delegates back to their seats after breaks. Harmon was not given a stick or shepherd's staff. So she went out and bought an inflated unicorn head. It's mythical, she said, just like synod starting on time. Chelsey named her "assistant" Roxy, suggesting, "Roxy and The Rev make for a good pair."

—George Vink



**Miles Kuperus III (left) is the youngest delegate at Synod 2016. Bud Ipema is the oldest.**

## Oldest and Youngest Delegates

At age 78, William "Bud" Ipema was the oldest delegate at Synod 2016, and Miles Kuperus III, age 24, was the youngest. Kuperus became a deacon fresh out of college. Ipema, an ordained minister, worked for nonprofit ministries in the Chicago area. Both were first-time delegates.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



# SYNOD 2016









## Engage 2016: Weathering the Storms



ALL PHOTOS BY DAN COOKE



**R**ev. Pedro Aviles warned that there are storms headed toward the Christian Reformed Church. Dr. Anthony Carter said that God walks on storms. Rev. Charles Kim said that in the new heaven and earth there will be no more storms, no more seas. Dr. Michelle Loyd-Paige lamented the storms already endured.

They were all speaking at Engage 2016, this year's multiethnic conference held in June at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. The conference drew participants of many cultures, including African American, Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, Anglo, and Native American.

After the opening event, which focused on lament for wrongs past, the rest of the conference focused on moving forward even when seas are rough.

Aviles, pastor of Ebenezer CRC in Berwyn, Ill., said, "There is a storm hitting our church. A gender storm, a generational storm, a financial storm, and a secularism storm. We need to be a weather-watching people. The storm disrupting our lives and our churches will

### Dr. Christena Cleveland

shape our future." God took 70 years to bring the people of Israel back to him in Jeremiah's day, he said. "How long will the CRC be in this storm? It's going to get worse before it gets better," he added.

Dr. Anthony Carter also talked about storms. In a week that saw Tropical Storm Colin make landfall in Florida, Carter said, "God doesn't name storms. He walks on them." For that reason, he said, people need to get past their fear.

Lack of diversity is based in fear, he said. "Fear amongst majority culture that if diversity happens, they will lose the blessing. This is what keeps us from doing the things God calls us to do." He said that his African American congregation is getting more and more white and Hispanic. "[People] fear that music will change, fear that people who don't look like [them] will preach, fear that we won't sing [their] favorite song any more."

Carter said that violence, whether in the street or in the womb, comes from fear.

### Rev. Pedro Aviles

Rev. Charles Kim, Korean ministries coordinator for the CRC, continued with that theme of seas and storms. Pointing to John's vision in Revelation 21, he noted there will be no more seas. In that culture, he said, "The sea meant exile, separation, chaos. So this new place is no more of that."

Instead of separation and chaos, the new city will be the ultimate fulfillment of God among us. "We need to let God be among us. This reality of new heaven and new earth, although it's not here yet, we get a glimpse today."

One way to get those glimpses, he said, is through the sharing of food. In sharing hospitality and food, cultures are unveiled. He challenged participants to eat each week with someone not like them, to eat foods that aren't familiar, and to hear the stories of the culture behind those foods.

Dr. Christena Cleveland, a fifth-generation minister, used a story to illustrate how to overcome the violence of the heart that fear can cause.



**Dr. Anthony Carter**

She told of a class she taught that three young white men had to take. “They sat in the front row every day, just to cause problems,” she said. “They talked loudly the entire time to undermine me, asked questions to try to make me look stupid, which is hard to do!”

But over time, even though she was polite and gracious, it wore down her heart. “In my heart I was responding to their violence with violence. So I started this exercise, as soon as they filed in. ‘The image of God in me embraces the image of God in you,’” she said. “Though the violence never stopped, my response became love and hope and grace and forgiveness and truth.”

But overcoming the fear that prevents unity can openly happen when there is *mutual* unity. “We’re joking if we think we can experience unity in a church where some people have more power than others, more voice than others.”

She pointed to Jesus, who was in a power position as a male and a Jew. “Jesus had a plan. He understood the power differential between



**Rev. Charles Kim**

him and us, inviting us into the Trinity. It meant that he had to leave privileged space.” She noted that Jesus strategically brought attention to those on the margins rather than those in power.

She noted, however, that actions of people in positions of power are not necessary to what God is doing in the church now, any more than in Jesus’ time. “I love it when they get involved. It’s good for them and great to have more partners,” she said. “This is the cross and resurrection way. You’re invited to be part of it on those terms, which means you’ll be last, which is an important place to be. The movement is happening, and we can invite people in.”

—Gayla R. Postma



**Dr. Michelle Loyd-Paige**

**Christopher Schoon:**

Toronto is the most diverse city in North America.

**Paul De Vries:** All this time, I thought Holland [Michigan] was the most diverse city in North America.





**Eric and Marli Lintner**

## In Sickness and in Health, and at Synod!

Eric and Marli Lintner of Wilsonville, Ore., served together at Synod 2016. She was a deacon delegate, and he was an elder delegate from Classis Columbia. "Synod is so much more inspirational than I had ever imagined; it's been a joy," said Marli.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE KINGMAS

**Marianne and Jerry Kingma**

## A Surprise Visit

Delegate Marianne Kingma received a romantic surprise while at Synod 2016: Her husband, Jerry, unexpectedly showed up on their 48th anniversary! He left their Strathroy, Ont., home at 5:30 a.m. Sunday to make the trip. "He's not always so romantic, so it was a big surprise. It was very touching," she said. "It made the day perfect, an unforgettable anniversary." Jerry even presented her a corsage composed of the same flowers that were in her wedding bouquet.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



**Jessica Driesenga and Rob Joustra**

## Wedding Bells

Rob Joustra and Jessica Driesenga were appointed to two separate study committees back in 2013 before they even knew each other. They both came to Synod 2016 for their committees, but now they are engaged, getting married in July.



**Rev. Len Hofman and his daughter Rev. Kathy Smith**

## Look Who Came to Synod!

Rev. Leonard Hofman stopped by Synod 2016 and also took time to chat with his daughter, Rev. Kathy Smith. Now retired, Len was long-time general secretary for the CRC. He attended his first synod in 1955 and has 35 under his belt. Kathy is a faculty advisor from Calvin Seminary and is a specialist on the Church Order.

**Karen DeVries:** I'm going to speak to you in the official language of the denomination which is, of course, acronym.



## Mother/Daughter (in-law) Delegates

Effie Bierling (right) from Classis Toronto is happy to enjoy Synod 2016 with her daughter-in-law Margherita Bierling, from Classis Chatham. Both are first-time deacon delegates.



**Sarah van Breda (left) and Sandra Raak**

## Expecting at Synod

Woman advisor Sarah van Breda and delegate Sandra Raak were both pregnant during Synod 2016. "The chairs are not very comfortable," said Raak, who often moved to a more comfortable spot during discussions. Raak was expecting her first child and van Breda her sixth.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



For the first time, synod had deacon delegates. Here is the first class.



### Imagine Meeting Here!

Both Sheri Admiraal and Rick Admiraal say their claim to fame is that their uncle was Case Admiraal, a CRC pastor. Sheri is a delegate from Classis Greater Los Angeles. Rick is from Classis Central Plains, where he is pastor of a prison church.

—George Vink

Sheri Admiraal and Rick Admiraal



James Litson (middle) with his wife Darleen Litson (right) and his clan granddaughter Autumn Yazzie-Newell.

### Like Father, Like Son

Rob Buikema and his son Derek Buikema served at Synod 2016 together—and they worked hard. “When you are at synod, you know you are at synod,” Rob said. “You have to be engaged, and it’s mentally exhausting.”

“It’s hard to be mentally focused for that long,” Derek agreed.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Rob Buikema (right) and his son Derek.

### Playing Navajo Bingo at Synod 2016

Sometimes descendants of Dutch immigrants play what is known as “Dutch Bingo.” This year, James and Darleen Litson played Navajo Bingo with Autumn Yazzie-Newell. They discovered that Autumn is James’ granddaughter by clan. “Any time you have clan, there’s that relational connection immediately,” James said.

Litson and Yazzie-Newell are both delegates from Classis Red Mesa, and Darleen is an ethnic advisor to synod.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

**Rob Buikema:** Rolf Bouma is a lawyer. This is a compliment. I’m not criticizing him.



Rev. IraRimam Mathias

## Nigerian Church Thankful for CRC's Peace Work

"I wish to extend our warm Christian greetings to all officials and distinguished delegates to 2016 Synod," said Rev. IraRimam Mathias of the Reformed Church of Christ for Nations (RCCN) in Nigeria.

The RCCN began an ecumenical relationship with the CRC in 2003, which has resulted in a peace process between the church and its sister denomination, the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, he said. "Thank you to the CRCNA for the work that has been done by [Christian Reformed World Missions] and [the Office of Social Justice] toward making sure that our area experiences peace in supporting the work of the Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation Committee."

Mathias petitioned the Christian Reformed Church to stay involved with the RCCN: "Even though the CRC has made up her mind in moving out of Nigeria as noticed in the downsizing of her staff, we wish to request that you have compassion in assisting the RCCN with some of your resources, particularly in the area of personnel."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Synod 2016 Expresses Desire for New Curricula

Synod 2016 instructed the denominational staff of the Christian Reformed Church to look into the feasibility of developing new curriculum for churches to use. Budget constraints and the closing of Faith Alive Christian Resources ended the development of new curricula in 2013.

Synod 2016 noted that Synod 2013 was assured that the core functions of Faith Alive would continue, "yet synod gave no clear guidance concerning the future of developing and supporting Christian Reformed Church curricula." Delegates noted that there is an ongoing need for distinctively Reformed curricula, though such new curricula may be costly.

Woman advisor Elaine VanLaare said that as a children's worship director she has noticed that churches in her area are not using curricula from the denomination. "The way [our denomination's curricula] is presented is not current enough," she said. "We need a new way forward in figuring out how to support families in the spiritual development of their children."

"It's exciting to see the desire for more materials," said Steve Timmermans, executive director of the



Woman Advisor Elaine VanLaare: "Our denomination's curricula is not current enough."

CRC. "What we also understand is that we have to balance all these wants with the dollars we have. I trust that we as staff will take it very seriously and see what we can do to make it all work."

—Roxanne Van Farowe



**Rev. Douglas Rollwage, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Canada:** In the spirit of Scottish frugality, I present you with the gift of this mug. We invite you to our synod, but we just ask that you bring back the mug



**Delegate:** Can we call it a false heresy?

**Cal Van Reken, faculty advisor:** I'm okay with heresy.



## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Thomas Vanden Bosch**  
1922 - 2016

Tom Vanden Bosch was a sincere man who went out of his way to welcome and love those who were not easily loveable. He died on March 31 at the age of 93.

Vanden Bosch served in the U.S. Army in Germany before attending Calvin College and Seminary.

He was ordained in 1958 and served Christian Reformed congregations in Iowa and Indiana. He held several chaplaincy positions in Michigan, California, and South Dakota and retired in 1988.

After retirement, Vanden Bosch and his wife, Laura, volunteered with Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (now World Renew) at many disaster sites across the U.S. Throughout his retirement and even as he entered an assisted living facility at age 88, he continued to minister to and encourage those around him.

Vanden Bosch was predeceased by Laura in 2008 and married Frances in 2011. He is also survived by three children and their spouses and by six grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

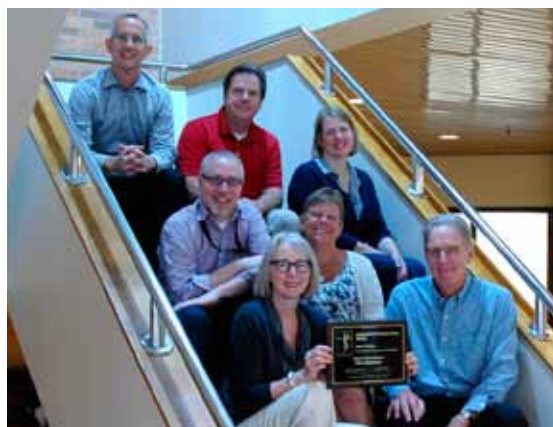
## Banner Best in Class for Denominational Magazines

The Associated Church Press awarded *The Banner* its Best in Class Award of Excellence for 2015 for denominational magazines.

The judges noted the overall quality of the publication and overall appropriateness for its readership, in both content and coverage.

Judges commended *The Banner's* typography, format, and design. "[It's] very dense with lots to read but not daunting because of clean graphics; well organized with strong headers."

Staff honored with the award were former editor Robert De Moor, interim editor Len Vander Zee, associate editor Judy Hardy, Tuned In editor Kristy Quist, news editor Gayla Postma, art director Dean Heetderks, and designers Frank Gutbrod and Pete Euwema.



(Clockwise from top) Dean Heetderks, Pete Euwema, Kristy Quist, Gayla Postma, Len Vander Zee, Judy Hardy, and Frank Gutbrod. Not pictured: Robert De Moor.

## DeVos Foundation Makes Donation to OneOrlando

In the aftermath of the shooting in a nightclub in Orlando, Fla., that killed 49 people and injured scores more, the DeVos Family Foundation made a donation of \$400,000.

Rich DeVos, a member of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and his family donated the money to OneOrlando, a nonprofit set up to aid families impacted by the attack. The Orlando Magic NBA basketball team, owned by DeVos, contributed an additional \$100,000.

In addition to the contributions, the Magic is teaming up with other Orlando professional sports teams to sell T-shirts featuring the slogan #OrlandoUnited. All proceeds from the black, blue, and purple shirts will go toward OneOrlando.

In a statement, the DeVos family said its thoughts and prayers are with the victims and families of this horrific tragedy as well as the emergency responders who were involved.

—Gregory Chandler

## NEWS DIGEST

### Iowa Pastor Becomes Police Chaplain

Kelly Vander Woude, pastor of Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Ames, Iowa, was named the first volunteer chaplain for the Ames Police Department as well as the city's other emergency services.



Kelly Vande Woude and Ames police officer.

### New York Foster Parents Win Volunteer Award

Stacey Bentley and her husband received an award for "outstanding service and laudable dedication to the children and families of Suffolk County, New York." They were recognized for mentoring and building relationships with their foster children's biological parents.

### City on a Hill Celebrates 10th Anniversary

City on a Hill Ministries is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The former hospital now provides low-cost office space to an array of 45 local and global ministries. It also runs a free health clinic, a mentoring ministry for people in crisis called ATLAS, and a vibrant, newly renovated cafe frequented by ministry partners, volunteers, and the general public.

—Banner News Correspondents



## CULTIVATING CHRISTIAN CIVILITY

**O**VER THE PAST several decades I have written much and spoken to many audiences about the importance of cultivating Christian civility. I first decided to take on this project back in the 1980s when I came across a fascinating comment in a book by Lutheran scholar Martin Marty. Many people who are quite civil do not have strong convictions, said Marty, and many people who have strong convictions are not very civil. What we need to cultivate, he added, is “convicted civility.”

The need to bring civility together with deep convictions is not just an option for Christians—it is an obligation grounded in biblical teaching. After the apostle Peter

tells us that we must “show proper respect for everyone” (1 Pet. 2:17), he goes on in his next chapter to link the cultivation of this respect to maintaining strong convictions. “Always be prepared,” he writes, “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” And then he adds immediately: “But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). That is the Bible’s way of telling us that God requires us to nurture “convicted civility.”

Someone asked me recently where I have personally found it most difficult to engage in convicted civility with people with whom I have serious disagreements. My answer: Within the Christian community!

When I engage in lengthy dialogues with non-Christians, I don’t feel defeated

when I have not succeeded in changing their minds. I am a Calvinist. I know that real change can only come by the power of the Holy Spirit. My responsibility in those conversations is to learn the lessons the Spirit wants me to absorb and to work at clearing up misconceptions about the Christian message. The Lord will use all of that according to his own purposes.

But things are different within the Christian community. Here we expect regenerated hearts and minds to be clear about the truth. Confused theology—to say nothing of outright theological error—can cause serious damage in the life and mission of the church. There are eternally significant matters about which we cannot be content simply to disagree.

So how do we handle that kind of conflict? Are there also significant guidelines within the Christian community for engaging in serious disagreements in a spirit of “gentleness and respect” for each other? I am convinced that there are, and I will mention a few of the more important ones here.

### **Avoid False Demons**

One obvious guideline is to make sure we are being truthful about the other person’s views. This means *asking* people what they believe rather than *telling* them. It is always important in serious theological debate to say things of this sort: “So, is this a good way to describe your view . . . ?” and “Help me understand you better on this. . . .”

G.K. Chesterton put it well when he reminded us that while worshipping false gods is a very bad thing, so is setting up false demons. One of our goals as Christians when we are arguing with each other is not to win by making rhetorical points but to seek to clarify what the real issues are in the hope of finding out where—and whether—we really disagree.

I once heard a “counter-cult” evangelical speaker describe what he understood to be the teachings of Mormonism on various subjects. After his talk I approached him, telling him that while I thought he had a number of points right, on a few matters many of my Mormon friends would not “own” the views he was attributing to them. I suggested that he might check this out by looking at a particular book by a Mormon scholar. The speaker responded to me with a very hostile tone. We don’t have time, he said, “for all of these fine points.” In dealing with Mormonism, “we are in a battle for the truth, and we have to win the battle!” The irony, of course, is that he was refusing to get clear about what his opponents actually believed—all in the name of fighting a battle for the truth!

### **Check Your Motives**

I am reluctant to make too much use of warfare imagery in dealing with spiritual theological matters. I know that it is

## THE NEED TO BRING CIVILITY TOGETHER WITH DEEP CONVICTIONS IS NOT JUST AN OPTION FOR CHRISTIANS—IT IS AN OBLIGATION GROUNDED IN BIBLICAL TEACHING.

appropriate on occasion, but—as in the flesh-and-blood realities of international relations—it is not something we should resort to without a spirit of caution.

John Calvin has helped me much in thinking about these matters. Discussing “just war” theory in his *Institutes*, Calvin urged civil magistrates who were thinking about attacking an enemy to engage in serious reflection before going to war. One thing they must do, he said, is to check out their own motives, to be sure that they “not be carried away with headlong anger, or be seized with hatred, or burn with implacable severity.” They must also, he insisted, “have pity on the common nature in the one whose special fault they are punishing.”

What the Reformer was saying about actual military concerns applies as well to conflicts over issues that divide us in the church. Calvin—as a good Calvinist!—was advocating a spiritual strategy here that is designed to compensate for our sinful tendency to put the best possible interpretation on our own motives while also putting the worst possible interpretation on those of our opponents. He wants a reversal: what is the worst interpretation I could come up with for my own motives, and the best interpretation I can give of what I see in my enemy?

So here are two guidelines that we receive from John Calvin himself about how we debate with other Christians. One is that we should always be clear about what is motivating us personally when we set out to engage in conflict with someone with whom we disagree. Are we taking up the battle primarily because we like to win arguments? Are we using ideas

in this case in order to enhance our ability to control the thoughts and actions of others? Or, to use Calvin’s own words, are we running the risk that in our contentions we will “be carried away with headlong anger” or “burn with implacable severity”?

### **Show Compassion**

A second guideline comes from Calvin’s insistence that before going to war a magistrate must show compassion toward the “common nature” that he shares with the one he is thinking about attacking. In the world of international relations, where leaders are often dealing with real enemies, that may seem like a difficult and not very productive assignment. Does, for example, an American president really have to spend valuable time thinking about a Hitler’s or a Saddam Hussein’s humanness? But in warfare we seldom attack only individual dictators—we attack large populations. So in thinking about bombing a city it is indeed important to reflect on the fact that the bombs we drop will fall on schools and family residences. Too often national leaders have failed to attend adequately to the human costs of warfare.

But here we are focusing on debates within the Christian community, where what we share in common with the folks we disagree with is more than simply the fact of our humanness. We share a unity in Christ. And the Lord has made it very clear that he wants us to make real efforts to give visible expression to that unity.

I am very familiar with the way many Christians will respond at this point. A genuine Christian unity is not merely »





of the organizational variety. God does not want us, for example, to preserve denominational unity at all costs. We must also be one in our understanding of the truth of God's Word.

Again, I know that argument well, and I have much sympathy for it. I want to hold fast to the historic faith, especially as it is expressed in our Reformed standards of doctrinal unity. And let me say it here: in the current arguments about sexuality I take my place on the "conservative" side of the spectrum. I have articulated the "traditional" viewpoint regarding same-sex practices in different contexts. But I have discovered the importance of not grouping all the folks I disagree with on these matters in the same theological category.

### No Easy Answers

Several years ago I talked with a pastor—a self-identified "liberal" in a mainline denomination—who was very upset with me about my views regarding same-sex relationships. In an effort to understand more clearly why he was so angry with me, I asked him about how he interpreted Romans 1, which I take to be a key biblical passage on the subject. "I just don't read Romans 1," he said. "In fact, I don't read Paul at all. I can't stand him. I never preach about his epistles. He is wrong about homosexuality—and about many other things as well!"

I don't feel a strong desire or obligation to affirm my unity in Christ with someone who holds to that kind of perspective. Whether his personal faith is genuinely Christian is not something I am going to judge. But when it comes to theology, the view he expressed is well beyond the borders of acceptable doctrine.

But it is different for me with other folks whose views I disagree with regarding homosexuality. I have engaged in public debates on several occasions in Presbyterian contexts with a good friend with whom I disagree about both same-

sex ordination and marriage. But if I ask her how she interprets Romans 1, she immediately says, "OK, Richard, let's look at the text." She carefully goes through the chapter offering her interpretation of Paul's intent at each point. I read that text quite differently, but our arguments take place under the authority of Word. I believe her when she insists that she wants to honor biblical teaching. And I know that she is firm in her affirmation of the Trinity, the full divinity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and so on. I argue with her about same-sex topics while also affirming the deeper unity that we have in Jesus Christ.

So does that mean we have to stick together denominationally when it comes to decisions about what practices—ordination, performing ceremonies—we are going to endorse? I don't have easy answers on that. But I do know that splitting denominations over theological questions—even very serious ones—is not without its dangers. In the early decades of the twentieth century, for example, J. Gresham Machen, who had served as a brilliant theologian at Princeton Theological Seminary, led a group of orthodox Calvinists out of the mainstream Presbyterian denomination to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Westminster Theological Seminary. I am a theological admirer of Machen. I agree with much of what he stood for theologically and have been significantly influenced by his writings. But I also worry much about what happened after his group departed from the larger denomination. Machen's movement very soon experienced several "splits" within its own ranks.

Kind, conservative Calvinists have often behaved rather poorly in engaging people with whom we disagree on theological matters. And it is a fact of history that when we take our leave from folks whom we consider "liberal" we often start arguing with each other about finer points of doctrine and practice. What this says to me is that the issues are not simply about theological formulations. There are deeper spiritual matters at stake.

When the apostle Peter counsels us to nurture "gentleness and respect," he is pointing us to those deeper spiritual matters. The same concern is at work in John Calvin's comments about warfare. "Headlong anger" and "implacable severity" are sinful patterns to which we are all too inclined in our defenses of orthodoxy.

You are reading this in a year when the current national political campaign in the United States—and yes, I know many Canadian friends who follow these developments very closely—is, by any accounting, one of the most mean-spirited that many of us have witnessed. (Both major political parties share the blame in this.) "Gentleness and respect" are not terms we would use to describe the debates among the major candidates this year. Nor can all of this be dismissed as a brief interlude in North American life that we will soon pass beyond. Something new is happening in our public life, and it is deeply disturbing.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be pointing our neighbors to a better way of managing conflict. But unfortunately it is often more of the same within the Christian community. To make that observation is not to downplay the importance of serious theological debate. Being clear about the reason for our hope is an obligation that requires as much theological clarity as we can muster as finite human beings. But it also requires a clear spiritual awareness of the theological mean-spiritedness that comes all too naturally to those of us who talk much about defending the truth of God's Word.

It would be a great contribution to the cause of Reformed orthodoxy in our day if we could show the larger world how it is possible to argue with each other about important matters in a spirit of gentleness and respect as we pursue the truth together. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Richard J. Mouw** is president emeritus and professor of faith and public life of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.

# 2016 Candidates for the Ministry

*How beautiful on  
the mountains  
are the feet of those who  
bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”*

—Isaiah 52:7

**I****N NORTH AMERICA**, June is synonymous with graduations. Stores display wares for graduation parties; plenty of households are preparing to host gatherings for a friend or family member who has completed a milestone. From kindergarteners to freshly minted Ph.D.s, graduates are celebrating.

In the Christian Reformed Church, June is also synonymous with synod. Delegated leaders from 48 classes (regional groups of churches) gather for a week to review our shared ministries and consider policy and theological matters.

On the next few pages, you will find the intersection of graduation celebrations and the work of the church. The 47 men and women pictured here have completed the academic and ecclesiastical requirements that make them eligible to serve the church as an ordained minister of the Word.

They have varied stories and varied gifts. Eventually they will serve the church in a variety of ways: as sole pastor in an established church; as a staff member in a larger church; as a church planter, chaplain, or missions worker; or in still other capacities for which ordination is appropriate.

What these men and women have in common is a love for the Lord, a love for the church, and a love for the Christian Reformed denomination. They have been trained, at least in part, by the faculty of Calvin Seminary, which is owned and operated by the Christian Reformed Church. They have been mentored, encouraged, and challenged by members of the CRC along the journey that brought them to this point.

Review these pages with a prayer of thanks and a heart that is ready to partner with these men and women in ministry. Thank God for our seminary and its faculty, and for the hard work each of these candidates has done to prepare for candidacy. And please pray for these candidates as they wait and seek and discern the place of service God has in mind for them.

**For contact information, biographical information, and testimonies from each of the candidates, visit the Candidacy Committee website at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org).** ■

—Rev. David Koll  
Director of Candidacy

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





**Christopher Allen**



**Yohanes Budhi\***



**Andrew William  
Carlson\***



**Zhigang John Chen**



**Scott Chiang\***



**Darrell Delaney\***



**Daniel John DeVries**



**Elisabeth DeVries**



**Willem de Vries**



**Trent Elders**



**Kendall Everett**



**Tara Foreman\***



**Laura Guichelaar-  
DeRuiter**



**Lloyd Hemstreet**



**Drew Hoekema\***



**Brian Hofman**



**Grant Hofman**



**Sarah Hoogendoorn**



**Joshua (Kyong won)  
Jung\***



**Matthew Kaemingk\***



**Moses Kang**



**Nathan Klingenberg**



**Timothy Kooiman\***



**Jonathan Kool**



**Brenda Kronemeijer-  
Heyink** »



**Samuel (SangMyung) Lee**



**Sheri J. Leisman**



**Benjamin McKnight**



**Hee (Brian) Na\***



**Katrina Olson**



**Jennifer Palkowski**



**Jesse Pals\***



**Matthew Pearce**



**Kristen Pikaart\***



**Joella Ranaivoson**



**Peter Rockhold**



**Hendrick Roeda\***



**Ivan K. Santoso**



**Kelli Sexton**



**Sharon Smith\***



**Samuel Sutter\***



**Brian Tarpy**



**Ricardo Tavárez**



**Arianna Tolsma**



**Jacob Van Steenwyk\***



**Thomas J. Van Wyk**



**Brad Zwiers\***



# Brain Power

In the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Scarecrow—along with his friends Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, and Dorothy and her little dog Toto—travels down the yellow brick road to meet the Wizard of Oz. He’s hoping the Wizard will help him get a brain.

Thankfully, you already have a brain! It was created by God just for you. Your brain has the power to help you do amazing things. And you didn’t even have to travel to the land of Oz to get it!



## Control Centers, Computers, and Storage Boxes

Your brain controls everything you do. It is the center of the body’s nervous system. It controls thoughts, motions, and memories. Your brain sends special messages to the other organs in your body to keep them running smoothly. For example, your brain sends messages to your heart for it to continue pumping blood through your veins. It is also making sure your lungs keep breathing!

Now hold your breath for 10 seconds. Ready . . . go. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Whew! Your brain just directed your lungs to hold your breath! Your brain tells your

body what to do, but you can also tell your brain what to do. Your brain is responsible for communicating with your body when you decide to turn the page of this magazine or click the mouse on a computer.

Your brain also takes in new information and stores it in your memory—like the way a computer stores data. When you memorize a new spelling word or learn to play an instrument, it’s like clicking “save.” The new information is stored in your brain. Your brain has “storage boxes” to save the new things you learn. Whenever you need to remember the new information you have learned, your brain gets it from the “storage box.” The more you practice the new skill you have learned, the quicker you will remember it.



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

# FUN Facts

The brain has over **100 billion** nerve cells called neurons that constantly send messages to your body.

There's enough **electricity** in those neurons to power a low-watt battery or a small light bulb!

The brain of an adult weighs about **three pounds**.

**New brain connections** are made every time a new memory is formed.

About 75 percent of the human brain is made up of **water**.

More **electrical messages** are formed in the brain in one day than all the phone messages in the world!

## Love the Lord with All Your Brain

Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). He is telling us to love God with everything in us—including our brain! With your brain you can think and feel happiness and joy. You use your brain to talk to God and praise him for who he is. Since our minds store lots of information, it is important that we save the right stuff. So memorize God's Word! Start with **Matthew 22:37**. The more we store God's Word in our brains, the better we can live by it.

## Brain Food

It's very important to eat healthy foods to keep your brain strong. Here are some foods that help your brain cells stay healthy.

- Eggs—Protein from eggs helps you concentrate and stay focused.
- Greek yogurt—Also high in protein, it helps your brain cells send messages to your body.
- Green leafy veggies—Kale and spinach help build healthy brain cells.
- Fish—Salmon, tuna, and sardines help your brain stay strong.
- Nuts and seeds—These have fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals to keep your brain and body running smoothly.
- Whole-grain foods—The fiber in oatmeal, whole-grain bread, and brown rice slows down the amount of sugar your brain takes in.
- Fruits—Apples, blueberries, and plums have antioxidants to help sharpen your thinking skills.

## Brain Salad

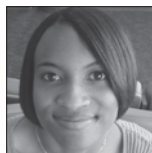
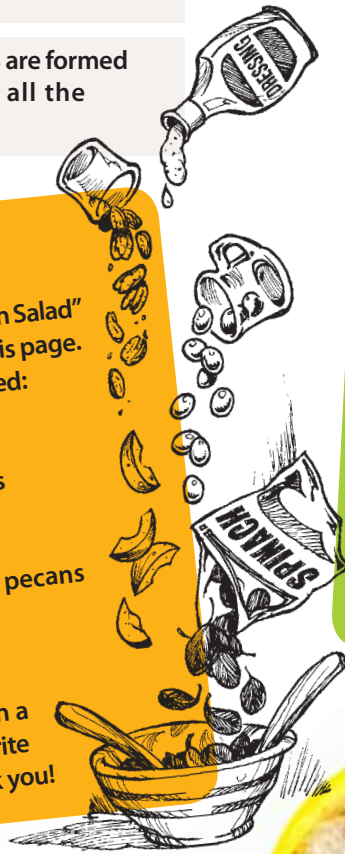
Ask a parent to help you make "Brain Salad" with some brain foods listed on this page. Here's a recipe to get you started:

### What you need:

- 1 bag washed spinach leaves
- 2-3 apples, sliced or cubed
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- ½ cup walnuts, almonds, or pecans
- Salad dressing

### What you do:

Toss all salad items together in a bowl and serve with your favorite dressing. Your brain will thank you!



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



# Group On!

What Will Your Group Study This Year?



## Real Simple

*How does your Bible study go about studying the Bible? Banner reviewer Jim Romahn offered the following simple idea.*

My wife and I have been in many, many study groups in different locations over the last 45 years, and this structure is by far the best.

### First Third of the Meeting

- Read aloud a passage from the Bible. Eugene Peterson's *The Message* has chapters broken into nice segments for this purpose.
- Go around the circle, asking if anybody has any questions about the passage. Trust the Holy Spirit to provide an answer from the group members.
- Go around the circle again, asking if the passage struck a meaningful chord and if a new insight arose.
- Repeat as often as time allows.

Trust in the Holy Spirit to provide an answer from group members.

### Second Third of the Meeting

- Go around the circle, allowing people to share thoughts from the previous week. Prayer requests are welcome. Those who prefer to say nothing can simply pass.

### Last Third of the Meeting

- Go around the circle again, this time praying aloud and remembering to pray for those who asked for prayer. Those who prefer not to pray aloud can say "amen" when it's their turn.

### A couple of rules

- Food and drink should be simple and affordable for all.
- What's said during the meeting is to remain absolutely confidential. Any breach of this rule will result in immediate dismissal from the group. ■

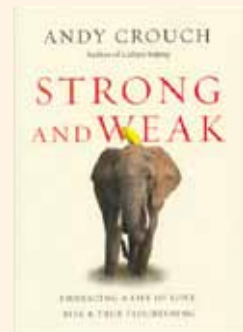
What has worked for your small group or Bible study? What practices or resources have been the most meaningful?

Let us know!

Email us at [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org).



**Jim Romahn** is a freelance journalist in Kitchener, Ont., where he belongs to Community Christian Reformed Church.



## Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk, and True Flourishing

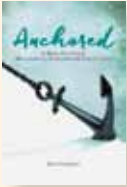
by **Andy Crouch**

reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

Written for leaders, Crouch's latest book is valuable for anyone living in community. How do we flourish in our lives and work when our ability to thrive is so dependent upon good leadership? Drawing on stories from Scripture and his own life, Crouch helps readers understand the tenuous balance of authority and vulnerability. He identifies flourishing, suffering, withdrawal, and exploitation as four places toward which leaders will move, depending on their ability to embrace the paradox of strength and weakness. This is a timely conversation for our denomination as we are poised to consider a new structure model that will require changes in leadership roles and positions. Accessibly written for a broad audience, there is a discussion guide included in the back. While this could be a one-meeting book club discussion, a small group or leadership team may want to break it up into several different meetings. (InterVarsity)

## Anchored: A Bible Study for Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Loss

by Erin Cushman  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



Thirty-six hours after Erin Cushman gave birth to her first child, baby Gwendolyn passed away. As Cushman struggled through her grief, she was surrounded by other women who had experienced loss. *Anchored* was one result of Cushman's journey. Written for women, though grieving men could also benefit from it, this compassionate yet challenging nine-lesson Bible study includes a leader guide. Throughout, Cushman encourages women to grieve, while at the same time pointing them to the hope of heaven and the promise of Christ's return when he will establish the new heavens and the new earth. She leaves them with the compelling challenge to ask the Lord: "What would you have me do with this?" (Westbow)

## Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife: My Story of Finding Hope after Domestic Abuse

by Ruth A. Tucker  
reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

A young bride marries a well-educated, charming evangelical minister and is subsequently exposed to all manner of abuse for almost 20 years until she finally escapes with her son. Tucker tells her own story but also weaves in those of many other women and men along the way, using them to speak to the theological debate over male headship—often called complementarianism. Readers will need to determine whether she makes her case, but it seems clear that the ways most "Christian" abusers justify their abuse is with complementarian theology. Rambling at times, this raw, moving memoir highlights the tactics of abusers, the way the Bible can be used to manipulate and control women, and the way evangelical churches, in particular, have failed to respond pastorally. Tucker's biographical manifesto puts a face on the issue and gives voice to a troubling topic that churches must lean in and confront. (Zondervan)



## The Comeback: It's Never Too Late and You're Never Too Far

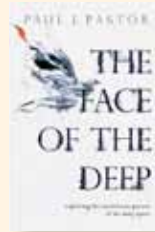
by Louie Giglio  
reviewed by Paul Delger



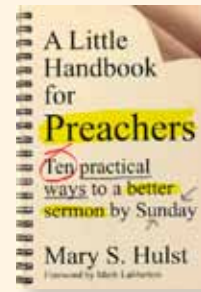
Pastor Louie Giglio's book *The Comeback* declares that everyone should live for the honor and glory of God. And that might mean a comeback. For unbelievers, the comeback is salvation. For believers, a comeback may include difficulties such as suffering along the way. For example, Samson lost his eyesight and strength, yet God helped him regain his strength and destroy the enemy. He describes other biblical comebacks too, like that of Lazarus, and also mentions modern individuals who have experienced comebacks. This pastoral book is easy to follow and is filled with hope. A study guide and 6-session DVD are also available. (Thomas Nelson)

## The Face of the Deep: Exploring the Mysterious Person of the Holy Spirit

by Paul J. Pastor  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



In 14 personal essays that are neither simply devotional nor an attempt to provide a thorough study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Paul Pastor shows that "the Spirit's glorious mystery is a *journey*, one that encompasses and sanctifies all that we encounter." With lyrical prose and meaningful artwork, Pastor explores the many facets of the Holy Spirit's character and work in the world: the Spirit is the One who creates, inspires, speaks the truth, meets us where we are, sustains all of life, does new things, speaks through us, sanctifies, unifies, invites, and more. Questions for reflection after each chapter make this absorbing book suitable for individual meditation or for group study. (David C. Cook)



## A Little Handbook for Preachers: Ten Practical Ways to a Better Sermon by Sunday

by Mary S. Hulst  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

Why would anyone other than a preacher read a handbook for preachers? While this book is packed with clear, practical encouragement and suggestions for preachers, it also offers a quick education for those in the pews. Hulst, chaplain at Calvin College, points out things that anyone serving in a church can use—as a youth leader, do I contextualize my words? As an elder, do I listen for the hurt behind the complaint? As a liturgist, am I using my voice to its best potential? As a congregant, am

I really looking for God's story in the sermon? How should I try to understand Scripture in my personal reading or with my Bible study group? This is a great resource for worship committees and councils. (InterVarsity)

MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE



# A Journey into Ministry

by David Koll

In college, Sam DeJong went with her church on a mission trip to Honduras.

The youth group made up the majority of the group, but she wasn't their leader. She was just there because there was an extra spot.

During an evening conversation, the girls from the youth group asked DeJong why she wasn't one of their leaders. "I remember clearly stumbling over my words and giving some excuse, but the truth was I was not spiritually healthy enough to be a leader," she said.

This was the beginning of a journey that led to seminary, to discernment of the program that would lead to ordination, and to meeting her partner in life and ministry, Nate McCarron.

"Nate came into seminary with a Greek minor and helped me through the challenges that Greek and Hebrew brought," DeJong recalled. "A year later we were engaged and married on our spring break in 2008."

### Please pray

- Pray for the new Vocational Ministry Assessment Initiative as it seeks to assist pastors and ministry leaders to discern their calling and where God would have them serve.
- Pray for the 47 people presented for approval as candidates for ordination as minister of the Word. Pray for them as they wait for and discern a call, and pray for the ministries that are looking at their profiles.
- Pray for classis teams that are encouraging those who are preparing for ordained ministry.
- Pray for the 12 Korean pastors who completed a recent denominational orientation retreat as they move toward ordination in the CRC.



Sam and Nate DeJong McCarron

In the summer of 2009 Sam and Nate DeJong McCarron moved to Albuquerque, N.M., to copastor as interns in Chelwood Christian Reformed Church. While there, they were recruited to plant a church in Denver, Col. They started fundraising and then moved to Denver. During a year-long residency they were ordained as ministers of the Word.

"After three years of church planting in Denver, we made the hard decision to close the church plant," says Sam. They moved in with her parents in Chicago and recognized that at least one of them needed to be gainfully employed. Nate found work at Orland Park CRC while their search continued.

In the fall of 2013, Nate received a call to be the lead pastor at Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. But what would this mean for Sam and her sense of call?

A two- to three-year process of discerning and waiting ensued.

"Nate and I decided that taking a job at a church other than Fuller was not an option," Sam said. "We wanted to keep our focus on Fuller and raising our kids in that community of faith, which meant my options for employment were limited."

Thinking through her gifts of communication, pastoral care, and strategy, she looked into chaplaincy jobs and



Sam DeJong McCarron with Eli, 5; and Alex, 2.

You add.  
C... ..

# A Journey into Leadership

school jobs. Then the ministry assessment coordinator opportunity came up, a new position within the denominational ministry called Pastor Church Resources.

“It checked all the boxes,” Sam says. “It was a part-time position that directly impacts ministry, uses my gifts for the advancement of the kingdom, and is not in a different church than Nate.”

After interviewing, the sense of call for this job grew. To the joy of Sam and of the search committee, she was appointed vocational ministry assessment coordinator for the CRCNA in February 2016.

Her work includes contact with a variety of ministry leaders: pastors, missionaries, chaplains, seminarians, and lay leaders wondering about ministry.

One of her primary roles is to help pastors find and take vocational assessments. She is also researching the best tools for assessments and the best possible time for assessments to be done in the lives of pastors. ■

**L**eadership takes many forms and develops in many different ways. Leaders in the church and elsewhere are often those who discover their gifts for learning and leading and then are fortunate enough to find their way into situations that encourage and allow them to develop those gifts.

Gallup, N.M., is in the heart of a Native American reservation where the Christian Reformed Church has a long history.

This is where Kristen Pikaart grew up, the daughter of parents who taught at Rehoboth Christian School, part of a CRC mission station just down the road.

Now she is a wife, mother, and hospital chaplain in that same town. But God had some interesting twists for her along the way.

Pikaart left home to attend college, as many young adults do. Later, feeling a call to ministry but uncertain of what kind of ministry, she attended San Francisco Theological Seminary, a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

She completed an M.Div. in 1999 and began a residency in chaplaincy at a local hospital, “never once thinking that this would be my vocation—just knowing that I didn’t have a good alternative plan, and I wanted to stay put as I was just starting to date my now husband.”

Eventually she married Sanjay Choudhrie (a child of missionaries in India), still wondering how God would use her. She enrolled in a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in the Bay Area while discerning what to do with her gifts and education.

During the first week of the first unit she experienced an “aha” moment. Maybe this was what she was made for! “I did five units of CPE and worked as a chaplain in two local hospitals there before being asked to apply for the job that I currently have in Gallup,” Pikaart said. “(It was) an unexpected return home for me.”

Along the way, a meeting with the CRC’s former director of chaplains, Herm Keizer,



**Kristen Pikaart and Sanjay Choudhrie with Elysia, 9, and Daya, 13.**

at a national chaplains’ conference sparked her interest in reconnecting with the CRC. At the urging of her church in Gallup, she became a commissioned pastor in 2006. She received board certification from the Association of Professional Chaplains in 2008.

But her leadership journey was not done. In 2009 Pikaart was asked by David Koll, the CRC’s director of candidacy, to serve on a committee to review and approve candidates for the ministry of the Word. She realized while doing this committee work that there was a road by which she too could become a candidate for ministry of the Word.

In 2016 she will complete a nonresidency ordination course with Calvin Theological Seminary and, following Synod 2016’s approval of candidates, will transition from commissioned pastor to minister of the Word this summer.

Pikaart is one of a growing number of chaplains and other ministry leaders who continue to learn through various educational agencies, earn ministry credentials with the help of denominational and non-denominational agencies, and then go on to serve in unique and significant ways throughout the world.



**David Koll is director of the Candidacy Committee for the Christian Reformed Church.**



**Ron Klimp is the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.**





Participants and facilitators in the Spiritual Vitality in Pastors pilot project involving 16 pastors from across Canada and the U.S.

## Promoting Spiritual Vitality in Pastors

“**W**eekly, I am studying the Scriptures, praying, and having conversations about spiritual life. But sometimes I feel like I am doing these things mostly for others. Focusing on my own life with God is a shift in pattern that’s refreshing me in places that now seem to have become parched.”

This comment came from one of the participants in the Spiritual Vitality in Pastors pilot project involving 16 pastors from across Canada and the United States.

Another participant, Ron Hosmar, said, “The retreat allowed all who are in the project to see each other face to face and build relationships. We got a sense that we are not alone in our thoughts, struggles, joys, and journey in ministry.”

The January retreat held in Comfort, Texas, provided a concentrated and spacious time in which a variety of practices and experiences came together for participating pastors.

Prior to the retreat, each pastor had engaged in vocational assessments, con-

versations with a professional coach, and initial Skype visits with a four-person cohort.

The retreat provided an arena in which “threads” could be identified that ran through these various activities and set the stage for additional practices to be engaged during the coming year.

Since the retreat, the pastors have identified a spiritual director and engaged in conversation with these spiritual directors about their own lives with God.

Three ministries partnered to develop this project, 50 percent of which is funded through a grant from the Pastoral Excellence Network, which in turn receives funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Faith Formation Ministries, and Pastor Church Resources have contributed funding, staff time, and creativity to develop and implement what is hoped will provide important data for the spiritual flourishing of pastors going forward.

To some this project might seem unusual. One might expect that pastors would need to be experts on their own spiritual formation in order to provide

leadership in spiritual formation for the congregations they serve.

But pastors say that, in attending to the various functions and relationships of ministry, there is often not enough attention given to understanding the dynamics of spiritual formation for self during preparation for ministry.

The Spiritual Vitality in Pastors pilot project is intended to address this deficiency.

A second retreat in Comfort is being planned for next January, at which time the learnings of this pilot project will be more clearly identified.

In the meantime, 16 pastors are paying attention to their own lives with God in fresh and creative ways. So far, the outcomes are encouraging. ■

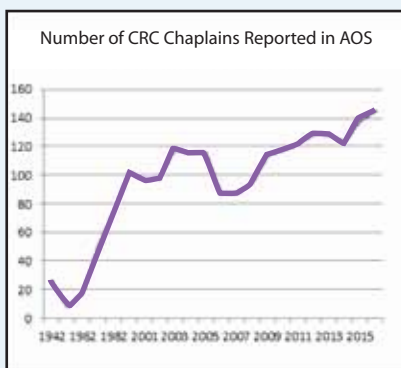


Norm Thomasma is the director of Pastor Church Resources for the CRC.



### Pray for Chaplains

- The CRC's 145 endorsed chaplains often serve in high-stress, emotionally troubling situations. Pray that they will be well-grounded in faith and have adequate support to maintain their health and equilibrium in the process of serving others.
- Chaplaincy usually requires special Clinical Pastoral Care (CPE) training. There are a growing number of individuals in the CRC (over 70) inquiring about or in the process of becoming chaplains. Pray that many of these people will find the resources to be trained and opportunities to serve in civilian or military situations.
- Military chaplains (22 in the United States and Canada) are required to move frequently to new assignments and occasionally are called to serve for an extended period of time away from home and family. Pray for protection for them and their families as they meet the spiritual needs of others who do the same for the sake of national security.
- The director of Chaplaincy & Care Ministry and the administrative assistant both hope to retire in the next 18 months. Pray that suitable replacements will be found and that the transition will be smooth and effective.



# Want a Strong Church Family? Tell Your Stories

**B**ruce Feiler's family was falling apart. After an intergenerational spat, Feiler, an author and a regular columnist for *The New York Times*, began to wonder, "What is the 'secret sauce' that holds a family together? What are the ingredients that make some families effective, resilient, happy?" At that point, he didn't know.

So Feiler embarked on a several-year-long research project. As he wrote in a *New York Times* article titled "The Family Stories That Bind Us," the conclusion he reached was unexpected: "The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative."

In other words, if you want to build a strong family, tell each other your stories.

The same holds true for our church families. Cohesive, caring congregations are knit together by shared stories. People in these churches share tales of faith, of loss, of rekindled hope. They dare to be human with each other—to show the less-than-perfect reality of their everyday lives. And they testify to the unrelenting love of God.

In the CRC, churches are beginning to incorporate storytelling in many different ways. Some have started a "faith sharing time" before Sunday school in which parents are invited to join their children to talk about where they've seen God at work that week.

Other churches invite parents to share a brief testimony at their child's baptism. Youth groups are interviewing the senior citizens in their church, asking questions about their faith journey and talking together about how to build a life in Christ.

To gather and share these ideas and many more, Faith Formation Ministries is creating a Faith Storytelling toolkit—an online collection of resources that will help equip churches to become strong storytelling families. If you have a story to tell about how your congregation is sharing faith stories together, contact Sandy Swartzentruber at [sswartzentruber@crcna.org](mailto:sswartzentruber@crcna.org). ■

### What Is Faith Formation Ministries?

Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) supports congregations as they carry out their callings in faith formation and discipleship.

FFM recognizes that each congregation has a unique identity, history, context, and calling. To that end, FFM listens, dialogues, and then suggests ideas and develops resources to strengthen these ministries.

Coaching conversations with our regional catalyzers range from a 15-minute check-in on a small detail to a year-long congregational revisioning journey, and everywhere in between. If you face a faith formation question or challenge, let's talk!

Here are some ways you can learn more or contact us:

- [www.crcna.org/FaithFormation](http://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation)
- [faithformation@crcna.org](mailto:faithformation@crcna.org)
- [facebook.com/FaithFormationCRC](https://facebook.com/FaithFormationCRC)
- [twitter.com/crc\\_ffm](https://twitter.com/crc_ffm)



**Sandy Swartzentruber** serves as resource coordinator for Faith Formation Ministries.



## What I Heard at Synod

“**W**e are the church together.”  
As I pen these words, Synod 2016 has just concluded. Synod is a primary way the Christian Reformed Church comes together to make important decisions, setting the tone for ministry and locally and far away.

To take the pulse of synod is to feel the heartbeat of the CRC.

Truthfully, there were times during synod when our words and actions suggested we are the church divided. “Us” and “them” language popped up often. Delegates spoke of “the denomination” as some impersonal bureaucracy, at odds with their local ministry. Suspicion and mistrust were evident throughout the hours spent on financial matters.

The atmosphere of mistrust made it hard to work through difficult issues. Until nearly the last moment of synod, delegate after delegate asserted his or her opinion and asked for proof that these opinions would be honored in post-synod actions. Trust was in short supply.

Let’s remember how we are the church together.

In the CRC, authority arises from local congregations. Some of this authority is delegated to local assemblies called classes. Once a year, authority is delegated to synod—the *broadest* as opposed to the *highest* assembly of the church.

Between synods, the Board of Trustees is entrusted with exercising this responsibility. And the board hires people to perform the day-to-day-work. All of this is the church—the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Notice that this way of organizing provides countless feedback loops. Yet what I heard at synod is that there are a lot of disconnects.

Why? In this age of information overload it’s easy to skip over the stories in CRC News or in *The Banner*, to miss the emails sent regularly to pastors and congregations, to ignore the discussions happening on The Network. It’s difficult for a congregation in Abbotsford to pay attention to the awesome things happening in Allendale, and vice versa.

Yet the causes go deeper than just the challenge of paying attention. We don’t agree on the place of the Belhar Confession in our life and witness; on matters of human sexuality and same-sex attraction; about whether and to what degree colonial

and imperial attitudes were at play in our earliest mission efforts.

Even worse, as we face these challenging topics, we mirror the polarization we see in disturbing ways in society all around us.

The problem isn’t that we disagree. That’s inevitable when we live as a body together. But the attitude of the body of Christ must be different. In Romans 15 we are reminded of the desire we should have: “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Despite the evidence of disconnectedness and mistrust, I’m hopeful—not that we’ll suddenly change, but that a number of things are emerging that will draw us closer, and in so doing help us to better understand how we are the church together, and how together we can constructively manage the disagreements that we encounter.

I’ll mention just a few:

- Classis renewal: making classis meetings places of ministry exchange and encouragement.
- The new ministry plan, Our Journey 2020—a tool that integrates our many resources in a way that supports congregations.
- New strategies from a pilot project called Connections, in which congregations in three regions of four classes each experiment with ways of connecting resources for ministry.

In addition, synod has instructed the Board of Trustees to evaluate and prioritize our various ministries and the costs associated with each. As we move toward a Council of Delegates—fusing four boards into one—the work we do together will become better integrated.

These efforts, plus many more, should help us better demonstrate to each other and to the world that we are indeed the church together. By God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, our steps will be directed, helping us to address our differences so that we may reflect the light of Christ to a world that is desperately in need of him. ■

“Let’s remember how we are the church together.”



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

## OUT AND ABOUT

### Finding Strength through Adversity

Vitorio was addicted to drugs and alcohol for 25 years. Knowing his path was not heading in a healthy direction, he searched for a way to stop his destructive habits.

It wasn't until he received a Facebook message from the Portuguese ministry of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) that he had the strength to begin his journey toward healing.

"With this message, I found the strength to walk with Jesus Christ," said Vitorio.

After he learned about the ministry through Facebook, Vitorio began watching the Portuguese television program *Verdade e Vida (Truth and Life)* online.



BTGMI Portuguese radio programs are transforming lives like Vitorio's.

The weekly 30-minute program is hosted by BTGMI Portuguese ministry leader Rev. Hernandes Lopes, who addresses theological issues in a clear and simple format.

"From the time I started to listen to the messages and worship songs, they had a huge

impact in my heart," explained Vitorio.

Since recovering from his dependencies and choosing to follow the Lord, Vitorio desires to share his new-found freedom in Christ.

"I want to talk to everyone facing these same issues," Vitorio said. "I want to encourage

them to bow down before our Lord with open hearts and be confident that he will do everything as he did in my life."

As Vitorio continues his faith journey with Christ, he is not looking to his past but only ahead to his future. He takes comfort in the words of Romans 5:20: "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more." ■

—by Kristen Fergus Van Stee,  
*Back to God Ministries International*

### Starting Up Conversations

Kyle Brooks set out to make connections with new people as pastor and planter of Oakland Startup Church in Oakland, Calif.

The most striking connection came during a pickup game of soccer. Brooks and a young man he had never met before began chatting and asking about each other's work.

Upon learning that Brooks was a pastor, the young man confided that although his family had never been religious or attended church, he always had a sense that there was a "higher power" and "more to life than what he knew." He often felt discouraged that he hadn't been able



Pastor Kyle Brooks talks with people interested in Oakland Startup Church.

to find the relationship with God that some of his friends had found.

Hearing this, Brooks encouraged the young man to explore his yearning for God. He explained to him,

"The good news of the Christian faith is not that you can find God. It's that God can find you." Brooks offered to meet with him further to discuss any questions he might have.

While church planting can be a slow process, Brooks and the Oakland Startup Church family are making strides into their community by readily sharing the gospel with those around them, proving that a simple conversation can go a long way.

Home Missions is committed to walking alongside this church and has been providing funding and support since 2015.

Find out more about the ministry at [oaklandstartupchurch.org](http://oaklandstartupchurch.org). ■

—by Annemarie Byl,  
*Christian Reformed Home Missions*



### Doubt and Wonder



David Dark spoke about his book at Calvin College and Seminary.

**D**avid Dark is an advocate for looking at the world with fresh eyes and asking why things are the way they are.

“I have in mind,” says Dark, “a kind of literacy of wonder that seems to exit whenever elitism [or] snobbery [enter in]. . . . Whenever God becomes a possession we have over others, or information about God becomes a boasting point, I think we’re missing it.”

Dark, who author Eugene Peterson calls his “favorite critic of the people’s culture of America and the Christian faith,” visited Grand Rapids, Mich., recently to speak at Calvin Seminary’s Book of the Semester discussion and Calvin College’s Festival of Faith & Writing.

He discussed the ideas behind his most recent book, *Life’s Too Short to Pretend*

*You’re Not Religious*, and his 2009 book, *The Sacredness of Questioning Everything*.

Contrary to what the latter title may suggest, Dark doesn’t endorse questions for the sake of questions, as “endless negativity or cynicism.” Instead, he sees them as a means of “always pushing further in our understanding of the sacred.”

For Dark, good questions are “like the good poems, the good stories, the good images . . . good questions are feats of attentiveness.”

And Dark is paying attention to just about everything around him—rap, science fiction, his Christian neighbor, his atheist neighbor. His questions, offered in a posture of wonder and good humor, push into spaces Christians don’t typically wiggle into on their own.

“I’d like us to always try to divide in our thinking our anxious, violent, defensive visions that try to order chaos—literal, and imagined—as a very separate thing from God’s already ordered, already ordering shalom.” ■

—by Amanda Smartt,  
Calvin Theological Seminary



Adiza Ujo, George and Sara Ahiome (left to right) at the first “Stop! Don’t Drop” cleanup of Usuma Dam.

### Stop! Don’t Drop

**A**diza Ujo has long been bothered by the trash she sees in her hometown of Abuja, Nigeria. But when she saw trash building up at the Usama Dam, the city’s source of drinking water, she knew she had to do something.

“I went on social media and put out word to my friends, and we organized a dam cleanup,” said Ujo. “Amazingly, 65 people left what they had to do on a beautiful Saturday to clean up the dam.”

Seeing this turnout made Ujo realize people did care about the environment and were looking to her for the next step.

At first, she wasn’t sure how to proceed.

Then Ujo learned of the Daniel Center, a ministry of Christian Reformed World Missions in Abuja whose primary focus is connecting and training community leaders such as herself.

As part of the program, she began meeting at the Daniel Center with Sara and George Ahiome, CRWM missionaries who attend her church. They brainstormed and came up with strategies for this growing environmental movement. Ujo also began to see creation care from a biblical perspective.

Talking about creation care gave her a different perspective. It provided “insight into what I was doing and helped me learn that it was God’s intent,” said Ujo.

With a renewed sense of calling, Ujo started a group called “Stop! Don’t Drop” which seeks to not only clean the environment but also teach others how to care for creation. ■

—by Brian Clark,  
Christian Reformed World Missions

Longer versions of these and other stories are online at [thebanner.org/together](http://thebanner.org/together).

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Rippers Help Farmers Beat Hunger in Zambia

**D**orothy Kaunda was already struggling as a farmer in rural Zambia when she took in her nine orphaned grandchildren.

Unfortunately, the soil quality of her land was poor, making it hard to grow enough food to feed her family. Tilling, planting, weeding, and harvesting by hand was more than she could manage on her own. Her grandchildren often had to miss school to help.

Kaunda was committed to growing more food. But how?

Through World Renew, Kaunda was introduced to the Magoye ripper, an ox-drawn tool that does minimum tillage, allowing more of the nutrient-rich topsoil



The ripper tool is helping families achieve better harvests.

to remain and preserving moisture and organic material.

Introducing rippers is one of the ways World Renew has been working with the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa (CCAP) to combat a hunger crisis in rural Zambia, where soil fertility has declined as people have mined the nutrients from the soil, seeking crop yields to meet the needs of the growing population.

World Renew and CCAP are introducing conservation agriculture techniques, allowing the land to regenerate while being planted with crops at the same time.

Conservation agriculture also encourages use of appropriate, affordable, and locally-available fertilizers and herbicides and planting of diverse crops.

Kaunda joined the program two years ago. By decreasing the amount of time needed in the field, the ripper made it possible for Kaunda's grandchildren to stay in school.

It has also multiplied their harvest. This year, despite lower-than-average rainfall, the family has doubled their harvest from the previous year. ■

—by Adele Konyndyk,  
World Renew

## 'You Can't Think Your Way to Holiness'

**T**o be human, Calvin College philosophy professor James K.A. Smith asserts, is to have a heart.

So it's not a matter of *whether* or not we will love something as ultimate. Rather,

the question is *what* you will love, since you are what you love.

The implications of this are at the heart of Smith's new book, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*.

In the book, he recounts his own transition from eating a hot dog while reading Wendell Berry's *Bringing It to the Table*, a book of essays on farming and food that encourages a different approach to eating. It's an example, he says, of trying to think his way to a new approach while his behavior remained the same.

Instead, he had to take those "epiphanies of insight" and translate them into new practices. The same is true, he says, for spiritual hungers. "I can't 'know' my way to new habits."

Such sentiments may seem surprising coming from a philosophy professor. But

Smith says he is wary of the tendency to reduce all we do to the rational.

Knowledge is important, but it's not enough. "You can't think your way to holiness," he says.

He adds too that philosophy has helped him think about the very notion of "pursuing" God.

The ultimate aim of this pursuit, Smith says, is to know that all the while God was attracting us—all along it was God who moved our souls in such a pursuit. ■

—by Phil deHaan,  
Calvin College

## SHORT TAKES

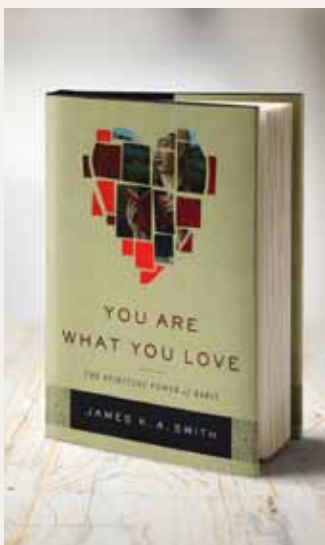


Edible Torah scrolls

## Tasting the Word

Ezekiel 3:1: "And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.'" After discussing this verse, Calvin Seminary associate professor of Old Testament Amanda Benckhuyzen invited students to bring in a treat. Student Kyle Kooyers brought in edible Torah scrolls so they could be like the prophets and ingest the Word. ■

—Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications



James K.A. Smith has written *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*.



# ADS

**Deadlines:** Sept. issue is 8/8/16; Oct. issue is 9/5/16. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Calls Accepted

**PASTOR DAVE DYKSTRA** of Faith Community CRC in Beaver Dam, WI accepted a call to Maranatha Fellowship CRC in Farmington, NM

### Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that Darren Hoogendoorn 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 ZEELAND** will meet on Thursday, September 15, 2016, at the Overisel CRC. Agenda deadline is August 3.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

### Retirement

**REV. JERALD (JERRY) LION** On June 30, 2016 Reverend Jerald (Jerry) Lion retired after 36 years of serving the Lord in pastoral ministry. During these years, he and his wife Donna have faithfully and joyfully served Community CRC in East Grand Forks, MN, Vogel Center CRC in McBain, MI, Family of Faith CRC in Kennewick, WA, and, since 2004, Avery Street CRC in South Windsor, CT. Avery Street Church celebrated Rev. Lion's and Donna's retirement with a party in their honor on Saturday, June 25, followed on Sunday June 26 with a final Service of Celebration at Avery Street Church. Please join us in praising our wonderful Lord for placing His call on Pastor Jerry so many years ago and for His empowering Spirit to accomplish what He intended through this faithful servant of His.

## Congregational

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**CHAMPLAIN VALLEY CRC** in Waltham, Vermont is celebrating 50 years of serving Christ this year. All who have participated in the life of this congregation over the years are invited to join us for worship on Sept. 4 and a picnic celebration at the church on Sept. 5th (Labor Day). If you can come, please RSVP Pastor Phillip at 802-877-2500 or [pastor@cvcrc.net](mailto:pastor@cvcrc.net).

**HOPE CRC** in Rapid City, SD is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2016. We are planning a celebration Sunday with our morning service and activities to follow on September 4, 2016. We invite all who have been part of our church over the years and others who have participated in our ministry to join us for fellowship and a celebration for all the Lord has provided to us in the last 50 years.

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**THE CRC OF CHANDLER, MN** will be celebrating 100 years of God's faithfulness to all generations on August 6 and 7, 2016. All who have participated in the life of the congregation over the years are welcome to join us for a celebration meal, program, and worship service. Please RSVP by phone 507-677-2524 or email [crcofchandler@gmail.com](mailto:crcofchandler@gmail.com)

## Birthdays

### 98th Birthday

**LILLIAN (DYKSTRA) DE BOER** 725 Baldwin #1061, Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate her 98th birthday on July 29. Her family praises God for His blessings to her.

### 95th Birthday

**BERTHA HELLENGA WOUDEWYK** will celebrate her 95th Birthday on July 27. An inspiration to her friends and family. Happy 95th!

## 105th Birthday



**JOHN VANDERBILT** born July 30, 1911 in Rock Valley, Iowa. 3 children, Judi, Marvin, Karen. 9 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren. Cards welcome. 2064 S. San Antonio, Ontario, CA. 91762 Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

## 90th Birthday

**FABER** Francis of 111 Dodge St. Luverne, MN 56156 will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 13, 2016. His wife Audrey and their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God for the for the blessing he is in our lives.

**JUNE HOLLEMANS (KEEGSTRA)** will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 13. Her 6 children and spouses, 21 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren thank God for 90 wonderful years.

**RAYMOND KLYN** will celebrate his 90th BD on August 4, 2016. His family gives praise to God for the blessing of his many years and gives thanks for his care, love, support and Godly example. We love you! Help him celebrate by sending cards to 199 Franklin Street, Pella, IA 50219.

**LUCILE (DE STIGTER) POEL** 2042 Mallard Dr SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on August 23, 2016. Her children, their spouses, 14 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren thank God for the blessing she has been to our family.

**VIRGIL SCHULD** of 650 Mechanic Street, Edgerton, MN will celebrate his 90th birthday on July 30. Celebrating with him will be his 3 children and their spouses, 11 grandchildren/spouses and 2 great grandchildren as well as many other family members and friends. Praise God for his faithfulness!



**SYLVESTER (SHORTY) VANDER TUIG** will celebrate his 90th birthday on Aug. 29. His wife Arlene and his 4 children and spouses. 14 grandchildren and spouses. 44 great grandchildren Thank the Lord for his amazing love and faithfulness.

**LEONARD D. WILKINS** will turn 90 in July. Len is married to Mary Lou Cook and is the father of Dick (Jan), Sue (Mark), and David (Susan). He is a blessing to his 8 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. We love you Dad

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary



**BORST** Gerry and Trudy Borst celebrate 65 years of marriage on June 20. 2236 Merton Ave, Eagle Rock CA 90041. Their children and grandchildren join them in thanking God for His love and faithfulness from generation to generation.

**BUIKEMA** Bill and Gert Buikema (Werkman) 12565 Renaissance Circle #211 Homer Glen, IL 60491 celebrate 65 years of marriage August 25 2016. They and their children, grandchildren & great grandchildren praise God for His goodness and faithfulness.

Think you can change the world *by listening?*

**We do.**

**CHANGE** can be big, like eradicating poverty big. Or it can be small, like sharing a cup of coffee small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go. That changes everything. Including you.



**REDEEMER**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

*A degree you can believe in.*



redeemer.ca

**FISHER** Charles & Ann (Vande Ree) of Wyckoff, NJ celebrate 65 years of marriage August 1, 2016. They and their children, grandchildren & great grandchildren praise God for His faithfulness.

#### 60th Anniversary

**VOETBERG** Gerben and Lila (Veldheer) Voetberg will celebrate 60 years of Marriage on August 10, 2016. They celebrate with their children Lynn and Bruce Walters, Lisa Goetsch, Rick and Betsy Voetberg and Jaci and Greg Gartland. They have been blessed with 12 grandchildren and 2 great granddaughters.

#### 50th Anniversary

**VROON** Evert and Linda of 16219-53 St NW Edmonton, AB, Canada, T5Y3C6. Are celebrating God's goodness August 5th. Children: David and Jennifer, Dan, EJ and Janet, Justin and Melissa, Trish and Eric Rolleman. Nine grandchildren.

**ROZEBOOM** Praising and thanking God for Rev. John & Linda Rozeboom and 50 years of blessed marriage. Love, Kristin & Scott (Katie, Kamryn & Troy) and Dan & Nesha (Emma & Andrew).

#### Obituaries

**BIELEMA** Jean Lois (VanVliet) went to be with her Lord and Savior on Monday, May 30, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband, Alvin G. Bielema and is survived by her children: Cynthia (Larry) Terlouw, Sally (David) Koll, and Mary Winters; six grandchildren: Beccah Terlouw, Tim Terlouw, Michael (Sherwin) Koll, Sara (Brian) Sybesma, Mark Winters and Kristina Winters; and two great grandsons: Isaac Sybesma and Joshua Koll.

**DE VOS** R. Jack, age 87 of Grand Rapids, MI, went home to be with his Lord on Saturday, May 7, 2016. Jack is survived by his wife, Rosemary; sister-in-law, Gladys De Vos; three children, Jessica and John De Ruiter, Chris and Barb De Vos, and Brian and Kristy De Vos; eight grandchildren; and five great grandchildren.

#### Church Position Announcements

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES** Faith CRC, Elmhurst IL, is seeking qualified person to direct its youth ministry. This position is full-time with primary focus on middle and high school and some responsibilities for children's and young adult ministries. To apply, send letter of introduction with resume to [dymsearch@faithelmhurst.org](mailto:dymsearch@faithelmhurst.org) or contact Ray Middel at 630-862-1861

**PASTOR** Tillsonburg CRC, a rural/small town church in Tillsonburg, ON is looking for a full time pastor to walk with us as we step out in the "Going Local" program. Please contact Harry Dykxhoorn at [hdykxhoorn@gmail.com](mailto:hdykxhoorn@gmail.com) for more information and our church profile.

**PASTOR** Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out! Christ Community Church in Victoria, BC is inviting qualified candidates to lead and feed our congregation. Our congregation is firmly rooted in God's love and is committed to practicing love, promoting dignity and discipleship, and living our faith. We are seeking someone to nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation, provide pastoral care and promote the intergenerational, multi-cultural and accessible vision held by the church. To learn more about this position, go to [www.cccvictoria.ca](http://www.cccvictoria.ca)

**YOUTH MINISTRY DIRECTOR** We need your help to share God's Grace and Hope! Drayton CRC, located in southwestern Ontario Canada, is seeking a highly relational youth pastor/director who will engage the youth of DCRC in spiritual growth by coordinating and administering an effective youth ministry. As a member of the pastoral team you will provide discipleship and pastoral care for the youth and young adults, as well as lead the congregation through shared preaching. Please contact Andy Knetsch at 519-638-3341, or [andyknetsch@hotmail.com](mailto:andyknetsch@hotmail.com)

**ADULT MINISTRY PASTOR** For almost two decades a thriving Christian church, aptly named New England Chapel, has become a haven for the broken and for people who may have given up on church but not on God. We are seeking a self-motivated, lover of God, people

# God Loves Me storybooks

For the past 16 years, *God Loves Me* storybooks have been a well-loved and much-used resource in church preschool ministry. Newly revised in 2015, these storybooks will provide families and churches with a wonderful way to nurture faith while establishing devotional habits of Bible reading and prayer.

Visit [FaithAliveResources.org/GodLovesMe](http://FaithAliveResources.org/GodLovesMe) to see samples and learn more.



**More resources for preschoolers, children, and youth are available at [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org)**

800-333-8300  
[Orders@FaithAliveResources.org](mailto:Orders@FaithAliveResources.org)



and details, to walk alongside those both new to faith as well as those exponentially growing in it via established efforts and across various ministries. Visit [newenglandchapel.org/nextpastor](http://newenglandchapel.org/nextpastor) for complete job description.

**PASTOR OF PREACHING & WORSHIP** Emmanuel CRC in Calgary Alberta. We are an active, large church with a full range of ministries including contemporary Reformed worship and a community development ministry. We are looking for an inspiring, motivating leader able to apply Scriptures to our world and lives and to work collaboratively with ministry leaders and staff. In a city that offers everything from sports to arts and prairies to mountains, we invite you to consider helping us build a body that is alive in Christ! For more information contact Hessel Kielstra [hessel.kielstra@vyfield.ca](mailto:hessel.kielstra@vyfield.ca)

**SOLE PASTOR** First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta Canada is seeking a full time Pastor. We are seeking a relational and creative leader who can walk with our congregation as we seek to follow Christ. The pastor will be a collaborative leader who encourages and coaches members to develop and express their faith. For more information please contact [ssolte@gmail.com](mailto:ssolte@gmail.com)

**LEAD PASTOR:** Lead Pastor position available at CrossPoint Church, Chino, CA. To see if this is a possible fit, visit our website [www.crosspointcwcw.org](http://www.crosspointcwcw.org) and click on the Search Process tab to view a church profile and position description.

**WORSHIP COORDINATOR** Westwood CRC (Kalamazoo, MI) is seeking a half time Worship Coordinator to plan and lead worship utilizing both traditional and contemporary elements. Desirable skills include the ability to sing, play the piano/guitar, arrange music and develop musicians/vocalists. Contact Randy DeJong at [ranjodejong@att.net](mailto:ranjodejong@att.net).

**YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP DIRECTOR** Covenant CRC in Cutlerville, Michigan, is seeking candidates for a Youth Discipleship Director for the middle- and high-school areas. Applicants for this position should

have a clear passion for youth and getting them involved in the life of the church, as well as have a degree in this area of study and/or at least three years of experience. When combined with other gift(s), this position will be full-time. Possible other gifts could be ordained preaching, outreach, diaconal, or discipleship work. Send resumes to [info@covenant-crc.org](mailto:info@covenant-crc.org). Application deadline: July 22, 2016.

**NELAND AVE. CRC** of Grand Rapids, MI seeks a second full time pastor to join its ministry team. We seek a Reformed pastor who can present sermons that are deeply rooted in scripture and are relevant for life in the 21st century. This pastor should be able to work with the team in providing pastoral care for the congregation and involvement in ministries to the Neland neighborhood in the heart of Grand Rapids. A church profile is available at the Pastor-Church Relations Office. Interested persons should contact Search Committee Chairperson Douglas Daining at [dbdain@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dbdain@sbcglobal.net)

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR.** Geneva Campus Church ([www.genevacampuschurch.org](http://www.genevacampuschurch.org)) seeks an engaging and godly associate pastor to become part of our (CRC) congregation's ministry on the University of Wisconsin - Madison campus. In addition to pastoral ministry to families and students, this position includes directing our Vocation|Formation program, funded by the Lilly Endowment. Please send a letter of interest to Elizabeth Toman ([eliza.toman@gmail.com](mailto:eliza.toman@gmail.com)).

**SOLE PASTOR** Due to Pastor Fauble's retirement, Hanley CRC located in Grandville MI is seeking a full time minister. We are a warm supportive congregation who desires a leader with strong Biblical teaching, ability to interact with all age groups, enjoys pastoral care, and a heart for reaching and serving the community. Please see our church profile at [CRCNA.org](http://CRCNA.org) for more information, contact Jack Nyenhuis at 616-299-0596, or mail Hanley CRC, 0-372 Jackson, Grandville, MI. 49418





**BOER** Harold, age 86, on January 24, 2016. 3765 U. S. 75 Ave. Sioux Center, IA 51250. Survived by wife Gert Boer, children: Ron and Maria Boer, Doug Boer, Barb and Dale Landhuis, Brad Boer, Cheryl Boer, Patty and Ken Timmermans. Nine grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and one sister, Betty (Boer) DeBoer.

**HAM** Johanna (Kroonenberg) age 87, of Denver, CO, went home to her LORD May 5, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband Alex, and two sons, Marvin and James. She is survived by son Joal, daughter Karen, daughter-in-law Brenda, granddaughter Jamie, sister Jennie, sisters-in-law Bette (Ken) and Helen (Norm), and many nieces and nephews

**HOLWERDA** Thomas Ray, aged 74, of Grand Rapids, went to live with his Lord on Sunday, May 1, 2016. Tom was preceded in death by his first wife, Ruth (Van Dorp). He is survived by his wife of 10 years, Janice (Hekman, Burghgraef); stepchildren: Jeff Burghgraef, Kris Burghgraef, and Todd and Colleen Burghgraef; eight step-grandchildren; sisters: Jeanne (Larry) Borst, Sandra (Stan) Klop; in-laws, David (Nancy) VerMerris, Cornelia (Dan) Vellenga, John (Marge) Van Dorp, Lois VanderWel, Jim (Kathy) Hekman, Don (Martha) Hekman, Shirley (Ken) Vander Wall, Ed (Sue) Hekman, and Ken (Marybeth) Hekman; and numerous nieces, nephews, and many dear friends.

**KATSMa** Dennis, 72 years, went to be with his Savior on March 7, 2016. W787 Cty Rd. E Randolph, WI 53956. Beloved husband of Arlene (Hoffman) Katsma. Dad of Lisa (Charles) Beetstra, Marcia Rataczak & James (Paula) Katsma. Grandpa of 12 & Great grandpa of 5. Survived by brother Daryl (Brenda) Katsma, sister Elaine (John) Schultz

**KUIPERS** Jack B., 95, passed away Wednesday, April 27, 2016 in Grand Rapids, MI. He is survived by his wife Lois; children Benjamin (Laura) Kuipers, Emily (James) Akerson, Joel (Terry) Kuipers, Alison Kuipers, and Lynne (David) Eggert; and 11 grandchildren.

**MARTIN** Ida of Wayne, NJ died 5/18/16. Mourning her loss: her husband of 65 years Judge Ralph Martin, her children: Rev. Gregg Martin of Toronto, Cpt. Jonathan (Adrienne), Lance (Kate), 5 grandchildren. Predeceased by son Brian in 2012. "Well done, good and faithful servant."

**POELSTRA** Janette, 99, went to her Heavenly Home Mar. 23, 2016. Funeral service was held at CRC in Corsica, SD. She is survived by Ramona Dykstra, Eugene (Joann) Poelstra, Walter (Mavis) Poelstra, 9 grandchildren, 22 gr grandchildren, 12 gr gr grandchildren. Preceded in death husband of 67 yrs Tony (Jan. 1, 2002). Parents Peter & Flora Kiezer, 1 sister & 1 brother, son-in-law Dick Dykstra.

**RINGERWOLE** Lula Grace, age 101, of 6248 Summerhill Dr., Hudsonville, MI, went to be with her Lord on April 19, 2016. She is preceded in death by her husband, Alvin Ringerwole. She is survived by her daughter, Joan Ringerwole, and her brother, Kenneth Artz, and his family. Praise be to God for her long life.

**SYTSMA** Leonard, 91, 1050 S. Euclid Ave. Unit 2206, Elmhurst, Ill. 60126, went to be with the Lord on May 8, 2016. Survived by his wife of 66 years, Hermina, and his children; Mary (Stuart) Greydanus, Daniel (Mary) Sytsma, Thomas (Judith) Sytsma, Nancy (Joseph) Maggio, and Leslie Sytsma; nine grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. Memorial gifts may be directed to Chicago Westside Christian School.

**VANDEN BERG** Martin, went to be with Jesus on May 29, 2016. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, Lavonne (Vander Zaag), brother John (wife Marian) and sister Alida (Veenstra). Martin was a beloved father and grandfather and his Christ-like life was a blessing for daughter Loni (husband Michael), daughter Heidi (husband Kirk) and son Todd (wife Shari); thirteen grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

**VANDER HOVEN** Thelma Elizabeth, age 95 of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away on Tuesday, June 14, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband of 60 years, Rev. William Vander Hoven. Together they served six Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, Minnesota and Massachusetts, as well as several short term ministries in many other states. Thelma is survived by her children, Paula K. Vander Hoven, William J. Vander Hoven and James A. Vander Hoven; grandchildren, Gregory and Christine Fritsma, and Teri Fritsma; and great grandchildren, Rosa Pedriana, Jack and Aimee Clarke.

**VANDER POL** Agnes (Hanenburg), 104, died June 3, 2016. Preceded in death by husband Jack in 1976. She is survived by sister Clara Koegler, brother Ted (Jeanette) Hanenburg, children: Nelson (Joan), Mike (Gladi), Vern (Mina), Lila (Paul) Clapp, Will (Christine), and Warren (Pat), 19 grandchildren and 53 great grandchildren.

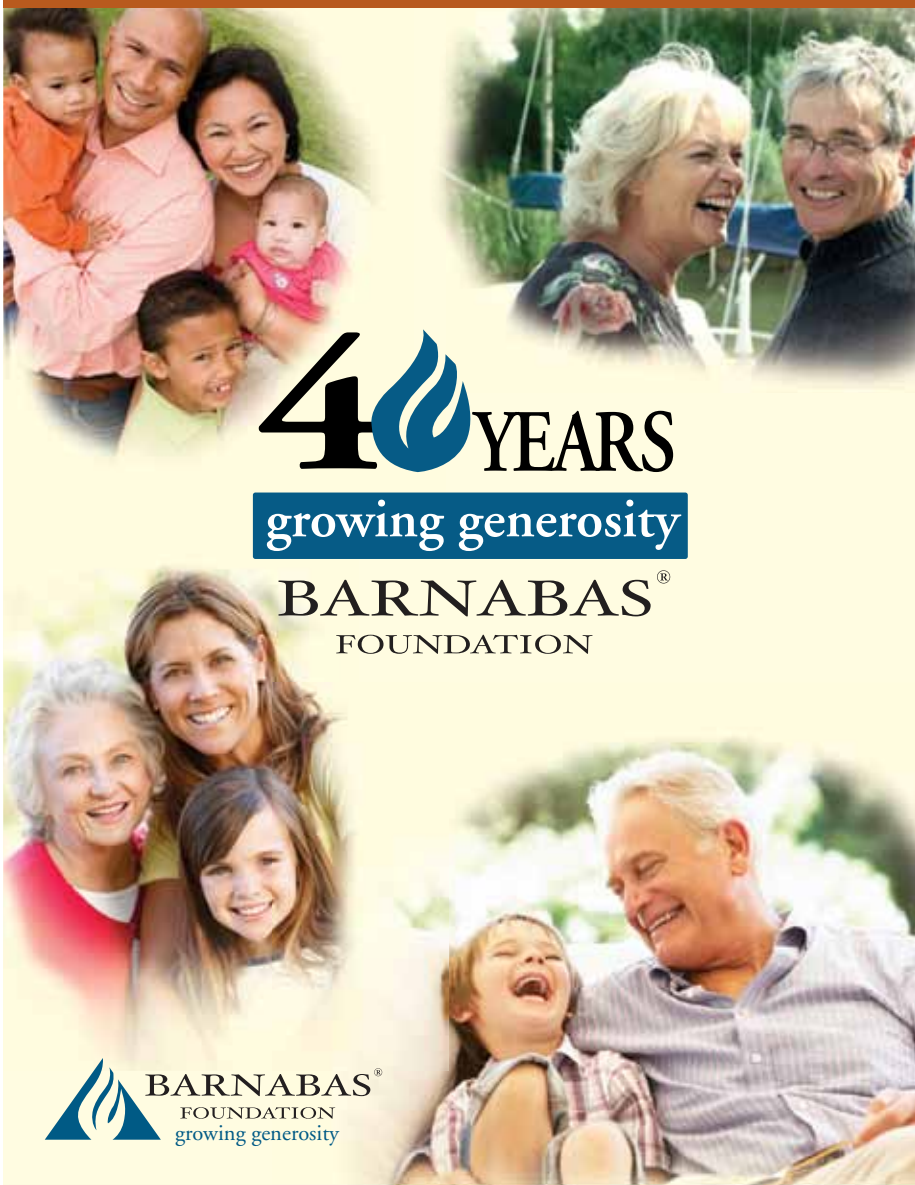
**VAN KOOTEN** Paul Edward, age 91, passed away on Sunday, May 29, 2016, in Kentwood, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his wife, Charlene; and is survived by his children Sandra (Mark) Walters, Lynda (Rick) Neigh, Debra (Peter) Land, Steve (Susan) Van Kooten and Dale (Linda) Van Kooten; sixteen grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren.

### Employment

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

**HANDY MAN** Part-time handyman wanted for higher end apt. bldgs. SE Grand Rapids. Very Flexible hours. \$20/hr. Great job for retiree. Call Greg. 616-723-4297

**Barnabas Foundation has been advancing God's kingdom by providing quality Planned Giving services since 1976.**



**40 YEARS**

**growing generosity**

**BARNABAS<sup>®</sup> FOUNDATION**



Toll Free: 1.888.448.3040 | [www.barnabasfoundation.com](http://www.barnabasfoundation.com)

## Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

**SAN CLEMENTE CA** 200 yards to beach access close to outlet mall & restaurants. 1 bed 1 bath comfortably sleeps 6. vrbo.com 795245 or 209-552-6139

**FT MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT** by the week or month, Oct – May. 905-630-6711.

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

**NAPLES, FL CONDO FOR RENT** 1st Floor Lake View. 2+2/Den, Sleeps 6. Lanai, Garage, Gated Comm/3 pools. Minutes To Beaches. \$3900/mo. Call Cindy 616-550-9078

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN** Year-round Vacation Home for Sale and Rent. See photos of "Peaceful Cove" on Platt Lake Bible Conf Assn website. 616-365-8777.

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** on Lake MI - Montague/Whitehall area. 4BR/2BA Sandy beach, beautiful view \$1500 week. 616-452-6621

**COASTAL, NC** 5 cottages: one 3 br on water; one 2 br, two 1 br & 1 effc in historic Beaufort. WiFi, TV, grill, ac & more. www.theShellcottage.com 252-504-6201 (h)

## Travel

**NIAGARA FALLS CANADA** Come stay with us at Trillium Bed & Breakfast. We have 3 guest rooms with private bathroom facilities. Call or text us at 905-354-3863



*A CENTURY  
OF CARING.  
A WORLD OF  
DIFFERENCE.*

Jane Keim  
*Fulton Manor Resident*



# Holland Home

Since 1892, we've helped countless mature adults flourish. Providing the care needed as it is needed, whether at one of our residential communities or in their own home. In each case, delivering a broad range of care services designed to answer the needs of every mature life stage.

From independent living to in-home care, you can rely on Holland Home for comprehensive services and incomparable resources today, as well as tomorrow.

**For more information call 616.235.5113 or visit us online at [HollandHome.org](http://HollandHome.org).**

Helpers of Holland home | HomeCare of Holland Home | Faith Hospice

# Hey Worship Leaders!

Did you know there is a place to connect with other CRC worship planners? A place to share resources, ask questions, and find encouragement? Look no further than **The Network** ([crcna.org/network](http://crcna.org/network)).

You'll find a vibrant community with an entire section dedicated to all things Worship!

Just in the past few weeks, your peers:

### SHARED

- Training Videos for Sound Technicians
- Disability Awareness Slides

### ASKED

- Does Contemporary Christian Music Imply Sin No Longer Matters?
- What Copyright Licenses Do I Need?

**Get involved today! After all, ministry is more fun together.**

Visit [crcna.org/network](http://crcna.org/network)

network



# TOGETHER

by Friendship  
MINISTRIES

For more than 30 years, Friendship Ministries has produced high quality materials that empower the church to share God's love with people who have intellectual disability. Now, our new line of material is designed to support the formation of small group Bible studies that include and enfold adults with and without disabilities. The topics are relevant and will contain appropriate supports to enable the full participation of all.

FRIENDSHIP.ORG | TOGETHERSMALLGROUPS.ORG

CONNECTING  
THE CHURCH ON  
THE OUTSIDE

WITH  
THE CHURCH ON  
THE INSIDE.

NOT  
FOR  
GOTTEN

WWW.CROSSROADBIBLE.ORG

I will  
BUILD  
my  
CHURCH



Christian Reformed  
WORLD MISSIONS  
www.crwm.org



**HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND** in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours. [www.chestnutlane.nl](http://www.chestnutlane.nl)

**CRUISE THE BLUE DANUBE** with Rev. Jim and Norma Osterhouse, June 26 - July 6, 2017. For details email [jnosterhouse@yahoo.com](mailto:jnosterhouse@yahoo.com) or call 410-394-3252 410-394-3252

**PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND** March 20 - April 1, 2017, led by Pastor Bill and Lyn Vanden Bosch in partnership with the Calvin College Alumni Association and Calvin College Academy for Lifelong Learning. A "disciple's pilgrimage" following in the footsteps of Jesus to not only understand the Gospels and the early church in their historical, geographical, and cultural context, but to also increase our commitment to wholeheartedly respond to His invitation to "Follow Me." Visit New Testament sites in Galilee, along the Jordan Valley, and Jerusalem. Contact Pastor Bill at (616) 826-1927 or [intheightofjesus@gmail.com](mailto:intheightofjesus@gmail.com). [www.intheightofjesus.com](http://www.intheightofjesus.com). Arrangements by Witte Tours.

## Products and Services

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

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

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

**I CAN SELL YOUR HOUSE FOR \$1000 or 1.5%** Local Calvin grad will sell your house for \$1,000 or 1.5% commission. Full, complete service but with savings! The system works! 100 closings in 2015 alone. Ranked in the top 2% of all West Michigan agents. Call or email Doug Takens: 616.262.4574 [takens@sbcglobal.net](mailto:takens@sbcglobal.net)

**REMODELING?** Call Ken DeVries today for an estimate on your next project. 616-457-5880. Serving West Michigan since 1985. [www.homework-construction.com](http://www.homework-construction.com)

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** is an agency that offers in home (non-medical) care to seniors. We are intentionally small allowing us to build relationships and tailor our services to each clients unique needs. Learn more about us at [truebluecaregivers.com](http://truebluecaregivers.com) or call 616-406-6819. Owned, by Calvin alums who serve the greater Grand Rapids area. True Blue Caregivers, the small company with a big heart.

**CALVIN'S CAR LOT** 2499 28th St. SW, Wyoming, MI. Managed & operated by the Grandpa Group @ Grandville Calvin Christian Schools. Donated cars appreciated. Proceeds benefit the students. Donors receive a tax benefit. Work done by Grandpas is voluntary. Call Glen Walstra @ 616-808-9113 for info.

**GRAY PSALTER HYMNALS** Jewel CRC has 1988 Psalter Hymnals and 1979 NIV Pew Bibles for sale. Price is best offer. Contact: Pastor@JewelCRC.org or 303-744-0827

## Miscellaneous

**CEMETARY PLOTS** Chapel Hill Gardens South 3 Gravesites Garden of Everlasting Life Cemetary price: \$3600 per lot. Will sell for \$2000 per lot. Contact: Laura email-[dornkelly@aol.com](mailto:dornkelly@aol.com)

**OPEN LETTER TO THE CRC** from the Rev. Dr. Edwin Walhout. Read the letter at [www.edwinwalhout.com](http://www.edwinwalhout.com).

## Punch Lines

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

**A** young officer is working late at the Pentagon one evening. As he comes out of his office around 8 p.m., he sees a general standing by the classified document shredder in the hallway, a piece of paper in his hand.

"Do you know how to work this thing?" the general asks. "My secretary's gone home, and I don't know how to run it."

"Yes, sir," says the officer, who turns on the machine, takes the paper from the general, and feeds it in.

"Now," says the General, "I just need one copy. . . ."

—Dawn Gebben

**M**y son invested considerable time teaching my grandchildren about "stranger danger." After extensive instruction, he asked them, "Now, if a stranger stopped his car and offered you some candy, what would you do?"

The response: "Don't worry, Dad. We would say 'please' and 'thank you.'"

—Rich Kornoelje

**A**t creation, God was talking to one of his angels. He said, "I've just made a 24-hour period of alternating light and darkness on Earth."

"That's wonderful," the angel exclaimed. "So what are you going to do now?"

And God replied, "I think I'll call it a day."

—Dick Bylsma

**O**n Monday nights I help teach the GEMS girls' club in Essex, Ontario. We have lots of fun singing, studying the Bible, and doing crafts. One day one of the moms wrote on Facebook: "Not sure what you are teaching the girls in GEMS. Phoebe keeps singing the song 'Days of Elijah' with the chorus 'There's no God like Jacoba.'"

—Jacoba Hoekstra Doris

**I** know God won't test me beyond my capabilities. I just wish he didn't have so much confidence in me.

—Sam Bosch

**T**hree-year-old Abby was trying to recite the Lord's Prayer but got a little stuck in the middle: "Forgive our debts as we forgive, um, our dentists."

—Gayla Postma

**W**e used to meet our children and grandchildren for breakfast on Saturday mornings at Big Boy. We liked to sit in the corner booth with the round table in the middle. When our food

came, we would hold hands, and my grandson would pray. When he said "Amen," we let go of hands and began our breakfast.

One morning my daughter-in-law had her hands full caring for little Maddy, who was into everything—first one thing, then another. Finally Maddy's mom grabbed her little hands and held them firmly while she explained what she could not do, and why.

With hands still tightly held in her mother's grasp, Maddy looked up at her mother and said "Amen."

—Joyce Eppinga Schram

**M**y 6-year-old brother threw a soccer ball at my mom and yelled, "Cannonball!"

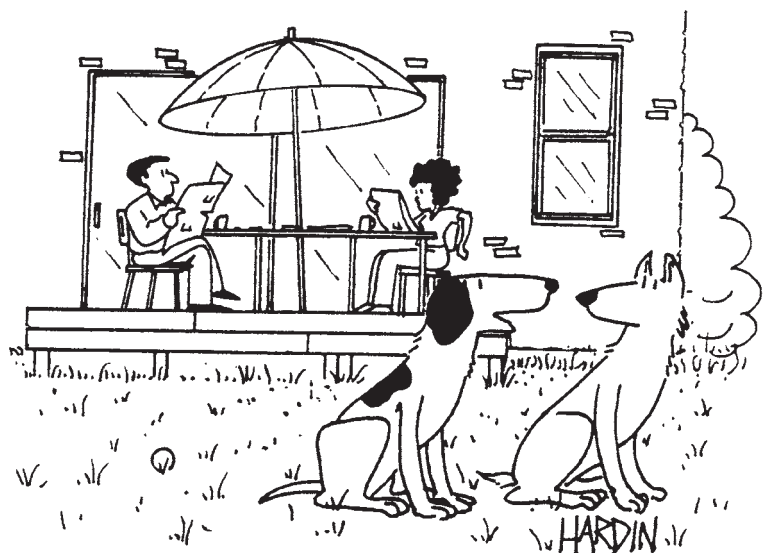
My dad laughed and said, "That's not a cannonball, that's a soccer ball!"

—Jacob Doornberg

**A**t school: First I went to English class where I learned " before "e" except after "c."

Then I went to science class!

—A. Whipple



"I keep them around because they have skills I need."





# HAVE FAITH IN YOUR DEGREE



Choose King's and look forward to excellent professors, personalized instruction, and a nationally accredited degree. Enjoy learning in a caring Christian community that will challenge your perceptions of the world and your place in it.



Caring community  
Faithful future

[KINGSU.CA](http://KINGSU.CA)