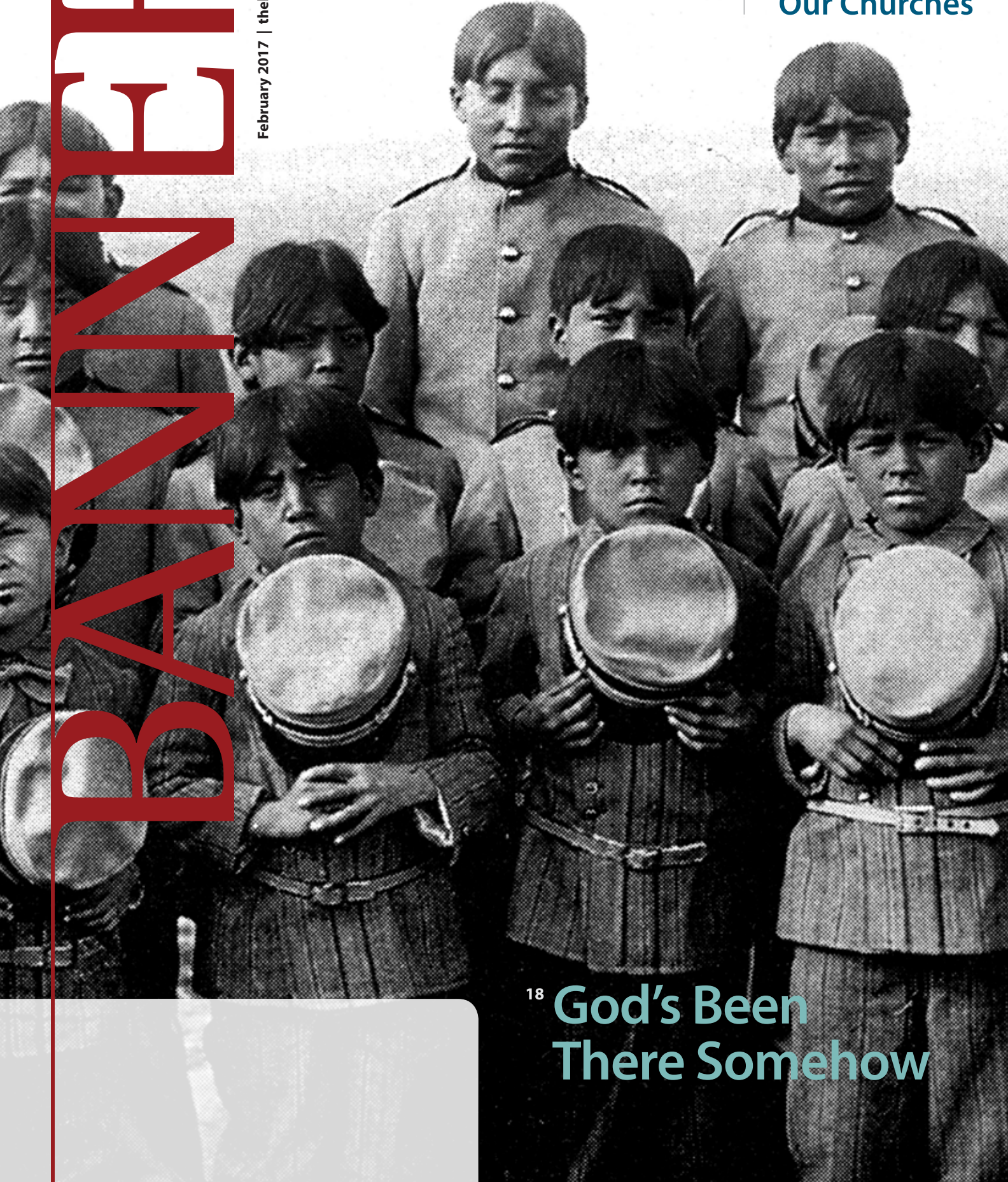


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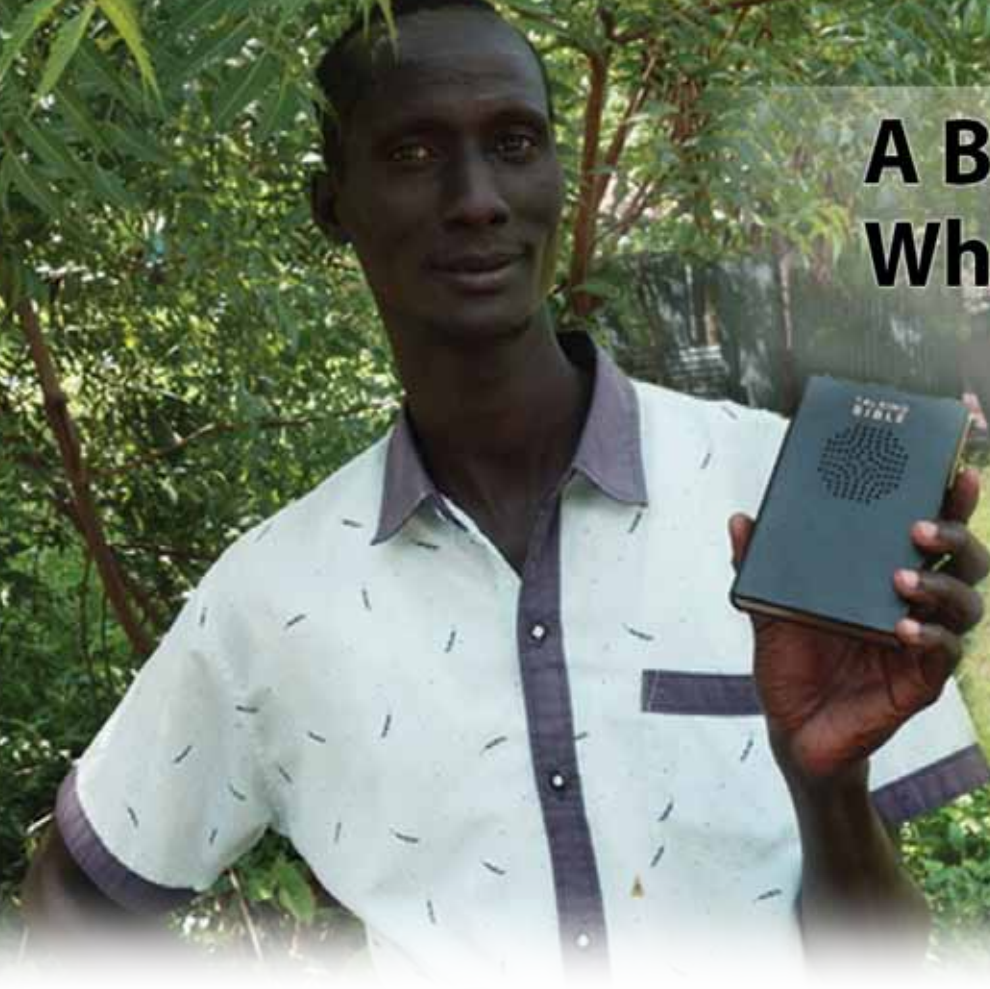
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There Somehow

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**Cover:** "Daily regimens at Rehoboth were sometimes reminiscent of the military" (*Rehoboth: A Place for Us*, p. 76).

PHOTOGRAPH CALVIN COLLEGE ARCHIVES



# Stand Together

**AFTER GRAD SCHOOL**, I sent out hundreds of resumes seeking my first full-time employment. As a new immigrant whose wife was expecting our first child, I applied for almost any job for which I was qualified. After months of futility, and acting on a suggestion, I changed the name on my next batch of resumes from “Shiao Chong” to “David Chong.” Immediately I got three callbacks from otherwise identical resumes.

Research shows that Asian job applicants with “whitened names and resumes” receive a 21 percent callback rate compared to only 11.5 percent of those with Asian-sounding names ([tinyurl.com/BannerResume](http://tinyurl.com/BannerResume)). The disparity is greater for African names. This is an example of white privilege. Thankfully, Christian institutions stood up to racism and hired me as “Shiao Chong.”

In connection with Black History Month, this issue includes a feature on “Confronting White Privilege” (p. 32). One helpful but imperfect analogy for explaining white privilege uses cycling ([tinyurl.com/BannerBikeArticle](http://tinyurl.com/BannerBikeArticle)). Our highways and roads privilege cars over bicycles. They were designed and built with the automobile in mind. Bicycles may share the road, but cyclists know how dangerous it can be when cars get too close, drive by at high speeds, or kick up gravel. Yes, some of those situations are the fault of obnoxious drivers. But most car/bike issues probably result from well-meaning drivers not being aware enough.

Similarly, white privilege is a social system that makes people of color more vulnerable, even when white people have no evil intentions. The term is not a label that calls every white person a privileged racist. Rather it describes a flawed system where most people of color are on bicycles, so to speak, in a world designed for cars. Unfortunately, unlike cyclists, people of color can never get off the bike.

Not everyone agrees that white privilege exists. It depends on how you perceive racism. Those who see racism as simply the result of individuals choosing to act in racist ways are likely to be skeptical of white privilege. Racism, for such people, is an intentional choice. If an action is unintentional, they say, then it is not racist. Those who think that social institutions also perpetuate racism, regardless of intentions, are likely to accept white privilege as true.

I believe these different viewpoints have contributed to divisions among Christians on various issues of race, from the Black Lives Matter movement to the Doctrine of Discovery. It is probably why some Christians don’t see how colonialism is relevant while others see its effects on our society every day. Why some say there are systemic racial issues in police enforcement while others say that assertion is an insult to those who serve and protect. Why some Christians seem to minimize what other Christians consider racist overtones in the U.S. president-elect’s (at the time of this writing) public statements.

If there are fundamental differences in the way we view racism, then we are constantly talking past each other. To move beyond this impasse, we need to listen to the stories and experiences of people of color. Develop cross-cultural friendships. Walk in other people’s shoes. Our Office of Race Relations has plenty of resources to help us ([crcna.org/race/resources-race-relations](http://crcna.org/race/resources-race-relations)).

Racism spans cultures and ethnicities. I’ll bet there is “yellow privilege” in China. Recognizing racism is not about blaming any one group. Rather, it’s about together repenting and standing against sin. I believe that systemic sins, like racism, are part of “the powers of this dark world” (Eph. 6:12). Let us, therefore, stand together against racism. ■



**Shiao Chong** is editor-in-chief of *The Banner*. He attends Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ont.

Most people of color are on bicycles, so to speak, in a world designed for cars.

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# Sisterhood

## HAVE FIVE SISTERS.

**I** That's right, there are six of us. No boys. People say, "Your dad must have really wanted a boy." But I know he was happy with his girls.

We have different personalities, different jobs, different gifts, different needs. But as we grow older, I've noticed we're starting to sound and look more and more alike—more and more like our mom, in fact. We grew up during a transitional era when most moms, though not ours, stayed home to raise the kids. By the late '60s, daughters were beginning to explore other options—going to school, preparing for a career—even if our imaginations didn't stretch much beyond becoming a nurse or a teacher.

My sisters live in two countries in six towns or cities, and most of the time we stay in touch by email or the occasional phone call. But every other year, for the past couple of decades, we've carved out one week to spend together. Just the six of us, away from spouses and kids.

We rent a cottage and hang out. Take turns cooking simple meals, read books,

drink wine, swim, talk, laugh, cry, sing, pray. Because it turns out there's some kind of blessing about being together that only increases over the years. Even though both our parents are gone, we feel their pleasure in our coming together.

We've supported each other through the deaths of loved ones and through illness, job transitions, and seasons of unemployment. We've celebrated the birth of grandchildren and prayed for each others' kids. We've named each other's gifts and celebrated bold ventures—from accepting a challenging new job to mastering a headstand.

Don't get me wrong. Like any set of siblings, we have our differences, and sometimes we've hurt each other by our words or actions. We don't always see eye to eye.

But no matter what, we see God in each other—and in the gift of sisterhood.

For many years, we rented a cottage in Ontario's rugged Muskokas—Canadian Shield country—for our week together. Driving along a highway blasted through solid granite, we'd point out *inuksuk* topping the jagged cliffs. These are figures

made of piled stones; they were used by the Inuit as a way to communicate. I recently read that in Inuktitut, *inuksuk* means "to act in the capacity of a human."

So it's fitting that the first year we stayed in that cottage in Northern Ontario, we canoed to an uninhabited island and created our own *inuksuk*, carefully choosing and fitting together the largest boulders we could heft. When we finished, we celebrated by pouring water over its head like a kind of baptism while naming and giving thanks for all our loved ones.

Thanks be to God, who knew we need each other and who so kindly placed us in families. Claiming that blessing, we find ourselves for one week in a sacred space where God's presence is as close as a sister's touch. As close as the yeasty aroma of a loaf from the oven or a gale of helpless laughter. Together we live out what it means to "act in the capacity of a human."

To sisterhood! ■



Judith Claire Hardy is associate editor of *The Banner*. She attends Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Simplicity locates the  
spiritual life where it  
belongs—in the ordinary  
events of everyday life.

— JOHN S. MOGABGAB

## Seeing Eye to Eye

OPINION

LISTEN

We can promote greater unity by listening to each other.

**OUR DENOMINATION** has plenty of differences. We don't see eye to eye on a growing number of matters, including liturgical practices, shared financial responsibility for the work of the denomination, and what our response should be to the social questions the world keeps bringing to our doorstep.

What's more, we seem to be reluctant to overcome our differences.

At the local level some of us can't agree on the use of a common translation of the Bible or what version of the confessions and sacraments to use for communal reading. And when it comes to the music in worship services, we're all over the map.

On the broader scale, at synod, the lack of consensus leads us from one study committee to another. In the meantime, the churches are left to their own devices in dealing with the questions that remain unresolved.

No, we don't want the void to be filled with top-down dictates from CRC offices in Grand Rapids or Burlington. What we do need though, is wisdom. When issues come to the fore, we need prayerful consideration of biblically-directed study, which, with God's blessing, will bring about a consensus that will be acceptable to all. We need to allow ourselves to be led

by the collective wisdom of the voluntary association that a denomination is. Without that commitment there can be no denomination.

How did we get to this point?

It is my sense that we have allowed the secular surroundings in which we mostly live, work, and play to influence how we think and act in our personal and faith lives. The world argues that it is no longer correct to call a spade a spade, because, you see, it might actually be a completely different garden tool. This uncertainty and lack of resolve creates a *laissez-faire* attitude that finds it easier to skirt around life's issues and let everyone do their own thing.

There seems to be a connection here with our reluctance in the church to confront and deal with our differences—at the expense of unity.

A denomination is, after all, only a human institution—a means to an end, an attempt to be more effective together. With or without a united Christian Reformed denomination, God will continue to gather believers for his church from every age, tribe, nation, and denomination.

In the meantime, we can promote greater unity in the CRC by listening to each other. Really listening, instead of stopping as soon as we think we have identified where the other person is coming from. We have to be willing to drop our preconceived notions about what we think is best, and be prepared to submit to the wisdom of God's Word.

Soli Deo Gloria. ■



Ed Grootenboer was formerly executive director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, now retired. He attends Community CRC, in Kitchener, Ont.



### Our Lady

I was so pleased to read Rev. Vander Zee's feature on Mary ("Our Lady Too," Dec. 2016). What a great reminder! Since Mary is the mother of God, she is the mother of the church, and since Jesus is our brother, she is the mother of us all. Mary is the New Eve, and the Ark of the New Covenant. St. John describes her as the Queen of Heaven clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars.

She is all of these things, and she loves us.

—Kenneth Horjus  
Zeeland, Mich.

### Then and Now

Our denomination officially believes there are two legitimate, biblically supported positions on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. In this interview ("Then and Now: Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the CRC, Dec. 2016), *The Banner* paints a narrative that only the egalitarian perspective is reasonable and compassionate to those women in office. While I lament my complementarian position saddens some, synod holds the position to be equally valid. It is distressing that *The Banner* glosses over that there could be any alternative view. Perhaps in our commemoration, we should mourn the dis-



# TTERS

unity and broken relationships this issue continues to engender 20 years later.

—Erik J. DeVries  
Munster, Ind.

*Editor's note:* For the CRC's official position on women in ecclesiastical office, go to [crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements](http://crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements).

## Hospitable Neighborhoods

As one who has had a career in residential land planning, I agree with a number of the observations about the hospitability of some of our neighborhoods ("Hospitable Neighborhoods," Dec. 2016).

Yet I am a bit perplexed by some of the word choices: "creating" a "strategy" of "simple steps" to "design a society" that "encourages" development of "inhospitable neighborhoods." These words mimic much of the jargon I have heard at a number of academic land planning conferences. They are more than a bit inflammatory.

In my opinion, these "undesirable" effects are the result of many and varied factors from a number of sources over extended periods of time. Certainly not clearly predictable or avoidable; not deliberate or planned.

Suburbia with all its foibles has become a "new normal" for millions of Americans. We can't go back. Yet we can still be as neighborly as we choose to be. No excuses. And we can enjoy driving to the coffee shop or community parks. (The good Samaritan was a long way from home to meet his neighbor.) In comparison to the residential environments worldwide, I'd say we have much to be thankful for in this country.

—Ted Lyzenga  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Other Seas

In response to "It's Time to Seek Other Seas" (Dec. 2016):

The Bible gives us the true history of creation. God's Word must be the final authority on all matters about which it speaks; not just the moral and spiritual things, but also its teachings that bear on history, archaeology, and science. What is at stake is the authority of Scripture, the character of God, the doctrine of death, and the very foundation of the gospel. If the early chapters of Genesis are not true literal history, then faith in the rest of the Bible is undermined, including its teaching about salvation.

—Carmen Reitsma  
New Sharon, Iowa

## Biblical Justice

Re "Biblical Justice and Same-Sex Marriage" (Dec. 2016): Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, a former professor of philosophy at Calvin College, says yes to same-sex marriage. The problem is that he purports his personal reasoning and ignores what the Old and New Testament say about this issue.

All of us are sinners, the LGBT community no more than any of us. Only when we confess our sins and shortcomings can we embrace God's amazing grace, through faith in our Savior who died for all of us.

—Albert Rumph  
Wainfleet, Ont.

## More Psalms

Debra shows her love of the psalms as her way of life ("A Memoir in Psalms," Nov. 2016). Her choice of text ripened her spirit. Reading Psalms you can find more psalms of lament, corporate confessions, illness, and political complaints. David cried out to God in despair, yet moved "from weeping to rejoicing."

—George Lieuwen  
Langley, B.C.

## Thanks!

As a long-time member of the CRC and frequent reader of *The Banner*, I wanted you to know how grateful I am that you are the editor-in-chief. I find you to be honest and humble and wise. I don't mean that as a quote from your article ("A Little Wisdom," Nov. 2016) but as an observation of what I hear coming from your heart. Thank you for serving our denomination.

—Arnie Koldenhoven  
Burr Ridge, Ill.

I thought the September editorial ("Flying the CRC Kite") was terrific!

—Sonia Berg  
High River, Alta.

## A Hot Iron

I believe that synod had the right to accept the minority report which rules that homosexual practice and marriage is in conflict with the word of God ("IMHO: A Hot Iron," Nov. 2016). What follows as a caution against the involvement of officebearers in a homosexual marriage ceremony, though, does not go far enough. It should have cautioned everyone who professes Christ as their Savior and the Word of God as the infallible rule of a Christian's life.

—David Pruin  
Dike, Iowa

## Correction

The In Memoriam for Rev. Timothy Koster (Jan. 2016, p. 11) included an error. It should read as follows: Among those left to mourn his loss are Mary, his wife of 33 years, and four children and their spouses. We sincerely regret this error.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

# NEWS

## New Mexico Church Holds Service of Listening and Repentance

**D**espite inclement weather, more than 100 people gathered at Rehoboth (N.M.) Christian Reformed Church on January 2 for a service of repentance for injustices toward Native Americans that happened at Rehoboth Christian School. The school was founded by Christian Reformed missionaries more than 100 years ago.

The service was built on four themes: I Was Wrong; I Am Sorry; I Seek Forgiveness; I Will Love.

The centerpiece of the service was a 25-minute videotaped conversation with Pastor Randy

Freeland, who experienced demeaning behavior while a student at Rehoboth Christian School. Freeland has been a pastor in the CRC since 2006, currently serving Bethlehem CRC in Tohlokai, N.M. He is a member of the CRC's Board of Trustees.

Freeland shared some of what happened to him during his seven years at the school, including being thrown into a corner and physically abused by a teacher, walking away with bruises. "I remember one teacher who looked at me and said, 'I feel that the public would be better off with you dead or in jail,'" he recounted. "For an adult to say that to a child was unfair and unjust."

Despite that, he said, Rehoboth gave him the foundation of Christianity, especially five people who showed him the true meaning of who Christ is. "They showed me what love was," he said. One of those people is Gail De Young, a teacher who welcomed Freeland



Rev. Rob Byker

into her home. She was part of the video. "Because of that, I saw again what love is," Freeland said.

Also appearing on the video was Don McGavran, current superintendent of Rehoboth Christian School. Although he was not at the school during Freeland's time there, he apologized on behalf of the school. "You should never have been treated that way. For others that we treated that way, we were



Don McGavran, superintendent of Rehoboth Christian School, apologized on behalf of the school to students who were hurt.

wrong," he said. "School should be a safe place. For you, maybe for others, it was not. And that's our fault." He also committed to providing resources for counseling or supportive services that alumni of Rehoboth may need.

Vern Bia, 55, who is Navajo, attended the service. He was not

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A video conversation with Pastor Randy Freeland was part of the service. (L-r) Rob Byker, Don McGavran, Randy Freeland, and Gail De Young. View the video at <http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-freeland>.

a student at Rehoboth but taught there for 11 years in the 1990s. Five of his children graduated from the school. He said that the CRC needs to address these issues rather than sweep them under the rug. There is real hurt, he said, especially the equating of Americanism with Christianity. "That hurt a lot of Natives," he said. "That equating has caused a lot of decline to language, problems in education, and loss of culture and loss of identity."

He said he appreciated the previous apology given at the school's 100th anniversary, but is concerned about the follow-through. He pointed to the lack of support from Christians in the protest against the Dakota Access pipeline project. "If Natives were valued, you would have [had] more people in support of that," he said.

The church service was held in part to follow up recommendations from Synod 2016, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. Gail De Young was a delegate to that synod. In response to a report from the task force studying the Doctrine of Discovery, those recommendations included recognizing "the pain of those who suffered from their experiences in the residential schools of the

United States and Canada, including Rehoboth Christian School, and lament any of our mistakes that caused pain."

Synod also directed the executive director of the CRC to work with appropriate CRC agencies to "walk alongside affected parties, listen to their stories, lament, and weep with them until such time as we can 'walk in beauty together'" (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 922-923). Hearing the story of Randy Freeland was part of those actions.

At the conclusion of the service, an invitation was given for anyone to come and speak with Rehoboth CRC's pastor Rob Byker, DeYoung, or McGavran. McGavran said they all met with several people and began to listen to their stories.

Byker admitted that he had several disagreements with the task force's report, but the report also got something right. "We have been guilty of sins like paternalism, heavy-handed discipline, a lack of listening, and racial superiority. As pastor of Rehoboth CRC, I personally believe that we are moving away from such sins and toward Christ-likeness," he said. "But whether I am right or wrong, we are not perfectly Christ-like. We are not walking in beauty together.

Our Lord's call to repent remains relevant. . . . It's my hope that we will daily seek to kill ugly sins like superiority and grow in Christ-like humility and compassion."

(See also "Doctrine of Discovery Update," p. 27, and "God's Been There Somehow," p. 18.)

—Gayla R. Postma

## Michigan Church Serves up Super Mission Sunday

Before settling into their homes for kickoff on Super Bowl Sunday, one Michigan congregation spends the morning reaching out to their community—a day they call Super Mission Sunday. This year, members of Providence Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., will worship with residents, families, and the community of Benjamin's Hope, a residential ministry for people with autism and other cognitive challenges. After working on service projects at Benjamin's Hope, they will gather again with the residents and friends at a local high school for lunch.

Last year, more than 400 members ministered to people without homes through various projects at the Holland Rescue Mission.

Super Mission Sunday is a chance to help others, but also a day to seek out how God might be calling them to serve. "It is a way to engage our people in ongoing mission work," explained organizer Braden Stradley, director of ministries at Providence CRC.

Last year, Stradley said the lunch was a highlight, a time to learn people's names and hear their stories. "There is such value in a shared meal, a place where connections can be made," said Stradley.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Before serving on Super Mission Sunday, Providence CRC meets for worship.



# NEWS

## Jesus on East Colfax Avenue



PHOTOS BY JANET GREIDANUS

Rev. Shawn Sikkema joked that a good attention-grabbing headline for this story could be “Former megachurch pastor and wife now live among homeless.” A bit dramatic, but true.

Sikkema and his wife, Diane, spent the past 26 years ministering at Eastern Hills Community Church in Aurora, Colo., a Christian Reformed congregation that grew from 100 members worshipping in a school gym to 2,400 members worshipping in a 70,000-square-foot ministry center located in the wealthiest part of Aurora.

Now they call home a room at the Ranger Motel on East Colfax

Avenue in Aurora. Their “parish” is a four-mile strip of 26 squalid and cheap motels. The “office” is a table at the local McDonald’s or Cafe Canaan a few blocks away. The ministry is Jesus on Colfax Ministries.

### From Megachurch to Motel

Sikkema is quick to say that he loves both worlds—the megachurch and this motel ministry—but last year he experienced a clear call from God to minister among people who are poor and dealing with broken lives here. The Sikkemas moved into the motel in September to better practice a “ministry of presence” in the area.

I’ve come to find out what Jesus on Colfax Ministries is about,

and I’m about to “walk the streets” with the Sikkemas as they knock on motel doors, offer food, listen to difficult stories, and, through prayer, invite the presence of Jesus into troubled situations.

The Ranger is slightly more stable than most of the other motels, but it is still grim to behold. Sikkema had recommended that I not book a motel in the area, and, to underscore the reality of the situation, described a shooting that had happened earlier in the week at one they regularly visit. He’d requested I phone him from the parking lot when I arrive so he could come down and escort me to their motel room. It’s a dark and cold December night. I don’t want to admit I’m frightened. But I’m excited too.

Colfax Avenue is just over 26 miles long and runs through the poorest part of Aurora. In its motels, especially on East Colfax, live the working poor as well as those who have scraped together enough money to get off the street for a night or two. It is an interracial demographic with a growing number of refugee groups. Domestic violence, family brokenness, addiction, drug-



The Sikkemas now call home a room at the Ranger Motel.

dealing, prostitution, mental illness, and gangs are a part of daily life on Colfax. Community reentry is a significant issue for individuals just out of prison. For many, said Sikkema, there is a thin margin between life and death.

After a quick crockpot meal in the Sikkemas’ motel room, we meet with a group from an organization called Mean Street Ministries and some other volunteers, several from Eastern Hills. In pairs, we begin visiting a half-dozen motels on the strip, offering burritos, day-old baked goods from Starbucks, and prayer. Most individuals are friendly but only open

A typical East Colfax motel.



# My whole body is shaking from the cold. I wonder how the people who have to sleep outside tonight will survive.



From left to right: Shawn Sikkema and Diane Sikkema with their friends, John and Juanita, who live in one of the motels on East Colfax.

their door part-way. It is freezing outside, and they don't want to let the cold air into their rooms. I am appalled at the filthy conditions I see through the half-opened doors, and my heart breaks to see a couple of small children living in these conditions. A bed-bug infested mattress is leaning outside one room awaiting disposal.

Our visits are brief. Many want to pray. Sikkema, I notice, always asks the person his or her name. To him, these individuals are not just a motel room number and certainly not insignificant. Each person matters and has a name that God knows and loves. Later, if and when he meets them again, Sikkema will try to remember their names. He makes notes along the way of issues and needs to be dealt with the next day. When the group returns to the parking lot and we stand in a circle to share and pray, my whole body is shaking from the cold. I wonder how the people who have to sleep outside tonight will survive.

## Jesus Shows Up

The next evening, there are six of us—just a small Jesus on Colfax Ministries group. Like every Tuesday, we'll only visit two motels. The consistency of visiting these two motels has enabled the creation of meaningful relationships. People appear to be expecting our visit. We offer deli sandwiches, bananas, and freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. We are invited into just about every motel room. After unhurried conversation, we join hands, form a small circle, and prayerfully invite Jesus into that space.

"I know that Jesus shows up in those moments, huddled together in a seedy motel room on East Colfax," Sikkema wrote in a recent online post. "I believe that the simplest definition of church is when Jesus says, 'where two or three gather in my name, there I am in the midst of you.' We stand in a circle and call on the name of Jesus. He shows up. No matter how worn or broken the group, no matter the sin present. We regularly pray with people who have not yet surrendered their

lives to Jesus. We do church with prostitutes, sex offenders, families, the mentally ill, drunks, you name it. We get asked periodically where our church is. I usually say, 'Right here. This is church.'"

Later, we sit in the Sikkemas' motel room and debrief. I ask the others why they volunteer in this motel ministry and what it means to them. One of them is Rev. Tim Spykstra, a CRC pastor for more than 20 years. Tonight he talks about being with a man named Ivan. "We had church tonight. We experienced an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That's why we go away so fed," Spykstra explained.

Christine Miskie described how life-giving the ministry is for her.

Reformed Home Missions as well as from Classis Rocky Mountain (the regional group of churches). There are also supporting congregations from other denominations and private donors.

It was a humbling experience to walk the streets with the Sikkemas and one I will not soon forget. Initially, I was shocked and frightened by what I saw around me, but I was quickly helped to see past that to the heart and soul of the ministry. I met many amazing people living in and around those motels. Much work needs to be done here on East Colfax apart from the motel ministry.

Meanwhile, "We consider it a privilege to be where Jesus has



Eastern Hills CRC in Aurora, Colo., where the Sikkemas ministered for 26 years.

She was touched this evening by a woman at the Radiant Motel who asked her to pray for strength. "I need strength," the woman said. "I'm going to quit alcohol and drugs. I was just at my parole officer and told him I was going to get back on track. Thank you for showing up. You are just what I needed."

This ministry has strong ties to the CRC. Family in Christ Community Church, a CRC in Westminster, Colo., is Sikkema's calling church. Jesus on Colfax Ministries received a grant from Christian

led us, here in the Ranger Motel on East Colfax," concluded Sikkema. "We consider it a gift that we get to love and serve in the midst of our new friends. We experience the presence and the beauty of Jesus in this place and in these relationships. Being here is not a hardship, it is a joy!"

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Alberta Doctor Earns High Canadian Honor



**Dr. Thomas Greidanus (I) and Canada's Governor General David Johnston.**

For the last 20 years, Dr. Thomas Greidanus, an orthopedic surgeon, has organized and raised funds for Operation Esperanza. He and his team travel annually to Cuenca, Ecuador, to perform corrective surgery on children with clubfoot and hip and knee replacements on adults, all free of charge. The team also provides training to local doctors.

That effort earned him a Meritorious Service Cross (Civil Division). The award was presented by Canada's Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston during a December 8, 2016, ceremony. Greidanus is a member of West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta.

According to the Governor General's website, "Meritorious Service Decorations (Civil Division) are given to recognize remarkable contributions in many

different fields of endeavour, from advocacy initiatives and health care services, to research and humanitarian efforts."

Greidanus said that in Ecuador there is a high incidence of hip dislocation or partial dislocation among babies at birth. "This can lead to the development of arthritis at an early age, especially in women," he said. "Dr. Manuel Avila, the local doctor we work closely with, says that of those who develop arthritis, 85 percent of the time, a husband will leave his wife if she can't work or do very much due to pain. I feel very fortunate to be in a line of work that can make a big difference in the lives of these people who have an arthritic joint replaced. It can allow them to go back to work and can even bring families back together."

The annual medical trip is no small venture. In addition to mountains of paperwork required each year, up to 40 prostheses (each worth approximately \$2,000 CAD), 60 team members, and every bit of supplies and equipment needed are brought down to Cuenca by plane.

While orthopedic surgeons, anesthetists, dentists, and nurses screen patients, prepare them for surgery and perform joint replacement operations, a pediatric team also operates on children, doing surgery on clubfoot and dislocated hips. They also provide education on how to prevent as well as screen for dislocated hips in babies. A dental team goes into schools to perform extractions, reconstructions, and education on proper dental hygiene to children.

After surgery, physiotherapists provide education and advice to speed recovery, and a local doctor conducts follow up appointments.

"The turnaround is very quick," Greidanus said. "The average length of a patient's hospital stay is 1.2 days. [In Canada] it's usually three or four days. Patients there are highly motivated and their families are really supportive. Immediately after the surgery, most of the time, they're in less pain than they were before. For those we aren't able to help, our physiotherapists and nurses provide some pain medication, advice, instructions, and exercises to do and supply them with a cane or a walker. It's tough not being able to help everybody."

Greidanus intends to continue doing this work as God allows and the doors remain open. "That text in Matthew 25:40 where Jesus says, 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,' is a real inspiration for me in this work. I'm very thankful for this award, but it's really for all the people who have supported it—the nurses and doctors, physiotherapists, and dentists who have come along in the last 20 years—and those who have supported us financially and with prayer. Without them, it wouldn't have happened."

—Krista dela Rosa

## Kalamazoo Churches Building Hope for Women and Children's Shelter

Approximately 350 people without homes seek shelter at the Kalamazoo (Mich.) Gospel Mission every night. Nearly 200 of them are women and children. But over the past 12 years, much of the mission's women and children's shelter has become unsafe and is damaged beyond repair. Christian Reformed congregations are joining the effort to change that.

"There is a lot of damage, water leakage, and black mold to the ceiling and floors," said Tammy Clubb, director of development at the mission. In addition, the building has no elevator. At night, women and children cram into the first floor and the separate family shelter.

The mission has asked churches to rally their members around its Building Hope campaign to build a new women and children's shelter.

A Building Hope promotional video shared on Facebook inspired 7-year-old Jamin Mills of Westwood CRC to sell art to benefit the campaign. His enthusiasm quickly spread to the rest of the Westwood congregation.

"We wanted to be part of a grassroots effort to support [people who are] homeless in the best way," said Cheri Dykstra, family life coordinator at Westwood. "The fact that this touched the heart of this small boy in our church is exactly what we're hoping to produce

**Children filled a wall with messages of hope.**



in the hearts of the children of our congregation: the desire and passion to bring about change in God's kingdom."

The mission accepts and serves anyone, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation. Though it provides shelter and resources to 84 percent of the population that is homeless in Kalamazoo, it receives none of the \$1.8 million in federal funds allocated to alleviate homelessness in Kalamazoo County.

"If we take that money, they can tell us how to spend it and what to do and what to say," Clubb

said, explaining that the mission could no longer operate on a foundation of faith, which has been the cornerstone of the organization since its founding in 1933.

Church partnerships play an important role. At Westwood, every family was invited to take home a building block bank. "We challenged the congregation to set family goals," said Dykstra. "We give them a monthly tangible application, like pledging a certain amount per pillow or blanket in their house." During the first month, Westwood raised \$2,000.

Westwood also plans to raise funds by selling art created by kids in the congregation. Other churches are taking part as well. Second CRC held a classic car show to benefit the campaign. During the Advent season, Third CRC participated in the Advent Conspiracy, a challenge to worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all. Their giving focus is the Building Hope campaign.

To date, the mission has raised \$2 million of the nearly \$8 million budget.

—Lori Dykstra

## Alberta Polytechnical School Invites Chaplaincy Presence on Campus

As part of a pilot project in its second year, the Christian Reformed Church has placed its first chaplain on the campus of Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) in a multifaith chaplaincy ministry.

Rick Mast, youth pastor at West End CRC in Edmonton, spends a few hours a week on the campus of 25,000 students.

The time Mast spends each week at NAIT is a "ministry of presence." Although a student can book an appointment, Mast usually just walks around campus meeting students. He stands out. "Although as of yet we do not have an office, while on campus I wear one of two NAIT polo shirts that has the word CHAPLAIN on the back, like the name on the back of a hockey or football jersey."

Representatives of NAIT's Student and Campus Life office real-

ized that while there were provisions for students with disabilities and those in psychological distress, there were also students, staff, and faculty with spiritual needs that were not being met. They initially contacted Rick Van Manen, CRC campus pastor at the University of Alberta (U of A), to discuss the possibility of offering chaplaincy services at NAIT. Instead, the school was encouraged to consider recruiting its own chaplains with the help of the Interfaith Chaplains' Association at the U of A.

The project of placing Mast on the NAIT campus is funded in a

partnership between West End CRC and Classis Alberta North (the regional group of churches). Today, chaplains at NAIT represent 11 different denominations and faith traditions.

At a recent meeting of classis, Mast said, "As a chaplain on your behalf, I engage and get engaged with amazing regularity. And there is more work to be done—much, much more."

The harvest fields are full and ripe, said Mast, but workers are few.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Neal Punt

1928-2016

Neal Punt of Grand Haven, Mich., passed away peacefully on October 18 at the age of 87.

Ordained in 1954, he served Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan and Illinois. The churches Punt served appreciated his Christ-centered leadership, biblically-based sermons, and the friendship he endeared them with. He retired in 1994.

Punt was an author of *Baker's Textual and Topical Filing System* for clergy, as well as several books on biblical universalism. He was also an inventor. His Music-Minder record holder was made by Imperial Furniture Company and sold in many furniture stores. He also invented a bread slicer.

Punt enjoyed fishing, gardening, and sailing. He had a great sense of humor, which his family says he kept until the end.

Punt is survived by his wife, Betty, and by five children and their spouses, a daughter-in-law, 13 grandchildren, and one great-grandson. He was preceded in death by his eldest son in 2015.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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



Rick Mast, NAIT chaplain.

# NEWS

Not Following Us on Facebook? Here's some of what you are missing!



Mendelt Hoekstra



Richard Mouw



News and photos of **Mendelt Hoekstra** of St. Catharines, Ont., receiving the 2016 YMCA Peace Medallion Award.

An article from *Religion News Service* by **Richard Mouw**: "Despite Trumpism, I'm not quitting evangelicalism."

Great photos from **Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in York, Ont.**, of the grand opening of its extensive renovation.

More great photos, this time from **Tillsonburg (Ont.) CRC** of its display of 90 nativity sets from around the world.

A reply from Nicholas Wolterstorff from *Perspectives* to Matthew Tuininga, continuing their conversation about **same-sex marriage**.

**Kuyper College**, in Grand Rapids, Mich., announced the appointment of **Carl Zylstra** as its interim president. Zylstra was president of Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, for 16 years. He succeeds Nicholas Kroeze, who is retiring following a sabbatical.

**Redeemer University College**, in Ancaster, Ont., announced that **Fred Verwoerd**, currently the school's vice president, administration and finance, will serve as Redeemer's interim president. He succeeds Hubert Krygsman.



Maranatha Christian Reformed Church



Tillsonburg (Ont.) CRC's nativity sets.

## Reducing Dordt College's Environmental Footprint

As part of its December service project, Dordt College, located in Sioux Center, Iowa, is ramping up the school's recycling efforts by purchasing bins that can be placed around campus.

The goal of this project is to "reduce Dordt's environmental footprint," according to Renee Ewald, student at Dordt and chair of the college's Sustainability Committee. She sees opportunity to reduce the amount of recycling by half. "Right now, approximately 50 percent of Dordt's waste could be recycled, and we want to bring that down to 25 percent," she said.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap is founder of the organization Young Evangelicals for Climate



KAREN HUITTINGA

Action (YECA). Some Dordt students are currently working with YECA and spearheaded this project. He said that the project is 100 percent student initiated. "These students are living examples of what it means to

love God with our whole selves and to love our neighbors, both here and around the world, with everything we've got," he said.

Dordt College administration has donated \$3,000 to the cause. YECA hopes to raise an additional

\$15,000, according to Ewald. She said that the college has also started an "institutional committee" that will continue to work on the impact that Dordt has on the environment and work toward a more "green future."

Ewald says that the Sustainability Committee decided to do this project because "Dordt does not have a great system for recycling, and students do not use what is available. By doing this as the December service project, we were able to reach all of campus and emphasize the fact that protecting the earth is what God calls us to do as Christians."

—Kyle Hoogendoorn



# FAQs

## Church/Doctrine

**Q** Many people like to quote Jeremiah 29:11 as a personal promise from God to themselves. Is that belief justified?

**A** There is no question that God had Jeremiah write this verse—“For I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”—to exiles in Babylon (29:1, 4). He assures them of his plan to bring them back to Judah some 70 years down the road and thus “fulfill [his] good promise” (29:10). The promise is specific to them in their time in history.

But the Bible reveals that this return to Jerusalem is also part of a larger plan to bring God’s only Son into the world to rescue us from our sin. Beneficiaries of this plan are not limited to exiles in Babylon. In the fullness of time, in Christ, God reconciled us to himself, creating a new humanity. By sheer grace we are included. We too have been given hope and a future.

As long as this history of redemption remains the primary focus, I see nothing wrong with including specific ways in which God has given us personally the riches of his grace. It isn’t an either/or. “Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes *me* wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him” (Q&A 1, Heidelberg Catechism).

To say that Israel’s God through Jeremiah had only you and me in mind is out of bounds, of course. But we may notice within ourselves “the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God’s Word” (Canons of Dort I, 12).

—Henry De Moor is professor of church polity emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s the author of Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary.

By sheer grace, we too have been given hope and a future.

## Ethics

**Q** What are God’s views on slavery? And why is someone not punished for beating a slave if the slave can recover from the injuries (Ex. 21:20-21)? Why was this OK back then?

**A** While teaching about divorce, Jesus suggested that God sometimes allowed less than ideal scenarios because of his graciousness to human sinfulness (Matt. 19:8-9). So even though God intended otherwise, Moses permitted divorce for certain conditions. Similarly, even though everyone is made in God’s image, Moses allowed for slavery as part of the ancient economy and culture.

In the ancient Near East, people often sold themselves into slave labor to work off their debts. This differed greatly from more recent forms of slavery based on race and kidnapping. Israelite slave laws also tended to be more humane than those of other ancient civilizations. For instance, no one could be kept as a slave for more than six years without their permission (Ex. 21:2-6).

The verses you cited demonstrate both the accommodation to ancient culture and the more humane treatment in distinction from that culture. In contrast to other ancient cultures, the Mosaic law assured punishment for beating slaves to death. This acted as a deterrent to such extreme abuse. However, there was no penalty if the slave recovered because the cultural assumption was that owners had the right to discipline their slaves.

Today we should not tolerate slavery, which was an accommodation to sinful culture, but uphold the dignity of every human being as God’s imagebearer. Jesus taught us to love all our neighbors as ourselves.

—Shiao Chong is editor-in-chief of The Banner. He attends Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, Toronto, Ont.

## Relationships

**Q** What can I do? I can’t seem to get over the bitterness I feel towards my ex-husband when we meet at events like our grandchildren’s school programs or piano recitals. Afterwards I feel ill for days, but I don’t want to isolate myself from my grandkids’ important events.

**A** It might help if you think of your experience at such events as triggers into a mild form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Reliving the emotions that connect strongly to the past is often unavoidable under certain circumstances. But you can develop new ways to respond to the feelings and thoughts that rob you of peace of mind. Before attending such an event, spend time feeling and expressing the anger and what causes it on paper, in detail. Then spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to lift this burden of old anger you might have a right to but do not want. If writing is not your medium, pick two colored markers (e.g., red and black) and just doodle, while allowing yourself to feel the anger and thinking about what causes it. Again, pray to release that anger. Repeat this pattern of expression and release as often as necessary until your feelings of bitterness and anger disappear.

The past cannot be changed, but what you can change is your own response to the triggers that rob you of enjoyable time with your children and grandchildren. Use creative means and a resolve to give your burdens of anger to the Christ who died for this very thing.

—Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont. ■

# God's Been There = SOMEHOW =



Winter at Rehoboth, 1920s

**WE WERE FIRST-TIER** candidates back then, young marrieds, newly-arrived Arizonians. College-educated, perfectly suitable youth group leaders. No experience, but no matter. My wife and I were just kids ourselves, young and “relevant,” as someone on the council probably said.

Our first youth retreat was 280 miles away, north and west, at Rehoboth, New Mexico, a place I remembered visiting as a kid way back in the 50s when my dad wanted to have a look at the place he and Mom had supported for just about as long as they could remember. So in 1973 I went back to the northwest corner of New Mexico with a van packed with teenagers, sleeping bags, Fritos, and M&Ms.

Rehoboth. What did I know about Native American history? Nothing. What

did I care? Probably less. We had squirrely teens to control that weekend, and I didn't have time to think about Navajos or Zuni.

Two of us youth leaders volunteered to stay up late and supervise. When it seemed clear no shenanigans were in the offing, what was left for us to do until early morning but talk?

I knew the guy I was with, but not well enough to know he was himself a Rehoboth grad, his father a missionary. He told me that when he was a child his weeks began when his dad, the preacher, dropped him off at an apartment on the compound and then did camp visits out on the reservation. Come Friday, he'd pick up his 7-year-old. Seven years old.

Our conversation took a serious turn, as conversations often do late at night. Being a first-grader living in the basement of one of those old houses up the street

at Rehoboth was awful, he said. No dorm room, but a cold, wet basement—just him and another boy a couple years older.

The black New Mexico sky was alive with stars. He said he remembered what he'd felt when his father left on those early Monday mornings—abandonment and hungering loneliness.

I'd never thought about missionaries quite that way. I was a kid when Ecuadorian Indians slaughtered five messengers of the gospel, who became thereby greater heroes in my book than any major league clean-up hitter. My fellow youth leader, a missionary kid, had had an appalling childhood. It was hard for me not to despise his father.

“It took me 35 years to forgive him,” he told me in the dark silence.

“He asked for forgiveness?” I said.

He shook his head. “When some of those old Navajos died up here on the reservation, their families would call, long distance, to ask him to do the funeral,” he told me, nodding his head. Time after time that happened. Only then, years later, did he realize that his childhood was brokered for the souls of men and women who wanted his dad to do their funerals. He was 35 years old before he could forgive his father, he told me. And he did.

“And your sister?” I said. He’d spoken of her too.

“She hasn’t spoken to my father for years.”

This guy, this youth leader, I probably don’t need to say, was white, not Native.

One has only to imagine how even more traumatic, how greatly more painful, how psychically disturbing a boarding school was to many Native kids, taken as they were from childhood’s most precious intimacies and given—some would say force fed—a new, unfamiliar way of life in a language they often had to work to understand. Not to mention a structured, doctrine-heavy religion that pushed them to reject the only way of life they knew.

When years later I wrote a book for Rehoboth Mission, a Zuni grandmother told me how impossible it had been for her to think of her parents as “lost.” Her father was a dedicated, traditional Zuni, a renowned athlete, a Kiva songwriter who knew all the Zuni myths, not to mention the rich tribal history. But the implication she couldn’t miss in a Christian school was that traditional parents were dead wrong about faith and therefore dead wrong about life. “It was simply understood,” she said. “To this day, I don’t condemn my father for what he believed because so much of his teaching was and is still good,” she told me just a few years ago.

Even if teachers didn’t say it outright, to the children of traditional Native people the implication was unmistakable. There was but one way to glory, to Jesus, only one—and her father, a man she loved and respected, wasn’t on it. What’s worse is that that trail led to hell. For her to think of her father as being dead wrong and damned on top of it was monstrous.

When I left her home that night after the interview, I told myself I’d heard something I’d never been forced to consider before—that killing the “old man” of sin (in doctrinal terms) was excruciating to many Native kids for other reasons than the Bible might suggest. At least that 7-year-old white missionary kid in the basement didn’t have to learn a new language or judge his parents’ faith.

It’s a blessing to know that that Zuni woman is a lifetime member of the CRC.

Yet another woman, another grandma, made no bones about it; she refused to tell me everything that happened to her in the boarding school at Rehoboth because there were things that went on back then, she said, in the early 50s, that no one should ever know, even though she certainly remembers.

She explained to me that she hadn’t seen teachers or dorm matrons abuse kids in her years at the school, but she’d seen

goats and the open range he’d known intimately as a boy and swept into a completely different world.

“I didn’t know a word of English—didn’t get a word of what people were saying,” he said, describing those first difficult days. But it was the military-like regimen that bothered him—marching off to dinner, marching off to school, marching off to church, two by two, like long lines of cavalry.

The full effect of this Rehoboth education on him is and was complex, having produced memories as heavy-laden with shame and anger as they are blessed by the love of teachers and staff he will never forget. Making peace with a cultural tradition that has decimated your own is not an easy task for anyone, especially when many Native people consider Christianity nothing more or less than the religion of white people. Throughout the continent, the Christian faith was proffered exactly

## WE’VE DONE A LOT OF PREACHING ON THE RESERVATION, BUT IT’S TAKEN US YEARS AND YEARS AND YEARS TO LEARN HOW TO LISTEN.

too much of another kind of abuse—kids abusing kids. There are things she’s forgiven, she told me, that she’ll never forget. It was not easy for a child of a tight-knit, growing family to be taken away from those she loved and brought into the round-the-clock company of some kids she certainly didn’t.

The whole boarding school experience left deep scars on many Native kids, she told me. Years later, she worked for Rehoboth for some time—did public relations work, in fact. That position gave her opportunity to speak with alums who simply wouldn’t set foot on the campus. She understood the darkness that coexists with missionary efforts among this nation’s Indigenous peoples.

Another man, a Navajo and a grandpa, a man who served the tribe in significant political office, described to me the difficulty of being suddenly out of his element—snatched from the sheep and the

that way, as it likely was for some time at Rehoboth—and by my own ancestors.

Way back in 1873, three young Yankton men created “The Brotherhood of Christian Unity.” One of those men was Phillip DeLoria, grandfather of Vine DeLoria, who much later wrote *Custer Died for Your Sins*. “The Brotherhood” realized the significant rift rising between those of their people who accepted the Christian faith and those who stayed instead with traditional Native culture. What those young men set out to explain about themselves is helpful in understanding the effects of Christian missions in First Nations cultures, even among those Native people white believers call “converts.”

“We Indians,” they wrote, “before the coming of the white man, knew what was good, but not what was very good. We knew what was bad, but not what was very bad. The white man has brought us the very good and very bad.” And then »

this: “Our Blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the very, very good.”

White Christians generally have no problem whatsoever believing “the very, very good,” but they have all kinds of problems understanding, accepting, and asking forgiveness for bringing with them the “very bad.”

The story is hugely complex. What is not negotiable is that the First Nations people who were here didn’t ask any Euro-Americans if they could come ashore. They didn’t. Those of us who aren’t Native are the original “undocumented.” That’s a verity that can never be forgotten.

But what about Rehoboth? Was it long ago a hall of horrors? Was the CRC mission effort any different from other boarding schools? How can we judge our own century-long mission efforts?

It isn’t easy.

A good Navajo friend of mine told me that his Marine buddy, an Assiniboine from Minnesota, could not tolerate even hearing the word Pipestone because that word conjured horrors from his boarding school experience in that southern Minnesota town. But Adam Fortunate Eagle’s memoir, *Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School*, is full of boyish hijinks, school kid fun.

There are stories, and there are many, and they’re not all the same. Not every Navajo or Zuni kid at Rehoboth experienced distress that would haunt him or her for a lifetime.

Another Navajo grandfather remembered a whole different world at Rehoboth School. As a boy in the dormitory, he was told by older boys that a strange light above the cemetery seemed to be stalking them. The only view of death he’d ever had was rife with evil spirits that could take hold if you were anywhere close to the dead or dying. He was a boy and couldn’t help seeing traditional Navajo monsters in the description.

He told me how, that night, the matron came over, sat beside him on his bed, and listened to him repeat the story about that spooky graveyard apparition. “No, no, no,” she told him lovingly. Not in

English either, he told me, but in Navajo, his own language of intimacy. “Don’t you ever think that way,” she said.

He slept well. “She treated me just like a mom,” he told me.

He remembered feeling comforted at night by the matron, being prayed for in his fears. “After I became a Christian,” he said, “then I knew what it was that night—it was the love of God, the powerful Spirit himself, the Holy Spirit right there.” He couldn’t help but smile at me then when he told the story. Tears brimmed in his eyes. “That’s how real it was then—and still is now.”

It seems to me that what Philip DeLorea meant when he spoke of “the very, very good” is at least something of what that old Navajo grandfather felt a half century ago and still feels today.

Despite the mistakes the Christian Reformed Church has made—and they were legion; despite our prejudice, our arrogance, our inability to know how to separate culture from faith; what the denomination did—what God Almighty did through the CRC in New Mexico—may well be among our greatest success stories. Last year, Rehoboth Christian High was voted among the nation’s best Christian high schools. But none of the others—in Iowa, New Jersey, Washington, Michigan, South Dakota—were created for “other people’s kids.”

As is true of every other mission effort among Native people, we did so much wrong—but God’s been there somehow.

And so are we. Still. More than a hundred years later. That’s very important.

Since retiring, my wife and I live in the country, where every morning when I wake up, I can’t help but note a sunrise against the wide skies all around. Sometimes I step outside and stand in awe. Some mornings a late-night shower is still breaking up against the dawn, and what covers more than half of what I can see of the entire world is an art piece that goes beyond anything any canvas ever held. It’s here, and then it’s gone. But the beauty lingers.

John Calvin maintained that when we honestly note what we can of God’s immensity, we can’t help recognizing in that vision our frailty because we know for a fact that we simply are not what God is and therefore stand in need of his great grace. Awe—the fear of the Lord—is the beginning of wisdom.

Just across the river from us, some Yanktons on such mornings may well have stood outside the flaps of their tipis and noted the very same thing. It was very Native to make that moment a ritual, to stand there daily. It was good for the soul.

In his new book *America’s Original Sin*, Jim Wallis makes the claim that our problems as a nation have a great deal to do with white America’s inability to make peace with a past that includes treating ethnic and racial minorities as immaterial, as not quite fully men and women and children. That transgression, Wallis says, emphatically, is America’s “original sin.”

“If white Christians hope to build multiracial and multicultural communities of faith,” he said, “they must be prepared to listen to and include worldviews and technologies of nonwhites and non-Westerners.”

We’ve done a lot of preaching on the reservation, but it’s taken us years and years and years to learn how to listen.

“That process can begin,” Wallis says, “by recognizing that many non-Western expressions of Christian theology have just as much to teach us about God as Calvin, Luther, or German popes do.”

Come now, Jim Wallis. You can’t be serious. Calvin?

If your busy schedule allows you a minute, tomorrow check out the dawn. ■

Please see the “Doctrine of Discovery Response Update” (p. 27) for the denomination’s ongoing efforts in walking alongside those who are affected.



James C. Schaap is a writer who lives in Iowa.

# Getting to Know Your Muslim Neighbors

**I** **KNOW** a lot of Christians who are interested in relating with Muslims these days. Some are learning Arabic or visiting mosques. Others are striking up conversations with Muslim business owners in their communities. While their approaches differ, all of these folks seem to be compelled by the same motivation: Christ's call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

As an Arab American and the daughter of a Muslim, there are many things I would like people to understand about Muslims. But I've come to believe there are three things people really need to know if they are seeking to relate with Muslims, particularly Muslims living in North America.

First, a misconception I run into fairly regularly is that all Arabs are Muslim, and that all Muslims are Arab. This is understandable since the Islamic faith is inextricably linked to the Middle East and the Arabic language. But in fact, *Muslims* are people who ascribe to the Islamic faith. *Arabs* are people who belong to an ethnic group whose roots are in North Africa and the Middle East. Retired NBA player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, for example, is a Muslim but not an Arab. Heisman trophy winner Doug Flutie is an Arab but not a Muslim. While many North Americans continue to associate Islam with the Arab world where it began, the majority of the world's Muslims live in Indonesia today.

Second, contrary to what many Christians think, not all Muslims are devout or super-religious. I know Muslims who pray five times a day facing Mecca. But I also know Muslims for whom practicing their faith looks like praying just a few times a day in the car or in bed at night. As much as I have learned about the Islamic faith, as a Christian, I cannot say that if a person doesn't do this or that, they are not a "real" Muslim. Islam has a

**Our faith  
moves us  
to embrace  
people  
who are  
different  
from us.**



lot of rules, but the failure to follow all of those rules does not negate a person's faith. Just as I would not tell Christians who attend church only on Christmas and Easter that they are not "real Christians," I would not do so to Muslims.

Third, and perhaps most important, is the fact that Muslims are people, just like Christians. It may seem obvious, but some Christians who criticize Muslims just don't seem to understand this. Whenever we point fingers at others, we need to look at what is motivating us. We need to be careful not to pick and choose sources of information that reinforce our preexisting ideas about others, rather than humbling ourselves enough to learn the way that Jesus teaches us to—by loving others.

There are many more things that I wish my sisters and brothers in Christ understood about Muslims (including the fact that all Muslim women are not

oppressed, and that most Muslims are not violent terrorists). But these are all things that people will see for themselves once they get to know the Muslims in their communities.

We don't need to be experts on Islam to relate to Muslims. In fact, relationships are the best way for us to learn about Islam. While our sinfulness makes us good at "othering"—ascribing evil motives to those who are different from us—our faith moves us to embrace our neighbor. How magnificent it is that a Reformed theological understanding of the world affirms and encourages this kind of engagement! ■



**Shannon Jammal-Holleman** is a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church serving in the denominational offices. She and her family are members of Oakdale Park Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Welcoming the World to Our Churches

by Danielle Rowaan

**H**earing Cliff and Angela Tuininga recall all of the parts of the world represented by the refugees their church in Neerlandia, Alta., has welcomed over the years is a quick review of recent world history.

“We started our sponsorship with boat people from Vietnam in 1979. Over the next years more people arrived from that area, then Eastern Europe and South America. Right now we have a Karen family of five from Burma and are in the process of sponsoring another family group from Africa,” said Angela.

Back in 1979, Cliff and Angela were chosen by their church to be the point of contact for the first Vietnamese refugee family the church sponsored through World Renew. They soon realized, however, that this work needed to be shared by a larger group.

A committee of nine currently shares responsibility for refugee sponsorship, with some members specializing in transportation, others in English language training, and still others in helping with medical needs, education, property main-



**Kristen, Trygve Jr., and Ella Johnson of Pillar Church, along with Jado, Kalamal, and Taijouk Akolawin make memories and build friendships canoeing at Water Fest at Windmill Island, Holland, Mich.**

tenance, and filling out paperwork to receive healthcare and citizenship.

Though there is a committee, welcoming refugees is the work of the whole Neerlandia CRC congregation, Angela emphasized. “The church community is very generous with things like food,

money, and babysitting while the parents are at ESL classes.”

Neerlandia CRC is just one of many Christian Reformed churches that are actively involved in refugee sponsorship. When staff from the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice asked for stories of how people had been blessed by refugees, Neerlandia CRC and 22 other churches from both sides of the border responded. Many shared enthusiastic messages about how much they had learned from the refugees they welcomed.

Pillar Church in Holland, Mich., is a great example. The church started supporting a refugee family last March. Jenna Brandsen had recently been hired as Pillar’s Pastor of Formation for Mission. Supporting the congregation’s interest in welcoming refugees became her first project. “I was hired at the height of the media coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis,” she explained. “It was obvious very quickly that there was lots of desire in the congregation to be involved with refugees.”

They began a discernment process, meeting several times on Saturday mornings to talk about how they might live into the call they were sensing. Representatives from Pillar Church met with Kris Van Engen and Kate Kooyman of the Office of Social Justice (OSJ), as well as with a representative of Bethany Christian Services, the refugee resettlement agency that partners with the OSJ and CRC congregations in the U.S., and members of a neighboring church that had already been welcoming refugees for many years.

Despite these meetings, not everyone at Pillar was immediately on board with the idea. “One church member came out to our

### Being a Safe Church for Refugees

Immigration, refugee resettlement, and safe church policies are a complex equation to solve. It’s complex because when refugees come to Canada or the U.S., they want to be afforded the same rights and privileges as the rest of us are given. But due to the sensitivity of their situations in their former countries, they also need to be protected. In some ways they need more protection than what is covered under a regular safe church policy.

For instance, with the explosion of social media, we are truly a global village. You may post a picture or quote of a refugee, thinking that only people in your “group” will see it. But pictures and quotes travel fast on the Internet, and what you thought was an innocent picture or quote has possibly turned into a linking thread that could point to the whereabouts of a newly arrived refugee who still lives in fear of his or her oppressors.

We, as a host church, need to figure out what level of protection to afford our brothers and sisters in the Lord who are looking for a new start to life yet may also still need protection. For suggestions on how to start, visit [crcna.org/SafeChurch](http://crcna.org/SafeChurch).

—by Garret Dykstra  
(Ebenezer CRC in Jarvis, Ontario)

You add.  
God multiplies.

discernment meetings with lots of questions,” said Kat Schulte, Pillar’s volunteer director of refugee care. “He said that he had been hearing on the news that Muslims are dangerous and wanted to know how we should protect ourselves. But he was there and willing to voice his questions and to listen to Kate Kooyman’s responses.”

Eventually, Pillar decided to assist a local elementary school as they welcomed a Sudanese mother and her five children. The church member who initially expressed his concerns about sponsoring Muslims is now a mentor to one of the Sudanese children.

“At first, the Sudanese boy wasn’t so interested in meeting with his mentor,” recalled Schulte, but then the mentor started praying in his car before each meeting. “Now the relationship has changed. He’s always telling the rest of our committee to pray, sometimes with tears in his eyes.”

“Some of the church members who were skeptical at first are now the most involved,” added Brandsen.

## “Some of the church members who were skeptical at first are now the most involved.”

While seeking to be a blessing to refugees, the members of Pillar have found themselves changed and blessed as well.

“They have taught us all so much about the resilience and strength of the human spirit. They have also opened our eyes to how difficult it is to be poor in our community. It has been hard and uncomfortable and wildly fun to learn how to speak with hand gestures or sit in

silence together. We are so blessed to know this family,” one member said.

Their relationships with the Sudanese family have also caused Pillar members to ask broader questions about how their city can become a more welcoming place. “We can zero in on refugees and say that we’re doing our part, but it’s part of a bigger system. How do we make our community safe for everyone?” said Brandsen.

That’s why Brandsen, Schulte, and Van Engen reached out to Holland’s mayor to talk about how the city of Holland might continue to become a place that welcomes refugees with open arms.

It is also why CRC ministries, such as the Office of Social Justice, encourage advocacy as one way to support refugees. After September 11, 2001, the number of refugees resettled by the United States »

**This committee of CRC church members and staff worked together to create a “Journey with Me” refugee workshop. See [crcna.org/JourneyWithMe](http://crcna.org/JourneyWithMe) for more information.**



# TOGETH

» decreased from around 65,000 per year to less than 30,000. Those numbers began to slowly climb back up to around 70,000 in 2009, thanks to advocacy efforts.

“All of these increases came about because refugee resettlement agencies like Church World Service and their constituents (like the CRC and Bethany) put pressure on the administration to raise the ceilings—which are established every year by the President and then need to be funded by Congress,” explained Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator of the OSJ.

Steve Timmermans, executive director of the CRCNA, joined several other organizations in sending a letter to the U.S. president in 2015 to advocate for an increased number of spaces for Syrian refugees to come to the U.S. Hundreds



**Refugee committee members from Neerlandia CRC greet Alexander, PawGay, and their two young daughters at the airport.**

of CRC members also signed action alerts urging the President to consider this request.

“Following this advocacy, the refugee quota for Syrian refugees increased to 10,000,” said Vander Meulen. “This is twice as many as before 2015/16.”

Similar advocacy also took place in Canada. In close collaboration with World Renew’s Refugee Office, the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue advocated for increased resettlement numbers and better communication between the government and resettlement agencies. The numbers of Syrian refugees welcomed increased markedly, but there is still much work to be done.

“As Canada assesses the experience of settling a historic number of refugees this year, it’s important to determine if the resources we’ve dedicated to resettlement are appropriate,” said Mike Hogeterp, the Centre’s Director. “We must remember too that Syrian and other Middle Eastern refugees are still outnumbered by other refugees living in places such as Ethiopia and Kenya. Many have been waiting in limbo for years or even decades.”

In the midst of this global need, churches like Neerlandia CRC and Pillar Church are continuing to do their part. In 2014, Neerlandia CRC celebrated its 35th anniversary of refugee ministry with a special service. Ten of the 27 families the church had sponsored as refugees

came, arriving from as far away as Texas and Toronto.

Emcee Cliff Tuininga thanked the former refugees “for letting us help [you], for trusting us, and letting us make mistakes.” He said, “We thought that if you didn’t know English you would understand us if we spoke loud and slow. It was hard for us to realize that what was common for us was unknown to you. We were blessed by sharing in your lives, and the tables were turned when we were invited to your weddings.”

A litany and a skit from the Journey with Me refugee toolkit ([crcna.org/journeywithme](http://crcna.org/journeywithme)), which had been developed by various Canadian agencies of the CRC earlier that year, were also part of the celebration, as well as music performed by one of the former refugees.

Both Pillar Church and Neerlandia CRC explain their work with refugees as part of living missionally. In Brandsen’s words: “We believe that we’re called to be on God’s mission and that we need to be formed for that work. Welcoming refugees is part of that mission.”

Angela Tuininga added, “This is such a wonderful ministry because we can’t all go out to the ends of the world, but there are so many people coming here. We can stay here and minister to people of all different cultures.” ■



**Danielle Rowaan** is the CRC’s justice communications and education coordinator.

## Sponsorship Stories

Faithful Christ-followers from across the CRC have been welcoming refugees for decades. These churches have some beautiful stories to share.

One representative from Westview CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., said, “Having Burmese families in our worship has given us glimpses of heaven. All nations and colors singing and worshipping together. We see the world globally now. Our worship and ministry is larger than just our church and neighborhood. Helping refugees resettle is in the DNA of our congregation now.”

To see additional photos and hear testimonials from a few of them, visit [facebook.com/CRCNA](https://facebook.com/CRCNA) and view the “Refugees Welcome” album.





# Soil, Seeds, and Seminary

by Andrea Visser Bult



*At Calvin Seminary, each student has a story of calling. Some stories are bold and bright, others are still coming into focus. What they have in common, however, is that each story is evidence of God's particular presence, power, and persuasion in one life. Here is one of those stories shared by seminary student Andrea Visser Bult.*

**M**y father is a seed planter. He has spent most of his 83 years working the soil, watching the sky, waiting, and praying for harvest.

I grew up on Prince Edward Island and loved being out in the fields with my father. I sipped his coffee while we plowed, planted, fertilized, and harvested. "You have to turn the hard soil," he'd say. "Air and water have to get down deep."

I watched the plow turn the dark red soil behind us. After planting, my father applied fertilizer: two parts nitrogen, two parts phosphorus, one part hope. During harvest, I napped behind his seat in the combine, until at age 9 I was considered old enough to drive it myself.

I can still see my dad walking through a ripe field of wheat, hands out at his sides, brushing the beards at the top of the grain. I can still feel the ache in my back after spending Saturdays in the field with him, bent under the sun, picking rocks the size of my head.



**Working, watching, waiting, and praying are key elements of farming and ministry.**

Barbara Brown Taylor often connects work and prayer. She writes, "It is good work, this prayer. It is good prayer, this work." My father's entire life has been this kind of work-slash-prayer: working the earth in hopes of a harvest.

So when I sensed God calling me to seminary, I was surprised. I don't come from a family of pastors or scholars. My ancestors have been farmers for many generations. We are potato people, not preaching people.

God began to show me that he was calling me into the service of a different kind of harvest. He was calling me to use words to work the earth of people's hearts. There too the soil can be terribly rocky, hardened by seasons of sun-scorched suffering or choked by the thistles of doubt and cynicism.

**As a child, Andrea Visser Bult would help her father farm the fields on Prince Edward Island. Now she is preparing for a career with a different type of harvest.**

Fortunately, I serve a generous sower. He does not hold back but scatters seed on all types of soil. It is in *his* service, and for *his* harvest that I will work. Turning the hardened soil of the heart with the plowshare of God's grace. Exposing stale places to the fresh air of the Spirit. And praying that the living water will indeed go down deep.

I will do what my earthly father does: work, watch, wait, and pray. All the while knowing that neither she who plants nor he who waters is anything. It is God who makes it grow.

Jesus said: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt: 9:37).

I am grateful to be the daughter of a seed-planting farmer. And I am grateful for the people alongside me at Calvin Seminary who are preparing for these harvest fields. God has bound us together for a growing season. Let us all work, watch, wait, and pray, and may we bear good fruit. ■

## A Hopeful Prayer for Our CRC Journey

**R**egular readers know this as the part of *The Banner* that serves as a platform for leaders of our denomination to share their thoughts and views. Can I, instead, allow you as CRC members and *Banner* readers to speak? Here is what I have been hearing from across the denomination as a hopeful prayer.

*Our Father* and God of the Christian church; God of its branch, the Christian Reformed Church, who lives and reigns with a perfect vantage to see all of our decision-making and efforts; who had our future in your hands long before we chose to author the strategic plans of our local, regional or denominational entities . . .

. . . *hallowed be your name*. May your renown be made more complete in the eyes of the witnesses within and without the CRC. Thank you for the myriad ways in which we see that happening in our churches and communities. May our plans, initiatives, ministries, and conduct so direct our mission in the world that your name is not blasphemed because of us but is honored and praised in the mouths of all those who find themselves connected to us.

*May your kingdom come* through our tangled missional relationships. May your wisdom and love be woven into the messiness of our culture, social issues, and among your diverse people. In so doing, may we reflect less and less the patterns of the secular “me-first” world, and more and more the patterns of selfless Jesus. So rule us by your Word and Spirit that we courageously submit our confused, worldly intelligence to you. May your kingdom shine through the slivers of our engagement so that the world understands true wisdom, authentic love, and real change that will both preserve and flourish.

So that *your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, open the ears of church leaders at every level to hear the voice of the body of Christ. Open our eyes to see the places where our

efforts match the joy of your will. Remove from us the habit of operating independently, and replace it with a Spirit-led sensitivity toward all levels of leadership. Grant that our collective charge may be carried out willingly and faithfully.

We need not only long-term care, Lord, but immediate care. *Give us today our daily bread*. While some churches flourish, some are near to closing. Some are being planted while others struggle to find money to pay their leaders. We wonder if the ministry shares system we participate in will endure. But God,

help us not to get lost in our concern for money. Rather, by your Spirit, fill us with courage that comes from spiritual growth fueled by the generous spending of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

*Forgive us our debts* that stem from our ignorance or intentionality. Where we have trampled on other cultures or peoples, we seek wholehearted reconciliation.

Where we have caused hurt to those of orientations other than our own, we ask forgiveness and godly correction, even while we desire to create places of healing so as to realize forgiveness from our debtors.

*And lead us not into temptation*. Keep our laity and leadership from the sugary impurities offered so readily by our world in the areas of wealth, sexuality, and pride. Give leaders a proper dose of self-awareness and create in them humility strong enough to laugh at themselves, while being flexible enough to change. Keep us from the temptation of believing that there is room within Christian love to water down your Word, thereby crafting new ideologies that seem gentler and kinder to the broken world around us; a world that needs truth, not permissiveness, from the church. *Deliver us from evil*.

In our attempt to control the confusion we live in, help us to promptly and sincerely recognize that we are second to your will, ways, and desires. *For thine is the power*.

And may any “success” that is achieved in our church be evidence of healthy models to follow as we collectively give glory to God. *Forever*.

Amen. ■



“May your wisdom and love be woven into the messiness of our culture.”



Rev. Darren Roorda is Canadian Ministries director for the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Doctrine of Discovery Response Update

**D**uring Synod 2016, delegates discussed the Doctrine of Discovery, labeled it as heresy, and lamented the pain it caused. While the synodical delegates rejected many of the study report's recommendations, they did task Steve Timmermans, the denomination's executive director, to "work with appropriate agencies and offices in committing the CRC to walk alongside affected parties, listen to their stories, lament and weep with them until such time as we can 'walk in beauty together.'"

They also called on the denomination to "consider a denomination-wide annual Day of Justice for the purpose of coming together as a body of Christ to recognize the plight of those who are oppressed, marginalized, and suffer in a culture of discrimination."

Here are a few updates on those mandates:

**1. Walking together.** Rehoboth Christian School in Rehoboth, N.M., has been intentional about promoting healing by seeking opportunities to meet with former students who believe injustices and wrongs were done to them in the past. The superintendent also issued a heartfelt apology on behalf of the school. At the same time, staff from the school have also heard people in the Native American community say that they cannot have a vision for the future if they are always looking back toward the past. One Native American pastor recently said, "The past has been redeemed by the blood of the Christ. We no longer have to live in the past because that has been forgiven." To honor both the need to express personal pain and Christ's call to ongoing repentance, the school held a special service in early January. The service provided opportunities for former students to share their stories and for the community to weep, lament, and move toward reconciliation. The service was built around these phrases: *I was wrong; I am sorry; Will you forgive me?; and I love you.* Additional activities are also planned to ensure a culture of ongoing dialogue, lament, and reconciliation.

**2. Day of Justice.** A diverse group of people representing various CRCNA agencies and congregations has begun meeting together to talk about what a Day of Justice in the Christian Reformed Church could look like. They have started by exploring what biblical justice looks like and how it is defined by people within the CRC. The group has spoken with theologians, philosophers, and advocates who have spent their lives in pursuing justice. At Synod 2017, information around a common definition for justice will be shared. Additional details about the first Day of Justice to be held in early 2018 will be shared at Inspire 2017 in Detroit next August. ■

—by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,  
CRC Communications

## Give Up Your Life and Follow Me

**A**bigail Chen (not her real name) heard God's gentle voice nudging her early in her adult life, asking her to give up her high-profile journalism career to serve him.

"Nonetheless," she said, "for me there were still a lot of unfulfilled dreams. I was not willing to let go of what I had achieved."

At a Chinese Gospel Conference in 2011, Chen saw a video testimony of an elderly woman encouraging the audience to surrender their lives to Christ.

Moved by the video, Chen recalls asking, "Lord, how do you want me to serve you?"

Later during the conference, she was introduced to the idea of attending seminary. She was considering this option when she was offered a volunteer position as chief editor for an e-magazine developed by Pastor Jerry An, currently the Back to God Ministries International Chinese team leader.

She accepted, meanwhile resisting the nudge to give up her day job.

Time passed, and Chen again heard God's gentle voice saying, "Give up your life and follow me."

At that time, Jerry An invited Chen to build a team with him to further spread the gospel through new digital media.

"To my shock, God had cleared the path and placed people in my life to encourage me to proceed with this calling," she said, adding she quit her job and enrolled in seminary.

In 2014, the magazine Chen volunteered for was abruptly terminated as the result of the Chinese government's new Internet policy. That's when Jerry An began working with the BTGMI Chinese ministry team. He invited Chen to join as chief editor.

"I saw how God has his plan laid out. I did not hesitate anymore," Chen said. She began as chief editor with BTGMI in January 2015.

Chen said she now hears the gentle voice saying, "Follow me! I will continue to use you!" ■

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



Abigail Chen gave up her desires in order to follow God's lead.

### A Woman's Place: A Christian Vision of Calling

**B**ased on her own experiences and conversations with more than 120 women, Katelyn Beaty has written *A Woman's Place*, a new book about the roles of women in the workplace—especially women of faith.

"I have been watching the integration of faith and work grow over the years, but the dialogue has been oriented to men," said Beaty, former print managing editor of *Christianity Today*. "There are specific and unique questions and



frustrations that women bring to the table, and there hasn't been a resource for that."

Published by Howard Books, *A Woman's Place* addresses the issues women

have faced in the workplace for decades but from a perspective that begins with women as imagebearers of God.

One of Beaty's points is to demonstrate the way social standards have been confused for scriptural truth. "Attaching manhood to work and womanhood to the home is a perfect example of well-meaning Christians confusing deeply bound cultural norms for biblical duty," she writes. "And when such norms are elevated to spiritual prescriptive, so

### Help for a Boy Named Bumb

**A**t a typical IMPACT youth club meeting, one of Jack and Kelly Organ's students would hit and threaten other students while refusing to participate in activities—all of which resulted in having to send him home early.

Jack and Kelly Organ serve in Romania with Christian Reformed World Missions. Although Bumb frustrated them, he has also become a reason why they love working with youth clubs.

In hopes of helping him, they decided to love him as best they could.

Although Bumb was sent home almost every week for the first year, he always showed up first for the next IMPACT meeting.

The Organs began talking more with Bumb outside of the IMPACT meetings and let him help them with little jobs around the office. They even talked to his teacher about his behavior and grades.

His school was not very helpful for students with special needs. When students acted out, the teachers weren't usually equipped to respond, said the Organs.



Kelly Organ (right) and her husband, Jack Organ, have seen God's plan for Bumb (left) unfold over the years.

Back at the IMPACT club meetings, Bumb slowly began to join other club members, serving in his unique way at community activities organized by the club.

"Bumb is good at seeing the unpopular tasks that need to be done and just doing them," said Kelly Organ. "Vacuuming, sitting at the door to make sure no one steals coats. . . . It might sound strange or lonely, but it's a way he likes

to serve, so we try to let him know we notice his help and appreciate him."

The Organs said God is using Bumb to create positive change among members of the IMPACT club and their wider community. He now attends an alternative school, where his teachers can give him more attention as he works toward the Romanian equivalent of a GED. ■

—by Brian Clark, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

enter unfounded guilt and unfounded judgment.”

Beaty, a 2006 Calvin College graduate, also suggests putting an end to the phrase “work/life balance”—“as if they are opposing forces to be constantly tamed and managed,” she writes.

“There are many different aspects to a person: friendships, family, work, recreation, travel, faith,” she said. “Life is not just every hour that you’re not at work.”

While Beaty focuses on women’s experiences working outside the home, she also recognizes the calling for women to work inside the home. Her overriding message is that all women fully bear the image of God, and women reflect his image when they work and create in God’s way.

“All women are created to work,” she said. “Work is a good thing. It’s not good up to a point, it’s not to be held as suspect for women. It’s a crucial way women bear the image of God and participate in the renewal of all things.” ■

—by Lynn Rosendale,  
Calvin College

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

## Small Loans Give New Hope to Farmers in Tanzania

**G**rowing up, Festo didn’t have the opportunity to continue his education. This made landing a good job challenging.

Finding little ways to earn money, either through agriculture or small businesses, was the only way he knew how to make a living. But his attempts at getting his own business up and running remained unsuccessful.

In hopes of earning a better income, Festo left his small Tanzanian community to become a fisherman.

But even then, the money he earned wasn’t enough to provide for his wife and four children.

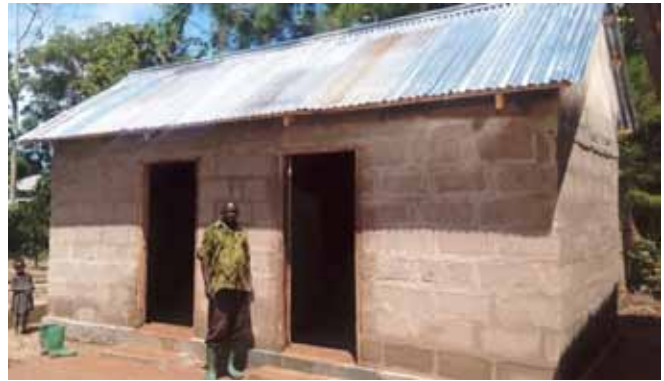
Meanwhile, World Renew and its partner, the African Inland Church of Tanzania, started to organize savings and lending trainings in Festo’s village.

After learning more about the program, he took advantage of the opportunity to join a savings group. Festo connected with 30 other members and learned how to save a small amount of money each week.

Over time, their money began to grow.

Festo and his wife borrowed money from the savings group and used it to buy 1.5 acres of land just outside of their village.

Then Festo took another loan to buy what he needed to start growing tomatoes.



Festo proudly displays the new home and small shop he was able to start thanks to a small loan program with World Renew.

For his first growing season, Festo planted 600 seedlings and was able to harvest 337 bags of tomatoes. After selling the tomatoes, he earned enough money to pay back his loan and begin building a new house for his family.

The next season, Festo took out another loan to plant tomatoes. This time he planted 8,000 seedlings on his land. After selling his harvest, he nearly doubled his profit.

The extra money has helped him finish building

his new house. Without paying rent, his family is more financially stable. Festo has also earned enough profit to open up a small shop selling agriculture supplies.

Now Festo can afford to send his children to school and ensure that their future is not hindered by the cycle of poverty. ■

—by Taylor Smith,  
World Renew

# Love, Sweet Love



The month of February is filled with hearts, hearts, and more hearts! Hearts in classrooms, hearts in stores, hearts in homes. That's because February 14 is Valentine's Day! Lots of people enjoy this time because it gives everyone—kids and grown-ups—the chance to show kindness and love to others.

## God's Love Letter

Did you know that God sent love letters to us? The Bible is filled with reminders of God's love for us. Here are just a few:

- ♥ "I love you." (Jeremiah 31:3)
- ♥ "I will never leave you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)
- ♥ "My love for you is higher than the heavens." (Psalm 103:11)

God's Word is the best love letter ever written. In his letter, God tells us that he loved the world so much that he sent Jesus to die for our sins and rise again to live forever (John 3:16). That means we can have joy and peace in our hearts. People who believe in Jesus will live with him always. Valentine's Day reminds us of God's love for us—every single day! So as you make cards, pass out candy, or surprise friends and family with special treats, remember that God has given you the best Valentine gift of all.

It should say "Be Mine" not "Bo Vine" ...and we printed 8 billion hearts that way?



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT FOLLADAY

## Be Mine!

Make someone's day by creating these **special cards!**

### What you need:

- ♥ Construction paper
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Markers
- ♥ Heart stickers, glitter, sequins, etc (optional)

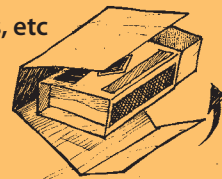
### What to do:

Cut out hearts from colorful construction paper. With a marker write special messages such as "Be Mine" "You're Sweet" or "God Loves You." On the back of each heart you could draw a picture of a favorite activity you enjoy doing with that person, or write a verse that shares God's love with them.

Here's how to create a **homemade candy box** for Valentine gift-giving. Go ahead, show the love!

### What you need:

- ♥ 1 large matchbox
- ♥ Construction paper
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Markers, crayons, stickers, etc
- ♥ Glue
- ♥ Yarn (optional)
- ♥ Small candies



### What to do:

Cut out colored paper and glue it to cover your matchbox. Decorate with small cut-out hearts and write your Valentine's name on the box. Fill the box with small wrapped candies or candy hearts. Write a note to a friend and put it in the box.



# FuN Facts

More than 8 billion Sweethearts candies are made each year—that's around **100,000 pounds per day!** They have fun sayings like "I love U," "Text me," or "Love Bug."

The **world's largest box of chocolates** came from London, England, and weighed 3,725 pounds!

In 1861 the creators of Cadbury chocolate created the first **heart-shaped box of chocolates.**



## Showing God's Love

Because God loves us, we can show love to others. There are many people who may not know that God loves them. Can you think of someone you can show love to this month? Maybe you can be a friend to someone who just moved to your school. Or share a kind word with your brother or sister.

There are also people in your neighborhood who need to know Jesus' love. Here are some ways you can show God's love to others!

## Food from the Heart

Collect food like peanut butter and canned goods. Ask your family to help deliver them to a local food pantry. Make Valentine's cards to tape to the food and write verses of God's love in the cards. Hint: you can find some on these pages!

## Secret Valentine

Choose a "secret Valentine" in your family or school. Do special things for them without the person knowing. Here are a few ideas to get you started: make their bed, sharpen their pencils, or put their toys away. Write notes like "God loves you" or "I'm praying for you."

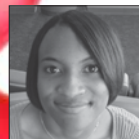
## Prayer Pals

Pick someone in your church, school, or neighborhood and be their "prayer pal." Write a letter to that person and write a prayer for them. Send the letter in the mail and invite them to write back to you.

## Book Blessings

Go to a library and read one of these books about God's love to a younger person in your family.

- ♥ *Thank You, God, for Loving Me* by Max Lucado
- ♥ *My Valentine for Jesus* by Laurie Lazzaro Knowlton
- ♥ *God Gave Us Love* by Lisa Tawn Bergren



Christin Baker is a wife and homeschool mom who has worked for years in children's ministry. She attends Tabernacle Community Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



## confronting white privilege

**I**N RECENT YEARS, Christian colleges and universities have made significant progress on issues of race. Many would even say they are “antiracist.” At the same time, they have been inconsistent on the topic of privilege. Overt racism is condemned, but the subtler conversation about white privilege remains controversial.

White privilege, as defined in social science, refers to “the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race” (Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*). Or, as Peggy McIntosh explains it, “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day.”

White privilege does not mean that every individual white person is always better off. Rather, it means that being able to claim the “white” identity in North America comes with certain social, cultural, and economic advantages, from getting a call back for a job interview to finding an apartment or booking an AirBnB. As James Bratt wrote on the Reformed blog “The Twelve,” this privilege has deep historic roots in American society, and acknowledging it is not intended to induce guilt but a sense of responsibility. As a personal example, Christina is often pigeonholed on our campus as one of the “diversity people” in ways that Joe is not, even though we both have scholarly interests in a wide variety of topics. She is often assumed to represent the views of people of color as a whole, whereas Joe is allowed a more holistic individuality.

On college campuses, part of white privilege is safety. In 2013, the most recent year for which we have data, there were 781 reported hate crimes on U.S. college campuses. The single largest motivation for these crimes was race—about 40 percent. A 2011 study of hate crimes on Canadian campuses found that 40.1 percent of respondents had experienced some incidence of hate crime. Race or ethnicity was a major motivator (23.3 percent) with Aboriginal people, and Afro-Caribbeans were particularly vulnerable.

We work at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. For us, the disparity between conversations about racism and privilege was made evident last winter, when one of our students wrote “white power” and drew a swastika in the fresh snow on the rear window of a parked car. Photos of the graffiti found their way onto social media, and our campus was confronted with a sobering reminder of the persistence of white supremacy. We came together to respond, and our president condemned the action as having “no place at Calvin College.” The primary student involved later confessed and issued an anonymous public apology. While some members of our community attempted to minimize the incident (the student was “only joking,” for example), there was almost universal condemnation for invoking white supremacist imagery.

However, many people failed to see the link between white supremacy and white privilege. We believe that the denial of white privilege rests on an implicit assumption of white supremacy. If you deny white privilege, if society is indeed meritocratic



and the game is essentially fair, it is difficult to avoid assumptions about who tends to win and who tends to lose. If the white population is not privileged in some way, how else does one explain the discrepancies between them and people of color? What's left is assuming that white people are just smarter, more moral, work harder, or have a stronger culture.

But if you talk too much about white privilege, you're told you're being extreme. In some cases, you're told that talk about racism and white privilege is actually what *perpetuates* racism. Inevitably, someone quotes Dr. King: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Calling attention to white privilege is holding back the dream. If you are surrounded by this sort of attitude, you begin

## resist rushing past or suppressing the deep sadness of this idolatry.

to question yourself. Maybe trying to talk about privilege is too confrontational. Maybe you should be less "extreme."

We don't think that's the case, and it certainly isn't what Dr. King meant. Here's a passage from his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in which he laments the role of "white moderates." Given that Dr. King's words are often reduced into easily misunderstood feel-good sentiments, we'll quote him at length:

I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White citizen's "Councilor" or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

Our suspicion is that many of those working to confront white privilege on Christian campuses know something about lukewarm acceptance and how bewildering it can be. Why is this conversation so difficult?

It shouldn't be. As Christians, we are confessional people. At many Christian Reformed churches, confession is part of the weekly liturgy. What would it look like to confess white privilege? We'd like to take this a step further. The church often talks about confessing and lamenting sins, and in the context of racism particularly, the sins of the past. That's appropriate.

But we'd like to name the subtle white supremacy that props up white privilege for what we think it is: an idol.

We think this is why the conversation about white privilege is so contentious. As Christina wrote about the controversy on our campus, "If you ever want to see somebody get . . . really mad, threaten their idol." Idols attempt to rob God of God's deserved glory. They minimize our needed dependence on the gospel, and they lead others astray. So what does it look like to tear down or repent of this idol?

First, we must ask for the spiritual sight to see racial injustice. For those who live it, like Christina, it is as evident as the day is long; but for those who benefit from it, like Joseph, this is harder. Our tailored history and politically aligned media sources shape worlds and worldviews that feed the idol of racism. However,

seeing this idol does not require some supernatural experience but rather a willingness to learn the full narrative. To listen to our brothers and sisters in Christ and to turn away from the voices of "post-racial" or meritocratic false prophets.

Second, this awareness will hurt. Resist rushing past or suppressing the deep sadness of this idolatry. It is so easy to medicate with avoidance, delusion, and quick tears. Repentance requires real sorrow and grief. It is a sorrow that acknowledges that we have missed the mark, that we have fallen so very short. The Bible provides us with images of godly sorrow that include weeping, wailing, and the ripping of clothes. We are broken people who ought to be broken up by our sin.

Third, our lament must lead to change. Christians serve an embodied Savior. We must have an embodied faith. A faith that has real implications for not only what we confess but how we live. We must walk up to and into racist systems and structures to change them. Lament must have legs—or else it serves to prolong the suffering of others.

Turning from idols is difficult. We cannot do it on our own. But we are not alone. Christ himself provides us with the ability to see our sin, the strength to repent, and the wisdom to proceed towards justice. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Joseph Kuilema** is an assistant professor in the social work program at Calvin College. He and his wife attend Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church.



**Christina Edmondson** serves as Dean for Intercultural Student Development at Calvin College. She trains congregations and organizations nationally about implicit bias, multicultural accessibility, and leadership development.

## Confessions of a Bingewatcher



**THE BANNER MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST PLACE** for a confession, but here goes: I was a bingewatcher.

That means if I started watching a series on Netflix or on DVD, I'd sit down to watch one episode. Then I'd look at the clock and think, why not another one? And maybe a third or a fourth. The feeling of slipping into the story was delicious.

After working late, "a little bit" of TV to relax sometimes turned into six or seven episodes, way into the night, long after my wife had gone to bed. Such compulsiveness is what *bingewatching* implies. If someone had confronted me on my lack of constraint, I might have argued sheepishly that it was the library's fault for only allowing a week to watch all the episodes in a DVD set. Or I would have blamed Netflix for allowing one episode to flow automatically into the next.

You probably noticed the past tense—I *was* a bingewatcher. Not so long ago, I gave up binging. It didn't feel particularly

**"A little bit" of TV to relax sometimes turned into six or seven episodes.**

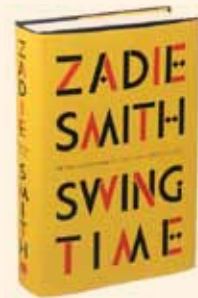
true, noble, or right (Phil. 4:8) to spend so much time alone in front of a TV screen. A worse feeling was having to muddle through the following day on little sleep. Also, the plotlines and characters just got confused in my mind.

The critic Clive James, in his recent book *Play All: A Bingewatcher's Notebook* (Yale), offers a better sort of TV "binging." During his chronic illness, he has taken to watching multiple episodes of a TV series with one of his daughters every Saturday afternoon. It provides a shared experience and, given the quality of many "long-form" shows, much to talk about afterward.

In a similar vein, I've developed some new habits. My wife and I have been making our way through some TV series. We usually stick to an episode once a week if we are busy. And as a treat, maybe one or two every night during a vacation. The combination of anticipation and dinner-time discussions about "what will happen next" is well worth giving up late-night binging for moderation. While I may not be up to date with every new series, I'm usually more relaxed and get regular sleep. I also enjoy each episode more, as I share them in good company. That feels at once excellent and, I hope, praiseworthy. ■



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



### Swing Time

by Zadie Smith

reviewed by Sonya

VanderVeen Feddema

In *Swing Time*, the unnamed protagonist narrates the story of her friendship with Tracey. Each of the girls was born to a white and a black parent in London, England. Though they find a bond in their common racial heritage and their love of dance, eventually they lose touch. The protagonist finds success as the personal assistant to Aimee, a rising pop star who engages in relief work in Africa. However, white privilege, exploitation of poverty for self-aggrandizement, and cultural insensitivity lurk beneath the seemingly positive guise of Aimee's philanthropy. This lengthy, complex novel contains vulgarity and some sexually explicit material, but it dares to see the world as it is and, nevertheless, offer hope and grace. (Penguin Press)



## Uncommon Grace: The Life of Flannery O'Connor

reviewed by  
Robert N. Hosack



Atlanta-based producer-writer Bridget Kurt spent two years researching and scripting *Uncommon Grace*, using rare photographs and interviews with current O'Connor scholars to tell the author's life story. Viewers learn how O'Connor's family life and Southern culture, Roman Catholic faith, and deadly illness shaped her imaginative storytelling. While the film covers territory that will be familiar to many of her myriad fans, it thoughtfully reveals details and insights to the delight of those interested in her corpus. In particular, the film will serve as a rich resource for high school and college instructors who teach O'Connor's violent, grace-filled stories. (Beata)



## Poets and Saints

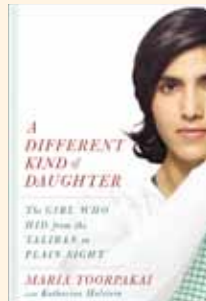
by All Sons and Daughters  
reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

Musicians Leslie Jordan and David Leonard looked into the lives of writers and saints such as C.S. Lewis, St. Augustine, and John Calvin for inspiration. *Poets and Saints* continues in the vein of previous albums from All Sons and Daughters, featuring acoustic-based worship music and lyrics that show a depth of study. For example, "Creation Sings," inspired by learning about John Calvin, has a stirring chorus: "Creation, all creation/ Sings your glory, God." This simple but theologically rich song has a text that will warm the hearts of Reformed Christians and a melody that will encourage us to sing it loudly. (Integrity Music)

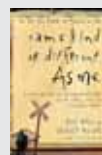
## A Different Kind of Daughter

by Maria Toorpakai  
reviewed by Jim Romahn

Maria Toorpakai cut off and burned her hair along with her dresses just before she turned five. She became a boy named Genghis Khan so she could join boys outdoors to play soccer in an area of Pakistan dominated by the Taliban. She was so determined that she dominated the boys; she became a prize-winning weightlifter, then a national squash champion. Under threats to her life for defying Taliban bans on education and sports for girls, she left family, friends, and country for freedom in Canada. This memoir is a heart-wrenching tale of determination and defiance. (Viking)



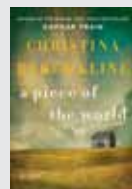
## THE LOWDOWN



**Same Story:** The best-selling inspirational book *Same Kind of Different As Me* gets the big-screen treatment this month in theaters everywhere. (Paramount)

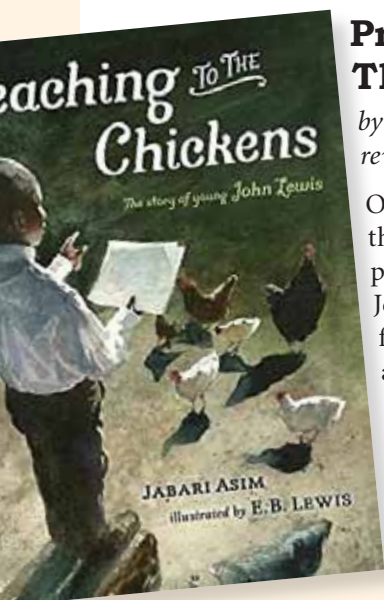


**Kuyper Collection:** Admirers of Abraham Kuyper should check out *abrahamkuyper.com*, where newly-produced English translations of his works on public theology are available in both print and digital form.



**Novel Idea:** Christina Baker Kline, author of book club favorite *Orphan Train*, based her newest novel, *A Piece of the World*, on a famous painting by Andrew Wyeth. (William Morrow)

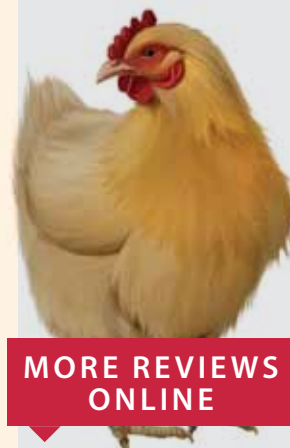
**Our Opinions:** The Grammys and the Academy Awards are being handed out this month. To find out what *Banner* reviewers thought of some of the nominees, visit *thebanner.org*.



## Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis

by Jabari Asim  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On a southern Alabama farm, young John Lewis loves to talk to the chickens. When he decides he wants to preach just like the preacher at his church, the chickens become his congregation. As John cares for them, he learns to speak for those who can't speak for themselves, invaluable experience for a child who became an adult active in the 1960s civil rights movement in the U.S. and a current Georgia congressman. Beautifully illustrated by E.B. Lewis, this picture book is a delightful tale of faith nurtured by hard-working parents and a church community filled with the Holy Spirit's power. (Nancy Paulsen Books)



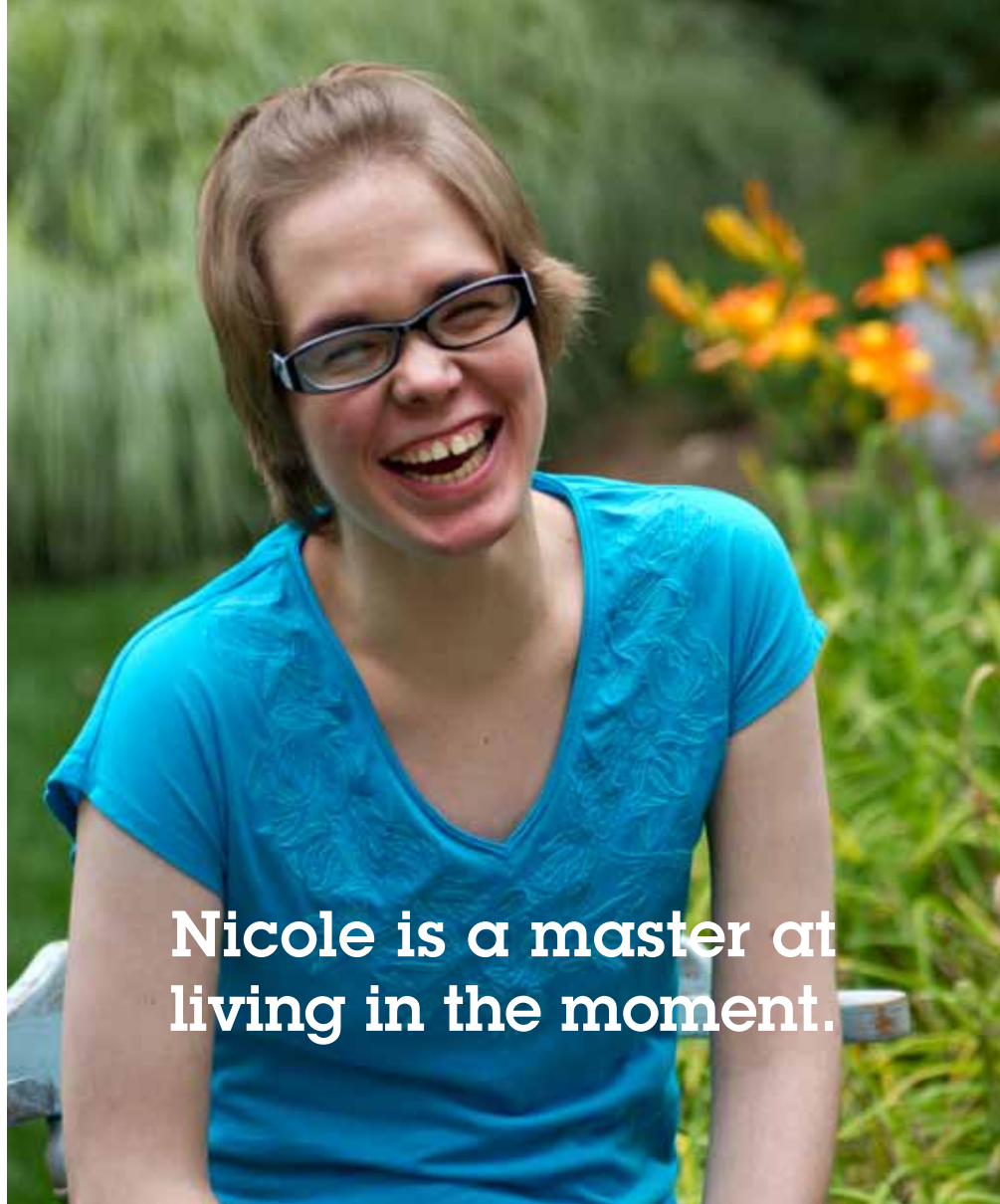
**MORE REVIEWS ONLINE**

## A New Normal

**WHAT IS IT LIKE TO PARENT** a son or daughter with disabilities? Here are a few thoughts from one father of an adult daughter who lives joyfully with severe, multiple disabilities.

**Life-changing.** Kids change your life; that's only more so for parents who raise children who have disabilities. Sometimes the change hits severely and painfully. Author and speaker Emily Colson writes that shortly after her son Max was diagnosed with autism, her husband left her. Our daughter, Nicole, who is 29, was born extremely prematurely and experienced many complications after birth. God used her to guide both my wife, Bev, and me into the callings we have today. I served in parish ministry for 17 years, and now serve the Christian Reformed Church as the director of Disability Concerns. Bev was a German teacher, and now teaches special education.

**Lonely and isolating.** As far as other parents are concerned, parents of kids with disabilities are odd. Here are a few examples. For a while, we grieved over the child we had hoped for who never came, while we learned to love this child with disabilities that God give us. We sometimes wondered whether others saw our child as a problem to be solved rather than as a person whom God has endowed with a personality and gifts and preferences and hopes and dreams. When Nicole was born, some people dropped out of our lives because they didn't know how to cope with the reality of her multiple disabilities. Other people reached out to us and were Jesus to us with their loving words, caring visits, and helping hands. A friend, now in his 80s, told me that he was thankful that his daughter, who had severe disabilities, passed away before him. That's odd, because most parents want their kids to outlive them.



**Nicole is a master at living in the moment.**

But he loved his daughter so much that he was willing to live with the pain of outliving her so that he could ensure good care for her from the beginning of her life to its end. A few times people asked Bev and me what it was like to parent Nicole, and then they listened. Their listening helped push away some of the isolation.

**Discovering a new normal.** When Nicole was about a year old, she needed monitors, tube feedings, oxygen, and many medicines. She was missing developmental milestones. Life was challenging for us. One day at dinner, I wiped my bearded face with a napkin. Nicole giggled at the scratchy sound. So I wiped again.

More giggling. Before long, all three of us were belly laughing. As Bev and I let go of the child we had hoped for and came to love the girl God had given us, we began to discover a new normal. Some things we could never have imagined doing, such as “bagging” Nicole during the times she stopped breathing, became a normal part of our lives. In contrast to the people who told us that we were special parents because we had Nicole, we have done what any loving parent will do normally by God’s grace.

**Feeling judged.** People frequently judge children and adults with disabilities (and their parents) negatively. Jesus’ disciples did that when they asked him, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2) Some parents have faced the difficult situation that their child with a disability was not welcome at the Christian school which their other children attended. Parents can feel judged when their child has a meltdown in public, or when a well-meaning stranger asks to pray over their daughter who uses a wheelchair. Some children make sounds during worship, and others stare at what they consider a disruption. One time, a person told me that Nicole lives with disabilities because my wife and I don’t have enough faith. On our worst days, we judge ourselves and wonder whether such an accusation is true.

**Advocating.** Most kids with disabilities are seen by an army of specialists who want to help. Medicine schedules, therapy routines, doctor visits, therapist appointments, individual educational plan meetings all have to be juggled by their parents. We had to learn a new vocabulary and understand education, insurance, therapy, and medical systems. Church leaders may have no idea how to engage a child or youth with disabilities in church pro-

## God brought her into the world with a particular calling.

grams. Given all these challenges, parents advocate with doctors, teachers, therapists, and people at church to bring about the best outcomes for their child.

**Surprising gifts.** Nicole doesn’t have the kinds of gifts church leaders usually look for. She’ll never teach a Sunday school class, serve as a deacon, or sing in the praise team—but she loves to worship. One Sunday morning we began singing, “What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Those old, familiar words can be taken for granted, but no one did that morning. As we began to sing, Nicole shook her hands in the air and let out a loud whoop—not your typical Christian Reformed worship behavior, but she didn’t care. She reminded all of us how good it was to worship the God who washes away all our sins through the blood of Jesus. Nicole doesn’t worry about the future or fret about the past; she’s a master at living in the moment. Nicole models a rich faith in God and in other people. She trusts that people will love and take care of her and that God will too.

**Wondering about the future.** When a child with a disability is young, parents wonder whether developmental milestones will be delayed or missed entirely. As the child grows into adulthood, they wonder who will assist him or her once they are unable to do so. Like my 80-something friend, many parents have the strange and painful hope that they will outlive their children. Sadly, that’s quite likely, especially for people with severe disabilities. We might outlive

Nicole too, and we thank God for the hope of eternal life that she has through Jesus Christ.

**Hoping for belonging.** Dr. John Swinton wrote, “To be included, you just need to be present. To belong, you need to be missed.” Friendships, jobs, and education do not come easily for most people with disabilities. That’s why the church is so important. Wouldn’t it be great, as Dr. Erik Carter says, if Sunday were “the best day of the week for families who have children with disabilities”? That happens in some churches, but not all. Why not do all you can to make it true for your church?

**Thanking God.** Bev and I would not have chosen the path Nicole has had to walk, but we thank God for our precious daughter and for the ways he has used her to help us grow to be more like Jesus. God brought her into the world with a particular calling, and she is fulfilling that calling well. Nicole is exactly the person God planned her to be (1 Cor. 12:18). God knew that we, our family, our church, and our community need her in order to fully be the body of Christ. ■



**Mark Stephenson** is director of Disability Concerns for the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Intersection Ministries, a CRC/RCA church in Holland, Mich.

# Why Make Profession of Faith?

Marking faith milestones is one way to pause and reflect on God's work in our lives.

PHOTO BY PIXABAY.COM

**I MADE PROFESSION OF FAITH** when I was 16 years old at my home church in Midland Park, N.J. Lots of men, one of them my father, were sitting in chairs against the wall of a large room as I sat there answering a series of questions. I don't remember many specifics about the questions, but I do know that the pastor asked about my personal faith and a bunch of questions about doctrine. It's not quite fair to call it a "grilling," but it also wasn't just a conversation.

In recent years, profession of faith "interviews" have focused more on personal faith rather than on doctrine. That's probably a good change. But as I reflect on my own experience, followed by standing up in church and saying "I do" when the time came, I wonder what my profession of faith actually represented for me. It sticks in my memory as an important event, partly because I was proclaiming my faith but also because doing so gave me access to the Lord's Table. Soon afterward, I was also invited to join a church committee, teaching me early that one of the hallmarks of the church is committee work.

Now that the CRC has separated profession of faith from access to the Table, many people have wondered about the purpose of this faith milestone. With that in mind, here are some thoughts about the additional blessings that come to us by way of profession of faith.

**You make a public commitment.** Making a public commitment is an important step toward accepting that my identity is found in being baptized into the family of God. Even though I always knew Midland Park was "my church," it became more real to me when I stood up and said so.

**You celebrate with your congregation.** Celebrating milestone moments like this with a congregation gives everyone an opportunity to reflect on God's faithfulness in our lives and in those of the people around us.

**You witness to others.** Even though I did not make any sort of verbal statement other than "I do," I was saying that I accepted the promises made to me at my baptism. I knew that others would look at my actions, listen to my words, and expect them to glorify Jesus.

**You learn.** I continued to learn what it means to be a member of the church. Much of this learning happened before I made profession of faith, but afterward my church continued to invest in me, teaching me what it means to be a young Christian adult.

**You serve.** In addition to raking leaves and doing other things as a member of the youth group, being placed on a committee was a way for the church to show that they valued my gifts.

Seeing profession of faith merely as a gateway to the Lord's Table misses many of the

blessings that accompany this important milestone. As we rethink its place in our congregations, let's find ways for young people to receive these other blessings. (See sidebar.)

Marking faith milestones in the lives of congregants young and old is one way to pause and reflect on God's work in our lives. Giving young people lots of opportunities to participate actively in worship will allow them to feel a sense of truly belonging to the congregation and the larger church of Christ—and encourage them to make ongoing professions of faith. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE

## Profession of Faith Tools

For ideas on how your church can encourage people to profess their faith, create a welcoming profession of faith process, celebrate profession of faith creatively in worship, and more, check out the *Professing Our Faith* toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).



**Robert J. Keeley** is professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance learning at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is a member of 14th Street CRC in Holland, Mich.

# ADS

**Deadlines:** March issue is 2/7/2017; April issue is 3/7/2017. Details online.

**Prices:** Beginning January 2017, new rates will go into effect. Most ads are \$0.39<sup>US</sup> per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.32<sup>US</sup> per character and \$50 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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## Denominational and Classical

### General

**AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2017** Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the office of the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda: A. Overtures, communications, and appeals to synod are due no later than March 15 and must first be processed through the local council and the classis. B. Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each synodical delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15. Materials will be included in the printed Agenda if received before the synodically established deadlines.

Steven R. Timmermans, Executive Director

**ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER** Synod has designated Wednesday, March 8, 2017, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, crops and industry, and the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U. S.), they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U. S.) is Thursday, May 4, 2017.

Steven R. Timmermans, Executive Director

### Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **Jesse Walhof** 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

### Financial Aid

**CLASSIS KALAMAZOO** The Student Aid Fund of Classis Kalamazoo, Michigan invites students from their classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial aid for the 2017-2018 academic year to apply no later than March 31, 2017 by contacting Rev. Phil Kok at 9316 Oakland Dr., Portage, MI 49024 or [philkok@charter.net](mailto:philkok@charter.net). Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2017-2018. Students presently receiving aid must reapply.

## Birthdays

### 90th Birthday

**GERARD "GERRY" BORST** celebrated his 90th birthday on January 6, 2017. Celebrating with him are his wife Trudy, children Steve and Jen (Logan) Borst, Mark (Zuiderveen) and Susan Borst, Scott and Jayne Borst, Mike and Kim Borst plus 7 grandchildren. We praise and thank the Lord for His Faithfulness! Gerry resides at 2236 Merton Ave, Eagle Rock CA 90041

## Anniversaries

### 60th Anniversary

**WASSINK, HAROLD AND EVELYN** of Holland, MI will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on February 15, 2017. Their children are Paul and Jan Wassink, Steve and Robyn Wassink, Ken Wassink, Mark and Lisa Timmer. 10 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness.

## Obituaries

**ALDRINK BEATRICE (KOK)** age 94, of Jenison, went home to be with her Lord and Savior on Sunday, January 1, 2017. Husband Harry preceded her in death 9 years ago. Memories are cherished by her sons, Larry and Mary Aldrink, Doug and Laura Aldrink, Chuck and Joyce Aldrink, her 7 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren and many other loved ones and friends.

**TED ANDRIESE**, 87, of Spring Lake, MI, died peacefully on November 26. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn (Rottschäfer), his children Paul and Gloria Andriese; Amy LeFebre; and Stephen and Mary Andriese; his grandchildren Jasson, Matthew (partner, Kristine Bahnweg) and Aaron Andriese; Claire, Bennett and Natalie LeFebre; and Lizzie, Allie and Teddy Andriese; his great-grandson, Bowen Andriese; Marilyn's children Dick, Michael, and Bradley and Molly Rottschäfer; Marilyn's nine grandchildren and one great-grandson.

**GERTRUDE (HEKMAN) DEBOER**, age 93, of Grand Rapids, MI died peacefully on Sunday, Nov. 27, 2016. Preceded by her husband, Willis (Bill) DeBoer; survived by her children, Sandra Bode (Donald), Kathleen DeBoer (Mark Pittman), Patricia DeBoer (Stuart Henderson), Philip DeBoer (Laurie), and Stephen DeBoer; five grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

**DECKINGA, PETER**, age 82 passed away suddenly on Monday December 5, 2016. He is survived by Yvonne wife of 59 years, Bonnie (Steve) Leffring, Ken (Jamie), Bette (Tom) VanKuiken, the late Peter W. (Jenise). Grandfather of 18, Great Grandfather of 6.

**KOOPS, BERNARD CORNELIUS** age 104, passed away peacefully in Holland, MI 12/12/2016 He was a member of Maranatha Chr Ref Church. Preceded in death by his wife of 70 years, Jean Zuiderveen, his sister Julia Toeset, and his son-in-law Art Chrzanowski. Survived by his children: Marcia Chrzanowski. Grand Rapids, J. Barry (Rev. Delianne), El Cerrito

CA, Rob (Esther), Gallup NM, Glen (Linda), Lawrenceville GA, Paul (Wendy Watkins) Dolores, CO; 13 grandchildren: Sarah (David) Vanderveen, Christopher (Renee), Jeannie (Mark) Elson, Geoffrey (Anna), Alexander (Shaelyn), Ruthie (Darren) Campbell, Jed (Lisa), Micaiah (Kevin) Robinson, Jael (Rashan) Sipes, Magdalena, Sawyer (Lauren), Casey, Austin TX, Lynn (Matt) Tepper; 23 great-grandchildren and many nephews and nieces. Contributions in his memory may be made to Calvin College, Hospice of Holland, or any of the Christian schools he served. Expressions of condolence to the family may be sent c/o Dr. J. Barry Koops, 1007 1/2 Contra Costa Dr., El Cerrito, CA 94530.

**KROLL, EGBERT** (Bert), age 88, passed away on October 31, 2016 at his home in Edgerton, MN. He was preceded in death by his wife, Willie, and two sons, Gary and Robert, and one grandchild, Willa. He is survived by his children Roger and Marlys, Marce and Gary Baartman, Sherri Vostad, Glenda and Henry Kraayenbrink, Randy and Rachel, Dennis and Rose, Bethany and Austin Haywood; 28 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren; and brother Gerald and Adele Kroll.

**VANDER VEEN**, Nick, age 84, passed away on December 11, 2016. Born in Twijzel, Freisland, he settled in Lynden WA with his parents and siblings in 1947. A lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church, he is survived by his wife Joanne, five children, four step-children and numerous other relatives. He was preceded in death by his first wife Juella, father John, mother Christine, and brother Ted.

## Employment

**IN HOME-CARE COMPANY**, small, locally owned, non-medical, looking to hire part-time, 8-10 hours a week to start. We are looking for people who enjoy working with seniors, have reliable transportation, and a flexible schedule, including some weekends. Send enquiries to: [truebluecaregivers@gmail.com](mailto:truebluecaregivers@gmail.com)

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## Church Position Announcements

**LEAD PASTOR:** Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church of Chilliwack, in southern British Columbia, Canada, seeks the services of a full time lead pastor commencing in the summer of 2017. This pastor will help us grow into the next chapter of our ministry by dynamically proclaiming God's Word, by actively leading in the implementation of our ministry plan and by caring for the congregation and community. Please indicate your interest in this position to: searchteam@cornerstonecra.ca

**PASTOR** Rochester CRC: Our mid-sized western New York state congregation seeks a senior pastor for preaching, spiritual leadership and pastoral care. We value strong preaching of the Word and seek someone who will challenge us to implement it in the culture around us. We have a strong desire for church growth and seek leadership to realize that vision in our community. Can you lead us as we face these challenges? To explore this opportunity with us, contact our Pastor Search Team at Office@RochesterCRC.org

**PASTOR** Crossroads CRC in beautiful north San Diego County is seeking a full time pastor who is a collaborative leader with a passion for worship, discipleship and outreach. The pastor's leadership gifts and ability to preach the Word will bring glory to God and build up the church. For more information, please contact searchteam@crossroadscrc.com.

**PASTOR, NEERLANDIA CRC:** Have the opportunity to experience Alberta's clear blue skies and Northern Lights all within driving distance of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, located in the rural community of Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, is seeking a full time ordained pastor. We are an active, multi-generational congregation of 150 families with a strong foundation of over 100 years of ministry. Our style of liturgy is a blend of contemporary and traditional with a strong emphasis on music and praise. We are looking for an experienced pastor with commendable preaching and teaching skills who looks forward to forming a cohesive multi-pastoral team. To explore this opportunity with us, please contact Simone Tuininga, mstuininga@explornet.com.

**THIRD CHRISTIAN REFORMED** Church is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Youth Ministry Coordinator. The person in this position will lead, develop, and coordinate youth programming for grades 6-12, both from Third Church and the surrounding community. This position is currently a half time position. Send all inquiries to office@thirdcra.net

**CO-PASTOR:** Trinity CRC, Edmonton, Alberta is growing and seeking a co-pastor to complement our current pastor and youth director in Biblical preaching, visionary leadership, and pastoral care in our increasingly diverse and vibrant congregation. Direct inquiries to TrinityCRCpastorsearch@gmail.com

**PASTOR** Faith CRC of Tinley Park, IL, is prayerfully seeking a full-time Senior Pastor. To explore this opportunity, please contact Doug Terpstra, preferably by email at doug@alanhorticultural.com or by cell at 630-514-0993

**PASTOR** Searchlight Ministries in Jamestown, Michigan is a community-minded church, which strives to be authentic, accepting, come as you are (both inside and out). Searchlight is focused on building relationships, committed to an open and vulnerable communal prayer time, and serving others. If interested, contact Herb Kraker at herb@dialogos-studies.com or Lynn Kraker at 616-821-8440.

**SEARCHING FOR FULL-TIME PASTOR** We are Calvin CRC in Holland, MI. We have thriving ministries, vibrant worship, friendly people, and lots of energy. What we are missing, though, is a pastor to work with us to reach the lost and challenge us with motivating messages. Our mission is to Seek God's heart and Share God's love. If you can hear God calling you in our direction, please send us your resume: searchteam@calvinministries.org or Search Team, Calvin Church, 387 W. Lakewood Blvd., Holland, MI 49424.

**HIGHLAND CRC,** located in the rolling hills of NW Michigan, is seeking a full-time Pastor to help lead our vibrant congregation with Spirit-filled energy based on God's word and our Reformed Confessions. Contact Search Committee at hrcsearch@gmail.com

**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

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**Reformation Heritage Tour of Germany**  
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**Alluring Alaska: A Glacier Discovery Cruise**  
August 19 – 30 | George & Kathleen Gentes

**Croatia: A Deluxe Yacht Cruise**  
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Dick & Candice Wallace

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- March 6** **PENFIELD, NY**, Rochester Christian Reformed Church, 7 PM
- March 7** **LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP, NJ**, Lafayette Federated Church, 7 PM
- March 9** **COLLEGE PARK, MD**, Wallace Presbyterian Church, 7:30 PM
- March 10** **CINCINNATI, OH**, Covenant-First Presbyterian Church, 7:30 PM
- March 11** **PALOS HEIGHTS, IL**, Southwest Chicago Christian High School, 7 PM
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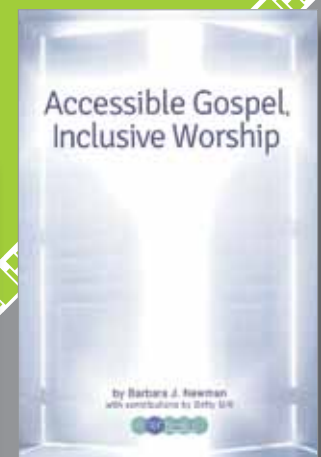
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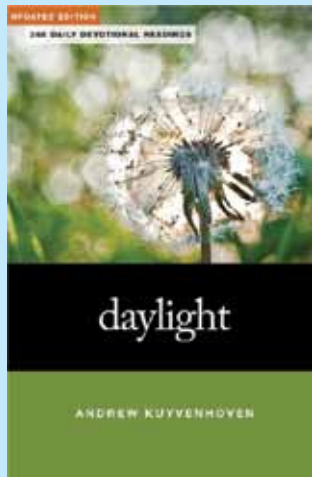
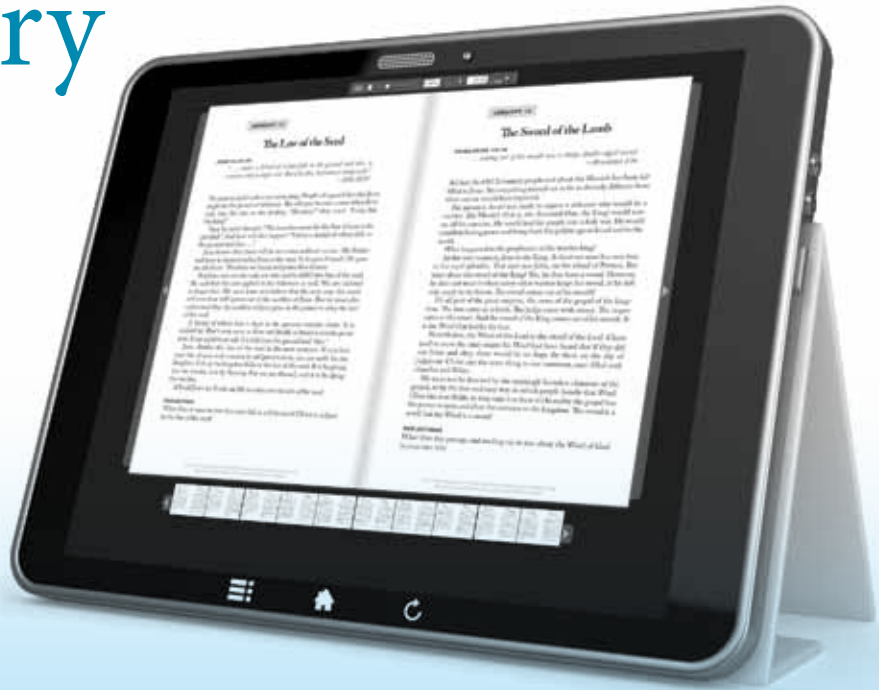


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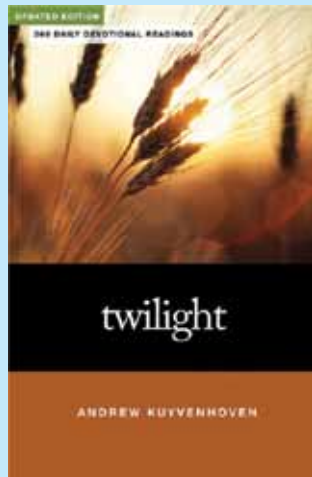
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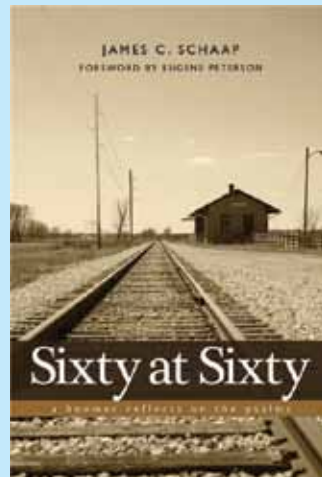
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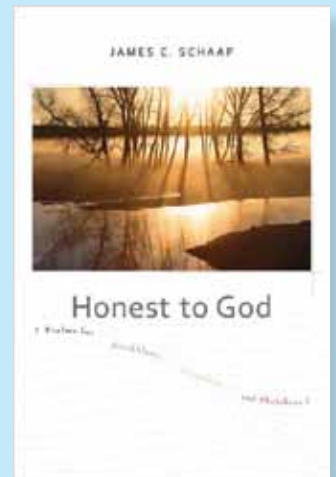
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## Punch Lines

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

A pastor received this note addressed to him and his wife, accompanying a box of Christmas goodies:

*Dear Pastor, Knowing that you do not eat sweets, I am sending the candy to your wife . . . and nuts to you. Merry Christmas!*

—Dick Bylsma

A little boy was participating in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd. While facing them, he would put up his hands like claws and roar.

So it went, step, step, ROAR; step, step, ROAR; all the way down the aisle.

By the time he reached the pulpit, the congregation was near tears from laughing so hard.

When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."

—Carla Van Den Hout

After William joined the army, he became concerned when he first heard the command, "Fire at will!"

—R. Smit

Arriving home after their school pictures were taken, 7-year-old Gary said, "Mom we had our pictures taken individually," followed by 5-year-old Debby saying, "We did not. They were taken in the gym!"

—Connie De Haan

A new and inexperienced waitress told a colleague that she was concerned about being able to carry the heavy trays of food. The other waitress pointed out that tray stands were placed strategically throughout the restaurant. After successfully serving lunches to the people at her tables, the new waitress asked one table if everything had been all right.

One man replied, "It was fine, but my wife and I have to leave now. Could she please have her walker back?"

—Jan Velkamp

It was an emotional wedding; even the cake was in tiers.

—Ralph Vander Kooy

Shortly after Christmas I was reading a Bible story picture book to my 2-year-old granddaughter. She was asking me who the Bible characters were, so I decided to change it up and ask her who she thought they were. For most, her answer was, "I don't know." But I barely got one of the pages turned when she shouted, "Santa Claus!" It was a picture of Moses.

—Diana Leyendekker

Lord, grant me patience. And I want it right now.

—Sam Bosch

While spending the weekend with my 5-year-old granddaughter, Reka, we were preparing to leave for church. I commented that I had forgotten my earrings. A few minutes later, I added that I hadn't taken my church coat either. Reka got it right by assuring me, "That's OK, Grandma. Our church lets everybody in!"

—Carole Shaarda

Our granddaughter was visiting over the weekend and joined us for church. As usual, she went to Sunday school midway through the service. While there, the leader took a collection.



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