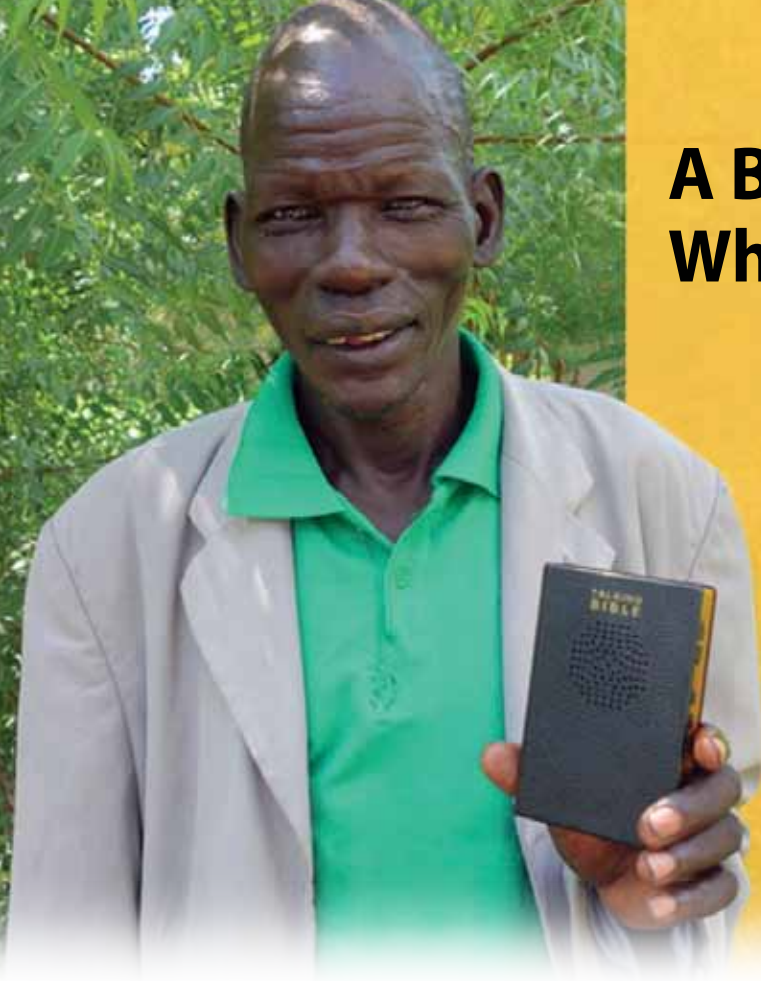


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- » Advocates for Canadian Charities Advise on Student Grant Applications
- » Church Worldwide: RCA Church Is Sanctuary for Indonesian Christians Seeking Asylum
- » Movie: *The Post*
- » Book: *Understanding Your Teen* by Jim Burns
- » Music: *The North Star* by Remedy Drive
- » As I Was Saying: Where Is the Church on #MeToo?
- » As I Was Saying: How to Change Hearts on Race



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BANNER

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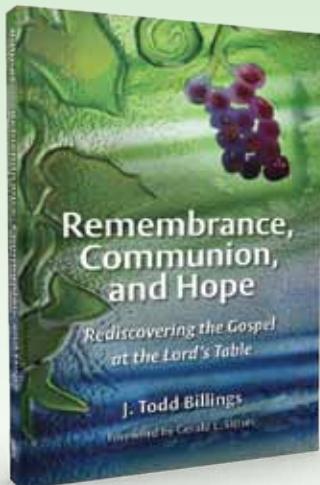
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Mirror and Forum

The variety of perspectives is important because none of us has a monopoly on God's truth.

WHEN THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church purchased *The Banner* back in 1914, it chose to protect the magazine's editorial independence, ensuring it was more "the press" than public relations. Even when the denomination decided in 2005 to send the magazine to every household in the CRC, synod chose to keep it a journalistic ministry rather than turn it into a denominational newsletter. Why? Because journalism matters.

At its best, journalism serves a community by being a mirror and a forum. As a mirror, *The Banner* brings news of significant and interesting happenings from the congregational, classical, and denominational levels. Through this news, both good and bad, we get to see our collective selves. We celebrate our shared achievements and identify our shortcomings for improvement. By being as truthful as possible, this mirroring also fosters accountability among us all, from the individual church member to the highest denominational leader.

By reflecting our collective stories and opinions, this mirror also fosters connections and unity. A reader from New Jersey can rejoice at a California church's good news. We recognize each other in the mirror despite our differences. We increasingly recognize shared values, shared ideas, and shared stories.

As a forum, *The Banner* creates a space for us to collectively work through our differences—ideally in a civil and loving manner. Good opinion journalism shares credible ideas and insights to help readers further think through social issues and problems. *The Banner* offers thought-provoking articles from a variety of perspectives in order to foster conversations and dialogues among readers and congregations on issues that affect our

collective spiritual and denominational lives. This forum allows us to learn from each other.


The variety of perspectives is important because none of us has a monopoly on God's truth. As limited creatures, each of us suffers from intellectual and theological blind spots. Missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin once wrote: "All reading of the Bible and all our Christian discipleship are necessarily shaped by the cultures which have formed us. . . . The only way in which the gospel can challenge our culturally conditioned interpretation of it is through the witness of those who read the Bible with minds shaped by other cultures. We have to listen to others. The mutual correction is sometimes unwelcome, but it is necessary and it is fruitful" (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 196-197).

This need to listen to Christians from different cultures applies also to listening to Christians from various perspectives. We can mutually correct each other's blind spots, helping each other to grow spiritually even if it might be emotionally unwelcome.

To fulfill these journalistic goals, Synod 1998 ensured *The Banner's* editorial freedom, including the freedom to publish views that "may be unacceptable to others in the church" (*Acts of Synod 1998*). Of course, such freedom is always moderated by our commitment to Scripture and the confessions, and by our accountability.

I would be the first to admit that we at *The Banner* are not without mistakes; we have not always fulfilled our role perfectly. Our mirror might need some extra polishing; our forum could perhaps use more variety. Like everyone else, we have our own blind spots and our own biases. We try to mitigate them.

But we will always strive, to the best of our abilities, to be faithful to our calling.

Synod believes that a journalistic *Banner* matters for the CRCNA's health. I too believe in that vision. I would love to hear from you, our readers, how that might matter for you as well. 



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

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at TheBanner.org.



REPLY ALL

Prophetic Witness

I was excited when I began to read your editorial “Prophetic Witness in Turbulent Times” (Jan. 2018). At first it seemed that you were stepping out of the CRC comfort zone to deal with a variety of issues. But speaking against abortion can hardly be safer in our circles.

There are plenty of other issues that affect everyone, including Christians, but they seem to be meticulously avoided. I believe that if a woman was pregnant and bearing the fetus to full term would almost certainly kill her, you would agree abortion would be justified. The point is that there are exceptions, and to deal with it in absolute terms is totalitarian. Please revisit the subject—and many others.

» Jake Terpstra // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Much appreciated your editorial “Prophetic Witness in Turbulent Times,” especially the closing suggestion “we must establish and support Christian organizations that provide counseling and support to women facing unexpected pregnancies.” I serve on the board of just such a proactive organization: Beginnings Family Services, a Christian adoption and counseling agency in Hamilton, Ont., with three care centers in Woodstock, Guelph, and Northumberland.

Last year we achieved 20 open adoptions, counseled and supported hundreds of clients, and were privileged to be at the forefront of an embryo adoption program. It is our objective to show the love of Christ by building strong families. Indeed, prophetic witness in turbulent times.

» Herman Praamsma // Brampton, Ont.

I wish to take the discussion on abortion and how Christians could respond to another level (“Prophetic Witness in Turbulent Times”). I am a volunteer at a hospice. From time to time I find out a patient has died according to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID), a Canadian practice.

A Christian friend of mine who has been experiencing tremendous pain for a few years said to me, “You do not know what it’s like. I need the comfort of knowing this can end.” I have not experienced such pain. But to rework your last paragraph, I might say, “Out of our hope in Christ, we can offer comfort to those whose lives have been affected by intense pain. Am I a victim? Why am I put in such a situation where I feel God would allow me to end my life on my terms? What support is available to help me through this what seems like interminable misery of living? Those who are partners in health can’t stand by and protest, withdraw, or condemn. In what ways can we show prophetic witness?”

I am looking to the church to help me analyze the future on this issue.

» Mike Hoyer // New Westminster, B.C.

Clergy Couples

My parents were a couple that ministered together back in the day when the pastor was assisted and supported by his wife (“Clergy Couples: A Small but Growing Part of the CRC,” Jan. 2018). There was no church secretary or ministry team to lead the congregation.

My mother taught catechism classes, led women’s groups, and taught Bible study groups in her role as “helpmeet” with my dad to lead the congregation in their spiritual growth.

Mom and Dad were both Calvin grads, she in teaching and he from the seminary. They were one of many “clergy couples” of that era. They were successful and well loved in the churches they served.

» Ruth Veltman Ruiters // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Revamped Banner

Something I’ve noticed about *The Banner*, aside from the beautiful new design (Jan. 2018), is that the articles are written mostly by people in the CRC. But the covers and illustrations are often stock footage or by artists outside the CRC. I attend Church of the Servant (Grand Rapids, Mich.), and within just our congregation, I can think of many artists and photographers whose work could grace the cover.

If this is true of our congregation, how many other folks in the CRC are making art that could be used? I wish those who choose the covers and art for *The Banner* would cast a net within our denomination to affirm the work being done by artists and photographers in our midst and list a credit for their work.

» Virginia Wieringa // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Pleased to read the *Banner’s* well-structured format with a clear front cover page and bold lettering. Also the contents page that draws our attention to what we should focus on. . . . I appreciate the well-ordered arrangements of items throughout the magazine with diverse news items. I like to see articles not exceeding much over 500 words. Also [in favor of] deleting Punch Lines.

» George Lieuwen // Langley, B.C.

Here are my comments about the new *Banner*:

I find the type harder to read. I miss the “funny page.” Was that not well liked? Under “Big Questions, Relationships”: Yes, there are many self-help options available, but sometimes counseling is necessary, and it is expensive. There was no solution offered to this dilemma.

» Carolyn Vrieling // Salmon Arm, B.C.

Ny Ly

A wonderful story, wonderfully told (“Ny Ly: ‘Life Is All the Proof I Need,’” Dec. 2017). Amazing—just amazing. Thanks, Jim [Schaap].

» Eric Van Dyken // online comment

Gentiles and Grace

While I appreciate Matthew Tuininga’s attempt to demonstrate the reality of

grace for homosexual Christians (“Gentiles, Homosexuals, and Grace in the Body of Christ,” Dec. 2017), he seems to suggest that the fruit of grace for homosexual Christians is “repentance.”

In the 1960s I was privileged to work as a clinical social worker with struggling Christian homosexuals who were requesting help in hopes that they could become heterosexual. These young people had not made a decision to be homosexual. As a committed Christian I concluded I had no choice but to help them accept who they were and to find meaning and purpose in their Christian life.

My prayer is that we may find as a church an openness to welcoming gay and lesbian Christians into our faith community while blessing them and accepting them as fellow believers.

» Dick Houskamp // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Strength of Networking

Thank you for your good and godly work each month. I was a little disheartened to read the following in “Strength of Networking” (Together Doing More, Dec. 2017): “Despite the diversity of those in the room, the consensus at the end of the evening was that it was good to be together.” I would hope that diversity would soon be the reason that people agree that it was good to be together, and/or that reporting would not set diversity against the goodness of togetherness. I was at this event, and I didn’t feel like diversity was an obstacle we had to overcome! Meant with good cheer.

» Dave Vroege // Halifax, N.S.

READ MORE ONLINE

Correction from CRC Communications

On page 25 of Our Shared Ministry (Feb. 2018), a photo of Rev. Dr. William Stroo was incorrectly identified as chaplain Rev. Al Schipper. Rev. Stroo also serves as a chaplain to people in crisis. We apologize for the error.

Blessings All Mine, with Ten Thousand Beside

LIKE MANY, FOR YEARS I thought that God’s blessings included mostly things that he gave, such as happiness, health, and employment, along with physical healing and success in worthwhile pursuits. God deserves thanks for all of these, but we must admit that his gifts go well beyond what our eyes or minds ever notice. Those other blessings are easy to miss, yet they give daily evidences of God’s enduring love for us.

Those blessings are found not only in what God provides but also in what he prevents. Recently I saw a picture of our safely parked van taken on a trip out west by our family of six. We traveled over 7,000 miles without accident or breakdown, thereby demonstrating that God prevented any harm to my most precious earthly possession—my family—the entire way. Years later he saved me from a fatal heart attack by allowing it to happen near an emergency room. Those are just two of the big things in my life, but most of God’s “prevention” blessings happen every day in ways we may never comprehend.

A friend once said that she didn’t get upset by an unexpected delay that kept her from leaving home as planned. She said it might have been God’s way of keeping her from going through an intersection just as another car ran a stop sign, thereby saving her life. We can’t be certain of that, but God foresees the future and guards us against many tragedies that we never realize are waiting. God repeatedly prevents potential front-tire blowouts on two-lane roads and keeps our body chemistry from going haywire every millisecond of every

day. We need not live in fear, but rather in confidence, because God continually demonstrates his love in countless unseen ways—whether we acknowledge them or not.

God blesses by prevention in visible ways as well. After illness, we thank God for restored health, remembering that for most of us, he prevents far more often than he cures diseases. For those with chronic conditions, he provides love and care in ways only they can truly appreciate.

Through God’s restraint, storms are only sometimes destructive. Unfulfilled dreams are possibly nightmares in disguise. Broken romances are still less damaging than broken marriages. Life-extending medicines and methods given by God have lengthened lifespans.

A little reflection should easily demonstrate that our “guardian angels” have been on duty nonstop, usually without credit or notice except from God.

God blesses not only by what he gives but also by what he prevents. When we cultivate that awareness, our thankfulness for “blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside” can have an even richer meaning. **B**



Michael DuMez is a retired Christian-school science teacher and a member of the Oostburg Christian Reformed Church of Oostburg, Wis.



Everyone Welcome

by Barbara J. Newman

Grace Church wants to be known as a welcoming place for all who enter. The words “Everyone Welcome” are prominently featured on the congregation’s website, bulletin, and entryways.

Let’s check in with some of the worshipers and experience that welcome together.

Worship begins as the worship leader steps up to the microphone and says, “Welcome! Everybody stand up and let’s join our voices. . . .”

The elders have prepared the elements for the Lord’s Supper. Small juice cups and bread cubes are stacked and ready.

During Sunday school, the worship leader needs no amplification as he

loudly greets the children and invites them to “sing louder.”

The youth group leader prepares for the popular annual treasure hunt by dividing kids into groups.

After the service, the adult small group is ready to meet. They’ve been asked to read a chapter and write their answers to a set of questions in the book they’re discussing.

But has anyone noticed the small print on those “Everyone Welcome” signs?

Amy is a wheelchair user who cringes at the opening words of the worship leader. The service has just started and already she is excluded from the conversation with God. She longs to hear the words “Please rise in body or in spirit.” Now *that* she could do!

Carlos is eager to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. He checked the bulletin and listened carefully, but there is no gluten-free option. Sadly, he passes the bread to the next person. John is excluded too. The arthritis in his hands makes it impossible to grab and hold such small items.

The Johnson family was taken aback when they dropped Tucker off for Sunday school. Not every child likes the volume turned way up. In fact, loud noise is painful to their son. Tucker beat his parents back to the car.

Courtney had been looking forward to the treasure hunt. This would be her first time participating in youth group. The leaders had prepared for everything except for welcoming someone with Down syndrome. “Sorry, we don’t have anything here for your daughter”

were the last words Courtney and her parents heard as they left the room.

Gustav has only been in the United States for a year. English is his second language. He would love the fellowship of an adult small group but wishes there would be an option that did not require so much reading and writing. He longs for the chance to build relationships.

Henry is experiencing the beginning stages of dementia. Words are getting harder to use. He wishes there were a different way of engaging in Bible study and fellowship.

Is everyone really welcome here? Amy, Carlos, John, Tucker, Courtney, Gustav, and Henry wonder if they have missed some sort of small print on the back of that welcome sign. Each has felt excluded from the welcome for various reasons.

So what can Grace Church do to make sure no one is excluded from their welcome?

Adjust the Vision

Expect persons of varied abilities. Persons with disabilities make up a large chunk of any congregation. These folks may include infants with spina bifida, toddlers with Down syndrome, elementary-aged children with attention deficit or a learning disability, young people with autism spectrum disorder, adults with bipolar disorder, and seniors with limited vision, hearing, or mobility. When you also consider those with athletic injuries or other medical situations, people from other countries, and individual preferences, learning to become more welcoming with persons of varied abilities and disabilities will likely impact most members of your congregation.

Look for the gifts each person brings to the community. Understand that everyone is gifted by God to enhance and grow the congregation. It was not simply the individuals mentioned above who lost out at Grace Church that day. Gustav would have brought a

whole new dimension to the adult small group. Courtney would influence her peers in youth group and help them grow. Tucker has gifts to share in Sunday school.

Use Elements of Universal Design

Architects had a great idea: Don't wait until someone needs an elevator before installing one. Instead plan for an elevator in multi-level buildings, expecting that someone will need it.


Churches can follow this same principle. Don't wait for that person to show up before making some changes. Build times of worship, education, fellowship, and service, expecting persons of varied abilities to attend. Here are some things a congregation could do:

- » Install a hearing loop in your sanctuary.
- » Provide large-print versions of bulletins and other reading materials.
- » Train worship leaders to invite people to "rise in body or in spirit."
- » Equip leaders and volunteers to welcome persons of varied abilities and disabilities.
- » Stock children's areas with fidget pencils, a weighted lap pad, a set of noise-canceling headphones, and a "wobble cushion" for those who need them. Set some of these items out so parents can see at a glance that their child is anticipated and welcomed.
- » Offer a gluten-free bread option for the Lord's Supper.
- » Recognize that most people do not learn and remember with a "words only" approach. A beautiful example of a multisensory experience in our worship is the reminder we often hear before partaking of the Lord's Supper: "Do this and remember me." The Lord's Supper is something we see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. How can we follow this example as we prepare messages and teachings for one another?
- » Set up websites to give a virtual tour of the church facility and activities.

- » Place sermon notes, PowerPoints, and bulletins on the website so they can be pulled up on individual devices or printed on a Braille printer according to the vision needs of members.
- » Offer an adult education option designed to welcome adults of varied abilities (see www.together-smallgroups.org).

While universal design will certainly erase most of the "small print" on the welcome sign, it's also important to have a process in place to respond to the unique gifts and needs of individuals. Maria, for example, may have a communication device that could be programmed to allow her to better participate in church settings. Members of the congregation may need to be trained on how her wheelchair works and how she can safely eat at the Wednesday-night potluck. Be ready to get to know specific individuals and put together a plan so each one can be included.

To become a truly welcoming community, Grace Church needed to adjust its vision as well as discover and implement the principles of universal design. Now their welcome sign contains only the words "EVERYONE WELCOME." There is no small print.

What about your congregation? What does your welcome sign look like? 



Barbara J. Newman is the director of church services for CLC Network. She is a special-education teacher, author, and speaker and attends Watermark Church in Grand Haven, Mich.

1. Do any of the examples of Grace Church's Sunday morning practices reflect those of your own church?
2. How many people in your church currently do you know that may have special needs or require special accommodations? Are your...

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BIG QUESTIONS

Ethics

In light of recent tragic church shootings, should churches consider having members carry concealed weapons to church?

Practically, I strongly counsel churches to first consult law enforcement for expert advice and training before making any such decisions. For instance, Classis Muskegon in Michigan had a police chief train them in civilian response to active shooter events. Law enforcement experts can help churches create safety protocols and prevention procedures.

Theologically, I need to warn churches away from our culture's faith in guns and violence for protection and security. A recent Pew survey reported that two-thirds of American gun owners cite protection as the major reason they own guns.

A classic pattern of idolatry is evident when we rely on the idol for solutions to its own problems. For instance, when dealing with social problems caused by technology, our culture often resorts to more or improved technology rather than to lifestyle changes that may use less technology. Let us beware of falling into a similar idolatry with guns.

When Old Testament Israel was facing a pending war with Assyria, they were tempted to rely on their ally Egypt's military might for deliverance. But the prophet Isaiah admonished them: "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and



in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD" (Isa. 31:1). If we rely on having more potential shooters as the solution to active shooters, we need to seriously examine our hearts to ensure we have not misplaced our faith.

This does not mean Christians must never resort to violence. If we apply Christian just war theory correctly, we require both just causes for violence and just means of violence to use that last resort.

Only after spiritually examining their hearts and after consulting with law enforcement authorities can local churches arrive at informed decisions with spiritual integrity on this question.

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

Missional Living

I have never discipled anyone. How do I get started?

I understand your fear. Your church appears to be attracting unchurched people. The leadership has observed your love for lost people. That's great! Here are some steps you can take.

First, invite the person over for dinner or meet for coffee. Most unchurched people prefer to meet in coffee shops or other relaxed venues for conversation. You do not have to do the talking; you just do the listening. Author Eugene Peterson once said, "People's stories must be listened out of them." Pay attention the person's story of grace, pain, struggle, and ordinary life. Most people have heart questions about God, Christ, and the Bible, but your prayerful attentiveness is probably the first step in discipling someone who is unfamiliar with Christ.

Second, find other people to support you and give advice. No one becomes a Christian by oneself. No one discipled people by oneself. Gather people to pray for you as you walk alongside the person. Don't hesitate to relay any questions needing clarification or advice. Author Tod Bolsinger rightly suggests in his book *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian* that "real godly change—real sanctification—requires people to live together in covenantal relationships." You are beginning to take your friend down the road of life under the conditions of Jesus' grace and love.

Third, find time to read Scripture and pray together. Introduce God's Word as a relational journey with the amazing trio of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Also, tell your own story of God's work in your life. I imagine it is a good one.

Finally, invite this person into your life. Being a Christian is not an additional duty or task. It is allowing people to see your real life in action with your spouse, your children, your work, and your plain old living. May the Lord be with you, my friend.

Reginald Smith is director of race relations and social justice for the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Faith Formation

Our children are at the age where they're staying in the worship service instead of going to children's worship. Much of the service, though, including sermons, is way over their heads. How can we help them stay engaged?

In their efforts to create meaningful worship services, worship planners sometimes overlook the needs of children. In addition, parents often feel pressure to keep children still and quiet in worship. But we want children to engage so that they aren't just learning to be still and quiet but are full, active, and conscious participants.

Preparation for worship can begin at home. Read the Bible passage the pastor will be preaching on and guess what the pastor might say. Talk about what words you could listen for. Ask your child to squeeze your hand when they hear those words. Create and design your own offering envelopes, insert the children's offering, and bring them to church to put in the offering plate.

In the worship service, sit near the front so the children can see what is

going on. Be a "church whisperer," talking quietly with your children to help them identify what is happening in the service. During the congregational prayer, ask your child to write or draw one or two people or events that are prayed for. After church, talk about those people or events and use them to guide your family prayer during the coming week. Divide a sheet of paper into four sections and ask your child to draw something they see and hear during the sermon in each part. After church, talk about it together.

Worship planners can help by using repetition. Sentences that are repeated each week are predictable and encourage participation by people of all ages. Using language that is known only to those who have been in church for years can be like a code that children have to unlock. When a term or phrase in worship may be unfamiliar, the leader can restate it in simpler words to make sure everyone understands.

You can download more ideas in "Ten Ways to Engage Kids in Worship" at crcna.org/FaithFormation.

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries and director of children's ministries at 14th St. CRC in Holland, Mich.

Robert J. Keeley is professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Relationships

How can I keep myself from becoming too busy and burning out?

If we feel good only when we are working and become restless when we are just being with family, friends, or ourselves, then we are out of balance. If, on the other hand, we enjoy "just being" but see work as nothing more than a chore to avoid or to finish as quickly as possible, then too we are out of balance. It is only when we derive a sense of purpose in our work—both paid and volunteer—that our personal sense of self is positively

affirmed. But in equal measure our experience of leisure pursuits, both alone and with others, should affirm our sense of self and thereby renew our energy for the work awaiting us.

Life balance happens when our identity is well established, our work life is meaningful, and we feel comfortable about who we are in relation to God, others, and ourselves. There are other factors that affect our life balance, such as age, health, or various disorders such as depression or chronic pain. There are also areas not under our control that have to do with the life circumstances of those we love and/or live with.

But to the degree that it can depend on us, we can change if we are motivated. Still, habits die hard, and change requires discipline. It helps to seek change along with others who can encourage us and hold us accountable.

Our sense of well-being, experienced through who we are and what we do, can be affirmed only if we feel secure. Feeling secure is not dependent on our status in life, our finances, our health, our age, or our looks. We instinctively know that any of these things cannot guarantee lasting security. Looks and status fade with age, finances shift with market fluctuations, and health can turn on a dime. The only lasting sense of security comes when we trust not only that God is in charge, but that in love God also desires our best. When our trust in God's love transcends our experience, our sense of security is a gift that can undergird the life balance we seek.

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



Alberta Family Celebrates a Life by Giving Back in Thankfulness

NEWS

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Carolyn and Adrian Aarnoutse and their children are members of West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta. In their household, birthday parties are usually “over the top,” filled with family fun and birthday cake. This year, one birthday celebration was different. Six months ago, their fifth child, Willem, died from SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). On January 10, what would have been his first birthday, Carolyn, Adrian, and their other four children decided to honor Willem’s memory in a unique way. Out of thankfulness for all the support and prayers they received around the time of his death, they spent the day lovingly reaching out to others, including the staff at two city hospitals and other families walking in the shoes they had previously walked in.

“[They] surely celebrated Willem’s birthday, not as usual, but as one of



sharing, loving, and of giving of themselves on that day,” said Matt Schoonderwoerd, Willem’s grandfather and also a member of West End CRC.

The Aarnoutses began the day by going to the maternity ward of Royal Alexandra

Microgrants Extend Church’s Outreach to Members’ Neighborhoods

The evangelism committee at Ocean View Christian Reformed Church in Norfolk, Va., wanted to put funds earmarked for outreach to good use. They opted to use the funds in small allotments—\$50 at a time—toward projects proposed by church members.

Called “If I Had \$50,” the program invited church members to bless their neighbors in some way. The desire was to help stimulate the congregation to think about evangelism.

Applications came from varied corners of the congregation.

Two young sisters came up with the idea of having ‘Love2Go’ bags with food, water, and tracts they could give to people experiencing homelessness at major intersections. Another member bought a grocery card for a neighbor experiencing

hard times. Another member bought gift cards from a coffee shop in his neighborhood and handed them out to the neighbors on his block, telling them it was a gift from the church.

The microgrants were awarded in January and February 2017. Hannah Gross, 10, and her sister Veronica, 9, carried out their project in April. They shopped for backpacks at a local thrift store and filled them with useful necessities. “We put in things you would need like toothbrushes and water, snacks, shirts, sunglasses, and shoes,” Hannah explained. Veronica shared how she saw God’s love received. “An older man started to look in the bag as he was going away and he found the Bible and turned back and held it up. That’s the part of the story that I really like,” she said. The girls’ father, David Gross, a deacon at Ocean



Veronica (l) and Hannah Gross with items for their Love2Go bags.

View CRC, helped them come up with the idea. They wanted to reach out to people living on the street because of volunteer work they do at a shelter through their home school association.

Ocean View CRC’s evangelism committee was inspired to create the microgrants by previous projects at Sherman Street Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, Mich., and at LaSalle Street Church in Chicago.

— Alissa Vernon

South Dakota Ministry Trains Immigrants for Pastoral Work

In Sioux Falls, S.D., New Roots Ministry offers pastors and ministry leaders who have come to the U.S. as immigrants training sessions to better minister to their communities. The evening sessions of Timothy Leadership Training have been helpful to newcomers like Ernesto Alfaro who also work full time.

“New Roots Ministry is very, very good and excellent. It doesn’t matter your background, it gives you the skills to spread the gospel and talk to others about the Lord—getting people to learn more,” said Alfaro.

Alfaro learned about the pastoral training opportunity at Palabra Viva church in Sioux Falls, where he has served as an English-Spanish translator since 2001.

New Roots, which was founded in 2007, is valuable in a city like Sioux Falls where there are residents from at least 101 countries and regions, and where 137 languages and dialects are spoken (2014 data from the Sioux Falls Multicultural Center). The ministry was developed as a bridge between incoming immigrants and established Christian communities. New Roots is partially supported by regional ministry shares through Classis Iakota of the Christian Reformed Church.

“Most of [the participants] have been African—South Sudanese, Ethiopian, Congolese . . . and Bhutanese, Rwandan, Nepalese, and Hispanic. We can offer materials in other languages, but most of them do this in English,” said Fred Wilgenburg, director of New Roots.

After completing their training, many of these leaders continue working in their churches, communities, or nonprofits. Some bring the gospel back to their home countries.

“I am looking forward to teaching in the church—Sunday school, preaching, and working with New Roots Ministry outreach in spreading the gospel to commercial dairy farms,” said Alfaro.

New Roots Ministry trains at least five pastors during the season. Some participants use the training to become chaplains to day laborers on nearby farms. Other programs offered by New Roots include seminars on how to run nonprofit organizations, as well as All Nations City Church—a group of more than 100 people from different backgrounds who meet a few times during the year to worship together.

—Kristin Schmitt



Aarnoutse family at Stollery Children’s Hospital with toys to deliver in honor of Willem.

Hospital, where Willem was born, bringing Dutch pastries for the staff and delivering 20 bags filled with items for new mothers.

In the afternoon they went to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Stollery Children’s Hospital, where Willem spent the last three days of his life. They delivered toys that Carolyn had spent months obtaining as donations, treats, and care packages for parents suddenly stuck at the hospital with little time to prepare. The staff at both hospitals were overwhelmed, amazed, and very emotional that a bereaved family would take the time to do this. At Willem’s funeral, the couple had said, “We are so thankful to the staff at the Stollery Hospital. Their strength and care astounded us constantly, knowing that they have to deal with sick and dying kids and their hurting families every day, when we only had to cope with our situation for three days. We admire the fact that they can still be so caring and loving in a such a sad place.”

—Janet Greidanus



New Roots Ministry

Ernesto Alfaro (left) with two other participants of the Timothy Leadership Training with New Roots Ministry.

Youth Ministry Champions Gather at Retreat



Koen Beugelink, a youth ministry champion from Classis BC SouthEast, leads an icebreaker exercise.

“Youth ministry champions” from across North America met January 16-18 in Ancaster, Ont., for a retreat hosted by the Christian Reformed Church’s Faith Formation Ministries (FFM). It was a time of building relationships, refueling, and realizing the value of networking with other dedicated and passionate youth leaders.

The youth ministry champion model was first developed in Canada. FFM formed and fostered a network of youth ministry workers appointed to each CRC region (classis) to be a voice for youth leaders at their respective classes and to encourage youth leaders within their regions. FFM has expanded the model to the U.S. and now oversees the North American network. This was the first binational retreat.

The 23 participants shared ideas, program options, and philosophies to help strengthen their individual youth ministries. One prevalent theme was the importance of building relationships with youth so that they feel a sense of

belonging and are fully integrated into the body of Christ.

“Youth need to be a part of the bigger church community,” said Ashley Patton, a champion from Classis BC North-West. “It is my hope and prayer that when youth graduate from high school, they don’t ‘graduate’ from church as well.”

Along with building relationships with youth, the regional champions also explored the importance of building each other up as leaders, both on a denominational level and in their specific regions.

“There was a strong sense of unity and a strong sense of vision—working for a strong intergenerational church in which youth can flourish, building networks in our regions, supporting one another, and making a difference,” said Syd Hielema, team leader with FFM and one of the retreat organizers.

Mario Perez, a champion from Classis Southern California and Greater Los Angeles, pointed out how many youth leaders experience burnout. “One thing that I will take away is the importance of creating opportunities for our youth leaders to rest, refuel, and serve the calling God has in their life,” said Perez.

“We don’t all do things the same way, but we care about supporting, encouraging, and equipping each other to do the best ministry we can in our context,” explained Brendan Stevens, a champion from Classis Lake Erie. “That’s why these retreats are simultaneously so important and such a blessing.”

The retreat was held at Mount Mary Retreat Center, a conference center situated on over 100 acres of gardens, woodland, and trails that serves as a place of spiritual renewal.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Back to God on the Move; Building Sold to Trinity Christian College

The property at 6555 West College Drive in Palos Heights, Ill., home to the media outreach ministry of the Christian Reformed Church for more than 40 years, was sold to adjacent Trinity Christian College in December. The sale is part of the relocation of Back to God Ministries International to the CRC denominational offices in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Approved by the BTGMI board last February, the move got underway in June 2017, with two staff members relocating and new hires beginning work in the Grand Rapids offices. The transition wraps up this month.

“The BTGMI offices in Palos Heights are scheduled to close Friday, March 2, 2018. After that date, we’ll finish moving equipment and tidying up before transferring ownership of the property to Trinity Christian College on April 2,” said Kurt Selles, director of BTGMI. The



Archival photo circa. late 1970s.

original decision to initiate the move came after a year-and-a-half study concluding that it would be the right step for the ministry’s strategic plan. “Moving the ministry to the CRC headquarters will help us achieve our stated goal of integrating our outreach with the efforts of our sister ministries,” Selles said.

The flagship radio program *The Back to God Hour* and television programs such as *Faith*

20 and *Primary Focus*, as well as other programs in six languages, were created in the Palos Heights recording and editing studios. Today most indigenous language programming is created in the countries where those languages are predominant.

In addition to BTGMI offices now in Grand Rapids, North American staff of the ministry work from the CRC denominational office in Burlington, Ont., and from remote offices in Texas, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana. Contributors to the ministry include 186 international staff members in 24 countries around the world.

The purchase price for the property has not been disclosed. A large part of the balance of the proceeds will be designated for specific BTGMI outreach projects. “The COD (Council of Delegates) subcommittee will help make the final decisions regarding the use of these funds in ways that reflect the legacy of the ministries previously launched from that building,” Selles said.

Rick Riddering, vice president for enrollment at Trinity, said the college and its board feel extremely blessed with the additional space it provides for improved student services and educational programming.

—Alissa Vernon

Michigan Church Gives Warm Welcome on Ice

Thanks to a newly installed community ice skating rink, Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, Mich., is now a hot spot for cold-weather recreation.

The project was jumpstarted by a \$2,000 Mission Initiative Fund Grant from the Classis Zeeland Evangelism Team. The church contributed over \$4,000 in additional funds toward the completion of the project.

Daniel Kinnas, pastor at Bethel, came up with the idea for a rink during the church’s participation in Calvin Theological Seminary’s Church Renewal Lab program.

“Last year I was thinking of ways we could use our property during the winter to connect with our community. We have several things we do during the summer, including a community playground on our lot, but we didn’t have anything during the winter,” Kinnas said. “We thought this might be something our community would be interested in and through which we could bless and get to know our neighbors.”

Dan De Haan, a member at Bethel, found a 70 x 32 ft. (roughly 21 x 9.5 m) commercial rink for the church and installed it with his son and some church neighbors.

Despite unseasonably warm temperatures and only word-of-mouth advertising, the rink has had good traffic in its inaugural season. “It is right out my window,” said Kinnas, “so I’ve been able to see several people using it. We’ve also



Susan Vanden Berg

Ella, 12, tries out Bethel’s new ice rink.

had several people call us to ask about it, so I know the interest level is there.”

The church has collected used skates for people to borrow if they don’t have their own, and a portable canvas garage has been set up to shelter people while they lace up. Broomball games or hot chocolate days are future possibilities for what the church hopes will be many seasons with the rink.

—Susan Vanden Berg



Fanshawe students (Woodstock campus) prepare meals at a Collective Kitchen in Maranatha CRC in Woodstock, Ont.

Collective Kitchen Stretches Food Dollars, Builds Community

Once a month on a Tuesday night at Good News Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in London, Ont., 10 people come together to chop vegetables, brown meat, and stir up sauces. Each of them takes home 25 single-serving, freezer-ready meals. But in the Collective Kitchen, the community is just as important as the meals prepared.

“Our main goal is to provide community,” said Rev. Kelly Sibthorpe, a CRC chaplain at nearby Fanshawe College and co-organizer of the program, now in its sixth year. Participants work with eight to 10 church volunteers, share a meal halfway through the evening, and give thanks to God for

food and friends. “There’s a lot happening during the time that we sit and talk and cut and wash and slice. . . . That’s a really important part of the program,” noted Ruth Jongejan, the other co-organizer.

The program started as a way to serve “second career” students at Fanshawe. “After the recession of 2008, about 3,000 people lost their jobs in the London area, and many ended up at Fanshawe College for retraining,” Sibthorpe said. On tight budgets and focused on their studies, they often didn’t join the social life of the college. Seeing a need for community and food, Sibthorpe started the Collective Kitchen.

Church Hosts CPR Training Inspired by Experience

Louise Van Anandel knows the value of CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) firsthand: she would not be alive today if passersby hadn’t administered it to her when she suffered cardiac arrest while overseas last summer.

Van Anandel was visiting her mother in the Netherlands for a week in June 2017. One morning, while bicycling to the nursing home where her mother lived, she collapsed. She has no memory of what happened but later learned that a woman driving by noticed Van Anandel lying on the bike path and called for help while lifting the bicycle off of Van Anandel. Her skin was already gray.

Three other people stopped, checked her vital signs, and began CPR. Almost eight minutes later, paramedics arrived, took over CPR, and used the AED (defibrillator) twice to shock her heart back into a steady rhythm.

When she was reunited with her family members in Canada two weeks later, their gratitude for the help of the strangers who saved Van Anandel’s life quickly sparked an idea, which then became an action plan.

Van Anandel’s sister-in-law, Jennie Roubos, decided to organize a couple of training sessions in CPR and AED to help raise awareness among the public about these life-saving skills. The first session took place on January 17 at Palmerston Christian Reformed Church, where Van Anandel and Roubos are both members.

“We had a successful first day running the course,” said Van Anandel. “It was well received by people who took it—not because they had to but because they wanted to.”

The church has held three sessions to date, adding the last after registration for the first two events maxed out.

—Anita Brinkman



Jennie Roubos checks the placement of the pads for the AED during a training session.

Participants pay \$25 (CDN) for their 25 meals; the cooking takes about three-and-a-half hours of their time.

While they have always met at Good News Church, the core group has changed as students graduated and the need shifted. "There's a big need in east London, particularly among single mothers on very strict fixed incomes, so we began to reach out to the community," said Sibthorpe.

The program now offers childcare to make it easier for single mothers to participate.

Between the \$25 participant fees and some food donations of garden produce or the occasional turkey, the program budget is sustainable and set to run longterm.

"We love it. Our volunteers love it. I would encourage [this for] any church that is looking to reach out into their community," said Sibthorpe.

In Woodstock, Ont., Sibthorpe oversees a separate Collective Kitchen for students of that city's campus of Fanshawe College. With support from volunteers at Covenant CRC, the group meets monthly at Maranatha CRC.

—Anita Brinkman

Things to consider for churches interested in starting a collective kitchen:

- » Menu planning: nutritious, cost-efficient recipes adaptable for large amounts
- » Ingredients: buy in bulk and look for community connections
- » Group size: eight to 10 is perfect for meal prep and communitybuilding
- » Childcare
- » Workspace
- » Recruiting participants (colleges, community agencies)
- » Reach out to other churches with similar programs for help in getting started

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Jan Friend
1932-2017

With compassion and integrity, Jan Friend served God and his country as a U.S. Army chaplain for 30 years. He died peacefully on December 13 at age 85.

Friend sensed God's call to ministry while serving as a young enlisted man in the U.S. Army in Korea. He was drafted in 1952. After completing high school through correspondence and graduating from Calvin College and Seminary, he was ordained in 1962. At the end of the Vietnam War, he served in refugee camps. There he met Do Thi Nhi (now Linda) who returned home with him and became a foster daughter.

After retirement from the military in 1992, Friend did pastoral counseling in Denver, Colo., and Tacoma, Wash. With his great tenor voice, he sang in many choirs through the years. He and his wife, Lydia, volunteered with Disaster Relief Services; he also contributed thousands of hours to The Refuge, a nonprofit in Washington.

Friend leaves behind Lydia, his wife of 59 years, and three biological children, one foster daughter, their spouses, and 11 grandchildren. He was predeceased by a son, a grandson, and a grandson's wife.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Chaplain Colonel (Ret.)
Herman Keizer Jr.*
1938-2017

Herm Keizer was the most decorated military chaplain in the history of the Christian Reformed denomination. Still active on numerous projects, Keizer died suddenly on Dec. 22.

Keizer was ordained in 1968 and commissioned as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, where he served for 34 years, including 15 years in the Pentagon and two years at the State Department.

After retiring at the mandatory retirement age, he was immediately recalled and served until 2002. He then became director of CRC Chaplaincy Ministries until he retired again in 2009.

Keizer also received a distinguished service award from the American Association of Professional Chaplains and distinguished alumni awards from both Calvin College and Calvin Seminary. He enjoyed cooking, gardening, reading, and singing and was an inspirational storyteller. He was the current national chaplain for the Military Order of the Purple Heart for those, like himself, who received the medal for wounds suffered in combat.

Keizer is survived by Ardis, his wife of 53 years, and by two sons. Interment will take place at Arlington National Cemetery on May 23, 2018.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Illinois Church Streams Jazz-Gospel Messiah to Correctional Facilities

For the second consecutive year, Elmhurst (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church streamed the live performance of *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah* to correctional facilities across Illinois, Wisconsin, and Louisiana.

The congregation, which had an existing relationship with the Louisiana State Penitentiary through its prison ministry, wanted to share the annual Chicago event, which has run for 13 years at the city's Auditorium Theatre. "*Too Hot* puts a twist on George Frideric Handel's classic oratorio, infusing the music with jazz, gospel, rock, and blues," according to Broadway World Chicago. The performances are traditionally held on the weekend closest to Martin Luther King Jr. Day (third Monday in January) to honor and celebrate Dr. King's message of "beloved community."

Streaming sites included the Louisiana State facility in Angola; Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center in Wisconsin; and six adult and youth correctional facilities across Illinois. Kyle Olson, the church's technical director, was onsite at the Auditorium Theatre handling the secure livestream. The church also provided technical equipment and assistance at the correctional facilities.

The goal of streaming the event was to spread the joy of the Christian message and the arts to inmates, both locally and across the country. Elmhurst CRC provided printed programs with the oratorio's text. "They knew exactly what Scripture was being sung and what was up next," said Jim McMillen, a member of the church's prison ministry team. "They were really invested in the performance."

At several of the facilities, congregation members joined inmates and staff and



were able to connect in conversation during intermission, eat a meal together, or meet inmates' families. "It provides a setting for people who don't know each other well to sit down and have a conversation," added John Zeilstra, another prison ministry team member. "You have an entry point for a good discussion on life, on freedom, on God, on grace."

The church's prison ministry has extended beyond these two concerts and other streaming events, including their Christmas service. Approximately 20 church members meet quarterly with

teens at Cook County Juvenile Detention Center in Chicago to show support and care. "You take the crime away and [the inmate] is still a person just like you and me," McMillen said. "I feel like a lot of times we forget that and let a person's crime identify them."

What started as the simple idea to stream *Too Hot* has impacted the lives of more than 50 church volunteers and thousands of others: staff at the facilities, inmates, and their families. "That's the work of the Holy Spirit," Zeilstra concluded.

—Lori Dykstra

NOTEWORTHY

Langley (B.C.) Christian School's senior boys' and girls' teams brought home gold banners in British Columbia's provincial AA volleyball championships in December. Janae Bruinsma, a member of Trinity CRC in Abbotsford, received first all-star team recognition, and Corina Beimers, a member of Bridge Community CRC, was named the tournament's top libero (a defense specialist position).





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Learning to Become God's Diverse and Unified Family

by Danielle Steenwyk-Rowaan

Five Congregations Finding Their Way

“One of our small groups invited me out for lunch,” said Pastor Albert Chu, “and it hit me: There were people from Singapore, China, Indonesia, the Philippines around me. But we spoke in English. ‘It’s interesting that you all speak English together,’ I remarked. They laughed. ‘That’s the only language that we all share.’”

Chu is the lead pastor at The Tapestry, a multisite Christian Reformed church in greater Vancouver, B.C. “Our intent was to plant a church in the neighborhood *for* the neighborhood, so being multiracial has been part of our DNA from the beginning,” Chu said. “We’re about 60 percent Asian (including many different Asian nationalities) and 40 percent Anglo or multiracial.”

This multiethnic environment did not come about by happenstance, he said. “By default, people like to gather with people who are similar to them, so we’ve worked to intentionally mix it up in our small groups, our leadership . . . in every aspect of our life together. It means going against the grain a bit.”

There have been challenges along the way. All of The Tapestry’s programs are in English except for two Mandarin-language Bible studies. “We want people to be able to really engage with the Bible,” Chu said, “but we do think about whether this could end up segmenting people.”

Intentionality

The intentionality and attention to language barriers that are needed to nurture a diverse congregation are familiar to Pastor Emmett Harrison of Oakdale Park Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Starting three years ago, a Kinyarwandan congregation was planted as part of Oakdale. Kinyarwanda is a language spoken in Rwanda and neighboring countries; many members of the congregation came to the United States as refugees after the Rwandan genocide.

As the Kinyarwanda congregation has grown from 30 members to more than 220, those who attend the two services at Oakdale have been learning how to be more fully the body of Christ together.

Pastor Emmett Harrison and Pastor Masuruka “Claude” Ngendahayo of Oakdale Park Church pronounce a blessing over church members who are about to be baptized.

“We have joint services three or four times a year with simultaneous translation,” said Harrison. “We also encourage Kinyarwandan members to visit our English service and vice versa. We sit people with them to translate for them.”

Harrison is also mentoring a Kinyarwandan pastor seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church, and the Oakdale leadership team is working to raise up a whole team of Kinyarwandan leaders, from deacons to pastors.

Meanwhile, across the continent in Vancouver, Trixie Ling is considering forms of communication beyond the spoken word. Ling organizes a Wednesday-night community dinner at First CRC Vancouver.

“How can we find those universal languages that people can gather around?” she asked. “We build relationships and connect with our ethnically diverse neighborhood through food, music, art, and games.”

In order to cultivate a community that feels welcoming for people from the many ethnicities represented in her neighborhood, Ling is always on the lookout for new cooks.

“I try to invite people who will reflect the diversity of our community in the food they prepare, like a Fijian woman who cooked dinner and celebrated Diwali a while ago,” she said. “We try to use food as a way to celebrate and learn about other cultures.”

Hard Conversations

In Oakland, Calif., church planter Kyle Brooks says he’s had to learn some lessons the hard way about creating places of belonging.

“When we started out reading Scripture together as a small group, I was talking about the value of diversity, and a black member said, ‘I hear diversity as a really white word,’” Brooks recalled, explaining that this member pointed out that a mixture of skin tones was not enough to create true diversity.

“He said that if we live justly, our community will be diverse. It took courage for him to share that with the rest of us,” said Brooks. “He taught me that diversity has to be more than an aesthetic—it has to be less about the language and more about being racially just.”

Brooks is pastoring a church called Oakland Communion that is planning to merge with The Way, a local African-American church that shares their multicultural vision.

“I first met Pastor Bernard Emerson from The Way when we were part of a clergy cohort around racial justice,” Brooks said. “Our churches were started around the same time, we’re the same size, and we have the same vision. We realized that we could be doing this work that we both want to do so much better together.”

The two churches have been worshipping together every eight weeks for the past year, but Brooks said there have been plenty of false starts and mistakes along the way. “We’ve had to learn to say ‘I’m sorry’ and ‘I forgive you’ a lot.”

Brooks is white and makes his living as a suburban church planter. Emerson, an African American, grew up in Oakland, works four jobs, and doesn’t receive a salary from the church that he pastors. Despite their differences, “I experienced the love of Christ through [Emerson] before I even ‘earned’ anything,” said Brooks.

“Bernard says, ‘I’m committed to you, period.’ We’ve talked about the need to be honest with each other. When we say we’re brothers and sisters in Christ, we have to mean it.”

This commitment has enabled them to have hard conversations about how resources will be shared once their churches merge. Many black churches in Oakland don’t pay their pastors, said Brooks, and it’s a model that has enabled them to be resilient in both good and tough economic times. But Brooks comes from a church planting model in which pastors raise their support—and are paid.

“We’re learning from the models of churches like Pastor Bernard’s,” he said, “and we’re also trying to have honest conversations about how much we’re each paid and how much we’ll work.”

Diverse Leadership

Sebastian Maldonado of LOGOS campus ministry at York University in Toronto, Ont., emphasizes the importance of this balance in leadership as well. “From the beginning LOGOS has introduced itself as a diverse Christian community, and the fact that our leadership team reflects that has helped students identify with the group,” Maldonado said.

“Having diverse communities begins with having diverse leadership that is willing to share power and delegate responsibilities to others,” he adds. “Our leadership is made up of three Dutch Canadians, one Jamaican Canadian, one Chinese international student, one Filipino Canadian, and one Latin American Canadian.”

Pastor Albert Chu agrees. “Leadership must be diverse. It’s amazing when I get to work with a staff that’s diverse with respect to age, denominational background, and ethnic background,” Chu says, but it has to go beyond multiethnic leadership. “They have to value diversity.”

At First CRC of Vancouver, Ling encourages her church to dig deeper.

“Are we empowering visible minorities to serve in leadership roles?” she asked, pointing out that churches can’t just expect visible minorities to feel welcome to serve.

“Wouldn’t it be amazing if they just offered? If they felt that comfortable?”



Pastor Bernard Emerson (front left) of The Way and Kyle Brooks (behind Emerson) of Oakland Communion serve communion to their two congregations.

Justice

That equity and safety is something Ling says she strives for in her ministry. “It’s not just guests and volunteers—everyone is helping everyone else,” she said. “People experiencing homelessness come in and they’re serving. Food and stories bring people together. It balances out the power relationships of one-way giving.”

Marcy Emmelkamp has seen a change in herself as a result of this breakdown of ethnic and racial boundaries at Oakdale Park Church. “When those you worship with are the targets of inequality and injustice, the burden that persons of other ethnicities must cope with daily becomes your burden too. Knowing these things changes how you live, worship, and connect.”

Oakdale seeks to make practical differences in the lives of those facing social barriers in their congregation by offering English as a second language classes, college scholarships, companions for people working toward citizenship, and a housing ministry.


“We just celebrated our first home purchase right before Christmas,” said Pastor Harrison. “We’re looking at creative opportunities like these to help out and maybe develop a fund that anyone can pay into and allow others to make their down payments.”

A Deepened Understanding of God

Moldonado agrees that robust multiethnic community should provoke change. “Growing as a diverse community requires the embracing of a humility that allows its members to see the diversity of our churches not as an obstacle to overcome but as the ultimate goal.”

It’s not all hard conversations and hard work, though. Pastor Chu spoke about various celebrations called “Global

Banquets” that Tapestry sites have participated in over the years. One of these feasts celebrated the Lunar New Year and included performing the Chinese dragon dance during the worship service. When asked how he would respond to people who question if the dragon dance belongs in a worship service, he said, “We want to experience God in many diverse ways, so we want to receive what people bring, and much of that is culturally based.”

Worshiping with Kinyarwandan sisters and brothers “has been a tremendous gift and blessing,” said Harrison. “We’re one of the fastest-growing congregations in our classis. We didn’t look for that or see it coming, but God had plans for us.” 

Going Deeper

Here are some resources recommended by the CRC’s Office of Race Relations:

- » *Growing Pains: How Racial Struggles Changed a Church and School*. Author Chris Meehan explores the struggle to desegregate Timothy Christian School in the suburbs of Chicago, Ill. This book provides historical context and a case study.
- » *Antioch Worship Leadership (antiochpodcast.org)*. This podcast from Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids considers questions about the intersection of faith, worship, leadership, and race.
- » *God’s Diverse and Unified Family (crcna.org/sites/default/files/diversefamily.pdf)*. This synodical document provides an important foundation for a Christian Reformed understanding of race and racism.
- » *Truth’s Table (podasterynetwork.com/truths-table)*. This podcast features conversations between Christian African-American leaders Michelle Higgins, Christina Edmondson, and Ekemini Uwan. Their series focusing on multiethnic churches considers power dynamics within multiethnic congregations.

Helping Others Participate Fully in the Life of the Church

LAST FALL, Pastor Dave Vroege of All Nations CRC in Halifax, N.S., approached Disability Concerns for help. Hannah, a woman in his congregation, wanted to have her baby son baptized, but her anxiety about being in front of church made her hesitant. Disability Concerns gave Vroege several helpful suggestions about anxiety disorders and how he could accommodate Hannah’s needs in the service.

After the baptism, Vroege wrote, “Your suggestions were so helpful in equipping us for this baptism. We did a practice run and had the baptism in our evening service where there are far fewer people. It was a joy for Hannah, for her extended family, and for all of us there.”

About that same time, Brian, who has cerebral palsy, approached Vroege. Brian wanted to profess his faith publicly but was concerned about having to physically make his way to the front of the church. Based on Disability Concerns’ suggestion, Vroege told him, “That’s fine. I’ll come to you.”

At the service scheduled for Brian’s profession, Vroege made his way to where Brian was sitting. Vroege had to walk down the aisle on crutches, because he had recently injured his ankle. When he arrived at Brian’s seat, he asked Brian, “Who do you trust as your Lord and Savior?”

Brian replied, “Jesus.”

Next Vroege asked whether Brian would commit to following Jesus and to joining with his new siblings in Christ in ministry. Brian replied by saying yes over and over. Before that moment, Vroege had been wondering whether it was appropriate to ask Brian, “Will you participate fully in the life of the church?” He realized it was just right.

“In that moment, and with Brian’s shining eyes matching his confident ‘yes,’ I realized that Brian is fully a part of our congregation and that he already is participating as fully as he is able,” said Vroege.

Following this meaningful service, “more than one worshiper commented on how strangely fitting that Brian, who has cerebral palsy, was ministered to by a pastor on crutches,” said Vroege. “God works in mysterious ways.”



Pastor Dave Vroege considered a young mother’s anxiety and found a way to do a baptism service that made her comfortable.

—Mark Stephenson, *Disability Concerns*

The View from Here

Doing Ministry Together

If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

I DON'T RECALL the first time I heard this African proverb, but I often need its reminder. This proverb is also supported by Scripture. First Corinthians 12 reminds us that “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’”

In the preceding verses we’re given an important lesson:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

I struggle to follow these words of wisdom. Perhaps it’s because of my DNA or my North American upbringing but, left to my own devices, many times I’d rather go quickly and do it myself. And I’m not alone.

Working together is not usually the first preference for many of us—even in the church. Look at the rise of nondenominational, independent churches. Rather than being hampered by being part of a larger group, an independent church is free to zoom

forward quickly, not stopping to consider whether it needs other hands or feet.

Recall the congregational meetings you’ve attended where tough discussions result in local priorities being given financial increases while funding for denominational commitments is decreased.

These examples can rest upon seemingly valid justifications. Why would we want to wait around for a classis meeting or a synodical decision when we’re able to step right now into an opportunity before us? Why contribute to a broader ministry effort when the needs in our own community are so compelling?

My purpose is not to second-guess these decisions. I do not want to guilt any congregation into increasing its financial commitment to the denomination, nor do I want to suggest there’s not an urgency in sharing the gospel message—nearby or far away. Rather, my purpose is to remind us all of the importance of life in the body.

Do I have any evidence that we sometime forget?

Exhibit A. In the 500 years since the Reformation, the Protestant church has split and split and split. Today there are at least 140 denominations around the world that claim a Reformed or Presbyterian identity.

Exhibit B. At times congregations experiencing great blessings in membership and resources take small steps or one giant step away from denominational commitments. You can probably name a situation in your community.

Some attribute this trend to the rising generation of millennials who want to

be unattached to organized politics and religion and are distrustful of institutions. But in every generation we can identify occasions and situations where the desire to go solo—to not work together—is present.

The challenge for us today is being the body of Christ in our current contexts. Some of us are members of Facebook groups in which growth in Christ and his body are the goals. Others are finding places to be the body of Christ in unexpected places—city sidewalks, local breweries, or motorcycle groups.

My challenge to the Christian Reformed Church is for us to move together in order to be faithful to God’s call upon us as the body of Christ. I admit that moving deliberately together may require reminders to speed up, simplify structures, and create a nimble culture. Let’s be honest: We also need cues to stick together. *But as it is, God arranged the members in the body. . . .*



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

Spanish and Korean translations of this article are available at TheBanner.org.

Samson Gains Strength with Help from a Wheelchair

SAMSON FINDS PEACE in knowing that God cares for him. Despite all the years he carried pain in his heart, he now feels free from the weight of trauma.

Samson grew up in a small Nigerian community with his mother, father, and two siblings. His parents worked hard to provide for their family.

But when his dad suddenly fell ill and passed away, the responsibility of caring for his siblings soon rested on his shoulders. His mother's income couldn't cover the costs of their basic needs.

To save money, Samson and his siblings dropped out of school, and Samson began working as a roadside mechanic. He was doing well until an accident occurred while he was working on a customer's car.

Injuries to his spinal cord left him unable to walk, and he was forced to quit his job. Losing his father, losing his job, and losing his mobility pushed Samson down a dark road of pain, devastation, and disappointment.

In need of a wheelchair, Samson was connected to the Beautiful Gate Handicapped People Center, an organization World Renew partners with to provide essential assistance to those facing a disability.

By doing this, World Renew, along with its partners and others, lives out important values for fulfilling God's desire for all people to flourish.

World Renew helped Samson get his first wheelchair and walked with him through the process of healing from his trauma. During this time, Samson was able to reignite his relationship with God and receive a better understanding of the Lord's love for him and his family.

"No one really helped me to process my pain the way this program has done," said Samson.

He said understanding that God cares and is also hurt by his pain has been very encouraging. He is now using this knowledge and truth to encourage others who are hurting.

With joy, he reminds those who are suffering that God is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Ps. 34:18).

With renewed zeal and hope, Samson works as a kerosene seller for someone in his community. His wheelchair helps him to go to work, attend church services, and socialize with others in his neighborhood. Meanwhile, Samson is saving toward starting his own business.

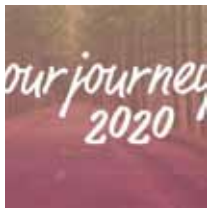
—Taylor Smith, World Renew



Samson getting into his wheelchair. The chair helps him go to work, attend church, and socialize with others.

Short Takes

Alberni Valley CRC Takes Long-Distance Journey



Following the lead of one of the “desired futures” in the Christian Reformed Church’s new ministry plan, “Our Journey 2020,”

several members of Alberni Valley Christian Reformed Church in Port Alberni, B.C.—from the oldest to the youngest—were involved in this year’s Christmastime candle-lighting service. Just before Christmas, inspired by a long-distance conversation with Canadian CRC leaders, adults participated in sketches and readings, and children brought various names of Jesus, written on placards, to the front of the church.

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Members of The River gather for a meal.

Donnee Helleenthal, The River Church

Financial Shalom: ‘A True Blessing to the CRC’

James Dykstra is using a grant from the Christian Reformed Church’s Financial Shalom initiative to supplement his salary as a pastor at The River Church in Allegan, Mich.

Scott Van Voorst has used a similar grant to help pay off the student loans he incurred while supporting his family and attending Calvin Theological Seminary.

In both cases, assistance from the grants has made it easier to serve in ministry—exactly what the Financial Shalom program is designed to do.

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Vacation Bible School Students Share the Risen Lord



Children gather for vacation Bible school in northern India.

RANCHI, INDIA, IS LOCATED in the northeastern corner of the country, where little is known or told about the risen Lord.

So it is a place where “the time is ripe to present the good news, even though it may invite harassment,” said Rev. A.K. Lama, Hindi ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International.

This spring, Christian leaders will come together in Ranchi to learn how to spread the gospel and share the resurrection story with children at the annual vacation Bible school (VBS) camp.

“Young people are hungry for truth,” explained Lama.

Because the gospel is not widely shared, parents in outlying villages rely on VBS for their children to hear the gospel and share what they’ve learned.

One mother wrote, “We live in Odisha and wait every year for VBS classes so that our son can go to Ranchi to attend and learn the teachings of the Bible. We send him there thinking that whatever he learns about God, we can teach the same to the children here in Odisha.”

Charles is one of the 1,500 children who attended the Hindi VBS program last year. Charles came not knowing about Jesus. As he learned more about the Bible, he talked with his parents about coming to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

Because Charles was able to share the good news with his family, they too came to know Christ. They were baptized as a family; this Easter will be the first time for them to celebrate the risen Lord.

—Kristen Fergus Van Stee, Back to God Ministries International

TEA Conference Helps Pastor Build Solidarity with Muslims

ON HIS MANY TRIPS to and from the church he pastors in Soroti, Uganda, Martin used to miss opportunities to show God's love. But not anymore.

Martin's church in Sorfi Ugada, is located adjacent to land that is usually inhabited by a group of Muslim squatters who eke out their existence washing cars for passersby.

"In the past, Martin would have these men clean his car, but he had no relationship with them," said Diana Boot, a Resonate Global Mission missionary serving in Uganda. "They were just known as homeless, poor, addicted, potentially dangerous men who were shunned by the community."

That changed in the summer of 2017 when Martin attended a workshop at the Theological Education in Africa conference sponsored by Resonate Global Mission. The workshop, called "Can Our Cities Be Famous for God?" was led by Resonate's Joel Huyser and Michael Ribbens. It challenged Martin to think about how he and his church could witness to the community.

Martin was challenged to get to know this group of squatters and to be seen with them.

"He developed relationships with them and has been gently speaking with them about making life changes gradually," said Boot.

These relationships came at a cost—members of his church began criticizing Martin for having contact with these men. In this part of the world, it isn't typical for a pastor to relate with such people.

Still, Martin's joy, energy, and deep love for this little community has brought transformation. Martin focuses on helping the men work

together as a group and has helped them start a savings circle managed by one of the group members. As a sign of solidarity and trust, Martin makes a contribution to the savings each day.

"It was beautiful to see the pride the men took in how much money has . . . been saved, and to hear their dreams and plans of what that money would

be used for," said Boot after visiting with Martin and the group. "There was a sense of hope in their future."

As these men begin to stabilize their lives, Martin hopes to continue showing God's love to the city's prostitutes, another group that is undergoing a time of crisis.

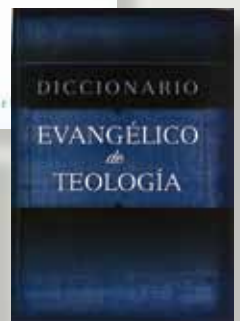
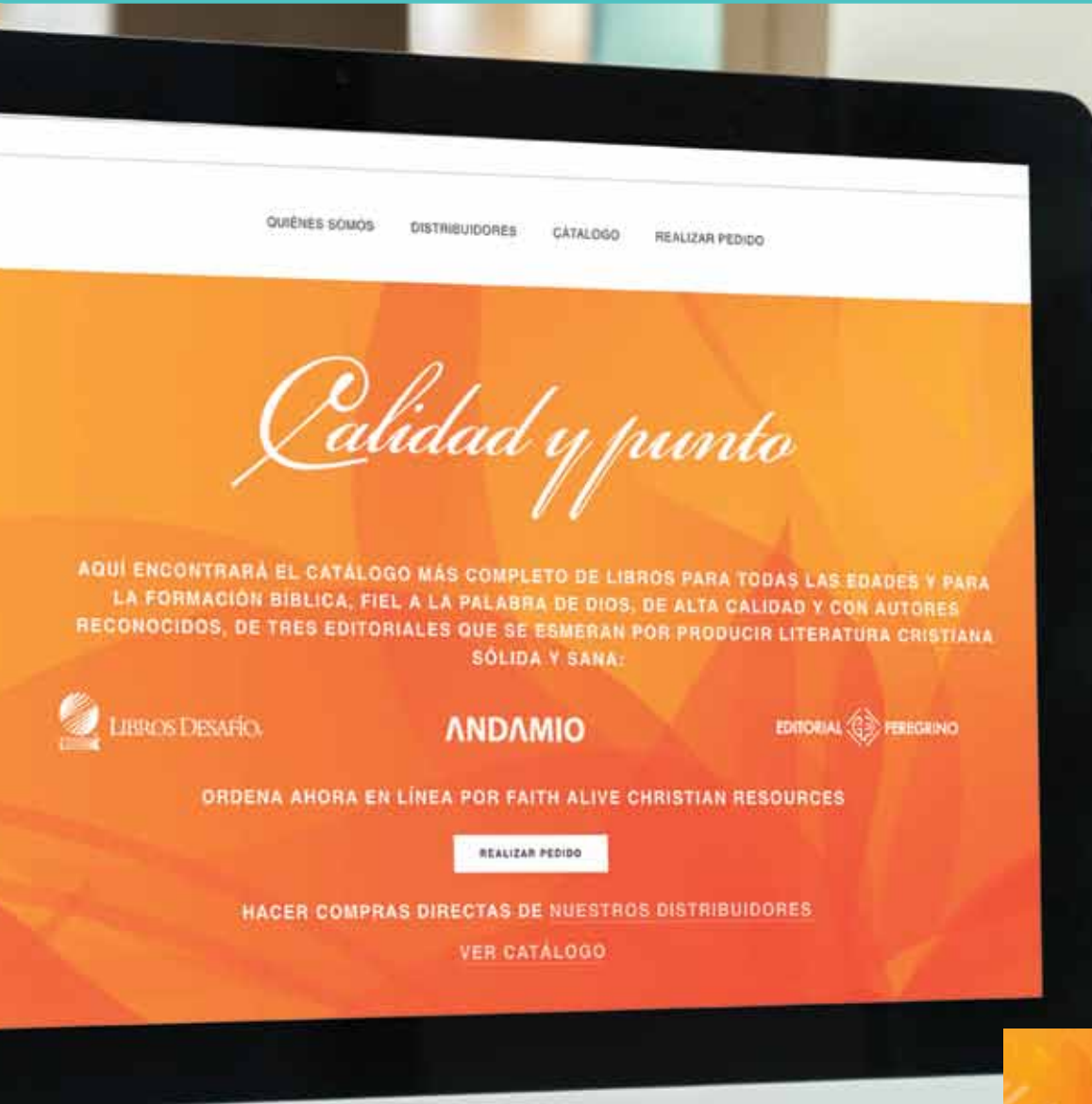
—Brian Clark, *Resonate Global Mission*



At a Theological Education in Africa conference, Martin learned that part of his role as pastor of a congregation should include reaching out to the squatters who lived nearby.

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Time for Slime!



WHAT'S GOOEY and slippery and oozes all over? If you guessed slime, you're right!

But what you might not realize is just how important slime is in the lives of some of the creatures God made. For example, slime may help them steer clear of danger. Let's look at the ways just a few of these animals depend on slime.

What Is Slime?

Another word for the slime some animals produce is *mucus*. This slippery, gooey stuff helps protect them from bigger critters who may want to eat them for dinner.



Christin Baker is a stay-at-home mom and writer.

Here are some of the ways slime helps these animals stay alive.

Because slugs do not have shells, their bodies are covered with slime to keep them from drying out. The slime on their bodies tastes terrible to other animals, so most creatures leave them alone. Slime also helps slugs move around from place to place. If you look carefully at the leaves of plants that

attract slugs, you may notice the slime trail slugs leave behind.

Hagfish are sometimes called "slime eels." These interesting creatures live in the ocean and eat dead sea animals. When other critters try to bother them, hagfish shoot out a thick, sticky slime that chokes the bigger animals.

Parrotfish make a kind of "sleeping slime" that covers their bodies while they rest in the ocean at night. This handy slime coat protects them from getting sick. Rainbow parrotfish make an even thicker mucus. Scientists believe this slime protects them from other fish who are looking for a midnight snack!

Did You Know?

Humans make slime too. Our bodies make mucus to help us fight sickness. That's why when you have a cold, you sometimes have a runny nose!

It's Slime Time!


Homemade slime is fun to play with. Try this recipe at home and enjoy your own slime time.

What you will need:

- » 1/2 tablespoon baking soda
- » 1 tablespoon contact lens solution
- » 4-ounce bottle of white school glue
- » Food coloring

What to do:

1. Find a bowl or cup to mix your slime in.
2. Pour the glue into the bowl.
3. Add baking soda and mix. Add a few drops of food coloring.
4. Mix and add more food coloring until you get the color you want.
5. Add contact lens solution.
6. Mix until slime forms and it begins to get harder to mix.
7. Take the slime out and begin kneading with both of your hands.
8. If needed, add a few more drops of contact lens solution to make the slime less sticky.

Have fun playing with your slime! 



Eating toward Shalom

Why Food Ethics Matters for the 21st-Century Church

by Matthew C. Halteman

My paternal grandfather was an egg and small-crop farmer. My maternal grandfather was an herbicide chemist who worked to promote the green revolution in agriculture. My dad, now an economics professor, is still a hardworking farm boy at heart. He never wastes food because he knows what went into raising it, and he can fix almost anything with just a few tools; all my home-improvement projects await his visits. My mom's cousin is an executive at one of America's largest pork producers. As an elementary schooler, I visited the

processing floor of a meatpacking plant with a mixture of pride and wide-eyed bewilderment. I wasn't raised on the farm, but favorite activities with grandparents included riding tractors, shucking corn, exploring the chicken houses, and playing freeze tag with cousins behind Great-Grandpop's butcher shed. I can't claim genuine farm-boy cred, but I do owe my existence, my spiritual aspirations, and many of my most cherished experiences to good Christian people in agriculture.

It might seem odd, then, that a healthy portion of my vocational bread and butter these days is asking tough questions about our food system and

its unintended consequences for creation.

If someone had told me 15 years ago that I would end up advocating for "greener" eating as a discipleship practice of shalom-inspired creation care, I'd have slathered up the nearest rack of ribs in defiant reply. My Mennonite background had taught me well that the active pursuit of peace and justice for human beings is central to living out the Christian vision. But it wasn't until 2003, when I joined a Reformed community, that animals (and the good earth we share with them) came prominently into view as inherently valuable creatures of God whose flourishing shalom requires.

The Reformed theological vision is generous to animals, reflecting a deep and abiding appreciation for the sovereignty of God over all creation. It affirms the goodness of all creation and mandates that human beings follow the divine example of delighting in God's creatures and taking loving care of them. It stresses the pervasive personal and institutional effects of human fallenness, the cosmic scope of Christ's reconciling power ("every square inch," as Abraham Kuyper famously said), and the call to be agents of renewal after Christ's example in our personal and institutional lives.

Where some Christians are skeptical of science, the Reformed vision sees the findings of general revelation—what human beings discover about God and God's plan through careful study of God's world—as continuous with God's special revelation in Scripture. And where some Christians shrink from engaging ideas and criticism from outside the church, the Reformed vision's emphasis on common grace empowers us to look beyond our tradition for insight into God's regenerating wisdom and our own shortcomings.

It is thus perfectly natural for Reformed Christians to declare that animals and the physical world are

good and precious to God and that we have a duty to God to care for them. It is faithful to our vision to acknowledge that pedestrian things like our food system and eating habits aren't just trivial matters of personal preference but are caught up in grander narratives of sin and redemption. And it is fitting that Reformed Christians, informed by confidence in general revelation and by humility as recipients of common grace, would seek counsel from environmental science, the study of animal behavior, and the animal welfare movement as we discern how to live out our biblical hope for shalom as 21st-century Christ-followers.

The good news is that the Reformed vision is theologically well suited to help us face the moral and environmental challenges raised by the need to feed almost 10 billion people by 2050 on a planet where arable land, water, and oil are increasingly scarce and the environment is increasingly unstable. But there's no way to soft-pedal the bad news: There are strong reasons to believe that our collective default to the animal-heavy standard American diet is deeply out of resonance with our professed hope for shalom and our ability to live out this hope.

To appreciate how far-reaching the consequences of our food choices are, consider the implications of raising and slaughtering almost 10 billion land animals annually in the U.S. and Canada so that North Americans can eat almost twice the global average of meat per person per year (213 pounds for Americans, 154 pounds for Canadians). Feeding this many animals requires unsustainable amounts of oil, land, and water to grow grain—a commodity the subsidization of which causes political and economic problems for farmers around the world.

Raising these animals confronts us with dangerous concentrations of ecologically threatening manure and greenhouse gases and the risk of

epidemic diseases such as bird flu. Processing this many animals at a profit means dangerous and often exploitative working conditions for a disproportionately minority workforce. And eating this many animals is strongly correlated with the rise of

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preventable diseases estimated to cost \$314 billion a year for interventional medicine.

Counting the costs of the standard American diet to ourselves and our fellow human beings is a crucial step. But a truly shalomic imagination must count the costs to God's other creatures too. Caring for animals was the very first responsibility bestowed to humankind by God—our very first chance to practice the capacities of love, power, and mercy that accompany the divine image within us. What, then, are the costs of our food system to the animals under our charge?

The vast majority of these 10 billion creatures are bred, housed, fed, transported, and slaughtered in industrial systems that consign them to short lives of crowded, sedentary confinement and deny them many of their most basic creaturely activities and enjoyments. The degree to which we bend every aspect of their existence to our convenience and profit raises the question of whether our

dominion over them has become more about playing god than serving God. Consider the life of a chicken in the egg industry, a mother hen—a creature whom Jesus himself elevates in the gospels of Matthew and Luke as an emblem of his own love and protection for God's people.

Mother hens in confinement farms never get to gather their young. They are genetically engineered to lay much more than natural quantities of either fertilized eggs for hatcheries or unfertilized eggs for human consumption. In hatcheries, their chicks are sorted by sex. Female chicks are sold to lay eggs. But male chicks—about a quarter billion of them annually—have no value and are thus ground up alive or suffocated in trash bags. Hens who lay eggs for consumers typically share a small cage with several other hens. They lack the room to spread their wings and their beaks are burned off to keep them from harming cage mates under the stress of confinement. When their egg production decreases after a year or more of laying, they are slaughtered.

Unlike their ancestors in Southeast Asian jungles or the mother hens that Jesus presumably had in mind, confined hens can't go outside for fresh air, feel the sun, breed or groom naturally, roost in trees, or establish social orders within a flock. By thwarting their creaturely capacities in these ways, we risk forgetting that they are living creatures, reducing them to mere egg-laying machines. Similar things can be said of the cows, pigs, chickens, and turkeys raised in confinement farms.

These practices have drawn sharp criticism from ethicists and theologians since the mid-1970s. But major scientific advances since then in our understanding of the inner lives of animals have made confinement farming even more difficult to defend. The more we learn about other creatures, the more we realize that thinking, feeling, communicating, and forging bonds of social belonging are

important parts of their worlds too. They are subjects of their own lives rather than mere objects of human utility, as we are often uncritically inclined to treat them.

For a church hoping to move beyond just envisioning shalom toward enacting it through discipleship practices that renew the world and cultivate fruits of the Spirit, these unintended consequences of our daily food choices raise some sobering questions.

Are we loving God, self, and neighbor when we knowingly consume a diet that degrades our health, marginalizes the poor, and causes needless suffering to animals? Is our joy increased by these things? Do we sow the seeds of peace or bless others with our generosity when we dine on such an inequitable and unsustainable distribution of resources? Are patience and self-control exemplified in breeding creatures who grow freakishly large unnaturally fast at the expense of their skeletal integrity so that we can eat unhealthful quantities of whatever tastes good? Are we consistently kind in welcoming dogs and cats into our families while treating cows and pigs with the same creaturely capacities as mere units of consumption? Are we faithfully striving to think and act upon whatever is true, honorable, just, excellent, and worthy of praise? Are we good shepherds, such that mercy characterizes our dominion over other creatures, all the days of their lives?

It is important to recognize that taking these questions seriously needn't require the church to achieve consensus on what particular actions congregations and members should take in response. As with other discipleship issues, congregations can challenge members to discern how to live more mindfully in this regard without binding consciences inappropriately or lapsing into extrabiblical legalism. Ideally, there will be spirited discussion but still generous fellowship among omnivores,

“reducetarians” (those working to eat less meat and more plants), vegetarians, and vegans, all committed to working together to set a more gracious and compassionate table in an age of resource scarcity, ecological degradation, and increasing awareness of the needs and capacities of God's other creatures.

In theory and practice, eating more mindfully makes sense as an engaged form of discipleship for aspiring Christ-followers. Theoretically, someone seeking to eat mindfully aspires to live toward the biblical ideal of shalom—the peaceful state of holistic flourishing that is portrayed first in Eden and last on the holy mountain in the prophet Isaiah's vision of a fully redeemed world. In practice, such a person strives faithfully if always imperfectly to live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly in a world where excessive, unreflective consumption of the standard American diet increasingly seems unjust, unmerciful, and extravagant. The goal is not to attain personal purity but rather to provide glimmers of shalom, however humble, in whatever places we serve.

These glimmers can manifest in our personal lives as fresher, more nutrient-dense meals, improved health, lower carbon footprints, more engaged solidarity with oppressed people, deepened compassion for animals, and renewed relationships with the folks who grow our food and the places they grow it. At church, the glimmers might shine through in more inclusive fellowship dinners and in more holistic preaching and teaching about the implications of our fallen institutions and habits and the prospects for being agents of their renewal. At home, in church, and in the world, thinking and acting more mindfully on the question of how Christ-followers should break bread has great potential for a bountiful harvest of spiritual fruit and a more compelling witness to our guiding hope for shalom.

Action Steps

- » Lead church-school or small-group discussion with curriculum from the Christian animal welfare organization CreatureKind, written by theologian David Clough. www.becreaturekind.org/sixweek-church-course/
- » Sign an “An Evangelical Statement on Responsible Care for Animals” to add your voice to the call for increased Christian attention to animal welfare in our food system. www.everylivingthing.com/sign-the-statement/
- » Add plant-based recipes (including decadent desserts!) to your meal plan or fellowship hour with Calvin alumna and celebrated food blogger Sarah McMinn. www.mydarlingvegan.com/2018/02/ultimate-guide-on-going-vegan/

Further Reading

- » Read “The Case for Eating Compassionately” by Phil Mobley in *byFaith: The Online Magazine of the Presbyterian Church of America*: byfaithonline.com/the-case-for-eating-compassionately.
- » Find answers to commonly asked questions about Christian care for animals in *A Faith Embracing All Creatures*: wipfandstock.com/a-faith-embracing-all-creatures.html.
- » Take a crash course on the ethics of eating with Halteman's book *Philosophy Comes to Dinner*: calvin.edu/directory/publications/philosophy-comes-to-dinner. 



Matt Halteman teaches philosophy at Calvin College and is a fellow of the Oxford Center for Animal Ethics. He is the author of *Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation* and co-editor of *Philosophy Comes to Dinner: Arguments*

About the Ethics of Eating. He is grateful to *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* for permission to reprise some of the ideas and language from a previous article, “Knowing the Standard American Diet By Its Fruits: Is Unrestrained Omnivorism Spiritually Beneficial?”

READ MORE ONLINE

Job understood
that the things he
possessed would
not always
belong to him.

An Attitude of Stewardship

PANIC SURGED THROUGH Wall Street in October of 1929. On October 24, stock prices plunged briefly before several large banks intervened and the market rallied. But things were about to get much worse. On Black Monday, October 28, stock prices fell by more than 10 percent. The next day it happened again. Prices would continue falling for the next three years. When they reached their nadir in July of 1932, prices were down 90 percent, and the country was in the midst of the Great Depression.

In the face of such tremendous financial losses, the kind of desperation felt by some financiers was understandable. But not inevitable.

The effects of loss depends on our attitude toward our circumstances. Stoic philosopher Seneca wrote, “No man is crushed by misfortune unless he has first been deceived by prosperity.”

Studies by economists and psychologists provide support for Seneca’s observation. Our satisfaction with our circumstances depends on the comparisons we make. We compare our circumstances to our expectations, and we hate losing things we were expecting to have. That aversion to loss influences all sorts of decisions about investments, insurance, and how long to work.

But loss cannot be avoided. Cars rust, fabrics fray, and bodies fail. All who are born must die, and each of us leaves this world with empty hands.

The Bible describes an attitude toward loss that can protect us from the disappointment that accompanies it. Our expectations about the future often reflect our current circumstances, but, as Seneca knew, they

also reflect the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

This is illustrated in the story of Job. In a single day, Job’s flocks, his servants, and his children were destroyed. But instead of cursing God, Job fell to the ground and worshiped, saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21).

Job understood that the things he possessed would not always belong to him. They had been entrusted to him for a time, but, as the psalmist David wrote, “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it” (Ps. 24:1). Job was merely a steward, and the things God had given him were things Job must eventually surrender.

Jesus illustrated faithful stewardship in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25). A man leaving for a journey entrusts his wealth—measured in talents, an ancient unit of weight—to his servants. The faithful stewards invest the money and return to their master both his money and what they have earned with it.

Christians most often discuss stewardship in the context of charity and service. If they are faithful stewards of the time, money, and abilities God has given them, they will not waste these gifts but invest them in projects of value to God. But an attitude of stewardship has further implications. The faithful stewards of the parable were not crushed when they returned the money to their master. That’s because they were expecting to return it.

Christians who adopt an attitude of stewardship toward the things that God has given them acknowledge that those things are not, as Seneca wrote, “theirs to enjoy forever.” When faced with loss, they will not be crushed. Instead, they will be able to say, like Job, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” **B**



Daniel Wilmoth is a writer and economist living in Maryland. He holds a doctorate in economics from Cornell University.

The Language of Feelings

To feel is to be fully human, fully Christian, and indeed, like Christ.



Ron Klok is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He is pursuing a degree in pastoral psychology and counseling.

THE REFORMED TRADITION has often been accused of being overly cerebral and intellectual. But more than anything else, the Reformation was concerned about our hearts—our feelings and emotions. Martin Luther was driven by a concern for a certain feeling, and that feeling was an assurance of our salvation. Following suit, the Heidelberg Catechism also begins with a feeling—namely, comfort. Our experience of God’s grace proceeds from the feelings of comfort and assurance that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts.

Despite this history, I’ve often run into disparaging comments and suspicion about feelings and emotions. Critics argue that feelings are too personal and therefore too subjective to be of any objective value. Recently I read a suggestion that feelings are our modern-day idols: Because they are fickle, they are not a “reliable measure of our relationship with God.” “We sometimes have the idea that our feelings and our faith go together like Frank Sinatra’s horse and carriage,” wrote one author. “The fact is, they often don’t.”

Because the realm of feelings has remained suspect, we don’t really know what to do with them. We tend to be afraid of feelings, and we certainly do not have an explicit theological understanding or language for them. In fact, I wonder if we have effectively outsourced the interior world of feeling, affectivity, and emotion to the sphere of psychology. Since we can’t seem to make sense of the emotional life from a faith perspective, we refer the inner life to psychology. Thus the heart of the Reformation becomes secularized, medicalized, and psychologized.

To counter that, it may be helpful to remind ourselves of a rich tradition that not only affirms the emotional life but gives it theological meaning.

First, to have an emotional life and to feel things is to be both fully human and fully Christian. This affirmation is woven throughout the Christian tradition. “Bearing the cross patiently does not mean that we harden ourselves, or do not feel any sorrow,” writes John Calvin in his *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*. He goes on to say that we are not to be like the Stoic who tries to lay off his humanity. Jonathan Edwards, writing two centuries later in *The Religious Affections*, looks to Jesus as a true human, a man “who was remarkably tender and affectionate of heart. . . . His virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections.” To feel is to be fully human, fully Christian, and indeed, like Christ.

Feeling is also the language of prayer, the language of the heart. The first criterion the Heidelberg Catechism gives for true prayer is that “we must pray from the heart” (Q&A 117). True prayer, in other words, utters the feelings of the human heart: adoration, gratitude, and joy, but also sorrow, regret, confusion, and helplessness. This, of course, is what led Calvin to describe the prayers of the psalms as an “anatomy of all the parts of the soul.” He writes, “Prayer itself is properly an emotion of the heart which is poured out and laid open before God” (*Institutes* 3.20.29). To pray is to feel.

The intensification of feeling is also a key dynamic in our sanctification and conversion. Psychologists who research the dynamics of how people change affirm the necessity of some




kind of emotional arousal. But they are only reiterating what the Christian tradition has always known: In order to change, we must first feel sorrow for our sin (Q&A 89) as well as the consolation of righteousness. When Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4), he was essentially saying, “Blessed are those who feel their losses, for they will be converted to a different emotional state.” To feel is to change, and it is no wonder that earlier Christians connected the emotional life of the soul with the will.

Many of our emotions are produced directly by the movement of the Spirit, by proximity to Jesus, and by the wonders and work of God. Calvin notes that the feeling of being forgiven is really the feeling of acceptance. In the New Testament, the kingdom of God is described as joy and peace in the Spirit (Rom. 14:17). To have a spiritual experience—that is, some kind of God experience—is to have an emotional experience. We cannot separate the two.

A key element, then, to discerning the work and movement of the Spirit is to pay attention to our feelings and to inquire after the source of those feelings. One of the more wonderful questions posed by followers of Jesus in the New Testament comes in the Emmaus Road account in Luke 24. After the fact, after they have seen Jesus for who he is, the two followers look back and wonder, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?” (Luke 24:32). The followers were talking about a spiritual experience, about something they were feeling in their hearts. And that feeling was caused by the presence and teaching of Jesus. Among other things, the passage invites us to discern and pay attention to the burning in our own hearts. Feeling is produced both directly and indirectly by the action and presence of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As Reformational Christians we have always been concerned for *orthodoxy* (right belief and thinking), and we

have been concerned for *orthopraxis* (right action and how we live). But I wonder if we have forgotten or are losing our attention to something akin to *orthokardia*, a right-heartedness that includes the cultivation of a full and fitting emotional life—in the words of the the New Testament, “to rejoice with those who rejoice [and to] mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15). We are not only to think and act Christianly; we are to *feel* Christianly. Feelings, then, are not of secondary importance. Neither are they are inherently untrustworthy. Instead, feelings are integral to the life of faith, integral to being human and Christian, integral to prayer, integral to the dynamics of conversion, integral to spiritual experience and discernment.

How does that slogan go? Head, hands, and heart—and yes, the feelings of the heart. Orthodoxy, orthopraxis, orthokardia: a perfect Reformational trifecta. 

1. Do you agree with the perception that the Reformed tradition is overly cerebral and intellectual? Why or why not?

2. How have you viewed the role of emotions in your life—especially...

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Misogyny in Pop Music: Denying the Image-Bearing Status of Women

IN THE BEGINNING GOD created humans in his image—male and female—with the mandate to rule over all of creation. As sin entered the world, the image-bearing status of women began to be denied, and they were viewed as lesser beings. Many songs in popular music reinforce this distorted idea, causing harm to both listeners and non-listeners alike.

At a recent conference, I led a workshop for teachers on how best to engage their students on the topic of popular music. One of the songs we discussed was the recent No. 1 song “rockstar” by Post Malone featuring 21 Savage. After listening to this song, the teachers began to unpack the mood of the song, the parts of the song that stood out, and the intent of the artist, as well as connections or contradictions to the biblical story. I noticed that only the men in the room were answering my questions.


So I asked the women in the room what they thought of the song. Silence. I could sense a deep reluctance to answer in contrast to their vibrant participation in the conversation about earlier songs. They talked about how the song made them feel dirty, belittled, devalued, and objectified. They noted that the women in the song were nameless and how at one point, the female cry for “no más” (no more) seemed to be ignored by the male protagonist.

At a time of challenging conversations around consent and sexual violence, audiences are still gravitating toward this song and others that objectify women and deny the image of Christ in them, including Christian listeners.

Like spiritually nursed babies, Christians are called to grow. The

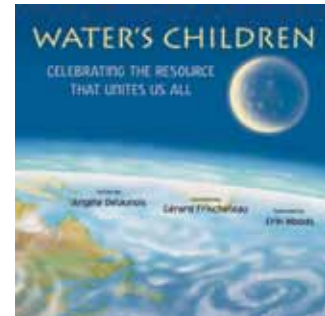
music we choose to consume impacts our spiritual growth. It either reinforces existing negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, or it can be part of the spiritual nourishment we should crave.

The final song we considered was “Praying” by Kesha, a redemptive song in which the artist explores her experience of objectification and sexual violence, seeking the inner strength to rebuild her life and career. The women in the room spoke again, noting that the type of power wielded in each song was quite different. One illegitimately claims power over another human; the other reclaims what is essentially the image-bearing power granted by God.

In the end God will make all things new, restoring appropriate power to those who are oppressed, silenced, or belittled. But in the meantime, God has called us to begin that work in all arenas. One opportunity we have is to seek out popular music that speaks truthfully to human power and affirms all of God’s creation. 



Micah van Dijk has a master’s degree in popular music studies from the University of Glasgow and is a speaker, manager, and DJ. He plans student events at Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ont.



Water’s Children: Celebrating the Resource that Unites Us All

*by Angèle Delaunois,
translated by Erin Wood*

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Twelve children from around the world live in different landscapes and circumstances but have one big thing in common: Water is essential to the flourishing of each of their lives. Water carries emotion, hope, and comfort. It is “a cup of mint tea” and “the breath of the river.” Gérard Frischeteau’s illustrations capture each geographical setting with brilliance and softness. An excellent nonfiction choice for reading aloud and a springboard for good conversation. Ages 3 and up. (Pajama Press)



A Reckoning

by Linda Spalding

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1855, as civil war looms on the horizon, both John Dickinson and his half-brother, Benjamin, are slave owners facing a reckoning. Because he's a preacher, John's congregation looks up to him even though he's often harsh and domineering. They know nothing of his secret sin, a transgression that will shape his future. Filled with biblical allusions, this novel covers vast territory both physically and emotionally. Spalding skillfully relates the intersecting realities of enslaved and free blacks, whites, and Native Americans as each tries to survive in difficult circumstances. (McClelland & Stewart)

The Lowdown

All Set: James K. A. Smith's latest book, *Awaiting the King*, is the third book in his Cultural Liturgies series. Better yet, all three books are now available in a boxed set. (Baker)

Free for All: *Ten Boom the Musical* is an original musical about Corrie ten Boom and her family, who hid Jews in World War II Netherlands in their "hiding place." The musical is available free of charge (with permission) for churches, schools, and others at tenboomthemusical.com.

Life Study: The book *Armand Merizon: His Life and Art* by Muriel Zandstra is a full-color journey through the celebrated artist's life and paintings. Available through the Calvin College Bookstore and on eBay.

New Wrinkle: Madeleine L'Engle's classic fantasy *A Wrinkle in Time* gets the big-screen treatment from director Ava DuVernay with big-name performances from Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, and more. In theaters March 10. (Disney)



Soul of a Woman

by Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings

reviewed by Micah van Dijk

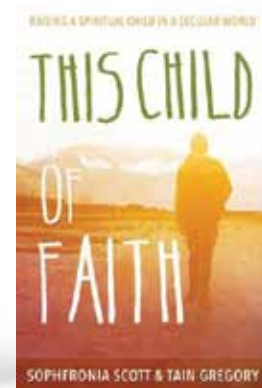
Soul of a Woman is an excellent album for fans of the soul and funk era of the 1960s and '70s as it provides authentic recordings and fresh material. Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings explore themes like time, romantic love, and heartache. Jones' faith and gospel roots are most prominently displayed in the final song entitled "Call on God," encouraging all of us to seek God in times of trouble. Jones died in November 2016 after a lengthy battle with cancer. (Daptone)



Wonder

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Auggie Pullman suffers from a rare facial deformity, a craniofacial difference caused by Treacher Collins syndrome. He has been homeschooled, but fifth grade seems a good time for him to experience more of the outside world. And while he encounters the negative treatment that his parents feared, he also experiences kindness. Told from several different perspectives, this is a must-see film (based on the book by R. J. Palacio) for children, their parents, and anyone involved in the lives of young people. It's a reminder that all of God's creations are wonders. (Lionsgate)



This Child of Faith: Raising a Spiritual Child in a Secular World

by Sophronia Scott and Tain Gregory

reviewed by Jim Romahn

Tain Gregory was in his third-grade class at Sandy Hook Elementary School when a young man shot and killed six adults and 20 children, including Tain's close friend Ben. Tain and his mother, journalist Sophronia Scott, co-authored this book about their Christian journey together. She listens closely for those moments when her son asks life-shaping questions and includes him in lesson preparations for Sunday school. They share daily devotions and prayer time. This heartwarming story offers a number of techniques and lifestyle habits to help children develop a rich faith. (Paraclete Press)

READ MORE ONLINE

Is the Bible Trustworthy?

To insist that human knowledge must verify Scripture's credibility is a form of spiritual idolatry.



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

WHEN I WAS A CAMPUS PASTOR, students often asked questions about the Bible's trustworthiness or truthfulness. Most of the questions fall into three general types: Have scientific truths proven the Bible false? Is the Bible historically accurate or is it human myth? Are biblical ethics still valid today? I suspect many of us struggle deeply with these types of questions. The assumption is that biblical truth must pass the tests of modern science, historiography, and ethical standards in order to be trustworthy.

However, the Belgic Confession teaches that we believe the Scriptures not because of these or other reasons but "above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God" (Article 5).

First of all, why should we assume that spiritual truths need to pass ethical, scientific, and historical tests to be credible? Can these human standards adequately measure spiritual truthfulness? Can they verify, for instance, that "God is love" (1 John 4:8)? Science, ethics, and history are important. But to insist that human knowledge must verify Scripture's credibility is a form of spiritual idolatry. It elevates our intellect and reason as judge and jury over God's truth. Spiritual truths require verification from a spiritual judge: the Holy Spirit.


Having said that, the Bible has proven resilient against attacks over the centuries. When properly understood in its ancient context, biblical ethics offer relevant insights for today. Biblical history has often been vindicated whenever historians and archaeologists can adequately verify

biblical accounts. God's Word, when properly interpreted, is not an enemy of science.

For me, two foundational keys to interpreting the Bible, besides the centrality of Christ's work and historical resurrection, are God's accommodated communication and the Bible's stated purpose.

The Reformer John Calvin explained that God "lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.1). The Bible is God's "baby talk" to his feeble creatures. If God accommodated us by having the Word (Jesus) become flesh, then God can adapt his infallible timeless truths for particular human languages, cultures, and thought patterns in the Scriptures. We must dig beyond the "baby talk" to unearth the spiritual treasures in God's Word.

Furthermore, the Bible's main purpose is not to convey facts or ideas for their own sake, but to "make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" and "for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:15-16). The Bible is "fully reliable in leading us to know God and to walk with Jesus Christ in new life" (*Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, 32). The Bible's trustworthiness depends not on satisfying our intellectual standards but on achieving this salvific purpose through the Holy Spirit's work.

Ultimately, as the Belgic Confession teaches, we learn to trust God's Word because of the Holy Spirit's mysterious testimony in our hearts. And, practically speaking, we will only hear the Spirit's testimony when we read and engage the Bible's whole salvation message—not just in bits and pieces, but on its own terms, with open hearts and minds. Doing this on a spiritual journey with spiritual mentors and a church community, we can "taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8) and that his Word is sure. 



Artist's Statement

This photo is a panorama of 21 images stitched together in Photoshop. I chose to include the oil rig to make the foreground more interesting. The photo was taken on a school-sponsored photography trip with teacher Joel Sjaarda.

Duckwater, Nevada. By Jadon Pascal Van Alphen, Grade 12, Toronto District Christian High, a member of Christian Schools International. Jadon is now a first-year student at the University of Waterloo.

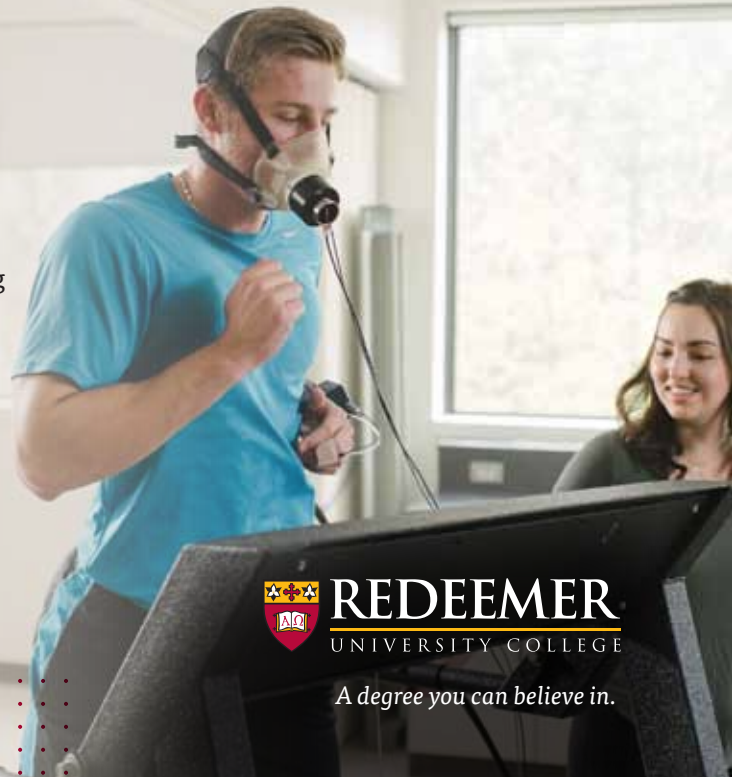
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General

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2018 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 the second Wednesday in March (March 14, 2018) 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 3, 2018.

Steven R. Timmermans Executive Director

Financial Aid

CLASSIS KALAMAZOO The Student Aid Fund Committee 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 academic year 2018-2019 to apply no later than April 30, 2018 by contacting Pastor Phil Kok, 269-327-1570 or philkok@charter.net. Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year by 2018-19. Students presently receiving aid must reapply.

Retirement

Hope Church in Houston, TX congratulates **PASTOR ROGER DE YOUNG**, along with his wife Debbie, who retired on Feb 4, 2018 after 45 years of faithful ministry, teaching and service. He served with the Navigators at the University of Connecticut for 3 years, was Associate Pastor at Alger Park CRC in Grand Rapids, MI for 6 years, was Chaplain at Hillcrest International School in Jos, Nigeria, West Africa for 4 years, and planted and ministered to Hope Church in Houston TX for 32 years. We praise and thank God for him and will miss both of them greatly. If you would like to send pictures, stories, memories and/or words of encouragement, please send them to office@hopehouston.org or Hope Church, 770 Pineloch, Houston TX 77062. Join us in giving thanks for them and praying for both of them as they transition into this new chapter of life and ministry.

PASTOR TOM DYKSTRA RETIRES. Visalia Christian Reformed Church of Visalia, CA wishes to congratulate Pastor Tom Dykstra and his wife Julie on his retirement this past November. Our congregation gives thanks to God for his four years of faithful service to our church, and his leadership in classis and denominational service. Pastor Tom was ordained on September 11, 1981 and previously served the following churches: Iowa Falls, IA; West Sayville, NY; Calvary, Pella, IA; and Lake Worth, FL. He also served for twenty years as a chaplain in the Navy Reserve. We celebrate their 36 years of ministry and wish Tom and Julie many blessings as they transition into retirement.

Birthdays

100TH BIRTHDAY

ALICE KLEIN SLAGER will reach her 100th birthday on March 3. Celebrating with her will be Ken, her husband of 68 years, her seven children and their spouses, 21 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren. Alice would love to receive birthday greetings at 2111 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

MISS CLARA TOGTMAN of 9739 W 154 St. Orland Park IL 60462 looks forward to celebrating her 100th birthday March 7. Celebrating with her are sister-in-law Ruth Togtman and many nieces and nephews. She has outlived her 7 siblings and continues in good health and sound mind. An open house will be held Mar. 17 at Orland Park CRC for anyone wishing to celebrate with her. Praise be to God. No gifts please.

90TH BIRTHDAY

ROGER BRASSER of 2479 S. Clermont St #331, Denver, CO 80222, will celebrate his 90th birthday on March 14. Together with his lovely wife Ruth, they have four children: Wayne & Chris, Karen & Larry, Verna & Dan, Harvey & Mary-Anna; 9 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. The Lord has been faithful.

REV. BASSAM MADANY 90th Birthday: Rev. Bassam Madany celebrated his 90th birthday at an open house on February 3 at 1st CRC in South Holland. He has been a wonderful dad, grandfather and great grandfather. Praise God for his long life of service! Greetings may be sent to 106 162nd Pl., South Holland IL.

LAURA (WEESIES) POST will celebrate her 90th birthday on March 29, 2018. Thanking God for her love and faithfulness are her children: Jo (John) Van't Land, Ed (Barb) Post, Cheryl (Jim) Scott, Kathy (Craig) Werkema, Amy (Brian) Martinie, 12 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren. Greetings may be sent to 2111 Raybrook St. SE, Apt. 1018, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

JAN ADRIAAN VAN BERKEL will celebrate his 90th birthday on March 20. Celebrating with him are his wife Corrie and family. Greetings may be sent to 35 Victoria Ave. E., Apt. 726, Brandon MB R7A 1Y7

Anniversary

70TH ANNIVERSARY

KWANTES Peter and Dorothy of Grand Rapids, MI blessed with 70 years of marriage on Feb. 14. The couple have a daughter Joan and Patrick Nagle and grandson Christopher.

Obituaries

BROUWER Barbara nee Zeilstra, age 69, of Villa Park went to be with her Lord on January 13, 2018. Beloved wife of Jim; loving mother of David (Sue) Brouwer, Anne (Kyle) Olson, and Sara (Peter) Anderson; dear daughter of Evelyn and the late John H. Zeilstra; devoted grandmother of Madeline and Adam Brouwer, Siena, Tessa, Quinn, and Mac Olson, and Karen, Elsa, and Wesley Anderson; fond sister of Janice (Dale) Holtrop, John T. (Janice) Zeilstra, William (Karla) Zeilstra, Mary (John) Cook, and Evelyn (Brad) Wieringa; aunt of many nieces and nephews. Barbara loved the Lord and served Him in everything she did, especially directing Coffee Break at her church, her 13 years of service

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at Back to God Ministries, and as a wife, mother, and grandmother. Memorials to Back to God Ministries International, 1700 28th Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49508, or Trinity Christian College, 6601 W. College Drive, Palos Heights, IL 60463 are appreciated

BUIKEMA Florence (DeBoer), 87, of Orland Park, IL, went home to be with her Lord on January 30, 2018. She is survived by her husband of 68 years, Ralph, her children, Cindy (Kevin) Bos, Bill (Jan) Buikema, 5 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren.

DEVRIES Meindert, 88 passed away January 22, 2018, now resting in the Lord. He leaves behind his wife, Cornelia, and his 5 children; Margaret (Ray) Drewes, Dorothy (Mark) Hoeks, David (Irene) DeVries, Micheal DeVries, Symon DeVries; as well as 12 grand children, and some great grand children. He was a life long member of the CRC; and had served as elder in Tacoma, Washington in earlier years. He supported many charities including Habitat for Humanity; which he actively participated in also in earlier years. We thank God for his life and his many blessings in this life, and we look forward to seeing him again in the life to come.

HALMA James, age 89, of Artesia, CA passed away on January 8. He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Lorraine. He is survived by his children, Sheryl Goedhart, Randy(Carol) Halma, Lori Bumsted, 7 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

HERLEIN Nellie, age 95 of Grand Haven, Michigan and Palmetto, Florida, went to be with her Lord on January 8, 2018. She was preceded in death by her loving husband, Jay, of 50 years. She is survived by her children, Linda (Dan) Shepard and Larry Herlein, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. We thank God for her Christian testimony



KERKSTRA Geraldine N. "Gerri" nee Hendriksen, age 84, of Aurora, CO, went to be with her Lord on Thursday, December 28, 2017. She is survived by her husband Rev. Louis of 61 years, children Philip and Beth, brothers Bernard and Daniel (Shirley) Hendriksen, and many more cherished family and friends. She was preceded in death by daughter Joy,

parents William and Rena Hendriksen and Stepmother Reta. Gerri was a devoted CRC minister's wife for 32 years and served 5 churches where she made many life long friends. She loved children and taught in school and church. Her sweet spirit is missed dearly on earth. Gerri loved music and has joined the angels, singing in God's mansions of glory.

KOOL Preston, of Battle Creek, MI, passed away on January 5, 2018, at the age of 86. Pres is survived by his wife of 63 years, Marge Kool (DeNooyer), and 6 children: Doug (Kathy), Dave (Deb), Tim (Lyn), Tom, Ron (Tammy) and Robyn Kool (Brad). Pres and Marge have 21 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. Dr. Stan Mast officiated the funeral. Rev. Ron Kool also spoke at the funeral about the four pillars in Pres' life: faith, family, friends and fun. Pres was a great family man and a successful businessman, but was also known for his philanthropic work, which benefited many organizations, including Calvin College and several other CRC related causes.

KOOLE Thomas James, 63, of Rogersville, Tn., artist, formerly of Midland Park, N. J., and Seminole, Fla., survived by his father James, sister Karen Rebecca, and uncle the Rev. J. M. V. Koole.

LIEUWEN Cornelius, age 95, passed away on Jan. 16, 2018. LIEUWEN, ELEANOR (ZYLSTRA) age 94, passed away on Jan. 24, 2018. New Holland, South Dakota. Married 73 years. Survived by Beatrice (Terry) Pheifer, Frances (Marlin) De Vries, Janice (Ron) Van Zee, Percy (Vicki) Lieuwen, Gail (Alvin) Punt, 13 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren.

PETERS Ted (Theodore John) age 73, died on Monday, Jan. 8, 2018. He is survived by his wife, Carol; his children Greg and Barb Peters, Amy and Devin Lockett, Carin and Adam Vogelzang, Brian and Daphne Peters; and his grandchildren Caitlin and Gavin Peters; DJ, Mia, and Kyan Lockett; Anne, Isaac, Clara, Josiah, Pearl, Molly, and Sam Vogelzang; Matthis and Zoe Peters.

PRANGER Robert ("Bob") Allen passed away on December 27, 2017, in Grand Rapids, MI. Bob was predeceased by his wife, Alice (Zandstra); and is survived by his daughters: Rhonda Whyte-Koster (Bob Koster), Polly (Duke Smith), and Tina Pranger (Dale Secord); 11 grandchildren; and ten great-grandchildren.

RECKER Constance, age 91, of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2018. She is preceded in death by her husband Bob, and is survived by her sister, Margaret DeHaan; her children, Paul and Nancy Recker, William and Linda Recker, Theodore and Eunice Recker, Bob and Sandra Recker, Timothy and Judith Recker, and Mark and Dee Recker; 15 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

SONNEMA MILDRED E SCHUURMAN, 5/26/1928 - 1/5/2018 - Millie was born the 5th child of Jacob and Ruth Faber Schuurman on May 26, 1928 in Wayne, NJ. She had a happy childhood and attended North 4th St and Midland Park Christian Schools and Eastern Academy. In 1945 she attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan where she met Rev. Harold Sonnema. They were married in July 1947 and served five Christian Reformed Churches in Michigan, New Jersey, Florida, and California. After four children, Millie attended the University of California and was a substitute teacher in that state for many years. Rev. Sonnema passed away in August 1984. In 1988 Millie moved to Florida. Here she pursued her musical career and was Minister of Music at the Congregational UCC Church of Boynton Beach for 14 years. She was also the Choral Director for the city of Boynton Beach for 12 years. She enjoyed music, traveling, golfing, boating and happy times. She is survived by her four children: Judy Hekman (Calvin), Ken, Roy (Debra), and Wayne Sonnema, and 3 grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at the Royal Poinciana Chapel, 60 Cocoanut Row, Palm Beach, FL 33480, on January 22, 2018 at 10am. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Lake Worth Christian School, 7592 High Ridge Rd, Boynton Beach, FL 33426, Attn: Jim Harwood. Condolences may be sent to: Wayne Sonnema 1110 Florentine Way Boynton Beach, FL 33426 "To God Be the Glory For Victory in Jesus"

SPOELMA Dorothy (VerWys) age 99, of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away on Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband John Spoelma; and survived by her two daughters, Gwen (Ken) Hoving, and Muriel (Bill) Hop; grandchildren: Jennifer and David Eldersveld, Chip Hoving and Andrea Bishop, Patrick and Chelsea Bosgraaf, Michael and Tonya Bosgraaf, Kristen and Mike Nitz, Jon and Krissi Hop; and her 11 great grandchildren.

VANDE GUCHTE (HAGEDOORN) Elizabeth (Betty) Frieda, age 87, of Grand Rapids MI, passed away on Monday, January 15, 2018. Betty is survived by her husband, Marten Vande Guchte; children, Kevin (Teresa) Vande Guchte, Beth Fulvi (Richmond, IN), Kathi Vande Guchte; 7 grandchildren; 5 great grandchildren; and siblings, Nicholas (Norma) Hagedoorn, Sue (Bill) Sweetman, Peter (Judy) Vande Guchte, Wilma (Norm) DeJong.

VANDER AA Arthur, of Pantego, NC, entered into eternal rest at the age of 91 on December 26, 2017. He was preceded in death by his son, Arthur, Jr., daughter-in-law Terry and brother John. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Grace (De Ruiter), children Cyndie Van Dyke (Alan), Jennie Febus (Dave) and Pam Kirkman (Barry), 9 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren, and brother Pete. He was a WW II veteran, and played his mandolin in church until a few weeks before his passing. He is now playing the mandolin (not a harp) to accompany that great choir in praising his Savior.



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**VANDERWOUE** Stewart, 91, Peace Village Palos Park, IL, died Dec. 19. Beloved husband for 68 years to Carolyn (Hendrikse). Father of Cheryl (Charles) Marcus, Marcia (Charles) Kooger, James (Jayne) Vander Woude and John (Janna) Vander Woude. Grandfather of 14, great-grandfather of 16. Stewart had the privilege of working with many young people in his 42 years as a teacher/principal in Christian Education.

**VAN VUREN** Harrieta A. nee Klaassens, age 86, passed away peacefully from her husband Don's arms into her Savior's arms on January 1, 2018 at her home surrounded by her family. Beloved wife of 66 years to Donald R. Van Vuren. Loving mother of John (Rosanne), Donna (Don) Rietveld (the late Raymond Fuller), Calvin (Patty), Karen (John "Butch") Borgman and Janice (Leonard) Schmidt. Cherished grandmother of 15. Dearest great-grandmother of 46, one of whom preceded her in death. Dear sister of Rosalynd (Richard) Loerop and the late Lawrence (Elizabeth) Klaassens. Loved aunt of many nieces and nephews. In her later years, Harriet became a caregiver for disabled adults at Bethshan Association.

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**PASTOR** - Ellsworth CRC located in scenic Northwest Lower Michigan is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small town congregation with numerous outreach possibilities. We desire a pastor who is committed to sound Biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth and the community. If interested, please contact Carl Veenstra at (231) 599-2392 or email [secretary@ellsworthcrc.org](mailto:secretary@ellsworthcrc.org).

**LEAD PASTOR** Rehoboth Reformed Church, in the beautiful northern Michigan community of Lucas, ([www.rehoboth.church](http://www.rehoboth.church)) is prayerfully seeking the pastor God has chosen to lead us in pursuit of our mission--Winning People for Christ and Equipping Them to Serve. Our next pastor will be strong in Biblical preaching and will inspire us toward spiritual growth. Rehoboth is a welcoming, compassionate body of believers in a strong family community. We desire a pastor who will share our love for music and our blended worship style. We seek a leader who will tap into our passion and excitement to grow God's kingdom, as we invest in our youth groups, children's programs, outreach, and mission endeavors. Please email your interest and resume to [act@theinastore.com](mailto:act@theinastore.com) by 4/1/18.

**FULL-TIME PASTOR** Riverview Reformed Church in Yankton, SD, is seeking a shepherd passionate about preaching the Gospel. We are a diverse group of believers of all ages strongly committed to growing the church, and seek a leader with vision. Send inquiries to [yanktonegge@gmail.com](mailto:yanktonegge@gmail.com). Website: [riverviewreformed.org](http://riverviewreformed.org)

**LEAD PASTOR** for smaller Vital, Outreaching & Welcoming church - Faith Community CRC, Beaver Dam, WI - 45 mi from Madison, WI & 10 mi from Christian Schools. Email Bruce McMurry, [brucemcmurry@gmail.com](mailto:brucemcmurry@gmail.com) or ph / text Bruce at 920-960-7524.

**PASTOR:** Middleville CRC is a small church in a growing community, located 20 miles southeast of Grand Rapids in beautiful Barry County, MI. We seek a pastor to continue

the renewal process through the power of prayer, inspired preaching of the gospel, and building relationships in our church and community. Please see our church profile at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) or email [pastor.search@middlevillecrc.org](mailto:pastor.search@middlevillecrc.org).

**SENIOR PASTOR - PATERSON, NJ** Madison Avenue CRC is seeking a senior Pastor called to serve in a multiracial, multicultural congregation in an urban environment which is transforming the community through spiritual leadership, faith formation, discipleship, indigenous leadership & outreach ministries. Position available Summer 2018. Email [tugmanaka@yahoo.com](mailto:tugmanaka@yahoo.com) for add'l information.

**PASTOR** Agassiz Christian Reformed Church, a small but vibrant, family orientated community located in the eastern Fraser Valley of British Columbia, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a welcoming and encouraging congregation searching for a pastor who will provide Christ centred preaching that will be applicable to our daily life, interacts positively with all age groups, and is an involved, creative and community minded individual. To inquire or apply, contact the search committee at [acrcsearch@gmail.com](mailto:acrcsearch@gmail.com)

**SENIOR PASTOR** Covenant CRC in friendly Winnipeg, Manitoba, is seeking a senior pastor for preaching, spiritual leadership and pastoral care. We have a strong desire for church growth and seek leadership to realize that vision within our community. To gain further information about our Covenant community go to: <http://covenantcrc.ca>. Regarding the position, go to Hank Vande Kraats at [kraats@calvinchristian.mb.ca](mailto:kraats@calvinchristian.mb.ca).

**PASTOR - DISCIPLESHIP & YOUTH** Bradenton CRC of Bradenton, Florida is seeking an Associate Pastor to promote Principles of Discipleship and their application to Youth Ministry programs, Small Group formation, & growth of ministry volunteers. The position offers opportunities to Preach, Teach, and focus on Faith Formation. We are a uniquely & equally pro- portioned group of young families, empty nesters, and retirees with an entertaining addition of seasonal associate members. For more details and a full position description please contact us @ [mary@bradentoncrc.org](mailto:mary@bradentoncrc.org)

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# Bentley's Birthday

On Sunday I watched Bentley celebrate his birthday for the umpteenth time.



Rod Hugen is pastor of the Village Church and leader of the Tucson Cluster, a church planting effort in Tucson, Ariz.

Each Sunday at the Village Church we ask people who are celebrating birthdays to come forward and let us help them celebrate. Last Sunday Bentley raced up and took his place. We're pretty sure he was celebrating his ninth birthday.

It's hard to keep track since Bentley celebrates his birthday every week. He is always first in the birthday line. This Sunday he was. Last Sunday too, and the Sunday before that. He stands ramrod straight, arms firmly folded across his chest, face stoic, and almost dares us not to celebrate him. So we do. We sing "Happy Birthday" to him every week.

Pastor Eric asks the celebrants their age. When it's his turn, Bentley bellows into the microphone, "I'm 9!" He stands patiently, waiting for the words of the song to waft over him. Only then does he finally break into a smile. The boy loves to celebrate his birthday—every week.

The Village Church does a great job celebrating birthdays and other significant events like anniversaries or first days back to school. We're masters at singing "Happy Birthday." We've made a rule: If you bring dessert, we'll sing for you. But you have to bring dessert or no one will notice. We're not picky—anything sweet will do.

There is one other requirement, of course—no organization ever makes just one rule. The second rule is you have to answer Eric honestly when he asks your age. That's hard for many adults. Shy people and those pretending to be younger struggle. We're OK with that, but rules are rules. Bentley doesn't care. He's proud to be 9, and he's thrilled everyone knows it.

Do we ever celebrate! The band strikes up and people stomp and cheer and deliver the most raucous rendition of the birthday song you've ever heard. There's

dancing and woo-hooing. You can wallow in the love. Bentley soaks it in—every week.

Bentley knows how to celebrate. He knows how to be the center of attention and how to bask in the love of others. He savors God's goodness.

I, on the other hand, most often don't dare celebrate. I wonder what people will think. I worry about pridefulness, or that it might be humiliating. Bentley gives no thought to these concerns. He just celebrates—often.

I recently celebrated 20 years of being ordained. But I didn't really. I stuffed my longing to be celebrated. I ignored it and moved on. Who cares about a mere 20 years of ordination? It's no big deal.

But on Sunday I watched Bentley celebrate his birthday for the umpteenth time. I noted his audacious assumption that he is worth celebrating. He is. I think maybe I should go buy a bag of Oreos, run up front, shout my name into the microphone, and tell folks I'm celebrating 20 years of ordination. Let them sing over me.

Bentley would. **B**



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