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- » Church Worldwide: Urged by Younger Members, Faith Groups Flock to March for Our Lives
- » Churches Seek Training Regarding Domestic Violence
- » CRC Pastor Meets Psychologist Jordan Peterson in Video Conversation
- » Movie: *Ready Player One*
- » Music: *Songs from the Valley* by Sandra McCracken
- » Book: *The Journey of Little Charlie* by Christopher Paul Curtis
- » As I Was Saying: Is *The Banner* Biased?
- » As I Was Saying: Reclaiming the Prophetic Imagination



FEATURES



10

'All Together in One Place'

Scott Hoezee // A pastor reflects on the value of collectively listening to sermons.



32

Faith and Climate Science

Clayton Carlson // For the sake of our witness, our young people, and our world, we must rise above fear, skepticism, or unwarranted optimism.



36

Faith Matters: Navigating Leadership Transitions in the Church

Geoff Vandermolen // What congregations can do—and avoid doing—when they're in a transition zone.



Cover: NASA photo // **Faith and Climate Science: Why the Church's Response to Climate Change Matters.** The role of the church is to remind the world and its leaders that this is God's good world.

COLUMNS

7 Editorial: Church and Politics—Again

Shiao Chong // The institutional church should not be reduced to either a political lobby group or a provider of religious goods and services.

8 Reply All

9 Vantage Point: Beyond Thoughts and Prayers

Justin Triemstra, M.D. // How do we as Reformed Christians respond to gun violence?

12 Big Questions

How can observing the Day of Justice help my church be more missional?

14 News

- » More Highlights of Winter Classis Meetings
- » Michigan Church Includes Housing Needs in Redevelopment Project
- » Denominational Staff, Minnkota Leaders Meet about *Do Justice* Blog

31 Discover: Gone Fishin’

Rachel Lancashire // We’re not the only creatures who catch fish for food.

35 The Other 6: Off the Clock

Zachary Vandenberg // For the next five days, I don’t know what time it is.

38 Mixed Media: Travel Wisely

Otto Selles // Tips from study-abroad programs that will make your travel abroad more meaningful.

40 Cross Examination: Why Does God Allow Suffering and Evil in the World?

Michael Wagenman // Christians have asked this question since the early church.

41 Point of View

Katerina Guthrie // Abuse. Aftermath. Recovery. Cycle.

47 Still: We Need More ‘Still’

Katie Ritsema-Roelofs // Each week I have the best seat in the house.

OUR SHARED MINISTRY

Editor Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



Why My Reformed Identity Matters

Brian Clark, Paola Fuentes-Gleghorn, Nancy VanderMeer, and Allyson Wierenga // Stories about living out our Reformed identity in ministry.

26 The View from Here: What Does It Mean to Be Christian Reformed?

Steve Timmermans // While I care a great deal about every generation in the CRC, the group I think about most is the young adult generation.

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Church and Politics—Again

It is time we determine whether our faith is shaping our politics or our politics has been shaping our faith.



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.

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THREE OVERTURES are coming to Synod 2018 having to do with the church and politics. Classis Minnkota and Columbia think the denomination has overreached its spiritual sphere and waded too deeply into political waters. Classis Minnkota wants “all agencies of the CRCNA to take up ecclesiastical matters only and to refrain from political advocacy.” Classis Columbia, however, draws the line at “political lobbying” while allowing for advocacy. Both overtures worry that denominational political activity will divide the church.

Classis British Columbia South-East (BCSE) also perceives that our unity is “threatened by a deep and growing divide and confusion about the practice of political discipleship.” But instead of shutting down political activity, it encourages the denomination “to foster discussion and education focused on the biblical principles for public discipleship,” which includes political discipleship.

I toyed with naming this editorial “Divided by Politics.” Our culture’s political polarization has infected our churches. We do not agree on what political policies we think Christians should support or oppose. In the United States especially, and to a growing degree in Canada, members of the Christian Reformed Church are split politically left or right. But why is a community that shares a common faith, a common Reformed tradition, and a common Bible so divided politically? It is time we determine whether our faith is shaping our politics or our politics has been shaping our faith.

Classes Minnkota and Columbia seem to assume that our political divisions are insurmountable, and we should simply not provoke the divisions further. Classis BCSE, however, thinks our political division stems from our

failure to adequately teach our members how to connect the dots from our faith to our politics. I lean toward Classis BCSE’s approach because I believe that if this underlying issue is not resolved, stopping political activity is only a Band-Aid solution at best. Granted, we may never reach full political agreement. But surely we can have greater political common ground than we have currently.

The institutional church should not be reduced to either a political lobby group or a provider of religious goods and services. In fact, the New Testament Greek word *ekklesia*, from which we get the word “ecclesiastical,” was originally “a political term in secular Greek—the citizen assembly of a Greek city (Acts 19:39)” (*Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., p. 47). A nonpolitical term for religious organizations—*thiasos*—was common during the New Testament era. Yet the early church chose to use a politically charged name, akin to our modern terms City Hall, Congress, or Parliament, to name itself. Why? If our churches today went by the terms of “the Congress of President Jesus” (because Caesar was “Lord”) in Los Angeles or “the Parliament of Prime Minister Jesus” in Toronto, would non-Christians think those terms were political? Is our current assumed definition of “ecclesiastical,” therefore, too narrow or unbiblical? Has it been shaped instead by our culture?

As I suggested in “Church and Politics” (Nov. 2017), we need to have tough conversations about church and politics that draw from various traditions, not just the Kuyperian one. And I don’t think synod is the best place for these particular conversations. They are best facilitated in a forum that allows for deep deliberations from our best thinkers with as few side political agendas as possible. Perhaps we need a task force to organize such a forum. Regardless of how, where, or when, we desperately need these discussions. B

Have you received our annual appeal letter? Please consider a gift. Or give online at TheBanner.org/Donate. Thank you!



REPLY ALL

New Banner

Thank you, thank you. I noticed “Punch Lines” is missing from the revamped *Banner*. That page bugged me so much. Jokes were too often profane, unfunny, or recycled from other sources. The few good ones certainly didn’t make up for the many bad ones. I am very glad you discontinued it.

» Coby Veenstra, Dresden, Ont.

Since coming out with the “new” *Banner* I am having trouble reading it. Is the print smaller or a different font? I did look at an online app so I can adjust the size but prefer to hold a print version to read while relaxing in a chair. I would assume most readers of the print version would prefer a larger print.

» Judy Strong, Pella, Iowa

Please, please bring back the joke page. Please!

» Jeff Nelson, Guam

Mirror and Forum

We must all look in the mirror and look deeply inside ourselves to see where we are going and what makes us tick (“Mirror and Forum,” March 2018). And we need to look at the blind spots in our lives. Sadly, some leaders simply can’t do that because they misuse their power. They don’t listen, and they have their own agenda. My prayer is that God seeks me over and over again.

» Andy A. Renema, Pitt Meadows, B.C.

The March issue was one of the best in recent memory. The editorial (“Mirror and Forum,” 2018) clearly spells out the basic mission of *The Banner*, and the subsequent articles deliver on those goals. What issues did the articles tackle?

Challenging churches to welcome those with disabilities. Calling out America’s gun culture as idolatrous. Exploring what ethnic and racial diversity means to the church. Winsomely arguing that church unity makes us a more effective witness. Faithful stewardship of financial resources. The centrality of feelings in the Reformed faith. Pop-culture misogyny that degrades women. Principles of biblical hermeneutics.

This collection of articles emerged as a cohesive whole. Congratulations, *Banner*, and keep up the faithful work.

» Steve Roels, Bath, Mich.

The Language of Feelings

Thanks for this, Ron! I found it helpful (“The Language of Feelings,” March 2018). I’ve wondered how the Western European cultures of the Reformers influenced the Reformation—did the Dutch and German tendency to “soldier on” (despite how one may feel) affect the theology we inherited from them? How was that theology culturally contextual? It was thought provoking to read the quotes you shared from people like Calvin about the importance of feelings.

» Danielle Steenwyk Rowaan, online comment

Love is a feeling, and also Jesus’ greatest command (“The Language of Feelings”). It’s feelings that elicit responses in us and thereby motivate us to Christ-like action. I don’t think it is the Reformed tradition that is so cerebral. My experience is that the immigrant mentality of the people was more responsible. Parents of my generation came to Canada and immediately put their nose to the grindstone to make successful lives for their families. Although church attendance was an essential element in that development, they didn’t allow themselves time for acknowledging and responding to feelings. I feel so blessed to be part of a church that readily acknowledges the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and motivates us to love God, each other, and our neighbors who need us all around the world. It is the basis for all of the ministries our church is involved in, both near and far. The

bonus? God blesses us by increasing our faith in him! Praise God!

» Elly VanAlten, online comment

I found myself both empathizing with and objecting to “The Language of Feelings.” While God has certainly created human beings with the gift of emotions, we were also created with intellect for reasoning. Both are part of the whole. I have personally been grateful for my intellect during those challenging moments of life such as my walk with cancer or the loss of loved ones. In those low moments, it is easy to feel that God has abandoned me, but my intellect assures me that he has not done that. Since many biblical scholars see the heart, body, and soul as one component—in essence, our consciousness—it seems that the heart as it is used in Scripture is much more inclusive than only emotion.

» Linda Vanderaa, Edgerton, Minn.

Editor’s Note: The article in question made this point: “We are not only to think and act Christianly; we are to feel Christianly.”

Food Ethics

I am a small organic dairy/egg farmer and would like to add to Matt Halteman’s article (“Eating toward Shalom,” March 2018) from the perspective of a farming family that is partly responsible for the health of the North American public. Since the industrial revolution, agricultural institutions have ingrained in the minds of farmers that they must become ever-increasingly “efficient” and produce cheap food for the consuming public. But this thinking has come at a cost that we are only now starting to realize: health issues; soil nutrient depletion and erosion; and water and environmental concerns due to the overuse of pesticides, commercial fertilizers, and antibiotics.

Done properly, farming is an integral part of our communities, both in producing healthy food and being part of a “rural economic local” environment. I thank God every day for this talent that has been given me: to toil, to sweat, to teach my children, to deal with sickness and death, to see new life, to feel satisfied at

the end of the day and rest—and finally to leave this Earth in better shape than I found it!

» Marte Pronk, Harriston, Ont.

I am deeply disappointed about the article “Eating toward Shalom” from an academic with no real experience in agriculture. Not only does this piece romanticize agriculture from days of yore; it does not comprehend the advances in animal or crop sciences that have made farming much more than what it was in my grandfather’s day. If you are interested in farming or advances in agriculture, find a farmer to talk to. We are on social media trying to reach nonfarmers.

» Jodi DeHate, Marion, Mich.

We now have undeniable evidence that North American food choices are having a detrimental effect on public health and on the health of the planet (“Eating toward Shalom”). Seven out of the top 10 causes of death in the U.S. are directly related to our overconsumption of ultra-processed foods and animal-based foods. Animal agriculture contributes significantly to greenhouse gas production (even more than all of the transportation sector), to excessive freshwater consumption, and to soil degradation. Adding to this, Matt Halteman raises important philosophical and ethical questions in this article that Christians should strongly consider as they make their daily decisions about what to eat. Those decisions contribute every bit as much to our integral mission and Christian witness as the testimonies we share about the gospel’s redemptive power.

» Dave Koetje, online comment

Guns in Church

Almost every victim of a shooting at a church, school, or concert thought it would never happen to them (“Big Questions,” March 2018). Trained concealed-weapons holders could stop a small tragedy from turning into a big one. What plan does your church have?

» David Vander Sluis, Holland, Mich.

READ MORE ONLINE

Beyond Thoughts and Prayers

THE SCHOOL SHOOTING in Parkland, Fla., reminds us of the epidemic of gun violence in the United States. According to Everytown for Gun Safety research, this was the 18th incident involving guns on school campuses in 2018—a horrifying statistic that will likely keep rising. As a pediatrician who completed medical school and residency training on the south and west sides of Chicago, I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of gun violence, from the 2-year-old child accidentally shot by his 8-year-old sibling to the 15-year-old who died by suicide with his father’s gun. These scenarios have contributed to my belief that offering “thoughts and prayers” is simply not an appropriate response when it comes to gun violence.

In residency, you spend a great many days and nights at the hospital. You get used to the constant pecking of computer keys and the beeping of heart monitors. But in children’s hospitals, there is one sound you never get used to and will never forget: the primal cry that occurs when a mother first hears that her child has died from gun violence. My former colleague Sameer Vohra, M.D., J.D., M.A., describes it in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*: “It is as if this loud, simultaneously high-pitched and bellowing shriek was predisposed to occur in mothers for one, and only one, event. . . . This scream means only one thing—the death of a child.”


According to a recent study in *Pediatrics*, this scream occurs, on average, 1,297 times every year due to guns. Gun-related deaths are now the third-leading cause of death in children in the U.S. In 2016 there were 14,925 homicidal gun-related deaths,

22,938 suicidal gun-related deaths, and 795 unintentional or undetermined-intent gun-related deaths. With all of this senseless violence, how do we as Reformed Christians respond? Is it enough to say, “Our thoughts and prayers are with you”?

John Calvin wrote in his *Institutes* regarding the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder”: “We are required to do what in us lies to defend the life of our neighbor, to promote whatever tends to his tranquility, to be vigilant in warding off harm, and when danger comes, to assist in removing it.” Therefore, in my opinion, it seems we can do more. We are taught to engage and reform the world by investing our energy and resources in Christ-centered political and social action. As a community of Reformed believers, let us use our energy to stop this senseless violence and assist in removing this danger from our communities.

Now is the time for action.

Now is the time for the removal of guns from our communities.

Now is the time for *shalom*. 



Justin D. Triemstra, M.D., is assistant professor of pediatrics at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital. He attends LaGrave Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.



‘All Together in One Place’

by Scott Hoezee

It was one of the most striking things I ever experienced.

In 2005, after 15 years of pastoral ministry (12 of them spent at Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.), I went to Calvin Theological Seminary to become the director of its Center for Excellence in Preaching. During the transition from pastor to faculty member, I realized I would go back to being a guest preacher on any number of Sundays. I'd had some experience with this. As a seminary student, I would take various pulpit assignments in a variety of West Michigan congregations. Back then it had been a good experience, so I figured it would be a good experience again. Finding a sermon would be no problem—I had a big backlog to draw from!

In the logbook where I kept track of each sermon I preached, I added a little star to those that seemed to be particularly well received. So when I started looking for sermons to take on the road, I began with those starred sermons.

That's when it happened. I reread sermon after sermon only to discover something I'd never realized before: Those sermons “worked” because they took place in a congregation I knew well and that knew me as their pastor. That collective chemistry between congregation and pastor influenced how those sermons were written, how they were received, and how they felt to me when the worship services were over. As it turned out, I could not just take those sermons and preach them any old place and expect it to sound or feel the same.

That discovery was just one small window that helped me peer into a larger truth: Sermons are first and foremost live events that take place in a specific time and place and that the Spirit uses to connect with a specific congregation gathered in the presence of God.

These days we can read, listen to, or watch sermons in a variety of places. YouTube is filled with sermons from local churches and from well-known preachers. This can be a blessing. Years ago most churches made cassette tapes of their worship services and brought them to the elderly or others unable to make it to church. Most churches called this a “tape ministry”—and indeed, it was a *ministry*. Those tapes blessed many people.

So I don't mean to knock the value of sermons absorbed in places other

than church. But given the availability of sermons in formats you can listen to from the convenience of your home or while using the treadmill at Planet Fitness, is there still value in listening to sermons collectively? Does it make any difference whether you take in a sermon all by yourself as opposed to shoulder to shoulder with fellow church members?

The answer, I think, is yes, though this is not exactly something we can quantify or measure. From the day of Pentecost—when “they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1), which may be significant—preaching has always been a public, live, in-person event involving the one who preaches and the gathering of all those who listen. Sometimes that gathered assembly interacts audibly with the preacher. The call-and-response tradition makes listeners an active part of the sermon; calls of “Yes!” and “Amen!” and “Preach it!” and “There it is!” become a kind of barometer indicating that the preacher is reaching the congregation. Of course, other traditions are far more quiet but no less engaged in the preaching moment. At times people may laugh as they listen; other times they may find their eyes filling with tears. Sometimes they smile, and other times they nod in approval.

Weaving in and through those responses is the Holy Spirit, who takes the words of the sermon and applies them in about as many ways as there are people listening. Of course, those reactions can also happen when watching a sermon on YouTube while sitting at your desk. You don’t need to be in a gathering of God’s people to be moved or convicted by a sermon.

But even as I did not notice at the time how my sermons at Calvin CRC were tailored for a specific group at a specific moment in time, so also we may fail to notice that each congregation has its own unique personality, needs, and sensibilities at any given moment. The Spirit uses preaching—both individual sermons and the overall


arc of preaching over months and years—to shape a particular people for the ministry challenges and opportunities that are before them. We are the body of Christ, and though that means each member plays a different role as a different part of the body, only by being collectively shaped does that one body become capable of doing the work God is calling it to do.

The Spirit uses preaching—both individual sermons and the overall arc of preaching over months and years—to shape a particular people for the ministry challenges and opportunities that are before them.

Similarly, many of us realize that how we feel about a given movie has a lot to do with the first time we saw it in a theater. There is something almost magical about being with other people, collectively laughing at something funny or shrieking together at a scary moment. This experience sticks with us even if we rewatch the movie at home. The same is true of watching football or basketball or hockey: You might have a better view of the game if you stayed home and watched it on TV, but you’d miss out on the energy of being part of a cheering crowd.

If that can happen with movies and football games among strangers, how much more powerful it is to

be gathered with our sisters and brothers in Christ! The Holy Spirit is very good at making sermon listening into a corporate experience of the one body of Christ. We can talk about the sermon together after the service; some churches even provide a structured time for this to happen. But whether in a group discussion or a casual conversation, someone may point out something about that morning’s message that you missed or make a connection you had not seen that becomes a powerful revelation. And always we remember what it was like to experience the work of the Spirit in the company of others. Our mutual reception of the message becomes indelible.

When the sermon is finished, it is the one people of God who get to experience what the sermon leads to or what it contributes to the work of ministry. In the mystery of preaching, the collective experience of sensing the Spirit’s movement among us becomes vital to the whole preaching event. The sermon that made such an impact in one congregation might not work in another place among other people. But it works today, it works here, and it works for us. In this way God’s promise to equip the saints for the work of ministry in Christ’s name is fulfilled. And, as at the church’s inception, this works best when we are all together in one place. 



Scott Hoezee is director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

BIG QUESTIONS

Ethics

If, as was suggested in this column earlier, gambling is wrong because it is profiting at someone else's expense and does not show love to your neighbor, what of shareholding in the marketplace?

In that previous article, I defined gambling as “artificially increasing risk in order to profit at someone else's expense.” Therefore, I do not view shareholding in the stock market as inherently gambling.

People can definitely gamble with their money at the stock market, but that is not what it is intended to do. For instance, people can bet and gamble on a football game. But that does not make any playing or watching the sport of football a form of gambling.

The stock market, as I understand it, is designed for investors to purchase shares of ownership in companies and profit from their growth in value. In return, companies get capital to help them grow their business. It is intended to be a win-win trade-off. There are risks, of course, as not every company does well. But that is a natural risk of doing business. It is not an artificially increased risk. All sorts of human actions and relationships carry risks. Risk alone does not turn something into gambling.

Overall, stocks tend to rise in value over the long term. Investors who hold on to stocks long term usually earn profits. But when people focus on making a quick buck, it distorts



investment into a form of gambling. These end up playing the stock's short-term fluctuations for profit, often in disregard of a company's actual worth and performance.

Scripture warns against such desires for get-rich-quick schemes: “A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished” (Prov. 28:20).

People who invest for the long term in shareholding are not, in my view, necessarily gambling. There are, however, other ethical considerations with shareholding. For example, do the companies we invest in have ethical business practices? Do they attempt to be environmentally conscious? Ethical investing is an option.

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

Relationships

Why does it so often happen that by the time churches and pastors part ways, the relationship has become strained or even antagonistic?

One possible reason for strained relationships between pastors and

churches is the tendency of churches to put their pastors on a pedestal, with impossible expectations of responsibility for a congregation's flourishing as a community. When pastors also place these expectations on themselves, the potential for failure is greatly multiplied, with the possibility of creating resentment and frustration for all—and burnout for the pastor.

When a congregation's leadership holds the pastor responsible for “fixing” what might have historically been an unhealed or divisive issue within a particular congregation—good luck! A pastor can help a congregation face its own flaws, including historic sins and hurts, and thereby help create change. But this can happen only if the pastor knows him- or herself to be equally flawed and identifies with the continued need for repentance and humility.

For this reason, whatever might need changing in a congregation must be initiated by the whole council—elected deacons, elders, and pastor—in a shared acceptance of responsibility so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, under the rule and grace of Jesus our King, change and growth can lead to new flourishing, with a

vision focused on following Christ rather than on following a pastor.

Both pastors and congregations would do well to remember that a pedestal by definition is a small and lonely place with little room to maneuver freely. It is also a place from which one can fall and land hard. It might be envied as a lofty perch that provides a great vista, but in the end, it is not what God provides for the flourishing of every congregation who calls Jesus Lord.

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

Missional Living

How can observing the Day of Justice help my church become more missional?

I'm sure you have encountered the brokenness of relationships, governments, and society. It would be easy to throw your hands up and never leave your home. But as Reformed Christians, we are called to enter into the world's pain with our heads, hands, hearts, and financial resources. Biblical justice is our Lord's command for us as his agents of shalom to advocate for the dispossessed to have access to basic needs, to seek reconciliation across the hard edges of race, and to help equitably rebuild places that have experienced natural disasters. When pursued, the mission of God is winsome and attractive.

CRC Executive Director Steve Timmermans has said, "The Lord is not telling us to 'relax a bit.' He's saying, 'Speak the gospel truth, be my servants.' We have a faithful track record of speaking the gospel in Word and in deed to a hurting and broken world." In other words, the Christian Reformed Church takes the view that the work of World Renew in assisting in natural disasters and redeveloping shattered communities around the globe matters. The work of churches across North America taking aim at targets of injustice

and inequity in neighborhoods and rural hamlets matters too. The Day of Justice, established by Synod 2017, is meant to build a groundswell of restoring right relationships between God, people, and society.

What can your church do on this third Sunday in August? Discern the ways your church's ministries are touching areas of brokenness. Highlight them in a service of lament, prayer, and a call to action on August 19. Visit the CRCNA Day of Justice website (crcna.org/dayofjustice) for additional worship and education ideas. Join with other churches in your area who are doing justice work and make a bigger impact together. Enact a day of service for all members and report their stories to encourage everyone that God uses us to bring hope and healing in Jesus' name.

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

Faith Formation

Next year we will have nine 3-year-old children joining our Children's Worship group. We wonder how to have a meaningful worship time with so many young children. Any suggestions?

What a blessing! Children this age are exciting but also challenging and tiring. They are old enough to do some structured activities, and they can listen to a short story. But they can have rigid expectations that established patterns will continue and may have trouble adjusting to transitions and changes in their routines.

One way to think about your question is to remember the purpose of Children's Worship for 3-year-olds. Kids—as well as their parents and worship leaders—need to hear God's stories; they need to know there is a place for them in your church; and they need to build

relationships with the church community as they worship.

Our first suggestion is to consider putting this group into two worship centers instead of one. You will have to deal with logistics: an extra room, extra materials, and extra volunteers, for example.

Practically speaking, whether you keep the children in one room or make two rooms, consider introducing the children to the classroom one or two at a time, by age or readiness, giving those children a chance to acclimate before adding more children. Having children join on their 3-year birthday or when their parents think they are ready is one way to help this transition go smoothly.

Take time to connect with each child. Facilitate this by adding adult leaders or teen helpers to lower the child-to-adult ratio. Schedule times to split up the group. Some children could have a leader read a book while others gather to listen to the Bible story. One group could play with Play-doh while the other responds to music.

It's easy to get caught up in the details, but worshiping with children is a wonderful experience. You get a front-row seat to seeing children experience the stories of God for the first time.

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 a professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.



More Highlights of Winter Classis Meetings

NEWS

For more news and longer stories about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit *TheBanner.org*. Or get the free app by searching for “CRCNA Banner” in your app store.

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Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to their classis, a regional grouping of churches. Here are the highlights of classis meetings of the past few months.

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include seminary graduates Benjamin McKnight, Matthew Pearce, Sheri Leisman, David E. Shin, Joanna Wigboldy, and George Keulen.

Ministers **transferring in from other denominations** were Revs. Chulhan Cho, Man Sub (Lewis) Kim, Faith Lim Goek Keng, and Daniel Hong Youn Kim.

Heu Guy (Dave) Park, Peter Stellingwerff, and John Ritsema were **declared eligible for call**.

Minister released from a congregation: Rev. Yi-Min Kao, from CrossPoint Chinese Church.

Released from ministry in the CRC: Matthew Kim, Edward Kim, Peter Choi.

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

An emerging church does not have its own council and is under the care of a

council of a neighboring CRC. An organized church has its own council.

Korean New Beginnings of Crosspoint, Chino, Calif., was declared **emerging**.

CrossWay Church of Battle Ground, Wash., was declared **organized**.

NexGen **changed** from emerging status to youth group of Little Saigon CRC in Westminster, Calif.

Cleveland Zion Church was welcomed as an **organized** congregation into the CRC.

Synod 2018

Classes Illiana and Atlantic Northeast ask Synod 2018 to establish a fund for **expenses of immigrant churches** affiliating with the CRC and securing pastoral leadership.

Stephenville (Tex.) CRC asks to transfer to Classis Rocky Mountain to better work together with other CRCs located in Texas. **Hope Community CRC** in Indianapolis, Ind., requests a transfer to Classis Kalamazoo because it seats women as delegates. **Peace CRC** in Menno, S.D., requests a transfer to

Noteworthy

Mikayla Flikkema, 12, a member of **Community CRC in Kitchener, Ont.**, completed her second annual climb to the top of the CN Tower in **World Wildlife Fund’s Climb for Nature**— 1,776 steps to the top!

An extensive partnership between **River Christian Reformed Church and Lugonia Elementary School** in Redlands, Calif., has been recognized with a **Golden Bell Award** for excellence in education from the California School Boards Association.

Christian Reformed campus minister **Mike Wissink**, who serves as team chaplain to **Ferris State University’s men’s basketball** team, accompanied the team to its **national championship** game in Sioux Falls, S.D. It was the first national title for the Big Rapids, Mich. school.

Robert Joustra, a member of First CRC in Hamilton, Ont, and associate professor of politics and international studies at **Redeemer University College**, has become the **new editor of Public Justice Review**, the core academic publication of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C.



Mikayla Flikkema

Michigan Church Includes Housing Needs in Redevelopment Project

Classis Minnkota because it does not seat women as delegates.

Classis Minnkota requests that Synod 2018 clarify that Church Order article 30 **allows one classis to appeal to another classis.**

Classis Minnkota requests Synod 2018 to ensure agencies of the CRC **refrain from political advocacy and revise the mandates** of the Office of Social Justice and the Centre for Public Dialogue. Classis Columbia asks Synod 2018 to instruct the agencies and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church to **stop political lobbying** on behalf of the CRCNA.

Classis British Columbia South East asks Synod 2018 to encourage **discussion and education focused on the biblical principles for public discipleship** and that the executive director monitor progress made and report to Synod 2019.

Classis Niagara asks synod to establish an **annual compensation survey for commissioned pastors** and a defined contribution **pension plan for commissioned pastors.**

Classis Huron requests a **standing translation committee** to report to synod regarding Bible translations.

Classis Huron asks Synod 2018 to approve a one-time ministry share increase of **\$150,000 to fund approved curricula solutions**, clarify the mandate of Faith Formation Ministries to **include development of Reformed curricula**, and **clarify expectations for denominational funding of that.**

Classis Zeeland requests that the CRC **honor the Synod of Dort** and teach its main points of doctrine in 2019.

**Full overtures are included in the Agenda for Synod 2018, available from Synod Resources.*

—Banner Staff



Photo by Stephen Mallon

Madison Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., is working with a local nonprofit organization to redevelop the building that was the original home of Grand Rapids Christian High School—both creating worship space and contributing to affordable housing in the community.

Dubbed the “415 Franklin Project,” named for the building’s address, plans call for the redevelopment of the 72,000-square-foot building to include 40 low-income apartments on the upper two floors and a worship center on the main floor. Project director Layla Kuhl said the building, originally built in the 1920s, was donated to the church in 2015 by developer Ed DeVries. He wanted to see it redeveloped as a Christ-centered building and community resource.

“For the last three years, we’ve been talking with a lot of organizations, talking to neighbors, doing grassroots work [in determining] what would benefit the community, what their needs and aspirations [for the site] are,” Kuhl said.

The building was home to Christian High until the late 1970s, and then served as headquarters for the Kent County Department of Human Services until 2009. It has been vacant ever since.

Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF), a nonprofit housing organization, is taking

Interior view of 415 Franklin Project.

the lead on the housing portion of the project, having already secured state-allocated tax credits to finance construction. Rent for the apartments will be based on tenant income levels, Kuhl said.

Grand Rapids city officials approved the project last fall. An architect is being hired to develop an overall footprint for the project, and Madison is expected to consult with a church planner on how to develop its portion of the building—one branch of its multi-site ministry.

“Our vision is to have our space for our church, to have it well-used, and partner with other organizations that are doing good work in Grand Rapids,” Kuhl said.

ICCF is also redeveloping another Grand Rapids project linked to members of a local church—Eastern Avenue CRC. A group of 14 investing households from the church launched Restoration Row LLC in 2008 to secure property for redevelopment. This year the group will sell the properties to ICCF to begin the work. Michigan state tax credits are again a key part of ICCF’s financing of the Eastern Ave. project, which will include affordable housing.

—Greg Chandler

Denominational Staff, Minnkota Leaders Meet about *Do Justice* Blog

When leaders of Classis Minnkota (a regional group of churches) met with denominational staff of the Christian Reformed Church, all agreed that it was good to meet face to face to talk about the controversy of the CRC's *Do Justice* blog.

The blog is produced by the CRC's Office of Social Justice (OSJ) and the CRC's Centre for Public Dialogue in Canada. Minnkota leaders said it includes articles that promote syncretism. Staff said the blog is a place to begin conversations about social justice and ministry contextualization.

That disagreement came to a head at Synod 2017 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) when Classis Minnkota asked for better oversight of the blog "to ensure that the posted articles are in line with Scripture and our confessions and that articles that are not in line with Scripture and our confessions are removed." (See *Agenda for Synod 2017*, pp. 424-428.) Its request noted a number of articles in which the authors reported and explored participation in First Nations religious ceremonies, including a new moon ceremony and prayer in the name of the Great Spirit.

OSJ's response, published in the *Acts of Synod 2017* (pp. 583-587), said that questions of syncretism and pluralism have already been dealt with extensively by synods and particularly by the Canadian churches of the CRC. "Classis Minnkota's concerns about syncretism and the integration of culture and Christian faith are critical—even suspicious—of non-European practices, and do not evidently examine European syncretisms," it read. "We observe a prevailing assumption in the church that Western European practices and interpretations are normative in Christianity."

Synod 2017's directives (*Acts of Synod 2017*, starting at p. 638) included telling those who have oversight of the *Do Justice* blog to "ensure that the articles are written in such a way that they encourage a Reformed understanding of Scripture." There is now a disclaimer at the bottom of *Do Justice* articles: "The Reformed family is a diverse family with a diverse range of opinions. Not all perspectives expressed on the blog represent the official positions of the Christian Reformed Church."

It also instructed the executive director, in the spirit of Matthew 18, to initiate a face-to-face visit between Classis Minnkota and representatives from the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice to discuss the issues presented in the overture.

Participants gathered on February 28 in Sioux Falls, S.D., and shared a meal before discussing the matter at hand. They included CRC executive director Steven Timmermans; Rev. Reggie Smith and Mike Hogeterp, who supervise *Do Justice*; Rev. Duane Kelderman as theological consultant; Revs. Roger Sparks, Joseph VandenAkker, and LeRoy Christoffels, members of the Classis Minnkota interim committee; and Rev. Joshua Christoffels, a delegate to Synod 2017 from Classis Minnkota. Two Christian Indigenous leaders, Darlene Silversmith and Harold Roscher, also participated and shared from their experience.

No one went into the meeting expecting the issues to be resolved. "The goal of the meeting was to illuminate understanding between Minnkota and the leaders of *Do Justice* about the articles in question," Smith said. "Synod is a terrible venue for having these kinds of conversations. This venue was not set up as a battlefield but a table for

story, understanding, questions, and fellowship."

Hogeterp said, "I suspect that there was some new understanding on issues of cross-cultural ministry amongst us. There are also areas of ongoing disagreement, all of which points to the importance of ongoing conversation on matters of cross-cultural mission."

Joshua Christoffels said that while it was helpful to hear the perspectives of all those present, including those from the Indigenous community, they didn't seem to come to any conclusions about what is and is not acceptable worship practice.

Sparks said it isn't enough to post a disclaimer saying that an article doesn't necessarily reflect the views of the CRCNA. "Our conviction is that the post [about the new moon ceremony] should be removed from the CRCNA website because it presents in a positive light a practice that the Bible forbids."

Smith said there is much to be learned from the conversation. "We can learn from the Minnkota conversation that controversy doesn't have to be a battle for theological winners and losers. It could be a way forward in finding common ground, gaining understanding, and moving forward as a unified church of Jesus Christ."

VandenAkker agreed that it was beneficial to get to know each other directly and personally but that more needs to be done. "The purpose of the meeting was not to produce a synodical report on this issue, which is what is really needed to provide the theological and practical guidance necessary for the denomination to 'do justice' to this issue," he said.

—Gayla R. Postma

'The Art of Water' Inspires Sermon Series



Photo: Susan Vanden Berg

Preaching and painting came together in a recent sermon series at Second Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich. The latest exhibit at the church's Atrium Gallery—"The Art of Water: Exploring the Biblical Theme of Water as a Cosmic Force, as a Source of Life, as a Cleansing Agent"—served as the inspiration for pastor Laura de Jong, who integrated the displayed artworks with her weekly messages.

Over the gallery's 14 years, this is the first time an exhibit has been featured in a sermon series. Using various pieces from the exhibit as a backdrop, de Jong preached five sermons on the water theme. "I wanted to present a variety of stories in which water plays different roles," she said of her sermon-planning process. "Water can give life, it can destroy life, it can be dried up, it can be poured out. So I chose different kinds of texts from throughout Scripture."

"The Art of Water" displayed more than 40 pieces in a variety of media from 24 artists, including Betsy Steele Halstead, Robin Jensen, and Julie Quinn. Some

Pieces from Robin Jensen, professor emeritus of Calvin College, and Julie Quinn (center).

artists created works especially for this exhibit, such as Matt Plescher, whose painting "*The River from the Temple*" was based on Ezekiel 47, one of the passages on which de Jong preached.

During the sermon series, de Jong projected a single piece of artwork in the sanctuary each week. She said, "I don't often reference it in the sermon, but as a visual learner myself, it gives people something to meditate on during the sermon and adds an extra layer of meaning or significance to what I'm saying."

The gallery, which shows three to four exhibits a year, is open for visitors weekdays during church office hours.

—Susan Vanden Berg

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Harry Andrew Van Dam
1931-2018

Pastor, missionary, chaplain, and counselor, Harry Van Dam had a heart for people who are destitute, especially people with addictions. Van Dam, 86, died on February 4 in Sioux Falls, S.D.

After eighth grade, Van Dam began farming with his father and did so until he heard God's call to ministry and enrolled at Calvin College in 1957. He went on to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary and complete a Master's in Pastoral Counseling at Fuller Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1965.

Over the years, Van Dam served the following: Valley CRC, Albuquerque, N.M.; Cook Christian Training School, Tempe, Ariz.; Christian Indian Center, Denver, Colo.; and Calvary Rehabilitation Center, Phoenix, Ariz.

After retiring in 1997, Van Dam and his wife, Tressa, continued ministry with small churches on the Navajo reservations around Denver. After Tressa died in 2003, he volunteered as chaplain during the winter at Green Oak Ranch in southern California. In 2008, he wed Carolyn Vander Haar, with whom he spent many happy winters in Mesa, Ariz., and summers in Edgerton, Minn.

Van Dam will be missed by Carolyn and by their blended family of eight children, 25 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

—Janet Greidanus

READ MORE ONLINE

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Albert Vanden Pol
1925-2018

As he served seven Christian Reformed churches in Canada over a period of 35 years, Albert Vanden Pol touched many people with his pastoral heart and gentle spirit. "He was a follower of Jesus through whom grace flowed freely," said a pastor who knew him well. Until he died on January 24 in Surrey, B.C., at the age of 92, Vanden Pol's mind remained sharp, and he retained his excellent memory for names and events.

After Vanden Pol graduated in 1948 from the School of Theology Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, he pastored a church in Groningen and served two years in the Royal Dutch Army as a chaplain.

In 1955, he immigrated with his young family to Canada, where he pastored First CRC in Rocky Mountain House, Alta. From there, he served five churches in Ontario before moving west to serve Fleetwood CRC in British Columbia. He retired in 1990.

Predeceased by his wife, Harriet, in 2004, Vanden Pol was also predeceased by two sons, a daughter, and a grandchild. He is lovingly remembered by his remaining five children and their spouses, 18 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Janet Greidanus

News Digest

by *Banner* Correspondents



Ontario Church Offers Home to Community Food Program

People have been coming to Lucknow (Ont.) Community Christian Reformed Church to pick up boxes of fresh produce and enjoy a bit of fellowship each month since 2002. The church serves as a venue for sorting, packing, and distributing the produce through the Good Food Box program, an initiative of the Grey-Bruce (County) Health Unit.

In an effort to promote healthy eating in a community without its own grocery store, the program offers a small crate filled with a variety of fruits and vegetables for a cost of \$15. Rev. Tim Leferink, the church's pastor, is a regular volunteer along with four other members of the church and many people from the community.

Michigan Churches Strengthen Intercultural Friendship

Members of Trinity CRC in Grandville, Mich., and members of Rosedale Park Baptist Church in Detroit have been building cross-cultural relationships for the past eight years. At a Sunday afternoon meeting in February they talked and prayed together about race and faith.

Rosedale Park pastor Haman Cross Jr. presented the message during morning worship at Trinity CRC while about 25 Rosedale Park members visited the congregation. At a luncheon after the service, members of the two congregations discussed such questions as, What does it mean to be white in America? What does it mean to be black in America?



B.C. Churches Host 'Reframing Retirement' Workshop

In March, Classis British Columbia South-East, a regional group of Christian Reformed churches, invited participants to rethink the way people live into retirement. Supported by churches in a cohort organized by Faith Formation Ministries, two presenting speakers facilitated sessions on facing the new realities of life after 30 to 40 years of work experiences.

Safe Church Conference Highlights Need for Strategies to End Gender Violence

Hosted by the Classis Huron Safe Church Committee, the annual multi-region conference in Waterloo, Ont., this year offered an afternoon session called *Creating a Safe and Just Community*. Presenters Joan Tuchlinsky, public education manager of the Sexual Assault support Centre of Waterloo, and TK Pritchard, an educator with Male Allies, asked participants to consider how faith communities can contribute to ending gender violence.

"We recognize that men and boys have a unique responsibility in being able to talk specifically to other men about sexual violence . . . and the ways that we interact with and treat women," said Pritchard. "We can talk to one another in a way that sometimes women are much more silenced . . . [or] we can support them and share the message that we want to treat women and girls with respect."

[READ MORE](#) [ONLINE](#)

Companionship Training Prepares Church to Welcome Its Neighbors



Amber Saldivar, disability advocate at Awake Church in Seattle, Wash., says her congregation is “in a community where we encounter disabilities of all kinds on a daily basis.” That reality prompted the Christian Reformed congregation to consider how prepared they are to welcome those with particular needs. They set about equipping their members to do just that.

In February about a dozen members of Awake Church gathered for Companionship Training. The goal was to develop a network of hosts with the skills to embrace whomever they encounter—ensuring that everyone who enters the church feels welcome and supported.

The Aurora neighborhood where the church is situated

has become known for drug use and homelessness. “We wanted to be really intentional about welcoming people who might cause some to feel quite uncomfortable because of their appearance or behavior, and this training and host program have been a great first step,” Saldivar said. “We purposefully encouraged certain people to attend, based on their gifts and talents in the area of hospitality and leadership.”

Every week a designated host welcomes all newcomers and guests and also monitors the comings and goings from the church building. The training, which Saldivar developed with support from Disability Concerns staff, consisted of dialogue and some vignettes of situations that could arise.

Participants in Companion Training, Awake Church.

“The [hosts], while they still may feel uncomfortable, would feel equipped enough to approach a wide range of people,” Saldivar said. “They would also step up with kindness and skill to engage when someone is disrupting the experience of others in the service.”

Saldivar sees the host program as a beginning step. The church is looking into de-escalation training as well as other resources to further assist them in welcoming everyone.

—Dan Veeneman

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Jochem Vugteveen
1933-2018

Jochem (Joe) Vugteveen was a humble man with an ecumenical spirit and a warm, welcoming smile. With forthrightness, he worked hard to help those who needed an advocate. In the sixties he was involved in racial justice issues in Classis Chicago North. He was an advocate for women in ecclesiastical office and served on the synodical committee in 1978. Vugteveen died on February 1 at the age of 84.

After attending Calvin College and Seminary, Vugteveen began ministry in 1962 and served CRC congregations in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ontario, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Much of his ministry had an evangelistic emphasis. In Classis Hackensack, he served as Home Missions board member and president and was part of the denominational regional Home Missions team for several years.

Vugteveen retired in 1998. As part-time ministry coordinator for Classis Georgetown, he helped establish homes for adults with special needs. As interim pastor he also helped First CRC in Paterson, N.J., close and transform into Bridgeway CRC.

Vugteveen is survived by Marlene, his wife of 57 years, by four children and their spouses, and 9 grandchildren.

—Janet Greidanus

Florida Church Feeding Teens Post-Hurricane

South Kendall Christian Reformed Church in Miami, Fla., has developed a ministry of feeding high school students experiencing homelessness. The small congregation started feeding 120 teens in September 2017 following the destruction and displacement left by Hurricane Irma. Now the church is serving more than 170 teens each week.

Daniel Vander Woude, an elder at the church, noticed the need through his involvement in Youth for Christ and brought it to the attention of the congregation.

All 175 people in the congregation are involved in the ministry in some way: buying or making food, gathering donations from community businesses, sewing backpacks, or providing other



Bagged lunches ready to go.

needs. Other businesses and organizations in the community have stepped in to donate as well.

Each week a team of 10 to 15 volunteers from the congregation meets to supply ready-made sandwiches and other portable food to the teens. The food is packaged in lunch bags along with a printed

Scripture text. A teacher at Southridge Senior High School picks up the items to be delivered to a confidential room at the school where teens can pick up the lunches without stigma.

Volunteers guard the teens' confidentiality and are sensitive to the dangers they face.

"You can't imagine what these children are exposed to, being homeless," said Carmen Ramon, a deacon leading the project, mentioning risks such as exposure to drugs, human trafficking, and other abuses.

South Kendall CRC plans to expand the ministry to include other necessary items and counseling services.

—Eliza Anderson

Northern Michigan Church Offers 'Drive-Thru' Prayer

When the National Day of Prayer rolled around in 2017, Calvin Christian Reformed Church in McBain, Mich., offered something different to those passing by its rural highway parking lot—"drive-thru" prayer. The congregation expected to offer the same service this year as the U.S. once again marks the day for prayer on the first Thursday in May.

The church's pastor, Ken Koning, and prayer group leader, Harriet Borgman, had wanted to do something different last year, apart from the typical annual recognition of joining for an evening prayer service with other local churches.

The church had volunteers ready to pray with anyone who stopped by between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. and again from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. "We thought that over the lunch and dinner hours would be when the most traffic would be moving by the church, and people would be most available to perhaps drive in and

pray," Koning said. "[The church is] sitting on a highway . . . so as people get close to our church coming from either way, we'll have some signs up." The church's prayer plan was covered in a local paper, and Calvin CRC invited other churches to participate too. Borgman and Koning had come up with the idea after reading about a church in another state offering "drive-thru" prayer and thought they'd try it.

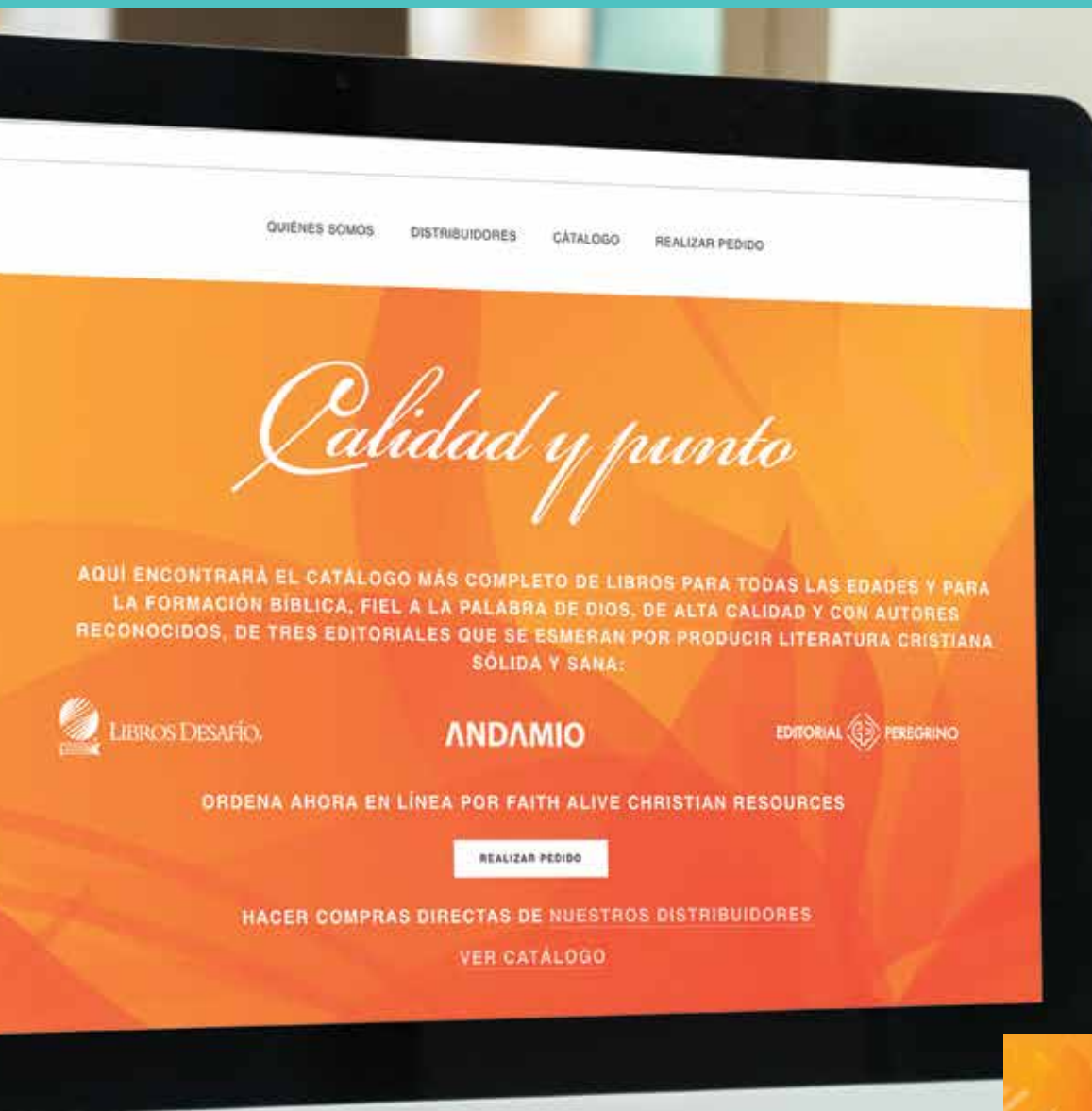
In 2017 nine volunteers participated over the two time slots, and seven people stopped by to ask for prayer—including two who were strangers to the congregation. "One [woman] had just lost a good friend, and as she was driving by and saw the sign, she said 'Oh my, I could use prayer right now,' so she pulled in," Koning said. The church members were pleased with the first attempt and decided to mount it again this year.

—Alissa Vernon



A volunteer prays with someone who pulled in for prayer.

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Why My Reformed Identity



By Brian Clark, Paola Fuentes-Gleghorn,
Nancy Vander Meer, and Allyson Wierenga

Matters

You may have asked yourself, “What difference does being Reformed really

make?” Our Reformed identity is much more than a set of theological principles. It’s a biblically-based framework for building a life that is deep and rich and shaped by the knowledge that, as the Heidelberg Catechism says, “I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ” (Q&A 1).

Faith Formation Ministries has developed a resource, available at crcna.org/network, that details 10 ways our Reformed identity shapes our lives.

The short stories on the next few pages are real-life examples of how Reformed ideas are helping members of the Christian Reformed Church contribute to God’s kingdom around the world while also learning from the wisdom of other traditions.

These stories reflect ministries that were started by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church as a way to live out our Reformed identity. Most of these initiatives are still supported by CRC ministry shares as part of our shared Reformed ministry.

God’s Story Shapes the Story of My Life

Ronnie Lopez’s passion for the Reformed faith stems from his time growing up in the Philippines, where 50 years ago he met Vince Apostol, Resonate Global Mission’s first missionary to the country. Lopez became a member of the CRC in the Philippines and a seminary student.

“It’s embedded in me,” Lopez said of the Reformed worldview. “And the moment you understand it, it leads you to a life of gratitude in the Lord.”

Today Lopez shares this passion for all things Reformed near Houston, Texas, where he is partnering with Resonate and with New Life CRC (Spring, Texas) to plant a church among Filipino immigrants.

Lopez says people who visit the church and attend Bible studies appreciate the Reformed approach to reading the Bible—as a whole story that we also are a part of today.

(facing page) A team leads worship in a church plant for Filipino immigrants near Houston, Texas.

“I think they see themselves becoming more aware of their relationship with God and their status in him,” said Lopez. “And because of that, they are becoming more familiar with the gospel and are more willing to share it.”

Such is the case for Arnold Tamayo, a Filipino immigrant and member of the church plant’s leadership team.

“When I first became a Christian, I felt a hunger for the Word of God,” said Tamayo. “Now I’m experiencing the same passion I had because I’m reading and listening to Reformed teaching.”

One opportunity both Lopez and Tamayo recognize for their church and its members is its ability to reach people in a time of crisis. More than half of the church’s members are in the medical profession.

“People from all over the world come right here to get medical attention,” said Tamayo. “We as a church have a chance to care for patients in a Christian way.”

I Am God’s Partner in Making All Things New

Justin Van Zee has strengthened the faith of many young Christian leaders since he began serving as a missionary with Resonate Global Mission in Cambodia. Yet, taken at face value, Justin’s mentoring of a young man named Seyha looks like a failure.

“As I walked alongside Seyha, he went from youth pastor to a parachurch organization to a job in sales,” Van Zee said. “It looks like a missionary just helped a guy quit the church.”

Seyha’s story is more complicated than that. At first Seyha was excited to leave his job as a youth pastor to begin work as a trainer for an international Christian organization, but as the only staff member for this organization in Cambodia, he felt isolated.

“I could sense Seyha needed some more support,” Van Zee recalled. So Van Zee began eating breakfast with Seyha every week while he offered a listening ear.



Justin Van Zee (right) eats lunch with Seyha each week and has helped the young man figure out his calling.

"I sensed that God was doing something important in Seyha's life, a deep work of the heart. My role was to be present as the new thing emerged—to keep showing up, to eat my bacon and eggs, and to pray with Seyha."

During this season of meeting with VanZee, Seyha realized he could find his calling in business just as well as he could in a Christian charity. Eventually he made the difficult decision to quit his job. Seyha has since begun working in sales for a business-training firm. Though he left work in a Christian organization, Seyha is learning to explore his faith and calling in other areas.

"[Seyha] recognized that he wasn't thriving in that ministry, and so he did what he needed to do in leaving it," noted Van Zee. "He's making decisions for himself and seeking to follow God."

"What I hope is that Seyha will continue to seek after God and to do that in a way that furthers his own growth . . . in Christ," said Van Zee. "I want to be present as he goes deeper into what God is calling him to do."

I Recognize That Jesus Is Lord (Over Pop Culture Too)

"As a kid who grew up in a movie-loving family that also belonged to a Christian Reformed church, I have long noticed glimmers of God's grace in the popular music, movies, and television that have been a big part of my life," said Josh Larsen, editor of Back to God Ministries International's *Think Christian* website (thinkChristian.net). "But it wasn't until I joined ReFrame Media as editor of *Think Christian* that I really understood how rich and expansive that grace could be—and how integral my upbringing in the Reformed tradition was in helping me recognize it."

Larsen said it has been rewarding to hear from *Think Christian* readers who have been similarly enriched, including many who are encountering the Reformed perspective for the first time.

Through the site, they explore popular culture as something that needn't be separate from or in conflict with faith. Instead, they learn to recognize that it, too, is under God's sovereignty, and as such can be informed, enhanced, and—when discernment calls for it—challenged by the gospel we hold dear.

"My mind and soul were searching unknowingly for the kind of insights I find in *Think Christian*," wrote Donna Millard. "Please, dear God, keep this kind of spiritual, cultural, Christian lens firmly in our reach."

At *Think Christian*, this "lens" metaphor is borrowed from Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper, who famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"



What does this mean for popular culture? "That by God's common grace, believers and

unbelievers alike are capable of creating beautiful things," Larsen answered. "While appreciating that beauty, we can also ask questions particular to our faith: Does the movie I just watched echo the gospel in some fashion? Does this TV show we stream evidence our need for the good news? Does the music on my phone contradict my understanding of the world in a way that deserves a loving response?"

At *Think Christian*, readers have questioned the vision of womanhood offered by Taylor Swift's *Reputation*, recognized how *Stranger Things* echoes our own world's disarray, and pointed out that *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* might offer a model for holding on to faith in a post-Christendom era.

I Can Have Confidence That I Live by Grace Alone

Sarah Hoogendoorn has never been a member of the armed services. She's never struggled with addiction or substance abuse. Yet her Reformed faith helps her empathize with those who have.

Hoogendoorn is completing her second year of clinical pastoral education at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in St. Cloud, Minn. As a Christian Reformed chaplain, she has many hard conversations with veterans who have lived the traumas of war and as a result struggle with both substance abuse disorder and mental health issues.

In her one-on-one conversations with these veterans, Hoogendoorn hears a common theme: "I am not worth it. I don't deserve God's love, or God's forgiveness, or to be whole."

Think Christian helps people apply a Reformed world-and-life-view to popular culture.



Sarah Hoogendoorn says her Reformed faith helps her empathize with those she serves as a chaplain in the armed services.

In those moments, Hoogendoorn is grateful for her Reformed faith's emphasis on the saving grace God offers. She knows that grace connects her to those she is talking to.

"This grace is extended not only to the drug addicts and the alcoholics, or to those who have relapsed four, five, six times, but also to me," said Hoogendoorn. "Perhaps I'm not sailing on the same boat of brokenness, but I'm certainly sailing on the same sea."

Hoogendoorn said she often uses a lyric from the band Mumford & Sons to explain this:

"It seems that all my bridges have been burned, but you say 'That's exactly how this grace thing works.' It's not the long walk home that will change this heart, but the welcome I receive with every start."

"If I am truly honest," Hoogendoorn added, "in my own brokenness I've also burned all my bridges and I've also had to walk the long road home. It is only by God's grace—higher and deeper and wider than I could ever hope or imagine—that I am welcomed to start again."

I See God in Creation

The CRC's Climate Witness Project (CWP) includes over 600 partners from more than 100 churches committed to responding to the call to care for creation through worship, education, energy stewardship, and advocacy. Since the project's beginning, CWP churches have taken on numerous creative outreach opportunities.

Several CWP churches in western Michigan recently sent a letter to Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss to thank her for supporting climate change mitigation and to offer their help with creation-care efforts. The letter, along with the CWP's growing presence and connections in the area, resulted in CWP being asked to partner with the city to create a baseline of building energy use in the area. CWP coordinator Steve Mulder was invited to join the city's energy advisory committee.

"Our churches are uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of creation care, and CWP is designed to support congregations as they step up and take on new creation-care initiatives," said Kris VanEngen, congregational justice mobilizer for World Renew and the Office of Social Justice.

Lindsay Mouw, a member of Central Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa, is a regional organizer for CWP.

"I joined the Climate Witness Project because I believe that my faith demands that I act on climate," she said. "Climate change is a social justice issue that affects the thriving of all of creation. As a steward of God's earth, I am excited to be part of a movement in which the church is stepping up to fight this issue out of love for our Creator and our global neighbors."



Climate Witness teams from West Michigan tour Church of the Servant's building and grounds to check out their solar power generation system and hear from a Michigan Interfaith Power & Light representative.

More information about the Climate Witness Project is available at crcna.org/cwp.


I Am Created in God's Image

More than 400 Muslim, Christian, and Jewish clergy and scholars came together on the eve of the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., in February to declare that they will protect and defend religious minorities in their countries. Leaders from the Christian Reformed Church were among those who participated in the gathering.

The gathering, called the Alliance of Virtue, was born in January 2016 when more than 350 faith leaders from around the world signed the Marrakesh Declaration in Morocco. The declaration stated that the persecution of religious minorities is contradictory to Islam, and it called for an end to acts of terrorism in its name.

February's event provided opportunities for Muslim leaders from around the world to pledge to protect Christians in their countries and for American faith leaders, including more than 50 evangelical pastors, to pledge to engage their congregations in fighting anti-Muslim bigotry.

The gathering made an impression on Cory Willson, professor at Calvin Theological Seminary. "Seldom have I seen such a religiously diverse gathering of men and women coming together to work for peace and protection of religious minorities. Muslims, Christians, and Jews all drew from resources within their own traditions to work for peace interpersonally and structurally," Willson said.

Those sentiments were echoed by Richard Killmer of the CRC's Office of Social Justice: "I was deeply encouraged by the commitment made by Muslim leaders to protect Christians in their communities," said Killmer, co-founder of Shoulder to Shoulder, an alliance of Christian and Jewish organizations that stands in solidarity with Muslims in the U.S. The CRC has been a member of Shoulder to Shoulder since 2014. 

The View from Here

What Does It Mean to Be Christian Reformed?

THERE IS A RULE that ministers should not tell stories about their children from the pulpit—at least not without their permission. Maybe there should be a similar rule that prohibits denominational folks like me from writing about their children. I'll let you decide.

Our adult children (and their spouses) range in age from 19 to 30-something, with the majority being 20-somethings. I asked them some questions as members of Christian Reformed churches, and those who answered said I may share my resulting perspectives with you.

I will begin with an explanation. I sent my quasi-scientific survey to nine people. I didn't get a 100 percent response rate, and I think that's healthy—they don't go along just because their dad serves the Christian Reformed Church.

A term often used with survey research is "informed consent." I told them my intentions, so they understood the purpose of my questions: I had a *Banner* deadline approaching!

While I care a great deal about every generation in the CRC, the group I think about most is the young-adult generation. We all read the research that says this generation is not sticking with the institutional church as have preceding generations. (For a helpful analysis, read *Emerging Adulthood and Faith* by Jonathan Hill, available from Calvin College Press.)

I'm concerned for our denomination. So I asked my kids to try to

understand their CRC-ness. I gave them three dimensions to consider:

- » The degree to which being part of their local congregations identifies them as Christian Reformed.
- » The degree to which their commitment to the denomination identifies them as Christian Reformed.
- » The degree to which embracing a particular set of biblical/theological beliefs leads them to identify as Christian Reformed. (For this, I used the example from Kuyper: Every square inch belongs to God.)

I asked them to place percentages beside each factor, and asked that the three add up to 100 percent.

Without revealing specific responses, a clear pattern emerged. For nearly all of them, the strongest reason for identifying as Christian Reformed was membership in a local congregation. That's what makes them CRC.

The second-strongest factor was embrace of Reformed biblical/theological beliefs—and for two, it was actually their strongest focus. In last place was identification with the denomination.

Is this pattern similar to yours? I suspect it is for many. And that's as it should be. Being part of a local worshiping body ought to be of utmost importance, and what a blessing it is to know that CRC congregations are filling this critical role.

I also was pleased to see that the biblical/theological dimension is also important, even though I know that my kids aren't into distinctions such as whether the church is an organism or an institute. These kinds of distinctions don't matter much to them.

If the topic is stewardship of God's creation, they don't much care about separating the actions of individual members from those of the institutional church. I would go as far to say that if the institutional church is silent in the public square, they would find it to be unfaithful to God's call.

We also need to face the third dimension: identification with the CRC as a denomination. Unlike previous generations, this emerging generation doesn't focus much attention there. It's clear that for this young-adult generation, being part of a denomination is acceptable but not necessary.

Perhaps that's something we need to learn from our young adults. We must focus on healthy congregations with sound biblical and theological foundations, while the denomination's role is to help churches to flourish so that our sons and daughters can be rooted, growing in faith, and sharing their faith with others.

I'm grateful to be learning from them!



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.

이 기사의 한글번역은 TheBanner.org/korean에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en TheBanner.org/spanish.

A Fruitful Collaboration

MOUSSA IS OVERJOYED with the fruit of a powerful collaboration. Together, his small West African community, the local church, and World Renew built a cereal bank.

To Moussa, it means much more than having a place to store his grain. It means having food for his family and his community all year round. It means changing people from being farm workers to being owners with dignity and hope for the future.

“I am so happy that this cereal bank exists in my village. It truly helped me to have grain stored when I hosted the naming-ceremony party for my newborn child,” said Moussa.

“And during ‘hungry season’ the bank was full of food. This is one of the best years I can remember living with real food security!”



Moussa is pleased that he and members of his village can share the bounty of their grain.

Achieving food security helps to restore justice as farmers change from hungry consumers to healthy and strong providers of food to those in need.

Moussa said more than 50 sacks of 100 kilos each went to neighboring villages to get them through the hungry season thanks to a partnership with World Renew and a church group in his country.

Moussa said he has also seen a reduction in the number of youth running away to earn a better living in neighboring communities. People have stopped abandoning their own fields to labor in the fields of more prosperous families.

God has truly remained at the center of their labor, said Moussa, and has allowed them to see many fruits of their work.

“God alone can justly reward all the people who have taken part in this work that is making a huge difference in people’s lives,” he said. “I hope that this work will spread and help more and more people in our district and beyond.”

—Taylor Smith, World Renew

Day of Justice to Be Held in August



LAST JUNE, Synod 2017 called for an annual Day of Justice to be held in churches beginning on Aug. 19, 2018.

A planning team has gathered a variety of resources to help congregations plan services that matches their individual justice journeys.

“Different congregations have different instances of injustice in their communities and different understandings about what their response should be,” said Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, a member of the planning team.

“We’ve tried to compile resources that can meet churches where they are, whether it is at the beginning of their justice journey or much further along the line.”

The 2018 Day of Justice resources can be found at crcna.org/DayOfJustice. This site includes study materials about justice, background information on a variety of justice topics, and suggestions to help plan a justice-themed worship service.

Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Rehoboth, N.M., will hold a Day of Justice this summer. In fact, the congregation was so excited about this annual day that they held a Day of Justice in August 2017—a year ahead of schedule.

Member Gail De Young said the church acted quickly because it believes the quest for justice cannot wait.

“It has to happen as soon as possible,” she said, “given the many forms of oppression, persecution, prejudice, and discrimination that occur every day.”

De Young said her hope and prayer as other congregations prepare to join Rehoboth this year is that “it will ignite a passion to stand up for others who have no voice.”

—CRC Communications

Guided by the Light

THE WOMAN, SWATHED in a black dress, sits on the floor of a white-tiled institutional kitchen, big pots stacked behind her and beside her. Broken masonry and other rubble ring her. A light from outside the frame spills over the scene.

“Notice where the light falls.”

Donna Spaan is walking a visitor through an exhibition in Calvin College’s Center Art Gallery. She’s stopped in front of a large photograph by Marina Abramovic.

“The light falls on her hands of service and on her face of contemplation,” she says.

Craig Hanson, professor of art history at Calvin, said Spaan “is looking for art that can move people’s thinking away from the urgent and toward the important.”

In the art gallery, she heard symposium participants talking intensely but in a very literal way about the artworks on display.

She thought, “Maybe a way to move people out of that worldview would be an art collection that opens up their imaginations.”

In a sense, it was a quiet, subtle continuation of her Chicago arts seminar in a new place with new participants.

“When Donna first approached me, I talked about how the college’s art collection functions as an educational tool,” said Joel Zwart, former director of the gallery. “We have historical works that students can learn a lot from. But at that point we had very little strong contemporary work. I mentioned that gap to her.”



As she and Zwart began searching the contemporary art markets for pieces to fill that gap and enhance Calvin’s collection, they realized they needed a guiding theme. Spaan chose “Light: God’s Eternal Presence.”

“I’m trying to get viewers to focus not, first of all, on subject matter,” Spaan explained, “but on light. If we can first ask, ‘Where is the light leading me in this work? What is the light trying to do?’ then maybe we can be freed a bit from the strictly fact-based approach to the world that dominates our thinking even in the church.”

Now including 24 pieces, the Donna Spaan Collection of Contemporary Art at Calvin began with a providential conversation.

Spaan had recently returned to Grand Rapids after 30 years in Chicago. For 25 of those years, she directed Calvin’s Chicago Semester, including designing an arts course that introduced students to a new experience of the arts every week, from dance and theater performances to museum visits.

Retired in Grand Rapids, Spaan was looking for a project. In January 2012 she attended the annual Symposium on Worship sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

When Spaan searches for and considers new work for the collection, she asks herself—as she hopes viewers will—what the light is trying to do within a particular work and how it speaks to artwork already in the collection.

Zwart said Spaan has collected “weighty works by important contemporary artists” that offer education in a different way of knowing.

“In the deepest sense,” Spaan said, “God defines himself as light—all kinds of light. Ultimately, the light in these artworks leads us to say with the psalmist, ‘In thy light we see light.’”

—Gayle Boss, Calvin College

Note: This article is adapted from the original story of the same title published by *Spark* (Dec. 2017).

Tuininga Speaks about ‘Politics and the Kingdom of God’

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

recently hosted a lecture by Matthew Tuininga titled “Politics and the Kingdom of God: John Calvin’s Theology of Christian Public Engagement.”

Tuininga, assistant professor of moral theology at Calvin Seminary, is the author of *Calvin’s Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ’s Two Kingdoms*, published last year by Cambridge University Press.

Presented as part of this year’s Meeter Center Spring Lecture Series, Tuininga discussed Calvin’s views on the role of the church and how the church and its members interacted with the political life of the city.

After the lecture, Tuininga was joined by Kevin Den Dulk, executive director of Calvin College’s Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity & Politics, for a time of questions and answers.

In both the lecture and the subsequent session with Den Dulk, Tuininga looked at Calvin’s thought on the church’s interaction with the city through three lenses—historical, theological, and political.

Calvin, Tuininga explained, spoke and wrote about two kingdoms—the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. Tuininga argued that Calvin has been mostly misunderstood in this area and that Calvin clearly saw the importance of this theological framework and the important distinction between the two kingdoms.

Calvin’s teachings, Tuininga said, provide answers to questions about a Christian’s role in the political life of the worldly kingdom,



and his theology still influences neo-Calvinist thought today.

While not wanting to put words in Calvin’s mouth, Tuininga used Calvin’s understanding of politics in his own time to theorize how he might consider politics and the role of government today.

The presentation is available on Calvin Seminary’s website (bit.ly/2HW1qWI).

—Matthew Cooke, Calvin Seminary

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953 Now Blessed Be the Lord Our God

PSALM 72:18-19
1 Now blessed be the Lord our God,
the God of Israel,
for he alone does wondrous works;
his glorious deeds exceed
for he alone does wondrous works;
his glorious deeds exceed.

2 And blessed be his glorious name
through all eternity,
the whole earth let his glory fill;
Amen! so shall it be,
the whole earth let his glory fill;
Amen! so shall it be.

Words: Psalm 72:18-19; Scottish Psalm, 1630, 4th, 72d.



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Gone Fishin'



Prasit Chansarekorn/iStock

WHAT DO YOU NEED to catch a fish? A fishing rod, bait, maybe a net. . . . But how do animals catch fish? They don't have fishing rods or nets. They don't need them! God gave animals that eat fish many different ways to catch their food.

Brown Bears

Bears learn from their mothers how to catch fish. A bear might wait for a fish to jump close enough to catch it in its mouth, or it might sit in the water and wait for a fish to swim nearby. Some bears chase fish and use their paws to trap them against the river bottom. Other bears even dive underwater to catch fish.

With a parent's permission, check out these live webcams of brown bears fishing in Alaska: explore.org/livecams/brown-bears/brown-bear-salmon-cam-brooks-falls.

The Fishing Cat

This South Asian cat has special water-resistant fur. Partially webbed front feet make it a good swimmer, and it gets right into the water to hunt for fish. It makes a catch by sticking its head underwater or by scooping fish out with its paws.

Birds

Brown Pelicans spot fish from the air and then dive headfirst from as much as 20 meters (21.8 yards) to catch fish in their expandable bill pouches.

American White Pelicans work together as a flock to herd fish toward shore, where they are more easily caught.

Ospreys dive feet first from the air to grab fish with their long, curved talons and prickly-soled feet.

The Black Skimmer flies low over the water with its lower bill just under the surface. When it feels a fish the upper bill snaps down to trap it.



Pierre Torset/Biosphoto

Otter Fishing

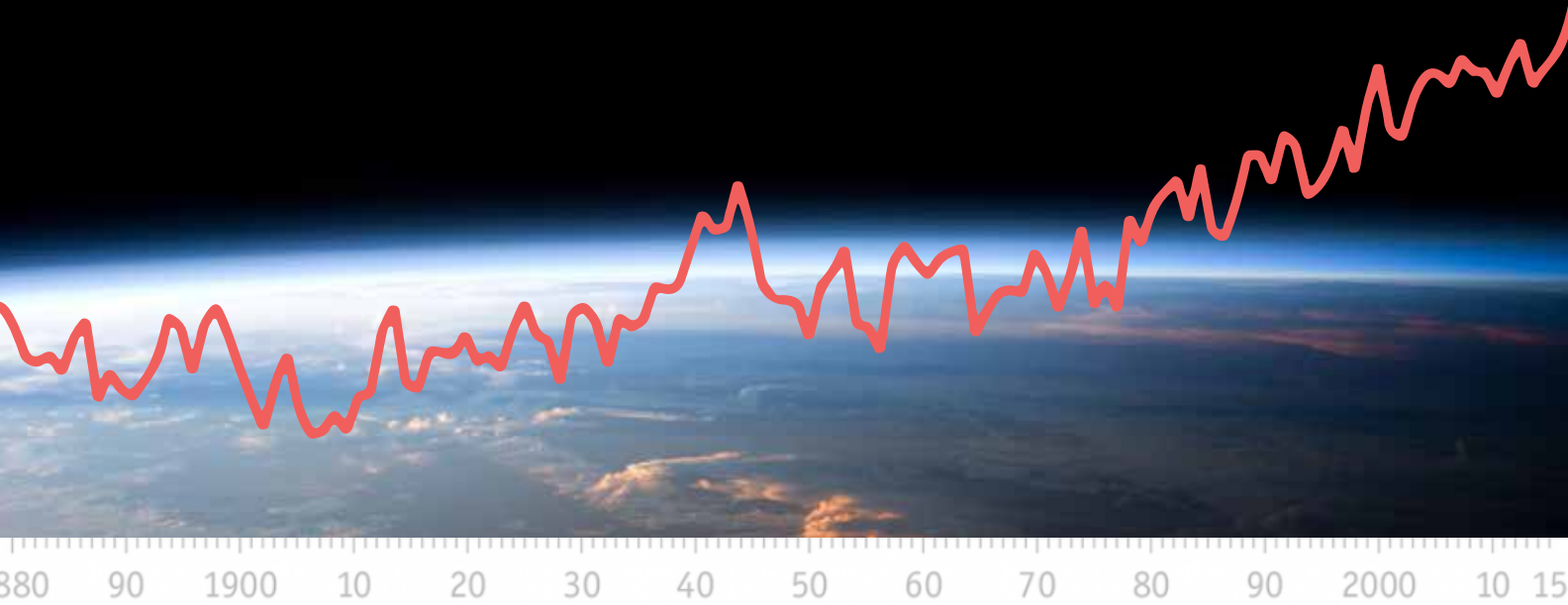
In Bangladesh, the centuries-old tradition of otter fishing still is used today. Fishermen work together with trained otters that chase fish toward fishing nets. Otter fishing was used in China more than 1,400 years ago. Later it was also used in Europe, India, and Malaysia.

Fishers of People

Some of Jesus' first followers were fishermen. They used nets to catch fish. When Jesus saw them in their boats, he called for them to follow him, saying, "I will send you out to fish for people" (Mark 1:17). Fishers of people tell others about Jesus. They "fish" them out of this world and into God's kingdom! **B**



Rachel Lancashire is a nursery worker (plants, not kids) and freelance writer with an educational background in wildlife. She grew up in the Christian Reformed Church but currently attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.



Faith and Climate Science

Why the Church's Response to Climate Change Matters

by Clayton Carlson

As someone who teaches and writes about faith and science, I've noticed a troubling disconnect between many Christians and the work of scientists. The problem is apparent in a variety of scientific disciplines, but the consequences of the widespread rejection of climate science are devastating. According to the Pew Research Center, only 50 percent of American adults (and just 28 percent of white evangelicals) believe that global climate change is caused by human activity. This wholesale rejection of scientific opinion is surprising, considering that we live in a scientific society. We unconsciously think scientifically even about things that are clearly not scientific. We ask about the *evidence* of our faith. We look for *scientific* approaches to parenting. We try to *prove* our affections. In our culture, scientists are positioned in a role that is almost priestly, as the wise ones who know the mysteries of the universe and have the power to bless with a bountiful harvest, healthy offspring, or long life.

Perhaps this priestly role has contributed to the strain between science and the church, but there are other causes as well. Scientific findings in evolutionary biology and genomics have led to insights that challenge traditional Christian interpretations of Scripture. Advances in scientific technologies, such as those around genome editing, grant scientists possibilities that some believers think should be reserved for God alone. But I'm convinced that some of the tension between science and the church regarding climate change has little to do with theology. There is ample motivation among Christians, like everyone else, to resist scientific discoveries that demand lifestyle changes we would rather avoid.

Tension Between the Church and Science

When faced with challenging science like global climate change, Christians too often respond in ways that are unhelpful for the church, for science, or for our broader society. Our gut reactions tend to arise from fear, skepticism, or unwarranted optimism.

We show our fear by lashing out at those with whom we disagree. We prove our skepticism by sowing dissension with rumors and doubt we barely understand. And sometimes we embrace unwarranted optimism by refusing to believe God would allow humans to ruin God's creation.

The division between science and Christianity has consequences that reach beyond climate change. Our inability to engage difficult science—including climate science—robs both the church and the scientific community of gifts we have to share with one another. When Christians reject science generally, and scientific findings specifically, we are deprived of more fully understanding God's majesty as Creator, and we ignore our responsibilities to be stewards of God's creation.

This division also hurts our gospel witness. Our neighbors, and particularly our young people, are paying attention. When the church is wrong about things that are easily proven, it is difficult for people to trust the church with matters of faith

that are not easily proven. In *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith*, authors David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins report that up to 30 percent of young people who leave the church do so because they think churches are out of step with science. We have inadvertently taught Christian students that the relationship between science and faith is a war in which they must choose one side or the other. When students come to believe scientific findings that come with difficult implications, they are only following that logic when they decide to leave their faith.

In my position as a biology professor at a Christian college, I have seen gifted students disengage from challenging science, knowing that their home churches approach science with fear and skepticism. Instead they choose careers in health or leave the scientific world altogether.

When Christians disengage from the scientific community, not only do we rob ourselves and hurt our gospel witness, we also deprive the scientific enterprise of the gifts of the Christian worldview. The church should be reminding scientists to share the redemptive gifts God grants through their work—gifts that reduce suffering and bring life. The church must also caution science as to its limitations in making claims only about the observable world.

The church has blessings to offer, and the scientific community has gifts to share. In order to develop a healthful relationship within which these can be exchanged, we must adopt a more productive means of engaging challenging science, including climate change.

One way we as believers should be giving these spiritual gifts to the scientific community is by encouraging our talented young people who are blessed with the interests and aptitudes to become scientists.

A Global Response to Climate Change

The science of climate change is widely available online for scientists and ordinary citizens to read (the Intergovernmental Council on Climate Change was established in 1988 to provide the current state of global

The role of the church is to remind the world and its leaders that this is God's good world, and we owe it our affectionate care.

knowledge in the science of climate change; see www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml.) As in any field, the language scientists use is loaded with technical jargon that may make it difficult for non-scientists to understand. But while those of us who can read the science directly should do so, church members can look at how other organizations have responded to the science. In December 2015, at the Conference of Parties 21, world leaders responded by signing a statement called The Paris Climate Agreement. The product of 20 previous global meetings, the statement begins by laying out the threat of global climate change that is already disrupting society. Next it explains the best-known solution for minimizing the consequences (increases to world average temperature must be stopped at 2 degrees Celsius). Then it explains how that ambitious solution will be carried out (each nation will voluntarily but publicly commit to specific greenhouse gas reductions). Finally, and very importantly, the agreement addresses issues of

justice (such as why rich nations were allowed to use coal as they developed but currently developing nations cannot). Through negotiation, compromise, good faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit, nearly every country on Earth signed the document.

At the most recent Conference of Parties, COP-23, Syria (which had been delayed by its brutal civil war) signed on to the agreement, so that now every nation on the planet has signed the document. (Since then, as has been well publicized, the United States government has vowed to leave the agreement.)

Fear works its effects on all extreme views. Some people, including Christians, lament an almost immediate and irreversible destruction of the entire world order because of climate change. These views spread fear—and when they fail to materialize, they provide talking points for climate change deniers on the other extreme. Many deniers also work from a place of fear. I have heard charges that “the climate change movement is embedded with corruption and political agendas.” Underlying such comments is a fear of cultural forces, hidden agendas, and perverse motivations—none of which is suggested by the science. In either extreme, fear prevents the hearer from thoughtfully engaging the science.

Skepticism is particularly common among Christians when discussing climate change. It's not unusual for me to hear comments along these lines: “There is no consensus in the scientific community about what (if any) correlation there is between the activities of man and climate change.” Any clear-headed analysis of the situation suggests that there is more than a likely correlation between our actions and climate change; indeed, there is causation. Nearly every expert in the field agrees that climate change is a serious and human-caused problem; every country in the world has agreed to address this problem; and major corporations are investing

serious money into preparing for climate change. If the whole world is convinced by the science of human culpability to the problem and human responsibility for addressing it, we need to push beyond our skepticism.

Unwarranted optimism has a particularly interesting manifestation among some Christians engaging climate science. It typically sounds something like this: "From a Christian standpoint, to suggest that we are the cause places our actions as more powerful than God's creative acts." From this perspective, God made the world good and would never allow humans to harm it. This argument is not new. In the early 1800s, Christians rejected the idea of extinction by arguing that God would never allow a species to disappear from the earth. Now we know that climate change, habitat loss, and other forces push between 150 to 200 species to extinction *every day*. This position represents a misunderstanding of God, creation, history, and sin. As the consequence of our sin, we are permitted hope but not unwarranted optimism.

A Better Way: Critical Reading, Thoughtfulness, Gratitude


I believe a more productive way of responding to the science of climate change involves critical reading, thoughtfulness, and gratitude. Critical reading of the science offers clear, robust evidence of a serious worldwide threat. The exact extent of the threat varies by model, location, and our future decisions, but the overwhelming scientific consensus is that human action has led to higher temperatures, which will result in harmful consequences. Stronger hurricanes, more widespread fires, and more frequent droughts are just a sampling of these predicted results. Critical reading demands that we respond, no matter how difficult that may be or what lifestyle changes may be required. But in the face of a problem so big, how do we respond as families, churches, and as the church?

A thoughtful approach will allow us to shape our answers to the difficult questions that arise. Is responding to global climate change in line with our Scriptural mandates? We are called to steward God's world and to be God's image to the world. We are expected to care for people who are poor, for widows and orphans. We can remember, with trembling, that to those whom much has been given, much will be expected. Engaging climate science with thoughtfulness reveals that we who live in developed nations need to make changes in how we eat, how we drive, and how we live. Our current lifestyle cannot be sustained. Churches need to educate members and function as examples of ecological stewardship. In our denomination, the Office of Social Justice provides resources for doing just that. The global church should be leading efforts against climate change, and as we lead we should be constant advocates for the poorest populations in the poorest nations. This work is being carried out by groups like Climate Witness Project, Climate Caretakers, and Young Evangelicals for Climate Action.

As we learn to engage the challenging work of climate science with critical reading and thoughtfulness, we can learn to face this sobering field of science with gratitude. Just as it is possible to experience gratitude for an abnormal mammogram or colonoscopy, and just as we can be grateful for a friend who calls out our sin, we can be grateful for the warning climate science has given us. Debates about how to address climate change can easily devolve into discussions of dollars, percents, and degrees. But the role of the church is to remind the world and its leaders that this is God's good world, and we owe it our affectionate care. We must guarantee that while the world responds to climate change, the burdens of expense, effort, and hardship must be paid first by those of us with the most to give.

Science continues to find new insights about God's good creation. As it does so, the church must find ways to engage those results productively. For the sake of our witness, our young people, and our world, we must rise above fear, skepticism, and unwarranted optimism. May God grant us experts to guide us through critical reading, wise leaders to shape our conversations into thoughtfulness, and hearts of worship so that we might lift up each new scientific discovery to God with gratitude.

Christian Reformed Church Resources on Climate Change

- » Synodical Statements on Creation Care: calvin.edu/admin/provost/sustainability/about/synodical.html
- » CRCNA Statements on Climate Change: calvin.edu/admin/provost/sustainability/about/climatechange.html
- » Office of Social Justice Position on Creation Care: crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/creation-care
- » Centre for Public Dialogue (Canada): crcna.org/publicdialogue/issues/climate-change 



Clayton Carlson is an associate professor of biology at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill.; his work is supported by the Oxford Interdisciplinary Seminars in Science and Religion. He attends Hope Christian Reformed Church in Oak Forest, Ill.

1. How important do you think it is to take seriously the issue of climate change? Why do you feel that way?
2. Have you witnessed the phenomenon of young Christians leaving the faith or avoiding scientific. . .

READ MORE ONLINE

Off the Clock

I power down
my phone and
chuck it into
the glovebox:
no service, no
weather app, no
camera, no clock.



After growing up in the Midwest, Zach Vandenberg moved west, first to be a high school Bible teacher and then again after seminary to be a pastor. He enjoys exploring the West with his wife and three kids.

THE GUIDEBOOK described the lakeside campground as one of the great family destinations in California if you don't mind the drive. But we live in Los Angeles—how bad could it be? The iffy part starts well enough but quickly turns into blind corners, steep drop-offs, and a maze of potholes, all on a one-lane road.

On arrival, I power down my phone and chuck it into the glovebox: no service, no weather app, no camera, no clock. For the next five days I don't know what time it is.

In the morning, after my camp-stove coffee is ready, I sit down to look at the lake. From the hill and through the trees I see it lapping gently on the sand. The birds—especially the Steller's Jays—are particularly noisy in the morning, having a look at everyone's picnic table, investigating what might have been left behind. Chipmunks scamper from hole to tree to rock, stopping to chew their food on fast-forward. "Praise the Lord from the earth. . . . Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!" (Ps. 148:7, 10, NRSV). The jays and chipmunks remind me of the noise and rush of life I've left behind in Los Angeles. I nod in recognition and turn my eyes back to the lake.

The afternoon brings summer thunderstorms, so after lunch we keep our ears open for the sound of rumbles. The storms are easy to see coming across the lake; we sit on the shore and watch. First the high country, then the nearby ridges, then the trees around the water disappear in the rain clouds. We tidy up camp as the sprinkles begin and duck into the tent when the rain starts to fall in earnest. We wait it out, sometimes for minutes, sometimes for much

longer. How much longer, I don't know, because I don't know what time it is. We listen and wait as "the voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness" (Ps. 29:7-8, NRSV).

Late one evening we're sitting around the campfire when we hear a low rumble, the familiar sound of thunder. Flashes fill up the sky over the ridges and trees, but this time the storm is far to our south and heading west rather than north toward us. We turn our camp chairs from the fire toward the edge of the hill and watch the show. My youngest son tells me it looks like fireworks without the colors. I tell him I like it better than fireworks because of the wildness of its beauty. He doesn't seem convinced.

After the storm passes, my wife and I get the kids ready for bed, then we sit a while longer by the fire. Behind the storm, a night wind picks up, rushing across the water and up through the stand of pines, firs, and incense cedar. The trees begin to sway against the light of clouds brightened by the full moon. The whirl and whoosh of noise crescendos and diminishes, the waves on the lake below us adding a descant. Our tent flaps agitate against the stakes, and the fire consumes the logs to coals.

"The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. . . . The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'" (Ps. 29:5, 9, NRSV). **B**

Navigating Leadership Transitions in the Church

When going through the transition zone, refuse to give up any sense of urgency for the mission of God to which your congregation has been called.



Geoff Vandermolen has been an associate pastor, church planter, and lead pastor. He now serves as director of vocational formation at Calvin Seminary.

EXPECTATIONS of the Canadian men's 4x100 relay team at the 2012 Olympics were low. It was supposed to be a rebuilding year. Consequently, the team's third-place finish caused a national celebration. But that celebration lasted only minutes. While runners were still catching their breath, officials announced an official race review. They found irrefutable proof that in the third transition zone, when the baton was passed from one runner to the next, a foul had occurred. Post-race analysis was peppered with versions of a single thought: The transition zone is crucial. It is the moment where races are won and lost.

Churches face transition zones too.

At some point, every congregation will navigate the transition of pastoral leadership. The genesis of these pastoral leadership transitions vary. Some are the natural byproduct of a pastor sensing a call to minister in a new context. Others are the result of a generalized incompatibility between the pastor and congregation. Congregations also experience transitions because of tragedy, illness, or even death. Perhaps most devastating, however, are leadership transitions brought about by moral failures. These transitions explode like grenades in the life of a congregation.

Life in the transition zone can be costly. Research shows that the interpersonal costs of failing to navigate the transition zone well can include physical or mental illness for church leaders, social and relational breakdowns, a growing climate of alienation and distrust, and even betrayal. These dynamics can result in ministry passivity, reactionary pendulum swings in ministry and vision, and outright

division within the congregation. And they can deaden even the most vibrant congregation's pursuit of God's mission, giving rise to power plays, coups, and battles for control. Many of these costs are entirely avoidable.

Given the inevitability of pastoral leadership transitions, what's a congregation to do? The good news is that there are some helpful postures and actions churches can take to maintain congregational health. Wise church leaders would also do well to comprehend the cost of poorly executed pastoral transitions and to identify predictable patterns to avoid.

Predictable Patterns

The most common of these predictable patterns to avoid could be called the Saul Model. The key issue is identified in 1 Samuel 9:1-3, which reads, "There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish. . . . Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else." In short, Saul looked good. But while we understand that the Bible is referring to Saul's physical appearance, we also know that there may be a broader application.

Potential pastoral leaders may display flashes of preaching brilliance on a weekend tour. Candidates often woo interviewers with well-rehearsed ministry stories. Prospects for pastoral leadership can endear themselves with written material that has been crafted and nuanced with precision. The allure of Saul-like candidates can be intoxicating. Many are the congregations wowed by a rock-star preacher who inspires visions of full pews, budgetary surpluses, the ability to win

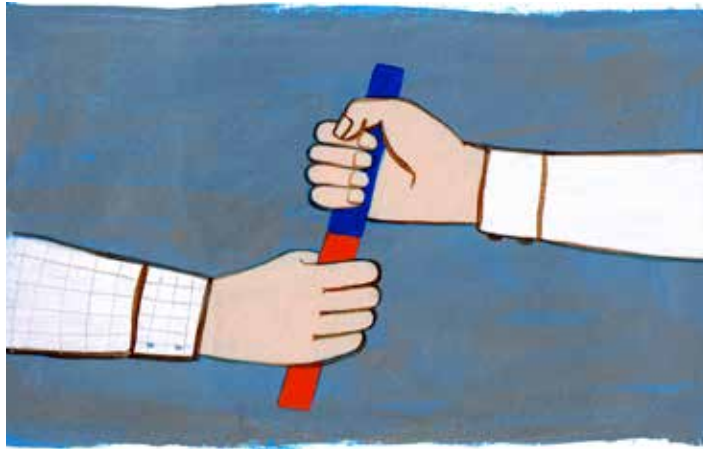
back prodigals, and more. In contrast, few are the search teams who press the Saul-like candidates with behavioral questions asking for multiple instances of effective kingdom leadership in every facet of ministry.

A second unhelpful model for leadership succession is the Solomon Model. The convoluted story of Solomon's inherited kingship is told in 1 Kings 1. It is a story of half-truths, guilt-driven promises, and family politics all vying for their place in the transition zone. In the Solomon Model, politics and palace intrigue exert influence on the choice for a particular pastoral leader who is best able to calm the political waters. But pastoral leadership born out of this process rarely leads to thriving ministry.

A third unhelpful model in the transition zone is the Timothy Model. In this scenario, the potential pastoral leader is often younger and less experienced; he or she may struggle with internal questions of success or failure in ministry. This dynamic was central in the relationship between the apostle Paul and his apprentice, Timothy. Paul encouraged Timothy to overcome his fear of others' perceptions of him as a foundation of his leadership. This is a goal worthy of rigorous pursuit by all emerging leaders through mentoring and other formative relationships. Congregations should eagerly engage emerging leaders who are invested in this vital work and should be equally wary of emerging leaders who refuse to wade deeply into the waters of self-awareness and formation.

Preparing for Transitions

Congregations can take a number of steps to ensure smooth transitions when it's time for new pastoral leadership. First, every congregation and its leadership should talk about succession plans. They should do so with their pastor and staff regularly and candidly. Initiating conversation about the transition zone when the outgoing pastor has preached his last



sermon and packed his office is far too late to avoid paying a steep price.

Second, make succession planning part of the job for all church leadership, including elders, deacons, and ministry leaders. What if faithful leadership required identifying and equipping your own ministry successor as an elder, deacon, ministry leader, and even pastor?

Third, be vigilant about articulating and following your congregation's vision at all times, not just in the transition zone. Investing in frequent vision conversations can keep these vital matters alive and well even during times of change.

Fourth, give regular, constructive feedback to your pastor. Arguably, some transition zones could be circumvented by offering honest, helpful, and supportive feedback in ways that the pastor can hear and appreciate.

Fifth, when speaking with candidates for pastoral leadership, be sure to press hard on behavioral questions, insisting on three, four, or even five examples of key leadership behaviors. Most leaders can tell you about one conflict that resolved well. But ask leaders to recount the last four or five times they were at odds with others, and the picture will go from black and white to color.

Sixth, use resources—including Christian Reformed Pastor Church Resources—wisely. In addition to helping negotiate transitions in

pastoral leadership, Pastor Church Resources may be able to direct you toward interim pastoral solutions to maintain congregation health.

Finally, when going through the transition zone, refuse to give up any sense of urgency for the mission of God to which your congregation has been called. The absence of pastoral leadership has no bearing on the need for passionate, thoughtful followers of Jesus who speak out against injustice, love unconditionally, and who serve with the conviction of Jesus himself. The apostle Peter reminds us that we have been given "everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Given this biblical promise, one can hope that when a new pastoral leader arrives, she or he will be able to keep up with the kingdom pursuits with which your congregation is so passionately engaged—even while living in the transition zone. **B**

1. What is your own congregation's most recent experience with some kind of transition? How did you feel about that experience?
2. How would you summarize, in your own words, the flaws in each of the Saul, Solomon, and . . .

READ MORE ONLINE

Travel Wisely

THANKS TO THE INTERNET, travelers now can book a nice apartment in a foreign city in a click, fly there inexpensively on a low-cost airline, and then Uber their way around the city without having to figure out the local transit system.

While the logistics and costs of overseas travel have greatly improved, I often wonder if we think enough about why we travel. As Donald DeGraaf, Calvin College's off-campus programs director, has written: "The easier it becomes to travel widely, the harder it becomes to travel *wisely*."

Many colleges organize study-abroad experiences that offer a good model for *intentional* traveling. We may not all have an entire semester to go abroad, but we can certainly be more deliberate about how and why we travel.

Here are some practices I have tried to develop with the student groups I have led to France, Quebec, and Spain. These practices can help us move away from treating travel as merely a consumerist enterprise to developing Christian virtues such as wonder for God's world, humility for all we do not know, and empathy for the foreigner in our midst.

First, preparation needs to go well beyond bookings. Go online, but also go to your local library or bookstore to build a solid knowledge of the places you are visiting. If you are going to a place where a foreign language is spoken, challenge yourself to learn its basic vocabulary—even better, take a course in that language. You could also read the country's most well-known authors or, if possible, watch its top films and TV shows.

Second, be ready for cultural differences—and even seek them out. A Starbucks in Paris may be a welcome sight, but try a local café first. If a waiter or hotel manager appears to be rude, consider your cultural expectations: Different cultures have different ideas of service and professionalism. Maybe your expectations are not the norm.

Third, focus on people. While you may embarrass your kids, take time to talk to fellow travelers, local shopkeepers, and the person who sets up your poolside chair. Enter their lives and consider how they might see you.

Finally, limit your smartphone contact with home to emergencies or a brief check-in. Life is more than creating the perfect Instagram account or following the latest major-league baseball scores. You may be missing out on the great experience that's happening off-screen right in front of you.

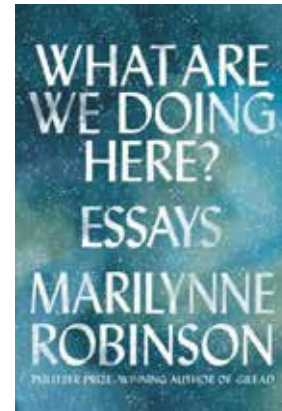
Travel deeply to travel wisely and to see yourself and your own culture with new eyes and greater understanding.

Resources

- » Donald G. DeGraaf, *There and Back: Living and Learning Abroad* (Calvin College Press, 2015).
- » David I. Smith and Pennylyn Dykstra-Pruim, *Christians and Cultural Difference* (Calvin College Press, 2016). 



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

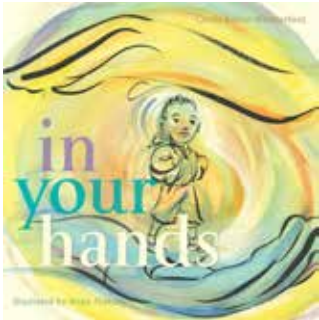


What Are We Doing Here?

by Marilynne Robinson

reviewed by Phil Christman

Like Bach or Proust, the novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson manages to explore the same terrain in work after work while making each one feel new. In this book of essays, she makes unexpectedly riveting reading of John Wycliffe, Oliver Cromwell, the Renaissance humanists Thomas Norton and Arthur Golding, the abolitionist Louis Tappan, the local legal codes that American colonies threw together during the Cromwell era, and the theological virtues. Readers who don't think they're interested in these topics should start with "Grace and Beauty," a ravishing account of Robinson's own creative process, and proceed from there. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)



In Your Hands

by Carole Boston
Weatherford

reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

In Your Hands is a timely children's picture book as it subtly deals with the racial discrimination prevalent in so many places in the world today. Though it offers the tender, prayerful musings of an African-American mother, it captures the hopes and dreams of every mother who wants her child to know God, to love others, to be treated justly, and to know how to respond in a godly way to injustice. Brian Pinkney's swirling, energetic illustrations capture the vitality and hope in this moving narrative. Ages 4 and up. (Atheneum)



Paddington 2

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Paddington, the lovable bear from Peru, is back. This delightful movie is full of wit and wonder. Paddington makes friends wherever he goes, including a stint in jail, and his knack for finding the best in people makes his world a better place. *Paddington 2* is a warm family film filled with action including a carnival, a prison break, trains, a treasure hunt, and even a musical number. It's a cinematic breath of fresh air. For a lighthearted escape from the seriousness of the world, you can do no better. On disc now. (Warner Bros.)



Sleepwalkers

by Brian Fallon

reviewed by Micah van Dijk

Brian Fallon delivers an archetypal rock album with relatable themes, interesting song structures, and an authentic, raspy rock voice sometimes reminiscent of Bruce Springsteen. Though he is also the lead singer of The Gaslight Anthem, he can get to a more personal place on a solo record than when speaking for an entire band. He offers glimpses of hope for the future and of his underlying Christian faith, but also of a melancholy understanding of present brokenness. This balance can be helpful to those seeking art that relates to their current situations. (Island)



It's Okay About It: Lessons from a Remarkable Five-Year-Old about Living Life Wide Open

by Lauren Casper

reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Lauren Casper and her husband, John, adopted their baby Mareto from Ethiopia; later they learned he had autism. In each chapter of this soul-baring memoir, Casper highlights one of Mareto's oft-repeated phrases and spells out how his perceptions of life helped her gain new spiritual insights. Casper covers themes such as barriers, the dark side of social media, the pressures American women face in regard to motherhood, and the current discussions about autism, its causes, and whether or not a cure is possible. Throughout, Casper showcases God as the good author of our life stories. (Thomas Nelson)

The Lowdown

Going It Alone? Christian music exec Robert Beeson's book *Going Solo* offers advice and encouragement to parents who are parenting on their own, based on his own experience. (Tyndale)

Groundbreaking: Juan Francisco Martinez's book *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States* is the first of its kind—a historical overview of American Latino Protestantism. (Eerdmans)

Iconic: Choose your cultural icon and then go see the movie: *Pope Francis—A Man of His Word* (directed by Wim Wenders), *RBG* (about U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg), and *Solo: A Star Wars Story* all hit theaters this month.

Round Two: Singer Leon Bridges, who made a name for himself with his soul- and gospel-infused debut album, releases his sophomore effort, *Good Thing*, this month. (Columbia)

READ MORE ONLINE

Why Does God Allow Suffering and Evil in the World?

Through his incarnation, Jesus comes alongside everyone who suffers pain in this world.



Mike Wagenman is the Christian Reformed campus minister and professor of theology at Western University in London, Ont., and part-time New Testament instructor at Redeemer University College.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SUFFERING and evil have been asked by Christians since the early church. A number of different theological responses have been offered. What we know is that we experience suffering and evil in life. What's not so easy to know is where it comes from.

Could it come from God? Odd as it may sound, some early Christians thought so. Maybe God isn't powerful enough to stop suffering and evil, they wondered. Maybe evil is such a strong force that God can't fully control it. Some borrowing from Greek philosophy believed that God and an evil rival god coexist in a kind of eternal tug-of-war. This, some thought, explained suffering—God is good but just can't do much to help.

Others thought our experience of suffering and evil is really just God's way of bringing us to desire his saving grace. God doesn't want us to suffer, they said, but it's necessary for us to desire something more than this world. This was Irenaeus's view in the second and third centuries after Christ. Suffering and evil, he thought, are tools in God's toolbox as God works to redeem us.

Few Christians found these "answers" satisfying for long. So maybe the source of suffering and evil isn't God. Maybe it's us. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) thought the source of our suffering is our wills infected with original sin. We desire everything but God and bring suffering and evil on ourselves.

In Eastern Orthodox churches, these rational theological explanations for why a good God allows suffering and evil in the world haven't been pursued as much. Many Orthodox theologians believe God's ways are shrouded in mystery. Finite human minds can't fully comprehend the infinite God. This was

the view of an anonymous Christian in the sixth century. Suffering and evil, and why God does what God does, are simply beyond the cognitive capacity of humans. Instead of performing mental gymnastics, this tradition has urged Christian believers to trust that God knows what God is doing, suggesting a pastoral response is more satisfying than a rational explanation.

When a student walks into my university office with a story of suffering, very rarely does she want a rational explanation for why God allows it. Instead, she needs a listening ear and an open heart. Rather than answers, she's looking for someone who will stand as a witness to her pain. And through his incarnation, Jesus comes alongside everyone who suffers pain in this world.

This raises a good question: What is the best response to questions of suffering and evil? Is it a rational theological system? Or is it a person who has been formed to be like Christ, someone who is willing to make space in their life for the brokenness of the world?

I think it's the latter more than the former. This is why honest attempts to explain away the problem of evil with sound theology often fall flat. Sure, it's helpful to have a theological framework in mind. But Jesus displays for us the priority of a compassionate pastoral response to those experiencing pain and suffering. Jesus made space in the very heart of God for the suffering of the world. He was willing to be interrupted and pierced by the pain in human life. He opened himself to the horrible depths of suffering and evil in the world. Christian faith is trusting that one day our hopes for both personal and cosmic healing will be fully realized by Jesus, who suffered on the cross and now reigns as Lord. **B**



Abuse. Aftermath. Recovery. Cycle.
By Katerina Guthrie, Grade 12, Toronto District Christian High, a member of Christian Schools International.

Artist's statement

My paintings explore the process and cycle of abuse based on my experiences and those of many others. Each painting has its own theme: "Abuse," "Aftermath," "Recovery," and "Cycle." The goal of the paintings is to convey the gravity, horror, and life-changing effects of abuse. I use bright, contrasting colours to depict dark imagery in order to symbolize how things are not always as they seem and how anybody can be a victim. I hope my work shows other victims of abuse that they are not alone and inspires them to speak up.

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General

CALL TO SYNOD 2018 The council of Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, calls all delegates to Synod 2018, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the College Chapel on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Thursday, June 7, at 7:00 p.m. for joint worship with the delegates to the Reformed Church in America General Synod. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates from the CRC and the RCA synods for All for the Sake of the Gospel—a community-wide Worship Service on Sunday, June 10, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. at the DeVos Center for Arts and Worship, 2300 Plymouth Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Ajoy Kumar Lama, the Words of Hope and Back to God Ministries International director for South Asia, will provide the message based on 1 Corinthians 9:22-23.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 3, and Sunday, June 10. Council of Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan

With gratitude to God, **First Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids** invites you to celebrate the culmination of their building project Restoring Place ~ Opening Doors. Open house Saturday, June 2 from 2- 5 pm and Dedication service led by Pastor Randy Buursma on Sunday June 3, 10:00 a.m. Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Psalm 127:1

Calls Accepted

CALL ACCEPTED Rev. Aaron Gonzales has accepted the call of First CRC, Hospers, Iowa. He was installed March 11, 2018. He previously served First CRC of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Retirement

PASTOR WILLIAM RENKEMA The congregation of Cutlerville East CRC congratulates Pastor Bill on his retirement from ministry in April 2018. He has served faithfully for almost 40 years, the last 8 here at CECRC, and previously at Borculo CRC and Calvary (Lowell, MI) CRC. He and his wife Teresa also served as Missionaries in Honduras and Puerto Rico. We will miss him, and we wish him and his wife Teresa many blessings in this next chapter.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION The congregation of 14th Street CRC (Holland, MI) congratulates Rev. Marvin Hofman on his retirement on June 3, 2018. A community open house to celebrate Pastor Marv & Mary will be Sat. June 2 from 2-4 pm at 14 West 14th Street. We thank God for his many years of faithful ministry in the CRC, including 18 years as our pastor.

Church Positions Available

LEAD PASTOR Mill Creek Community Church, located in the exciting, growing north Seattle area, seeks a pastor to lead it into the next phase of its mission. We are an open and inviting church, seeking in all we do to reflect the renewing love of God in our community. Check out our church profile at millcreekchurch.com with information on how to apply. We are open to both women and men in leadership.

DUNCAN CRC on beautiful Vancouver Island BC is seeking a full-time, dynamic pastor who would be a caring shepherd ministering to all ages in our congregation. More info available on our website duncancrc.org or by contacting the search committee at search@duncancrc.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, brucecmurry@gmail.com or ph / text Bruce at 920-960-7524.

SEEKING SENIOR PASTOR: Phoenix CRC has many established self-sustaining ministries of all ages with passionate leaders who use their Spiritual gifts to contribute to Christ's Kingdom. We are excited about our growing numbers of children. We seek a Pastor to inspire us to live out our God-given potential through Biblical preaching, teaching and engaging with our existing leaders. Got to phoenixcrc.org and contact us at search@phoenixcrc.org.

PART-TIME PASTOR Looking for a challenge? Trinity Fellowship CRC in San Diego is seeking a part-time (bi-vocational) pastor who is skilled in and passionate about preaching and leadership. We are a small diversified church that wants to attract, engage and enfold more members of our community. If interested please contact Mr. Jim Salle at 619-429-8715 or cell 619-254-5151. https://trinitysdccr.org

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Caledonia Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full time Worship Director. The job description is available on church website @ www.caledoniaccr.org. Please email your resume to Sue Sikma at ssikma@caledoniaccr.org.

PASTOR - After a thoughtful transitional process, FELLOWSHIP CHURCH in west Toronto seeks to implement an exciting new ministry strategy and is inviting a teaching pastor to join them on this journey. We want to build on our strengths of a strong and vibrant internal community to grow in faith and capacity as we reach out to serve our neighbourhood and city. In close collaboration with our new Ministry Director, our prospective pastor will pursue a holistic ministry that encompasses both personal discipleship and social concerns, equipping our members to serve in God's Kingdom, as articulated in a healthy Reformed world view. We want to share the message of Christ's saving love for people and the whole creation. We intend to partner with other local churches and ministries that share our vision wherever possible. Proven ability to inspire the congregation through teaching the Word in an experiential manner within a diverse and multicultural environment is required. Please contact Bill van Geest at billvangeest@gmail.com for more information by June 15, 2018. Website: www.fellowshipetobicoke.com

PASTOR Tohatchi, NM CRC is seeking a man who can guide our small congregation. We are located on the Navajo Nation, 25 miles north of Gallup, NM. We desire a pastor who is committed to sound Biblical doctrine, committed to the gospel of God's grace, and able to interact with people of all ages. Please send resume to : firstnavajocr_tohatchinm@yahoo.com

PASTOR/CHAPLAIN POSITION BRAMPTON, ONTARIO One of our three Pastors/Chaplains is retiring. We are Heritage Fellowship CRC located in Holland Christian Homes, a large Senior-Care community in Brampton, Ontario. This position has a dual nature: A) as Pastor to the Church and as Chaplain to the complex of 1150 residents. Our Church has about 320 Members, of which 60 live in LTC facilities in our complex. We value Biblical preaching, good listening, strong people skills and sensitivity to Dutch cultural background. 80% of membership is Dutch immigrant and median age is 86. B) The other aspect of the position involves providing Chap-



The Big Question

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—John Bijl, youth director

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Christian Reformed Church
Faith Formation Ministries

laincy as needed to the population of Holland Christian Homes which is about 1150 and 400 staff. There are two 120 bed LTC facilities and six apartment towers, connected by well-lit, decorated underground walkways. To learn more about this opportunity enquire with Search Committee Chair Pastor Hank Bylstra at pastor.bylstra@hch.ca

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES Modesto, CA CRC is seeking a full time Director of Youth Ministries. See detailed description at <http://www.modestocrc.org>

PASTOR Williamsburg CRC is situated about 10 km north of the mighty St. Lawrence River and about 50 km south of the city of Ottawa in the small town of Williamsburg, Ontario. We are an active and caring church with all the activities you would expect. We invite you to check out our church website at www.williamsburgcrc.org. You can find our Church Profile when you click "ABOUT". Come visit. We would love to see you and hear from you! Please contact Joe VanderVeen at yjoeveen@gmail.com for more information or call 1-613-222-5105.

WORSHIP COORDINATOR Ada CRC is seeking a part-time Worship Coordinator. The job description and application are available on our website: www.adacrc.org/employment. Please email your resume to: esther@adacrc.org.

FULL TIME DIRECTOR of Faith Formation, Neerlandia CRC: Have the opportunity to experience Alberta's clear blue skies and Northern Lights all within driving distance of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, located in the rural community of Neerlandia, Canada, is seeking a full time Director of Faith Formation. We are an active and growing multi-generational congregation of 150 families with a strong foundation of over 100 years of ministry. We are looking for an individual to join our ministry team who has a love for inter-generational ministry, with an emphasis on education and relationships. To explore this opportunity with us, please contact Steven DeVries, steven.devries@ualberta.net

SEEKING PASTOR Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, IA invites a pastor to walk with us as we seek to deepen our unity and our mission. A superb candidate will be committed to the Reformed faith and to excellent preaching and teaching. He or she will enjoy ministering to persons of all ages, thrive through collaborative and creative planning, and will work with us to develop a unifying vision. He/she will seek to foster community within the congregation and send us out in service. Contact the Search Committee at dennis.vanderplaats@dordt.edu or call 712-449-8203.

LEAD PASTOR Bethany Church is inviting a Lead Pastor to join us in the call to be a faithful presence of Christ in core city Muskegon. We value inclusive community, multi-cultural/generational worship, and living in/partnering with our neighborhood. If you are able to be ordained in the Christian Reformed Church, find the job description and more information at www.bethanychurchmuskegon.org. Resumes and inquiries can be directed to bethanymuskegonsearch@gmail.com.

Anniversary

70TH ANNIVERSARY

BAZUIN Rev. Lugene (Archie) and Ellie, of Hartsfield Village 10000 Columbia Ave. Apt. 1204 Munster, IN 46321 will celebrate their 70th Wedding anniversary at an open house June 9, 2018 2-4 PM at Hartsfield Village Children: Daniel and Theresa, LouAnne and Bart, Mary and Rich; 6 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

POSTMA Floyd and Ruth will reach a milestone on Saturday, May 5 - their 70th Wedding Anniversary. With deep gratitude they, along with their children and grandchildren, anticipate times of celebration for God's favor upon their family over these many years. Greetings may be sent to 1725 Port Sheldon St. Apt B408, Jenison, MI, 49428.

60TH ANNIVERSARY

BISHOP Allan and Irene (Wezeman) 24354 S. Frederick, Ripon, CA 95366. Thank-you for your example of Christian love and dedication to each other, your family, church and community. Rejoicing with you on your 60th anniversary, June 7! Love, John and Kirstie, Rich and LouAnn, Jim and Carol, Clint and Marnie, 13 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren.

FOPMA Earl and Alene (Sjaardema) 706 10th Ave Sully IA 50251 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on May 20, 2018. Children: Curtis and Brenda, Keith and Pam, Dale and Cindy, Diane and Scott (Roose); 10 grandchildren. Praise God for his goodness and faithfulness!

HUIZINGA Fred & Jan of Orland Park, IL. Celebrating with them are their four children: Cindy (Todd) Wessels, Darlene (Ken) Bulthuis, Lynda (Russ) Clousing, Tom (Marcia), 12 grandchildren (8 married), and 6 great-grandchildren. We give thanks for God's faithfulness.

VANDERWEELE Donald and Joan (Van Haveren) of 2000 32nd St. S. E. apt. 331 Grand Rapids, MI. 49508 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on May 10, 2018. Children: Brian and Lois (Roelofs), Keith and Lori (Banning), Dave and Cheryl Spoelma. Grandchildren: Karisa and Kayla; Elise, Elena and Eden; Kyle (Leanne) and Tyler. Congratulations! We love you! To God be the glory!

Birthdays

100TH BIRTHDAY

LUCY DYKSTRA (DELEEUW) celebrates her 100th birthday May 16 with open house May 20, 2-4 at MediLodge 1221 16th. ST., Holland, MI. 49423

CLAZINE ENGELSMAN will celebrate her 100th birthday on May 9. Celebrating with her will be her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild. Greetings may be sent to Phillips County Retirement Center, PO Box 628, Phillipsburg, KS 67661

AHLEEN HEYNEN Her birthday is March 29, 1918. She has been a member of the CRC her whole life, serving as a pastor's wife for about 35 years. Greetings can be sent to Ahleen at 2020 Muldoon Road, #203, Anchorage, AK 99504. Her family gathered to celebrate her birthday on March 24, and her friends and church family are gathering at an open house at Trinity Christian Reformed Church on March 29, 2018.

BERTHA ROOSE (STUURMSMA) wife of Wilbur Roose (deceased), is celebrating her 100th birthday on May 22 in Pella, Iowa. Praising God with her are children: Leon (Jana), John (Karen), Mae Bork (Henry), Ernie (Esther), and Tim (Sharon). Also 10 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

95TH BIRTHDAY

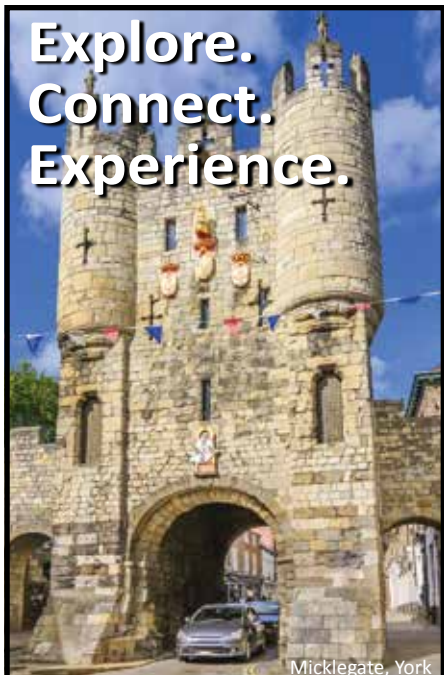
JULIANA FLIETSTRA STEENSMA celebrates the beginning of her 96th year on May 3, 2018. Wife of John (deceased), Mother of Ann/Al Schipper, Dirk (deceased), Joy/Jim Jonker, Mary Steensma/Jim Leunk. Grandmother of 9, great grandmother of 18. Resides at Freedom Village, Holland, MI.

90TH BIRTHDAY

NEAL PETERS will celebrate his 90th Birthday on June 8. Celebrating with him are his wife Ann, his children Ed & Susan, Tim & Sharon, Kathy & Ken Brock, Ernie & Maria, his 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Family and friends are invited to an Open House in his honor from 2-4pm June 9 at Ridgewood CRC, 1571 Baldwin St Jenison, MI 49428

MARIAN (WOLFSEN) TEUSINK will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 23, 2018. Praising God for her love are Jim (Kathy), Ken (Wendy), her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Greetings may be sent to 728 N. Stewart Ave. Fremont, MI 49412.

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CYNTHIA VAN DYKE ROELOFS will celebrate her 90th birthday May 8. She continues to be a great blessing, most especially to her children Lyle (Laurie) Roelofs, Karl (Vicki) Roelofs, Marilou (Steve) Richardson, and Evan (Sue) Roelofs, her 12 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren. Greetings may be sent to 2363 Greenview Dr. Wyoming, MI 49519

Obituaries

BROUWER Lester, age 93, of Willmar, MN & Bunde CRC, joined his wife Eva in the presence of the Lord on March 6, 2018. Lester is survived by children: Jean (Stan) Starkenburg, Wayne (Brenda), Shirley (Bill) Kuurstra, Evelyn (Jeff) Brouwer-Thomson, Ardie (Nathan) Elgersma, Lyle (Beth), grandchildren, & great-grandchildren. He leaves a legacy of deep faith and love.

CALVERLEY Mary (Wassenaar) 70, of Winnipeg Manitoba, passed away February 3, 2018. Survived by her husband Ron, 3 children and 3 grandchildren. Mary earned a degree in Religious studies at Reformed Bible College '73. She now sings in the celestial choir.



DE RUITER Herbert A. "Herb", age 84, US Army Korean War Veteran, beloved husband for 54 years to Rosemary, nee Belstra. Loving father of Michael (Kerri) De Ruiter and Rev. Steven (Tara) De Ruiter. Cherished grandfather of Alison, Nathan, Caleb, Viktor, and Alice.

Dear brother, brother-in-law and uncle of many. Herb was an avid gardener who found relaxation and spiritual joy while tending to his gardens.

EKDOM Christina (Oosthoek), age 87, of Grand Rapids, MI, went to be with her Lord and Savior on March 15, 2018. Preceded in death by a brother and an infant great-grandchild. Survived by her husband, Don of 62 years, 3

sons, Mark (Vicki), Dale (Theresa), and Ross, 3 sisters, Ena Peterson, Nel Carnes, and Hermie Groot. She was grandmother of 8 and great-grandmother of 4. She as a singer all her life and now sings in the angel choir. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



GREENFIELD HIBMA Gertrude, age 93, of Spirit Lake, IA, passed away on Thursday, March 29, 2018. Funeral Services were April 7, 2018 at the Christian Reformed Church in Ocheyedan, IA. Rev. Bill Van Der Heide officiating. Those left to cherish her memories are her 6 children and their spouses, Barbara Whalen, Terry (Diane) Greenfield, Vivian (Lary) Rosenboom, Sherwyn (Debbie) Greenfield, Todd (Kristine) Greenfield, Scott (Rebecca) Greenfield; 16 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren; 5 step-children and their spouses, Karen (Lyle) Pownell, Jim (Ginny) Hibma, Nancy (William) Jepson, Bonnie (Dennis) Pruckler, Lori (Wade) Duroe; 20 step-grandchildren, 31 step-great-grandchildren; 8 foster children; 3 sisters and brother-in-law, Katherine (LeRoy) Hanenburg, Lois Cuperus, Esther DeBoer; 2 brothers and sisters-in-law, Peter (Bertie) Runia, Alvin (Mary) Runia; one brother-in-law, Arlan Wiekamp, many nieces and nephews. Online Expressions of Sympathy can be sent to www.andringafuneralhome.com She was preceded in death by her husbands, William Greenfield and Elmer Hibma; granddaughter, Becky Greenfield Coleman; son-in-law, Edward Whalen; sister, Eunice Wiekamp; brother and sister-in-law, John (Joan) Runia; 2 brothers-in-law, Erwin Cuperus and Charles DeBoer



GROENBOOM Doris D. née Rozema, went to be with her LORD, March 13th, 2018, N1546 Oak Shores Ln, Fontana, WI, 53125. Beloved wife of the late John; loving mother of Cathy (Tom) Arnold, Diana (Bob) Beckus, and Julie; devoted grandmother of John (Jennifer) Arnold, Christopher Arnold, Jason, Nicole, and Brooke Beckus; loving great-grandmother of Ella, Abigail, and Olivia Arnold; fond sister of Ann Bilthouse (Bob and the late Ed Bilthouse) Havel, Ronald (Joanne) Rozema, the late Agnes (the late Claude) Klein, and the late Stewart (the late Marge and the late Alice Rozema); sister-in-law of Joanne (Arthur Jr.) Vos. Preceded in death by her grandson Bradley Arnold. Memorials to Bethshan Association and Eim Christian Services are appreciated.

KAMPS Roland, went to be with his Savior on March 18, 2018. He leaves his wife of 67 years, Ruth (Poppen) Kamps along with their children: Linda Hekman, Randy (Fran) Kamps, Ken (Laura) Kamps, Laura (Jerry) Herweyer. The Kamps were blessed with 14 grand children and 14 great grand children. Roland was the son of the late Rev. and Mrs. J. R. Kamps who were early missionaries to the people of the Navajo Nation. He spent most of his time on earth under the "xerox blue skies" of New Mexico. Memorial contributions may be made to Rehoboth Christian School, a place near and dear to Roland's heart.

MEYER Annie Noordmans - age 93. On March 23, 2018, Annie, a child of God, joined her beloved husband Richard and they now joyously sing together in the heavenly choir. Her life exemplified the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Her children: AnnaMae/Pete Bush, Ruth/Rich Huisman, Betty/Chris Kacos, David/Ellen Meyer and their families celebrate her long life, well-lived and so very loved.

MONSMA-WASSENAAR Dorothy, age 85, met her Savior on 3-5-18. She was preceded in death by husbands, Dr. Timothy Monsma and Jack Wassenaar. Dot and Tim served many years in overseas missions and raised 5 children, all surviving: Karl, Sheri (Tom) Muma, Karen (Andrew) Visser,



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DeeDee (John) Hunt, Mark, Sharla, with 18 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. Dorothy's nursing career included 12 years in Nigeria; work with the Red Cross, health department, home hospice; and as director of a nursing home. She volunteered in Zaire after the genocide and established an orphan ministry in Malawi. She was hospitable and traveled extensively. On 8-1-17, she suffered a massive stroke. Dorothy always had a smile for others; her soul was anchored in Jesus Christ! Her memorial service was on March 31, in Grand Rapids, MI.

PAULSON Jean, nee Folgers, went to be with her LORD on March 16, 2018. 347 61st St. Willowbrook, IL 60527. Wife of the late Herbert Paulson; mother of Jeffrey, Kurt (Lyn), Dale (Rebecca) and Laura (Rob) Tazelaar; Grandma of Adam, Lindsay, Ethan, Nicholas (Brooke), Katherine, Lora Paulson; sister of the late Marion (the late Herm) Van Stedum, the late Doris (the late Clarence) Wieringa, Kenneth (the late Virginia) Folgers; aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Lombard Christian Reformed Church, 2020 S. Meyers Rd, Lombard, IL, 60148 are appreciated.

PERSENAIRE Theodore (Ted), age 88, of Crete, IL, passed into Glory on March 25, 2018. Beloved husband of 63 years to Gladys (nee Hoitsma) who preceded him in March 2017, loving father to Bonnie (Paul) Zigterman, Sandy (Wally) Loerop, Rick (Val), Larry (Jan), fond grandfather of 13 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren (1 in Glory).

TELGEN William Sr., 86 yrs old, of Middlebury, Vt, formerly from Shoreham, Vt, passed tenderly into the arms of his Savior on Thanksgiving Day, November 23, 2017. Bill was born in Midland Park, NJ and was the beloved husband of Catherine (Siegers) Telgen of Midland park, NJ. He was the loving father of Susan (Elwyn) Flynn, Sandra Brisson, William (Carleen) Telgen, Laura(Gerry) Koning, Ronald (Tina) Telgen, Karen (Roger) Desabrais and Linda (Andre) Larocque. He had 22 grandchildren and 26 great grandchildren.

TERPSTRA Harold, age 97, passed away peacefully March 17, 2018, near Seattle, WA. He is survived by wife Nancy

Leaf, son Ken (Shirley) Terpstra, daughter Judy (Allen) Hulse, daughter-in-law Diane Terpstra, step-daughter Melody Taylor, 9 grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife Harriet, nee DeGraaf, and son Glenn.



TODD Anne (nee Bulthuis) of La Porte, IN, formerly of LaGrange, IL, met her Savior on Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018. Husband, Mark, preceded her in 1993. Children: Carolyn (George) Bosman of Elmhurst, IL, Robert (Mary) Todd of Three Oaks, MI, Marcia Wolff of Rolling Prairie, IN, Susan (Tim) Herwaldt of Holt, MI, Glen (Kathy) Todd of La Porte; 18 grandchildren; 36 great-grandchildren; sisters, Florence Stoub, Jeannette (Louis) VanDyke, Harriet Nietzel. Preceded by sisters, Grace Niemeyer, Pearl Bulthuis, Angeline Bulthuis, and brother, Clarence Bulthuis. "Blessed in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Ps. 116:15.



WIERINGA Doris Mae (nee Folgers) passed away peacefully on February 23rd, 2018. Doris was born in Chicago, IL on April 20, 1927. At the age of three she first met the boy who would become the love of her life, Clarence Wieringa. They were married on June 7, 1947. Together they had three children; Doris (Glenn) Boonstra, Don (Carol) Wieringa and Sandy (Curt) Lieneck, seven grandchildren, and seventeen great-grandchildren. She also leaves behind her dear sister Jean (late Herbert) Paulson, and her brother Kenneth (late Virginia) Folgers. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Clarence; her parents, Neil and Jennie Folgers; and her sister and brother-in-law, Marion and Herman Van Stedum. Doris was a remarkable woman who created a sense of belonging to all who crossed her path. Beloved by many, she will

be dearly missed. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made in Doris' name to a memorial fund benefiting Christian Living Communities Resident Assistance, 7000 E Bellevue Ave, Suite 150, Greenwood Village, CO 80111 or Elim Christian School, 13020 S. Central Ave, Crestwood, IL 60418.

VOS Edna (Tjoelker), 96, of Everson, WA, passed away on February 11, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband Jake, daughter Lorene, and grandson Doug. She is survived by children: Ken (Millie) Vos, Gerald (Priscilla) Vos, Don (Janet) Vos, Linda (Jeff) Kok, and Bernie Vos; son-in-law Arie Vander Zouwen; 21 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren; brother-in-law Bill (Marlene) Vos and sister-in-law Winnie Miedema.

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We Need More 'Still'

Still we rise to bless
God's holy name,
whether in glorious
autumn sunshine or
the deepest, darkest
despair of winter.



Katie Ritsema-Roelofs serves as the minister of music and worship at Washington, D.C. CRC and also as worship coordinator at Silver Spring CRC in Maryland. She enjoys a busy life with her husband and three children north of the nation's capital.

It was one of those oppressively gloomy mornings—the kind where it's difficult to rouse yourself from sleep, with the sort of gloom where the grayness of the sky is not simply a vision to behold, but an emotion, a physical weight on the soul. I was doing what I do at 9:30 every Sunday morning: driving to church, rehearsing the words and phrases of liturgy in my head, and tapping through difficult key changes on the steering wheel.

The dreariness outside had spilled over into the congregation. People wore it on their backs like cloaks and on their faces like masks. I breathed in dreams of a blue sky and exhaled with the beginning notes rising from the piano. Each week I have the best seat in the house: Our piano faces the congregation, so I can look up and see their faces. Some are beaming with joy as they look down the row at their family; others are filled with fear for whatever the week might hold, or are stoically holding it together even though their world might be crumbling. I get to see these faces in their truest and most vulnerable expressions each week.

That day I noticed the anxious faces of those in our congregation—more than half—who serve as federal employees and are feeling the tension of the political climate. I saw the weary face of a dear friend with stage 4 cancer. I saw four empty seats in the front that should have been occupied by my husband and kids, who were instead at home recovering after an exhausting night of managing my 7-year-old diabetic son's blood sugar. I sunk my fingers into the keys, urging the music to pour forth like that first warm breeze wafting in the smells of spring.

*"Then hear, O gracious Savior,
accept the love we bring,*

*that we who know your favor
may serve you as our King;*

*and whether our tomorrows
be filled with good or ill,*

*we'll triumph through our sorrows
and rise to bless you still."*

Still. Sometimes it feels as though this word is used in scolding or command: Be still! It pushes us to do something—or not do something—along with giving us the feeling of not quite measuring up. Many of us can do little to change our life circumstances, more often than not bustling with commitments to job, family, and church. We seem to have little control over the time-consuming stuff of life that preoccupies us. But what we can do is direct how we respond to what we've been given.

Maybe for now, in this time and space, we need more "still" in its adverbial form: a resolute, unwavering, unchanging state of being in our very souls. *Still* we bless our gracious Lord and Savior, no matter what masks our faces or clouds our hearts. *Still* we go through the stuff of life, meeting deadlines, doing dishes, attending school board meetings and parent-teacher conferences with gratitude in our hearts and praise on our lips. *Still* we rise to bless God's holy name, whether in glorious autumn sunshine or the deepest, darkest despair of winter. *Still* we honor God and offer all our praise in our chaos or our stillness.

Still. No matter what. **B**

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