

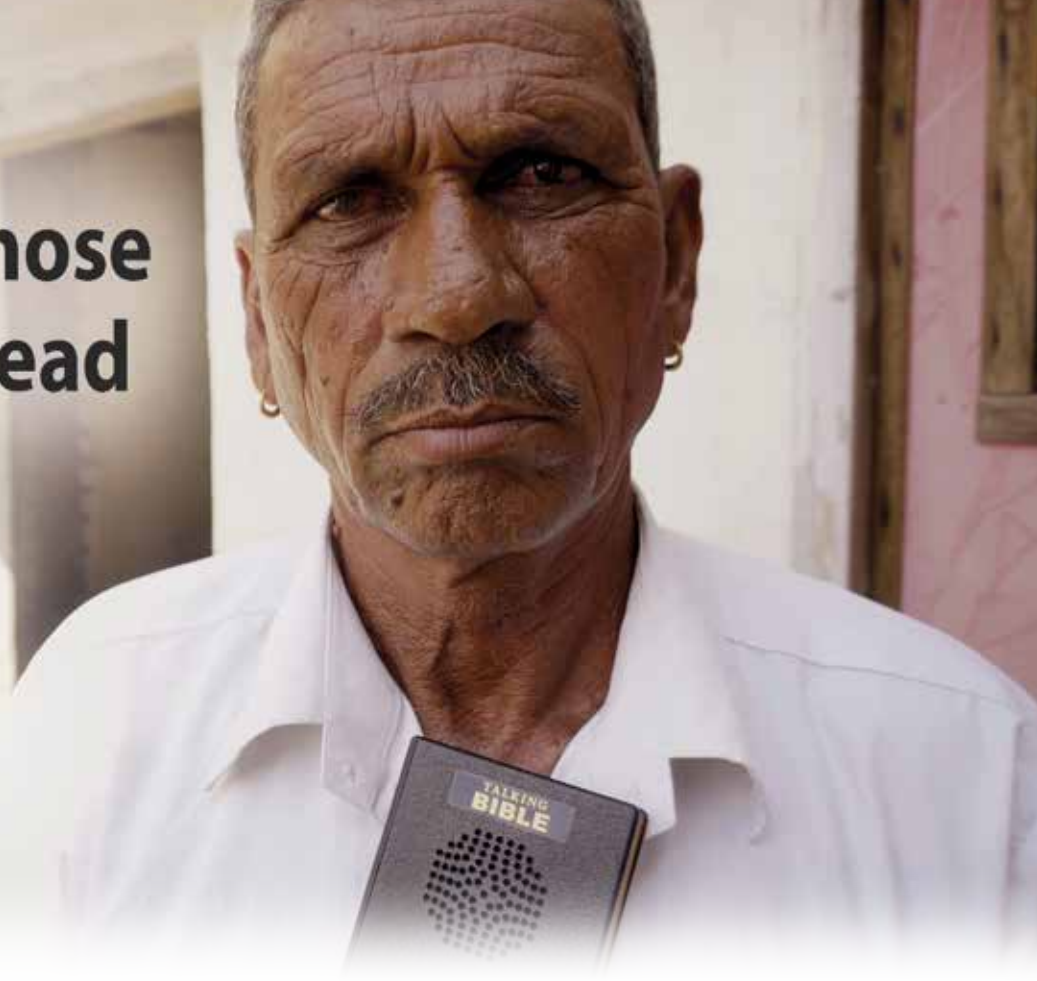
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- » Movies: Three Horror Movies That Teach Us About Christianity
- » Book: *Introverted Mom* by Jamie C. Martin
- » Music: *Threads* by Sheryl Crow

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

The Banner staff wishes a very happy Thanksgiving to our readers in the U.S. who are celebrating Nov. 28. And we wish a belated happy Thanksgiving to our Canadian readers who celebrated Oct. 14.

GET INVOLVED

Calling anyone with original music or poetry/spoken word art to share! Enter our video open mic; see the ad on page 46 for details.



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Photo by Kevin Mueller/Unsplash

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BANNER

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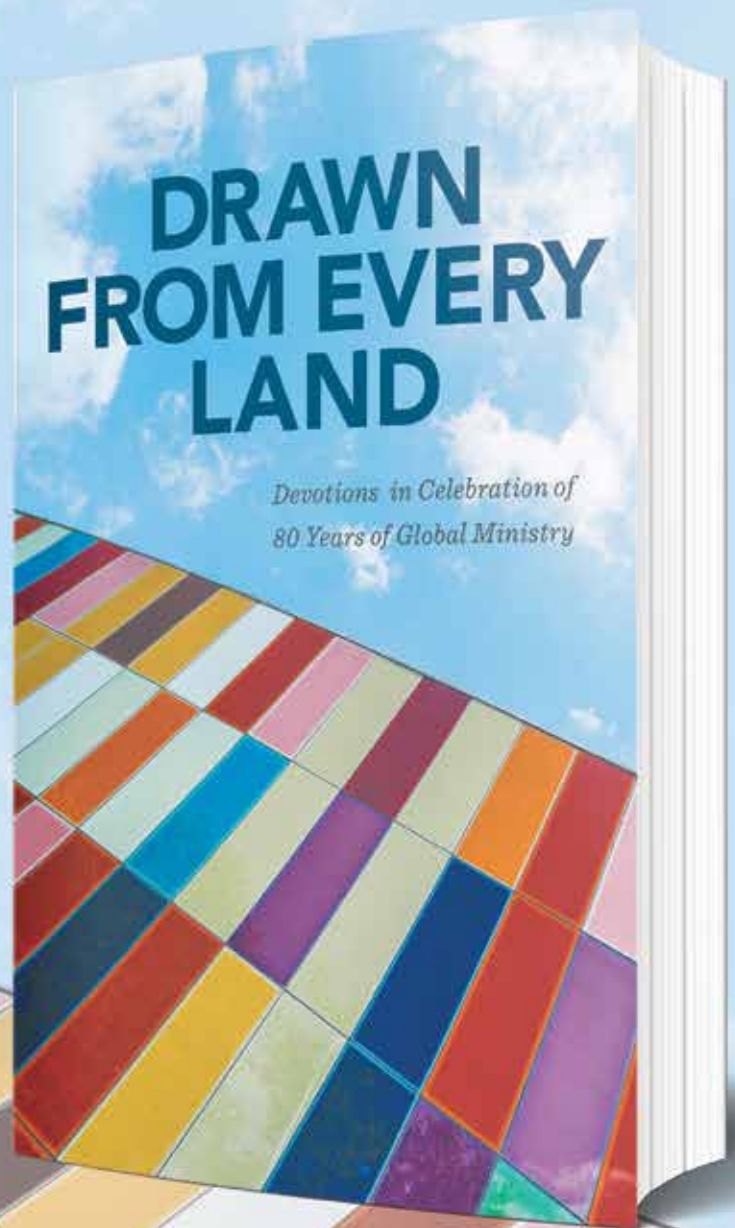
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Ignorant of Ignorance

It is not unusual for our world to reward and promote the less competent over the truly competent.



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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“YOU DON’T KNOW what you don’t know.” I heard this phrase recently and it struck me. As someone who is always tempted by intellectual pride, I find the Holy Spirit often reminds me of my mind’s limitations. It is true that I don’t know what I don’t know, and that should humble me.

When I was younger, I felt more certain about a lot of theological things. But as I grew older, learning more theology, I began to recognize that there was a lot I didn’t know, and my previous certainties are now far less certain. I have drastically changed my mind on some of them. For instance, I used to be very certain that infant baptism was unbiblical, but after some rigorous study, I changed my mind. I changed not because of my feelings, but because I was convicted by Scripture. I wouldn’t have joined the Christian Reformed Church otherwise.

By learning better methods of studying Scripture and by seriously studying opposing viewpoints, I began to see some of my previous intellectual blind spots. My previous certainty was based on insufficient knowledge.

The apostle Paul warned that “knowledge puffs up, while love builds up. *Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know*” (1 Cor. 8:1-2, emphasis mine). Sadly, most Christians remember the first part of that warning, of knowledge puffing up, but neglect the second part. It is not simply intellectual knowledge in and of itself that leads to pride, but also insufficient knowledge and knowledge not joined to God’s love.

Modern psychologists call this the Dunning-Kruger effect, named after its original researchers. They found that less competent people tend to overrate their own abilities, while the reverse is true of the truly competent. Those who

know more tend to be more humble about their abilities because they are more aware of their own limitations. They understand the vastness of available knowledge. Less competent people, on the other hand, know enough to function, but not enough to rightly evaluate their own incompetence. They are overly self-confident because they are ignorant of their ignorance.

A greater problem is that we often mistake such confidence and certainty for charisma and leadership. In turn, we often mistake intellectual humility for indecisiveness and cowardice. It is not unusual, therefore, for our world to reward and promote the less competent over the truly competent. (To be clear, the less competent are not totally incompetent. For example, we can have two doctors who both graduated from medical school but are not equally competent.)

How does this affect our theological arguments? I have learned over the years to pay greater attention to those biblical theologians who are more nuanced, less black-and-white, and more humble in their conclusions. But many Christians on either side of a debate often prefer those who make absolute statements with absolute certainty. I fear we might be rewarding and amplifying the wrong voices. The ones who shout “The Bible is absolutely clear!” might not be right even if they are absolutely certain of their positions. Their confidence and certainty might be based on insufficient knowledge.

I am more humble in my intellectual convictions now because I realize I probably still have intellectual blind spots. I continue to learn and grow in knowledge. But my faith does not depend on how much I know, but on knowing God, who holds me in love. B



REPLY ALL

Outlook for the RCA

Two stories in the August *Banner* indicated that the Reformed Church in America is on the verge of a split. We are divided, it's true. But don't put the Holy Spirit in a box by assuming a split is inevitable. An excellent team is working hard on our behalf to propose a recommended future. It may be business as usual, reorganization, separation, or a new option that arises. As we wait for that recommendation, we are walking by faith. We are waiting with expectation for the Holy Spirit to write the next chapter of our story. Brothers and sisters in the Christian Reformed Church, please join us in praying for this work, for our future, and for open hearts to hear from God and the courage to follow where God calls.

» Rev. Eddy Alemán // general secretary, Reformed Church in America

July/August Banner

A sincere thank-you to everyone who was part of the July/August issue of *The Banner*. I appreciated the review of the actions of Synod and being informed about the issues facing the CRC. With this information we can start conversations, pray for our leaders, search the Scriptures and our hearts, and challenge the leaders of our individual churches to do the same. I am impressed that in Jesus' high-priestly prayer (in John 17), as he prays for those who believe in him but have never seen him, he prays that we may love each other and that we may be one. And he adds the phrase, "Father, I in them and you in me." May we ever be willing to submit to the spirit of Jesus within.

» Blanche VanderBent // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Statement Regarding Mass Shootings

There is much to commend in the "Statement Regarding Mass Shootings" released by the denominational offices a month ago. Prayer and a willingness to rethink one's own prejudices are certainly necessary on all sides as society looks for ways to address and respond to this phenomenon. One line in the Statement reads: "[W]e call on all members of the CRCNA to take an active stance against false narratives." Maybe that stance begins closer to home than the Statement's authors care to look. It was published several days after the shootings. *The Dayton Daily News* had already reported that the Dayton shooter had attended a Ku Klux Klan rally as an armed counterprotester. While officials are still searching for a motive, there is no reason whatsoever to believe it had anything to do with the shooter being a white supremacist. It very much bothers me the shooting in Dayton was shoehorned into the Statement's white-supremacist narrative.

» Bruce Anderson // Muskegon, Mich.

Deciding Identity

The assumption is that (deciding one's identity) is primarily a psychological rather than a theological issue ("Big Questions: How do I decide my identity?" September 2019). It is proper to normalize some of this searching and questioning, but by this age we should also expect that the church has laid a foundation of theological reference points that can start to guide a young person or at least serve as a compass the person's local congregation (parents, pastor, teachers, friends) can use to provide direction.

» David Dill // online comment

Just War

We must be careful to observe categorical differences between God's revealed will for personal behavior and God's revealed will for governments ("Big Questions: Why does the CRC endorse 'just war'?", September 2019). However pacifistically you interpret passages such as "turn the other cheek" or "love your enemies," such commands were not being made in context to governments or governing officials as they carry out their duties. We must balance God's personal instructions with God's institution of government as one that "does not bear the sword in vain" and is an "avenger who carries out God's wrath" (Rom. 13:4, ESV). It simply will not do to attempt to hold the instituted government to the standards for personal conduct because government was instituted by God for a specific purpose. We don't personally seek vengeance and punishment on those who have harmed us because we leave that to God, both in the eternal/final sense and in the temporal sense through his instituted agents (government) and through his providential will.

» Eric Van Dyken // online comment

His Wounds

Thanks for sharing! ("His Wounds," September 2019.) Listening to people's rants and anger at God is such a valuable ministry. We don't have to have all the answers; listening, all by itself, shows that you value that person enough to spend time to listen. It shows God's love and care. It's not easy to hear, but is part of what we are called to do when we are called to love.

» Bonnie Nicholas // online comment

READ MORE ONLINE

Don't Throw Out the Organ!

IT WAS ADVENT, and praise team leader Mark Roessing led the congregation into the first verse of "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence." Using just guitar for accompaniment, he gave this ancient hymn a contemporary beat. In verse two, an electric guitar, a keyboard, a bass, and drums joined the accompaniment. Then came verse three and a nowadays unusual instrumental addition: the organ! What? With a key change for verse four, the intensity increases, and now there's full organ with all praise instruments. Near the end, Roessing signals that the final phrase will be repeated:

*... as with ceaseless voice they cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, Lord Most High!"*

Full organ! Drums throbbing! All instruments lead the congregation into this emotional high point. On the final chord, a 32-foot pedal reed rattles the room. And then silence. Some are in tears. People have been touched by this moving interpretation of a hymnbook classic.

This article could be just for encouraging churches not to abandon their organs. But it's deeper than that. Organs can enhance the sound of praise bands, enrich congregational singing and praise, and, not least, offer pleasing sounds to our Lord!

Not only can playing the organ bridge the gap between old-timers who lament the lack or loss of organ music and the younger generation who wonder why we ever used it in the first place, but it also can give new vitality to a blended service.

At my church, Ferrysburg (Mich.) Community Church, praise leaders have opted to include classical organ with all styles: ancient classics, such as "Let All Mortal Flesh"; favorite hymns

Organs can
enhance the sound
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sounds to our Lord!

like "Nearer, Still Nearer"; and, yes, even more recent praise songs. The organ never leads, never dominates, and usually sneaks in almost unnoticed. But it provides a depth and richness not only to the sound, but to the experience.

Granted, how well the organ can be integrated depends on many factors, especially the location of the organ, the abilities of the organist, and the type and quality of the instrument. I'm blessed to work with a 30-rank custom Allen organ with a festival trumpet and two 32-foot pedal stops.

Including the organ has been a winning proposition: Praise musicians appreciate the supplement, singing has improved, and the congregation loves it.

Don't throw out the organ! **B**



Doug Tjapkes has been organist, pianist, keyboardist, and choir director at Ferrysburg (Mich.) Community Church for 55 years. He's the president and founder of Humanity for Prisoners and the author of two books.



As I Was Saying

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- » When Christian Superstars Struggle with Faith
- » Pencil Marks on the Doorframe and Other Signs of Growth
- » Overcoming the Pleaser Identity



Christlike Masculinity

By Shiao Chong

Men's razor company Gillette released an ad in early 2019 that encouraged men to embrace a healthier masculinity by attacking some elements of toxic masculinity, including bullying, harassment, and "boys will be boys" fighting. It created a storm of controversy as those who perceived the ad as an attack on manhood pushed back.

But "toxic masculinity" does not mean all masculinity is toxic. Originally coined by the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and '90s, it refers to a common male stereotype that promotes aggressive behavior, dominance over others, and stunted emotions. Social science studies have shown that these behaviors are harmful not only to men's relationships

with women but also to the men themselves, partly contributing to health risks including depression, substance abuse, higher risks of coronary and pulmonary diseases, and suicidal tendencies.

I was surprised by the amount of pushback to the Gillette ad. Was it the attack on the "boys will be boys" line that triggered the anger? Were people reacting to the feeling that men aren't allowed to be "real" men anymore?

But surely we are not left with just two options: either "real," hypermasculine men who behave badly versus emasculated, effeminate men. Is a man who is loving, kind, and joyful, gentle and peace-loving, faithful and good-hearted, patient, and able to control his anger not a "real" man? According to social tests, most men would label

most of those attributes as more feminine than masculine. But that's a problem—because I just listed the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Since the fruit of the Spirit is what God wants and expects all Christ followers, men and women, to exhibit in their lives, it must be how God intends "real" men to be as well. The problem lies not with the Spirit, but with our culture's stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. We have accepted a lie about masculinity for so long—"boys will be boys"—that we think it is truth.

Social scientists explain our culture's "Boy Code" with four major themes: no sissy stuff, be a sturdy oak, be a big wheel, and give them hell (*My Brother's Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don't) Tell Us About Masculinity*, pp. 97-100). "No sissy stuff" means boys must avoid anything remotely close

to being feminine— from girls' toys to vulnerable states such as crying, showing distress, or asking for help— lest they become targets for shaming.

This leads to being a sturdy oak. Boys are expected to be stoic and self-reliant. If you can't get yourself out of trouble, then you should at least "take it like a man." The problem is that it trains boys and men to be emotionally constipated. They don't know how to express their emotions in healthy ways or how to deal with them besides suppressing them, causing long-term psychological and emotional issues. The only emotion that boys are often allowed to express freely is anger.

This in turn leads to the call to "give them hell." Violence is often portrayed as a natural solution to problems and conflicts. Popular media, including video games, constantly portray and encourage this. "Boys will be boys" gives boys the message that it's okay for them to lose their temper and act violently. Does this contribute partly to domestic violence later in life?

Finally, boys are told they need to become a big wheel, a success, the alpha male in one's tribe/gang, gaining status and honor among one's peers. The typical route to this for young men is through success in sports, in attracting girls, or both. Later in life it often means getting a high-paying job or one that gets you fame, fortune, and followers. Of course, not every boy/man can be an alpha male. Boys/men are therefore constantly competing to outdo one another in gaining status and honor. Their manhood is wrapped up in pursuit of success and a life that revolves around performance rather than grace. In this scheme, failure becomes terrifying. What happens when you inevitably grow older and weaker? And those who have disabilities, those in a lower economic class, and those in a marginalized ethnic group face even greater barriers to "real" manhood.

There was probably a "boy code" or "man code" back in Jesus' first-century

How does Jesus square up with our modern stereotypes of masculinity?


world, too. But how does Jesus square up with our modern stereotypes of masculinity? Although Jesus is a role model for Christian men and women alike, the fact that he was male might give some insight into how a Christian man should behave.

Did Jesus avoid all things "sissy"? Jesus certainly wasn't afraid to show vulnerable emotions. He wept openly in public (Luke 19:41; John 11:33-36). He was comfortable in the company of women, allowing them to follow him in his travels. In fact, he even received financial support from women (Luke 8:1-3). Some of his parables—about baking with yeast (Matt. 13:33), looking for a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), and virgins at a wedding (Matt. 25:1-13)—indicate a familiarity with women's everyday life. Jesus even praised Mary for bucking the traditionally women's role of preparing and serving food when she chose instead to sit and learn at the feet of Jesus among the male disciples (Luke 10:38-42). He welcomed little children when most men didn't have time for them (Mark 10:13-16).

Jesus never seemed obsessed with fame and success. In fact, he taught his male disciples, who were jockeying for status and honor, that true greatness lies in humility and service (Matt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28; Mark 9:33-35; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48). Jesus never married, which was an important step to gaining first-century alpha-male status. Of course, dying a criminal's shameful death by crucifixion destroyed

whatever chance Jesus had of being a "big wheel."

In a violent and vengeful era, Jesus taught people to "turn the other cheek," to "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:38-48), and to put away the sword (John 18:11). Many think that Jesus' cleansing of the temple was a display of "manly" anger and violence. However, Mark's account shows that Jesus actually went into the temple and "looked around at everything" the day before (Mark 11:11), returning the next day to drive out the money changers and merchants (11:12-17). He reflected overnight on what he saw in the temple and decided on a plan of action. It was not, as often imagined, a spur-of-the-moment violent rage. Rather, it was a calculated public protest. This is not to say Jesus never lost his temper, but we cannot use this one instance as license for a man to fly off the handle.

Jesus did not seem to fit easily into either his ancient culture's or our modern culture's "boy/man code" of honor. Instead of shaping our boys according to our culture's "boy code," we should be diligently shaping them according to the fruit of the Spirit, which we know from Scripture is God's will for us. That is our spiritual goal: to be Christ-like men and women. 



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

1. How have you understood the term "toxic masculinity"? In what context have you heard it being used?
2. How have you experienced or observed elements of the "boy code" in your life?
3. Why do you think many men identify most of the attributes in the . . .

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

BIG QUESTIONS

Faith Formation

My teenager is asking questions about her faith, and I'm not sure I have the answers. What should I do?

It's great that your teen is asking you faith questions! Many teens who walk away from the church don't share their concerns. That doesn't make the answers easier, but it's good she's still in conversation with you and with God. Faith questions are and should be asked as teens start to make faith their own.

Many faith questions do not have easy answers, but when teens ask difficult questions, they don't always *want* answers—and certainly not easy ones. While their questions are sincere, teenagers also want to know that their questions are valid and that their faith still makes sense. Adults can sometimes paint a picture of the Christian life as happy and free from worry. But the Christian life is not often like that. As kids grow, they try to figure out what it looks like when Christians face real-life issues straight on.

So, begin by listening. Restating the question can sometimes help get to the real issue. Share the questions you wrestle with, and talk about how you think about these things when you don't have answers. Give your honest thoughts. Reflect on what Bible passages the question makes you think about. Clearly affirm that God accepts our questions and that you do, too.

Don't forget you're not in this alone. Ask for help from others. There is a lot of wisdom sitting in your church's



Illustration for The Banner by Laurie Sienkowski

pews. There are people who have dealt with great disappointment and loss and found God there walking with them through it. There are people who have real-life experiences and people who have studied the Bible. There are people who have lived life longer who can add perspective to these conversations, and there are people who will pray for you and for your teen.

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.

Missional Living

My church does traditional doctrinal education well. I think we can improve our emotional intelligence to become more welcoming. Any advice?

Your question is a good one. Christian Reformed churches have a long history of teaching theology quite well. However, our strength can become a weakness. Underneath our robust theological vision we hide our brokenness from others. But we can work to build a transparent community of healing. We must regain the healing ministry of the church.

When broken people come to churches, they are looking for people who have walked in their shoes. They are seeking a community that

becomes a safe place. They want to hear a gospel that repairs lives and imparts grace. However, our churches display little of our brokenness. We work hard to hide our problems. Christian counselor Larry Crabb writes, "We moderns tend to think of our spiritual journey as a God-directed adventure until something goes seriously wrong or until certain problems persist past the time we give God to take them away. ... We focus more on using God to improve our lives than worshiping him in any and every circumstance" (*The Safest Place on Earth*, p. 17). In other words, we need healing just as much as the people from our neighborhoods and locations who come seeking healing.

In his book *Churches That Heal*, pastor Doug Murren suggests some ways to restore this vital ministry of in-reach and outreach, including an audit of your church's environment. Does everyone resist deep conversation about pain and sorrow? Is the prayer ministry shallow? Murren said churches must have a desire to change the culture from superficial sharing to admitting life hurts. People need churches to absorb their pain.

Crabb says the healing ministry is essential for outreach. "In a spiritual community, people reach deep places in each other's hearts that are not often or easily reached," he writes. "They discover places beneath the awkwardness of wanting to embrace,

cry, and share opinions. ... Spiritual togetherness creates a movement. Together in Christ encourages movement toward Christ" (Crabb, p. 196).

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

Ethics

The Bible says God hates "lying lips," but there are also stories, such as Rahab helping the Israelite spies, where lying seems to be a good thing. So is lying sometimes okay?

If lying is defined as "unjust deception," then it is always wrong. David sings against "lying lips" because such are connected with "pride and contempt" and are "against the righteous" (Psalm 31:18), and in Proverbs, "a lying tongue" is connected with things like "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). In both cases of lying, we have deception paired with a selfish motive or a motive that elevates the self's interest more than it should be. Since the elevation of the self above its proper place is against justice, it is something God, as the source of justice, obviously hates (Prov. 12:22).

Nevertheless, is all deception—every instance of actively or passively communicating what is not true—unjust and therefore lying? Rahab deceives the men of Jericho in order to save the lives of the Israelite spies, and certainly the outcome of this is good; indeed, she is praised not once but twice in the New Testament for helping the spies (Heb. 11:31 and James 2:25). Since her motivation here seems to be in service of justice (to save innocent lives and help those who are of

the LORD's party), one could argue that this is an example of "just deception"—what Plato calls *gennaion pseudos* (a noble lie) or what some in the Latin Christian tradition have called *mendacium officiosum* (a dutiful lie).

Following Augustine, Calvin argued against many classic cases of "just deception," largely on the ground that truth—which is intimately connected to God—is always a good thing. Yet unless we assume that all deception is lying, we may have instances where, at the very least, communicating the truth conflicts with righteousness. Could we plausibly imagine God allowing basketball players to fake out their opponents? Authors using pseudonyms? Actors playing a part? If yes, then we might have instances of deception—communicating what is not the case—without necessarily having instances of injustice. If no, then we are still in good company with Augustine and Calvin.

Adam Barkman is a professor of philosophy at Redeemer University College.

Relationships

Is it inevitable that the Christian Reformed family of God in North America will split over the LGBTQ+ issue when it comes up at Synod 2021?


But for the grace of God ... yes. However, the grace of God is enormously powerful. A church denomination that understands that all have sinned and that everyone's sexuality is in need of cleansing but is also intent on family unity in spite of cultural and theological diversity has a chance of finding a way to remain united.

Focusing on unity rather than accepting schism as inevitable can make an

enormous difference. No family, not even such a large family as the CRCNA, has to break up. If we bathe every conflict, every painful truth, every heartfelt passion in fervent communal and individual prayers, the Holy Spirit will lead us toward resolutions.

To stay together, we will have to make room for various theological interpretations of key passages in our Scriptures. Bible scholars Sylvia Keesmaat and her husband, Brian Walsh, have taken a historical approach to the Scriptures in their freshly minted book *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire/Demanding Justice*. Justin Lee's book *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate* also takes a fresh approach to the topic.

Seeking to decide who is "right" and who is "wrong" will not keep us together. How the truths revealed in God's word will guide us to a united confession of faith is an enormous challenge. We can accept that challenge in humility, acknowledging that none of us can know the ways of God fully, all of us have our own lived experiences that inform our interpretation of the Scriptures, and all of us have our blind spots. Accepting our brokenness and differences as children of God—as well as the counsel of the Holy Spirit—creates the hope that Synod 2021 will result in a new creation: a family of God united in its need for a Savior and unwilling to be torn apart.

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

Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to editorial@thebanner.org with "Big Questions" in the subject line.

Church to Community: Come Over, Talk Politics

NEWS

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During election seasons in cities and towns across North America, church buildings are often employed as polling places, meeting venues, and information distribution centers.

Members of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Brighton, Ont., have created a partnership with the Brighton-Cramahe Chamber of Commerce to host all-candidates meetings in their voting district. The church sees it as an opportunity to live into their vision statement, “Rooted in Christ to impact community through relationships.”

On Oct. 3, during the recent Canadian federal election, the church welcomed 350 residents to the third such meeting. Fellowship CRC previously hosted all-candidates meetings during the 2018 provincial and municipal elections.

The church provides facilities, a time-keeper, and sound and camera staff to simulcast the debate online. Ron Rupke, a member of Fellowship CRC, said, “Questions to the candidates are formulated at a community round table including business people, educators, and a Fellowship CRC representative.” Rupke played that role for the Oct. 3 debate.

“The event is completely non-partisan and presented to the community as a service

Fellowship CRC member Ron Rupke (standing) welcomed five local candidates to the Oct. 3 all-candidates meeting.

to help enable informed voters and good government,” Rupke said.

As cosponsor, the Brighton-Cramahe Chamber of Commerce booked the candidates, arranged for moderation, and provided publicity.

Rene Schmidt, a member of Fellowship CRC and one of the organizers of the first provincial election debate, appreciates the church’s participation in civic matters. “As a large-capacity church in a small town, it is natural for us to make these connections, especially for the sake of those who don’t know the Lord.”

In Brief

Diet Eman, a Dutch resistance hero during World War II who was credited with saving hundreds of Jews, **died Sept. 3**. She was a **member of Seymour Christian Reformed Church** in Grand Rapids, Mich. **Excerpts from her book *Things We Couldn’t Say***, co-authored with James Schaap, were published by *The Banner* in a series of eight installments in November and December 1993 and **are now available in PDF format online**. See bit.ly/DietEman.

Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of church denominations and national organizations of which the Christian Reformed Church is a member, **issued a public letter to the president of the U.S. on Sept. 17** suggesting necessary elements of “a truly viable peace.” **Steven Timmermans**, executive director of the CRC, **was one of the 22 signatories**. For the full text of the letter and its accompanying statement, see bit.ly/CMEPStatement.

Ontario School Creates Playground for All

When Calvin Christian School in Hamilton, Ont., hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to open its new playground Sept. 13, they celebrated the realization of a vision for an inclusive playscape where all students could play safely, learn while playing, nurture belonging, and enjoy God's creation. The school was helped by the Grade 10 Venture class at Hamilton District Christian High School, which took the project from concept to reality in just one year. The playground has been designated as a PlayCore National Demonstration Site, the first Hamilton school playground to receive this designation.

"Our school mission is 'Equipping to Shine,' and we really want to equip students of all abilities with the opportunity to shine," said school principal Arn Boonstra. "This new playground offers that opportunity!"

The high school's Venture class is part of a three-year career exploration program that uses community projects as a way for students to develop a range of employable skills. The students conducted a survey of the site, researched other playgrounds, gathered input from Calvin staff and students, and consulted design group Park N Play to learn about inclusion and accessibility in playground design.

"Some of these concepts are abstract, but the students were able to understand and catch the vision for this playground," said Richard Van Egmond, Venture teacher at Hamilton District Christian High. "I was impressed by the students' capacity for empathy in the needs and various abilities of the (Calvin) students, making sure it would be accessible."

The new playground was possible because of funds raised through the capital campaign, donations from corporate sponsorships, and the Re-Source Thrift Shop. Parent volunteers helped assemble the structure during the summer.

Second-grader Christian Joose, who uses a wheelchair, said his favorite part of the playground is the boat, called the Rock N Raft. His mother, Julie Joose, is thrilled about the new playground.

"It's incredible that the school talked about this and then made it happen," she said. "This makes it possible for Christian to play with everyone."

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Calvin Christian School students enjoy the new playground with their families Sept. 13.

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. William Gerrit
Brouwers Jr.*

1934-2019

Bill Brouwers, who died June 14, was a searcher of the truth and wanted everyone he met to know about the Creator God behind the universe. He encouraged every congregation he pastored to share the love of Jesus and salvation through Christ in nursing homes and prisons.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Mich., Brouwers served in the U.S. Army from 1956 to 1958. He then worked at Blodgett Furniture Service Truck Lines, working his way up to assistant treasurer. He continued to work there part time while studying years later at Calvin College and Seminary. He was ordained at age 41 and then served the following churches: New Holland (S.D.) Christian Reformed Church; New Hope Community CRC, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisc.; and Wright CRC, Kanawha, Iowa. He retired in 1998.

Adventurous with a love for travel, Brouwers visited all 50 U.S. states. A private pilot, he enjoyed flying. He also enjoyed family time, playing cards, reading, and engaging in a wide range of discussions.

Brouwers is survived by his wife, Beverly, three sons and their spouses, and six grandchildren. He was predeceased by two children, a grandchild, and a daughter-in-law.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Photo by Sue Wikkerink

South Dakota Church Delivers Thanksgiving Dinner

The people at First Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, S.D., care about people. That's why they call their annual Thanksgiving meal delivery program Caring About People—CAP. For 15 years, First CRC members have been gathering the essentials to make a holiday meal and hand-delivering them to families in their community.



Every CAP (Caring About People) meal is delivered in a reusable grocery bag.

Megan Schouten, director of youth ministry at First CRC, helps direct and facilitate the delivery of the meals. Congregation members pick up an empty grocery bag and are asked to purchase a box of instant mashed potatoes, a jar of gravy, canned vegetables and fruit, boxed stuffing, and pudding mix for each bag. Schouten also encourages each participant to add something of their own choosing to their meal. This can

range from a special treat to tableware or a book. The church supplies a turkey or ham for each family as well, asking the contributing congregation members to add \$15 per bag to help cover the cost of the meat.

Congregation members return full grocery bags to the church. Volunteers go out the Sunday before Thanksgiving and deliver the meals to families who have requested them. Seventy-five meals were distributed in the first year and about 160 in 2018.

Holly Burns, a First CRC member who initiated the CAP meal program, said it began by noticing the needs of others. "I had seen a story on the local news about the high percentage of kids that live at or below poverty in Sioux Falls, and it really tugged at my heart," Burns said. She said the program "has been such a blessing to my family. We have met many families who are so thankful and grateful. Some are so overwhelmed that we would care enough to do something for them."

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

Jeremy Benjamin Closes 'I Am Not My Own' Tour



After visiting 60 Christian Reformed congregations across Canada through 2018 and 2019, musician Jeremy Benjamin sees a "real understanding of putting our faith into action when it comes to kingdom work in our cities."

The 18-month tour, which included Benjamin's family, raised over \$500,000 for missions (including a portion of matching funds from a governmental program). The Burlington, Ont., office of the CRC hosted a small service of thanksgiving for the effort Sept. 10.

The tour also resulted in the recording of over 20,000 voices singing one song: "I Am Not My Own," based on Lord's Day One of the Heidelberg Catechism. Benjamin describes these words as beautiful truth—words of comfort, belonging, and relief

woven into the personal stories of many in the CRC.

"It was beautiful to see so many congregations participating and to see their smiling faces (at the concert). It felt like a new connection," said Marja Fledderus, member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ont., which hosted a tour stop in June.

It was a unique privilege to interact with Canada's Christian Reformed churches, Benjamin said. Despite the geographical distance and worship differences among congregations, he and his wife said they saw a deep desire for unity everywhere they went. Many of the host churches were rural, some feeling disconnected. Consistently, the feedback was that this concert and the celebration of singing the catechism together gave these churches a deep sense of being part of

In Memoriam: Former Director of Disability Concerns

Jim Vanderlaan, former director of Disability Concerns, died Aug. 18 at age 81. His 14 years of leadership left a lasting legacy in this ministry that seeks to bring about the full participation of people with disabilities in the life of the church.

Overcoming the challenges of blindness, Vanderlaan graduated from Calvin College and Seminary and proceeded to obtain an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Princeton University. After ordination in 1971, he pastored the following congregations: Bigelow (Minn.) CRC, Webster (N.Y.) CRC, and Parchment CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich. In 1992 he became director of Disability Concerns until he retired in 2006. From 1991 to 2014, he was also part-time chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, and during retirement he served as a mediator for Kent County Courts.



Rev. Dr. James Lee
Vanderlaan 1938-2019

The Americans with Disabilities Act, a law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities, was signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. Vanderlaan was Disability Concerns director when Synod 1993 adopted a resolution encouraging all churches and ministries of the CRC to work toward full compliance with the act. When staff was reduced by half during the 1990s, Vanderlaan set up a network of volunteer regional and church disability advocates that continues to this day.

Mark Stephenson, appointed director after Vanderlaan retired, reflected, "I was able to hit the ground running with many excellent and trained volunteers in place. In fact, less than a month after I started, I met with a number of volunteers whom Jim had recruited and trained, and they in turn did a lot to train me. That cadre of volunteers, and the way they were set up, allowed the work of Disability Concerns to engage on the church level—to varying degrees with all 1,100 CRCs—even though our staff is very small."

Bert Zwiers and Hank Kuntz each were regional disabilities advocates in Canada. "Jim was the perfect 'disabled image' for the fledgling agency that was attempting to raise disability awareness within the church," said Zwiers. "We did many speaking engagements together—he with his long white cane, I in my wheelchair. He, his image, (and) his use of his Braille Bible will be remembered for years to come."

Kuntz commented, "Jim showed that people with disabilities can reach their full potential as members of society, as workers, teachers, husbands, leaders. His very personality conveyed the normalcy of being a leader/pastor/scholar/advocate who happened to be blind as well."

Pete Euwema used to drive Vanderlaan to work daily and was affected by the confidence with which Vanderlaan lived with blindness. "In the winter he would be out shoveling snow or taking the trash to the road. He did repairs on his car," Euwema said. "He preached at our church once, and at the conclusion of the sermon, he said that he had been blind since birth, so for him in death his eyes would be opened and the first thing he would ever see is the face of Jesus."

Predeceased by son David, Vanderlaan is survived by his wife, Eunice; six children and spouses; 25 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Photo by Heather Brooks, heatherbrooksphotography.com

Jeremy Benjamin at Inspire 2019,
Windsor, Ont.

the CRC. Benjamin noticed that "even in the smallest of rural communities, the CRC was very intimately involved in the community in very grassroots ways." This involvement encouraged and motivated Benjamin.

From each concert, 45% of profits went to a local mission chosen by the church. Another 45% went to World Renew programs in Nigeria, with matching donations from the Canadian FoodGrain Bank. The remaining 10% covered tour costs.

The 20,000-voice recording of "I Am Not My Own" is included on Benjamin's latest CD, *Wonderlove*, which was released October 4.

—Maia VanderMeer

Classis Watch: Fall 2019

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to their classis, a regional group of churches. Many of the actions taken by classes are governed by the CRC's Church Order, the rules that govern denominational life. Here are some of the actions by classes in the past few months.

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include seminary graduates Zack DeBruyne, Joel Altena, Josiah Youngquist, John Cleveringa, Kristopher Walhof, Gale Tien, Mark Janowski, Abigail DeZeeuw, Mitchell Sheahan, Christopher Bouma, Cara DeHaan, Daniel Gregory, Aaron Gunsaulus, Jon Bosma, Kyu Hahn and C. L.* (Church Order Articles 6 and 10)

**Synod 2019 allowed four candidates to be known only by their initials as they will be working in sensitive geographical areas in which they could be endangered if their ministerial status were public.*

Those **welcomed into ministry in the CRC from other denominations, following a satisfactory colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) establishing soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice**, include Rev. Karen Campbell, Rev. Joel Kwon, Rev. Yong Je Chung, Rev. Joseph Cho, Rev. Daniel Duyung Yi, Samuel Han, and Rev. Yunho Jung. (Church Order Art. 8)

Bob Rienstra and Kyung Lok Jang were declared **eligible for call**.

Ministers released from a congregation: Rev. Roeloff Pereboom, from Mount Hope Community CRC (Hamilton, Ontario); Rev. Eric Kas, from Good News Gatherings (Grand Rapids, Mich.); Rev. Steven Tamming, from Trinity CRC, (Goderich, Ont.). (Church Order Art. 17a)

Wayne Kobes, Emmett Harrison, David Beelen, Alfred Van Dellen, and David Nederhood were granted **emeritus status** (retired). (Church Order Art. 18)

Leaving ministry in the CRC

Churches and classes make a declaration reflecting a resigned minister's status that is appropriate to the way and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office. Those designations are as follows: honorably released, released, dismissed, or in the status of one deposed (Church Order Art. 14).

Todd Grotenhuis and Nate DeVries were **honorably released**.

Nicholas Hopkins, Timothy Kwon, and Choung-woo Kim were **released**.

Commissioned Pastors

Kent Sanders (Classis Grand Rapids East), David Scholman (Classis Niagara), Shaun Buikema (Classis Illiana), Annika Bangma (Classis Atlantic Northeast), and Stanton Visser (Classis Iakota) were **approved as commissioned pastors**, called to specific roles within their classis (Church Order Art. 23).

Dean Su and James Baylor (Classis Chicago South) **ended their service as commissioned pastors**.

Barbara Schultze (Classis Grand Rapids East) was granted **commissioned pastor, emeritus status**.

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

An emerging (unorganized) 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. (Church Order Art. 38)

Manhattan Vertical Church (N.Y.) and Cornerstone Church (Queens, N.Y.) were declared **emerging churches**.

Hope Community Church (Lowell, Mich.) and Korean Community Church (Buena Park, Calif.) were **declared organized**.

Good News Gathering (Grand Rapids, Mich.), Ecclesia (North Oshawa, Ont.), and B.O.A.T. (Pickering, Ont.) were **closed**. (*The Banner* reported on Ecclesia CRC in Nov. 2018, p. 18. To read about its closing, see online "Church Plant Closure in Ontario 'Sad and Disappointing,'" Oct. 2019)

Santa Maria Faith Presbyterian Church was **renamed** as Young Sung Nanum Church of U.S.

Newly formed **Classis North Cascades** met in Lynden, Wash., for its inaugural meeting.

In Classis Heartland, the Siouxland Diaconal Conference was **disbanded**.

—Gayla R. Postma, *Banner news editor*

Hundreds Attend Edmonton Climate Vigil



Photo by Wendy Mulder

On the steps of the Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton, Alta., Sept. 22.

Members of five Christian Reformed congregations in Edmonton, Alta., helped to organize a multifaith vigil recognizing the global impacts of climate change. It took place in late September on the grounds of the Alberta Legislature Building as international movements staged protests and “climate strikes.”

“Faith communities, mosques, synagogues, temples, and churches—we all have a responsibility to take a stand on the defining moral issue of our time: the climate crisis,” said Rabbi Gila Caine from Temple Beth Ora Synagogue, one of several representatives from various faith traditions leading segments of the vigil.

Hundreds of Edmontonians of all ages gathered with music, prayer, and reflection. Faith leaders led participants through four themed stations of mourning, repentance, gratitude, and hope.

For Jennifer Porritt, member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, there are many reasons a vigil is helpful. “Caring about creation can be lonely work in the church, so we gather to support each other. This is a way to show the larger public that there are people of faith who care deeply about this subject. We have also been complicit in harming the earth, and part of holding vigil is a public display of repentance. ... Finally, in silence and in prayer, we hope that God will guide us in creative and loving ways forward to heal our relationships with each other and the earth.”

Members of Bethel, Avenue, CentrepoinTE Community, Maranatha, and Fellowship CRCs were involved. They make up a faith and climate justice group initiated by Fellowship CRC member Gabrielle Gelderman, the Edmonton chapter organizer for Citizens for Public Justice.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Harry George Arnold
1925-2019

Harry Arnold wanted to be remembered as a faithful servant of the Lord. He died June 16, two weeks before his 70th wedding anniversary.

Born in Paterson, N.J., Arnold enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps during his senior year in high school and was on active duty in World War II from 1944 to 1946. After his military service he studied at Calvin College and Seminary, graduating in 1953.

Arnold began ministry at First Christian Reformed Church in Minneapolis, Minn. He then pastored East Palmyra (N.Y.) CRC; First CRC, Zeeland, Mich; First CRC, Lansing, Ill.; and Grace CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich. During those years he also received a master’s in theology from Calvin Seminary and a doctorate in ministry from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill. He retired in 1991 and served area churches as supply pastor for the next 25 years, concluding his preaching ministry on his 90th birthday.

Arnold enjoyed woodworking, having coffee and donuts with friends, and chocolate anytime. Besides the daily crossword puzzle, he spent a lot of time reading.

Arnold is survived by his wife, Kathryn; four children and spouses; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by grandson Bradley.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dwayne
Frederick Thielke*
1939-2019

Dwayne Thielke died July 27 after three months in a Philippine hospital for complications of heart bypass surgery.

Adopted at birth, Thielke grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich. After graduating from Calvin College, he worked in business until called to ministry at age 42. He studied at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss., was ordained in 1985, and pastored Lucknow (Ont.) Community CRC for five years.

Thielke and wife Gladys joined Christian Reformed World Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) in 1990 and moved to Tacloban, Philippines, to minister among the Waray people. They transferred to south of Manila in 2005. He retired there in 2011 but continued serving the local church and various other ministries. He was an avid gardener, handyman, computer whiz, and nature enthusiast.

Resonate missionary Stan Kruis visited Thielke in the hospital before his surgery. “He told me about the Christian family that he was adopted into, his church, people and experiences that shaped him. ... Gratitude to God was a very strong theme in Dwayne’s life.”

Predeceased by his son Fred, who died in 2018, Thielke is survived by Gladys, his wife of almost 35 years; two sons; two Filipina daughters; and three grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Church Worldwide: Running for President to Confront American History

Mark Charles has been active in the Christian Reformed Church, having previously served Classis Red Mesa (a regional group of Native American churches) with a license to exhort and participating in the task force to study the Doctrine of Discovery, which Synod 2016 declared to be a heresy. In May 2019 he announced his candidacy for the United States presidency, running in 2020 as an independent. The following article from Religion News Service is published in accordance with The Banner's subscription to the service. It has been edited for length.

Mark Charles—who grew up in New Mexico, the son of an American-Dutch mother and a Navajo father—is not your average politician, and certainly not your average presidential candidate.

For his (nearly two-hour) interview with RNS, he wore a T-shirt and sat in a busy dining spot in Washington, but not once did he stand up to shake hands or talk politics with any of the hundreds of people who meandered by, nor did any patrons outwardly express any knowledge of who he was or of his campaign for president.

However, Charles is absolutely serious about his campaign and very concerned about the plight of America's poor and marginalized, particularly Native American communities.

"I've come to the conclusion that the United States of America needs a national dialogue on race, gender and class," he said. "It's a conversation I would put on par with the Truth and Reconciliation commissions of South Africa, Rwanda, and Canada."

Charles had an idea.

"Every four years we have a dialogue about who we are and where we're going—that's our presidential election cycle," Charles said.



Photo by RNS/Emily McFarlan Miller

Mark Charles, speaker and author, presented on the Doctrine of Discovery in Woodstock, Ill., July 26, 2018.

One of Charles' core campaign issues is his fierce, long-standing criticism of the Doctrine of Discovery, which he addresses in his forthcoming book, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*. He said his fascination with the doctrine emerged out of his experience pastoring the Denver Christian Indian Center in Colorado, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, where the mostly Native American congregation pushed him to contextualize worship for indigenous cultures.

"The question we began asking as a church is: What does it mean to be Navajo and be Christian?" He said. "How does our language, our culture, our understanding (of) the sacred affect or even dictate the way we worship and follow Christ?"

This spiritual exploration eventually led him to confront the Doctrine of Discovery, a concept that dates back to the 15th century when a series of papal bills laid out the theological justification for European colonizers to conquer lands held by non-Christian indigenous

populations and subjugate the inhabitants. Charles has lectured extensively on the subject and wrote about the concept at length for Red Letter Christians, a progressive Christian group and website.

Ultimately, Charles said, he understands his pursuit of the White House is, at best, a long shot. But he hopes to lean on the Native American vote, holding his initial campaign stops primarily on Native American reservations and indigenous sites. According to his campaign, if he organized every Native American over the age of 18 in the country, that alone would be enough to put him on the ballot in every state.

Charles insists, though, that his focus isn't just on Native American issues, but also on building a nation that is more inclusive and more whole.

"We don't have a common memory," he said. "We have the white majority that remembers the mythological history of discovery, expansion, opportunities, and exceptionalism. Then you have communities of color, women, and LGBTQ people that have the lived history of stolen lands, broken treaties, slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, sexism, exclusion, boarding schools, internment camps, and families separated (at) our borders. There's no common memory, and because of that, community is almost nonexistent at a national level right now. We can't even talk to each other."

He added: "The theme of my campaign is, I want to build a nation ... where for the very first time 'We the people' truly means all the people."

— Religion News Service

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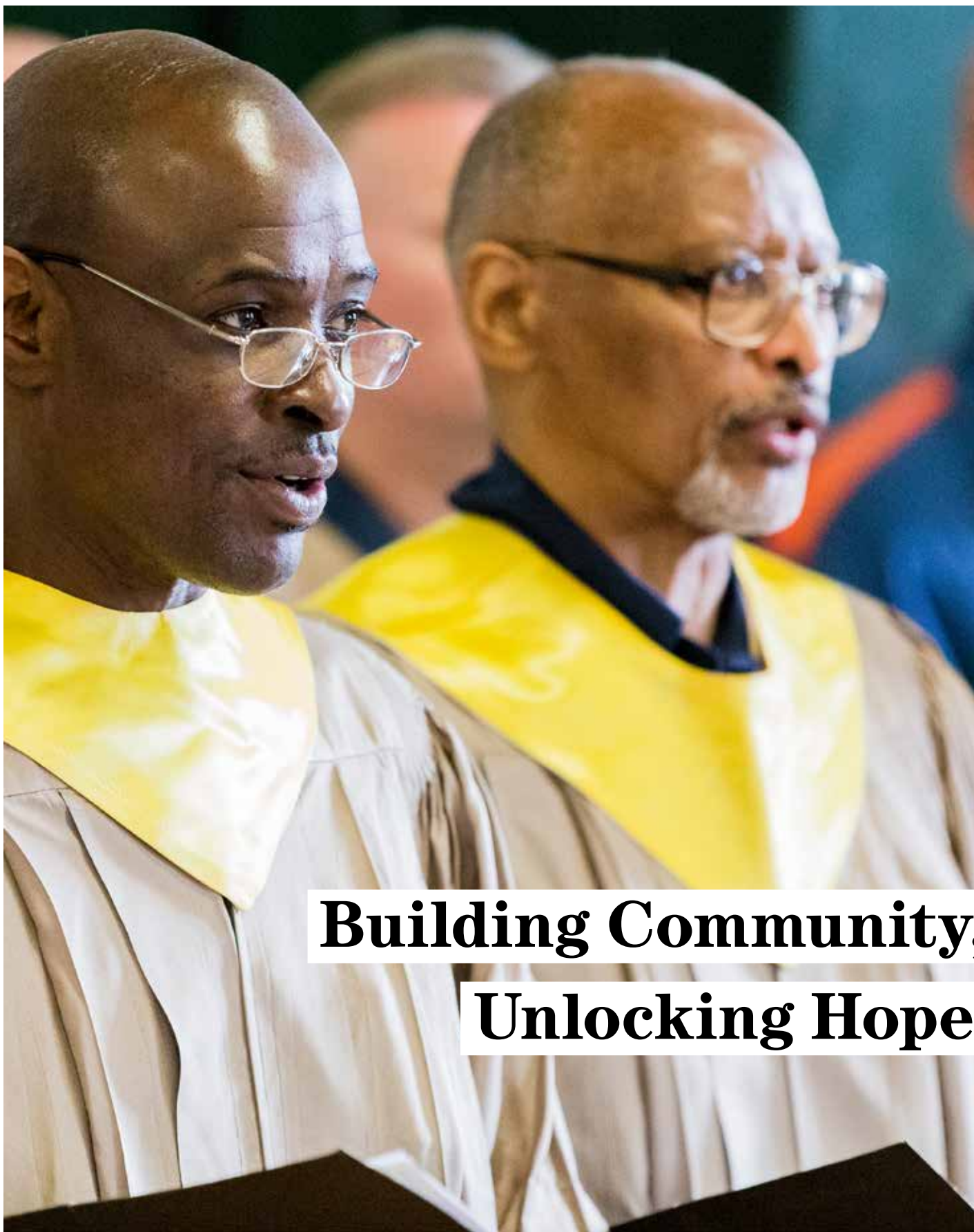


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Grand Rapids, Michigan



Building Community, Unlocking Hope

By Matt Kucinski, Calvin University

I had a buddy who had just left a year before—not a great place to be,” said Mark Urban of the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich., where he is incarcerated.

“It was considered gladiator school, the worst of the worst,” added fellow inmate Crisanto Escabalzeta Jr. “You were destined to fight.”

That’s the environment Urban and Escabalzeta were expecting to find inside Handlon’s 20-foot-tall, barbed wire fencing.

It’s what Bob Woldhuis, an assistant resident supervisor at Handlon, had witnessed for much of his 23-year career inside those fences. “The culture had definitely been every man for himself,” he said.

But when Escabalzeta and Urban arrived at Handlon in 2016, their perception was shattered. They witnessed men tutoring other men, professors teaching inmates, men learning trades, and a fully functioning church inside prison walls.

So what happened in just a handful of years?

Steps of Obedience

Part of the answer is found in how the Holy Spirit led several different people to this prison setting.

“I had been aware of and receptive to issues and concerns about the criminal justice system and mass incarceration,” said Bob Arbogast, who was a pastor in Columbus, Ohio, at the time. “But even though I drove by this one particular prison countless times, I never gave a thought to the guys on the inside; (it) never occurred to me to think about them.”

Around the same time, Mark and Carol Muller from Grand Rapids, Mich., were hearing about inmates frequently from a fellow church member who regularly visited prison and talked about these visits. They decided to visit one, as well to appease their friend. “We felt if we go, they won’t say anything anymore,” Mark Muller said.

Urban, who received a lengthy sentence in 2005, wasn’t going to church services even though he is a Christian. “I was looking to go to Bible college,” said Urban, and “the deal with the chaplain was that I had to attend one service before he would sign off on my Bible college correspondence course, and it happened to be Celebration Fellowship” inside Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility.

The Handlon Tabernacle Choir performs during convocation for inmates who are part of the Calvin Prison Initiative.

Urban, Arbogast, and the Mullers each took a step of obedience. For Arbogast, at the prompting of a retired pastor in 2012, he stepped into Marion Correctional Facility in Ohio. Mark and Carol Muller, in 2008, and Urban, in 2012, stepped into a Celebration Fellowship service.

“They had no idea where we would be now. But they just showed up,” said Todd Cioffi, director of the Calvin Prison Initiative.

Stirring Hearts, Forming Identity

Now, in 2019, on any given Monday night, Urban, Arbogast, and the Mullers are worshiping together inside the fences of Handlon Correctional Facility as full members of Celebration Fellowship—a church plant of the initial congregation that still exists inside Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility across the street.

On this Monday night, about a dozen “outside” members of this congregation move through multiple checkpoints and take a 100-yard walk across the prison yard. As soon as they enter the building, they are cheerfully greeted by “inside” members Jeff and Steve, and fellowship begins. A cold hallway soon takes on the feeling of a warm living room as it fills with meaningful conversation. You can hear the band warming up inside the auditorium, and some members of the congregation take the opportunity to sing along before the official start of the service.

“There are guys in here that don’t have families. There are guys in here that don’t get visits. There are guys that don’t have anything,” said Urban, “and they all say the same thing: ‘On Monday nights, it’s like having a visit.’”

The service officially starts. Men in prison blues sit next to men in khakis and polo shirts and women in blouses. The 100 in attendance sing, pray, watch a video, have small group discussions, listen to a sermon, and even celebrate profession of faith.

“This whole collection of people loves each other and cares deeply,” said Arbogast, who has served as the pastor of Celebration Fellowship since 2017.

“The fact that somebody knows your name and they call you out by name ... they ask about who you are, they remember the stories you talk about in small group, they see the improvement over six months or a year and they encourage you, that’s a beautiful thing,” said Escabalzeta.

“We are in each other’s lives,” Mark Muller said. “I wouldn’t have met these people in 100 million years. I’m very much ‘the other’ for them, and they are kind enough to treat me as a member.”

A Shared Commitment

While the church is no doubt contributing to the culture change happening at Handlon, so too is education.

In 2010, John Rottman, professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, started offering classes to Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, once notorious as one of the bloodiest prisons in America. Rottman hoped to show students how education could play a role in transforming prison culture.

In 2011, Dave Rylaarsdam, professor of the history of Christianity and worship at CTS, received a letter from an inmate at Handlon expressing a growing interest in becoming equipped to help transform his own prison culture. Within months, with the blessing of the warden, the seminary started offering a few classes at Handlon.

A few years later, those first steps of obedience would pay major dividends when the Calvin Prison Initiative was established—a partnership between Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary that offers 20 inmates each year the chance to begin pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in faith and community leadership.

“I’m amazed at how God has blessed this program, all the faithful work of faculty, administrators, students, and volunteers,” said Cioffi. “And now we’re starting to see the fruit of our labor. God is raising up inmates as moral and spiritual leaders, and the prison is being transformed.”

The first cohort of CPI students will graduate with bachelor’s degrees from Calvin University in 2020, becoming the first class of inmates ever to earn bachelor’s degrees in the state of Michigan. Escabalzeta and Urban will graduate in 2021 and, with the help of Resonate Global Missions, are in the process of becoming commissioned pastors within Michigan’s prison system. While they aren’t sure where they’ll be called to serve after graduation, leaders of Celebration Fellowship see the education they are receiving through the CPI program as an asset to their current church body.

“Guys in the Calvin program have been gaining tools to carefully read and consider Scripture,” said Arbogast. “They don’t

draw unwarranted conclusions from a word or verse, but they are being trained to think deeply and broadly as they approach Scripture, and that is a helpful thing to have in the mix (at Celebration Fellowship).

“Celebration Fellowship is composed of scholars, guys who can’t even write their own names, and everything in between,” Arbogast continued. “In 1 Corinthians, it says one part of the body can’t look at another part of the body thinking that I’m more worthy than you are. There has been no need to push that (teaching) on the members of the body. They are just innately aware of belonging to one another and together belonging to Christ.”

“Changing the culture to one that’s more and more looking out for your fellow man, that can do nothing except make this a better place to live, a better place to work, a safer place to be, a less expensive place to run,” said Woldhuis.

And the numbers don’t lie. A prison that used to average 150 major incidents a year, such as assault, robbery, and physical altercations, now averages eight. While there’s much work that still needs to be done, there are now more people within the prison who are equipped and who have something that’s hard to find inside prison walls: hope.

“Shame is the thing that hamstring everybody—the fact that you feel worthless, you don’t feel like there’s anything to look forward to,” said Escabalzeta. “Whether it be members of Celebration Fellowship or all the different professors from Calvin, you can see in their faces the love that they have, the devotion they have towards the individuals who are in prison. It has seriously breathed new life in me.”

“This isn’t a culture change,” said Muller. “This is bigger than that. This is a spiritual change. This is like warfare, and we just won something.” **B**

‘You Will Be the Ones’

RESONATE GLOBAL MISSION missionary Josh Shaarda has prayed for years that God would raise up more people to spread the gospel and share the hope of Christ.

“God is answering that prayer through ministry in prison,” said Shaarda.

Set Free in Christ

The Soroti Prison in Uganda is packed with hundreds of men in bright yellow uniforms. They are sent to the prison from cities and villages all over Uganda.

Their lives have not been easy. Some have struggled financially and couldn’t repay a debt. Some felt they had no other option but to steal. Some have been falsely accused of crimes. Some are there for murder or manslaughter.

But there’s a church that meets under a mango tree in the prison courtyard, and many men have found hope in Christ there. When Shaarda offered *Freedom in Christ* discipleship training to the men of the church, they jumped at the opportunity.

“They have grown to cherish their identity in Christ,” said Shaarda. “They understand that their identity comes from what Christ did for them, not from what they did. ... They have learned that truth sets them free.”

But transformation doesn’t stop within the walls of the Soroti prison.

Sent Out to Declare Freedom in Christ

One day, a man who was recently transferred to the Soroti prison sat through the training.



Resonate missionary Josh Shaarda (right) speaks with church leaders in Uganda. Shaarda also facilitates *Freedom in Christ* discipleship training in prisons.

“If only you could bring this teaching to our whole country,” he told Shaarda. “It would change our nation.”

Shaarda asked five men in the training where they were from; all were from different parts of Uganda. When they left the Soroti prison, they would go miles away in different directions.

“This teaching *will* go to the whole nation,” Shaarda told the man. “But I am not the one to bring it. I am equipping you. You will be the ones to bring it.”

The man took that revelation to heart. Eight months later, the group was gathered for another training and he told the others: “We need to listen well because we are being prepared to take the good news to our people.”

This man’s prison sentence will be over in three years, and he’ll join other

men Shaarda has discipled. Three have started Bible studies in their home villages; one started a primary school to teach kids how to live for God; another keeps calling Shaarda, asking to be sent out.

“He is ready to go to new places to spread the message of Jesus,” said Shaarda.

That’s the life-transforming power of the gospel. **B**

—Cassie Westrate

The View from Here

As If You Were Bound with Them

“REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON as if you were bound with them, and those who are mistreated as if you were suffering with them” (Heb. 13:3, Berean Study Bible).

These are weighty instructions. If we are honest, remembering those incarcerated as if we were bound with them is an instruction many of us would rather forget. When we do remember, we hope someone else will do it. But that’s not what God has asked.

As each of us considers how to live out this instruction in one’s own life, we have several great examples from which to learn. Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University, for example, provide undergraduate courses that help inmates at a Michigan prison earn a degree. The stories of those who have participated in this program are powerful, and not just for those behind bars. My brother-in-law, though now retired from Calvin, continues teaching in the prison because of the benefits it brings him.

Crossroads Prison Ministry is another way many Christians from a variety of denominations live out this command. In 19 different countries, Crossroads prompts believers via correspondence to build relationships with those in prison so they can study the Bible together. Combined, they reach about 30,000 prisoners each year with a library of 12 Bible study courses.

In my own church, Larry and Marianne Tanis started ministering in prisons in the late 1980s. Today

We don’t go
into prisons to
bring God to the
prisoners; God is
already there.

they are part of a worship team that leads services once or twice a month in the Brooks Correctional Facility in Muskegon, Mich. Marianne teaches drawing and painting to inmates each Monday and Thursday. Their involvement also led them to raise funds for the eventual building of a chapel on the prison grounds.

Here’s what they say about their involvement:

- » We don’t go into prisons to bring God to the prisoners; God is already there. We go to prisons because God has asked us to meet God there, and when we do that, we and the prisoners are blessed and experience God’s love as we serve each other and worship God together.
- » God has equipped us for this throughout the years and has helped us to see what God sees. God sees broken lives that need him, that have been banished from society to a place they cannot leave, where few will come to visit, and where those who live there feel they have been forgotten. God uses those who spend time there to open up these lives.
- » There is nothing like experiencing the response people at the bottom of their lives have to a song or sermon in a worship service, or to a newfound understanding of being able to express themselves through a drawing or painting they have

done. As they worship and as they create, God reveals new things to them about God and their own lives.

What an amazing testimony this is! And being bound to prisoners does not end when they are no longer behind bars. Think about the many ways those released from prison need your support and encouragement once they return to your communities. This includes Sundays and every other day of the week. For a great example, see the video at crcna.org/OurJourney/church-and-community.

I believe we also have a responsibility to think about the ways all of us can help prevent people from ending up in prison. This includes coming alongside vulnerable populations, mentoring people, and seeking to make the criminal justice systems in Canada and in the United States places that truly reflect the call of Amos: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24, NRSV).

Consider the gifts and opportunities God has given you. How is God calling you to remember prisoners as if you were bound to them and suffering with them?



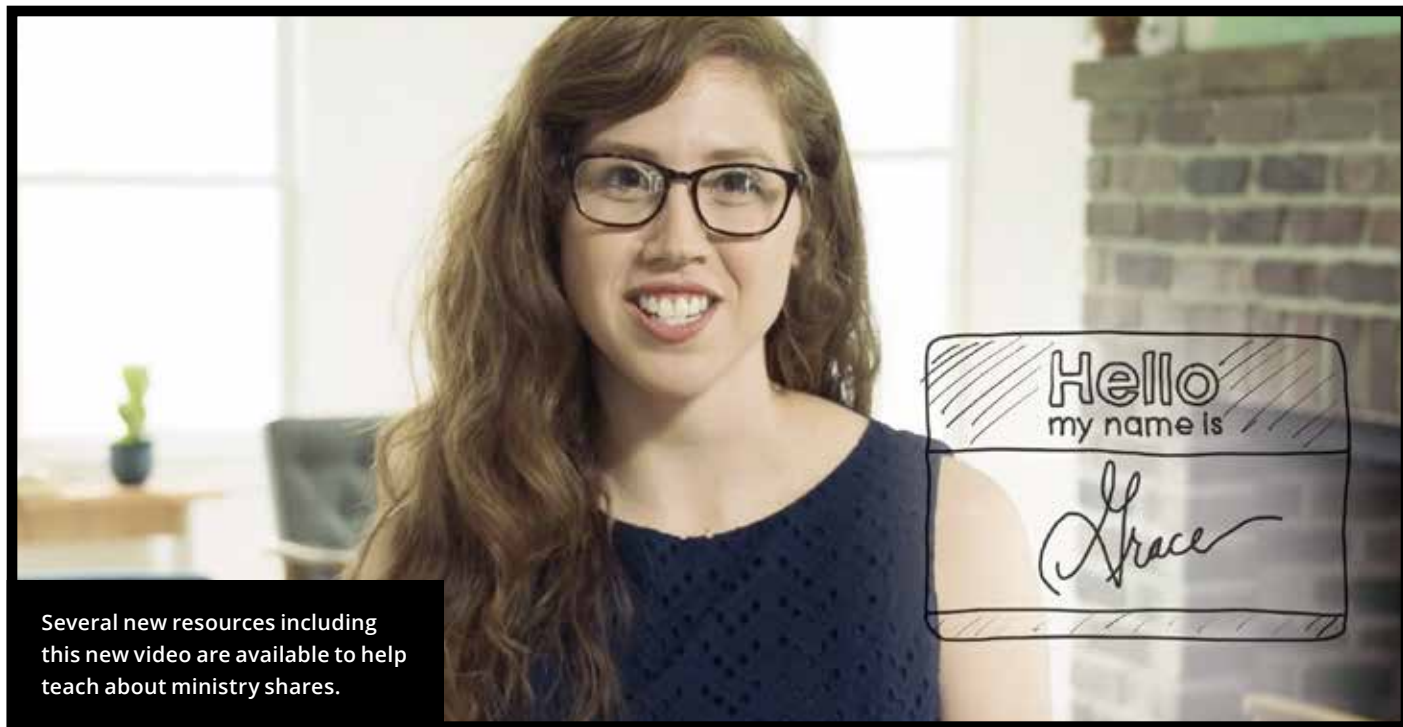
Steven Timmermans is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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.

Classes Talk about Ministry Shares



Several new resources including this new video are available to help teach about ministry shares.

“WHAT WILL THE NEW TIMETABLE BE if these changes are adopted?” This was one of the questions raised by Classis Northcentral Iowa as it discussed ministry shares at its fall meeting.

Ministry shares is a covenant program of the Christian Reformed Church in North America that enables every CRC congregation and member to contribute toward, take part in, and benefit from shared ministry. The program has existed since 1862 and has been used to fund global mission, chaplaincy, Sunday school curriculum development, and more.

During its June meeting, Synod 2019 voted to accept in principle some sweeping changes to how the program of ministry shares will run. One proposal is that synods will no longer set a per-member donation amount for ministry shares. Instead, each congregation will be asked to prayerfully

consider how much it wants to pledge toward shared denominational ministry. Program budgets will be set based on these faith promises.

“The new proposed system puts the local church at the start of the annual budget process. This is much more in alignment with our church polity,” said John Bolt, chief financial officer of the CRCNA.

Synod 2019 asked congregations and classes to discuss these changes over the next year so that Synod 2020 can make a final decision on whether or not to implement them. To assist in this task, several denominational employees have made a commitment to attend the fall meetings of CRCNA classes (regional groupings of churches) and help with ministry shares conversations.

They are sharing newly available resources for explaining ministry

shares to congregations. They are also walking through the proposed changes and answering some frequently asked questions.

Bolt answered Classis Northcentral Iowa’s question this way: “In July of each year, the denominational offices will send guidance out to all congregations to help them have a conversation about their pledge amounts. The churches would need to determine their pledged amount and bring that to their fall classis meeting. Each classis would then report back to the denomination by Jan. 31. This would start in the fall of 2020.”

To learn more about ministry shares, to watch a new video, or to find answers to frequently asked questions, please visit crcna.org/ministryshares.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Learning of a Grandmother's Trauma

WHEN FAYE YU'S grandmother died, Faye was asked to do the eulogy.

Doing so, she learned things about her grandmother, who died at the age of 94, that she had never known.

Yu, country consultant for World Renew in Malawi, also was reminded that traumatic events affecting someone's life are often kept hidden.

In her role with World Renew, Yu has led people through a program to help participants identify and begin healing from trauma—and to do the same for others.

A Grandmother's Trauma

Yu's grandmother, born 10 years after China ended imperialist rule, lost her birth mother when she was 4 years old and had an abusive stepmother. When she was 19 she entered an arranged marriage with Yu's grandfather.

At 24, Yu's pregnant grandmother fled to Taiwan with her husband, mother-in-law, and three small children after the Nationalist Party lost China to the Communist Party. She emigrated to the United States when she was 60.

"And those were just the highlights," said Yu. "My grandmother didn't like to talk about the past, and there were so many things we didn't know about her. She focused on the future, gritted her teeth, used the resources available to her, and survived."



In writing the eulogy for her grandmother, Faye Yu learned that healing can come from talking about trauma.

Forging Ahead Despite the Pain

Yu also sees this attitude of perseverance in her role with World Renew.

"Often when we work in communities, we just talk about getting things done. We need to get a well dug; we need to help farmers adopt a diverse, drought-tolerant way of doing agriculture; we need to help communities access better markets. These are not bad things, but often we overlook the pain and trauma that people might have experienced."

Yu said she would not be surprised if many or even all of the people World Renew works with have gone through trauma.

"It could be physical abuse faced as a child or adult. It could be the girls that were encouraged to engage in transactional sex to earn money for their family," she said. It could be losing

their home in a natural disaster, losing a child to malaria, or any number of other things.

"Trauma, if not dealt with, can fester and grow. It can prevent families from reaching their goals," said Yu.

Recently, World Renew provided training on trauma healing to a group of people who work in communities that may have experienced trauma.

"This opportunity gave the participants a chance to identify the trauma they have faced in their own lives and to talk about it," said Yu.

During the five-day training, Yu and her colleagues saw people leave the room in tears when they realized they could name the pain they went through. They learned that what they were feeling was normal and that they didn't need to ignore it. Those that went through training also were encouraged to plan their own trauma healing sessions with people they know.

"It is our hope that our partner staff will begin to use trauma healing in the communities where they work—that they will be able to identify when they see trauma and be more equipped to handle it," she said.

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Solitary but Not Alone

“I COULD SEE THE LIGHT coming in, but couldn’t see out.”

Dorothy* remembers the grueling months she spent in one of the world’s loneliest places: an 8-by-12-foot solitary confinement cell of a Montana prison.

“I just wanted to give up,” Dorothy said. “I just kept saying, ‘I have no one. What am I going to do?’”

In 2018, while Dorothy was still in the middle of her sentence, she lost a family friend—one of her only contacts outside of prison.

But then she heard a prison worker say her name.

It was during mail call, and Dorothy wasn’t expecting anything. Surprised but grateful, she scanned the piece of mail addressed to her.

“I remember wondering, ‘Who would ever write me and know I need help?’” Dorothy said.



Then Dorothy saw what it was—her bimonthly copy of the *Today* devotional.

ReFrame Media, the English outreach of Back to God Ministries International, distributes *Today* in bulk to about 70 chaplains who share the devotional with at least 13,500 inmates.

“God was tapping me on the shoulder and reminding me that he was still there,” Dorothy said, “that he was the one I needed to hold my hand.”

Not long after that, Dorothy began receiving more mail from a neighbor she barely knew before her time in prison. He told Dorothy that he wanted to help take care of her house while she was away now that her family friend had died. This served as another reminder that she was not alone in prison.

“He is a blessing, helping someone he really doesn’t know,” Dorothy said.

Although Dorothy’s prison sentence was longer than she originally thought it would be, she has found comfort in God’s Word.

“The best part of prison has been my relationship with the Lord,” Dorothy said. “I’ll never forget when I thought I lost all the people in my world. ‘Tap, tap,’ God said. ‘I’m still here. No one can take me away.’”

—Brian Clark,

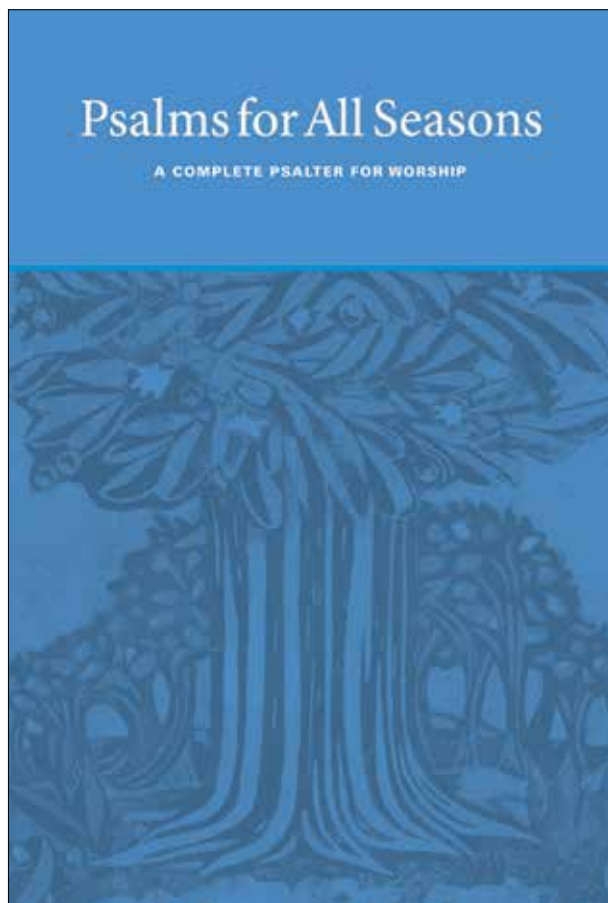
Back to God Ministries International

*last name withheld for privacy

Four Unique Thank-Yous from Prisoners Who Read Today

- » Jeffrey wrote a note with more than 60 prayer requests, most of which were for others, such as one that read: “Pray for kids in the foster care system that they will be cared for and come to know Jesus.”
- » A group of prisoners in Colorado sent a Father’s Day card with messages of thanks to their heavenly Father, whom they know better through *Today* readings.
- » An inmate sent his own examples of devotionals he wrote inspired by *Today*’s format.
- » Shawn, an inmate in California, wrote his prayer requests in the form of a poem:

“Heavenly Father, Savior, Lord,
I thank you for never giving up, abandoning, or getting bored.
When everyone else runs and hides,
You stand up and fight for me, side by side.
You’ve been there for me through it all,
The good, the bad, the ugly;
You always pick me up, when I stumble and fall.
You gently guide me in my times of need,
Teaching me when I come to you, on hand and knee.
Why you love me so much, I’ll never know.
But I’m eternally grateful that you chose to save my soul.”



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Gobs of Grains

WHEN YOU WOKE UP this morning to prepare for your day, did you eat a good meal for breakfast? Maybe a slice of toast, a bowl of oatmeal, or a tasty waffle? You may have had some grain at your kitchen table! This time of year is a special time to be thankful for the foods we eat—and we can be thankful for gobs of grains!

What Are Grains?

Grains are a kind of grass. The seeds from different grains are food that people and animals can eat. Those seeds are also known as cereal. Wheat, rice, and corn are the grains most people eat. Other healthy grains are barley, oats, rye, and millet. Whole grains are the healthiest kinds of grains for kids and adults.

Cool Corn

Corn is part of the grass family and grows in a long stalk. An ear of corn is also called a corn cob. Inside each ear of corn are hundreds of small seeds called kernels. Corn flour is used to make foods such as tortillas and cornbread.

What Is Wheat?

Wheat is a cereal grain that also grows as a tall grass in many places in the world, including China, India, France, Canada, Australia, and the United States. Some foods made from wheat are breads, rolls, doughnuts, muffins, cookies, cakes, cereals, crackers, pancakes, and waffles.

Some people might have an allergy to foods with wheat, or they find that foods with wheat upset their stomachs. In these cases, foods made from rice and corn are great choices.

More Oats, Please!

Oats are another cereal grain that can be crushed to make oatmeal or ground to make oat flour. Oat straw is often used as bedding for animals.

Rad Rice

Rice grows in long, grass-like stems in many places in the world. Because lots of water is needed to grow rice, it is planted in places where it rains a lot.

Do Animals Eat Grains?

Many farm animals, including horses, cows, goats, sheep, and chickens, eat grains. Their favorites include corn, oats, and wheat.

Fun Grain Facts

- » There are more than 40,000 kinds of rice.
- » Corn is called “maize” in most countries. The name comes from the Spanish word ‘*maiz*.’
- » Popcorn is a puffed-up whole grain.
- » Whole grains have healthy vitamins and minerals that give your body energy.
- » Most granola bars are made from oats.

Thankful for Grains

Eating grains is a great way to keep your body healthy and strong. During this Thanksgiving season, don’t forget to give thanks to God for all the many foods you are able to eat! **B**



Christin Baker is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



The Pot family

The Cult of Normalcy

By Sara Pot

In the fall of 2005, my husband, Ralph, and I announced the impending arrival of our third daughter. We were the parents of two preschoolers, 4-year-old Emily and 2-year-old Sophia, and we looked forward to being outnumbered by our children. Our anticipation turned to trepidation in December 2005, when we learned our baby was developing with some significant concerns.

Rachel Joy was born in May of 2006, and, in short, everything about her was unfamiliar. She wasn't able to eat or breathe on her own, and her physical body was malformed, suggesting mobility and independence would be a challenge. After six weeks of testing, surgery, and training, we took Rachel home from the hospital. We tried to find a new routine, one that included a child who was diagnosed medically fragile with global developmental delay.

Before Rachel's arrival, life as we knew it was with two little girls who

loved to sing, color, and run to the park. They happily ate peanut-butter-and-jam sandwiches for lunch and slept in their bunk beds at night. They gave sticky hugs and left fingerprints everywhere. What we didn't know was life with Rachel, one who would never eat peanut butter or walk or run anywhere. Rachel's fingerprints will remain forever in medical files for gene research, and the only singing she's offered is through the twinkle in her eye.

We tried to make the unfamiliar known and called those first years with Rachel "our new normal." For the sake of our older girls, and also for friends and family who were at a loss for how to respond, we wanted to create a sense of ordinary happenings.

All of that turned upside down with the birth of our fourth daughter. The ultrasounds failed to see what was painfully obvious at the birth of Janneke Grace on March 14, 2009. When our little one finally arrived,

she presented malformations and concerns just like her big sister Rachel. As Janneke lay under the warming lamp, our excitement was replaced by the weeping of everyone in the room.

Truthfully, Ralph and I sobbed like we had never cried before. The adrenaline evaporated, and the darkness that now enveloped us was intense. We knew we would have to kick at that darkness, waiting for it to bleed at least a glimmer of light. Whatever normalcy we tried to create didn't last, and we were back in that space of fear and anxiety.

In my struggle to find something to hang onto, my dad reminded me of the words in Matthew 4 and 5. The people that followed Jesus were also struggling to hang on. They were living with sorrow, impairment, and disease and were considered "less than" by the rest of society. When I was encouraged to read who was in those crowds, I understood why Jesus' words went beyond the law and societal norms to reach into broken hearts.

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

“Now, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

“He said, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’” (Matt. 4:23-5:3).

So begins the well-known Sermon on the Mount.

Today, the word “blessed” is used and overused in many contexts, all suggesting that “blessed” is when good things happen. Yet Christ’s use of the word “blessed” in this context is extended to those who are in the lowest of lows. Sadly, this message was missed by his disciples (John 9) and the leaders of the church that followed. Over the centuries, those who struggled with impairment or disease were often poor, cast out, or seen as cursed.

This reality is so different from the work of God, who came in human form, defied cultural norms, and sat among the least of society. Our creator used stories with surprising twists to share much-needed good news, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable (a phrase coined by Finley Peter Dunne, a Chicago newspaper columnist, in 1902).

I wonder if we are still missing the message from that sermon on the mountainside. We’ve developed (or maintained) an unhealthy obsession with and misplaced admiration of fitting in, of falling within society’s bell curve of normalcy. We

find comfort in predictable patterns and milestones. I wonder if we need to rediscover the biblical witness through the lens of disability. In his book *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, associate professor of theology Thomas Reynolds writes, “This ...

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the Mount.

requires rethinking human dependency and vulnerability in the context of the cult of normalcy that dominates North America” (p. 70).

Some would argue the rise of the terms “disability” and “normal” began during the Industrial Revolution. A person with an impairment was not able to work efficiently according to society’s designs for building and manufacturing; they were “dis-abled” by the new societal norms. The average man who was able to successfully perform tasks and contribute to the larger economy was now defined as “normal.”

As the Industrial Revolution gained momentum, so did the study of human capability and social influences on human development. Eugenics looked at the impact of race and ability on humans. Measuring height, weight, head circumference, skin color, and intelligence became ways to quantify

“normal.” When measurements didn’t fit in the central bell curve of “normal,” a person was considered deviant and unfit. Not surprisingly, as the idea of “normal” became defined, institutions were built to house the deviants, allowing for segregation in the name of the nation’s safety and well-being.

Through the years, the concept of “normal” has remained. To this day, people desire to fit the standard; it is an assumption deeply embedded into our life and culture.

The fields of education and medicine are two clear examples where the cult of normalcy exists. In our schools, those with disabilities are encouraged or required to develop skills and techniques that mirror or mimic their non-impaired peers. Students with disabilities cannot flourish and become painfully aware of their differences when the classroom requires unrealistic, one-size-fits-all standards.

Accepting diversity in ability challenges the vision of a school and can lead to uncomfortable conversations about defining excellence and interdependence. In my work with Christian schools, I am aware of a subtle but prevailing fear and uncertainty among able-bodied school community members when it comes to welcoming students with disabilities.

In the medical world, impairments are seen as deviations from the norm, and children like Rachel and Janneke are featured at genetics conferences. Had my children been born a generation earlier, doctors would have advised institutional care. Thankfully, in North America, we are slowly shifting toward family-centered care, allowing for collaboration between families and medical caregivers. Still, much work is needed to understand treatment and therapy, and it is vital to consider the long-term effects and outcomes.

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas says we humans are afraid of differences, and we see those who are different from us as more of a threat than a gift. We are reluctant to change our routines to

accommodate differences. We create our own communities based on this comfort and reluctance. In his book *Becoming Human*, Jean Vanier wrote, “We build walls around our group and cultivate our certitudes” (p. 39).

Though Ralph and I have not experienced intentional exclusion, over time we have felt less included and more alone as a family. It isn’t easy to join the rest of our family and friends who jump into the car for a road trip, grab a quick meal at a restaurant, or gather for fellowship in someone’s home when there are wheelchairs, feed pumps, diapers, medications, seizures, and chronic pain issues. We didn’t have family or friends with wheelchair-accessible homes until Ralph’s mom moved into a senior living residence.

Now that our girls are older, we’ve come to wonder if the problem with being included and fitting in is less about our girls’ disabilities and more about the ableist culture in which we live. Ableist culture and language refers to norms and words that devalue people with disabilities. Lennard Davis, a specialist in disability studies, suggests in his essay “Constructing Normalcy” that “the ‘problem’ is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person.”

Though often unintentional, ableist culture and language create more limitations for those with disabilities. But we can instead, for example, value the created person first by saying someone *uses* a wheelchair for mobility—rather than saying someone is wheelchair-bound. When we build wider doorways and accessible washrooms with adult-sized changing tables, we value the created person’s quality of life. These features allow for universal access in our churches, schools, and public spaces.

Moving away from the cult of normalcy means moving toward the inclusive vision of belonging. Rather

than living the gospel of fitting in, let us consider how we can truly live the gospel proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount.

The first step is person-first language. If we see disability before we see humanity, who is blind? Learn about the people in your community by name first. Become aware of recent changes in language that illustrate universal design and personhood, and know which words hurt. Recognize your own implicit bias and ignorance before you decide what to say. Develop a posture of listening to understand.

Second, let us move away from stigma and isolation toward collaboration and interdependence. Make decisions *with* people who live with disability, not *for* them. There’s a common phrase that echoes through the global disability community: *Nothing about us without us*. If you are making policies and procedures for including those with disabilities, consider that those with disabilities have the most important insights to contribute.

When preaching or teaching, use materials and words that promote diversity and universal experience. Reconsider inadvertent references to normalcy, such as assuming that everyone learns to walk or that everyone loves to play in the snow. Find ways to create physical spaces that are accessible to wheelchairs, mobility aids, and those with sensory sensitivities. Our Rachel is not able to have anything by mouth, but for several years I could sense from her body language and eye contact that she was intent on participating in communion. She now joins her church family by receiving the elements on her forehead; the wine-soaked bread is used to make the sign of the cross on her forehead. This is the accessible gospel at work!

We are a visually driven culture, significantly influenced by what we see. Consider who leads worship and ministry, who fills your places of worship, and who sits in the

classrooms of your school. What good news do people see when they walk through your hallways and scroll through your social media platforms?

Develop a cross-generational approach to church ministries. Simply having a Friendship Ministries program on Thursday nights does not mean that you are an inclusive congregation. It’s a beautiful start, but the vision of inclusive belonging is about creating interdependence and connections, integrating all ages and abilities every day. When we work to foster a comprehensive spirit of belonging, it will have amazing residual effects when our youth grow into our leaders.

There have been significant changes for the better in society’s view of disability and normalcy. Still, some of the prevailing ignorance exists in the sentiment that disability is credible only when we can see it in the form of a mobility device or a unique body presentation such as malformed hands. It is hard to understand what we cannot see. Indeed, those who live with a non-visible disability are often exhausted from defending the disability.

We cannot forget that a significant number of people in our church, school, and neighborhood communities live with something that challenges their quality of life. In forgetting this, we risk losing parts of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). Learning to see possibilities instead of just the problems allows us to offer hope and encouragement to those who sit on the periphery of what the rest of us have perceived as normal. **B**



Sara Pot works for Evdance Christian Schools Association and the Niagara Children’s Centre. The Pot family attend Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Pulling Up TULIPs

Too many of
TULIP's terms are
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They end up
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the Canons and
giving a distorted
impression of
Reformed theology.



Suzanne McDonald is ordained in the Christian Reformed Church and is professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich.

IN MY EARLIER COLUMN marking the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dort (“Commemorating the Canons,” Jan. 2019), I mentioned my dislike of the well-known acronym TULIP (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, preservation of the saints). Although we need to hold onto the core doctrinal truths of the Canons, I honestly wish we could uproot TULIP.


None of the terms of TULIP is actually used in the Canons. The acronym first appears in the 20th century, and we tend to forget that it only “works” in English. The “petals” don’t even reflect the order of the Canons (which would be ULTIP). While this might seem like a trivial point, it actually gets at something very important: TULIP misrepresents the Canons in a number of ways.

At least three of the terms are particularly problematic. Despite what the phrase “total depravity” might suggest, the Canons do not teach that people are utterly wicked all the time. The Canons simply acknowledge that no part of us is unaffected by sin, which means no one could make a move toward God without the personal gift and work of the Spirit.

Also problematic is the term “limited atonement,” which seems to suggest there is something deficient about Christ’s work on the cross. The Canons quote a medieval axiom to make clear that Christ’s death is *sufficient* for all, but it is *efficient* only for some. This is not a uniquely Reformed position. The main issue in the second point of doctrine (so poorly summarized by the “L” of TULIP) is that Christ’s death doesn’t simply hold out the *possibility* of salvation, as the Arminians claimed. Rather, Christ’s death *achieves* salvation for all whom God has chosen.

“Irresistible grace” is another term I wish we would strike from our theological vocabulary. It is often misunderstood to imply that the elect never resist the Spirit, or that becoming a Christian means losing your free will. The Canons teach the opposite. They remind us that apart from Christ, our wills are captive to sin such that we would never choose to turn to God in faith. We need the Holy Spirit to set our wills free, and when that happens, we freely choose to turn to Christ. That also helps us to see that the only issue here is *how* someone comes to faith, not that the elect can never resist the Spirit in other aspects of their lives.

Too many of TULIP’s terms are misleading and easily caricatured. They end up misrepresenting the Canons and giving a distorted impression of Reformed theology. But there is another important way that TULIP is profoundly unhelpful. For some folks, it has become *the* summary of what it means to be Reformed. That is something the Canons themselves were never intended to be—the writers of the Canons would point us to the Belgic Confession for that. They simply respond to five disputed points raised by the Arminians about election. Besides giving a poor account of the Canons, TULIP, when misused as the only badge of Reformed-ness, has contributed to wider misunderstandings of our tradition.

Are you ready to join me in pulling up TULIPs from your theological garden? 

1. What do you know about the acronym TULIP and what has been your experience with it?

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

Defrauded

Walking away and leaving things to God is not a sign of weakness but of a vital relationship with God.

I AM A BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER.

Recently I started a contracting company with two friends. We fixed the roof of a church and the exterior wall of a house. The church paid promptly. But an elder from the church who owns the house refused to pay the agreed amount. He said he would only pay \$3,500—\$3,000 less than the agreed amount.

This kind of story is common. It's hardly worth mentioning apart from theological reflection. But what should Christians do in these situations?

First, we should assess the severity of the sin. Not all sins are equally severe in terms of their harm to others. Jesus makes this point when he says the judgment of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum will be greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 11:20-24). The logic is inescapable: the more harmful the sin, the greater the judgment. Jesus' earlier words that lust is like adultery and hate like murder cannot be used to eradicate the idea of the degrees of sin. In our case, the sin is not big. A man cheated, and a company lost \$3,000.

Second, we should begin by following the steps Jesus gives in Matt. 18:15-20: point out the fault, bring others along if repentance is not achieved, and let the church know if stubbornness persists. We followed step one and got nothing. But we decided not to escalate. We agreed to let the elder pay whatever he saw fit.

When we walked away, though, we followed a different principle. The apostle Paul says something remarkable to the Corinthians: "Why not ... be cheated?" (1 Cor. 6:7). He argues that we have the prerogative to walk away. But some parsing is necessary: In this

context, Paul is addressing wealthier members of society who are taking poorer members to court. In this case, he says that justice does not always need to be exacted. Christ followed the same principle. He, who was sinless paid the cost on the cross for the sins of others. To follow Christ, we have the privilege of doing the same. We can be wronged and still forgive because we follow a God who has forgiven us.

But because sin can compound, we need to be on guard. It is not just about being sinned against anymore. The Greek word *apostereō* used in 1 Cor. 6:7 puts us on alert. It means "to defraud," and in three of the five times it's used in the New Testament it connotes financial fraud (Mark 10:19; 1 Cor. 6:7-8; James 5:4). The sequence of sin works like this: If we don't get paid, we might fail to pay our workers. We can pass along the fraud. This temptation is always there. Christians, however, have the ability to end this pattern. The person who takes the first hit should be the leader in God's economy. Godly people have always blessed others at their own expense, whereas ungodly people seek to fatten themselves at the expense of others.

When reflecting on our particular case as a microcosm of a daily reality, a few points emerge. First, the church has been called to radical nonconformity. Second, God in his patience allows us to deal with our sins. If we have defrauded others and can make amends, we should. Third, walking away and leaving things to God is not a sign of weakness but of a vital relationship with God. The Holy Spirit will honor such acts and can use that grace to break down strongholds. **B**



John Lee is the head of the Upper School at The Geneva School of Manhattan, a Christian classical school. He also serves with Ben Spalink at City Grace Church in the East Village.

Reading Between the Turkey Feast and the Tinsel Tree



I Still Believe: A Memoir of Wreckage, Recovery, and Relentless Love

By Russ and Tori Taff

Reviewed by Paul Delger

Christian music icon Russ Taff has won numerous awards, including Grammys, but his biggest victory was overcoming an alcohol addiction. Readers receive a brutally honest inside look at Taff's demons and how they almost destroyed his marriage and his family. Husband and wife each write individual reflections of how they worked through major relational pain through God's grace and mercy. Readers also discover the inner workings of the music industry and how its community reached out to the Taffs and didn't bury the singer despite his alcoholism. The book brings hope and encouragement to others who struggle with addictions or know family and friends who do. (Post Hill Press)



Just. You. Wait: Patience, Contentment, and Hope for the Everyday

*By Tricia
Lott Williford*

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

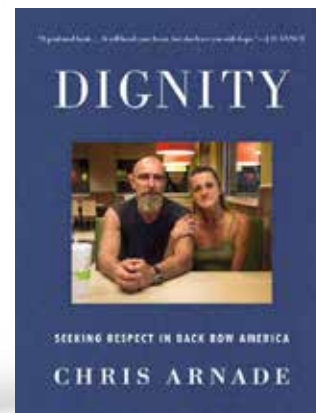
It's so hard to wait—for physical healing, for a relationship breakthrough, or for a dream to come true. But through the process of waiting, we are becoming, growing, and developing into a stronger, braver, wiser version of who we were when we began to wait. Life in 2019 doesn't exactly cultivate patience, but this book, like the Bible and God himself, is wonderfully countercultural. When I closed the pages of the funny, warm *Just. You. Wait.* a shift had occurred. I knew God was with me in my waiting, attending to my hopes and needs. I knew I was becoming someone new, and that my awakening was coming—maybe not today, but someday, at the perfect time. (NavPress)



Best Friends *By Shannon Hale, illustrated by LeUyen Pham*

Reviewed by Kristy Quist

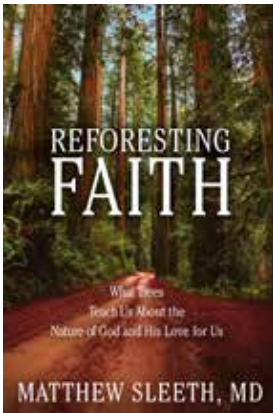
This new graphic novel/memoir from author Shannon Hale (*The Princess Academy*) explores how hard it was to make her way through the minefield of middle-school friendship pressures. As young Shannon begins sixth grade, she has a new best friend, the most popular girl in her class. She is overjoyed to be part of the popular group. But is she really part of it? Does she want to be? This empathetic book is true to the ups and downs of middle-school life, and it will be both comforting to readers and encouraging to students who have the opportunity to show kindness to someone who is on the outside. Ages 8 and older. (First Second)



Dignity: Seeking Respect in Back Row America *By Chris Arnade*

Reviewed by Andrew Zwart

Even after years of documenting "Back Row America" with his camera, Chris Arnade doesn't know how to solve poverty, stop drug addiction, or end racism. In fact, as he notes in his astonishing book of photojournalism, it's all too easy for us in the "front row" to hold opinions on these matters without ever meeting someone whose life is entangled with these difficulties. Rather than offering answers, Arnade wants us simply to see those we've relegated to the margins. Impressively, he does so without reducing them to morality tales or items of merely academic interest. It most powerfully teaches a holy lesson—a lesson about the dignity we are all imbued with, including "the least of these." (Penguin/Sentinel)



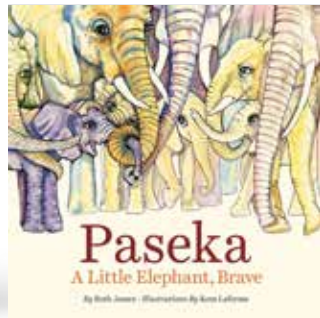
**Reforesting Faith:
What Trees Teach Us
About the Nature of
God and His Love
for Us**

By Matthew Sleeth

Reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Several years ago, author Matthew Sleeth faced a difficult time in his life. Trained as a medical doctor, Sleeth, who was not yet a Christian, began to look for answers in nature, especially in trees. He wondered, “What can trees teach us about the nature of God and his love for us?”

Sleeth’s questions led him on a nature walk through the Bible, resulting in his conversion and then in this intriguing, spiritually insightful journey from Genesis to Revelation. Focusing on Job, the patriarchs, Moses, God as gardener, Isaiah, Jesus as vine, and Paul, he shows that trees are a thread throughout Scripture. Pondering *Reforesting Faith* will contribute to readers’ deeper appreciation of the intricacies of God’s salvation narrative. (WaterBrook)



**Paseka:
A Little Elephant,
Brave**

*By Ruth James,
illustrated by
Kent Laforme*

Reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

On the African savannah, an elephant calf’s mother is killed, and the calf becomes vulnerable to the attacks of hyenas and poachers. Wounded, frightened, and alone, Paseka runs away from the hyenas, calling for her mother. She is filled with hope when she sees a big, gray shape moving toward her. Thinking it’s her mother, Paseka gives chase and bursts through a wooden wall into a safari camp. Based on the true story of an orphaned elephant calf who found a new family in an African sanctuary, this children’s picture book shares the wonder of God’s creation of elephants and the necessity of protecting them. Illustrated with exquisite watercolor paintings. Ages 6 and older. (Page Two Books)

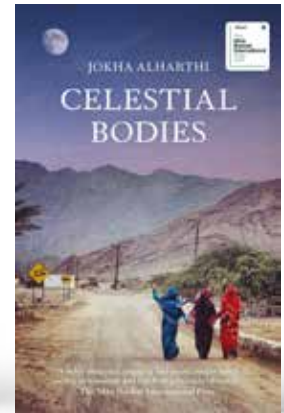


**The Words
Between Us**

By Erin Bartels

Reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Fourteen-year-old Robin Windsor is given a new identity to protect her from public association with her infamous parents, both serving jail terms for high-profile crimes. As Robin Dickinson—so named to honor poet Emily Dickinson—the teen grows up to own a failing bookstore in River City, Mich., and run it with her employee, Dawt Pi, a refugee from Myanmar. On the morning of her father’s scheduled execution, Robin receives a package in the mail with a familiar book and is transported back in time to her high school memories. Books arrive daily, each a window into her bygone years and the broken relationships she’s left behind. A tender, gripping novel portrays the power of life to overcome death. (Revell)

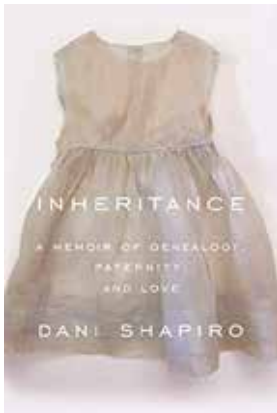


Celestial Bodies

*By Jokha Alharthi
translated
into English by
Marilyn Booth*

Reviewed by Jenny deGroot

This 2019 International Booker Prize winner takes readers into the village life of an Omani family. Three upper-class sisters are raised knowing they will be married within the context of familial choosing. After a heartbreak, Mayya dutifully marries a rich merchant. Asma pursues an education, marrying a young man presented to her. Khwala, the youngest, has given her heart to a cousin who moves to Canada. She stubbornly refuses marriage, awaiting his return despite the rumors that surround his life in this far country. All the while, the sisters struggle to see both servants and mistresses living with much more love and freedom than they themselves ever hope to experience. An enthralling family saga. (Sandstone Press)

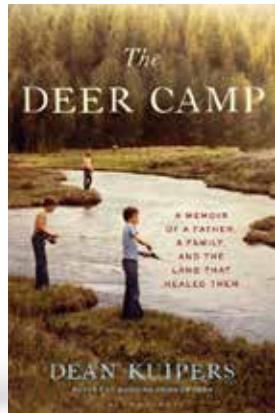


Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity, and Love

By Dani Shapiro

Reviewed by Jenny deGroot

When Dani Shapiro innocently submitted a DNA test, the results were earth-shattering: she was not 100% Jewish and not, in fact, her beloved late father's biological child. But then who was her birth father? Who was *she*? With the help of her journalist husband's sleuthing skills, Shapiro begins to unravel and then piece together the story of her unusual conception via artificial insemination. This tossed her into a world of family secrets, altered memories, and actions buried deeply in her very identity. Propulsive, tender, and profound, this memoir would be excellent for book clubs, for adoptees, and for anyone who has wrestled with family secrets or identity issues. (Knopf)

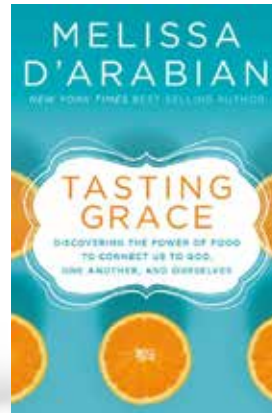


The Deer Camp: A Memoir of a Father, a Family, and the Land that Healed Them

By Dean Kuipers

Reviewed by Karl Westerhof

This is a memoir of a broken Christian Reformed family and the Michigan land that binds them. A father's controlling nature and sins destroy his marriage and damage his three boys. Somehow—I might like to say by the grace of God, but God's grace is not part of this author's story—they doggedly keep trying to relate, mostly about hunting and the dreams they have for the acres of field and forest their dad buys. As they engage together in the project of healing the land, their relationships begin to heal too. Kuipers' writing itself is healing, and the book brought me with it through pain to beauty, though it was still painful to see how very little of that healing the church contributed to their lives. (Bloomsbury)

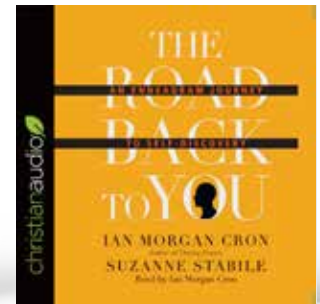


Tasting Grace: How Food Invites Us into Deeper Connection with God, One Another, and Ourselves

By Melissa d'Arabian

Reviewed by Ann Byle

Melissa d'Arabian, winner of *The Next Food Network Star* Season 5 and host of Food Network's *Ten Dollar Dinners*, takes readers deep into her love for food and family in her newest book. She offers 16 invitations that encourage readers to see food as a gift from God to be used well. Her invitations—into compassion, authenticity, grace, patience, stewardship, work, dependence, hospitality, and more—are mixed with her life story to create a full-bodied, well-blended, tasty meal that will satisfy her longtime fans and create new ones. D'Arabian reveals much about her food-insecure childhood, her mother's death, unexpected stardom, four babies in three years, and the life she and her family have created around food. (WaterBrook)



The Road Back to You (Audiobook)

*By Ian Michael Cron
and Suzanne Stabile,
narrated by Ian
Michael Cron*

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

The audio version of this best-selling book remains a top pick, and for good reason. This winsome, story-driven book was my introduction to the Enneagram, an ancient personality type system with an eerie accuracy in describing how people are wired, positively and negatively. Cron, a therapist/Episcopalian minister, and Stabile, a retreat director and Enneagram teacher, create a practical, comprehensive way of getting into Enneagram wisdom, exploring its connections with Christian spirituality for a deeper knowledge of God and of ourselves. Cron narrates the book, and I was drawn to his warm, homespun voice. Since the main takeaway is to be yourself—and to let others be themselves—Cron's authenticity as a narrator is the perfect complement. (IVP)

Has Science Proved That God Does Not Exist?

Christians should rejoice that scientists and their research help us appreciate how God created his world and how he rules over his handiwork.



Todd Statham is the Christian Reformed chaplain at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus.

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD the rumor spread by pop-culture outlets and institutions of learning that science has proved God doesn't exist. I hear this rumor too often. I spoke recently to a university committee tasked with addressing the raging mental health crisis on campus about how spirituality can help students struggling with depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. Afterward, one of the administrators came up to me: "No offense," she said, "but I think anyone who believes in God has a mental health problem." As we chatted, she insisted several times that because science had conclusively disproved God, God has no place in a scientific institution such as a university.

She's wrong on both counts. Science has not disproved God, and many scientists believe in God. In fact, in the wake of Barack Obama's appointment in 2009 of a devout Christian, geneticist Francis Collins, to head the National Institutes of Health, the Pew Forum surveyed scientists in the United States and found that just over half believe in God (bit.ly/2mraT2S). There must be a lot of incompetent scientists in North America if half their membership still believe in something their own field has apparently disproved!

Most Reformed Christians probably don't get too rattled by claims that science has disproved God's existence. Our tradition has a proud history of encouraging scientific research as well as reflecting on how science and faith complement each other to help us understand God's work as creator, sustainer, and redeemer of all reality. When a historic standard like the Belgic Confession speaks of God revealing himself to us in "two books,"

Scripture and creation (Article 2), it's not surprising that the Reformed tradition produces scientists like Collins, theologians like Alister McGrath and Thomas Torrance, and philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, all of whom are convincing guides for how to read God's "books" in harmony with each other.

At the same time, I've found it useful to have something on hand for when folks try to convince me that science has disproved God's existence. Lately, I've been falling back on a charming and simple example used by John Lennox, a British professor of mathematics. Imagine your Aunt Matilda bakes a fantastic cake, which is then analyzed by a horde of scientists. Chemists, physicists, and nutritionists can tell us all about the proteins and particles and calories in the cake. In other words, they know (almost) everything about how the cake was made. But why did Aunt Matilda make the cake in the first place? That she made it for your birthday is something she'll have to reveal. So the most important question of all can't be answered by the scientists.

Lennox's point, of course, is to remind us of something too often overlooked: science has limits. The most basic and the biggest questions we have—Why is the universe here? Why are we here? What does it all mean?—aren't questions science is qualified to answer because science handles the *how* of the universe and not *why* it was made or who made it. Christians should rejoice that scientists and their research help us appreciate how God created his world and how he rules over his handiwork. But in Christian belief, God isn't part of the stuff of the universe. What this means, then, is that it's simply beyond the reach of science to prove or disprove God. **B**

Find clues to this crossword puzzle in this issue of *The Banner*. See the answers next month!

Down:

- 2. Grows in long, grass-like stems in many places in the world
- 4. Caring About People is a Thanksgiving meal _____ program
- 6. When Dani Shapiro submitted a _____ test, the results were earth-shattering
- 8. Popular acronym for summarizing the Canons of Dort
- 9. A Soroti Prison church meets under this tree.
- 11. In Edmonton hundreds gathered for this
- 13. This author and World War II resistance hero died in September
- 17. Remember those in _____ (Heb. 13:3)

Across:

- 1. *The Words Between Us* features a refugee character from _____
- 3. The playground at Calvin Christian School in Hamilton, Ont., is now _____
- 5. Jesus uses this word to describe the lowest of the low
- 7. The _____-Kruger effect.
- 10. *Just. You. Wait.* is wonderfully _____
- 12. Starts with "no sissy stuff"
- 14. Don't throw this out!
- 15. Rahab is praised for helping them
- 16. Jeremy Benjamin's song "I Am Not My Own" comes from Q&A 1 of this catechism
- 18. Faye Yu helps people identify and heal from this

Answers to the October 2019 puzzle

- 1. SPECTACLES
- 2. DIRT
- 3. CHRISTIAN
- 4. HILFESTRA
- 5. BRUTE
- 6. EARTH
- 7. NO
- 8. DORT
- 9. TREE
- 10. JUST
- 11. HUNDREDS
- 12. NO Sissy STUFF
- 13. AUTHOR
- 14. DON'T
- 15. RAHAB
- 16. Q&A 1
- 17. REMEMBER
- 18. FAYE YU

Think you can change the world from a lab?
We do.

CHANGE can be big, like climate change big. Or it can be small, like monitoring local water quality small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go.

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Denominational Announcements

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANDIDACY

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

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

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

Congregational Announcements

WINTERING AT YOUR 2ND FLORIDA HOME? Make Bradenton CRC, your first church choice! Bask in the Sunshine with our church diverse in ages and interests but united in passionate service to our Savior. Sunday services 10am & 5pm with an 8:30am added Jan-Mar; weekly Bible studies and events. Let our weather, worship and music lift your spirit! www.bradentoncrc.org.

WORSHIP IN CENTRAL FLORIDA You are invited to worship with us at Lake Alfred Ministry, a church of Reformed persuasion in Central Florida, meeting from Nov. 17-April 12. Services: 10AM - 5:50 PM. Pastors: Rev. Jim Admiraal Nov.17-Dec.15, Rev. Jim VanderRoest Dec.22, Rev. Herman VanNiejenhuis Dec.29-Jan.26, Rev. Ed Tamminga Feb.2-23, Rev. Ron Noorman March1-April12. Address:140 Mallard, Lake Alfred, FL. Directions: lakealfredministry.org or call 269-720-6413.

RETIREMENT

RETIREMENT SERVICE The Council and Congregation of the Sanborn CRC of Sanborn, IA congratulates Pastor Al Van Dellen and his wife Gwen on his upcoming retirement. We thank him for his faithful ministry with us and for 32 years of serving CRC congregations. All are welcome to join us for his final service on Nov. 17, 2019 at 9:30 am. May our Lord bless them as they seek new ways to serve Him.

TIME OF WORSHIP SERVICE

WINTER VISITORS You are invited to worship with us at Maranatha Community Church beginning Dec 1. Our service starts at 10 am at

Farnsworth Hall, 6159 E University, Mesa, AZ 85205.

Church Positions Available

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP 1st Byron CRC is seeking a vibrant, passionate, knowledgeable and committed full time Director of Youth Discipleship. Interested applicants apply at firstbyroncrc.org. Go to job postings.

LEAD PASTOR River Rock Church of Rockford, MI believes that God is calling us to be Radical in Love, Real in Life, and Rooted in Christ. We are seeking a full-time Lead Pastor to guide us and partner with us in that ministry. If you are interested in and/or would like to learn more about the Lead Pastor position, please email searchteam@riverrockcommunity.com.

PASTOR Come do Ministry with us! We are Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, ON, Canada. If you would like to explore whether this is a good fit for you, please contact our Search Committee Secretary, Karen Antonides at searchcmt@mountainviewcrc.org. All inquiries are confidential.

PASTOR OF FAITH FORMATION Hope Christian Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario is seeking a Pastor of Faith Formation and Discipleship. The successful candidate will be part of our team ministry with a focus on intergenerational faith development. We are a large vibrant congregation in a growing community in southwestern Ontario. For more information, please contact Nancy @ info@hopecrc.ca

PASTOR Wolf Creek Community Church is located in beautiful Lacombe, Alberta. We are seeking a pastor who will join us in our mission to reach out and enfold people for Jesus. Visit wolfcreekchurch.ca or Email searchteamwccc@gmail.com

SEEKING PASTOR - Trinity CRC of Ames, IA. A small church with a large caring heart situated in a university city is looking for a pastor to lead us in worship and help us grow in sharing God's love and hope to others. We seek one who interacts well with all ages. Please contact Jeff Kopaska at jeffkopaska51@gmail.com

Birthday

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

PASTOR LLOYD WOLTERS turns 90 on Oct. 29! Celebrate God's faithfulness with us on Sat. Nov. 2 from 1:30-4 pm (singing & more at 3:00) at Audio Scripture Ministries, 760 Waverly Rd, Holland, MI. RSVP on facebook

at PastorLloydturns90, email fridsma.mary@gmail.com or call Lauri at 616-669-2395.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS

BRUINOOGUE, Dick and Harriet, 120 Superior Ave., Sheboygan WI 53081, married before a blazing fireplace in G.R. by Rev. B. Pekelder, celebrate 70 yrs of marriage on Nov. 24. Children: Rick(Cher), Nan(Brendan), Nina(Paul) 7 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, 2 great-great-grandchildren Ps 18:2 "The Lord is my Rock."

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS

FEY, John and Carol were married on November 7, 1959 in Bellflower, CA. They live in Artesia, CA and attend the First Christian Reformed Church of Artesia and raised five children. Sheryl Lorigo, Bryan (Carolyn), Debbie (Gregg) Suyenaga, Sam (Mary) and Darrell. They have been blessed with 18 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. We are so thankful the Lord has blessed you with 60 years. We Love You Mom and Dad!

Obituaries

CLOUSING, James C., 80, of 11602 Upper Peninsula Lane, St. John, IN 46373 went to be with his Lord on August 5, 2019. He is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Carolyn and his children/grandchildren/great-grandchild: Mark and Cheri Lubbers (Kaitlyn, Michael and Melissa Bloem, and Allyson), Charles and Linda Zandstra (Steven and Michelle Hoeflich (Clara), Jonathan, and Matthew), Ronald, Kevin and Julie Hengeveld (Kiley, Logan, and Aiden).

LUCHT, Ray, age 90. Died June 2, 2019 in Denver, CO. Preceded in death by daughter Deborah. Survived by wife Joan (married 65 years), children Christine, Stephen (Linda), Michael (Sue), Gregory (Joan) and Kate (Hank), and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"

MULDER, Minnie, age 107, of New Holland, SD passed away on September 14, 2019 in the Corsica Good Samaritan Nursing Home. Grateful for having shared in Minnie's life: Sharon (Dalwyn) Vanden Hoek of Rapid City, SD and Kenneth (Beth) Mulder of Grand Rapids, MI; a daughter-in-law Joan Mulder, of Platte, SD; 12 grandchildren; several great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren; along with nieces and nephews. Minnie was preceded in death by her husband Edward, a

daughter Helen DeVries, a son Arnold, along with parents, siblings and in-laws. She will be fondly remembered as a woman of faith, positive example to many and loved by all.

VAN DER WEELE, Donald, 87, of Grand Rapids, MI passed away on August 31, 2019. He is survived by wife Joan (Van Haveren) Van Der Weele of 61 years and children/grandchildren: Brian and Lois (Karisa, Kayla) Keith and Lori (Elise and Nick, Elena, Eden) Cheryl and Dave Spoelma (Kyle and Leanne, Tyler)

VANDER LUGT, Allan, 91, of Grand Rapids, MI, died on Sunday, July 21, 2019. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Emily, and is survived by his wife, Annetta; daughter Ellen and her husband Pablo Mora, sons Ethan and Terrie Vander Lugt, Eliot Vander Lugt and Hector Rodas; 9 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

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15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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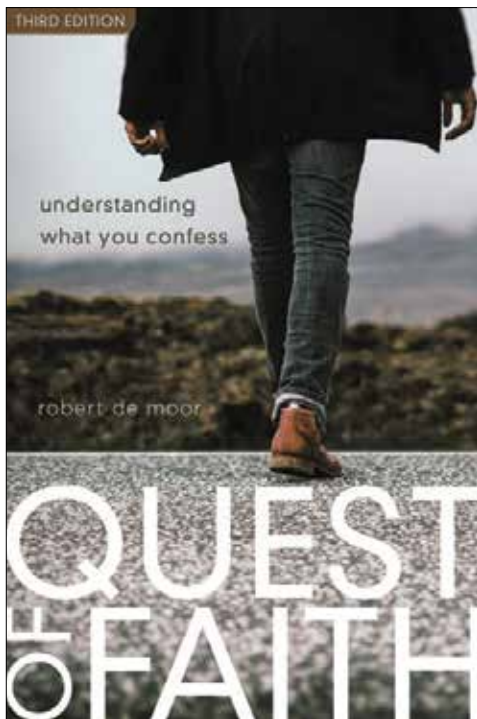
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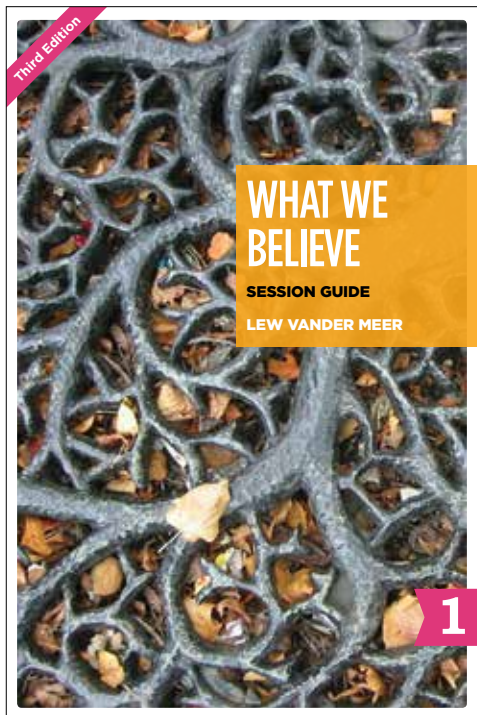
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Shelter

Our house isn't
really "ours."
We're temporary
caretakers of
a home that
will stand, Lord
willing, long after
we're gone.

*Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—a place
near your altar, LORD Almighty, my
King and my God.*

—Psalm 84:3

MY SON AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

are in the process of buying a house—their first.

It reminds me of our own experience buying a house 35 years ago, when that same son was still a baby. It was frustrating and exhilarating at the same time. A leap of faith, really. Will we be happy here? Will the neighbors welcome us and our kids? Will our jobs last long enough to cover 30 years (!) of mortgage payments? Oh, and that orange shag carpet—what were they thinking?


We're still in that same four-square on Hope Street that has sheltered generations of families for over a hundred years. Its broad front porch has been the space for countless conversations and cups of coffee, the site for digesting Sunday newspapers or dozing in filtered light. Back in the late '90s and early 2000s, kids like mine could be found on neighborhood porches just like ours reading the newest *Harry Potter* tome, hot off the press, cover to cover. One year the kids made a tin-can phone linking our porch to the neighbors' with a strand of twine.

It's a house, but it's so much more than that. The sturdy oak floors and wide crown moldings bear witness to the former plenitude of hardwood forest in our Midwestern state. The formation of ice dams in winter taught us more than we wanted to know about the physics of warm air meeting snow and cold on a roof. The occasional bat—and once even a small squirrel

that must have come in through the basement door—provided moments of creative problem solving and a little bit of horror, at least on my part.

The neighbors on our block taught us about hospitality, about looking out for each other, about borrowing an egg or half a cup of flour or providing a spare key at a moment's notice. When we needed to leave in the middle of the night for the birth of our fourth child, our next-door neighbor spent the night at our house to be with the other kids.

Our house isn't really "ours." We're temporary caretakers of a home that will stand, Lord willing, long after we're gone. Other families will come and live out their own stories after we leave. I wonder if the echoes of our lives will somehow persist in these walls and floors and foundation.

These days, the kids are all grown up. The house feels pretty big for two people. Only occasionally, when they all come home for holiday get-togethers, do the rooms get filled. I'm starting to think it might be time to pass on the caretaking of this good old house to the next family. But maybe there's no rush. Meanwhile, I'm filled with gratitude for a home that has created a shelter for our own story to unfold. And I am looking forward to the next chapter. 



Judith Hardy is a former associate editor of *The Banner*. She worships at Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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