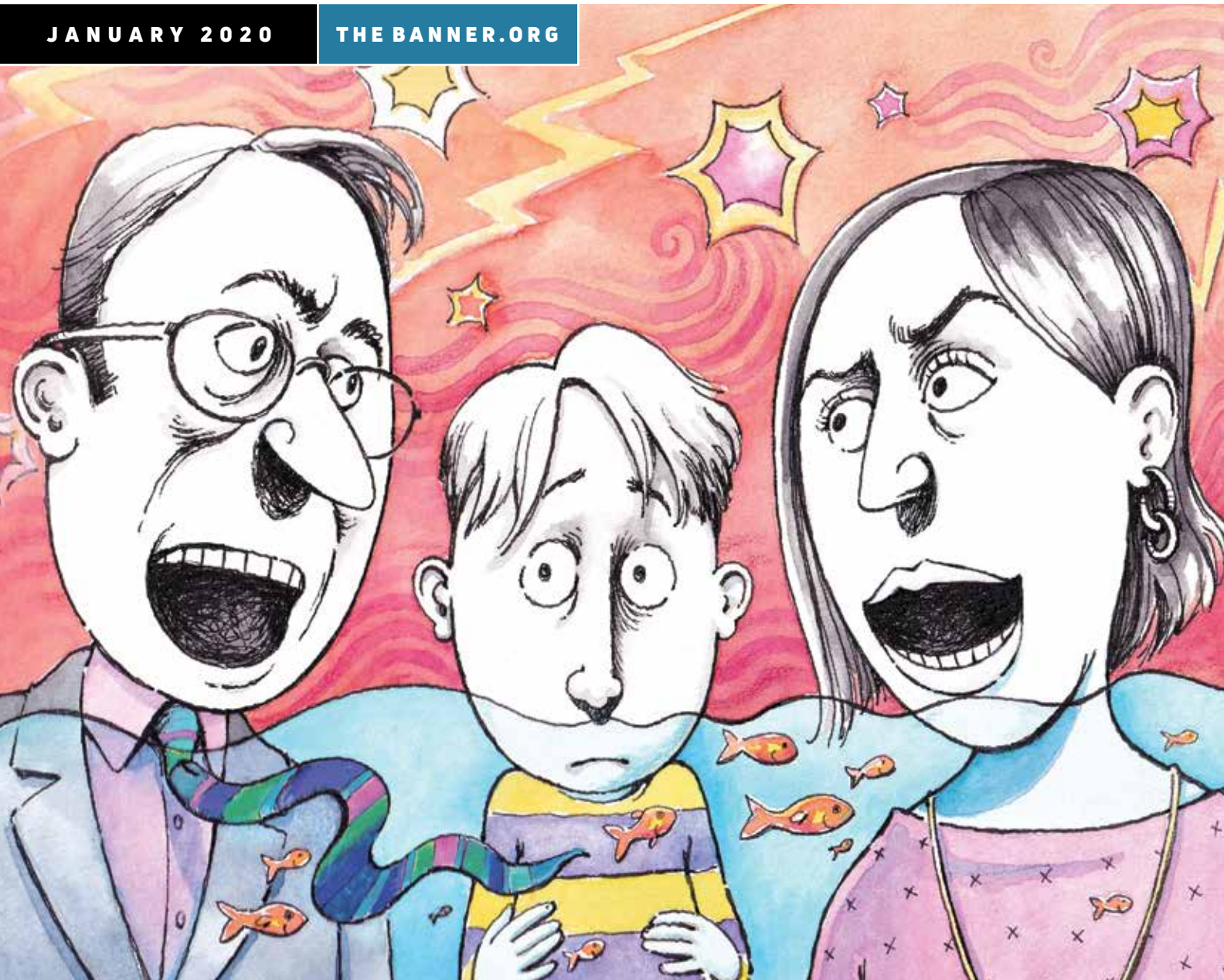


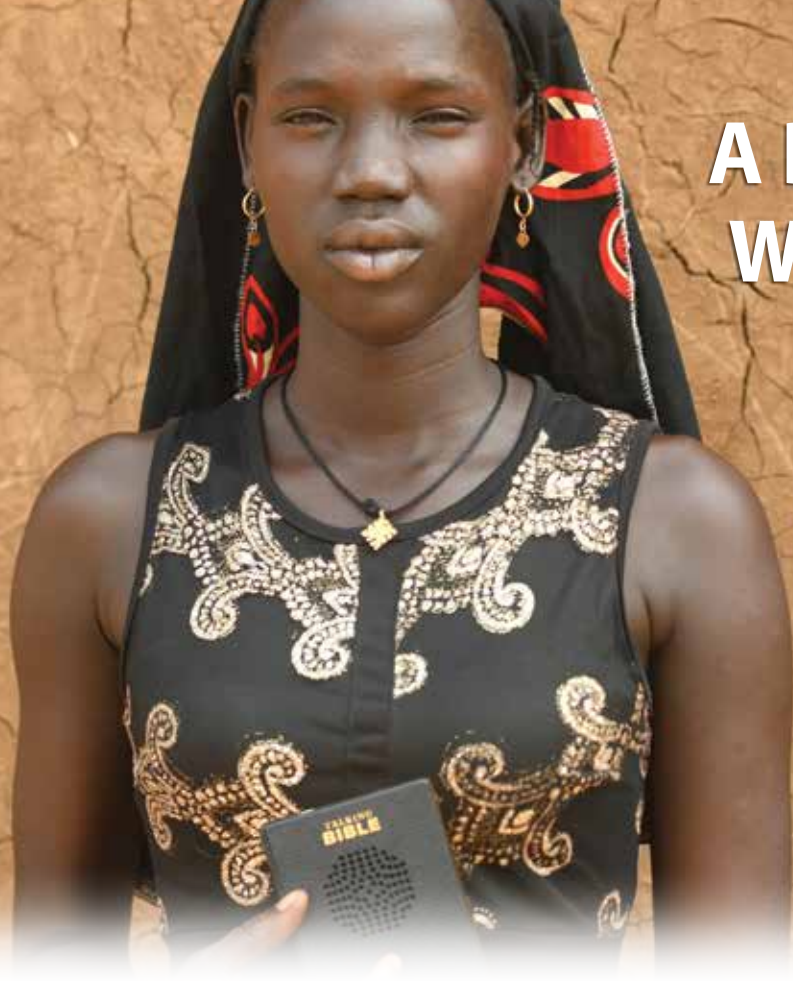
# BANNER

JANUARY 2020

THE BANNER.ORG



# A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



## The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered

**DONATIONS FROM CANADA ARE NOW TAX-DEDUCTIBLE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE!**



Enhancing Trust



"Accredited for special offerings"

Five years since the conflict began in South Sudan, over 4 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Nearly 2.3 million of those are refugees, having fled to neighboring countries.

Neva is 19 years old and a newlywed at a refugee camp in East Africa. She came to the camp 4 years earlier to escape the fighting in South Sudan. Neva cannot read and first heard a Talking Bible two years ago. When she listened, she heard that they were supposed to forgive one another — a difficult task after years of fighting and hatred in her homeland. *"I understood it was the Word of God, and meant to keep sin from entering my heart," said Neva.*

When asked if she needed anything, Neva quietly requested this: "Would you pray to God for my husband, so he can lead his family and live as a Godly man?"

**Will you help?** Your gift this Christmas will give a non-reader a chance to learn about the true meaning of Christmas and change their life forever.

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

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



# BEING CHRIST'S WITNESSES TOGETHER

Photo: Guelph Campus Ministry at the University of Guelph

Resonate is an extension of your own church, and we exist to serve you and walk with you as you join God's mission in your own neighborhood and around the world.

Resonate can help **deepen** your passion for mission, **strengthen** your capacity to follow God on mission, and **amplify** the impact you and your church have in your neighborhood and around the world. We can do more together than we can on our own!

[RESONATEGLOBALMISSION.ORG](https://resonateglobalmission.org)



A Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church

**Resonate**<sup>™</sup>  
GLOBAL MISSION

# BANNER



## WHAT'S ONLINE

Looking for more? Here are just a few of the stories you'll find online at *TheBanner.org*. (Try typing the headlines into the search box.)

- » Classis Heartland Encourages Churches, Ministry Graduates With Residency Program
- » Church Hosts Conversation About PTSD
- » Book: *Bible Gems to Remember Devotions for Kids* by Robin Schmitt
- » Streaming: *The Public*
- » Music: *Rescue Story* by Zach Williams

## FEATURES



10

### The Music of Water and Baptism

Matthew Cooke // Water themes can be found in secular and Christian music through the ages.



32

### Why I'm Not A Christian Zionist

Gary Burge // You can lose friends over this one.



36

### The Other 6: To Swerve and Protect

Diana Zondag // By listening, not judging, and offering support, you are valuing another person.



**Big Questions (p. 12):** Relationships columnist Judy Cook responds to a teenager's concern about raucous political discussions at home.

Illustration for *The Banner* by Laurie Sienkowski.

**NEWS**

**14 Stories of Renewal: Christian Reformed Churches Seeking Regeneration**

**17 Girls' Club Badge Promotes Support for Refugees**

**20 Naschitti CRC Returns to Worship in Restored Sanctuary**

**COLUMNS**

**7 Editorial: Pro-Life is Pro-Love**

Shiao Chong // Life, in the Bible, means relatedness.

**8 Reply All**

**9 Vantage Point: What's Your Brand?**

John Van Donk // Even if your church doesn't have a sign out front, it is still sending messages into your community.

**12 Big Questions**

What are the dangers of being a church that focuses on attracting people?

**31 Discover: Cool Winter Coats**

Christin Baker // How do animals keep themselves warm?

**35 Faith Matters:**

**Words We Don't Want to Hear in 2020**

Abby Zwart // As we look forward to a new decade, I propose we stop using these words in church.

**38 On Kanye West, the Sacred, and the Secular**

Jordan Petersen Kamp // Is Kanye's much-buzzed-about new album truly his first Christian recording?

**40 Cross Examination:  
How Can We Trust the Bible?**

Mary Hulst // Multiple authors give the Bible more authority, not less.

**41 Word Play**

**47 Still: From the Republic of Congo to Appleton.**

Laurie Kreller Pluimer // Agatha came to Appleton, Wisc., as a refugee this past winter.

**Correction**

In the December 2019 issue, the article "Study Needed on How the Church Should Speak on Justice Issues" should have said delegate Susan Hoekema is a member of Classis Northcentral Iowa.

**OUR SHARED MINISTRY**

**Editor** Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,  
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



**Dear Church: A Letter From Young People**

Paola Fuentes Gleghorn and Matt Kucinski // What do young people want CRC members to know?

**26 The View from Here: What Do They See?**

Steven Timmermans // Truly understanding other people is a multidimensional task.

**BANNER**

*The Banner* is the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church

**Editor** Shiao Chong

**Associate Editor** Sarah Delia Heth

**News Editors** Alissa Vernon, Gayla R. Postma

**Mixed Media Editor** Lorilee Craker

**Art Director** Dean R. Heetderks

**Designer** Pete Euwema

**Contact Us** 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407 [info@TheBanner.org](mailto:info@TheBanner.org)

**Address Changes and Subscriptions** 800-777-7270 or visit [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org)

**Classified Advertising** 616-224-0725 [classifieds@TheBanner.org](mailto:classifieds@TheBanner.org)

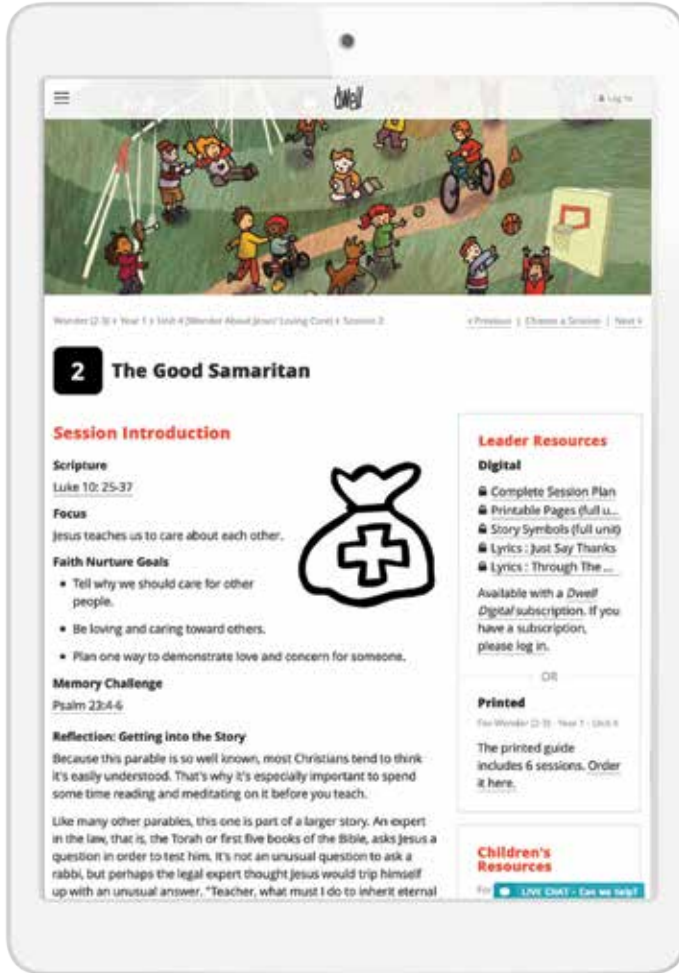
**Display Advertising** 616-224-5882 [ads@TheBanner.org](mailto:ads@TheBanner.org)

**Editorial** 616-224-0824 [editorial@TheBanner.org](mailto:editorial@TheBanner.org)

**News** [news@TheBanner.org](mailto:news@TheBanner.org)

Published monthly (except August). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: *The Banner*, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: *The Banner*, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8. Copyright 2019, Christian Reformed Church in North America. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 155, No. 1, 2020.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.



Using *Dwell* Sunday school curriculum has never been easier. Now Sunday school coordinators and teachers have the option to access all of their leader materials online with a subscription to *Dwell Digital*.

By subscribing to *Dwell Digital* you'll have complete control. You can easily print lesson plans at home or view them on any device. This added layer of convenience and flexibility will make planning and teaching lessons simple.

Subscription pricing is based on the number of children in your program

- 1-19 children \$150.00<sup>US/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*</sup>
- 20-29 children \$200.00<sup>US/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*</sup>
- 30-39 children \$300.00<sup>US/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*</sup>
- 40-49 children \$400.00<sup>US/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*</sup>
- 50+ children \$500.00<sup>US/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*</sup>

To learn more visit [DwellCurriculum.org](http://DwellCurriculum.org).

# Pro-Life is Pro-Love

We must promote ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and a culture that fosters belonging and love toward each other and God.



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](http://TheBanner.org).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean) 에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).

**WHEN MY WIFE WAS PREGNANT** with our third daughter, we were told there was a high risk the baby would have Down Syndrome. We never considered abortion as an option because of our faith and desire to follow God’s ways. But fear of the unknown and grief that our child might not be “normal” gripped us. Yet we relied on God’s strength and grace to carry us through with the help of God’s people. Our daughter with Down Syndrome is now 12, and we thank God for her presence in our lives.

I used to think the Bible teaches that human life has physical (temporal) and spiritual (eternal) dimensions. I thought that was all there is to know on the subject—until I learned that the ancient Jewish worldview of the Bible had a more nuanced, complex view of life.

The Bible sees life and death in more relational and covenantal frameworks. As Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann explains, “Life and death do not have to do, in biblical perspective, simply with the state of the individual person but with the relation between the person and the community which identifies that person. ... Life in the Bible means relatedness. Conversely death is to be unrelated” (*The Bible Makes Sense*, p.109).


Life, in the Bible, means relatedness. It is about belonging, body and soul, to God and, secondarily, to belong in a community. There is no genuine life, biblically speaking, without community, love, belonging, and relationships.

The Heidelberg Catechism points in this direction when it teaches that “by forbidding murder, God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness. In God’s sight all such are disguised forms of

murder” (Q&A 106). It makes sense that these sins are the root of murder if life is relatedness. All these sins destroy relationships; they destroy love for each other. Hence, “God tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly ... to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies” (Q&A 107). The Catechism teaches us that the commandment against murder goes beyond forbidding killing someone. It involves promoting love for our neighbors and even for our enemies.

When I understand life this way, being pro-life takes on a wider meaning. To be biblically pro-life, rather than politically pro-life, we must be pro-relationships, pro-belonging, pro-love. To be pro-life is to be pro-love. We cannot simply be about preventing the physical killing of babies. We must promote ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and a culture that fosters belonging and love toward each other and God.

Therefore, it is inconsistent to advance a “pro-life” agenda through divisive, outrage-inducing, fear-mongering rhetoric and methods. The ends do not justify the means. We need to advance pro-life ends through pro-love means. We need to be patient, peaceful, gentle, merciful, and friendly, even to those who are “pro-choice,” to those who might have undergone abortion, to those who might vote differently from us.

Let us follow the Catechism’s lead , not only preventing death and murder but diligently working to reduce the roots of murder—envy, hatred, anger, vengeance, all that destroys love and belonging—and promote love, patience, peace, and gentleness within us, among us, and in our world. 

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
Please take our readers’ survey. See ad on page 44.

**SUPPORT THE BANNER**



## REPLY ALL

### Ignorance and Conviction

Intellectual humility is a virtue (“Ignorant of Ignorance,” Nov. 2019). If we’re smart, then we ought also to be wary of theologians who shout, “The Bible is absolutely clear!” And yet, to refrain from agreeing that Scripture is absolutely clear on some things—such as “there is a God,” “he created the world,” “murder is wrong”—would not, it seems, be intellectual humility but intellectual dishonesty.

The reality is that intellectual humility and religious conviction are both biblical virtues. Where God has not clearly revealed himself, the former virtue is called for (Job 28). Where God has clearly revealed himself, the latter virtue is called for, even if it means much suffering and death (Heb. 11:1-35).

Columnist Judy Cook believes unity in the CRC will only be preserved if intellectual humility reigns (“Big Questions,” Nov. 2019). The difficulty for many, however, is that the virtue to be embraced in this instance is not intellectual humility but religious conviction. For this reason, and with deep sorrow, I agree with Ms. Cook’s leading assessment: Will the CRC split over this? “But for the grace of God ... yes.”  
» Ed Gerber // Willoughby, B.C.

### Me and the Black Dog

I just finished reading the unbelievably open, informative article by Theresa Miedema (“Me and the Black Dog,” May 2019). The way she described chronic major depression—you feel the pain, sadness, frustration like nobody has ever been able to describe it! I lost a friend to suicide [and] had a sister-in-law battling (depression). Miedema showed us in her article the horrible struggle it is to stay on top of it. I am so happy for her that she has the amazing support needed. I am thankful that she shared this misunderstood sickness with us. Wishing her health and peace of mind for many years to come!

» Tineke Bosch // Abbotsford, B.C.

### Children in Church

I couldn’t believe what I read about “prayergrounds” (“Big Questions,” Sept. 2019). A worship service is a time that children should be seated with their parents and taught how we listen to God speaking to us through our minister. It is one hour of our Sunday morning that children should be quiet and respectful to others who are also listening to what is being said. Parents bring quiet objects for younger children because attention spans are shorter. Children should be disciplined or taken out if noisy. How distracting to have children playing up front with toys, books, or each other, causing people to watch them instead of listening to God’s word. A worship service should not be a performance or an informal Bible study, but a serious, important lesson of life. Children belong in the pew with their parents, who I hope are teaching them this is how we worship our Creator, Lord, and Savior.

» Jeannene Veenstra // Oskaloosa, Iowa

### Redemption in Movies

I have run into a problem with the article “How Redemption Runs Through the Marvel Cinematic Universe” (Oct. 2019). I believe this article promotes movies too much and that they are poor examples of redemption. They might be good stories, but are movies where the church should find its values? I believe that real redemption comes from God’s word and that it is the only source of salvation.

» Gare Mejeur // Portage, Mich.

### Revisionism

Revisionist views often involve a selective retelling or twisting of historical facts to suit a current narrative (“Revisionism,” Oct. 2019). Jesus points us to God’s purposes for marriage being clear in the creation account (Matt. 19). He points to this as God’s pattern for marriage. Embracing what God calls an abomination (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) is not the way of Christ (Matt. 5:17-19). The Leviticus passages make it clear that the homosexual act itself, not violence or lack of commitment, is what God calls an abomination. Romans 1:24-27 similarly describes homosexual relationships even by mutual consent as opposed to God’s design.

So what does the church say to people struggling with gay orientation? For one thing, we should teach that sexual identity does not define us. Character defines us. But we also need to affirm that God has designed human sexuality for male/female partnership. This is not an invention of humans, and gender is God’s gift to embrace, not the accident of a Godless universe. And we need to acknowledge that all of us at some level struggle with living in a way that honors God.

» Edward Field // Duncan, B.C.

**READ MORE ONLINE**



# What's Your Brand?

**ALL I HAVE TO SAY** is “Coke” and you know what I am referring to. “Coke” means “refreshing,” “goes well with popcorn,” “delivered in shiny red trucks.” That’s because the Coca-Cola people have cultivated the brand and protect it vigorously. If local distributors fail to properly maintain the delivery trucks, they will soon hear about it from Coke headquarters. The brand does not tolerate dirty trucks because it sends a confusing message to customers. People expect clean and shiny, not dirty and drab.

What is your church’s brand? What do people in your community think about when they hear your church’s name mentioned? Not too long ago, our entire denomination and every individual congregation were known as the “Dutch church.” We have made great strides in shaking that image. But to no longer be known as something hardly qualifies as a strong brand.

Sometimes it helps to think about your brand as a message you might put on a church sign. Imagine one that says, “We have the answer to your problems. Please hush so we can tell you what you need to hear.” Now compare that with another sign that says, “Please hold my hand as together we wait with hope for God to heal us.”

If you weren’t already attending your church, which of these two signs might inspire you to check out what this church is all about? Why?


Even if your church does not have a sign out front, it is still sending messages into your community. People might learn about your church from talking with a current member or from reading a newspaper announcement about a new program. Or they might

What do people in your community think about when they hear your church’s name mentioned?

learn about it from your website, your Facebook page, or some other public presence. Even your church’s physical appearance sends a message.

Perhaps your church is ready to form a branding task force, a group of people from diverse backgrounds who take a closer look at *how* and, more importantly, *what* your church communicates to its neighbors, both purposeful, explicit messages and what people might read between the lines.

Don’t make the mistake of thinking your brand should be like Coke, all shiny and clean. I know of a church in Arizona where they tell people right up front: “We are broken people; we get many things wrong; our pastors are not perfect. If you think you are, you may be disappointed, but join us anyway. We know how to love people like us, but God is teaching us to also love people like you.”

By the way, this church is growing. 



John Van Donk is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who loves to hang out with other retired guys. He serves on his church’s brand task force.



## As I Was Saying

Find the latest posts from our award-winning blog online at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

- » **In Christ There Is No Protestant or Catholic:** We might have left some important things behind.
- » **Before You Leave Your Church:** Some important considerations.
- » **Seeds of Love:** Sometimes we don’t reap the rewards of seeds sown.



# The Music of Water and Baptism

By Matthew Cooke

*“Music, at its essence, is what gives us memories. And the longer a song has existed in our lives, the more memories we have of it.” —Stevie Wonder*

**M**usic is difficult to define, but it is undeniable that it is significantly intertwined in our lives: it is wrapped up in our culture, our ideals and values, and even our faith. Music is everywhere. It reminds us of the past and connects us with those who performed or listened to it before us.

Musical themes can be like this too. Musicians are shaped by the culture of their lives—the music they enjoy,

the experiences they have had, and the ideas that have challenged and encouraged them. This all can be seen in their lyrics, creating a lineage of creativity and ideas.

One curiosity, then, is how biblical themes have been represented over the history of music. These themes show up not only in our traditional church music, but in modern music as well, in songs written for inside the church and outside it.

To explore this, let’s look at the way one ancient theme, water, has flowed through the popular music of the church and into the ever-expanding musical genres of our society. Water has assorted reputations in the Bible.

At times it is used to represent life and renewal—it’s found pouring out of rocks and peacefully raining out of heaven, sustaining and renewing. At other times water is something to be feared—roaring and storming, flooding and chaotic. Almost always it is powerful, as is most pointedly represented in the sacrament of baptism.

This symbolism of water found its way into the songs and psalms and soundtrack of the North American church. Old hymns such as “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” or “It Is Well With My Soul” remind us of some of the biblical connotations of water: peace, sadness, blessing. “Come Thou Fount” especially speaks to water’s

connection with baptism, expressing visions of a fountain of goodness pouring out, unbounded and undeserved.

The African American spiritual “Take Me to the Water” gets more to the point of it all, reminding the listener what this all means: that we are reconciled to Jesus through the grace of God. The river in this case represents blessing, but even more so, it is a bridge spanning the divide between God and humanity.

Not surprisingly, some songs of the past few decades also use the biblical theme of water, though they seem to extend the theme more than their traditional counterparts.

In the mid-1990s, “Flood” by Christian band Jars of Clay received much attention, getting solid play on both Christian and Top 40 radio stations. The popularity of “Flood” partly had to do with how it referenced biblical stories of water and related them with everyday personal struggles. The song references the story of Noah:

*My world is a flood  
Slowly I become  
One with the mud  
But if I can't swim after 40 days  
And my mind is crushed  
By the crashing waves  
Lift me up*

It alludes to Jesus calming the storm:

*Calm the storms that drench my eyes  
And dry the streams still flowing  
Casting down all waves of sin  
And guilt that overthrow me*

It weaves in a personal narrative of being lost in the storms of life—so lost that the only hope of survival is Jesus. Even as a teenager I recognized the uniqueness of the song, in part because of its honest lyrical themes. Most of the Christian music I knew up to that point dealt only with the positive. Then along came “Flood,” which states clearly that life is full of challenges and gives permission to bring the very depths of our lives to God, our only hope.

Another water-themed 1995 release is “Waterfalls,” the iconic hit from the

**Water imagery  
in the Christian  
faith gives us a  
picture of our  
uncertain lives  
within God's  
sweet grace.**

rhythm and blues group TLC. This song tackles heavy challenges such as drug use and the HIV epidemic. Like “Flood,” “Waterfalls” uses water as a metaphor for potential danger, but also for blessing. This most pointedly happens in Lisa “Left Eye” Lopez’s mid-song rap, which begins:

*I seen rainbow yesterday  
But too many storms have  
come and gone  
Leavin' a trace of not one  
God-given ray*

Storms and challenges, promises and blessings—“Waterfalls” explores the complexity of life through these biblical themes.

Decades later, popular music is still exploring these themes.

Take, for instance, a song like “Oceans,” from Jay-Z’s 2013 album *Magna Carta Holy Grail*. Water is a blessing for some but a horror for others in the heartbreaking stories of the African slave trade Jay-Z describes. Water and storms are a metaphor for individual and collective pain.

The Christian megagroup Hillsong United also has a song titled “Oceans.” Using the story of Peter walking on water but eventually sinking, it speaks to the personal storms that can challenge our faith.

Surprisingly, few modern Christian songs use the theme of baptism, though many songs outside traditionally Christian genres do. One example is country singer Carrie Underwood’s 2015 hit “Something in the Water.” Underwood understands the power of baptism in the life of a new believer.

*Couldn't fight back the tears so I fell  
on my knees  
Saying, "God, if you're there, come  
and rescue me."  
Felt love pouring down from above  
Got washed in the water, washed  
in the blood*

Another modern song using the ancient themes of water and baptism is Leon Bridges’ 2015 song “River.” Its music and lyrics sound as if they come from an earlier era:

*Tip me in your smooth waters  
I go in  
As a man with many crimes  
Come up for air  
As my sins flow down the Jordan*

Here is a song about sin and repentance, pain and hope, faith and salvation. It builds upon the past while remaining modern and distinct.

Whether it’s rain and floods, storms and waves, the joy of an overflowing fountain or the promises of baptism, water imagery in the Christian faith gives us a picture of our uncertain lives within God’s sweet grace. Our music reflects this—not just the songs heard in our churches for decades, but also in the playlists of our kids and neighbors. While our culture continues to shift and evolve, it’s delightful to see new takes on old reflections, with both “sorrows like sea billows” and “smooth waters” still bubbling up. **B**



Matthew Cooke is the director of communications at Calvin Theological Seminary and a freelance writer who is particularly interested in music, religion, and education. He attends Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## BIG QUESTIONS

### Relationships

**In our house we fight about politics. My dad's side of the family is mostly Republican, but my mom's side is mostly Democrat. I'm a teenager who is sick of the fighting in our house, and I'm scared my parents might want to divorce. What can I do?**

The first thing you must understand is that you cannot resolve the conflicts within your parents' marriage that are highlighted by these political differences. You have a right to love both your parents, but you are not able to mediate or "fix" their marriage.

Think about yourself in relation to the three overlapping family systems you belong to. System one, your parents' marriage, predates you. As such, only your parents can be in charge of finding solutions to their marital difficulties. System two includes you, your siblings, and your parents, and as executives of the family, your parents continue to be co-responsible for the well-being of their children, even if they were divorced. System three includes all the extended family members—aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

By all means, if you are interested in politics, talk with your siblings or your cousins—the family system where you are on equal footing—and try to promote respectful and informed dialogue. Resolve not to demonize those of your siblings or cousins who have a different view of the political landscape from yours.



Illustration for The Banner by Laurie Sienkowski

Above all, remember that "principalities and powers" are under the lordship of Jesus Christ, our "King of kings." Be aware that you, if you identify as Christian, are called to belong first of all to a kingdom that transcends all political ideologies and all family systems. Keep this kingdom of peace and reconciliation of opposites in your heart, even during times of political or family unrest.

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

### Faith Formation

**Many families in our church are hyperbusy and rarely have time for family devotions. How can our church encourage families to build good practices for faith to grow?**

There are a lot of families that struggle to find time to be together. Reasons for this busyness vary from family to family, but one reason is we don't want to miss out on anything. There are too many good options available to all of us. And, let's face it, some of the things we're flying off to are really good things: church meetings, volunteer opportunities, night classes, even prayer groups or Bible studies. They're good things, but they all take time, and that is what is often driving this sense of extreme busyness.

The first thing your church can do is to encourage these families to attend church whenever they can. For some families that is also a challenge (for a variety of reasons), but we need to make them feel welcome and part of the group whenever they do come. The

more we miss worship, the easier it is to feel disconnected from the community and from God.

We also want to give parents resources to help them build faith practices into the "in-between times" of their lives. Perhaps they can have faith conversations in the car when they're driving to sports practice. One mother has the small book *Everyday Faith* in her car. She hands it to one of the kids and asks them to read one of the questions in it. That's what they talk about as they drive 20 minutes to school.

Invest in Bible story books and begin to make those stories part of your lives. Read Bible stories at mealtimes, bedtimes, or first thing in the morning, and then talk about them. Use devotional books like *Teach Us to Pray* and include some of the rituals suggested there.

Finally, spend some time listening to families about why they're so busy. Are they afraid of missing out on something? Are they letting urgent things push out important things? Don't be judgmental in these conversations. It could be that they're busy due to things outside of their control, such as finances or caring for an aged family member. Perhaps your church members could step up and help them.

There is no easy answer to this question, but encouraging families to be deliberate and intentional about their faith practices is a great way to start.

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****What are the dangers of being a church that focuses on attracting people?**

One of the reasons the “attractional church model” is being questioned today is the realization that it often produces consumers of religious goods and services more than it makes disciples. Participants can come to church, be uplifted and inspired, greet some like-minded people, and then go home having “consumed” their spiritual “product” for the week. The call to love our neighbors, to bear witness, and to disciple and be discipled is perceived as optional, periphery, or a voluntary add-on to already busy lives. Faith formation, in other words, is not considered integral to being a Christian.

A second danger of the attractional church model is its understanding of church “success.” It’s about getting more people in the pews and more money to pay the bills and run the programs. But what if being church is more about discovering and joining the Spirit in God’s mission right where we live? Congregations seeking to move away from an attractional model are asking different questions. Instead of trying to get more people to come to the worship gathering, they are wondering about how they can *be* the church—talking with neighbors, reflecting on how well they are listening, and responding to the Spirit at work ahead of them in their neighborhoods.

A third concern about the attractional paradigm is the individualistic approach to life and faith that it engenders. In this model, church is about *me*: *my* needs, *my* relationship with Jesus, *my* comfort. But the church is the only kind of organization that does not

exist for the sake of its members! The church, as theologian Craig Van Gelder asserts in his book *The Essence of the Church*, is called, made, and sent to be “God’s personal presence in the world through the Spirit.” We are blessed to be blessings—salt and light! The question, then, is not how to attract more people to church, but how to go and be the church in our contexts today.

Karen Wilk is a Go Local catalyzer with Resonate Global Mission and Forge Canada. She is a pastor of Neighborhood Life (a home church movement) in Edmonton, Alta., where she also enjoys being a wife, mom, and neighbor.

**Ethics****If a couple takes issue with state marriage and decides to privately commit to each other forever with the Lord as their witness, should the church recognize their marriage?**

The Christian Reformed Church’s official position on marriage is that it is “an institution created by God. It is a covenant relationship established by mutual vows between a man and a woman united by God. Permanent unity in marriage is possible in Christ and is demanded of Christ’s disciples who are married.” This definition provides clues to an answer to our question.

To begin with, there seem to be only three persons absolutely necessary to make a marriage a Christian marriage: the man, the woman, and God, who recognizes the marriage or not. This suggests that the state, parents, and the church are nonessential to a marriage becoming a Christian marriage.

I say this, however, with a word of caution: Some may confuse what is

“good” with what is “better”—that is, while a young couple pledging themselves to each other forever under God may be married in a minimal sense, the goodness obtained by the blessing of the church is far from nothing.

What is the value of the church’s recognition of marriage? People in love naturally want to bind themselves to each other with promises of “forever.” But this is where the church comes in. It tries to make sure the couple in love really understand what they are doing. The church advises the couple on the nature of marriage and promise-making, and it helps to hold the couple accountable. This is partly why marriage in the church is a very good thing, even if not necessary in all cases of marriage (e.g., Adam and Eve, Isaac and Rebekah, and others). The church will help the couple, when their emotions cool, to remember the seriousness of their promises.

Should the church recognize individual promises of marriage between a mature man and woman under God even if they didn’t seek state recognition? Probably yes, provided the church is convinced that the couple understood what they were doing.

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

*Editor’s Note: Synod 2019 agreed to “appoint a task force to study the advisability, legality, and morality of ecclesiastical (non-civil) marriage and to report to Synod 2021 or 2022.” (Acts of Synod 2019, p. 791)*



Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org) with “Big Questions” in the subject line.

# Stories of Renewal: Christian Reformed Churches Seeking Regeneration

## NEWS

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

**Follow *The Banner* on social media:**

- » [Facebook.com/crcbanner](https://www.facebook.com/crcbanner)
- » [Twitter @crcbanner](https://twitter.com/crcbanner)

This past fall in Ontario, two churches marked milestones on a journey of renewal. In September, The Junction Church in St. Thomas, Ont., hosted a service including a ribbon cutting to mark extensive renovations of the church’s building. In November, Water Street Church in Guelph, Ont., hosted a similar celebration to mark a renewal of their ministry and facilities.

A growing number of congregations are investing time, energy, and resources in church renewal, which can involve building renovations and always involves a new focus on ministry goals, church vision, and values—and a lot of prayer. Some churches begin the journey because they’ve seen a decline in membership or the number of people attending each Sunday. Others simply seek more definition in their purpose and vision, and still others join as part of a cohort or classis effort. There are various types of church renewal processes available to congregations, including several through the Center for Church Renewal and the newly formed Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal. *The Banner* talked to church members and pastors at three Christian Reformed churches to learn of their experiences.

**Wolf Creek Community Church** in Lacombe, Alta., worked through a renewal process last year after the church’s pastor moved to another congregation. Church leadership decided to take some time before seeking a new pastor to clarify and build on the values and goals of the church. “Refocus, Renew, Rejoice” became the theme and the name of the process, facilitated by Jack Tacoma, a church vision consultant.

A five-member revisioning team organized 40 days of prayer followed by a congregational retreat in February where members prayed, brainstormed possible goals, and defined the core values of the church. Seeking God was the constant



foundation. “There was ongoing work in small groups, prayer—regular prayer gatherings and prayer before and after the service at times,” said revisioning team member Ingrid Vander Meulen.

“It brought people together. It built community between generations; it fostered conversations and relationships that hadn’t formed before,” said church clerk Annette Zuidhof. Congregation members had a reaffirmed sense of the church’s goals and vision, which they embraced in a new way. The formal part of the process has wrapped up, said Zuidhof, but the work continues as the church begins implementing the proposals and goals agreed upon by the congregation. A pastor search committee formed in June.

For **Family of Faith Church** in Kennewick, Wash., the story is one of continuing changes. They started the Church Renewal Lab process as part of a cohort in Classis Columbia in spring 2018. Membership was down, said Pastor Thomas Kok, and leadership was seeking a way to bring new life to the church. The journey involved more change than



The Junction Church's pastor and chair of council are joined by the youngest, oldest, and some founding members to mark the dedication of their newly renovated church building.

they had anticipated: after a lot of prayer and conversation, they sold their church building to a larger congregation and moved worship services to a Boys & Girls Club in a low-income area of Kennewick.

"We were familiar with that neighborhood because (of) a ministry to immigrants and refugees that was born out of our church—the Family Learning Center," said Kok.

Led by a renewal team of 10, the congregation established a mission statement, values, and goals, all focusing on establishing relationships with people in the new neighborhood of the church. "We're still in what I'm calling our 'Year of Listening' as we try to discern where we might best serve Jesus in this place," said Kok, noting that he's seen, in the congregation and himself, renewed interest, passion, and willingness to serve.

### **Princeton Christian Reformed Church**

in Kentwood, Mich., worked through the Church Renewal Lab from 2016 to 2018. The church's pastor ended up accepting a call to another church quite early in the process. Like Wolf Creek, the church found the renewal experience helped the search process by clarifying the goals and values of the church, important in finding a good fit with a new pastor.

In any church, there is a diversity of opinions, and this can make planning and communication difficult. Change can be hard, and there are no quick fixes; the process of church renewal is often slow, involving a lot of prayer and discussion. A member of the renewal team at Princeton CRC, Harvey Koning, said they sent updates, hosted town hall meetings, and encouraged and led discussions at church and in small groups, sharing renewal-themed messages and Bible verses. All those helped, he said, "but the real embracing comes more from the work of the Spirit."

Eighteen months after the end of the formal renewal lab, Koning said he sees more signs of transformation than were present by the end of the two-year process. The congregation's mission statement is now prominent, both in big letters on the wall of the narthex and in the actions and attitudes of members. New and creative ministries have begun, the mortgage has been paid off completely, a Wednesday-night ministry has grown to include more fellowship, and an Alpha course (evangelistic study group designed to answer seekers' questions about the Christian faith) took place and was followed up with new studies. Church leaders have noticed a new focus on hospitality, outreach, and discipleship.

—Anita Brinkman

The total number of Christian Reformed churches working through a renewal process is hard to count because of the many different pathways.

Jack Tacoma, the consultant who worked with Wolf Creek, has led about 40 churches through his program. Eighty-one churches are currently in renewal processes with the Center for Church Renewal. Its pilot project in 2013 included 80 churches.

**For resources for your congregation,** visit [churchrenew.org](http://churchrenew.org) (Center for Church Renewal) or [reformedpartners.org](http://reformedpartners.org) (Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal).

# Faith and Immigration

## Campus Forum

At Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, about 100 people attended a panel discussion Nov. 12 called “Faith and Immigration: Getting Beyond the Rhetoric.”

The Evangelical Immigration Table, the National Immigration Forum, and the Christian Reformed Church’s Office of Social Justice were co-presenters.

“We believe that God calls us as his people to continue to seek the welfare of our communities,” said Mark DeYounge, Northwestern’s dean of Christian formation. “That includes seeking the common good for our neighbors on a personal level as well as on a systemic/macro level. Immigration right now is gridlocked and thus is deeply and negatively impacting our beloved friends, our neighbors, and our communities.”

Panelists responded to questions like “What can colleges do to help with immigration?” and “How do we move past the idea that immigrants are coming to steal our jobs?” Tim Breen, pastor of First Reformed Church in Orange City, and Martha Draayer, Northwestern’s Hispanic community liaison, moderated the panel. Melissa Stek, a justice mobilization specialist with the Office of Social Justice, and Pastor John Lee of Bethel CRC in Sioux Center participated as panelists, along with a police department’s public safety director, a city councilor, and a business leader.

Cory Van Sloten, pastor at Lebanon CRC in Sioux Center, said he attended the forum out of an interest in the intersection of faith and immigration, and he wanted “to be further informed about immigration from a Christian perspective that goes beyond the rhetoric of the political left and right and is grounded in God’s Word.”

Stek noted that the Office of Social Justice provides “resources to learn about the root causes of poverty, hunger, and oppression,”



Photo by Jason Lief

Melissa Stek (holding the microphone), a justice mobilization specialist with the CRC’s Office of Social Justice, participates in the Nov. 12 Faith and Immigration forum at Northwestern College.

and she encouraged people to “love their neighbor in tangible ways.” She shared a handout titled “Ten Ways Churches Can Welcome Immigrants” (available from Faith Formation Ministries).

Attendees were invited to sign their endorsement of the Evangelical Immigration Table’s stated principles, which call for policy that “respects the God-given dignity of every person; protects the unity of the immediate family; respects the rule of law; guarantees secure national borders; ensures fairness to taxpayers; and establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.”

## Christian Leader Advocacy

Christian Reformed Church Executive Director Steven Timmermans joined other denominational leaders and pastors in signing “The Evangelical Call for Restitution-Based Immigration Reform,” made public by way of a press release Nov. 6. It asks the United States government to act in ways guided by those principles.

The call advocates for a solution between what are often seen as two extremes:

mass deportation or wholesale amnesty. “We must develop a solution that fits the problem we have, solves it by upholding the rule of law, creates a process of restitution, and gives the possibility of integration so immigrants can fully participate in American life,” the letter says.

Timmermans is one of 10 denominational leaders to sign the statement. Others include Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention and Eddy Aleman, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

Staff in the CRC’s Office of Social Justice had recommended the endorsement after receiving an invitation from the Evangelical Immigration Table, noting that the request from EIT “aligned well with recommendations that synod adopted in 2010,” said Kris Van Engen, Congregational Justice Mobilizer for the Office of Social Justice and World Renew.

Those recommendations, arising from a report by the synodical committee to study the migration of workers, included prioritizing “advocacy strategies that will lead to immigration reform and the enactment of fair, just, and equitable laws regarding those without status in Canada and the United States.” (See *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 878.)

For the full statement, see [bit.ly/EITStatement](http://bit.ly/EITStatement).

—Kyle Hoogendoorn and Alissa Vernon



## Girls' Club Badge Promotes Support for Refugees



In Jarvis, Ont., the GEMS Girls' Club at Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church has made its own badge to explore issues of displacement and how to help support the resettlement of people fleeing persecution.

GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) are clubs for girls in first through eighth grades in churches throughout North America and around the world. At Ebenezer CRC, the club includes about 40 girls. In the past three years, 16 girls have completed the refugee badge, which was developed by GEMS counselor Rebecca Shortt. Shortt is also the chair of Refugees for Hope, a group of six local churches (including four other CRCs) helping to resettle refugees through Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.

Shortt noticed that by the time GEMS were in sixth or seventh grade, they had already completed many of the badges offered in the curriculum, limiting the opportunity to work on badges as a group. The refugee badge was created to be used by this age group and to provide an opportunity to discuss heavier content in a safe environment.

Badge work includes reviewing a memory verse (Prov. 31:8-9), the definition of a refugee, statistics, and refugees in the Bible. Then girls read and discuss stories from the book *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees* by

GEMS club members from Ebenezer CRC and their new friends enjoyed making pizza together at a local grocery store.

Deborah Ellis. Club members then choose an activity to do together to apply what they've learned.

The first year, the girls made signs and cards that were used at the airport to greet a refugee family. This year, the GEMS hosted a pizza party.

The pizza party involved Shortt's group, the fourth grade GEMS group, as well as two girls in fourth and sixth grade who recently came to Canada as refugees.

Kaitlyn, 12, said "going out and spending time with the refugees" was her favorite part and that other girls should do the badge because, "it helps them to learn more about refugees and sponsorship."

Shortt said she would be happy to share her resources with other clubs. She recently shared her material with the GEMS head office as well.

—Kristen Parker

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Paul William Brink*

1942-2019

A gentle soul who loved the church and God's Word, Paul Brink died Sept. 17 at age 76 from complications of Alzheimer's disease. He is remembered as a wise and compassionate pastor and a thoughtful preacher with a warm presence and a winsome way with words.

Brink graduated from Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, and Princeton Seminary. He was ordained in 1968. Driven by a desire for racial justice, he began serving at the intentionally diverse urban community at Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He then pastored Terre Haute (Ind.) CRC. The longest years of his ministry (1980-1995) were at Rochester CRC in Penfield, N.Y., where he pastored the congregation through huge changes—including rebuilding in a new location after a fire—with grace, patience, and wisdom. He went on to serve Ann Arbor (Mich.) CRC, then Harderwyk Ministries in Holland, Mich., where he loved visiting in hospitals and with seniors. He retired in 2008.

Brink vividly sensed the wonder and power of God in nature. He delighted in birds, trees, and the changing of seasons.

He will be missed by Karen, his wife of 54 years; his four children; and eight grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Young Adult Discipleship: Reframing Expectations

Photo by Tyler Triemstra



Interested in figuring out how to get young adults to church? Start by listening to them. That's the advice of four leaders from Encounter Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Kentwood, Mich., who spent a year writing curriculum geared toward discipling this age group. Funded in part by a grant from the Fuller Youth Institute, Paula Englin, Britten Docter, Robin Bupp, and Justin Ellison developed [RE]FRAME, a ministry combining nine weeks of personal stories, small group discussion, and responsive "dares."

[RE]FRAME took place Sept. 25-Nov. 20, featured five speakers from the Grand Rapids community, including two from within the Encounter congregation, and had 115 participants between the ages of 23 and 29.

Having listened to the stories of young adults, the planning team found there was a great sense of unsettledness, particularly around identity, belonging, and purpose. Englin said the compiled stories revealed two narratives: a "flawed narrative—"I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing with my life or doing it with the right people. If I work hard enough I can get to where I need to be"—and a Jesus-centered narrative: "God has placed me in my current circumstances to love and serve those around me."

Young adults in Encounter Church's [RE] FRAME ministry engage in Table Talks.

[RE]FRAME's purpose, she said, is to bridge those two narratives, to have young adults consider what it looks like to work as a people who are called into the "dailiness" of life.

Speaker topics included hopes, dreams, and expectations; gifts and passion; calling; people; and work. Sessions included a meal and "Table Talk" discussions to reflect with a group facilitator. Between sessions, participants worked through a portfolio on the same topics.

Completing dares—actions related to the topic that participants fulfilled between sessions—were a final component of the program.

All the components together allowed young adults to stop and think—a practice many feel they don't have time for. Pastor Dirk vanEyck, who volunteered as one of the Table Talk leaders, said one participant told him that he feels like he's "flying through life all the time" and that [RE]FRAME gave him a chance to slow down.

—Callie Feyen

## Classis Watch: Late 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 Bailey Sarver, Brad Stolman, Jon Bosma, J.D.C.\*, Janet Ryzebol, Seth Atsma, Bill Whitt, Aaron Mamuyac, Garret Saul, Noah Kruis, Jaleesa Stanford, Luke\*, Shaun Jung, Chris Ganski, Steven Berkenpas, Jason Crossen, Hilary Smith, Ryan Schreiber, Israel Alvarado, and Loretta Stadt (Church Order Articles 6 and 10).

*\*Synod 2019 allowed four candidates to be known only by their initials or first names 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. Sea Ho and Rev. Phillip Lee (Church Order Art. 8).

**Ministers loaned:** Rev. John Kim to Hebron Presbyterian Church, Prospect Heights, Ill.; Rev. Yun Jin Kim to Salinas (Calif.) Presbyterian Church (PCA). Rev. Joe Nasyvitis to First Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Starkville, Miss. (Church Order Art. 13b).

**Ministers released from a congregation:** Rev. Allen Kleine Deters from The Bridge (Niagara Falls, Ont.) (Church Order Art. 17a).

**Ministers granted emeritus status (retired):** Revs. Tom Vos, Fred Koning, David Kuiper, Yi Ming Kao, John Westfall, and Bert Vanderbeek (Church Order Art. 18).

## 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).*

Comunidad Cristiana Internacional Church (Wyoming, Mich.) and Bridge Church (Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) were declared **emerging**.

Garden of Grace (Lynnwood, Wash.), Harbor Church (Seattle, Wash.), and Westside Community (Bradford, Ont.) were **closed**.

East Friesland Covenant Church (formerly named First CRC), Randolph, Wisc., **disaffiliated from the CRC**. Classis Wisconsin also **disavowed** any official association with that congregation's leader, Stephen Robbins, noting that his leadership, his direction, and his views do not reflect those of the Christian Reformed Church.

Anchor of Hope CRC (Silverdale, Wash.) and Newman CRC (Hesperia, Mich.) **disaffiliated from the CRC**.

## 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: honorably released, released, dismissed, or in the status of one deposed (Church Order Art. 14).*

Jacob Meadows was **released**.

—Gayla R. Postma, Banner news editor

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Gordon Lee Van Enk*

1940–2019

Gordon Van Enk served in parish ministry for 25 years. His hope to also serve 25 years as a hospice chaplain was cut short by ten months when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Treatment extended his life for two years and allowed him to enjoy his hobbies. He died Oct. 12. "He truly loved people," said Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Director Sarah Roelofs. "It was evident in his warm and humble presence. He had a servant's heart."

Ordained in 1966, Van Enk went on to pastor Atwood (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church; Crossroads CRC, Madison, Wisc.; and Crenshaw CRC, Los Angeles, Calif. After a year of clinical pastoral education at UCLA he began serving at VITAS hospice in Torrance, Calif.

A gentle, kind, and patient man, Van Enk was concerned about gender, racial, and economic inequality, climate change, and lack of respect for LGBTQ persons. He loved gardening and reading, especially in the areas of history, astronomy, and politics. He read in Latin and Hebrew until the day he died. He treasured good relationships with family and friends.

Van Enk is survived by Barbara, his wife of 54 years; five children; and seven grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Russell  
Van Antwerpen*

1954–2019

Russ Van Antwerpen, a beloved chaplain with a ready smile, died Oct. 3 following a brain aneurysm. He was 65.

During seminary Russ increasingly felt called to cross-cultural ministry. An early internship at a small church in Chicago taught him about the trauma of racism and poverty. He also learned it's not always what you say but how you listen that brings comfort.

After ordination, Russ pastored the American Indian Chapel in Chicago. He and his wife then spent nine years in the Philippines with Christian Reformed World Missions (now Resonate Global Mission). He went on to serve Faith Community Church in Zillah, Wash., before turning to chaplaincy. After two years of clinical pastoral education, he became a chaplain at Hamot Hospital in Erie, Penn., then at the continuing care retirement community of Southampton Estates outside Philadelphia. He served and loved those residents for 10 years, and they loved him.

Russ played the trombone, enjoyed biking the Delaware River trails with his wife, and loved art projects.

He is mourned by his wife, Pat; two children; their spouses; and two grandchildren. Russ gave many a new life through organ donation.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## News Digest



Members of Classis Georgetown serve as volunteer construction workers to complete a Jenison, Mich., home.

Seventeen **congregations of the Christian Reformed Church's Classis Georgetown** recently **partnered with Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity to build a Habitat home in Jenison, Mich.** (A classis is a regional group of churches.) "It took about a year to get rolling, then the build took another year, and we were finished this year in August," classis coordinator Jim Roskam said. About 150 volunteers participated in funding and building the home, raising \$103,000 toward the project.

**Brothers & Sisters Homes**, supportive residences in Holland Mich., for men and women with intellectual disabilities, **marks its 40th anniversary in 2020.** Owned and operated by the Holland Deacons' Conference, the homes partner in ministry with several Christian Reformed congregations. Catherine Brink, a member of Pillar Church, a jointly affiliated Christian Reformed and Reformed Church of American congregation, has led a weekly Bible study at Sisters Home 1 for the past two years. "I enjoy preparing for the study, hearing about what is going on for each person, and gaining new insights," she said. "Sometimes I go to the study worn out from work, but every time, my energy is renewed."

More than 100 people attended a Sept. 18 workshop at **Bethel Christian Reformed Church** in Listowel, Ont., to discuss methods to help people make a way out of poverty. The **Bridges Out of Poverty workshop** was initiated by a group of community workers that included Bethel CRC member Gertie Heimpel, who took the idea to the North Perth Chamber of Commerce. Heimpel is dedicated to issues of food and housing insecurity and sees opportunities to speak about these issues as important community outreach for the church.

—Banner correspondents

READ MORE ONLINE

## Naschitti CRC Returns to Worship in Restored Sanctuary



Photo by Vibeka Mitchell

Naschitti CRC invited surrounding churches and people around the community to a reopening celebration, Nov. 17.

The congregation of Naschitti (N.M.) Christian Reformed Church was able to return to worship in their sanctuary in November after completing repairs and restoration from smoke and fire damage incurred in the summer. (See "Fire Damage, Uncertainty in Days Following Arson," Oct. 2019.)

"We give all thanks to the Lord," Vibeka Mitchell wrote in a Nov. 18 email update to CRC ministries. "He sent many volunteers and resources to our church to rebuild. We left it all in his hands and the Lord provided. God is good."

Mitchell lives in Albuquerque, N.M., where she attends Chelwood CRC. She grew up in Naschitti CRC and still considers it home. Of the fires, deemed to be arson, she said, "This event was hard for me to witness, but seeing the Lord's blessing come to life in our home church shows he is alive."

The congregation hosted its first service in the restored sanctuary Nov. 17. A team of volunteers with World Renew's Disaster Response Services had spent two weeks working alongside congregation members to replace drywall panels in the sanctuary ceiling; install new flooring, lights and fans; and repaint not only the sanctuary but the classrooms, bathrooms, and kitchen as well.

In her update Mitchell also asked that CRC members "continue to pray for the church in Naschitti as they still have to find funds to remove three fire-damaged buildings on church grounds."

Earlier inspections of the three burned-out buildings uncovered the presence of asbestos, so care must be taken in demolition and removal. At the time of writing, the church was waiting for a response from the local tribal government to see if they might contribute to the removal, as the damaged sites pose a community risk. Jerome Sandoval, an elder at Naschitti CRC, said World Renew is also continuing to work with the congregation. He continues to trust God, saying "everything has fallen into place."

—Alissa Vernon



DwellCurriculum.org



*Dwell* curriculum awakens kids' imaginations to the ongoing story of God that starts in the pages of Scripture and continues in our lives today. Kids, young teens, and their leaders grow in faith as they explore each story and retell it together. At the middle school level, young teens discover how Reformed/Presbyterian doctrine grows out of the narrative of Scripture.

With *Dwell*, kids do more than hear a story. They experience it. Take-home pieces and lesson elements are designed to stick with kids throughout the week. Each level of *Dwell* has a name that reflects the experience.

- Play (Preschool)
- Imagine (K-1st Grades)
- Wonder (2nd-3rd Grades)
- Marvel (4th-5th Grades)
- Dive (6th-8th Grades)

Children's resources include take-home cards, Show and Share papers, Storymarks, and Magazines.

Each leader guide contains 6 session plans that include "Reflections" (short devotionals for leaders), teaching tips, song lyrics, and printable pages.



# **Dear Church: A Letter from Young People**

# What Do Young People Want Members of the Christian Reformed Church to Know?

By Paola Fuentes Gleghorn and Matt Kucinski

**C**hurch leaders often discuss young people and how to get them to hold onto their faith and stay in church. But how often do we take time to listen to what young adults have to say?

The Christian Reformed Church in North America takes this question seriously. Starting in 2009, youth observers aged 18-26 were invited to attend synod. In 2010, this idea was upgraded. The young adults who attend are now known as “young adult representatives” and have the privilege of the floor during synodical debates. Every year, they provide valuable insight into synodical discussions.

The denomination has tried other initiatives related to youth and young adults. In 2011, the CRCNA launched a Young Adult Leadership Taskforce; in 2013, the Engage Young Adult Conference convened in California; in 2017, Ron DeVries was hired by Faith Formation Ministries as a Youth Ministry Catalyzer; and there are now Youth Ministry Champions in 24 classes (regional groups of churches).

Building on this momentum, the CRCNA asked six young people what they want the church to know about themselves and their peers.

Some of these young people are Canadian; some are American. Some have been engaged in their churches for a long time. Others left the church after painful experiences and are just starting to find Christian community again. Some attend Christian universities. Others are students on secular campuses. Together, we hope they will provide a glimpse of the hopes and messages young people have for the church.

## Be Intentional About Building Community

Isaac Veldhuis is studying engineering at the University of Waterloo in Ontario. He’s been inspired by being a part of a local church, which he refers to as a community of believers who are connected to one another.

“It has given me a space and a community who is willing to support my strengths and passions in the church,” Veldhuis said.

But it’s about way more than gathering once a week for a worship service. “I don’t want to just attend,” Veldhuis said. “I want to live life richly with others. I want to be able to invest.”

He sees this playing out throughout the week as he lives in an intentional Christian community on campus. Veldhuis believes young people like himself are looking for

congregations who are open to mutual learning, who are cultivating faith formation, and who allow young people to contribute to and receive from the community.

## Welcome Full Participation in the Church, Encourage Lament

Nate LeFebre is studying psychology and neuroscience at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich. He credits the church with helping him discover his gifts in music.

“Shortly after I started to learn guitar, my church’s worship pastor took me under his wing and got me involved in worship. ... His willingness to give (me) a meaningful role in worship gave me confidence in my gifts and shaped my enthusiasm for worship,” LeFebre said.

He continues to use that gift in the church. If he had one message to give the church, it would be to engage with young people even more. “Too often I feel like there is a perception among young people that ‘real’ church is what the older adults do, and young people are just along for the ride. Instead, involving young people in ‘real’ church—the difficult conversations, worship planning, missions, budget, etc.—empowers young people to engage in the life of the church.”

LeFebre also sees an opportunity for churches to make more room for lament. “Making space in worship to cry out against injustice and brokenness, to lament our struggles and burdens, encourages a more embodied and honest worship,” he explained.

## Be Inclusive, Offer Equal Membership

John\* is a 24-year-old graduate of Azusa Pacific University who is still trying to find that “perfect” job. He feels at home at Sojourn Grace Collective, a progressive nondenominational church in Pacific Beach, Calif., but his path to Sojourn included rejection from a few Protestant Christian communities.

This journey has made him reluctant to call his new home a ‘church.’ He prefers the term ‘community.’ “My community has inspired me with their commitment for social justice awareness and advocacy in the areas of immigration, racism, LGBT issues and progressive theology,” he said.

It’s his community’s inclusivity of young people and marginalized groups that drew him back to church. “Young adults are treated as mature adults by leadership, not as naive community members, and there are plenty of discussion groups where young adults are included for input. Their overall vibe is for equal treatment regardless of how much life experience one has,” he explained.

**Extend Hospitality, Live Your Values**

Jane\*, a 24-year-old with a degree in biotechnology from a Christian university, said she's never been inspired by a church. Instead, she has been "way more inspired by individual Christians who have modeled faithful living."

Jane pointed out that if church leaders want to engage her and her peers in the life of the church, they should "design an environment that is welcoming and accepting." She said it doesn't need to necessarily be filled with people her age, but it must have a hospitable feel.

She noted that churches with ethnic diversity in their membership tend to be better at enfolding new people. "I think it's because they know what it feels like to be ostracized." She also said it's important that the church "find true values that it stands by and never compromise on those values."

**Engage Difficult Issues**

Hayley Topp is pursuing a degree in early childhood studies at the University of Guelph-Humber in Toronto, Ont. She said the pastoral staff at her church, Community Kitchener CRC, are fantastic because "they allow me to have doubts and a sense of knowing that I don't have to be perfect to be accepted."

She appreciates her church's willingness to engage the difficult issues. "About a year or so ago, my church did the Blanket Exercise (an interactive tool that walks participants through the history of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada). There were a variety of people and they held different viewpoints, yet I was happy to see people share and grow and learn, even in a difficult theme." (The blanket exercise was created by KAIROS Canada and is facilitated by the CRC Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee.)

Topp's message to her church is to continue to press into these challenging conversations. "Find a way to have open conversations," she said. "We need an understanding of all the issues, from all perspectives." She added that churches should also give young people a voice: "View us not as people with limited life experience, but as someone with a different life experience."

**Be Biblically Rooted, Have Tough Conversations, Celebrate the Holy Spirit**

Lauren Holwerda is studying English education and music at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich. She credits her church and her elementary school for helping her see the importance of being biblically rooted, and she said this has helped her to discern the messages of church and culture today.

She sees great opportunity for the church to continue to engage young people by "providing a space to talk openly about difficult questions."

"In a time when there is much freedom to 'live your truth' and 'you do you,'" Holwerda said, "the need for conversations

about real truth is imperative, specifically surrounding homosexuality, money, and around popular culture in regard to music and art. I think many young people aren't aware of the CRC's stance on these issues or how to approach them wisely in their contemporary shades."

Holwerda also said that "despite the life-bringing traditions and liturgies of the CRC, I think the CRC sometimes fails to celebrate the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Dependence on the Holy Spirit opens doors for rich community, opportunities to serve in ways we're not aware of on our own, and a greater magnification of God's glory as he works among us."

**So Now What?**

Mary Hulst is the Calvin University chaplain. At Inspire 2019, a conference for ministry leaders and volunteers in Windsor, Ont., Hulst gave a plenary talk\*\* about young adults that might provide congregations with some suggestions for moving forward:

Our younger leaders are asking us to trust them: trust them to lead, trust them to plan worship, trust them with hard conversation, trust them with the budget, trust them to love the church as much as their elders do. What we hear in their writing is not a rejection of the church, but a longing for the church to be the church: to welcome the outcast, to draw us deep into Scripture, to call us to live differently with our money, sex, power, and time than the culture asks of us. Our young leaders are hungry for the church to be more.

This is inspiring! They actually believe that the church of Jesus Christ *can* do these things, and our young leaders *want* these things. They want communities of faith that challenge them, and encourage them, and show them what it really looks like to follow Jesus. They want to move with us toward the hardest conversations about race, sexuality, popular culture, immigration, politics, or poverty, but not in the way they hear and see in the media. They want to engage in these conversations as followers of Jesus Christ.

Have you had congregational conversations about these topics in ways that foster community and appreciate difference? Is the preaching in your church explicitly biblical, theologically Reformed, and engaging with culture? How is your local congregation engaging the passions of young leaders? Is anyone under the age of 40 on the elder team? Are those who lead worship all over the age of 18? Could your classis begin a young adult, post-college shared ministry that creates space for them to ask the hard questions, receive wise counsel, and love Jesus more?

Our young leaders are crying out for more. It's time for us to listen. And change. **B**

\*Not their real names

\*\*Find Mary Hulst's plenary talk at [network.crcna.org/crcna-and-synod/inspire-2019-audio-recordings](http://network.crcna.org/crcna-and-synod/inspire-2019-audio-recordings).



# 10 Years of Networking for Ministry

**“HOW ABOUT WE POST** that question on The Network?”

This is what Marilyn VanOostrum suggested to her husband, a deacon, after a council meeting.

The deacons had been asked to consider a new name for the benevolence ministry. There was concern that the term “benevolence” might not make sense to younger members or others in the community.

So when the question came up, VanOostrum thought of The Network ([crcna.org/Network](http://crcna.org/Network)). She became aware of the site through the Christian Reformed Church’s Safe Church Ministry and knew it was a gathering place for people across the denomination—a place to ask ministry questions and compare notes with people in other churches, a place where anyone could post.

After posting the question “What Do You Call Your Benevolence Ministry?”, VanOostrum received several responses. “We had a great experience using The Network,” she said, “and the responses we received were very helpful and prompted rich discussion among the deacons.”

Another Network user, Rachael Klein, checks the site regularly to see what other churches are doing to glean ideas for her own congregation, Sussex (N.J.) CRC. When that church began to explore the idea of printing its own photo directory, Klein turned to The Network.

After posting her question, Klein received feedback from peers that “helped reinforce the direction we were thinking of going and gave us really good suggestions about how to do it.”



These practical ministry questions are what makes The Network special. Since the site launched in February 2010, its value has always come from the participation of the community. By connecting pastors, deacons, Sunday school teachers, musicians, and many others, we learn with—and from—each other.


Now, 10 years later, the site has over 60 different ministry topics that reflect the wide variety of roles and passions of God’s people. Users serve as elders, nursery coordinators, and small group leaders. They are planting churches, leading worship, and serving coffee.

As they serve, they are asking questions, discovering great tools, and learning, thanks to the Network. The impact of this sharing can be seen in part in the numbers:

» Page views average over 85,000 per month and are still growing.

» Nearly 600 ministry questions have been posted (over 95% with responses).

» Dozens of new blogs, resources, and church positions are added each week.

These numbers tell the story of a community that is active and growing. They are stories of individuals but also of the whole. When we step back, these questions, stories, and resources come together to reflect a vibrant tapestry of ministry in churches across our denomination. 

—Staci DeVries,  
Content and Community Manager  
for The Network

**The View from Here**

## What Do They See?

**SOME PEOPLE CALL** it emotional intelligence. Others call it social perception. Whatever you call it, truly understanding other people is a multidimensional task.

In my role within the Christian Reformed Church, I'm often part of conversations that center around how older generations of church leaders can better listen to young people in order to keep them in our churches. I wonder, though, if a first step to this relationship ought to be trying to see ourselves as young people see us.

If you are a younger person, I suspect you've spent some time thinking about what older generations think of you. We've all heard stereotypes about Millennials and Gen Zers. You might disagree that these stereotypes hold true for you as an individual, but you probably know they exist.

I wonder, though, if those of us in the middle of the family years, those who have become empty-nesters, or those well into their retirement years have spent any time thinking about this same thing. Have we ever wondered what younger generations think about us? What do they think we view as important? What do they hear us say?

Calvin University chaplain Pastor Mary Hulst shared a few of these insights with those who attended Inspire 2019 in Windsor, Ont., in August. Many young adults, she said, are acutely aware about issues related to the environment. They are willing to consume less, live in tiny homes, and spend more for products from socially and environmentally

Have we ever  
wondered  
what younger  
generations  
think about us?

What do they  
think we view  
as important?

What do they  
hear us say?

responsible companies because they believe their lives should live out the values they have been taught about Christian stewardship.

Yet these same young adults rarely hear sermons about caring for the environment preached from the pulpit. They see congregations using disposable coffee cups for their fellowship times, and they witness older generations seeming to consume without thought about the environmental impact. What do you think this communicates about our commitment to Christian stewardship?

Similarly, Hulst challenged older generations to think about how we talk and act around issues of sex, politics, race, and justice. In some cases we don't talk about these things at all. That leaves young people to try to figure things out for themselves from the social norms around them.

When we do talk about these issues, we often proclaim from a place of certainty, as if we have everything figured out. Yet our actions don't always match what we have stated. We might say, for example, that we value diversity and that all people are God's children, yet the ranks of our elders and the people in our pews do not reflect the diversity that young people see in their schools, work, or community.

We teach sexual purity, yet we don't talk about how to deal with singleness in your 20s or 30s. We don't offer prayers of confession for those who have looked at online pornography, and we don't talk about how to respond to the LGBTQ members in our midst. What does this communicate about our values and our relevance in today's society?

There are many other examples I could share. The point is this: before we can seek to hear what young people and young adults in church have to say, we need to get in their shoes and see what they see. I suspect this will help us all shift from places of certainty and polarization to places where we can ponder and work together as we seek God's kingdom.



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](http://TheBanner.org).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean)에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).

# Chinese Christians Share Faith Stories Across Generations

**EVERY YEAR**, the already-crowded subway stations, buses, and airports across China become even more bustling. Millions of people are traveling home for Chinese New Year celebrations.

In 2018, Back to God Ministries International's Chinese ministry team realized this time of family celebration provided an opportunity for Christians to talk about their faith with other generations.

Using WeChat, the most popular social network in China, the ministry team challenged young people to ask their Christian parents or loved ones to share their testimonies and submit a written version to the ministry team. The best essays would be published in a new book of testimonies to encourage Chinese-speaking Christians.

Li was one of almost 150 people to submit a story after the New Year celebration. Fittingly, the story she shared of her mother's and grandmother's faith took place on a previous holiday break.

## Li's Story

In her university days, Li remembers, she felt more anxious than excited when she traveled home for the holidays. The arguments between her mother and grandmother made her dread going home.

"Growing up, there were major fights every week and little ones every day," Li says.

The quarreling began when Li's mother decided to explore the Christian faith.

Li's grandmother made it clear she did not want anyone in the family going to church.



"I think that what Jesus has done among later generations of believers is impossible to declare one by one. My mother's story is one of them," Li says.

"Instead," Li says, "we would gather in my parents' room to sing, pray, and share those things in our lives that deserved giving thanks for."

## A Welcome Surprise

But when Li walked through the door at the start of her holiday break one year, she almost couldn't believe her eyes. She saw her mother and grandmother joking and laughing together.

Li's mother shared that she had chosen to put her faith into action, deciding to show love and forgiveness toward Li's grandmother instead of arguing about faith. These actions didn't just encourage and surprise Li; they softened her grandmother's heart as well.

"For the first time, I really understood what it meant for a family to be happy," Li says.

During that break, Li saw more changes in her family. Where there had been abuse and attacks there was now love and forgiveness.

"Not long after returning to school that year, my mother called me on the phone and told me that grandmother had also believed in the Lord," Li says.

Li's story won second prize in BTGMI's essay competition. Pray that her published story will encourage others to talk about their faith stories with other generations—especially during Chinese New Year, which this year will be celebrated Jan. 25.

The book of testimonies, titled *In Every Season*, will be published in Chinese and will be available by the end of 2019 through [BackToGod.net/ChineseBooks](http://BackToGod.net/ChineseBooks).

— By Brian Clark,  
Back to God Ministries International

## Young Adults Explore Their Callings in Central America

### JAKE BAKKER AND JEISON RODRIGUEZ

graduated from universities in two different countries, but they both had questions about what God was calling them to do and what role faith could play in their daily lives.

They found a way to explore their callings through Resonate Global Mission's Cohort in Central America, a yearlong experience for young adults from Central America and North America to serve in a local grassroots ministry, live in community, and engage in deep spiritual formation.

#### Transformation

Graduating from Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., with a business degree, Bakker wondered how he could pair his business skills with international development. He also wondered what role his faith should play in his career.

"It was really important for me coming out of (university) to understand how my faith connects with what I do," Bakker said.

He joined Resonate's Cohort in Central America, where he lived and served with people from across Latin America, including several refugee families, at Resonate partner Casa Adobe. He also volunteered at a school for teenage boys, many of whom are part of a foster care system, live in poverty, shoulder family strife, and struggle with behavioral problems.

"I think I've seen transformation, but I've been transformed the most," Bakker said. "I was changed a lot by being in another country, and the people I lived and worked with shaped me profoundly."

Through Bakker's experience in Cohort, God called him to serve in Costa Rica



Jeison Rodriguez and Jake Bakker explored their calling through Resonate Global Mission's Cohort in Central America.

for another year. He'll be returning as a Resonate missionary working at Casa Adobe, focusing specifically on starting youth programs in the community to prevent violence and connecting local churches with refugees.

He said the Cohort not only showed him what he wanted to do in life, but how to do it. "Vocation is about what you do and who you are," he said.

#### Rediscovery

"(Cohort) was like rediscovering my identity and my faith," said Jeison Rodriguez—"rediscovering who I am (and) what I'm doing in this time of life."

Rodriguez joined Cohort after graduating from Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica with a degree in economics. As he searched for finance jobs, he had a lot of questions about the role faith played in his profession. He said many people in Costa Rica view faith and work separately. "I wanted something more," said Rodriguez—"to have an experience with people in the communities."

Rodriguez served alongside and roomed with Bakker at Casa Adobe. He also served at his alma mater. Through Cohort, he learned how to share the gospel in a new way. He became friends with someone by teaching a guitar class and having conversations about faith with him.

"I don't want to see him ... as an object that needs to be evangelized, but instead as a friend," Rodriguez said. "I'm very happy to know (him), and I pray for him and his relationship with God."

He's not sure what his career will look like after Cohort, but he said the past year has been a time to discover new gifts and passions. Rodriguez knows he wants to continue sharing the gospel in Central America and living incarnationally, he said, "just as Jesus came to our world and walked among people."

—By Cassie Westrate,  
Resonate Global Mission

## The Path of Reconciliation

**PASTOR TALIA** (not her real name) was never a likely candidate for ministry.

As a young woman in Lebanon, she experienced war for most of her life. She witnessed the closing days of a brutal civil war, ongoing conflict with Israel, and the 30-year occupation of her country by the Syrian military, which controlled Lebanon's politics, oppressed its people, and killed its elected leaders.

And then there was the war at home. As her mother was dying, the rest of the family abandoned them, leaving 12-year-old Talia to care of her mother by herself.

"I lost my mother, and I blamed God for that," Talia said. "She didn't do anything wrong ... but I had a problem with God. I just wanted to grow up so I could take revenge on my family for deserting my mother as she died from cancer."

In time, Talia found church and found God. Miraculously, she also found forgiveness in her heart.

"I enjoyed listening to the sermons and found myself wanting to go back again and again. At a certain point, it felt like my legs were just taking me to church. ... Then one day I washed my face, looked in the mirror, and saw a new person. I started to forgive my extended family, and all the hate I had turned into love," Talia explained.



Photo by Helen Manson

Pastor Talia delivers food to Haya and her family.

In 2011, war once again erupted in the region, but this time it was in Syria—Lebanon's old enemy. Seeing Syrian refugees flooding across the border revived feelings of resentment and bitterness for many Lebanese.

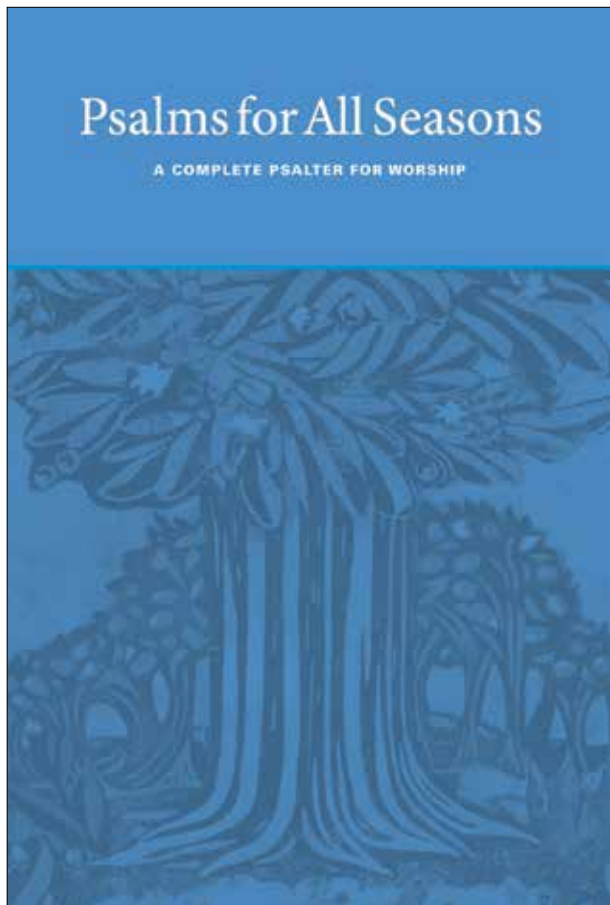
But not for Pastor Talia. Now a mother of two girls and a missions pastor at her church, she feels called to continue on the path of reconciliation, this time helping people she once called enemies.

Partnering with World Renew and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Pastor Talia and her church are assisting over 100 Syrian families by providing them with food, milk, diapers, and other basic necessities. For Haya (not

her real name), a widowed mother and grandmother whose home and business were destroyed by ISIS terrorists, World Renew's food assistance program is a precious lifeline. But most importantly, she has experienced the love of Christ through people like Pastor Talia.

"Through [Talia] we benefit from many things beyond just food," Haya said. "She came to visit us when my husband died. ... I thank God for her!"

— *By Ruth Alkema,*  
*World Renew*



# Psalms for All Seasons

This comprehensive collection of psalms for worship includes all 150 psalms in multiple formats. For each psalm this unique resource offers

- the biblical text, with pointing for responsive reading or chanting.
- various musical settings, including metrical, contemporary, global, chant, and responsorial.
- suggestions for use with worship, the Christian year, funerals, and more.
- complete settings for morning and evening prayer.

A full index allows you to search by psalm, genre, occasion for use, lectionary placement, subject, composer, or author.

**400440**

\$40.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*

**Spiral Edition 400441**

\$45.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*

Bulk pricing available for 10+ and 50+ copies.

**Music and Words for Print (digital edition featuring music and words in PDF format)**

**400443**

\$250.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>\*

# Cool Winter Coats



**BRRR! IS IT COLD** where you live? In northern countries, January is one of the coldest months of the year. We need to keep ourselves warm when we go outside. How do you keep warm in the winter? Maybe you wear a sweater or a winter coat. Perhaps you like to sip hot chocolate by a warm fireplace. But how do animals keep themselves warm?

## Polar Bears

Do polar bears wear fur coats? A polar bear's coat is between 2.5 and 5 centimeters (about 1 to 2 inches) thick. This helps them stay warm. These large seal hunters also have at least 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) of blubber (fat) under their skin that helps them stay even warmer. A polar bear's skin underneath its fur is black, which helps keep the bear warm by absorbing heat from the sun.

## Arctic Foxes

Arctic foxes also have thick fur that keeps them warm. These playful creatures are known to burrow in snow, creating tunnels that keep them insulated (protected) from the cold. They can stay warm in temperatures as low as -58 degrees Fahrenheit (-50 degrees Celsius)!

## Snowy Owls

Snowy owls are swift birds with thick, white feathers that keep them warm in the icy winds of the Arctic. Male snowy owls are almost completely white, while female snowy owls have white feathers with gray speckles. These thick feathers make snowy owls one of the heaviest owls in North America, weighing from three to six pounds (about 1.3 to 2.7 kilograms).

## Orcas

Orcas spend their lives swimming in the chilly waters of the Arctic and

Antarctic oceans. They have a thick layer of blubber under their skin to keep warm. Mammals lose heat when they exhale, but orcas are able to save their body heat by breathing less.

## God of Winter Wonders

Isn't it amazing that God created icy cold weather? The book of Job talks about the greatness of God's winter creation: "The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen" (Job 37:10). As you put on your winter coat today, remember to give praise to the God of winter wonders, who wraps creation in the warmth of God's love!

## Science Experiment—Feel the Blubber!

If you have ever wondered how blubber is used to keep animals warm in the cold, try this activity!


You will need:

- Lard or shortening
- Latex gloves
- A tub of ice or snow
- A stopwatch

### *Step 1:*

Place your bare hand in a tub of ice and see how long you can keep it in the tub before your hand becomes too cold. Brrr! Record how many seconds you kept your hand in the tub.

### *Step 2:*

Put your other hand in a latex glove and coat that hand with lard or shortening. Put your hand with the shortening in the tub of ice (add more ice if you need to). Use the stopwatch to record how long you can keep your hand in the tub of ice. Did you notice a difference? How is the shortening similar to how animals keep warm using their body fat? 



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.



# Why I'm Not a Christian Zionist

By Gary M. Burge

**I** have had the dubious privilege of standing in the crosshairs of one of the most divisive issues of our day: Israel and Zionism. Thanks to my many trips to the Middle East and my friendships in the Palestinian church, I have been drawn into conversations that are not casually shared, but vehemently debated. You can lose friends over this one.

Christian Zionism is a political theology with 19th-century roots. It took on its full form following the birth of modern Israel in 1948. It is a political theology because modern Israel, in this view, is not like other countries: it is the outworking of God's plan foretold in the Scriptures, and therefore modern Israel's political fortunes have profound theological and spiritual consequences.

The church in America today is awash with this sort of thinking. Books and sermons spin a dramatic picture of how the world is coming to an end, how God has a plan centered on modern Israel, and how God's promises cannot be stopped despite what the nations think. Some Christians today feel obligated to apply literally to modern Israel God's words in Genesis

12:3—"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse"—even though God was talking to Abraham 4,000 years ago about his own life. This interpretation means Christians have a spiritual obligation to pray for modern Israel and petition their governments to protect Israel; failure to support Israel's political survival will incur divine judgment.

## Around the Globe

I have encountered some blend of these themes in Christianity all over the world—in Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond. Israel has taken on a mythological status. In the United States, it is often linked with American prosperity, exceptionalism, and patriotism. Students have described to me their home churches where the American flag stands beside the Israeli flag in the sanctuary. Sometimes Christian Zionism can be militant. A high-profile pastor in Texas has even called for violent military action against Israel's foes as God's will.

The spiritual root of Christian Zionism is dispensationalism, whose themes have fully permeated many American churches. Dispensationalism was born in the 1800s as an attempt to

divide human history into a series of seven biblical categories (or dispensations) of time: the eras of Adam, of Noah, and others. We live in the era of the church, followed by the end of time. Dispensationalism embraced a pessimistic view of history, thinking the world was coming to its end and judgment day was near. As a result, it became sectarian, separating itself from mainstream society, calling sinners to repent and be saved from the impending catastrophe.

As a Reformed theologian, I am at odds with this sort of thinking. Reformed theology has generally understood humanity's calling to be one of transforming the world, not separating from it, and bringing God's good things to bear on the things of this world.

In the mid-20th century, countless Christians believed the birth of the State of Israel in 1948 marked the beginning of the end of history. If prophecies are being fulfilled, if history is near its terminus, then Christians are obligated to join in what God is doing. This expression of faith is nowhere clearer than in one's interpretation of God's plans for Israel. Pro-Israel zealots today are known as Christian Zionists.



Let's be clear: This is not a referendum on Israel's right as a nation to have a place in history and enjoy international legitimacy. Israel has a right to exist in safety. But Christian Zionism is a theological question. Christian Zionism implies that being Christian has a necessary political entailment and that supporting Israel's nationhood is a spiritual obligation.

### **Reformed Theology and Christian Zionism**

The Reformed tradition has always resisted the call of Christian Zionism, and with today's pressure to wed your spirituality to your politics, it is increasingly important to know what to believe. Let me outline a few differences between Reformed theology and Christian Zionism.

### **God's Promises to Abraham**

Christian Zionism takes the land promises of God in Genesis 12, 15, and 17 and applies them to the modern state of Israel. To Christian Zionists, this promise of land inheritance is permanent and unconditional. Therefore, despite Israel's own declared intention of being a secular state (and despite Israelis' low religious participation), modern Israel still benefits from a 4,000-year-old promise. For Zionists, the Abrahamic covenant is still active regardless of whether Israelis believe in God or not. In the Christian Zionist view—and this is key—the covenant of Christ does not replace or supplant the Jewish covenants.

Reformed theologians believe something decisive happened in Christ. His covenant affected not simply the covenant of Moses, making a new and timeless form of salvation, but also every other Jewish covenant, including Abraham's covenant. Christ fulfills the expectations of Jewish covenant life and renews the people of God rooted in the Old Testament and Judaism. Thus, Jesus is the new temple, the new Israel.

The Reformed tradition has always resisted the call of Christian Zionism.

In Galatians 3:16, the apostle Paul writes, "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say 'And to offsprings,' as of many; but it says, 'And to your offspring,' that is, to one person, who is Christ" (NRSV). Paul argues from the singular noun in Genesis to show that the promises to Abraham point to Christ. Christ is the locus of the promise of land! The promises to Abraham have been realized in Christ. He holds everything Judaism desired, and knowing him gains access to such promises.

Jesus' homily in John 15 says the same. The Old Testament image of Israel is that of a vineyard filled with vines rooted in the soil of the Holy Land. You can see this outlined beautifully in Isaiah 5. But Jesus upends this. We see a vineyard again, but now we learn that there is one vine—Christ—and the only concern is not on gaining access to the land but being attached to him.

To think Christianly about land and promise is to think differently than Judaism. The New Testament changes the spiritual geography of God's people. The kingdom of God is tied to neither an ethnicity nor a place. Because the early Christians understood this, they carried their missionary efforts to the entire world. God loves Ephesus just as much as he loves Jerusalem. Indeed, God loves the entire world and all its people equally.

Reformed theologians are not convinced the promises to Abraham

can be used politically today. The work of Christ is definitive. There is one covenant, and it is with Christ. In the zeal to promote and protect modern Israel, has Jesus been demoted?

Still, some might ask if emphasizing the centrality of Christ's covenant leads to the dismissal of Judaism and its covenants. Would this lead to anti-Judaism in the church?

No. Christ and his church are deeply rooted in Judaism. As Gentiles, we are grafted into the Jewish tree of Abraham (Rom. 11:13-24). Jesus was Jewish, and it is through the Hebrew covenants that we understand our own covenant.

Christ does not replace these covenants; rather, he fulfills them and enables the birth of God's kingdom, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. Reformed theology does not split Israel and the church; it finds rich continuity between them. Paul did not "become" a Christian; he realized the deepest meaning of his Jewishness when he chose to follow Jesus. This new, category-changing event at the heart of Christ's work cannot be diminished. It is central to New Testament faith. Some have misused this teaching and promoted a dreadful anti-Semitism. But this misuse does not mean we dismiss what the Scriptures teach. Judaism deserves our respect, and anti-Semitism should be rejected outright as an utter corruption of the gospel.

### **Israel, Prophecy, and Nationhood**

In Christian Zionism, 1948 is not simply a political marker in history. It is a theological marker. Israel has been restored to the land in fulfillment of prophecy, Zionists say. Therefore, the establishment of modern Israel is a theologically ordained event deserving of profound Christian respect and awe.

Reformed theologians also affirm Israel's right to exist, but they are skeptical about Israel's theological claim to own the Holy Land. They point to

countless times when Christians used ancient prophetic texts to interpret contemporary times with bad results. They also note that any biblical claim to nationhood must also incorporate biblical expectations of nation-building—expectations that aren't now being met.

The promise of land always comes with covenant expectations for religious life and for justice, themes echoed regularly by the prophets. Modern Israel began as a secular state. It does not reflect ancient Israel's religious or moral national aspirations as described in Scripture, and it has made choices regarding the Palestinians living within its borders that would inspire harsh criticism from Old Testament prophets such as Amos or Isaiah.

For all these reasons, Reformed theologians do not see commitment to Israel as a spiritual imperative. They are moved more by ethics than eschatology when considering any country, because no one country now enjoys a preferential place in God's economy.

### **History Is Coming to Its Close**

Christian Zionists think Israel's national birth is the key prophetic fulfillment in counting down the end of history. They believe Israel's return fits with what else is happening in the world: moral values are in decline, an ecological crisis is looming with our oil-based economy in peril, and most importantly, there is war in the Middle East, all leading to widespread agreement among Zionists that history is reaching its end. All of this, they claim, was prophesied in Scripture.

Reformed theologians are not so catastrophic, not so sure these pronouncements are true, and they have always called for sober judgment. They worry Christian Zionists have let their zeal for prophecy and history's end drown out other, more primary Christian values.

Our chief complaint is how a desire for the end times has shaped the ethics of

Christian Zionists. Building the kingdom of God has become secondary to building the kingdom of Israel. Passion for seeing Christ's second coming now comes before a passion for justice and fairness. When presented with the remarkable suffering of 4 million Palestinians living under harsh military occupation, Zionists typically stand unmoved. Negotiations that might return land to Palestinian owners are deemed to be against God's will. Some Zionist pastors have even written that natural disasters hitting the United States and killing thousands are God's punishment for political pressure put on Israel. It is this sort of theological confusion that stuns Reformed theologians.

### **Fidelity to Israel**

For Christian Zionists, the first obligation of Christians is to study end-times prophecies and to monitor each nation's political decisions. One conviction is always held aloft: God blesses those who bless Israel and curses those who curse Israel. Nations will stand or fall based on this one creed.

Reformed theologians hear this and wonder if the message of the gospel has been lost. My first call is fidelity to Christ and his kingdom. And yet this commitment should inspire in me a deep love for Israel and a desire for its people to become what their Scriptures call them to become: a nation of priests, a light to the nations, a people in whom there is such goodness that the nations will see the glory of God and rejoice.

### **Jesus' Second Coming**

This is the crown jewel of Christian Zionism. The birth of Israel has set the stage for the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Zionists claim, any national agenda that would impede God's plan, any peace plan that weakens Israel's hold on the land, or any decision that stands in the way of this dramatic stage-setting is not a plan blessed by God.

Reformed theologians believe in the second coming too. But the chief difference is that Reformed theologians make profound investments in the world. We are not sectarian. We devote ourselves to promoting Christ's commitments here and now. We do not despair about the course of the world, and we refuse to abandon it. We still build schools and hospitals and speak to injustice and poverty.

Dwight Moody, the founder of the dispensational Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, once asked why you'd want to polish the brass on a sinking ship. Reformed theologians are not convinced the ship is sinking, and we continue to polish the brass, navigate a course, and make passengers comfortable until we are surprised by Christ's return—just as the Bible tells us we should be.

This is my ultimate concern: Christian Zionists believe in Jesus, but I wonder if they have lost the gospel. They have uncritically wed our faith to the politics of one nation, and this, as the church has learned so many times, is a prescription for disaster. **B**



Gary M. Burge is a professor of New Testament and dean of the faculty at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has authored many books, including two on Israel and Palestine: *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told*

*About Israel and the Palestinians and Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology.*

1. Have you heard of Christian Zionism previously? What did you think it meant?
2. Have you observed an unconditional support of the modern state of Israel among some Christians? What is your feeling and/or opinion about that? ...

**READ MORE ONLINE**

# Words We Don't Want to Hear in 2020

I've encountered several words and phrases that have started to fall flat.

**BETWEEN CHURCH-HOPPING** as a Millennial and teaching students of Gen Z, I've spent a lot of time thinking about the language we use in church. I've encountered several words and phrases that have started to fall flat. To me, they might feel false or stale. To students, they feel exclusionary or induce shame or confusion. As we look forward to a new decade, I propose we stop using these words in church. These aren't awful words, necessarily. But if we want church to resonate with the next generation, here are a few words to reconsider:

## 'Nones'

Let's stop calling people "nones." This term, originally used by sociologists for the group of people who answer the survey question, "What religion do you affiliate with?" with "none," has crept into popular church lingo. There are a variety of reasons a person might answer "none." How would you like to be known by what you're *not*?

## Welcoming

Here's the most common complaint I hear from students: "My church says they welcome everyone, but they don't mean *everyone*." I think what they're identifying is the difference between welcome and inclusion. To welcome someone is simply to be hospitable and inviting. But to truly include someone, to affirm their identity in Christ, is to make sure they have a voice and a seat at both the proverbial and the sacramental table.

## Purity


This word has ironically tainted the minds and spirits of many young people—women who took their first virginity pledge before they had their first period and men who were told that any sexual desire was evil. Does

dropping "purity" mean we don't teach everyone to respect their bodies and each other, to think carefully about their physical relationships, and to value partners who do the same? Of course not. But "purity" has too much hurtful history attached. In its place, try "holiness," "respect," or simply "love."

## Love offering, Joy Box

Why do we feel the need to euphemize "giving away money because we've been blessed"? "Offering" or "collection" work just fine, and it's a great idea to remind the congregation what the money is used for.

## Liturgy Without Explanation

Without explanation, liturgical words can be intimidating to someone visiting a church or new to church altogether. This is especially true for the communion liturgy. It's beautiful and significant, but communion is also highly symbolic and is one of the weirdest things churches do. Communion needs explanation in plain language every time. It should be clear who is welcome at the table, what it means to partake, and what to do if you're not interested. The logistics of receiving the bread and the cup should also be spelled out. Do this every time, even if the regular congregation has heard it 500 times. Your visitors will thank you. 



Abby Zwart teaches English at Grand Rapids Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1. Have you ever attended an event where people used jargon that you were not familiar with? How did you feel at the time?

2. What are some other church jargon words that you think are confusing or not helpful to newcomers? ...

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

# To Swerve and Protect

My purpose is to bring to the readers' attention how appealing it is for people to swerve, to choose an abortion, for a range of selfish to altruistic reasons.



Diana Zondag is executive director at Dawn Centre, a pregnancy care center in Cambridge, Ont. She and her family attend Community CRC in Kitchener, Ont.

**THE OTHER DAY, I SWERVED.** A car came into my lane, and in reaction I swerved into the lane on my left. I was met with a honk, and I am sure some choice words, as I made my way back into my proper lane. Everyone was fine, but in that one moment, lives could have been changed.

As I continued on my way to work, I wished I had reacted differently. Given time to reassess, to think about what the potential outcomes could have been, I would have made a different decision. I would not have swerved.

As my day progressed, I gave more thought to this event and how it related to the clients I work with. At the pregnancy care center we interact daily with people facing unintended pregnancies. These people have had the unexpected push them out of the paths they were on, changing the trajectories of their lives.

My swerve into the other lane deepened my understanding of these often vulnerable and broken people I work with.

## Swerve for Protection

Don't we all have the instinct to swerve? If something unpleasant or threatening enters our path, we want to avoid it or put it behind us as quickly as possible. When a client is faced with a pregnancy she did not plan, I am not surprised when she wants that pregnancy to go away. The quick fix of an abortion is so appealing: simply swerve away from the problem and then jump back into your lane as if it never happened.

I think of Susan (name changed), who recently left an abusive relationship and was trying to keep her two young children, one with special needs,

safe and out of poverty. Looking at a positive pregnancy test, she says she knows she will regret an abortion but cannot think of another way. She believes a quick swerve will allow her to stay on her already bumpy path and will protect her family from being pushed over the edge.

## Swerve for Survival

I have been blessed to know since my youth that I am precious in God's sight. I believe each life is a valued, precious creation made by God.

But not everyone is a Christian; most of our clients would not identify as such. I don't expect them to hold the same beliefs as me on issues such as the sanctity of life or sex before marriage. Paul reminds us that we should not expect non-Christians to adhere to the same moral beliefs we hold (1 Cor. 5:12; Rom. 14). Holding my clients to expectations based on my beliefs is not realistic, and to do so would not keep my heart open to hearing their stories.

In this postmodern age, a swerve in the name of self-preservation is often encouraged and at times even celebrated. Our "me"-driven society is telling people to "live their own truths." If my swerve, or your abortion, ends someone else's life, that is a necessary though maybe unfortunate consequence.

For Janelle (name changed), a client in a long-term, monogamous relationship, an unexpected pregnancy while using birth control caught her completely off guard. She was about to enter law school, the next stop on a long road she and her immigrant parents sacrificed much for. She believed becoming a parent at this stage would end her dream of being a human rights lawyer. She was seven



Photo by WW5/iStock

weeks pregnant; her Islamic faith says the soul does not enter the body until 120 days after conception. For Janelle and her partner, an abortion would serve their understanding of a greater good.

### **To Protect**

I unashamedly believe life begins at conception and should be protected. My points above are not meant to argue that abortion should ever be the answer. My purpose is to bring to the readers' attention how appealing it is for people to swerve, to choose an abortion, for a range of selfish to altruistic reasons. I hope readers will use grace when discussing this difficult topic, because you never know if—or why—someone has swerved.

Yet I also hope this article will encourage Christians to action. The Guttmacher Institute reported in 2014 that 54% of people who have had an abortion identify themselves as Christian ([bit.ly/343sLBH](http://bit.ly/343sLBH)). This means there likely are people attending our churches who have had and/or are choosing to have abortions.

The day I swerved, it could have ended differently. Something terrible could have happened. I believe my loved ones would have forgiven me, and with God's grace, I would have one

day forgiven myself. My plea to you, my fellow believers, is to offer that grace and forgiveness to each other and to yourself if abortion has touched your life.

I also believe that if I were more knowledgeable and practiced in defensive driving, I would have reacted differently.

Dear Christians, we need to talk about the sanctity of life in our churches. We need to be well-versed in why each life is precious. Peter reminds us to be "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Our children need to hear repeatedly that they are valued. They need to hear messages such as "You are worth waiting for" coupled with phrases that remind them there is grace for all repented sins. It needs to be preached that abortion ends a life, and as a greater church we should mourn each life lost.


From those same pulpits needs to come the truth that in God there is hope and forgiveness for all sins. To defend ourselves against the temptation to swerve, we need to know how to respond differently. And if someone

does leave the path, we must not use shame to prevent someone from getting back on the road.

Katie (name changed) called to ask where to get an abortion. When gently asked why she felt abortion was her only option, she answered, "I'm not gonna bring a kid into this world to have to go through the same \*\*\*\* I've gone through." She then shared about her battle with depression and her periodic attendance at a local church. How can someone see the value in another life if they don't see the value in their own life? Without seeing her own value, Katie had no defensive skills to fight against the pull to swerve.

Whether abortion is legal or not, abortions will take place. With society and governments moving away from Christian beliefs, abortion as a reproductive health option most likely will remain. But Christians can remind others that they are loved and that each life is uniquely created and has a purpose. Seeing life through this lens could make choosing to end a life by abortion unthinkable.

By listening, not judging, and offering emotional and physical support, you are saying you see the value in another person. In your eyes and actions, they may see God's love for them. If we can protect people from feeling alone and unloved and instead build them up, they may want to make choices to defend their worth and the worth of the unborn.

Be prepared to serve in the swerve. 

# On Kanye West, the Sacred, and the Secular

## HIP-HOP ARTIST KANYE WEST

released his ninth studio album in October 2019, but he says this one is different from the others. The album is titled *Jesus Is King*, and West is touting it as a Christian album.

To that end, the album is completely profanity-free, and Kanye spends most of its 27 minutes describing his walk with God. He compares himself to Noah, gives a shout-out to Chick-fil-A, and wards off “the culture” that tries to push him from his righteous path. Unsurprisingly, the album has been warmly received by some public Christian figures.

This is not the first time Kanye West has talked about God. In fact, he’s been talking about God throughout his two-decade career. But until now, his music has been irreverent, profane, and crass enough to ensure it would not be accepted in most contemporary Christian spaces. West professed to be a Christian, but his art was viewed as un-Christian, or at least not fully Christian—a dynamic only now changed by West avoiding swear words on this album. For many Christians, *Jesus Is King* represents a shift from secular to sacred.

I think this perspective is misguided.

There is a widely held view that any art that explicitly references God in an inoffensive, sanitized way is sacred while any art that does not match that description is secular. But this does not take God’s creative and redemptive work on earth seriously enough. It’s the classic heresy of gnostic dualism, in which anything belonging to the physical world is evil and completely separate from the goodness of God.

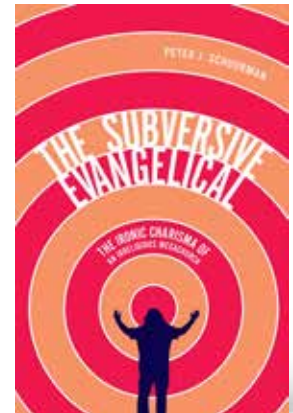
If we believe Christ is fully human and fully God, the notion of sacred and secular in the theological sense no longer works. Christ lived, worked, ate, and wept on earth. He prayed for God’s kingdom to come to earth. None of these actions changed the fact that Jesus was God.

What I believe this means for Kanye West, hip-hop, and all of popular culture is that there is no strictly sacred or strictly secular art. Everything belongs to the narrative of a fallen creation redeemed through Christ. God’s truth is truth wherever it shows up. To call a work of art sacred is to claim that we have the power to pigeonhole God’s truth within a box of our own making. To call another work of art secular is to claim that God cannot work outside of that box.

I’m not saying that everything we make is good. Evil exists in the world, and it exists in art too. I’m also not saying that *Jesus Is King* is a bad album because Kanye West does not swear on it or that it would be a better album if he did. I am saying the premise that *Jesus Is King* is West’s first Christian album is flawed because it perpetuates a view that devalues the world and Christ’s work within it. **B**



Jordan Petersen Kamp graduated from Calvin University in 2017. He now works as an auditor and writes as often as he can. He attends Sherman Street Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



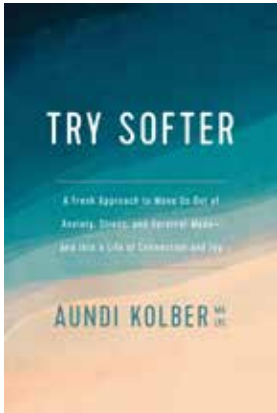
## The Subversive Evangelical: The Ironic Charisma of an Irreligious Megachurch

by Peter J. Schuurman

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Author Peter Schuurman opens a compelling window on “a church for people not into church”: The Meeting House, an Anabaptist megachurch with 19 regional sites in rented movie theaters throughout southern Ontario. But *The Subversive Evangelical* is more than just a study of pastor Bruxy Cavey and The Meeting House network. According to Schuurman, The Meeting House “provides a microcosm for understanding ... a new evangelicalism for mostly white, evangelical Christians who are weary of being caricatured as legalistic, judgmental, and politically motivated.”

Anyone interested in learning more about trends in the North American church and particularly in megachurches will find in *The Subversive Evangelical* a scholarly, well-researched work. (McGill-Queen’s University Press)



## Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us Out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode—and Into a Life of Connection and Joy

By Aundi

*Kolber, MA, LPC*

Reviewed by Ann Byle

Do you know what it feels like to be “overextended, overburdened, and overwrought”? Licensed professional counselor Aundi Kolber does, and she knows pushing harder isn’t the answer. She offers a new way of being, saying, “Trying softer is the path that leads to true connection and joy.” Kolber first takes readers on a journey to understand why they live as they do, looking closely at life story, trauma, how the brain works, early attachments, windows of tolerance, and boundaries. She then offers practices to help readers “try softer” with their attention, bodies, emotions, internal critics, and resilience. Undergirding Kolber’s professional work is faith in the God whose “heart for us is outrageously gentle.” (Tyndale Momentum)



## Refugia: A Podcast About Renewal

With Debra Rienstra

Reviewed by Kristen Parker

*Refugia* is a podcast hosted by Deb Rienstra, a professor of English at Calvin University. In each episode, she explores with guests “what it means for people of faith to be people of refugia.” Rienstra asks (and answers), “How can we create safe places of flourishing? Micro-counter cultures where we gain strength in spiritual capacity to face the challenges ahead.” Rienstra invites experts in science and the arts to discuss how refugia and renewal can be interwoven into different areas of life.

Rienstra’s podcast is intriguing for students, teachers, or anyone searching for places of renewal where they can flourish. (*Refugia* is released weekly and can be found on most podcast services.)



## Evil

Reviewed by Trevor Denning

Despite its unfortunate title, the new CBS drama *Evil* offers storytelling with a decidedly Christian worldview. Each week, a skeptical clinical psychologist partners with a believer, a priest in training, to investigate the supernatural. (The creators of the show, husband and wife Robert and Michelle King, mirror the beliefs of their main characters. Robert is a believer, while Michelle is agnostic.) Rounding out the team is a handyman with computer expertise. Together the trio covers every angle—mental, physical, and spiritual. A spiritual successor to *The X-Files*, but with demons instead of aliens, *Evil* can be dark and disturbing, but it reminds people of all faiths that our struggle is often against powers and principalities. (CBS TV Studios)

### The Lowdown

**Love, Sex and Gender:** *Our Bodies Tell God’s Story* by Christopher West is a bold and biblical look at the meaning of the body, sex, gender, and marriage. (Baker/Brazos Press)

**Based on a True Story:** In the movie *Just Mercy*, a young lawyer’s first case is defending a man sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insists he didn’t commit. (Jan. 10, Warner Bros.)

**Carrots, Redux:** Season 3 of *Anne with an E*, the gritty fan-fiction series that reimagines classic heroine Anne of Green Gables, drops Jan. 3. (Netflix)

**Mother/Son Border Crossing:** One of the most anticipated novels of 2020, *American Dirt* by Janine Cummings details the harrowing journey of a mother and son fleeing a dangerous Mexican drug cartel toward the United States border. (Flatiron)

# How Can We Trust the Bible?

Millions of people through the generations have valued these documents because they found in them an accounting of the relationship between God and his people that is unlike any other 'holy' book ever written.



Mary Hulst is university pastor for Calvin University and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

**THE KORAN HAS ONE AUTHOR.** The Book of Mormon has one author. Buddhist texts all claim to be the words of the Buddha. Confucius wrote the Five Classics of Confucianism. The Bible, however, is one book of 66 parts written in three languages by up to 40 different people over two millennia.

For those of us who already view the Bible as a special book, this affirms our trust in a God who guided the collection of these books over the generations. Those who don't yet believe, however, may wonder how we can call this hodgepodge of books "holy" and trust the Bible for insight into God, ourselves, and our world.

The assumption is that if humans were the primary sources of the documents, the primary curators of which documents mattered, and the primary voices interpreting the documents, then the documents themselves cannot be trustworthy. But here's why the comparison to other religious books is important: For the Bible, there wasn't only one author, one person curating the documents, or one person interpreting them. Millions of people over generations have valued these documents because they found in them an accounting of the relationship between God and his people that is unlike any other 'holy' book ever written.

The canon (a word that means an accepted and approved list) of Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) was most likely finalized while the Jews were in exile. Because disobedience to the Word of God had led them into exile, there was a renewed devotion to the Scriptures during and after the exilic period. Nehemiah 8 tells of the scribe Ezra bringing the Torah back to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon

and reading it to the people. When the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1946, scholars were amazed to find Hebrew copies of Old Testament books that were essentially identical to the Hebrew editions currently in use. The book that Ezra read was the book that Jesus read and is the book we currently read!

For the books we call the New Testament, the early church was quick to circulate letters from Paul that each congregation had found helpful, showing that the church was already respecting certain texts as valuable for teaching and worship (Col. 4:16; 2 Pet. 3:16). The gospels were written later than most of the letters as a way to preserve the stories of Jesus before the people who lived alongside Jesus died.

This is why the "gospel" of Thomas and the "gospel" of Mary were not included in the Bible: they did not align with the redemption story that begins with the Torah, continues through the wisdom books, the prophets, and the epistles, and is clearly seen in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Bible was not written to answer all of our questions or to polish up the truth of a broken people and a mysterious God. This isn't a book of fairy tales. The characters do not live happily ever after. This is a book that says, "Life on earth is hard. People get hurt. We hurt each other, and we hurt God. But out of God's great love, God gives hope to God's people through the Son and assures us of God's presence through the Spirit. In this book, God calls God's people from death to life. God holds out the hope of a new heaven and a new earth." The Bible is not a book that simply describes the past. It is a book that promises our future. **B**



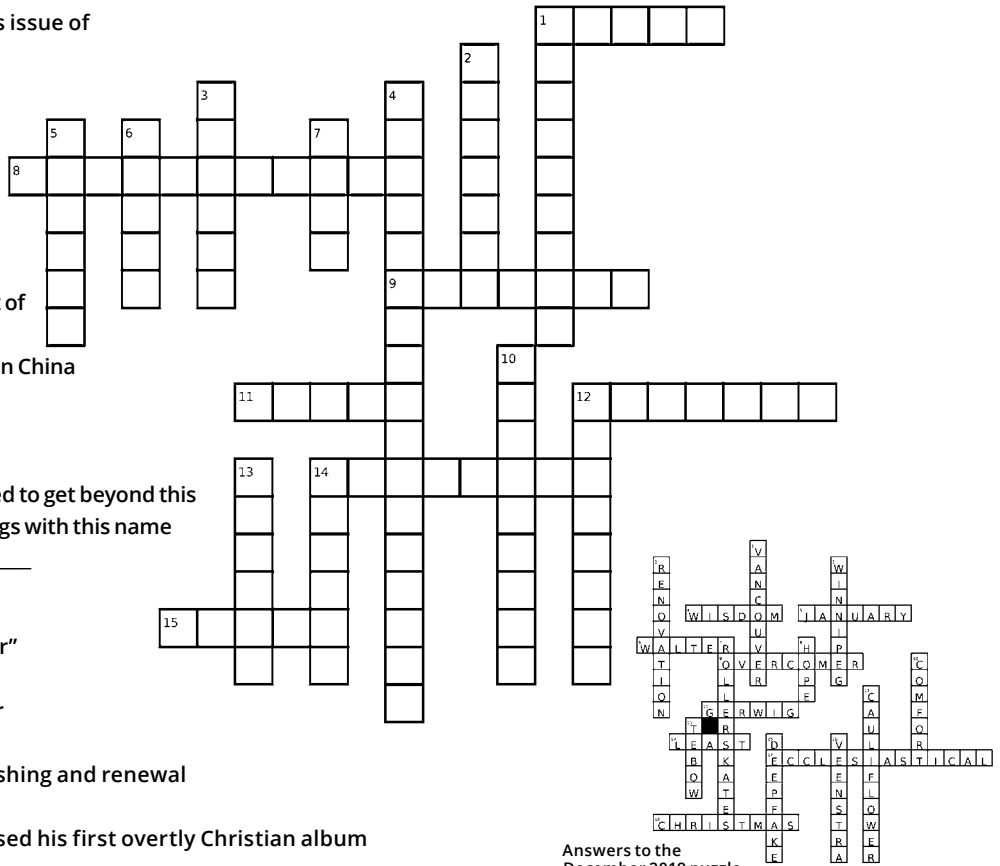
Find clues to this crossword puzzle in this issue of *The Banner*. See the answers next month!

**Down:**

1. Can stay warm in temperatures as low as -58 degrees Fahrenheit
2. \_\_\_\_\_ for Humanity
3. We have an instinct to do this when something bad comes in our path
4. A mindset from the 1800s that is the root of Christian Zionism
5. The most popular social media network in China
6. "An accepted and approved list"
7. Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior
10. Young adults are unsettled over this
12. A forum at Northwestern College wanted to get beyond this
13. Jay-Z and Hillsong United each have songs with this name
14. Church renewal involves a lot of \_\_\_\_\_

**Across:**

1. The first name of the author of "Try Softer"
8. Life, in the Bible, is \_\_\_\_\_
9. The CRC website celebrating its 10th year
11. Calvin University chaplain
12. The name of the podcast about flourishing and renewal
14. Pro-life is \_\_\_\_\_
15. The hip-hop artist who recently released his first overtly Christian album



Answers to the December 2019 puzzle

Think you can change the world with a brushstroke?

**We do.**

**CHANGE** can be big, like Sistine Chapel big. Or it can be small, like a sketchbook full of possibilities small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us wherever we go.

That changes everything.

Starting with you.

**redeemer.ca**

 **REDEEMER**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

*A degree you can believe in.*

**DEADLINES:** 12/30/19 for February; 2/3/20 for March. Subject to availability. Details online. Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

**PRICES:** Most ads are \$0.41<sup>US</sup> per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.34<sup>US</sup> per character and \$50 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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

**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](http://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. 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](http://lakealfredministry.org) or call 269-720-6413.

**CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 20 YEARS**

**THE JOURNEY OF LONGMONT CO** will celebrate our 20th anniversary on January 26, 2020 @ our 10:07 am service. You're invited to

join us if you've ever been a journeyer or just want another party to attend!

**Church Positions Available**

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR** Come and join us in prison ministry at Cornerstone Prison Church in Sioux Falls, SD. Contact [office@cornerstonepcsd.org](mailto:office@cornerstonepcsd.org) for more information.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR** Shalom CRC of Sioux Falls, SD a growing and vibrant congregation, is seeking a dynamic part-time Children's Ministry Director. Please visit our website at [www.shalomcrrc.org](http://www.shalomcrrc.org) for a job description and application information.

**LEAD PASTOR** Crossroads CRC in beautiful North San Diego County is seeking applications for a full-time lead pastor. We are looking for candidates who are collaborative leaders with a passion for worship, discipleship, and outreach. If you are interested in knowing more about our church we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at [searchteam@crossroadscrc.com](mailto:searchteam@crossroadscrc.com)

**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](http://wolfcreekchurch.ca) or Email [searchteamwccc@gmail.com](mailto:searchteamwccc@gmail.com)

**Birthday**

**BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS**

**MARGARET VANDER VEEN (ZONNEFELD)** will celebrate her 90th birthday on January 19th, 2020. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren wish to honor her with a card shower. Greetings can be sent to 409 9th Ave N #202, Sibley, IA 51249.

**Obituaries**

**BUIKEMA JR** William, age 60, of Englewood, CO died on October 12, 2019. He is survived by his wife Carol, his children Will (Becca), Leanne, and Eric, his parents Bill and Clara, and his sisters. He was dearly loved and will be missed.

**DONKERBROOK**, Marian S., of San Jose, CA, passed into Jesus' arms on November 7, 2019. Marian was born September 3, 1923, in Chicago, IL. She was a graduate of Chicago Christian High School. She worked for the Santa Clara County Office of Education for over 15 years and retired as an account clerk II. Marian loved her family, her CCHS Fidelius Club girls, reading, cooking, baking and gardening. She especially had a tremendous love for all her grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is survived by her sister, Judy Kamp, and her children: Cindy (Charles) Herbert, Diane Snider, and Robert Jr. (Cheryl)

Donkerbrook; her grandchildren: Deborah (Brad) Johnson, their children, Trevor and Cassandra; Aaron Spurling, his daughter, Makena; Alyson Spurling, her sons, Kaleo and Peter; Ryan (Lindsay) Weeks, Casey and Jamie Snider; John (Karen) Herbert and their children, Pearl, Samuel, Miles, Hannah, and Gabriel; Joshua (Ellie) Herbert and their son, Mason; Keri (Nathan) Martin and their son, Carter. Marian was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Sr., her siblings: Everdeen Laninga, Ethel Bruinius, and John Schurman, and by her first born child, Carol Weeks. Communications can be sent to C. Herbert, 4940 Birmingham Dr., San Jose, CA 95136.

**KEEN** Nellen - nee Morren, Holland, MI; wife of the late Bernard Keen went to be with her Lord and Savior on Nov 3, 2019. She is survived by Pat Hooley -late Ron- and Sandra; Bonnie and Larry Johnson - late Matthew, Dr. Derick and Lexi (Axel Keen, Ian Hendrick), Aaron and Jen (Silas Vale, Remi Inez); Jan Wheeler and Katie.

**ROOSE**, Bertha (Stuursma), age 101 of Pella Iowa, died on November 2, 2019 at the Cottages in Pella. The fifth of five children born to Jan J and Dirkje (Postma) Stuursma, born May 22, 1918 in Peoria, Iowa. Survived by five children and their spouses, Leon and Jana Roose of Crete Illinois; John and Karen Roose of Lake City Colorado; Mae and Henry Bork of London Ontario; Ernie and Esther Roose of Peoria Iowa; and Timothy and Sharon Roose of Pella Iowa. In addition, she has ten grandchildren and twenty great grandchildren. She will be fondly remembered as a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and friend to many, as well as for her courage, faith in God and good spirit in later life as she struggled with many health problems. In short, she was a wonderful mother.

**VANDER TUIG**, Sylvester "Shorty", 93 years, passed away October 28, 2019 at his home in Tulare, CA. He is survived by his loving wife Arlene; his children Rich (Kathy), Joanne (Craig) Travis, Jay (Bev), Bev (Earl) Lanting, 14 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great-grandchildren, his sister Mary (Stan) Vanden Brink and brother Dale (Glenda).

**VENEMA**, Jr., Dr. William, age 87, went to be with his heavenly father on Monday, October 28, 2019 in Grand Rapids, MI. Bill is survived by his wife, Lois; daughters Susan Potter (Dennis), Carol Buist (Bob) and Mary Kaszuba (Tom); grandchildren Jennifer Huizinga (Dave), Eric Buist (Kendra), and Dr. Megan Everson (Josh); and six great-grandchildren.

**Real Estate Sales / Rentals**

**ANNA MARIA ISLAND FL** condos, pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bed-



**DORDT UNIVERSITY**

**Chamber Orchestra WINTER TOUR 2020**

**JAN. 3: PELLA, IA**  
**JAN. 4: WHEATON, IL**  
**JAN. 5: HOLLAND, MI**  
**JAN. 6: BYRON CENTER, MI**  
**JAN. 7: OOSTBURG, WI**  
**JAN. 10: SIOUX CENTER, IA**

Find out more at:  
[dordt.edu/2020tour](http://dordt.edu/2020tour)

rooms. \$700-850/wk. Ask Tim Redeker about off-season and extended stay specials. 941-704-7525. Online: [redekercondosonami.com](http://redekercondosonami.com)

**BRADENTON FL RENTAL** 2 bedroom double wide mobile home in a 55+, no pets community. \$1100.00/month. [Ts2jln@att.net](mailto:Ts2jln@att.net) or 616-669-1269 for more info.

**CONDO FOR RENT** Kentwood, MI. Quiet, fully furnished. Internet and utilities included. Available for a professional woman. Call Mary at 616-295-4934.

**COTTAGE 4 RENT.** 4 bed, 3 bath, updated. Sleeps 12, Hess Lake, MI private waterfront. \$1,600/week. Call Lonnie 616-942-0048.

**GRAND RAPIDS APT FOR RENT** Burton St and Patterson. 1 Bedroom Apt, ideal for Calvin Student or Retiree. \$675/month includes utilities. Contact 616-340-6038.

**INDIANA DUNES NAT'L PARK - LAKE MI** Vacation Rental: Modern townhome; sleeps 6-8 3 bdrm-2 bth; w/ky \$1500-1800; Close to Chicago, cross st. to park & beach 219.741-2170

**LAKE MICHIGAN BEACHFRONT COTTAGE** Large secluded cottage near Pentwater. Sleeps 14 3 full baths \$3500. per week. 616-350-0777 [www.lakemichigancottagerentals.com](http://www.lakemichigancottagerentals.com)

**MOVING TO/FROM SEATTLE/ BELLEVUE/ WA?** 35 + yrs exp! Allan Kuipers, Coldwell Banker Danforth. 206-850-2724, [rlst8brokr@comcast.net](mailto:rlst8brokr@comcast.net). [www.allankuipers.com](http://www.allankuipers.com)

### Travel

**HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND** A self-contained Cabin. We offer car rentals and tours. [www.chestnutlane.nl](http://www.chestnutlane.nl)

### Products and Services

**ABSOLUTELY BEST PRICES** paid for religious books. Contact Credo Books, 1540 Pinnacle East SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, ph. (616) 249-9291. [gvsbooks@gmail.com](mailto:gvsbooks@gmail.com)

**BOERS' TRANSFER & STORAGE, INC** Offering professional moving services within the United States and Canada. EXCELLENT CLERGY DISCOUNTS and an approved mover for retired CRC clergy! 13325 Riley Street, Holland, MI; 1-800-433-9799 or 616-399-2690 email: [larry@boerstransfer.com](mailto:larry@boerstransfer.com); [www.boerstransfer.com](http://www.boerstransfer.com) Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.



**CARING FOR AGING PARENTS?** Visiting Angels has been providing in-home assisted living for 15 years in West Michigan. Trish Borgdorff

and her multitude of Angels offer meal prep, light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or up to 24-hour care for assisted independence in your home, call Visiting Angels at 616-243-7080.

**I CAN LIST YOUR HOME FOR \$1000 OR 1.5%.** 1992 Calvin grad will list your property using a cost effective business model- full service, with savings. The system works! 175 closings in 2018 with 15 Banner clients. Contact Doug Takens of Independence Realty, 6801 Gettysburg, Hudsonville, 616-262-4574 or [takens@sbcglobal.net](mailto:takens@sbcglobal.net)

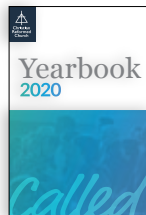
**REMODELING?** Call Ken DeVries today for an estimate on windows, kitchen/bath renovation. 616-457-5880. Since 1985. [www.home-work-construction.com](http://www.home-work-construction.com)

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** offers in home (non medical) care to seniors. Learn more about us at [truebluecaregivers.com](http://truebluecaregivers.com) or call 616-406-6819. Owned and operated by Calvin alums, serving the greater Grand Rapids area.

## YEARBOOK 2020

### Printed version Yearbook:

- Denominational offices directory
- Classical stated clerks and member churches
- Churches and ministries
- Ministers and commissioned pastors



To order, visit [FaithAliveResources.org/Yearbook](http://FaithAliveResources.org/Yearbook), call 800-333-8300, or email [Orders@FaithAliveResources.org](mailto:Orders@FaithAliveResources.org)

**Regular Edition** \$10.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>

**Spiral Bound** \$12.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>

**PDF Download** \$7.00<sup>US</sup>/\$<sup>CDN</sup>

**Available February 2020**

**Yearbook online at [crcna.org/Yearbook](http://crcna.org/Yearbook). Always current, always available.**

### FREE access to:

- Directory of churches
- Classical personnel, statistics, and more
- Churches' current and former ministers
- Directory of ministers and commissioned pastors



Taormina, Sicily

# Explore. Connect. Experience.



### 2020 GUIDED ITINERARIES:

**IN THE LIGHT OF JESUS: PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND**  
Mar 2 – 14 | *Pr. Bill & Lyn Vanden Bosch*

**PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS IN GREECE**  
Apr 2 – 14 | *Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima*

**THE DUTCH: EMIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA**  
Apr 29 – May 11  
*Henk Aay & Mary Risseeuw*

**ITALIA: TREASURES OF SOUTHERN ITALY & SICILY**  
May 5 – 18 | *Bruce & Judy Buursma*

**ITALY: FLORENCE THROUGH THE EYES OF DANTE**  
May 15 – 28 | *Dr. Jennifer Holberg*

**ALASKA & DENALI**  
Sep 5 – 17 | *Ken & Laurel Bratt*

**FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS: ISRAEL & JORDAN**  
Oct 8 – 20 | *Dr. Jeffrey A. D. Weima*

**2021 GUIDED ITINERARIES:**  
**MEXICO'S CULTURAL CHARMS**  
Feb 7 – 19, 2021 | *John & Lynda Witte*

**SIGN UP TODAY!**  
[www.wittetours.com/banner](http://www.wittetours.com/banner)

**witte**  
Travel & Tours  
Grand Rapids, MI | 616.957.8113

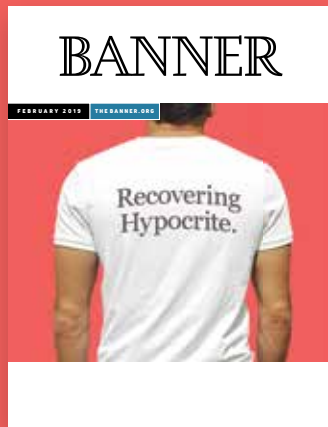
# ✔ We Want To Hear From You

*The Banner* wants to know what you think! Help us serve you better!

We want to find out what you, our readers, think: How are we doing? How can we improve? What new topics or ideas should we explore?

We are partnering with the Calvin University Center for Social Research to conduct this survey. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Your responses will not be connected to your name. We expect the survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

To take the survey, visit [thebanner.org/Survey](http://thebanner.org/Survey). Thank you for your feedback!



# God Loves Me storybooks

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

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



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

800-333-8300  
Orders@FaithAliveResources.org



Dordt University is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2020:

## Faculty Positions

Agriculture  
Criminal Justice  
Engineering/Physics  
Education  
Mathematics and Statistics  
Philosophy and Theology  
Social Work/Field Director  
Social Work

Application reviews will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to follow the faculty application procedure at the link below.

[www.dordt.edu](http://www.dordt.edu) — About Dordt — Job Openings

Dordt University endeavors to diversify its staff within the framework of its mission. The commitment of the college to nondiscrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national or ethnic origin, or race is consistent with

# UNCOVER YOUR FUTURE

**A SUMMER PROGRAM | JULY 11-31, 2020**

for high school students who have finished grades 11 or 12 to explore who God is calling them to be and how ministry can be lived out in any vocation.

Nominate a student or apply at [dig.calvinseminary.edu](http://dig.calvinseminary.edu)

*Priority consideration for applications received before Feb 1.*

CALVIN  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY



# How Can We Help?

**You and your church now have three options for easier access to CRC ministries and resources.**



## Click

Search hundreds of resources from CRC ministries and churches.

Try it out at  
[crcna.org/Resources](https://crcna.org/Resources)



## Call

Got a ministry question but not sure who to call? We can help.

Give us a shout at  
[800-272-5125](tel:800-272-5125)



## Chat

Oh yeah, we chat too. Type and we'll type back.

Chat from any page at  
[crcna.org](https://crcna.org)

If you have a ministry need and wonder if your denomination can help, just click, call, or chat.

**We're here to serve.**



**Christian  
Reformed  
Church**

# From Republic of the Congo to Appleton, Wisconsin

In this partnership  
we are finding  
friendship,  
kinship, and the  
body of Christ.

**I WATCHED HER** lightly step down the stairs wearing my old skirt and sweater, discards from my surplus of clothes. Each callus and crack on her bare feet told a story of hard work and determination. Her flawless skin made me suddenly self-conscious about my pale, freckled complexion. Her two toddlers danced around the living room with cookies, mindless of crumbs underfoot. I smiled at them as they laughed and spoke to me in a language I didn't understand. One boy, one girl, they mirrored my own two children, though younger and with far more physical prowess. I felt instantly bonded to this woman as a mother, a wife, and a fellow believer on this spring day with the sun beaming through spotless windows.

Agatha came to Appleton, Wisc., as a refugee this past winter. Like the many other refugees in my city, she had been displaced from her homeland, her language, her culture. Sitting in her sparsely decorated living room, I marveled at her ability to continually put one foot in front of the other after her tumultuous pregnancy and relocation. I watched her gather up bags of breast milk and herd her little ones upstairs, where their father slept after working the night shift. We were heading to St. Elizabeth Hospital to visit her twin sons, born prematurely.

I first met Agatha at a Congolese worship service at my church. Many Congolese refugees gather there each Sunday to worship in their own language while communing with others who are learning this American way of life in the community I call home. At the tender age of 24, Agatha has already lived through more grief and trauma than I can fathom. She is beautiful and delicately strong,

soft-spoken and humble—qualities to which I failingly aspire. That day I was humbled to be allowed into her home, her life, her journey.

After my training with World Relief Fox Valley, I had initially been hesitant to drive Agatha to the hospital. I knew that by doing things for her or giving things to her, I was not helping. Rather, I learned, I was boosting my own ego and feeding my “superhero” hunger. What Agatha truly needed was to do things for herself. She needed to become a fully capable citizen, caring for her own needs and finding her own way.

So it was with some reservation that I was in Agatha's home, offering her a ride to the hospital to nourish her babies. But on the way, I found it was my own soul that was nourished. Agatha knew every road and turn. She perfectly instructed me on the best route to take, where to park, what door to enter, and where to wait while she entered the locked neonatal intensive care unit. We communicated despite the language barrier. Agatha was already a fully capable woman, and I was along for the ride.

At my church we are learning the art of helping our Congolese friends without handicapping them. It is indeed an art, and one must step lightly. It takes finesse, proper training, and certainly prayer. Above all, it comes with great blessing. For in this partnership we are finding friendship, kinship, and the body of Christ. **B**



Laurie Pluimer attends Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Appleton, Wisc. She is a full-time wife and mother, homeschool teacher, and reading and writing enthusiast.

When you  
change  
a story...

**STORIES** grow through families. And families thrive when they have the support they need. When you partner with World Renew to Free a Family™ from poverty, you not only care for the health and nutrition of that family's child, you also care for the livelihood and dreams of that family's future. That's more than a single story. It's a heritage.

...they get to  
change  
the world.

**THE EGONGUS**

Family of 12  
Amuria District,  
Uganda



Give to the stories

[worldrenew.net/FreeAFamily](http://worldrenew.net/FreeAFamily)