

# BANNER

MAY 2021

THE BANNER.ORG



# Tending God's Creation

Watch for Our  
Donation Appeal

# A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



Before following Christ, Samson would get into fights and conflicts with his neighbors. But he's changed since he started listening to the Talking Bible. "I heard Jesus say, 'Forgive and you will be forgiven.' So now I don't fight," says Samson. "I have gotten a spirit of perseverance and tolerance."

Listening to the scriptures on the Talking Bible has taught Samson about the power of forgiveness. Now, instead of quarreling with others, Samson knows that forgiveness is the answer. Because forgiveness is the way of Christ.

Samson's life has been transformed by the Word of God through the Talking Bible! New believers like Samson need access to God's Word. Many will only have access if it is through a Talking Bible. Give the gift of God's Word today!



## The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered

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



**Talking Bibles International • [www.talkingbibles.org](http://www.talkingbibles.org)**

419 East Grand Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025 • Telephone: 855-55-BIBLE (855-552-4253) or 760-745-8105 • Mark S Hoekstra, President



# You Will Be My Witnesses

Resonate is an extension of your own church, and **we exist to serve you and walk with you.** We want to help our congregations explore their communities, discover where God is moving, and join God on mission!!

Your church partners with Resonate as you join God's mission in your own neighborhood and around the world. Resonate is here to walk alongside you in preparing missionaries and volunteers, calling and supporting church planters and campus ministers, connecting with ministries overseas, engaging church members and younger generations in mission work, and following the Spirit by discerning new ways to demonstrate and proclaim the gospel.

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



A Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church

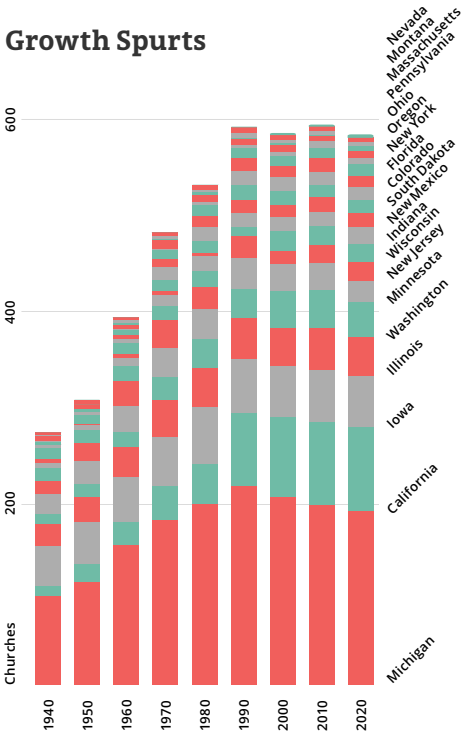
**Resonate**<sup>™</sup>  
GLOBAL MISSION

# BANNER

## BY THE NUMBERS

The Christian Reformed Church in North America got its start in 1857 when about 130 families separated from the Dutch Reformed Church. After World War II, tens of thousands of Dutch Reformed immigrants joined the CRCNA. Below is the growth in the number of churches in the U.S. in states that have more than three churches.

### Growth Spurts



Based on data from Heritage Hall at Calvin University. Heritage Hall is the archive for the CRCNA, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University.

## 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.)

- » Gallup: Fewer Than Half of Americans Belong to a Church or Other House of Worship
- » Podcast: The RELEVANT podcast
- » Music: *House of Miracles* by Brandon Lake
- » Book: *A Bowl Full of Peace*, by Caren Stelson, illustrated by Akira Kusaka

## FEATURES



10

### Tending God's Creation

Frank and David De Haan // How are we taking care of the places where we live?



32

### How to 'Argue' Christianly

Shiao Chong // Gentleness is the key.



36

### Faith Matters: Wanted: Volunteers for Crucifixion

Daniel Boerman // Cross-bearers are more willing to suffer injustice than to seek revenge.



**Cover:** Actions we take now affect not only our own backyards, but also distant places and peoples extending far into the future. // Photo by Kelly Sikkema for Unsplash

**NEWS**

- 15 Consejo Latino: A CRC Network of Resources**
- 16 Classis Watch: Spring 2021**
- 19 Exposing Harassment of OSJ Raises Questions, Hope for Humility**

**COLUMNS**

- 7 Editorial: Words of Life or Death**  
Shiao Chong // Words can lead us to break the sixth commandment: "You shall not murder."
- 8 Reply All**
- 9 Vantage Point: All Lives Matter—Except if We Disagree**  
Patty Hoezee Meyer // We need to practice what we preach.
- 12 Big Questions**  
Should parents have to help in children's worship?
- 31 Discover: A Tree in the Rock**  
Clayton Lubbers // Trees affect the ground in many ways.
- 35 The Other 6: The Sound of Silence**  
Ilka Luyt // Intentionally embracing silence, physically and spiritually, can bring healing.
- 38 Mixed Media: What WandaVision Teaches Us About Grief**  
LeMarr Seandre Jackson // Even a TV show can show us truths about life.
- 40 Cross Examination: Should Our Beliefs Evolve?**  
Mike Wagenman // Faith formation sometimes involves change.
- 41 Word Play**
- 45 In My Shoes: Lessons from Indigenous Mourning**  
Parry Stelter // The biblical picture of mourning seems closer to this.
- 46 Still: It Is Well**  
Helen Sybesma // A blessing is found in the midst of grief.

**OUR SHARED MINISTRY**

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



**Why Planting Churches Matters**

Cassie Westrate // Square pegs don't fit into round holes.

**26 The View from Here:**

**Sharing and Living the Gospel**

Darren Roorda // Does your church have a growth strategy?

**BANNER**

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

- Editor** Shiao Chong
- Associate Editor** Sarah Delia Heth
- News Editor** Alissa Vernon
- 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. 156, No. 5, 2021.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.



# One Gift. One Thousand Churches.

You have the unique opportunity to make an impact on all the congregations of the CRC with just one gift.

Your gift, in addition to ministry shares, ensures these twelve ministries have the resources to serve the one thousand churches of the CRC in their mission to share the love of God with their communities.

By supporting the CRC ministries, your gift reaches one thousand churches across North America.

Give your gift at [crcna.org/1000churches](https://crcna.org/1000churches)



**Christian  
Reformed  
Church**

Faith Formation Ministries / Worship Ministries / Safe Church Ministry / Disability Concerns  
Office of Race Relations / Office of Social Justice / Indigenous Ministry / Centre for Public Dialogue  
Diversity / Candidacy Committee / Chaplaincy and Care Ministry / Pastor Church Resources

## Words of Life or Death

What ties verbal insults to physical murder? I think the common link is dehumanization.



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).

**I WROTE THE ARTICLE** “How to ‘Argue’ Christianly” (p. 32) in December. Back then, I was mainly thinking about how toxic online arguments among Christians have become. Since then, intimidation toward denominational justice and mercy staff have been reported (see p. 18). If I were to write that article now, I would add that our words can cause us to sin. Specifically, our words can break the sixth commandment: “You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13).

Heidelberg Catechism’s Q&A 105 explains that God’s will for us in the sixth commandment is that I am not to “belittle, insult, hate, or kill” anyone, “not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds”; nor am I “to be party to this in others.” According to the catechism, then, if we belittle someone, such as by calling someone an idiot or implying so, we are guilty of murder. Similarly, Jesus said anyone who is angry and insults another “will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matt. 5:21-24). When our disagreements lead to bullying, insulting, or even intimidating words, in God’s eyes we are guilty of murder and must repent.

What ties verbal insults to physical murder? I think the common link is dehumanization. When through our words we reduce people made in God’s image to objects of derision in our minds and hearts, we have made them less human. When we imagine them as less human, it becomes easier for us to abuse or even kill them.

This is why Asian-American Christians have taken issue with the terms “Kung Flu” or “China virus” in reference to COVID-19. From verbal abuse to physical attacks, acts of anti-Asian racism, especially toward women, have risen since the start of the pandemic. Between March 2020 and February 2021 in the U.S. there were 3,795 Anti-Asian incidents reported to

Stop AAPI Hate. How many more were not reported?

With this backdrop, most Asian-Americans feel the March Atlanta shootings, where six of the eight victims were Asian women, had racial overtones. The shooter denies it, claiming his motive was to eliminate temptation for his sex addiction. But this is still dehumanization. It reduces Asian women to sex objects to be eliminated. We can find other examples of how words can foster death, but anti-Asian racism hits close to home for me.

From late-night talk shows to social media memes, we live in a culture where mockery and insults are normal. We no longer see the harm in carelessly “throwing shade” on others. We also live in a world where words—spoken and written—surround us everywhere. We can hardly escape from words. I wonder if that inundation of words makes us care less about how we use them?

In the Bible, words matter. “The tongue,” and by extension written words, “has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Prov. 18:21). Using words well is a grave responsibility for writers and editors like myself. God knows I might have sinned with my words or been party to others doing so, even unintentionally.

Words can foster life or death. We need to be more serious and careful with what we write and say and consider the possible impact of our words beyond our intentions. Let us seek to foster life with our words. **B**

Please consider donating to *The Banner* so we can keep the conversation going. Give online today at [theBanner.org/Donate](http://theBanner.org/Donate). Thank you!

**SUPPORT THE BANNER**

## REPLY ALL

### God and Natural Disasters

With much delight, I read the informative article “Why Do We Blame God for Natural Disasters?” by Mary Hulst, Calvin University pastor (February 2021). Could the COVID-19 pandemic be called a natural disaster? Is it considered an “act of God”? It’s defined by Webster’s as “an extraordinary interruption by a natural cause (such as a flood or earthquake) of the usual course of events that experience, prescience, or care cannot reasonably foresee or prevent.” I postulate that the pandemic is indeed a natural disaster, as well as a national and universal disaster! The health, social, environmental, economic, and political dimensions of this disaster are embedded within one another, and they need to be considered together. Praying that God will guide us as we navigate the pandemic in this era.

» George Groen // Thousand Oaks, Calif.

I am disappointed in Mary Hulst’s simplistic answer to the very difficult question of whom to blame for natural disasters. While Rev. Hulst is certainly correct in pointing out that current human actions sometimes lead to or exacerbate so-called natural disasters, it is a stretch to suppose that all natural disasters have human origins. How is the shifting of the earth’s tectonic plates that led to ... the 2004 Asian tsunami that caused the deaths of at least 230,000 people due to the equivalent of humans pouring gas on their lawn? Calvinist doctrines of God’s sovereignty and predestination provide major problems for theodicy, i.e., the problem of the origin of evil if God is

wholly good. Job’s friends were judged as completely wrong in attributing Job’s misfortunes to his own sinfulness. Similarly, the questions surrounding the origins of evil and suffering as represented by natural disasters are certainly more complex and difficult to answer than Rev. Hulst’s column suggests.

» Robert W. Bruinsma // Edmonton, Alta.

I agree with the author partially. We should not blame God automatically for natural disasters. Yes, often we cause our own disasters, but there is another possibility, namely, that Satan has been given permission by God to cause them for whatever reason. The story of Job makes that pretty clear, I believe. So the cause of natural disasters is not either/or, God or us. It’s more along the lines of “Is God punishing us, did we ourselves bring this about, or has Satan been allowed to bring this about, spoiling more of God’s good creation?”

» Evert Vroon // Edmonton, Alta.

### A Christian Insurrection

A quick note to let you know how much I appreciated your article “Reflections on a Christian Insurrection” ([bit.ly/38DFzmL](http://bit.ly/38DFzmL)). It was insightful, prophetic, and forceful in a good way. It is my hope that it will stimulate important conversations throughout the denomination on an issue that we have been reluctant to confront. Thank you for your courage. Blessings as you continue to speak out!

» Gary VanArragon // Guelph, Ont.



### Evangelicalism and the CRC

What a beautiful, eloquent, theologically spot-on, inspiring, encouraging, and empowering definition of evangelicalism you gave in that recent edition of *The Banner* (“Are We Evangelicals?” March 2021)! I’m a pastor in the CRC, and here’s the thing that puzzles me: I don’t think most of our churches get or embody this definition. I feel—at least in my experience—a radical disconnect between what I see at the think-tank and leadership levels compared to the staunchly embedded us-vs.-them, dualistic thinking and living I keep finding at the local church level. I don’t have any answers, but I encourage you to keep saying things like this; hopefully it’ll trickle down with some repetition.

» Josh Schatzle // Charlottetown, P.E.I.

The article and the related editorial (“What Is Evangelical?” March 2021) raise an interesting issue. During my year at Calvin Seminary back in 1992, professors often explained theological issues by placing the “liberal” understanding on the left, the “evangelical” understanding on the right, and then the Reformed understanding right in the center. That confused me because the evangelical seminary I had attended previously, Regent College, had also taught me that more centrist understanding. When I questioned one professor on the matter, his response was, “Oh, but that’s *British* evangelicalism.” Yet many American institutions would teach the same thing, and the evangelical periodical *Christianity Today* often holds much the same, more centrist position. I have generally referred to myself as an evangelical, often adding the Reformed distinction for nuance. But I sympathize with the questions raised by Shiao Chong in his editorial, and “cultural evangelicalism” has become very problematic. ... These days, when asked if I’m an evangelical, I’m more likely to respond, “What do you mean by ‘evangelical’?”

» Rev. Gary Roosma // Vancouver, B.C.



## All Lives Matter— Except If We Disagree

### A Religious World

Justin Bailey's smart article "Is Our World Less Religious Than Ever?" (March 2021) brought me to a favorite passage of Scripture in Acts 17. ... Pluralism was on display in Athens, just as it is very evident in our world today. The apostle Paul responds with a message of a personal God who commands personal repentance, all based on the (death) and resurrection of Jesus. ... May our Christian response to present-day pluralism and secularism spur us to "look carefully" at what people are buying into and respond gracefully with the gospel message of forgiveness and hope in the name of Jesus. The culture we find ourselves in now needs that message more than ever.

» Mike DeVries // Byron Center, Mich.

READ MORE ONLINE



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

- » A Christian Perspective on COVID Vaccines
- » Out of Grief, Love
- » Let the Church Declare: Asian Lives Matter

"**ALL LIVES MATTER,**" my neighbor said to me as he walked up my drive and nodded toward the Black Lives Matter sign in my front yard. "You should get rid of that."

"All lives do matter," I agreed, "but if I said to my husband, 'I don't think I matter to you,' and he replied, 'Honey, all wives matter,' I don't think that would be helpful. It wouldn't address my hurt. In fact, his comment would intensify my hurt."

When those of us outside the Black community—and those of us in the Christian community—say "all lives matter" in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, we deny the legitimate hurts of the Black community. As German Lopez said on the *Vox* website, "The point of Black Lives Matter isn't to suggest that Black lives should be or are more important than all other lives. Instead, it's simply pointing out that Black people's lives are relatively undervalued in the U.S.—and more likely to be ended by police—and that the country needs to recognize that inequity to bring an end to it."

But after my neighbor left, I continued to think about the phrase "all lives matter." In a sense, I had embraced All Lives Matter as a movement many years ago.

For most of my adult life, I was pro-life—or, as I now define it: pro-birth. I always voted for the pro-life candidate, no matter who, no matter what. But over the years, I became universally pro-life. In other words, I became pro-life on every issue because all lives matter. So today, keeping all human life in mind, I ask, "What does this candidate believe about the environment?" "How will this candidate vote regarding health care?" "What will this candidate do for those who are marginalized in our society?"

If we say "all lives matter," then all lives must matter—not just the lives of the unborn.

After all, if we say "all lives matter," then all lives must matter—not just the lives of the unborn. Thousands die from a lack of clean drinking water, from hunger, poor nutrition, violence, poverty, and inadequate health care in the U.S. and around the world. As Christians, our pro-life stance cannot extend only to the unborn if we say and believe all lives matter.

I left my church in 2008 after discovering that Christians in my church cared more about the unborn than people who disagreed with them on various issues, including people like me. I felt ostracized because of my differing opinions, and my fellow church members called me a "murderer," a "baby-killer," and a "non-Christian."

I learned the hard way: all lives matter, except if we disagree. B



Patty Hoezee Meyer is a former educator and current executive director of the nonprofit Friends of the Felt Estate ([feltmansion.org](http://feltmansion.org)). She lives in Hudsonville, Mich., with her husband. She has written two books: *150 Rules for Carefree Living* and *The Felt Mansion: A Story of Restoration*.



# Tending God's Creation

By Frank and David De Haan

**A**fter creating Adam, God placed him in a garden. The garden would feed Adam, and in return Adam was to take care of it (Gen. 2:15). How are we taking care of the places where we live?

In our interconnected world, actions we take now affect not only our own backyards, farms, and cities, but also distant places and peoples extending centuries into the future. An important example of this interconnectedness is greenhouse gases, which are like a global thermostat, trapping heat in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases emitted anywhere travel around the world within weeks and might remain in the air for many decades, increasingly affecting everyone.

We're starting to see damaging effects from increasing greenhouse gas concentrations—increasingly severe heat waves, storms, floods, and wildfires. Almost two-thirds of Americans now agree that climate change is either a crisis or a serious problem, with a majority wanting immediate action. Yet many others, inside and outside the church, deny the urgency of this problem. They wonder: given

the huge temperature swings from summer to winter, day to night, do a few degrees really matter? They ask: would a good God allow a global climate catastrophe to unfold?

These are fair questions. But they have answers.

## **Do A Few Degrees of Warming Really Matter?**

Let's address this question with relevant information from *climate.nasa.gov*. According to ice core data, in the 12,000 years since the last ice age, the earth's average temperature has changed only slightly from century to century. In the past 50 years, however, temperatures have increased by 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit), and at a rate at least 10 times faster than after any earlier glacial period. It is no coincidence that temperatures are increasing at the same time as greenhouse gas levels. Scientists have calculated that the odds of "natural variability" being the major cause of our rising temperatures are now less than one in 20. Living by this assumption is clearly a foolish gamble.

There are two things to keep in mind about the temperature change we've

seen so far: its unevenness and its speed. While a change of 1 degree Celsius sounds almost imperceptible, this is a global average. Almost all land areas have warmed more than this, and temperatures have been increasing dramatically nearer the poles. Some areas of the Arctic have already warmed by 15 degrees Fahrenheit (*National Geographic*, Nov. 2015, p. 16). A Dartmouth expert on ice melt has described Greenland's current melting rate as a herd of 2,000 elephants entering the ocean every second. Multiple scientific studies predict that if global average temperatures increase by another degree or two, the melting of Greenland's ice sheet will become unstoppable, sending us down a path where sea level will rise by 23 feet over the next few centuries. We might already be halfway down the road to causing this slow-motion disaster.

The speed of change also matters. In a warming climate, plants and animals migrate toward the poles or to higher altitudes to stay at similar temperatures. Entire ecosystems must travel together to survive, so the speed at which successful migration can occur is quite slow. As reported by Elizabeth Kolbert in *The Sixth Extinction*, if our rapid rise in temperature continues for

another few degrees, a mass extinction is likely. Up to one-third of God's species might be gone, including many associated with mountaintops (redwoods, pikas), polar regions (polar bears, ringed seals, penguins), and coral reefs. All of us who worship God as Creator should work together to prevent such a loss.

### **Would God Allow This to Happen?**

God is good, all the time. Would God allow our coastal cities to be lost to the ocean, or so many of his creatures to vanish? We can all affirm that God is active in restraining evil as he works out his purposes of salvation. A normative way that God restrains evil, however, is by allowing us to experience the damage and brokenness caused by our actions so that we will turn to him in repentance. Jesus' parable of the prodigal son illustrates this. The son's dissolute lifestyle and rejection of his father landed him in dire poverty. If his father or anyone else had shielded him from the consequences of his actions, the son would not have been driven by hunger to return home, and he would never have experienced the intensity of his father's love expressed in the joyous welcome and restoration the son received upon arrival.

But isn't God in charge of climate? Indeed he is, but he loves humankind so much that when we mess up, he sends us wake-up calls and makes us deal with the consequences. Great parenting! In the 1980s, the protective ozone layer was depleted by refrigerant chemicals, and we had to fix it. Now the U.S., with 5% of the world's population, is using 25% of its resources. By unnecessarily adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, we are disregarding the survival of other species and the welfare of future generations. This is evil, another aspect of our damaging fallenness.

By unnecessarily  
adding  
greenhouse  
gases to the  
atmosphere, we  
are disregarding  
the survival of  
other species  
and the welfare  
of future  
generations.

Our climate is breaking down, and we are the cause. How will we respond?

The church should know the correct way to respond. Let others try to shift blame, justify inaction, or jockey for advantage in the chaos. We know that even though God is in control, he prefers to work through his people. We therefore must abandon all our sinful ways and, like the prodigal son, decide to return home. This is the only road to renewal and restoration. We pray:

*Father, thank you for our exquisitely beautiful home, its amazing diversity of plants and animals, and your provision for every living thing. We confess that we have not taken adequate care of your creation. We have lived large instead of simply, used far more than was necessary, and have sought luxury instead of you. You've called us to care for "the least," as you do, but instead we have placed our wants front and center and left little for the poor or for future*

*generations to work with. Father, forgive us! Help us to reorder our lives, reflecting your love and care for others and for all parts of your good creation. Through the Holy Spirit, heal us and our land. In Jesus' name, amen.*

The prodigal son didn't make it all the way home before his joyful father ran out to meet him. God can use our small steps toward faithful living to accomplish something big—in our hearts, in our churches, and in our world.

### **What Would Reordered Lives Look Like?**

You will need to envision this for yourself, guided by the Spirit. Here's what we envision:

- » Practice the spiritual disciplines of simplicity and generosity.
- » Focus on relationships rather than possessions.
- » Support leaders who will courageously address climate change.
- » Rapidly reduce our carbon footprint—the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted by our activities and our purchases—by enacting many small and large changes in how we live, work, and travel.
- » Downsize, consume less, waste less, and love more. **B**



Frank De Haan is a retired chemistry professor and an active member at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sun Valley, Calif. His son, David De Haan, serves as professor of chemistry and biochemistry at the University of San Diego and as a volunteer musician at Redemption Church in Scripps Ranch, Calif. The two recently authored *Reading Genesis and Modern Science: A Study Guide*, which includes a chapter on global climate change.



## BIG QUESTIONS

### Ethics

#### Should Christians own guns for self-defense?

While restrictions and requirements differ from state to state, U.S. law generally allows for the ownership of firearms for purposes of self-defense (much less so in Canada). Whether we as Christians should exercise that right is a harder question.

Jesus said that his followers should “turn the other cheek” when struck by an assailant (Matt. 5:39) and strive to love their enemies (5:44). Because of this, Christian ethics has historically been somewhat skeptical about self-defense for believers. When affirmed, it is usually defended with philosophical reasoning rather than in direct biblical and theological terms.

John Calvin, for example, thought that Christians should be willing to allow themselves to be harmed and their possessions taken rather than retaliating against an enemy. Rather than defending themselves, he said, Christians should rely for their defense on public officials vested with responsibility for the common good (the “sword” of Romans 13, as in just war or just policing). By this principle, it would be hard for me to justify owning a gun to defend myself, but more defensible if I had serious reason for concern for, say, my family members and unreliable access to law enforcement authorities.

In addition to whether self-interest or concern for vulnerable others is the motivating factor, we should also consider whether we want to cultivate the mindset needed to use a deadly



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

weapon properly under duress. We ask soldiers and police officers to cultivate that mindset as a sacrifice for the good of society. The fact that it can be a hard sacrifice is shown by what scholars call the painful “moral injury” that soldiers and police officers sometimes experience as a result of their profession’s involvement in violence, even when doing so lawfully and with moral justification.

Do we want to become the kind of people who are ready—primed, vigilant, suspicious—to harm a potential threat? This might be a sacrifice we are called to make on behalf of those we are responsible for. But if it is a matter of concern for ourselves, Christians have a significant reason to be willing to suffer evil: because we believe in grace and resurrection.

Matt Lundberg is the director of the de Vries Institute at Calvin University. His book *Christian Martyrdom and Christian Violence: On Suffering and Wielding the Sword* comes out this month.

### Faith Formation

#### My church expects parents to help in children’s worship once a month. Is that necessary?

There are a variety of reasons why churches might ask parents to help in children’s worship periodically. The children’s worship curriculum suggests that a leader and a greeter be present, each with a different role

in the worship center. Finding these volunteers can be a problem and, if there are no extra volunteers, the church might have to ask parents. Also, many churches have church or child safety policies that require two adults to be in rooms with children. While this might seem overly strict, we gain protection for our children and our volunteers by following it.

There is more to it than this, though. There are also faith-nurturing benefits for the children. An extra person in a children’s worship room can be very helpful in making the room more worshipful. A good greeter can pay special attention to children who need assistance in settling down, focus the children on what the leader is saying, and help the children to use their time wisely. Adding a second adult in the room gives children more adults with whom they can begin to form relationships in the church. Forming intergenerational relationships is seen as one of the key supports for children and teens in churches. Having more adults in church who know our children is a win for everyone.

Beyond that, most people who lead children’s worship say that even though they miss being in congregational worship, they feel they really have worshiped with the children. Listening to or telling the stories, even if we know them well, and hearing the children’s comments and questions can bring fresh insights to Scripture.

These experiences can enhance worship for adults because we begin to see and hear things we might otherwise miss.

When we're with the children, we do indeed get the opportunity to experience worship. It just looks different.

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries and director of children's ministries at 14th Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. Robert J. Keeley is a professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.

### Relationships

## **My siblings and I can't seem to agree on end-of-life decisions for our parents, and they do not have a living will. How do we find consensus, if not agreement?**

Consensus—having the same values and/or beliefs about something—might not be possible, but agreement is much more attainable. Agreement requires compromise but is less weighty and more concrete. For instance, you and your siblings might come to agree that your parents need to be part of the discussion. However, if your parents are beyond being able to understand and articulate personal wishes, it becomes paramount that you and your siblings find agreement through compromise. In that case, perhaps one of you could be chosen by the rest of you to represent your parents' preferences.

Compromise assumes the validity of everyone's preferences. Everyone's opinion counts, but when there is disagreement, only compromise can move the discussion forward. In your discussion, be thoughtful and respectful, and listen carefully to the reasons for individual preferences.

Begin by agreeing on a meeting in the foreseeable future that can be attended by everyone involved. Agree that each of you will do some research and bring information about, for instance, what it means to have a living will; about cremation versus body burial; about ornate caskets versus a simpler, biodegradable casket; or about resuscitation (or not) after a medical emergency. Distribute the information and agree on another meeting within a month's time. At that meeting, focus on what is truly important: your common desire for closure at death.

Above all, remember that Jesus has promised we will be with him in paradise if we recognize our need for a Savior. Hopefully there is consensus among your parents, you, and your siblings on that score.

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

### Missional Living

## **Could right thinking (and believing) not be enough?**

Western Christianity has asserted that being a Christian means believing the right things and ensuring (via logical argument and rational persuasion) that others do too. However, we are becoming more aware that discipleship is not merely about endorsing a set of propositions or confessional statements.

We realize that our neighbors are not going to believe just because we provide logical evidence of the Bible's relevance or can win arguments about the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection. Instead, they, like us, need to discover and experience the grace of God's kingdom as it is embodied and expressed in our ordinary lives. The gospel truth, after all, has always been a person: "I am the way and the truth

and the life," Jesus said (John 14:6). As we begin to embrace a more holistic approach to discipleship, we also discover that the Spirit is already at work ahead of us in our neighbors and neighborhoods.

Perhaps in this way the Spirit is opening up a space for the church to discover (or recover) a more Christ-like posture in the midst of a changing, seeking world (Phil. 2). Perhaps, as Calvin University philosopher James K. A. Smith proposes, the church must "recognize that its primary responsibility is to live the story for the world, and therefore Christians have a responsibility to 'act well'" (*Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 79). So the question is, how do we learn to "act well" among and with our neighbors? How do we "live the story" as friends and fellow journeyers, appointed and sent to remain right where we are? Perhaps it begins with simply learning to love our neighbors—in other words, by keeping the great commandment in such a way that we bear witness to God's loving reign. How many of your neighbors do you know? What would happen if we were more present, attentive, available, and responsive to those on our block? Perhaps we would discover God at work not only in us, but in the world he created and so loves.

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.



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.

## 'Collaboration at Its Best': RCA-CRC Church Plant

### 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)

**Got a news tip?**

Know of a noteworthy event or accomplishment in the life of a CRC member?

Send your news tip to [news@TheBanner.org](mailto:news@TheBanner.org).

In Phoenix, Ariz., a regional assembly of the Reformed Church in America and a classis of the Christian Reformed Church are cooperating to share resources and offer ministry in Orangewood Community Church, a joint church plant that hosted its first public worship service last June.

The young church is continuing a legacy. "The work that the previous congregation was doing in the community was amazing," lead OCC pastor Fred Bates said. "I believe that our community engagement will be our strength, and our mission is to serve them well."

Support for OCC falls equally on both classes. The CRC furnishes the building; the RCA provides staff. The RCA contributed funds to repave the parking lot; the CRC owns the property. Together they appointed a joint oversight team. Rodney Hugen, a commissioned pastor in the CRC, a church planter, and the head of Mission Southwest (a mission committee shared by Classis Arizona and Southwest Classis), said OCC "doesn't fit the boxes. It's collaboration at its best."

—Maia VanderMeer



Photo by Darla Palacio

Sunday worship takes place at Orangewood Community Church, a joint church plant of area Christian Reformed and Reformed churches in Phoenix, Ariz.



Photo by Mark Morgan

New Hope Center in Cadillac, Mich., is a shelter serving community members without housing. Seen here under construction, its new facility will consolidate five aging and unconnected buildings. New Hope board member Mark Mogan, who is a member of Cadillac CRC, is the building lead for the construction. A wide network of volunteers is contributing to the project, which began last May. It's expected to be completed this spring.

## Wheel House Cafe: Good Coffee, Youth Jobs

Wheel House Cafe is a portable coffee stand operating in the covered front entrance of Christ Church of Davis, a Christian Reformed congregation in Davis, Calif. It opened in mid-February.

"The idea is fairly simple: Provide for the common good of our neighborhood through good coffee, good connections, as well as teaching young people employable skills along the way," said Eric Dirksen, the church's pastor. The church is next to a business park and across the street from the largest high school in the area.

Rebecca Detrick, a member of Christ Church who is also an English teacher, runs the ministry. She offered a resume- and cover letter-writing workshop to interested teens before the start-up.

"They came to the workshop knowing that I could not hire them all, but also knowing that it would help (them) apply elsewhere as well," she said.

—Dan Veeneman



## Consejo Latino: A CRC Network of Resources

Consejo Latino, an active network of Hispanic ministry leaders within the Christian Reformed Church and beyond, is connecting and training pastors seeking ordination in the CRC and helping interested churches to affiliate with the denomination.

For Jose Rayas, Consejo Latino's secretary, the first hint of such a network was around a table in Ancaster, Ont., where he was attending Synod 2012, the annual general assembly of the CRC. Rayas, a church planter and a teacher at All Nations Seminary in El Paso, Tex., spoke with other pastors there about the lack of networking and shared resources among Hispanic pastors in the CRC. With pastors Eduardo Gonzalez and Gianni Gracia, who was already praying to find a solution with what was then Home Missions, Rayas planned a gathering.

In November 2012, 40 pastors met in El Paso. They shared dreams and grief, and they pooled resources. A year later, a core group from the gathering formed a catalyzing group, and in 2015 Consejo Latino officially formed. Rayas became secretary in 2017.

Martha Villafane is the pastor of Latin American CRC in Anaheim, Calif., a mentor for church planters with Resonate Global Mission, and, for the past two and a half years, a board member of Consejo Latino. Before the network, she said, Latino church planters and pastors lacked a connection with denominational leadership. In fact, when Consejo Latino created a database of Hispanic churches in the CRC, they discovered twice as many congregations than what church records said existed. "We wanted to create something new to support all our Latino churches because they are so alone," Villafane said.

"We're experiencing just about everything for the first time," Rayas said. "We've never had this level of involvement in the past. (We are) the first council to



Members of Consejo Latino met in December 2018.

represent the Hispanic ministry (in the CRC) and to interact between them and the denomination as a whole."

With everything so new, Consejo Latino routinely convenes to evaluate its productivity, obstacles, and strategy. The most recent review came at the close of 2020, when the group noted that in the past three years it had hosted four regional conferences and four teaching seminars for Hispanic churches interested in joining the CRC.

The seminars introduce participants to Reformed identity, CRC history and church order, creeds and confessions, hermeneutics, and more. It's had a "tremendous impact," said Rayas, who is passionate about doctrinal unity and multicultural diversity in the CRC. "Some of the folks we had in Phoenix, for example, came as far as from New Jersey. One was a pastor who wanted to affiliate with the CRC because of what he had heard, but he wanted to know for sure." Many churches are "disgruntled with their denominations because of the beliefs they're trying to put on them," Rayas said.

The affiliation process can take six months to two years. Consejo Latino helps bridge the cultural gap in everything from documents and paperwork to doctrinal differences in areas such as infant baptism and speaking in tongues.

"I was an outsider, too, when I came into the CRC 18 years ago," Villafane said. Now she heads recruitment for Consejo Latino. When she joined the CRC, she accepted the theology and practices that were different from hers and has come to deeply love them. "It's the same as family values," she said. "We train people to respect these family values. We have a beautiful denomination, very warm. (The people entering) feel respected, valued, and that is so important."

Consejo Latino is conscious of being a link that serves not only Hispanic churches, but the denomination itself. It's a "two-way learning process," Rayas said. "There are things that we're learning for the first time and things that the denomination is experiencing for the first time because of this. It brings to the forefront how things can change as the denomination truly becomes more culturally and ethnically diverse."

—Maia VanderMeer

# Classis Watch: Spring 2021

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 member churches agree together to follow. Articles are noted here for actions taken by classes in the past several months:

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include candidates Jeremy Oosterhouse, Jaebok Choi, Mike Slofstra, and Erik DeLange (Church Order articles 6 and 10).

One welcomed into ministry in the CRC **from another denomination** following a satisfactory colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) establishing soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice: Rev. Kwang Bae Lee (Art. 8).

Ministers **loaned**: Rev. Ferenc "Frank" Varga to serve the American Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park, Mich. (Art. 13b).

**Ministers released** from a congregation: Revs. Leonard Kuyvenhoven, from Ridgewood CRC (Jenison, Mich.); Ken Vander Horst, from Smithers (B.C.) CRC (Art. 17a).

## Leaving Ministry in the CRC

*Classes may end a pastor's ordained ministry status, guided by Church Order articles 14 and 17. Designations of release, which reflect the manner and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office, are honorably released, released, dismissed, or in the status of one deposed (Art. 14).*

Luke Wynja, David Kroon, and Mark Langenbach were **honorably released**.

Simon Kim and Ben Katt were **released**.

**Ministers retiring (granted emeritus status)**: Revs. Marjorie Kooy, Jantina Cornelison, Calvin Aardsma (effective June 6), Robert Cummings (effective July 1), Henry Steenbergen (effective July 31), and John Gorter (effective July 31) (Art. 18).

Classis **Central California** revised its October 2018 decision and **restored the title of minister of the Word emeritus** to Larry Van Essen (Art. 31).

## Commissioned Pastors

Approved as **commissioned pastors called to specific roles within their classes** were Chava Vang (Lake Erie), Rosario Orosco Callebero (California South), Dan Wierenga (Muskegon), and Mike Mun (Hackensack) (Art. 23).

Yuanita Gitamara (North Cascades) and Catherine Evans-Smith (Central California) were **honorably released** from ministry as commissioned pastors. Leo Clemente (South California) was **released**.

Bob Moore (California South) and Phil Du Bois (California South) were granted **commissioned pastor emeritus status**.

## New Ministries and Ministry Changes

The Story Church (Flushing, N.Y.) was recognized as **emerging**. An emerging (unorganized) church does not have its own council and is under the care of a council of a neighboring CRC (Art. 38).

**Name change**: Reclaim in Anchorage, Alaska (formerly Crosspoint Community Church).

## Other Matters

**Drayton (Ont.) CRC** communicated to Classis Huron "**affirming the tone and analysis of the human sexuality report to synod.**"

**Sully (Iowa) CRC** communicated to Classis Central Plains its **support for**

**synod's human sexuality report, report on ecclesiastical marriage, and study of bivocationality.**

In a note to the Council of Delegates, **Classis Toronto conveyed "support and solidarity" with mercy and justice staff of the CRCNA regarding threatening communications staff have received.**

**Sherman St. CRC** in Grand Rapids, Mich., **communicated** to Classis Grand Rapids East a motion adopted by its council: "**That LGBTQ+ people of Sherman Street, whether single, in a dating relationship, or married, who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, enjoy full participation in the life and leadership of the church,** including ordination to the roles of elder and deacon, preaching, being married, having their children baptized, and filling leadership roles as their gifts allow." The communication said the decision was made in light of a 15-month process of congregation-wide engagement and discernment.

## Synod

*These actions connect to synod, the broadest assembly of the Christian Reformed Church. Although Synod 2021 has been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes may still direct requests or communications to synod.*

**Several classes have sent requests or communications related to Neland Avenue CRC** and its action in 2020 to appoint as deacon a person who is in a same-sex marriage. **Northcentral Iowa expresses "deep concerns"** and calls the denomination to do better "in submitting ourselves to the clear teachings of Scripture."

**Central Plains, Rocky Mountain, B.C. North-West, Columbia, and Minnkota have similar requests.** Classis Rocky Mountain asks that Neland receive "godly admonishment, and appropriate disciplinary action if necessary," and



Classis Columbia asks for Neland to “publicly acknowledge that (its) actions were a violation of our covenant and a violation of God’s Word.”

**Classis Iakota requests that synod offer Neland “and all like-minded churches who desire to read, think, and live outside of the confessional nature and bounds of authoritative Scripture the option to be allowed a one-time six-month window to resign their membership** (at the vote of their individual bodies) from the denomination, with their assets.”

**Classis Grand Rapids East asks synod “to rescind the action of the Council of Delegates in sending a letter to the Council of Neland Ave. CRC expressing disappointment and grieving Neland Ave. CRC’s decision.”** The Council of Delegates decided to send the letter at its October 2020 meeting. Grand Rapids East writes, “The Council of Delegates usurped the authority of the local council and local classis” and “could have reported the concerns it received in correspondence from other classes and churches to Synod 2021, but overstepped its authority by communicating directly to a church council.”

**More classes have sent requests to synod related to the human sexuality report.** (See “Classis Watch: Winter 2021,” April 2021, p. 20.) **Classis Toronto** and **Classis Grand Rapids East** ask synod **not to accede to recommendations in the report.** Grand Rapids East’s request says, “The study committee did not fulfill its mandate” in that the report does not “serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 920).

Classis Toronto writes, “The report includes neither the voices of the LGBTQ+ community who are living in committed monogamous relationships nor those of cisgender members who hold differing biblical views regarding human sexuality. We disagree that the ‘heart of the gospel is the call to repentance and faith’ (Report, p. 147) but rather that love and grace are centered as the heart of the gospel.”

**Classis Minnkota has asked synod to adopt the report**, saying, “Because the report is in agreement with the Bible and our confessions, adopting the report would not unbiblically violate anyone’s conscience and (would) help to ensure that our church leaders are faithfully leading God’s people in his Word and gospel.”

**Classis Northern Michigan communicated support** for the report.

**Classes Niagara, Heartland, Rocky Mountain, Eastern Canada, Lake Erie, Alberta South and Saskatchewan, Hackensack, Iakota, and Alberta North** all tabled or delayed overtures related to the human sexuality report, **deferring deliberation to later meetings.**

**Classis Illiana is reiterating a request it sent to Synod 2020** (which did not meet) asking synod to **declare as heresy denials of penal substitutionary atonement** (*Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 320). The new request refers to a definition of heresy as included in a report to Synod 2020 (*Agenda*, pp. 68-77). Penal substitutionary atonement is the belief that Jesus satisfied at the cross God’s wrath against our sin.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

## Noteworthy

**Churches for Middle East Peace wrote to U.S. President Joe Biden on March 8**, thanking him for making good on the commitment to “to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen” and addressing other policy recommendations related to the Middle East.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is a member of CMEP. Colin Watson Sr., serving as the CRCNA’s executive director, was one of 28 leaders to sign the letter ([bit.ly/CMEPMar8](http://bit.ly/CMEPMar8)).



In January, **Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa, launched the Thrive Center for Applied Behavior Analysis**, the school’s newest affiliated academic center. Offering ABA to children 2-6 years old and social skill groups for older children, Thrive Center is a teaching and a clinical center serving families and children with autism and other learning differences.



Since November 2020 **fifth-graders at Allendale (Mich.) Christian School have mailed cards and letters to more than 150 organizations, businesses, charities, politicians, and churches to spread kindness.** Teachers John Vanden Berg and Jessica Kirchoff called the project Choose Kind → Spread Kind. In a letter introducing it, they wrote, “During a time when a contagious virus has caused stress, anxiety, and some negativity, we want to focus on the contagious nature of kindness.”

READ MORE ONLINE

# Exposing Harassment of OSJ Raises Questions, Hope for Humility

Reports to the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates in February brought to light longstanding harassment that staff of the denomination's Office of Social Justice and the CRC's Race Relations office have been experiencing as they carry out their work. (See "Mercy and Justice Staff Report Escalating Intimidation," April 2021, p. 17.)

"While this issue may be newly exposed to those in the CRCNA, it is unfortunately not new," wrote CRC executive director Colin Watson Sr. and Paul DeVries, chair of the Council of Delegates, in a March 23 follow-up addressing questions about the incidents.

Some of the received communications and threats were delivered anonymously. Other examples came from within the church. "As the COD looked at examples of the things that staff have endured, it was painfully clear that CRC members, including officebearers, were involved in multiple instances," DeVries and Watson wrote in the March 23 communication.

So why is this happening?

"There are longstanding theological debates on the nature and limits of social justice and anti-racism work in the church," said Mike Hogeterp, director of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue in Canada. "These debates have often shaped ... CRC justice work on both sides of the border in healthy ways. But the toxic polarization that has grown recently in the wider culture has found its way into the church and has led to incivility and a failure to respect one another."

## Debates at Synod

Such debates about justice have bubbled up at synod, the annual general assembly of the CRC.

When Synod 2018 addressed varying requests about justice work, it reminded member churches to "continue engaging in the social/political/economic layers of public life," and it pointed out that "in the



Unsplash photo by Aaron Burden

significant majority of cases, it has been synod itself that has provided the initial instruction behind CRCNA social justice activity." It also asked the Council of Delegates to create a committee of guidance and support for the Office of Social Justice (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 524-528).

Synod 2019, after receiving differing requests about the 2012 decision to encourage member churches to take an active role in mitigating climate change, decided more clarity is needed. "Differing political understandings of justice continue to come before synod, along with questions about what matters are ecclesiastical and therefore appropriate to be enacted at the levels of synod, classes, and local councils," *Acts of Synod 2019* says (p. 821). So synod asked the Council of Delegates to provide historical research on the rationale for past synodical decisions related to political matters, hoping to "fully answer: 'What is an ecclesiastical matter, and what is the rationale for determining it?'"

The Council did some of that research (see "When Should the Church Speak?" December 2019, p.22), but it wants synod to appoint its own study committee to

discern and develop a definition of "ecclesiastical." Because synod hasn't met since 2019, that recommendation, found in *Agenda for Synod 2020* (p. 41), hasn't had a hearing. (The synods of 2020 and 2021 have been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

## Committee for Guidance and Support

Meanwhile, the committee requested by Synod 2018 to provide guidance and support for OSJ has been established. So far, it has leaned into the support part of its mandate—a stance that's "very appropriate considering the level of bullying that has gone on," said Mark Stephenson, interim director of OSJ and Race Relations.

Minutes of a November 2020 meeting of the Committee for Guidance and Support of the OSJ note that a consultant was engaged "to facilitate a series of in-depth conversations among staff to help them move beyond the pain and anger they are experiencing in their work. So far, the conversations have been very helpful."

## Church Worldwide

In addition to publishing a statement concerning harassment of staff March 23, Stephenson said, the committee also established a new email address, [OSJ\\_Committee@crcna.org](mailto:OSJ_Committee@crcna.org), so people can “connect directly with committee members.”

Statements of support for staff should not be seen as shutting down others’ views on justice issues.

“We’re not for a moment trying to suppress disagreement,” Stephenson said. “The concern is when people, instead of articulating ‘these are my concerns about this position of the Office of Social Justice,’ they launch into ‘you’re out of your minds’ or labeling.

“That’s not only unhelpful, it’s un-Christian, and what my hope is through all this exposure is together we can start to learn about how to apply Philippians 2—how to have the mind of Christ among (us) in our speech, in our conversations, in our disagreements; that we are humble, gentle, respectful. That would be my hope of what would come out of this,” Stephenson said.

Philippians 2—a charge to imitate Christ’s humility—is mentioned in the preamble to a Code of Conduct proposed by the Council of Delegates to be adopted by synod for all ministry leaders in the CRC.

It’s one of the steps called for by Synod 2019 to address and prevent abuse of power. The Council adopted the code for its own use in spring 2020. At its February meeting, members were reminded of it and were also encouraged to speak up about unkind speech.

“Members are strongly encouraged to confront anyone speaking in a derogatory manner—it is not Christian. We are called to be ‘light’” (Minutes of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, Feb. 17-19, 2021).

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

The Banner has a subscription with the Associated Press to republish religion and faith content from the AP and Religion News Service. These stories, in brief here, were published on [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) over the past few months.



Photo by AP Photo/Marianne Armstrong

Luis Palau (left), in March 2003, prepares for BeachFest, his multimedia Christian revival event, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

[AP]—**Luis Palau**, an evangelical pastor who was born in Argentina and went on to work with Billy Graham before establishing his own far-reaching international ministry, **died Mar. 11. He was 86.**

[RNS]—The **Asian American Christian Collaborative**, formed in 2020 to speak against anti-Asian racism at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **coordinated rallies and issued a statement in March denouncing racial hatred and condemning the March 16 shooting deaths of eight people in Atlanta, Ga.**, including six women of Asian descent. Jeff Liou, a

commissioned pastor with the Christian Reformed Church, is part of AACC’s leadership team. Colin Watson Sr., executive director of the CRCNA, **also issued a statement about the deaths in Atlanta** ([bit.ly/WatsonAtIStatement](https://bit.ly/WatsonAtIStatement)).

[RNS]—**Following the release of an independent investigation determining sexual misconduct by the late international ministry founder Ravi Zacharias**, the Christian and Missionary Alliance revoked his ordination Feb. 12. **Ravi Zacharias International Ministries Canada** on Feb. 18 **announced it is disbanding.**

[RNS]—The board of **Bethany Christian Services approved “a nationwide policy of inclusivity in order to serve all families across Bethany’s core service lines” Jan. 20.** It announced the move to staff March 1. The significant change for the evangelical ministry makes Bethany, the largest Protestant adoption and foster care agency in the United States, open to LGBTQ couples.



Photo by AP Photo/Paul Sancya



Artist Melissa Fischer, a member of Immanuel Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., and the church’s prayer coordinator, has led three “Sketching as Prayer” retreats through the church.

Fischer sketched this image during a January 2020 retreat.

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Peter Jan Boodt*  
1929-2021

For more than 40 years, Peter Boodt pastored Christian Reformed congregations across Canada. After living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia during the latter years of his life, Peter died Feb. 14.

With his growing family, Peter emigrated in 1961 from the Netherlands to Alberta, Canada, and then moved to Grand Rapids, Mich. After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1964, he served the following: Wallaceburg (Ont.) CRC; Stratford (Ont.) CRC; First CRC, Rocky Mountain House, Alta.; Bethel CRC, Brockville, Ont.; and Sunrise CRC, Ponoka, Alta. After retirement in 1996 he continued to serve churches in central Alberta and later in British Columbia.

An accomplished pianist and organist, Peter often preached and played the piano during a worship service and directed several choirs in the churches he served. He was an avid fisherman. He enjoyed having company for coffee or dinner and could often be found busy in the kitchen preparing a meal or baking bread. A "people person," he enjoyed walking his dog in his neighborhood, engaging neighbors and strangers alike in convivial conversation.

Peter is survived by Janet, his wife of 63 years; five children and their spouses; 13 grandchildren; and 22 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased in 2005 by his son Jeremy.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Peter Kang*  
1954-2021

The life of Peter Kang was marked by a passionate dedication to Jesus Christ in local ministry and on the mission field. He died Feb. 11 due to COVID-19.

Kang served as an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in the School of Intercultural Studies since 2000. He earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and an M.Div. from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

He pastored All Nations Church in Lake Terrace View, Calif., with his wife, Christina, also a pastor. First ordained in the Evangelical Church Alliance International, Kang was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church in 2010. As pastor of family ministry at All Nations Church until 2015, Kang cared for church members, pastors, and missionaries across the world. He was an associate member of Santiphap Mission Initiatives, which has been planting churches in Thailand, since 2018.

Kang also was a founder of Providence University in California, established in 2019 with co-founder Edward Yoon.

A dedicated father and grandfather, Kang enjoyed spending time with his family as well as cooking, watching sports, and traveling. He is survived by his wife, Christina; two children and their spouses; and one granddaughter.

—Jonathan Kim

## Coopersville CRC Turned 100 in 2020



Artwork by congregation member Mrs. Eleanor Drooger (d. 2017) depicts Coopersville CRC's original building on Pine Street (left) and the current church on Henry Street.

In October 2020, Coopersville (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church marked 100 years of ministry. The congregation celebrated with a service that included three messages focused on the past, present, and future. Lloyd Hemstreet, the church's current pastor; Bob Zomermaand, a former interim pastor; and Steve Bussis, the most recent pastor to have served the congregation before Hemstreet, all preached.

Zomermaand, now a member of Coopersville CRC with his wife, Janine, wrote a history of the church for a 100th-anniversary booklet.

Zomermaand noted setbacks and periods of growth over the church's 100 years, including a split as it was trying to call its first pastor just four years after the church first formed: "The church called a candidate who did not pass his classical ordination exam when questioned on his stance on common grace. ... The issue was a point of severe contention in the whole denomination that year, and many pastors and their churches left the CRC due to the position taken by the denomination."

Zomermaand also noted that after the release of the 1934 Psalter Hymnal, "It took only five years for our congregation to adopt the singing of hymns in worship. There was one stipulation, however: there had to be no more than 50% of singing done from hymns (like most CRC congregations of the time, previously we only sang psalms)."

Photos included in the booklet picture the congregation rebuilding after a lightning strike, remounting vacation Bible school, and hosting a drive-in service during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor



# dwell<sup>®</sup>

Faith Alive's most popular children's ministry curriculum.

Created from a Reformed perspective, DWELL awakens kids' imaginations to God's ongoing story. It comes with easy-to-use leader resources, active and engaging lessons, and colorful story symbols that create visual timelines of events from the Bible.

**Don't miss out on DWELL. Visit [DwellCurriculum.org](https://DwellCurriculum.org) to learn more and download free samples.**



**[Facebook.com/DwellCurriculum](https://Facebook.com/DwellCurriculum)**  
**[Twitter.com/DwellCurriculum](https://Twitter.com/DwellCurriculum)**

# Children



# Why Planting Churches Matters

By Cassie Westrate, Resonate Global Mission

**A** square peg trying to fit into a round hole. That's what Dirk VanEyck felt like while he was interning at Brookside Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was completing his studies at Calvin Theological Seminary but had not grown up in a traditional church with pews and an organ. There wasn't anything wrong with the church; he was just having a difficult time feeling as if he belonged.

"Maybe there's an opportunity here," Brookside pastor Paul DeVries told VanEyck one day. "Maybe instead of making you, a square peg, fit into a round hole, we make a square hole."

That opportunity turned into Encounter, a church planted in nearby Kentwood, Mich. Within 10 years, Encounter has grown into an established congregation with hundreds of members and is in the process of planting another site today—and Encounter is just one of the many Christian Reformed church plants that have grown.

One of the CRCNA's *Our Journey 2025* ministry priorities is to share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant churches. It comes back to the "square peg, round hole" problem.

Whether it be because of age, ethnicity, culture, language, church model, how people connect to God in worship, or something else, it can be hard for people to find the right fit. Church plants are specifically designed to reach people that established churches haven't been able to reach so people can be part of a community, learn about Jesus, and worship God in ways that resonate with them.

But church planting is hard work. It's a denominational effort, and there's one important support system the CRCNA has been having trouble finding: churches who are willing to plant and parent new churches.

"I think sometimes we hear this sort of sense that it's church planting versus church renewal, and you have to pick one," said Kevin Schutte, who works with Resonate Global Mission to lead church planting in the denomination. "Why spend money on a church plant when we could invest in our own?"

But it doesn't have to be an either/or question, he explained. In fact, it's usually more of a both/and situation.

While planting and parenting a church certainly comes with challenges and sacrifices, many established churches experience renewal in their own congregations through

---

Encounter, planted by Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., meets just a few blocks away from its parent church, but Encounter is reaching an entirely new demographic, including young adults.

the process. They also see renewal in their neighborhoods as church plants reach people who are searching for a faith community where they feel as if they "fit" or belong.

#### Partnering to Bridge a Cultural and Racial Divide

Bethany CRC in Bellflower, Calif., is a church that dates back more than 75 years. Over the past few decades, people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds, especially Latino people, have found a home in the neighborhood.

That's why Tomas Ivens decided to plant Ethnos Community Church and why Bethany offered to support it as a parent congregation. Ethnos is a bilingual church intent on reaching first- and second-generation Latino immigrants in the community—and Bethany is walking alongside the church plant.

"I can tell that they are our partners, more than our mother or parent church," said Ivens. "We are always trying to close that cultural and racial gap. ... The community recognizes Bethany because they've been in the community 75 years. They have facilities, resources, and very talented and gifted people. But they don't always know how to engage the community."

The people who make up Ethnos, however, understand the cultural context. Ivens has a heart and a gift for outreach and knows how to engage the multicultural community, especially the growing Latino population. He serves on the board of a local nonprofit, has formed a relationship with the school district, and leads training for parents in the community.

Bethany provides meeting space, financial support, and prayer for Ethnos, and the two churches have worked together on outreach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, they made gift baskets with Dutch and Mexican treats and delivered them to neighbors in the community.

At least three people in their community accepted Christ this past year, and many more people are connecting with the churches, including seekers who are interested in learning more about Jesus.

Mirtha Villafane, who works with Resonate and Classis Greater Los Angeles, is working within the denomination to establish more churches for the growing Latino population in North America. There aren't enough churches where people can worship in their culture and language, she said. Finding churches to parent new congregations is essential for those efforts.

"When you are an emerging church, you need a lot of people to help," Villafane said. "What's the commitment? Supervising and praying for the pastor, the church, and the

emerging congregation. If you want to support them with money, that's fine. If you can't, that's fine too."

Partnership and support can take many forms, but a healthy relationship is key for ministry.

"The church has an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus and to be part of the important role in the transformation of our communities," Ivens said. "If we can do it together, it's going to be more powerful."

### A New Demographic Encounters Jesus

Sometimes church plants reach across cultural and language barriers; sometimes they reach people who are looking for a good fit for their age, worship style, or preference for church model. That's one of the reasons Brookside CRC decided to plant Encounter.

Meeting in a building just down the road from Brookside, Encounter has reached an entirely new demographic. While many young adults had been leaving traditional churches, most of the adults at Encounter are ages 18-29. Many of them, especially in the first few years, visited or started attending because parents or older adults in the area had told them about the new church plant.

"There were so many of these parents whose hearts broke for their kids who were getting disconnected from Jesus and weren't attending church or weren't practicing their faith, but were still identifying as Christian—kind of, sort of," said VanEyck.

DeVries admits that it was difficult at times for his congregation to watch Encounter thrive in a way their church had not, but he also said that was the point.

"That's part of the reason we started Encounter and blessed them: they're going to do things that we won't," DeVries said. "It was more advantageous to God's kingdom to start something entirely new."

Alongside other churches in Classis Thornapple Valley, Brookside gave financial support, but they also sent 60 members to plant Encounter with VanEyck. The church invited VanEyck and his team to use Brookside's office space and, perhaps most importantly, DeVries provided mentorship.

"He helped me find resources and networks that I had no idea existed," VanEyck said. "That was invaluable. I don't think you could put a number on it."



Ethnos Community Church, parented by Bethany CRC, is intent on reaching first- and second-generation Latino immigrants in Bellflower, Calif.

While it was initially stretching for Brookside, DeVries said that planting Encounter brought renewal to the congregation.

"As churches age and grow, just as human beings age and grow, you have to be thinking of your health," said DeVries. "(Church planting) gives new energy and vision. ... You need that thriving energy to stay healthy. You get so much long-term benefit. We have a lot of churches that are small and struggling and need renewal. We see church planting as one of the ways to help with that."

Now Encounter is in the process of planting a church through a multisite model. A lot of people were driving 20 or more minutes to worship and other events. So, rather than starting an entirely new church, Encounter is establishing a new site to reach another neighborhood.

"Once you start driving in 20 minutes, it just gets harder," said VanEyck. "It's harder to join a Sunday morning serving team. It's harder to join a small group. It's harder to—this is a big one—invite your neighbors to church who don't know Jesus."

Churches in Classis Thornapple Valley, including Brookside, have given a lot of financial support to Encounter as it works with a church planter to establish the new site.

"Church planting is something that gives Classis Thornapple Valley energy," DeVries said. "I think still too often churches think too individualistically. We're in this together." **B**

*Let's partner together to plant more churches and reach more people. If you're interested in planting or parenting a new church, Resonate and the CRCNA have resources to walk alongside you and support you in the process. Get started by visiting [ResonateGlobalMission.org/starting](https://ResonateGlobalMission.org/starting).*



## Youth Justice Project Supports Young Changemakers

**THE STUDENTS** at Unity Christian School in Chilliwack, B.C., are committed to being good stewards of God's creation. When the seventh-grade class began seeing the effects of improper waste disposal globally and locally, they began exploring ways in which they could actively participate in providing solutions to the problem of waste. While it was an overwhelming issue, they quickly realized they needed to start with their own school.

"Students saw the need to change the way Unity dealt with their garbage," said Julia, a former student. "There were no bins to sort our waste; this gave us no choice but to toss our compost and recycling into the garbage."

The class started small by collecting garbage and recyclables, and by composting in the middle school area. The students continued their mission to be good earthkeepers by coming up with several ideas to help educate other students about where to put their waste and by adding new bins outside for access by students eating there.

These changes have now become a collaborative, school-wide effort. Each year the fifth-grade students do their part by collecting refundable bottles to keep more waste out of the landfills. The elementary and high school divisions joined the efforts the following year.

"I think that the changes we have made are greatly important," Miles, an eighth-grader, said. "God tells us in the Bible to take care of the creation that he has made for us. It is important for us to carry out the work that God has given to us."

One way the students at Unity were able to accomplish many of their creation care activities was through a grant from the Youth Justice Project




Students outside Unity Christian School in Chilliwack, B.C., near the new bins purchased with a grant from Diaconal Ministries.

(YJP), an initiative of the NewGround program of Diaconal Ministries Canada. They also received funding from the City of Chilliwack and support from the deacons at Heartland CRC.

"The YJP provides young people with coaching, relational support, and encouragement as they put their ideas for making a difference into action," Rachel Vroege, Diaconal Ministries' regional ministry developer, said. "Through this process of learning about injustice and being nurtured into responding through their faith community, young people are encouraged to be incredible changemakers."

Nathan Boersma, vice principal of Unity, shared his appreciation for the partnership and, more specifically, to Vroege for approaching and encouraging the school to apply. "We

want to express our sincere gratitude to NewGround for offering this grant money," Boersma said. "This and other projects have helped our students become locally active and give their time and effort to raise awareness for important causes that directly affect our community. Our students are actively living out their desire to care for God's world and to love their neighbors as themselves."

For more information about NewGround and/or the Youth Justice Project, visit [diaconalministries.com/newground](http://diaconalministries.com/newground) or call (800) 730-3490, ext. 4304. 

—Erin Knight,  
Communications Coordinator,  
Diaconal Ministries Canada

**The View from Here**

## Sharing and Living the Gospel

**ACCORDING TO STUDY.COM**, the textbook definition of a “growth strategy” is “the method that an institution uses to achieve their goals for expansion.” Generally, it involves at least three things: an internal adjustment, an external focus, and risk. Does your church have a growth strategy? Do you sense that our denomination has one? And are we ready to risk it for Jesus’ sake?

Fittingly, at the Council of Delegates meeting in February, Zach King, director of Resonate Global Mission, reminded those in attendance that “we are all missionaries.” It seems to me that such a phrase conveys the heart of God’s growth strategy: the Great Commission (Matt. 28). It also conveys the overall strategy for growth that Jesus placed upon the church in Acts. And it is, for us as the Christian Reformed Church, the fourth milestone of the *Our Journey 2025* ministry plan.

That milestone is this: “We desire to be congregations and communities that share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighborhoods as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.”

As Canadian ministries director, I see this desire being lived out in so many places across Canada. I see it in Destination Church in St. Thomas, Ont., which converted an old bar into

Every part of our denomination needs a growth strategy. ... Perhaps seeing ourselves as missionaries is the place to begin.

a ministry center and transformed the town around it. I see it in Bridge Church in Fort Saskatchewan, Alta., which launched a completely online church that includes dedicated pastoral leadership, community, discipleship, and small groups. And I see it when you or I invite a friend into a deepening relationship with Jesus. This is missionary work!

Within Canada, CRCNA missionary efforts also expand nationally to places like our three Canadian Indigenous Ministry centers in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Regina as they embody the gospel with and to Indigenous communities in their midsts. The missionary staff have become frontline workers during the pandemic as they serve meals, provide hospitality and fellowship, and care for very vulnerable urban populations. That’s missionary work!

The Centre for Public Dialogue also worked with key partners in 2019 and 2020 to extend grace to recent immigrants so that their financial debts

to the government are further minimized. This too is missionary work!

And around the world, as Resonate, Reframe, and World Renew bring the gospel in word and in deed to places far away from North America, they do so in ways that bring people to Christ and carry out mercy and justice. That’s missionary work.

Yet even with all of these success stories going on, I know there is a lot more we could do. Every part of our denomination needs a growth strategy. Every church needs a growth strategy. Perhaps seeing ourselves as missionaries is the place to begin.

That’s the thinking behind *Our Journey 2025*. As we go into this five-year stretch, imagine what God could do with and through our denomination if we all took this call to be missionaries seriously.

Theoretically, it should be easy for us Reformed types. After all, God has called us to embody gospel witness everywhere and in all areas of life. This includes practicing the way of Jesus in our neighborhoods and the world and dedicating abundant resources of time, talent, and treasure to this cause.

Granted, there are myriad challenges in our churches right now. This is not the place to name them. But challenges will never cease. What must rise above the challenge is a real, practical, comprehensive growth strategy. I look forward to seeing how God will use us.



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

## A Story of Divine Hospitality

**JENICA GROOT-NIBBELINK'S** path seemed clear. Having completed bachelor's and master's degrees in English, she was enjoying her work as a ministry intern with the Kuyper Centre for Emerging Scholars, a Christian Reformed campus ministry at Western University in London, Ont.

Although her studies at Calvin Seminary were initially set to begin in the fall semester of 2013, she decided to defer starting her program for one year. She felt called to continue serving in her chaplaincy role at Western for another academic year.

But suddenly, all those plans changed.

On Sunday, March 16, 2014, Jenica had just finished preaching a sermon titled "Seeing God Anew" and was on her way back home when a large truck T-boned her vehicle. The crash left her with several life-threatening injuries, including severe head trauma. Jenica remembers nothing of the several months that followed.

She spent weeks intubated in a critical care trauma unit and months in a coma. When she finally regained consciousness, she needed to relearn everything, from walking to talking, from breathing to eating. Finally, after six months, Jenica was released from the hospital to her parents' home.

But her healing journey had just begun. Her new, rigorous schedule was dominated by appointments with physiotherapists, voice therapists, cognitive therapists, and hand therapists, plus training in the latest assistive technology. Numerous other medical appointments also filled her weeks.

Throughout her road to recovery, Jenica's sense of calling persisted. In the fall of 2015, she decided to test the waters to determine how ready she was to begin academic work.



Jenica Groot-Nibbelink has looked to God and to stories from God's Word for strength in trying times.

Needing to stay connected to her local network of therapists, doctors, and other specialists, Jenica's original plan of residential studies was now off the table. However, Calvin Seminary worked with her to offer an independent study course through distance learning. The course, Spiritual Formation for Leadership, proved to be affirming for Jenica.

For the next few years, Jenica took one course per semester until the 2020-21 academic year, when she experimented with two courses per term. She's now on track to graduate with her M.A. in Ministry Leadership in spring 2022.

In Jenica's view, Calvin's distance learning program is "an expression of God's hospitality."

"The barriers of relocation and transportation are removed," she explains. "The distance learning program allows

you to express and apply theological truths in your here and now, wherever you live (and) breathe."

While Jenica's story has inspired many, she finds that the stories of her fellow distance-learning students also inspire her. Jenica said it's often in the "jagged" stories where God is most clearly at work. "It's in our brokenness where we often discover God's faithfulness in new ways."

Jenica is unsure where God will lead her once her degree is complete, although she dreams about possibly serving as a spiritual director at a retreat center. Nevertheless, she's learned that it can be an audacious thing to claim to know what God has planned. "There is so much mystery," she said. "His ways are not our ways."

— Shawn Brix,  
Canadian Church Relations

## ‘Hearts Exchanged’ Seeking Participants

**HEARTS EXCHANGED** is a learning and action journey that equips Reformed Christians to engage with Indigenous peoples as neighbors in ways that grow trust and transformation.

The Christian Reformed Church is now seeking participants from every Canadian Classis to participate in cohorts that will begin this fall.

Over the past year, the CRC’s Justice and Reconciliation team has piloted *Hearts Exchanged* cohorts in Eastern Canada and Alberta. They’ve developed a compelling program that includes connecting via monthly Zoom conversations. These conversations explore the reconciling gospel and model a posture of respect, reciprocity, and relationship-building using Indigenous teachings on belonging and generosity as the basis for learning.



**HEARTS EXCHANGED**

Between sessions, participants complete learning activities designed to deepen their understanding of biblical reconciliation and Indigenous/settler relationships.

“So far, this has been time well spent,” said Justice and Reconciliation mobilizer Shannon Perez. “Participants are having real, sincere reflections, and this is a good place to be open to these kinds of reflections.”

*Hearts Exchanged* was inspired by the CRC Cross-cultural Ministry Forum of 2000 and gets its name from Indigenous participant Ray Aldred, who said, “When it comes to cross-cultural ministry, I could give you techniques, but what has made the greatest impact is when we exchanged hearts.”

Denominational staff took this guidance seriously and intentionally designed the cohorts to be places where it is safe to “exchange hearts” with honesty, humility, and a desire to be changed.

Anyone connected to the CRC in Canada who is wrestling with the challenges and opportunities of reconciliation and has a mind and heart open to transformation is welcome to participate in regional cohorts starting in fall 2021. Express your interest in joining a cohort at [crcna.org/hearts-exchanged](http://crcna.org/hearts-exchanged).

—Victoria Veenstra,  
Justice Communications Team

## Japanese Health Care Workers Find Strength

### AS IN MANY HOSPITALS

around the world, Momoru said the hospital where he works near Tokyo, Japan, has felt “more like a battlefield than a place of care.”

Facing patient deaths, a lack of supplies, and feelings that the coronavirus waves will never end, Momoru has been second-guessing his career path.

“Why am I even doing this? I often ask myself after a long shift at the hospital,” Momoru admitted.

Yet every work shift, he chooses to return to the battlefield. Messages from ReFrame Ministries’ Japanese outreach are giving him the hope he needs to do that. (ReFrame Ministries is the new name of Back to God Ministries International.)

Momoru takes a train to the hospital. During his commute, he faithfully listens to God’s Word on his phone along with the devotional messages from ReFrame.

The messages help Momoru see how God has called him to serve in the hospital during the worst pandemic of our lifetime.

“The Word teaches me how to spend each day,” Momoru said.

As the pandemic worsened, Momoru was surprised to discover that he wasn’t the only one listening to the programs. Patients and fellow hospital workers were reading and listening too. While Christians in Japan are few and far between, the messages are providing regular reminders of God’s good news.

Momoru said he is not a Christian yet despite his regular meditation in God’s Word, but he and many people like him are asking important questions as a result of COVID-19. He is considering attending church again when the pandemic has subsided in Japan.

This Pentecost (Sunday, May 23), people around the world will hear God’s Word in their own languages thanks to support for the Christian Reformed Church’s media ministry. Please pray that people like Momoru will continue to seek God’s Word as they look for answers in difficult times.

— Brian Clark,  
ReFrame Ministries



Momoru listens to ReFrame’s Japanese ministry programs before heading into long shifts at the hospital during the pandemic.

## Virtual Pulpit Supply

**EVEN BEFORE COVID-19**, the Worship Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church identified a need for a library of video sermons for use in churches with pastoral vacancies, especially those that are geographically distant from other CRC congregations, which can make finding pulpit supply difficult.

However, during the restrictive months of the pandemic, with congregations being forced to adapt and go virtual, a new use for the videos became apparent: rest for pastors.

“As Worship Ministries talked with leaders across the denomination, we kept hearing that leaders were tired, burned out, and in need of spiritual and physical rest,” said Pastor Katie Roelofs, a worship catalyzer for Worship Ministries.

In response to these needs, Worship Ministries resourced a video sermon for Epiphany and allowed a few churches a preview. Rev. Meg Jenista Kuykendall from Washington, D.C. CRC had pre-recorded a five-minute welcome and a 20-minute message with Scripture reading from Matthew 2. Worship Ministries staff also prepared worship resources to lighten the load for worship planners and pastors after Christmas.

Pastor John Dykhuis and Fellowship CRC in Albuquerque, N. Mex., have been meeting virtually during the past year and decided to use the video Jan. 3, at the start of Epiphany.

“I’d planned to be off that Sunday for a time of vacation. Pulpit supply was difficult to find on that Sunday, so I was grateful when the video option came our way,” Dykhuis said. “For the sake of familiarity and consistency in our Zoom arrangement, I did the worship leadership as usual.

“Simply plugging in the sermon worked well for our situation,” Dykhuis added.



Rev. Meg Jenista Kuykendall prepared a video sermon for Epiphany as part of a library of videos churches can access for use as pulpit supply.

“My sense is that this resource can be very helpful for pastors and churches. When pulpit supply is limited, this provides an emergency resource or a ready resource to consider as needed. It’s especially attractive for us in our online-only season.”

Pastor Tara Foreman at Bethany CRC in Muskegon, Mich., also appreciates the resource. “The video was a huge gift to us at the time,” she said. “One of my immediate family members had COVID, and so we were quarantining, and it made the decision of what to do Sunday morning much simpler. Although we had been livestreaming a service from our sanctuary, for that week we sent out a compilation video that included a previously recorded introduction from me, the Epiphany sermon by Rev. Kuykendall, and a video of Bethany kids acting out parts of the Epiphany story from their homes.”

Worship Ministries continues to add to its small library of video sermons for congregational use. Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda and executive director Colin Watson are expected to record two sermons from Philippians that will tie into *Our Journey 2025*, the CRCNA’s five-year plan. These video sermons, along with related devotional and worship resources, will be available to all CRC congregations through The Network ([crcna.org/network](http://crcna.org/network)).

If you know of a pastor who may need a day of rest or a vacant church that could use this virtual pulpit supply, contact Worship Ministries ([worship@crcna.org](mailto:worship@crcna.org)).

—Kevin Hoeksema,  
CRC Communications

Getting your copy of *The Banner* from someone else?  
Get your own copy. For free.

[TheBanner.org/Signup](https://TheBanner.org/Signup)

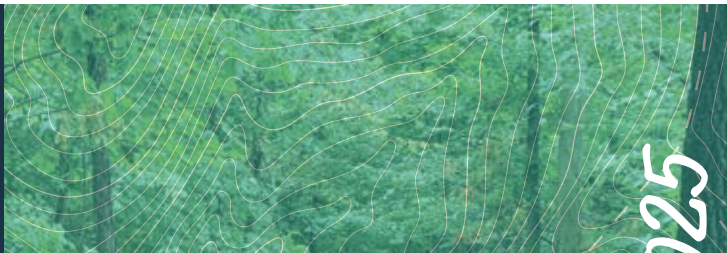
Already getting *The Banner*? Use the address above to make any changes.

**YOUR AD  
COULD BE  
HERE**

Advertising helps you  
connect with the CRC  
616-224-5882  
[ads@thebanner.org](mailto:ads@thebanner.org)



Christian  
Reformed  
Church



JOINING THE GOOD WORK BEGUN IN CHRIST

*Our Journey 2025*

We are on a journey together. As Christian Reformed people, we aspire to become congregations and communities that:

**Share** the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighborhoods, as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.

Learn more about this and 3 other ministry "milestones" at

[crcna.org/OurJourney](https://crcna.org/OurJourney)

## Hey Worship Leaders!

Did you know there is a place to connect with other CRC worship planners? A place to share resources, ask questions, and find encouragement? Look no further than [The Network](https://cncna.org/network) ([cncna.org/network](https://cncna.org/network)).

You'll find a vibrant community with an entire section dedicated to all things Worship!

Just in the past few weeks, your peers:

### SHARED

- Training Videos for Sound Technicians
- Disability Awareness Slides

### ASKED

- Does Contemporary Christian Music Imply Sin No Longer Matters?
- What Copyright Licenses Do I Need?

Get involved today! After all, ministry is more fun together.

[network](https://cncna.org/network)

## A Tree in the Rock

**A WHILE BACK**, my family and I took a vacation to Colorado. While hiking in a park, we saw the tree in the photo to the right.

One of the things God designed trees to do is to affect the ground in different ways. Willow trees absorb water in their roots and transpire (release) water through their leaves—large amounts of water. Other trees use their roots to break up the soil. The tree in the photo is actually breaking up the rocks here as well as trapping soil. As the roots grow, they not only hold soil in place, but widen the cracks in the rock, sometimes breaking the rocks! Over the life of a tree, and over generations of trees, soil builds up, and once-barren rock turns into a place of fertility and growth.

This happens often. The basement of my parents' pre-Civil War house has a portion of a wall made of cemented-together fieldstone. Over the years, some walnut trees have run their roots into that foundation, weakening it. We had to replace an entire section of the foundation wall that the roots had begun to destroy. But the trees were simply reaching out with their roots to do what God created them to do, be it transporting water or creating new growing conditions.

I'm reminded of Moses when I think of the tree in the picture. Moses was placed in a rough position between the enslaved Israelites (his people—but he was in the palace), and the Egyptians (he wasn't an Egyptian). His life in those days must have been miserable. The Israelites would have disliked Moses because he lived a life of privilege, and the Egyptians must have viewed him as "the princess' pet," or simply a slave that for some reason lived in the palace. Then Moses spent



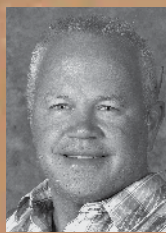
Photo by Maggie Lubbers

40 years in the wilderness tending his father-in-law's flocks—a rough life.

But God was preparing Moses for a greater mission. When Moses went back to the palace, the guards recognized him, so he could walk in and see Pharaoh to ask for Israel's freedom. He also knew how to survive in the wilderness, where he would lead the Israelites for many years. During Moses' life, God was preparing him to be a part of God's salvation plan for his people.

God uses each of us to accomplish his mission: to work toward restoration in this fallen world and to bring fertility back to a barren place.

Be like that tree! **B**



Clayton Lubbers teaches science at Byron Center Christian School and has been teaching for over 25 years. He loves the outdoors and commonly meets and sees God while hunting, fishing, and exploring creation.

Illustration for The Banner by Anita Barghigiani

# How to ‘Argue’ Christianly

By Shiao Chong

I still remember hearing in childhood this fable of Aesop: One day, the sun and the wind got into a debate as to who is more powerful, so the story goes. Seeing a lone man walking down a path, they chose to settle their dispute with a little contest. The one who successfully got the man’s coat off his back would be the more powerful. The wind went first and blew harshly at the man’s coat with all its might. But the stronger it blew, the more tightly the man held on to his coat. Then it was the sun’s turn. The sun shone its gentle warmth, and before long, the man voluntarily took his coat off. The story’s moral: a gentle approach is often more effective than a harsh one.

These days, most Christians seem to have learned how to argue from Twitter rather than Scripture. That’s a problem. How we argue matters to God as much as what we argue about.

Arguing about theological differences seem to be about as old as the church itself. But we tend to argue badly with each other, especially on social media. We tend to mimic the world’s ways of arguing—with outrage, marked by arrogance, full of implied superiority and put-downs. Everyone wants to land the verbal knock-out punch or the mic-drop moment. People seem bent on winning rather than learning—and on defending their egos while carelessly bruising others.

Drawing from Scripture, I suggest that gentleness is key to “arguing Christianly.”

## With Gentleness

In 2 Timothy 2:24-25, the apostle Paul instructs Timothy, “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but

kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth” (NRSV).

It is important to remember that Paul was talking to Timothy about false teachers who were “upsetting the faith of some” by undermining a core Christian belief, the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:18). Hence, even when arguing against false teachers who are leading people’s faith astray, Christians are to correct “with gentleness.”

Gentleness, also translated as “meekness” (Matt. 5:5), is not optional for Christians. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). We are called to live our lives “with humility and gentleness (and) with patience” (Eph. 4:1-2).

This does not mean being a doormat or weak. But it certainly means we cannot be angry, arrogant, and antagonistic, as is so often seen today—not even when we are arguing about important doctrinal matters.

## What about Tough Love?

But what about “tough love”? Don’t we sometimes need to use harshness to get through to people for their own good? Didn’t Paul tell Timothy to rebuke as well? True, in 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul tells Timothy to “convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.” But note the context of “utmost patience” and encouragement. Too often we are prone to convict and rebuke without encouraging—and with very little patience.

Furthermore, Paul told Timothy to be kind and gentle to everyone (2 Tim. 2:24-25). The original Greek word for “kind” (*epios*) in verse 24 has only one



other New Testament occurrence, in 1 Thessalonians 2:7. There, it was translated as “gentle”—“We were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children” (NRSV). This tender image does not square with “tough love.”

We just cannot get around Paul’s emphasis on gentleness. There is very little room for harshness.

Furthermore, tough love is only genuinely loving when it is in the context of a loving, trusting relationship, such as a parent-child relationship. Harsh words between strangers over the internet is not tough love; it’s just an excuse to act like jerks.

## What about Jesus?

But, some may argue, Jesus was harsh with his opponents, denouncing the Pharisees as hypocrites and a “brood of vipers” (Matt. 23:33). How does this square with Paul’s instructions?

Firstly, Jesus did this only rarely, and almost always against those in power, especially the religious leaders. We have to be very careful not to elevate these rare cases over the very many more instances where Jesus was gentle and kind, especially to sinners. When Paul appealed to the trouble-ridden Corinthians, he did so by “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1).

Perhaps, in his divine wisdom and knowledge, Jesus thought it was





necessary to be harsh toward the Pharisees because of their self-righteousness and pride. Even if this is true, it is difficult to emulate Jesus in this without his wisdom and his insight into people's hearts.

Jesus' rare use of harshness should not overshadow the consistent and repeated teachings on gentleness found not only in 2 Timothy, but throughout the New Testament. Titus 3:2, for example, asks us to "speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone" (NRSV). 1 Peter 3:15-16 tells us to defend our faith "with gentleness and reverence." James 3:17 says that God's wisdom is "peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits."

In addition to gentleness, here are some other guiding questions for how to argue Christianly:

#### **Have I Truly Understood?**

St. Francis of Assisi's famous prayer suggests that we should seek first to understand, then to be understood. We must take time to carefully read or listen to properly understand what the other's point is. Rather than reading for faults and preparing a response, read charitably to truly understand. We may find that we are actually not that far apart. But too often we rush to judgment and argument based on just a few disagreeable words or sentences.

One of the best ways to see if we have properly understood what the other is saying is to repeat, in our own words, what we think they are claiming. Ask questions, rather than make assertions: "Am I right to understand that you are saying ... ?" If the person agrees with our restatement, then we have understood correctly. Then we can offer accurate critique.

All of this, of course, presumes that we ourselves are fully immersed in Scripture and correctly understand biblical truths before we go around pointing at others' faults. We need to be an approved worker, able to handle God's word correctly (2 Tim. 2:15). So we need to ask ourselves: have we truly understood not only our opponents, but also the Scriptures?

#### **Am I Humble and Honest?**

We will not be taught by Scripture if we are not humble enough to learn. That humble posture carries over into our disagreements with others. Do we have logs in our own eyes before we start pointing out specks in others (Matt. 7:3)? Is our way of thinking off? God might use a disagreement to teach us something and help us grow.

Our goal should be to find truth, not win arguments. That means we must be humble and honest enough to recognize when we are mistaken or wrong. We cannot be so arrogant as to assume that we are always right and have nothing to learn or change. Humble approaches tend to be better received anyway.

We should never aim to change someone's mind immediately to totally agree with us—least of all in just one conversation! That is an arrogant savior complex. Remember that it is

**Gentleness,  
also translated  
as "meekness"  
(Matt. 5:5), is  
not optional for  
Christians. It is  
part of the fruit of  
the Spirit  
(Gal. 5:22-23).**

God, not us, who will convert people's minds (2 Tim. 2:25).

Rather, our immediate aim should be to teach and to explain as clearly and patiently as we can what our viewpoint is so as to be understood. Whether the listener agrees is up to the Holy Spirit.

#### **Am I Kind and Fair?**

Kindness is more effective than harshness. We need to check our tone, especially in writing. Are we being sarcastic? Are we passive-aggressive, using phrases that imply insult?

For example, phrases such as "only by capitulating to secular culture can we ignore the Bible's clear teachings" are insulting to your opponent and not being kind. Far better to make the same point by asking questions rather than making assumptions: "How do we guard against misreading Scripture through cultural lenses?"

Being fair to our discussion partners means that we should not jump to conclusions or assumptions about them. We should not stereotype them. It also means we need to truly understand their arguments and not turn them into straw man fallacies for us to knock over.

In fact, it is probably best to start by finding what we have in common. What did they say that we can affirm and agree with? In the process, we might even find that we differ only in degrees rather than in kind.

Ultimately, we need to use our words to heal rather than harm, to draw people closer to God instead of turning anyone away from God.

### Why Do I Want to Argue?

Perhaps the first question to ask ourselves should be “Why do I want to argue now?” Avoiding arguments altogether seems to be Scripture’s preferred first recourse. Paul cautioned Timothy not to be quarrelsome (2 Tim. 2:23-24). We need to humbly and honestly ask ourselves: Why do I want to argue? Why am I so worked up about this particular issue? Is it worth arguing over?

It is good for our spiritual lives to examine ourselves when we feel angry about something. Perhaps there is some unresolved pain, hurt, or even sin that is triggering my fight-or-flight emotional defensiveness. It is better to deal with our personal issues rather than projecting them onto our arguments. Otherwise, arguing becomes an unhealthy way of avoiding the hard work of spiritual growth and sanctification.

We must also ask ourselves what our motives are for correcting the other. Is it to further God’s kingdom or mine? Am I trying to be helpful, or am I being prideful? If our desires are to boost our egos or our social status among friends,

or to score brownie points with God, then we are correcting for the wrong reasons. These desires might be part of the youthful desires or passions that Paul warned Timothy to shun (2 Tim. 2:22). Instead, we are to “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace” (v. 22).

### ‘In Love’

Speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) means you cannot use harsh words, implied insults, or unfair straw man arguments for the sake of defending God’s truth. Gentleness is not optional even when arguing over important doctrines. You should be “quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness” (James 1:19-20, NRSV). How we argue is a spiritual matter.


Speaking of “slow to speak,” there is a time for everything, including “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Eccles. 3:7). Jesus advised us not to throw our “pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6). We need wisdom to discern when and with whom we should engage. I have found social media and online forums to be generally bad places to engage in arguments.

However, when I was a campus pastor, I followed a student-run atheist Facebook group, mostly to listen in and learn what young atheists today are thinking and feeling. Once, someone argued that God is cruel, because how could Adam be held responsible if he didn’t know the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, before eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Despite his sarcastic tone, I chose to comment, gently explaining that Christian theologians taught that “knowledge” in Hebrew Scripture often meant experiential, even intimate knowledge rather than simply theoretical understanding. That is why it used “know” as euphemism for sex—“the

man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived” (Gen. 4:1). It is similar to the difference between someone theoretically knowing that getting addicted to drugs is bad versus someone who actually lived through and recovered from drug addiction. The latter knows that truth experientially and intimately. Christian theologians, therefore, believe that Adam theoretically knew right from wrong, good from evil, before his act of disobedience made him know it experientially.

I did not seek to disparage the student or try to convert him with that one Facebook comment. I limited my arguments to just one point of teaching and explanation, and I prayed for the Holy Spirit to work. The conversation thread ended with one of the atheists thanking me for my comment. She encouraged me to comment more often in the future.

When your “opponent” thanks you and invites you to speak further, that is a sign you have been gentle, kind, and fair in your arguments. Although arguing might not be the best word to describe it, this is arguing Christianly. 



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

1. From your experience, have you seen examples of a gentle approach being more effective than a harsh one? Share that experience.
2. Do you think there is more anger and outrage these days? Why or why not?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

# The Sound of Silence

Silent moments,  
unanswered  
prayers, and  
divine inaction are  
important spaces  
that can move  
us through the  
mystery of God.



Ilka Luyt teaches communication courses in New York and Ontario. She attends Westside Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Kingston, Ont.

**WHEN MY MOTHER DIED**, a friend told me, “The silence is so profound.” I sat with this difficult truth for a long time.

In the years that followed, the silence of other sorrows made me feel isolated and alone, even in a caring church community. I thought of God as a shepherd who searches for his sheep, but I felt none of this agency. Rather, I felt as if God was giving me the silent treatment—that he was indifferent and neglectful.

But silent moments, unanswered prayers, and divine inaction are important spaces that can move us through the mystery of God.

Silence can be an absence of sound, speech, or activity. Silence can reflect reverence or an act of prayer. Silence is not, however, simply being quiet. And it is not the same as peace.

The peace of God is knowing we cannot orchestrate our lives, but only do our part and trust his sovereign design.

Unlike this peaceful surrender, silence occurs in difficult circumstances. Death, loss, grief, and suffering challenge our existing beliefs and require us to search for meanings to understand our personal story. In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis writes, “When you are happy, so happy you have no sense of needing him, ... if you remember yourself and turn to him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence.”

Western culture does not handle silence well. In our overstimulated society, silence is a negative space, something to be avoided. Technology has made us consumers of knowledge and noise at every turn. Endless news cycles and social media bombard us with ideas. However, intentionally

embracing silence, physically and spiritually, can bring healing. Separating from technology and noise in our lives can highlight larger truths, much like a rest in a musical score, a strategically placed darkness in a painting, a gaping black hole in the universe.

Perhaps silences, though difficult to bear, are an intentional part of God’s chiseling of our souls.

God is not indifferent or uncaring, but perhaps God’s silence is there for a reason. As Anne Lamott writes in *Stitches: A Handbook on Meaning, Hope, and Repair*, “Periods in the wilderness or desert were not lost time. You might find life, wildflowers, fossils, sources of water.” Wilderness moments are important spaces that force us to shift our understanding of God and make us more conscious of him. Careers, children, aging, and even death can fill our lives with noise and activity. In these times, divine silence can lead us to prayer. While silence may not produce the euphoric, exciting animation our society expects, silence reflects God’s work in our brokenness.

Silence suggests that God is not always active in clear ways, but I know he is working. I see it in the people I live and work with every day, people who help me to make sense of this silence through their own stories. It comforts me to know that I am not the first person to experience divine silence, and I won’t be the last.

People in the Bible and in history who endured anger and grief and faced divine silence also give voice to this experience. Their behaviors and attitudes in the face of lament offer hope that silence is seasonal. Their stories frame my journey and shift my focus to God.

As Christians, we are called to action, yet embracing divine silence is a powerful choice that rests with each of us. **B**

## Wanted: Volunteers for Crucifixion

Taking up my  
cross means  
accepting all the  
pain and injustice  
and misery life  
imposes on me  
as I attempt to  
be a faithful  
follower of Jesus.



Daniel Boerman is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and a buyer for a builder's hardware store. He is a member of Forest Grove (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church.

**THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS** knew all about crucifixion. They had seen the crosses of slaves and rebels lining the major highways of their homeland. They had heard the anguished moans and cries of the victims struggling in vain to escape the agony of their predicament and its inevitable death. And they had witnessed the skeletons of the dead still clinging to their crosses weeks later, their flesh consumed by vultures and dogs.

Crucifixion was a horrible reality for the people of Palestine in the first century. It was something too awful to think much about or to discuss in polite company. Crucifixion was simply a fact of life for a nation living under the oppressive heel of Rome.

So when Jesus turned to his followers and told them they had to take up their crosses and follow him if they wanted to be his disciples, there was no doubt in their minds as to what he meant. He was asking for volunteers for crucifixion. He had just told them he was going to be rejected and killed by the Jewish leaders, and now he was telling them that, if they wanted to follow him, they should expect the same fate. Is it any surprise, then, that the disciples all fled in terror when Jesus was arrested?

In his book *The 21: A Journey into the Land of Coptic Martyrs*, Martin Mosebach tells the story of 21 Coptic Christians beheaded by their Islamic State captors in Libya. On Feb. 15, 2015, the self-styled Islamic State, a terrorist group, released a video showing the decapitations. These deaths were far less agonizing than death by crucifixion, but their cruel and savage nature still shocked our contemporary world.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about these deaths, however, is the attitude of the Coptic Christian community toward them. The families of these victims honor them as heroes



and even watch the video of their executions to remember them. The pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church has declared them to be martyr saints to be commemorated every year on Feb. 15. Many of the 21 young men had signed up for construction work in Libya knowing there was a chance they would be kidnapped and killed. In fact, some of them anticipated and welcomed this outcome. They knew they would become saints if they died for their devotion to Jesus. They were willing victims. It is no stretch to say they were volunteers for crucifixion.

All of this seems nearly incomprehensible for us 21st-century Christians in North America. Each of us clings to his or her individual life as if it were the most precious of our possessions. We cannot imagine literally following Jesus, carrying a heavy cross beam, and offering to give up our body to unimaginable torture and a shameful



death. And it is difficult for us to identify with the young Coptic Christians who were willing to give their lives and become honored martyrs.

When we talk about cross-bearing today, we usually mean enduring some kind of pain or difficulty in life. It could be a physical handicap, chronic pain, mental illness, or a host of other common afflictions. But we never think about it in terms of actually submitting to torture and death.


I propose that we need to think about cross-bearing in a more radical way. Jesus told his followers they had to take up their crosses in imitation of him. He was about to demonstrate that salvation and healing come about only through intense suffering and death. We can bring healing and renewal to the world, too, if we follow his example. Taking up my cross means accepting all the pain and injustice and misery

life imposes on me as I attempt to be a faithful follower of Jesus. It is not just one illness or one problem; it is my whole life with all of its challenges and difficulties. Taking up my cross is total self-denial and total commitment. It is always fatal; it always leads finally to death. But it also leads to renewal and healing and new life.

Growth through suffering is simply how sanctification works. We cannot achieve spiritual maturity without struggle and anguish and pain. This is a fundamentally countercultural message. Our society tells us that moral people are supposed to be winners. If we obey the rules, our lives will be healthy, successful, and happy.

If we are being treated unfairly, we need to stick up for our own rights.

But this is not the way of the cross. Cross-bearers are more willing to suffer injustice than they are to seek revenge or payback. None of the early Christians tried to take revenge on Pilate or the Jewish leaders because of their unfair condemnation of Jesus. The families of the Coptic martyrs made no attempt to track down the killers of their sons, brothers, and husbands to bring them to justice. Instead, early Christians and modern Coptic believers celebrated the rewards and blessings that Jesus and their martyrs achieved through their righteous suffering.

I'm not sure why you are reading this article, but I doubt you are genuinely interested in volunteering for a literal crucifixion. We can certainly be thankful that none of us in North America is threatened by something so awful. But if you are a follower of Jesus, if you seriously want to walk the way of the cross, you are called to a self-denying, life-renouncing commitment to Jesus. This path will not be fun or easy, but the rewards are infinite and everlasting. 

1. Have you heard of the 2015 beheading of 21 Christians in Libya that the author referred to? What was your reaction? If you are reading this for the first time, what is your reaction now?

2. How have you understood Jesus' call to "take up your cross"? What sermons or explanations have you heard about it?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)


# What *WandaVision* Teaches Us About Grief

**“HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE.”** The story of *WandaVision*, the smash Marvel Studios series streaming on Disney+, underscores this poignant quote. Dealing with grief is something we all have to go through, but knowing that doesn't seem to make it any easier. *WandaVision* is all about how Wanda, the main character, deals with the grief of losing all the people she has ever felt close to.

Wanda's story before *WandaVision* is woven throughout Marvel Cinematic Universe films and is riddled with grief. At a young age, she loses her parents in a terrorist attack that she initially blames on Tony Stark (Iron Man). Later, out of grief and anger, she and her brother, Pietro, become part of an “anti-freedom terror organization” that fights against Stark. While with this organization, Wanda is subjected to brutal experiments and comes to realize her tremendous, reality-warping power. Wanda and Pietro later switch allegiances and join the Avengers with righteous intentions, but Pietro then sacrifices himself for another hero. Alone, without her family, Wanda meets Vision and begins to confide in him. Vision consoles her, and the two fall in love.

In a series flashback, we see a significant moment of Vision supporting Wanda when she is at one of her lowest points. Vision tells Wanda that he

doesn't know what she's feeling, but he is there to listen if she is ready to talk about losing her brother. She lets him know that talking won't bring her comfort; only seeing Pietro again can do that. Wanda explains her depression by stating, “I'm so tired. It's like this wave washing over me, again and again. It knocks me down, and when I try to stand up, it just comes for me again. ... It's just gonna drown me.” This moment becomes the greatest example of what this show has to teach us about grief as Vision says, “No, no, it won't, ... because it can't all be sorrow, can it? ... But what is grief, if not love persevering?” Cue the tears.

The show displays that, in grief, love and loss exist together. In Romans 12:15, Paul says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” This is how we love each other. Vision exemplifies the nature of the body of Christ and how to be there for one another in moments of grief. *WandaVision* reveals the importance of community. Though the show itself doesn't focus solely on the benefit of having a community that mourns with you, it does show what could happen when one doesn't have that community. In Wanda's hurt she unintentionally hurts others. When she has a community around her that mourns with her, though, we see her become able to deal with grief in a healthier way. Let's learn from Wanda and, when we grieve, seek a community that can be the body of Christ for us. Let's be that community for each other. 



LeMarr Seandre Jackson's mission is to raise the bar for student and Christian leadership. He is the director of youth ministry at Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

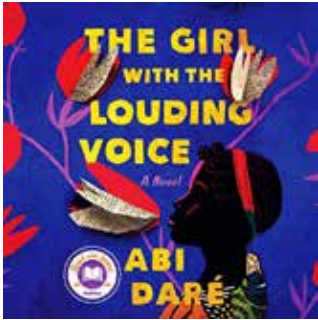


## 'Til I Want No More

By Robin W. Pearson

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Author Robin W. Pearson (*A Long Time Comin'*) is a rarity in Christian fiction: an African American who writes about the faith and family focus of African American characters. She's also a top-drawer storyteller, having won a Christy Award for her first novel. In her followup, *'Til I Want No More*, Pearson offers readers a savory story of one young woman and the secrets that threaten to upend her carefully balanced life. I was sad to leave these characters behind when I turned the last page, but hopeful, too, that readers haven't seen the last of these characters and everyone who loves them. An effervescent new voice in Southern fiction and inspirational fiction, Pearson and her novels are perfect for readers who love sprawling family dramas told with warmth and humor. (Tyndale)

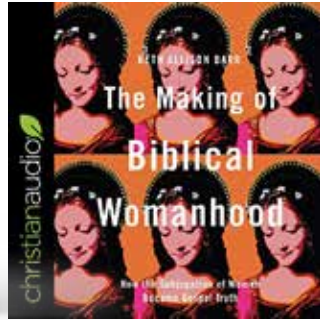


## The Girl with the Louding Voice (Audiobook)

By Abi Daré,  
narrated by  
Adjoa Andoh

Reviewed by Michelle  
Loyd-Paige

A *New York Times* bestseller and a “Today Show” Book Club pick, this is the unforgettable, inspiring story of a teenage girl growing up in a rural Nigerian village who longs to get an education so that she can find her “louding voice” and speak up for herself. It is a story of sorrow, poverty, betrayal, cruelty, and violence. Yet it is also a story about the power of a “nevertheless hope.” The narration by Adjoa Andoh is at first a little hard to follow because Adunni’s English is broken and Andoh employs a strong Nigerian accent. After the first couple of chapters, my ears got used to the accent, and my appreciation of Andoh’s narration skills grew. Recommended for mature audiences. (12 hours, 6 minutes, Penguin Audio)



## The Making of Biblical Womanhood

By Beth Allison Barr

Reviewed by Li Ma

In this influential new book, a historian asserts that “biblical womanhood” isn’t biblical, but rather arose from a series of clearly definable historical moments. As a pastor’s wife who was once an insider within conservative evangelicalism, Barr now writes this book to clear the house of patriarchy. She flips the narrative by showing that evangelicals have always selectively interpreted biblical texts, written in patriarchal worlds, with regard to gender roles. Women inevitably fall into one of two camps within the complementarian system: adapter-enablers and victim-survivors. The author candidly admits that she has traveled from the first to the second. The last chapter presents in great detail how both subgroups have fared in America’s mass-mediated public sphere. (Brazos)



## Brother’s Keeper

By Julie Lee

Reviewed by Sonya  
VanderVeen Feddema

In 1950 in North Korea, 12-year-old Sora Pak dreams of continuing her education and becoming a writer. But life in the tyrannical communist state is permeated with suspicion, fear, rules, and strictly defined gender roles. As political oppression mounts, the Paks finally make their escape to South Korea. When Sora and her brother, Youngsoo, are separated from their parents during an air raid, the two are thrust on an exacting, treacherous journey in which Sora exceeds her culture’s expectations of what girls are capable of. Inspired by author Julie Lee’s mother’s experiences fleeing North Korea, *Brother’s Keeper* offers middle-grade readers a stirring portrait of a courageous female protagonist who sacrifices much for the sake of her brother and family yet persistently pursues her own ambitions. (Holiday House)

### The Lowdown

**Prey Tell:** Addressing men and women in all work settings within the church and beyond, author and podcast host Tiffany Bluhm sets out to understand the cultural and spiritual narratives that silence women. (Baker/Brazos)

**Marvel’s Phase 4 Begins:** *Black Widow* is a prequel focusing on Scarlett Johansson’s character Natasha Romanoff. (PG-13, Marvel Studios, May 7)

**Hemingway:** Ken Burns’ latest subject is literary legend Ernest Hemingway. The three-part documentary not only delves into the writer’s iconic career, but the mythology and tragedy behind his life. (PBS)

**A Little-known WWII Story:** In *The Last Green Valley*, by Mark T. Sullivan, it’s March 1944, and Emeline and Adeline Martel must decide whether they want to follow the hated Nazis or wait for the Soviets to conquer Ukraine and thus live under Stalin’s rule. (May 4, Lake Union)

## Should Our Beliefs Evolve?

Beliefs, like physical stature or emotional awareness or symbolic thought, mature through life.



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

**LIKE THE BEST QUESTIONS**, the answer to “Should our beliefs evolve?” is “It depends.” Let me give three different reasons beliefs might change.

The first reason is simply for the sake of change, like the student who tries to justify her viewpoint to their teacher with nothing more than, “Because it’s 2021!” If your beliefs change for no other reason than to change, you should ask yourself whether it’s Jesus you’re following or if you’re chasing the fantasy called change.

A second reason for a change in beliefs is because it’s a natural process of human maturation. James Fowler (1940-2015) was an American theologian who proposed that faith formation goes through normal developmental stages similar to the cognitive stages of human development proposed by psychologist Jean Piaget.

Seen in this light, changes in beliefs that a child experiences as they become a teenager or that a teenager experiences as they graduate from university or that those in midlife experience are all part of normal human growth. Beliefs, like physical stature or emotional awareness or symbolic thought, mature through life.

A third reason beliefs might change is because of changes in knowledge and understanding in the world around us. I recognize this might be a challenging, perhaps unwelcome idea, but we need to name it and engage it thoughtfully.

Let’s be honest: We no longer believe the Bible requires a geocentric view of the universe. We no longer believe slavery is acceptable. In our own lifetimes, our views on women working outside the home or serving in church leadership have changed. Beliefs change, sometimes because of increased knowledge of the world around us.

This can be challenging because there is a way of hearing and understanding this that’s no different from the first reason—change for the sake of change. We look around, see what others are doing, and change our beliefs to be “up to date” with everyone else. This is often called compromise or syncretism, but that’s not what I’m getting at here. I’m getting at how our beliefs legitimately change for weighty reasons that come to us from the world around us and cause us to take another look at beliefs (often rooted in the interpretation of Scripture) with fresh eyes.

Changes in our understanding of the solar system and the universe caused us to realize that sometimes ancient biblical authors used figures of speech that were never meant to be taken as literal proof that the earth is the center of the universe. For others, key social movements of the past 50 years have forced them to recognize for the first time that the apostle Paul was overthrowing ideas of ethnic superiority rather than providing their theological justification, causing a revolution in their beliefs on race.

Clearly, there are a range of contentious issues related to this. Just look at the topics synodical study committees have been addressing during the past few years. These complex questions demand the difficult work of faith-filled discernment, not simplistic sound bites that sidestep debate, even if wrapped in pious language.

Should our beliefs change? Scripture affirms that God’s posture toward us in Jesus Christ is constant and unchanging (Heb. 13:8), but the witness of church history is that our understandings and interpretations of our faith do change for important and legitimate reasons. Maybe it’s because God is unwaveringly committed to us that we don’t need to be afraid of beliefs evolving. **B**



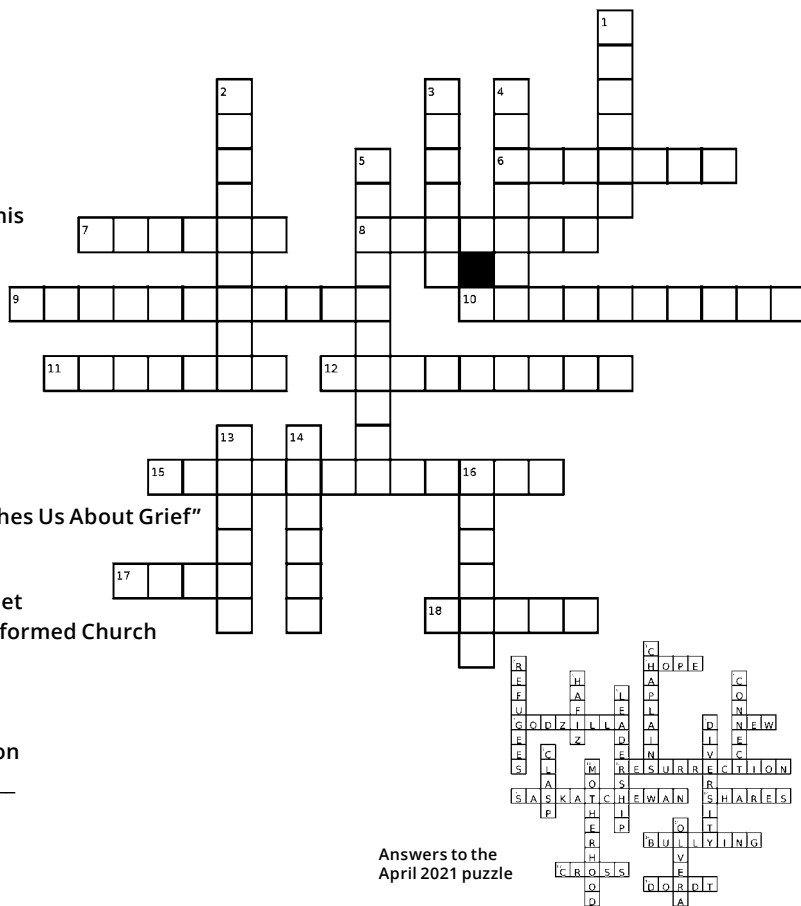
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

**Down**

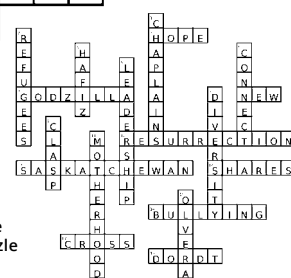
1. Wheel House Cafe provides youth jobs and sells \_\_\_\_\_
2. A growth strategy is an institution's method to achieve this
3. It has the power of life and death
4. Synod has heard "differing political understandings" of \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ are helping to construct New Hope Center in Cadillac, Mich.
13. American theologian who proposed faith formation goes through stages
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Exchanged equips Christians to engage with Indigenous peoples
16. The first name of the writer of "What WandaVision Teaches Us About Grief"

**Across**

6. It can be an absence of sound, but is more than being quiet
7. Consejo \_\_\_\_\_ is a resource network in the Christian Reformed Church
8. *The Girl with the \_\_\_\_\_ Voice*
9. The cross refers to this
10. This is needed to "argue" Christianly
11. Just a couple degrees of this could lead to mass extinction
12. Ken Burns' latest subject is literary legend Ernest \_\_\_\_\_
15. A church that turned 100 in 2020
17. Trying to fit a square peg into a round \_\_\_\_\_
18. They affect the ground in different ways



Answers to the April 2021 puzzle



**Get the latest from your denomination!**

Subscribe to *CRC News* to receive news, upcoming events, missionary stories, and more every Wednesday.

[crcna.org/Subscribe](http://crcna.org/Subscribe)

**Christian Reformed Church News**

**DENOMINATION**  
Denominational Survey Opens  
The annual survey for the CRCNA is now open. One survey respondent shares his experience.  
[Learn More](#)

**WORSHIP**  
A Catch of Fish  
During the Calvin Symposium on Worship, John August Swanson spoke of how Luke 5's miraculous catch has inspired his art and helped him through some hard times.  
[Read Story](#)

**INSPIRE 2019**  
Windsor Welcomes You to Inspire  
Ambassador Community CRC in Windsor, Ont., invites you to attend Inspire 2019 in their city. Registration is now open!  
[Read Story](#)

**INTERNATIONAL**  
Helping Yemen  
Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis.  
[Read Story](#)

**DEADLINES:** 5/3/21 for June; 6/21/21 July/ August. Subject to availability. Details online. Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

**PRICES:** Most ads are \$0.43<sup>US</sup> per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.36<sup>US</sup> per character and \$60 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.

**Announcement of Candidacy**

We are pleased to announce that **DAVID BOUMA** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Colin P. Watson, Sr., Executive Director.

We are pleased to announce that **LYNN SONG** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Colin P. Watson, Sr., Acting Executive Director.

We are pleased to announce that **LOICE MINITO** has now completed her academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Colin P. Watson, Sr., Executive Director.

**Church Positions Available**

**LEAD PASTOR** - Aylmer CRC in Aylmer, Ontario is seeking a Lead Pastor gifted in the areas of shepherding and teaching. We are prayerfully searching for a self motivated and compassionate Pastor who is devoted to providing Reformed preaching, passionate about nurturing our spiritual growth and equipping us for community outreach. If this is a position you may feel God's calling to, we would love to speak with you. Please contact Lisa at 519-520-1220 or email [bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com](mailto:bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com). Job description and church profile are available on the Portal.

**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES** Bellevue CRC in Bellevue, WA is seeking an experienced Director of Children's Ministries to grow our young children's program. In this half-time position, our Director will plan and administer our children's ministries program and facilitate our children's faith development. The Director plans and leads both weekly and special events, recruits and trains volunteers, and teaches in the ministry. If you are a mature Christian who loves kids and Jesus, please email: [office@bellevuecrc.org](mailto:office@bellevuecrc.org) for a complete job description.

**SENIOR PASTOR** Sonlight Community CRC seeks Senior Pastor gifted in preaching, as well as attentive to the administrative and pastoral needs of the congregation. To learn more about Sonlight and the Senior Pastor position, visit <https://www.sonlightchurch.com/senior-pastor-job-opportunity>.

**Birthdays**

**BIRTHDAY 103 YEARS**

**LUCY DELEEUEW DYKSTRA** and her family are blessed and thankful to God for His gift to her of 103 years on May 16. Cards and memories are welcome and can be sent to Medilodge at 1221 16th, Holland Mi 49423

**BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS**

**CLARISSA ROZENBOOM** of Oskaloosa, Iowa will celebrate her 100th birthday, D.V., on June 8. She is a charter member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church. She was married for 74 years to her devoted husband, Gerald, who passed in 2019. Her five children and their families are grateful to God for her rich, loving and faithful life.

**BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS**



**DELORES STOB** has been blessed to celebrate her 90th birthday on May 14. She and her husband Bill are celebrating with their three daughters and their husbands Deanne Dyk-Dean Dyk; Tammy Kooy-John Kooy Sr; Carlin Rykse-Russ Rykse. Her nine grandchildren and many of her sixteen great grandchildren are visiting her from distant places prior to May 14. The entire family praises God for His boundless providential care.

**Anniversary**

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS**



**WHIPPLE** The children of Dennis and Aletta (Pilon) Whipple are pleased to announce their parents' 50th wedding anniversary. Dennis and Aletta were united in marriage on May 7, 1971 at Wyoming Park Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, MI. They have been blessed with 3 children, their spouses, and 8 grandchildren. They have been members at Wyoming Park CRC and Faith Community CRC in Wyoming, MI. We give thanks that God has blessed them with 50 years. Dennis and Aletta's address is 3095 - 92nd St. SW, Byron Center, MI 49315. We love you Mom and Dad/Grandma and Grandpa. God is good!

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS**



**MEYER, Peter & Catherina** It is with gratitude and thankfulness that we can share in the celebration of 65 years of marriage with Peter and Catherina Meyer. We rejoice with them that they have been blessed with so many years

of health and experiences, and that they have been able to share this with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. On May 12, 2021 let us all celebrate whether that be in person or in our hearts the occasion that brought them together! Peter and Tena reside at 205 Mountain Circle, Airdrie AB Canada T4A 1X6



**NYENHUIS, Jacob (Jack)** and Leona (Lee) will celebrate with joy and thanksgiving 65 wonderful years of marriage on June 6, 2021. God has blessed them with four loving daughters: Karen J. Louwsma; Kathy J. and Arthur G.

Kurtze III; Lorna J. and Chris Cook; and Sarah V. Nyenhuis and Joel P. Servais; nine grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren. Address: 1274 St. Andrews Drive, Holland, MI 49423

**Obituaries**



**BOUMA, John**, age 92, of Holland, Michigan, passed away peacefully at home to be with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, March 7, 2021. John was a man of God. He was also a faithful and steadfast supporter and longtime member of La-

Grave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. John is reunited in Heaven with his loving and devoted wife, Sharon K. Bouma; his son, John Bouma Jr., his parents, Henry and Katie Bouma; his siblings, Catherine (John) Oosterhouse, Bertha (John) Flietstra, Paul Bouma, Beulah Hofstra, and Henry Bouma. John is survived by Doug (Trish) Bouma, Susan (Tim) Small, Pam (Bob) Molenhouse, Pam Bouma (John) Miller; 15 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Betty Bouma, Carolyn Bouma; brother-in-law, Carl Hofstra; and many loving nieces and nephews. To God be the Glory!

**DE JONG**, James Henry "Hank", age 82, of Grand Rapids, MI went to be with his Lord and Savior on Wednesday, March 24, 2021. He is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Lois (Egedy) De Jong; his children, Tim (Lisa) De Jong, and Sandy (David) VanderLugt; and grandchildren, Brooke and Kevin Seville.

**EINFELD**, Rev. Frank, age 100, went home to the Lord on March 28, 2021. He was preceded in death by his wife Angeline and by his wife Hildred. He is survived by his children Sharon, Doug, Dave, and Carl and their spouses; 10 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.



**FRYER**, Stephanie (Mickey) Barendrecht nee' Rooks, met her Lord on March 19, 2021 in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. She was preceded in death by her parents, Wendell H. and Geesje U. Rooks; two brothers and two sisters-in-law David

and Candelaria (Dely) Rooks, Jeanne Rooks, and Steven Rooks; by her husband of 35 years, Cor W. Barendrecht, and her second husband, Richard D. Fryer. Stephanie is survived by her daughter, Sharlene (Barendrecht) Te Beest, son-in-law Howard, and grandsons Matthew and Christopher Te Beest, all of Wisconsin. She will be missed by her remaining family: brothers Wendell (Nancy) Rooks, Girard Rooks, Andrew (Irene) Rooks; and sister Judy (Orv) Lantinga, nieces and nephews, as well as her second husband Richard's children and grandchildren.

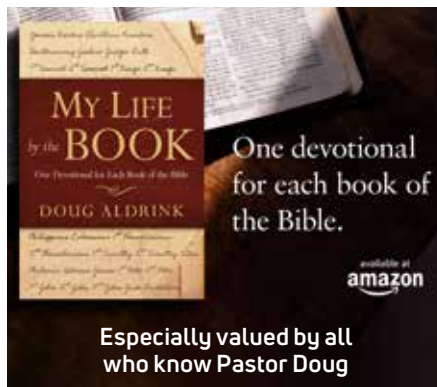
**GELDOF**, Richard C., age 92, of Hemet, CA passed away on Sunday, February 28, 2021. He was preceded in death by his son, Dale, sister and brother-in-law, Milly and Peter Feddema, brother, Gordon Geldof. He is survived by his daughters, Lynne Freeman, Laurel Vivion James, sister-in-law, Ginny Geldof. Richard was a Calvin University graduate. He was a respected teacher and well thought of by his former students. His teaching career led him to teach in Chicago, Colorado, Montana and California in both Christian and Public Schools.



**HOLWERDA**, Joyce C. (Bouma) of Hudsonville, MI was received into the arms of her Savior on February 28, 2021 at the age of 91. Joyce was a committed and loving wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She supported her

husband as a devoted and active pastor's wife. To God be the Glory! She is survived by her husband of 71 years, Rev. Robert Holwerda, her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren: Bob & Gayle: Karen, & Mark Guzicki (Morgan, Gavin, Riley); Kris & Wade Eldean (Ryan); Kelli & Dave Slager (Adalyn, Kyra); Kathy & Ken Wall (Jax, Elli, Ava). Dan: Renee & Ben Saarloos (Alex, Jackson, Sammy, Emmy); Karla & Zac Sorensen (Eli, Isaac). Mari-

lyn & George Lanting: Heather & Kelly Kuchera (Jacob); Rebecca & Mike Sales (Michael, Jackson, Colin); Anna & Pete Graham (Noah, Dylan); George & Andrea (Emma, Jordan, Bridgette, Mikayla); Ken & Jill (Ryan, Carson, Ethan); Jennifer & Greg Hoekstra (Carter, Adelyn). Sheryl. Steve & Sheri: Jonathon & Paxton (Brixten, Scotlyn); Jason & Marissa; Amanda & Matt Jennings (fiancée). She is also survived by her brothers & sisters in law: Dr. David & Gayla Holwerda; Dr. Harry & Joann Holwerda. Preceding her in death were her parents & parents-in-law: Gerrit & Anna Bouma; Rev. Peter & Edith Holwerda; her brothers and sister: Clarence & Eileen Bouma, Cornelius (in infancy), Marilyn & Ed Gort; her brothers and sisters-in-law: Rev. George & Evelyn; Peter (WWII), Jack & Pearl.



Especially valued by all who know Pastor Doug

## Scholarship Funds Available

Elim Christian Services is pleased to announce that \$1,000 - \$2,000 Euwema Memorial Scholarships are now available for special education professionals doing their student teaching or professional internship placements at Elim.

Scholarship funds can be used to offset expenses directly related to the student teaching or professional internship (OT/OTA, PT/PTA, SLP/SLA, Behaviorist, Social Work) experiences at Elim. Such expenses may include, but not be limited to relocation, lodging, and supplies.

**Elim**

Please visit  
[elimcs.org/careers](http://elimcs.org/careers)  
to learn more.

# Explore. Connect. Experience.



French Quarter, New Orleans

## 2021 GUIDED ITINERARIES:

### THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: National Parks of Washington

Jul 22 – Jul 31 | *John & Rachel Witte*

\$ Refundable Deposit \$

### ADVENTURES IN SCANDINAVIA

Sep 8 – Sep 21 | *Johannes & Lynda Witte*

\$ Refundable Deposit \$

### GREECE: SHINING THE LIGHT OF JESUS

Sep 16 – Sep 27 | *Bill & Lyn Vanden Bosch*

### THE NETHERLANDS BY BIKE & BARGE

Sep 17 – Sep 25 | *Kathy & John Korstange*

\$ Refundable Deposit \$

### JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAND

Sep 19 – Oct 3 | *Jeff & Karen Blamer*

### POLAND: WALKING IN CHOPIN'S FOOTSTEPS

Oct 13 – Oct 22 | *Frances Nelson*

### A TASTE OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

Oct 18 – Nov 2 | *Johannes & Lynda Witte*

\$ Refundable Deposit \$

## 2022 GUIDED ITINERARIES:

### Following in the Footsteps of Jesus: ISRAEL & JORDAN

Mar 31 – Apr 12 | *Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima*

### NETHERLANDS WATERWAY CRUISE

Apr 15 – Apr 23 | *Bruce & Judy Buursma*

### ROME & THE AMALFI COAST

Sep 24 – Oct 2 | *Mindy Alexander & Eric Kuhn*

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

**LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE?**  
Our Vacation Consultants are eager to help you get wherever you want to go!

Visit [www.wittetravel.com](http://www.wittetravel.com) or call us at (616) 942-5112 to get started.

**witte** Travel & Tours

Grand Rapids, MI | 616.957.8113

**KRUIS**, Mae Elizabeth Van Zwol (March 8, 1921-March 4, 2021) celebrated her 100th birthday in Heaven. She met her daughter Trudy and her late husband Rich on arrival. She leaves behind 8 children (Anna, Rick, Dan, Bob, Ed, Ron, Phil, & Brian), 34 grands, 39 greats, & 1 great-great. A memorial will be held at the Rehoboth CRC on June 13, 2021, at 3 pm. Memorial donations may be sent to Classis Red Mesa Facility Improvement Fund, PO Box 93, Rehoboth, NM 87322, office@classisredmesa.org OR to Care Net Pregnancy Center, 9809 Candelaria Rd. NE STE 1-A, Albuquerque, NM 87112.

**PROSE**, Marjorie Alderink, age 100 of Grand Rapids, MI, was called home to her loving father on March 11, 2021. She was preceded in death by her husband Roger and her infant son, Douglas Paul. Celebrating her life and Christian example are her children Fred and Jill of Glendale AZ, Betsy of Grand Rapids, & Tom and Patsy of Jupiter Island FL; her grandson Brad & Yarizeth of Scottsdale AZ; and great grandsons Braxton and Zachariah.

**SERRANO**, Patricia, nee Caro, age 64 of Villa Park, went to be with her Lord on March 16th. 211 S. Michigan Ave, Villa Park, IL 60181. Beloved wife of Rev. Guillermo Serrano; loving mother of Olga (Benjamin) Karwoski, Bill (Elizabeth) Serrano, Elizabeth Serrano and Denise Serrano; dear sister of the late Eduardo (Maria) Caro, Julio (Soledad) Caro, Nancy Caro, Adriana (Alfonso Higuera) Caro, and Victoria Caro; aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to American Cancer Society and Lombard Christian Reformed Church Benevolence Fund, 2020 S. Meyers Rd, Lombard, IL 60148 are appreciated.

**STOUB**, Florence, nee Bulthuis, age 99 went home to be with her Lord on March 12th, 2021. 9608 S. Trumbull Ave, Evergreen Park, IL 60805. Beloved wife of the late John Stoub, Sr.; loving mother of John W. Jr. (Debra), Charles H. (Sandra), Ronald W. (Yvonne) Stoub, and Ruth E. (Barry) Medeiros; devoted grandmother of ten; great-grandmother of eleven and two on the way; fond sister of the late Grace (the late Elzo) Niemeyer, the late Anne (the late Mark) Todd, the late Pearl (the late Peter) Bulthuis, Jeanette (Louis) Van Dyke, the late Angeline (the late Richard) Bulthuis, Harriet (the late Alvin) Neitzel, and the late Clarence (the late Nola) Bulthuis; aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601, are appreciated.

**WEIDENAAR**, William B, age 83, was peacefully called to his eternal home by his Lord and Savior on October 27, 2020. A US Army Veteran, Bill was the Senior Managing Partner of the Ruff, Weidenaar, and Reidy law firm in Chicago, IL. He had an uncanny wit and while his practice and knowledge of the law was legendary, his true passion was in service to others, all in the name and honor of the Lord. Bill cheerfully shared his im-

mense wisdom and freely gave of his time and talent as a Board member of organizations such as Trinity Christian College, the Evangelical Child & Family Agency, the CRC-NA, the Barnabus Foundation that he co-founded, and the Evergreen Park CRC. Bill's generous spirit, humor, wisdom, and love will be missed by all those he leaves behind, including : his wife and soulmate of 57 years, Suzanne, nee Mejeur; children David (Alexandria) Weidenaar, Jennifer (Ron) Pruiksmas, and Rebecca (Mike) Cudecki. Grandchildren: David, Nick (Jenna), and Matthew Weidenaar, Jake (Carolyn), Joshua Pruiksmas, Ryan Shepherd, Lindsay and Rena Cudecki, and Great-Daughter Emery Weidenaar. Bill lived by the words from Micah 6:8 "And What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". His family rejoices and finds comfort in knowing that upon Bill's passing, he was met with this heavenly welcoming, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"



**ZEEFF**, Richard of Bradenton, FL, a faithful servant of his Savior Jesus, died on March 15 at the age of 95. He cherished his wife of 30 years, Louise Brummel Zeeff, and his stepchildren - Ron and Rose Brummel, Joan and Bill Bonnema, Marva and Dave Lubben, Denise and John Dileman, Rick and Beckie Brummel and their families. Rich was predeceased by his first wife Joan VerHill Zeeff, his daughter Cher, grandson Michael and his three sisters. The Brummel family thanks God for Rich's warm welcome into his heart 30 years ago and for his loving devotion to our dear Mom.

### Employment

**NANNY WANTED** Nanny in Tinley Park Fall of '21, 9 hrs/day, M-F. Christian values & dog-friendly are a must. If interested, please call Jon for an interview @ 708.878.7442

### 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



**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.

**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; www.boerstransfer.com Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.



**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! 200 closings in 2020, including 25 Banner clients. We help clients

buy properties as well. Contact Doug Takens of Independence Realty, 6801 Gettysburg, Hudsonville, 616-262-4574 or takens@sbc-global.net

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

**REMODELING?** Call Ken DeVries today for a free estimate on windows or kitchen/bath renovation. 616-457-5880. Since 1985. www.homework-construction.com

### Real Estate Sales / Rentals

**1 BEDROOM APARTMENT** Burton and Patterson SE, Grand Rapids MI. Perfect for Calvin students and retirees. Includes utilities except electric. \$775 a month. Call 616-340-6038.

**2 ROOMS IN BASEMENT FURNISHED APT.** Includes laundry, high speed internet, and utilities. \$325 - \$350. Near town, quiet area. Betty (616) 791-1919

**ANNA MARIA ISLAND CONDOS** Large pool, beach access, free WiFi, 1&2 Bedroom \$700/\$800/\$900 a wk. redekercondosonami.com Tim 941-704-7525

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



**GORGEOUS 2 BDRM CONDO ON LAKE MICHIGAN WITH POOL.** At Maranatha in Muskegon, MI. For photos, rates, & details ann@annspangler.com/616-540-6261

**NAPLES AREA 2 BD GATED CONDO,** 2 FBA, great pool, beautiful residential area near Gulf Available monthly JAN-MAR & APR-DEC (reduced price). No pets No smoking. 616-560-2895

## Lessons from Indigenous Mourning

It seems to me that the Indigenous way of mourning is similar to what I have read in the Scriptures.



Parry Stelter is a doctoral candidate in contextual leadership with Providence University and Seminary who offers workshops on grief, loss, and intergenerational trauma. He is a member of Hope CRC in Stony Plain, Alta. His website is [wordofhopeministries.ca](http://wordofhopeministries.ca).

**WHEN MY ADOPTIVE MOTHER** died, the process of mourning was short. In fact, half of the family, including me, didn't even go to the lunch after the burial. When my 7-month-old daughter died of sudden infant death syndrome, the process was similar, except I did go to that lunch.

As an Indigenous person, when I compare the style of mourning in my non-Indigenous upbringing to what I have witnessed in Indigenous communities, there is a vast difference. It seems to me that the Indigenous way of mourning is similar to what I have read in the Scriptures.

One helpful aspect of mourning in Indigenous communities is that the viewing of the body is more of a public event. When someone dies, the body is brought either into the living room of the closest family member or placed at the front of a community hall. When we look at the Scriptures, we see many public forms of mourning, such as people being hired to mourn publicly.

The second helpful aspect is that these wakes can go for two to three days (but mostly two days, from what I have witnessed). When we look at the Scriptures, we also see that the mourning process went anywhere from seven to 30 days and sometimes longer. At the end of the wake there is a formal service, the last formal viewing of the body, and then the graveside service, where people will take shovels and cover the casket with dirt.

The third helpful aspect is that the family will often have public outbursts of crying and mourning, even clinging to the casket. At some services, the family and friends of the deceased will have a final viewing of the body after the formal service is completed even though the wake has been going on for at least two days. Sometimes family or elders must drag a mourner away from

the casket, which others are trying to close, so everyone can go to the graveside service.

Depending on where the Indigenous or Native American person is from, some of these aspects will vary, but there will be many similarities. A friend who is a missionary in Africa recently told me the mourning process in the village where she serves is like what I described in my experiences but more intense. And the biblical picture of mourning is even more intense and extended.

Having a more public expression of mourning and an extended time to mourn as a community are far from being individualistic and time-oriented. Many professionals and authors describe grief and loss as occurring in up to 12 stages, all part of the intentional approach to grief necessary for healing.

I believe we all can learn some valuable lessons from this Indigenous style of mourning that is more in line with Scripture. It allows the individual and the community to say goodbye without rushing, resisting the pull to be left alone. Psalm 118:5 says, "In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free" (NIV 1984). We can all learn to enter our pain more deliberately and allow God to set us free from our anguish. **B**

## It Is Well

Their words  
pierced the  
horrible grief I  
was carrying.

**"IT'S CANCER,** it's widespread, and it's untreatable." After 54 years of zestful living, the remainder of my brother's life was now defined by this sentence. Down syndrome had not prevented him from squeezing joy out of every day. Now he was given "days and weeks, but not months" to live.

He spent a week in the hospital and a week in a nursing home, all with family by his side, and he breathed his last breath late one Sunday afternoon. We said our final goodbyes and waited for the folks from the funeral home to collect his body.


When they arrived, I was dimly aware that there was live music in the nursing home's dining hall. Sure enough, as we followed the gurney on its trip past the dining hall filled with residents, there were young musicians from Dordt University scattered among the tables. As the words filtered into my consciousness, I realized what I was hearing: "It is well, it is well with my soul."

My brother had a particular love for the Holy Spirit. He saw the Holy Spirit everywhere: in the rays of the sun breaking through the clouds, in the flickering of the Advent candle he lit in his church each year, in the harp music his friend would play for him.

That day, the Holy Spirit showered me with reassurance that all was well with my brother's soul.

I doubt that any of those Dordt students knew that day that they would be a particular blessing to me. But then, does any of us know when God will call us to be a channel of God's grace and peace?

Their words pierced the horrible grief I was carrying, and comfort flooded my soul so that all was well with my soul too.

When will God use you or me to speak grace and peace to someone, maybe even someone we don't know? Maybe we will, like those musicians, be unaware that the Holy Spirit is using us to let someone know it is well with their soul. 



Helen Sybesma Andringa lives with her husband in Lincoln, Neb., where they attend Capitol City Christian Church. She has taught in several Christian schools and is now retired from teaching.

# God's Pentecost Blessing



On Pentecost, we remember how powerful it is for each of us to hear God's Word in our own language. Following the Spirit's lead, ReFrame proclaims the gospel in 10 major languages, reaching people in nearly every country.

In India, Mrs. Hiramani heard God's Word in Hindi on a ReFrame radio program and her life changed forever.

As she grew in her faith, Mrs. Hiramani knew she couldn't keep this good news to herself. Today she joyfully shares copies of print devotionals and other ReFrame materials with her friends and loved ones. She even helps raise some of the funds for printing costs!

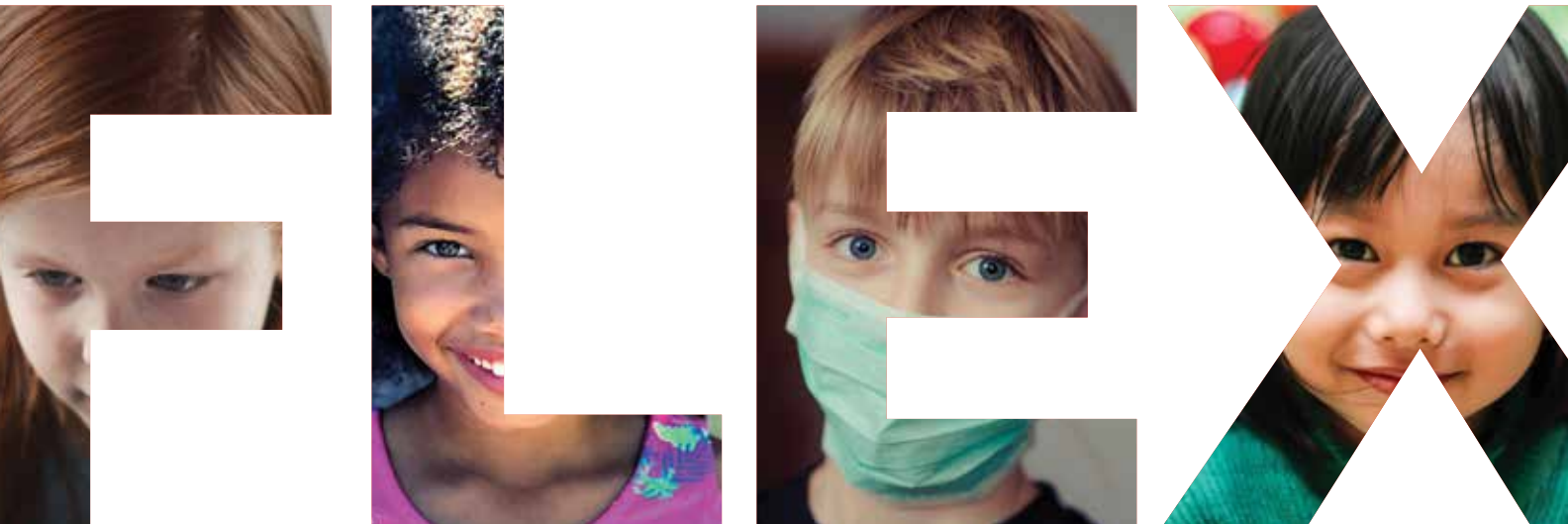
With your help, the Christian Reformed Church's media ministry can reach more people in their own language this Pentecost. Visit [ReFrameMinistries.org](https://www.ReFrameMinistries.org) to see how you can help.



**ReFrame  
Ministries**

is the new name of  
Back to God Ministries International

# Simple Sessions for Complex Times



Available free to CRCs through Dwell Digital



For these uncertain times in children's ministry, we've tailor-made 36 new stand-alone *Dwell* sessions for use in a variety of situations to help make lesson planning a little easier. We call it *Dwell Flex*.

*Dwell Flex* is...flexible!

These are simplified, single-page *Dwell* lesson plans that require no other materials and work within a wide range of ages and in multiple contexts, including:

**By Video:** Whether pre-recorded segments or live via video conference.

**At Church:** If lower attendance requires you to combine into a multi-age class.

**At Home:** Send these easy lessons for families to do at home.

*Dwell Flex* sessions are available now as part of a church's Dwell Digital subscription (and **free to CRCs**, thanks to ministry shares).

Call 800.333.8300 to sign up or visit [DwellCurriculum.org](https://DwellCurriculum.org) to learn more.

dwell<sup>®</sup> FLEX