

BANNER

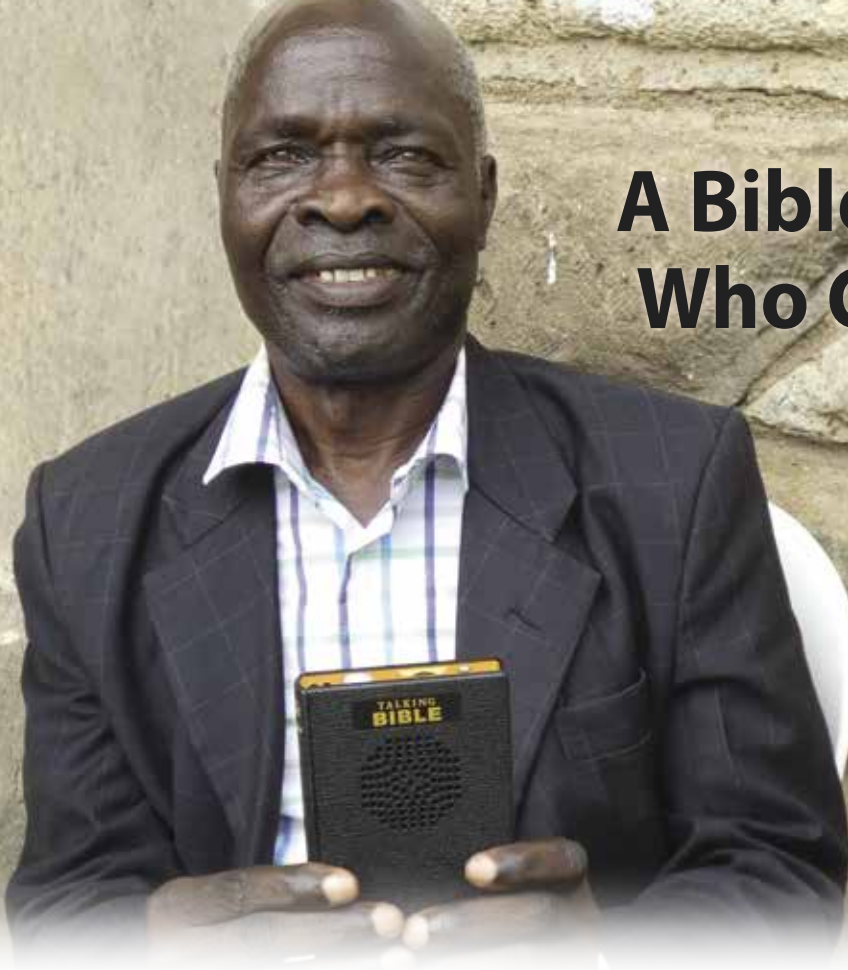
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Mental Health, Trauma & 2020

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READY FOR WHAT? ANYTHING.



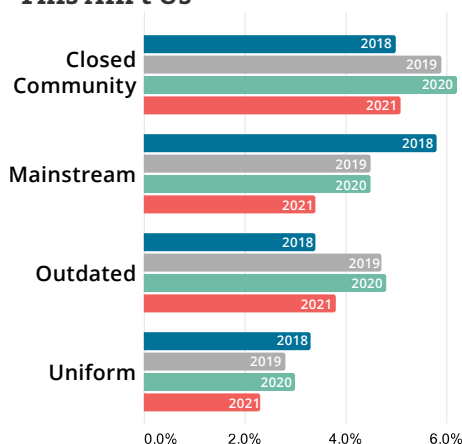
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BY THE NUMBERS

In our February issue, we listed the top 20 answers to the question, “What does the term Christian Reformed mean to you?” from last year’s denomination survey. Some of us wondered what might be at the bottom of the list. What doesn’t the term mean to you? Or better, what doesn’t it mean quite as much to you? Here are the answers from the past few years, in decreasing order:

This Ain’t Us



The survey is conducted every January-March by the Calvin University Center for Social Research. About one-fifth of the denomination is invited to participate each year, with an average of about 1,200 responses per year.

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.)

- » News: North American Churches Support CRC in Cuba
- » News: Toronto Church Explores Color, Art, and the Liturgical Calendar
- » Podcast: The Atlas Obscura Podcast
- » Music: *Old Church Basement*, by Elevation Worship and Maverick City Worship
- » Streaming: 3 Masterpiece Theater Series to Stream Now

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Mental Health, Trauma, and 2020

Arielle Wellons // Emotional healing is incomplete apart from spiritual healing.



My Favorite Teacher

Lorilee Craker // A good educator can change your life for the better.



The Other Six: How Sept. 11 Changed Me

Christina Stanton // A first-person account.



Cover: The year 2020 was hard for people across the continent. We won’t heal until we learn to process trauma. // Photo by Road Trip Raj/Unsplash

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Thoughts on Binationality

If we don't wrestle
with these fears
and differences,
we likely will
repeat this cycle of
frustration.



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.

이 기사의 한글번역은 TheBanner.org/korean 에서 보실 수 있습니다.

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

MANY CANADIAN Christian Reformed leaders are grieving the dismissal of Darren Roorda as Canadian Ministries director (see p. 16). Roorda was beloved by many. I pray for God's providence and blessing for him and his family as they face the future.

Unfortunately, we have been here before. A letter of lament by nine Canadian ministry leaders points out that three other people in the position left "in deep frustration with the CRCNA administrative structures." It asks for a third party to investigate "this dysfunctional pattern of frustration." As a Canadian, I get a sense of the concerns.

I have two streams of thought when it comes to the CRCNA's binationality. The first concerns lingering underlying fears. Second, I wonder about the cultural differences between Canada and the U.S. and how that relates to doing God's mission in each country's context.

It's not as if we haven't studied this before. The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) report to Synod 2013 (it also reported in 2012 and 2014) delved into issues of binationality, among other things. It noted two fears often raised with binationality. First is the fear of separation or division into two denominations. This fear often "stifles space for legitimate differentiation."

The second fear is that of one nation dominating the other—namely, that the U.S. side of the CRC, with its sheer number of churches and members, would dominate the Canadian side and call all the shots in ministry decision making. Canadians fear that the default unconscious mindset is that of the CRCNA as a U.S. denomination with a Canadian subsidiary rather than a partnership of two equals.

I wonder how much these fears have been openly acknowledged and

wrestled with by CRC leaders. I wonder how much of our various attempts at restructuring were subconsciously trying to allay these fears.


The fear of U.S. dominance leads to my second stream of thought: the cultural differences between Canada and the U.S.

While America's ideals from its Declaration of Independence are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Canada's Fathers of Confederation preferred "peace, order, and good government." Is that a fundamental difference in the two countries' cultural DNAs?

The 2013 TFRSC report noted some more practical differences. For example, while immigration to the U.S. was dominated by working-class Hispanic people with Christian backgrounds, immigration to Canada was dominated by middle-class Asian and African people with non-Christian backgrounds. Pursuing God's mission in these two different contexts should not be a "one-size-fits-all" posture.

Ultimately, pursuing God's mission in a faithful and contextualized way is the goal. Logically, Canadians should have the freedom to self-determine the best ways to contextualize ministry in Canada, and Americans for their context. This need for self-determination takes us back to those fears.

For some, self-determination sounds too much like separation or division. For others, lack of self-determination implies U.S. dominance over Canada, rather than an equal partnership.

I don't think this is an either-or polarity. We need to go beyond this narrow thinking. At the very least, it will be wise to revisit and deeply engage that 2013 TFRSC report on binationality. If we don't wrestle with these fears and differences, we likely will repeat this cycle of frustration. 



REPLY ALL

To send letters to the editor, please see our guidelines at thebanner.org/letters.

Removing Bethany Christian Services

Bethany Christian Services has partnered with Christian Reformed churches for more than 75 years to be the hands and feet of Christ to the most vulnerable children and families. ("Bethany Christian Services No Longer Recommended for Offerings," online.) The denomination has been a wonderful partner in Bethany's mission to demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus. I was disappointed to learn that Bethany was removed from the list of recommended charities for CRC churches because of their decision to take an "all hands on deck" approach to meeting the needs of children. Bethany's job is to determine if a family can provide a safe, stable home for children, not to interpret theology. This is a monumental task and should be left to the church. As evidenced by the CRC Council of Delegates' close vote (23-21), the conversation within the denomination is nuanced. Bethany will continue praying for the CRC and working alongside CRC churches.

» Garth Deur // Bethany board chair, 2016-18

Bullying Trauma

I applaud Andrea Meszaros for her honest portrayal of the devastation school-based bullying causes ("The Trauma of Bullying," April 2021). During my career, I've heard many of these traumatic stories. Why didn't a caring adult step in to help her years ago? As a Christian mental health professional who recognizes the integration of one's mind, body, and spirit, I value each shared account, and yet am intensely angered by these intentionally negative peer behaviors.

I am very thankful you saw your pastor as trustworthy and secure and chose to share your pain with him, but also that he had the insight and skills needed to help comfort and address your long-standing sorrow, distress, and brokenness. Continue with God's perspective for Andrea: "You are loved; you are safe; you are accepted." You are also bearing fruit by sharing your story of hope.

» Paulene Kamps // Calgary, Alta.

Argue 'Christianly'

I greatly enjoyed your essay "How to 'Argue' Christianly" (May 2021). After 76 years of living, I continue to learn the joy that comes from being willing to listen to those with whom I disagree, to state simply and quietly "I disagree" when that's the case, and, when the other person shows interest, to try to explain myself to be understood, not win points. Thanks for your interesting review of this issue.

» Frank Barefield // Holland, Mich.

Words of Life or Death

Thank you for your May editorial ("Words of Life or Death," May 2021). Words make a difference, and all of us must continue to work at inclusion. It is important in Alabama, Michigan, and all over!

» Vern and Karen Steenwyks // Pelham, Ala.

It Is Well

The article "It Is Well" in the April 26, 2021, issue was one of the most beautiful articles in *The Banner* that I have read in a long time. That great hymn is deeply moving and reflects many memories of loved ones who are no longer here. This hymn powerfully shows our faith.

The author is right that we never know how our Christian witness is influencing others. We are so thankful that her brother could have had a significant part in the worship services in his church. May God bless those young people who go to the nursing home with their beautiful music.

» Charles Veenstra // Sioux Center, Iowa

May Issue

Thank you for articles in the May issue that help us to speak the truth in love. "How to 'Argue' Christianly" and "Wanted: Volunteers for Crucifixion" suggest better listening, slow speaking, forbearance instead of revenge, and Jesus' model as the standard for gentleness. Whether in person or online, may we continue to grow in such directions.

» Shirley Roels, Ph.D. // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Thanks for the May issue, which contained a remarkable amount of wisdom from numerous writers. Some who particularly impressed me: Shiao Chong on disagreeing graciously, Frank and David De Haan on a faithful response to climate change, Patty Hoezee Meyer on the falsehoods underlying "all lives matter," Matt Lundberg on the moral peril of gun ownership, Karen Wilk on the insufficiency of correct belief for Christian faith, and Mike Wagenman on legitimate reasons for our beliefs to change. Like letter writer Josh Schatzle, I hope this kind of full-orbed evangelical Christianity will spread more widely from our denomination's leadership into local churches.

» James Leunk // Rochester, N.Y.

Restructuring

It sounds like the latest Council of Delegates meeting had long and intense discussions about how to restructure, especially as it involves one denomination trying to work together while being of two countries. With emotions high and

To the Sunday Ministry Spouse

solutions difficult, maybe it's time we hear God's voice and be open to doing things differently. Two leadership structures of the same denomination running beside each other instead of with each other can be OK. Forcing this to work will never work. Remember to let God lead us into paths we never thought possible, even the path of being the same denomination while structured differently in two countries.

» Judy De Wit // Sioux Falls, S.Dak.

During my whole working career I was with only two CRCNA agencies: World Missions and Home Missions. Some of my colleagues agree that every time there were "problems," the answer was "restructure." Personnel and budget and programs kept shrinking. Now that is happening at the very denominational level. So I agree ... that the answer must lie elsewhere, namely in spiritual renewal and revival. Let's pray.

» Rev. Lou Wagenfeld // Holland, Mich.

READ MORE ONLINE



Find the latest posts from our award-winning blog online at TheBanner.org.

- » Is Our Christian Brand True to Christ's Name?
- » Soul-saving Is No Excuse for Ignoring Injustice
- » After COVID-19, What?

TO MY HUSBAND who supports me in Sunday-morning ministry (and the many people with family members who serve in churches):

I know Sunday mornings are not the peaceful, relaxed times that so many of your friends enjoy.

There are no tranquil Sunday brunches, no sleeping in, no impromptu weekends away at the cottage, few weekends away at all.

We are among the first at church and the last to leave.

For four hours on the day of rest, you run after our toddler while I run around leading other people's kids. On Sunday mornings, the sacred time most families spend together, you are on full-time parent duty.

You are my go-to last-minute nursery volunteer. You jump in as greeter for newcomers, basketball teammate for children, and server for meals at special events.

You listen and listen and listen as I process what ministry means, as I struggle with the challenges of finding volunteers, of church politics, of trying to get others on board with my vision, of striving to bring growth in a slow-moving, albeit wise, institution.

You didn't know when you said your vows you'd be signing up for all this—saying no to weekend social events because we are booked every weekend; leaving Saturday night events early because Sunday is my Monday; saying no to vacations during Christmas or Easter; becoming a default volunteer for most activities in our church's calendar; staying home with the kids several evenings a week because I have to work.


My ministry is in the foreground—the children's messages, the preaching, the games and teaching and songs

You didn't know
when you said
your vows you'd
be signing up
for all this.

and activities. My ministry can be measured and recognized by hours and smiles on faces. I'm the one who gets thank-yous and hugs. Your ministry is in the background, and like so many throughout Scripture, you do the quiet, seldom-recognized work of supporting.

And you do it all willingly. Over and over again you offer to step in. Over and over again you hear my frustrations and joys, my prayers and challenges.

A helpmate. I've come to be cautious of this word because of the ways it has been used to limit people's (particularly women's) roles. But when I see all you do Sunday after Sunday, I can think of few better words.

I see you, and I see the pastors' spouses and ministers' children and families of people in vocational ministry. I know there are thousands of hidden hours you put into our callings. I am so grateful. Thank you for all the work you do to make my work possible. 



Melissa Kuipers writes fiction and nonfiction. She is also director of discipleship ministries at Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont.



Mental Health, Trauma, and 2020

By Arielle Wellons

The year 2020 was a hard one for Americans and Canadians across the continent, and I've been reflecting on how North Americans have individually and communally been struggling to understand the problem of trauma. As a counselor, I'm equipped to help clients, Christian or not, process trauma. However, I'm acutely aware that emotional healing is incomplete apart from spiritual healing. I believe America is struggling to understand trauma primarily because the gospel is not widely understood as a crucial part of the solution. For many people, trauma processing happens most effectively in a counseling context, but holistic trauma healing must rest on the foundation of the gospel.

Trauma

What is trauma? Trauma, as it is often understood, can be an emotionally intense experience that floods a person's brain with fear-activated impulses, overwhelming the mind's ability to process and understand the event. Another way to look at trauma is the disruption of attachment. This can involve chronic or acute betrayal

of a relationship, often in a formative or emotionally significant context (e.g., childhood, a marriage, or a close friendship). Trauma, whether acute or chronic, can create lasting struggles such as hypervigilance, emotional volatility or numbness, depression, relationship struggles, and a host of other challenges.

Unhealed trauma tends to obscure reality in the domains of life affected by the traumatic experiences. It is a blurry and broken lens through which to view relationships, community, and the world. A person suffering with trauma may constantly feel unsafe in the absence of danger and may experience intense emotional pain, which could be disproportionate to the immediate context or triggering situation.

Trauma is difficult to understand from an outside perspective, so empathy is essential. Empathy is, in fact, a part of the healing process. Counselors often learn that emotional healing from trauma requires several crucial elements: the presence of a safe person who offers consistent and unconditional care, the openness to directly face and understand the reality of what has happened, and

insight into one's true significance and identity.

Here's an example of how these dynamics might play out in counseling. Having left an abusive relationship involving emotional manipulation and several physical assaults, Tricia* struggles with flashbacks, constant anxiety, and fear of vulnerability. She avoids dating and shuts down when men seem kind and attentive, since the abuser was initially charming and romantic. Tricia begins to meet with a female counselor, but she finds herself worrying that the counselor will think she has been naive and is "crazy" due to flashbacks and severe anxiety. However, the counselor shows consistency and warmth, so Tricia gradually begins to share feelings and thoughts that seem shameful or frightening to her. This allows her to acknowledge the reality of the abuse (including incidents she's afraid to think about), identify the abuser's sin, and grapple with regrets about how she wishes she had responded. Along the way, the counselor asks questions to help Tricia notice how her feelings of identity and worth have been derailed by the abuser's manipulation. They review Scripture together to

reinforce Tricia's awareness that she is a beloved child of God whose worth is defined by her heavenly Father. As the counseling progresses, Tricia finds that her anxiety and shame are being replaced by hope and confidence.

The Gospel as It Relates to Trauma

Through a gospel lens, trauma is integrally related to sin. We could understand original sin as a form of relational trauma that began with Adam and Eve breaking their relationship with God, then continued through generational cycles of broken relationships—with God and with each other. This means we are all touched by the traumatic effects of sin, including not only our own sin but also the sin of everyone who has ever hurt us, along with the sin of everyone who has hurt those who hurt us, and so on.

Viewing trauma as the outgrowth of sin is the only way we can truly make sense of the way trauma begets trauma and violence begets violence. It is usually out of insecurity, anger, sadness, or fear that people hurt each other, often after having been hurt by others. People who abuse others have often been the victims of abuse. The world struggles to understand this, wanting to group everyone into categories as victims or victimizers. From a gospel perspective, we are all traumatized by sin, having been harmed by others and doing harm to others.

Here I'll return to the three components of trauma healing that I mentioned earlier. These components have been identified in many secular trauma counseling models. The presence of a safe person offering consistent, unconditional care is the starting point for allowing the other two components to unfold. Counselors are trained in providing an emotionally safe and caring environment for trauma healing. And throughout Scripture we see

From a gospel
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that church communities, spouses, family members, and friends are called to build caring relationships that create opportunities for healing. Ultimately, though, spiritual healing comes through the presence of unconditional love. People can try to provide that—human relationships and wise counseling might be vital parts of the healing process—but human love will always be limited and flawed due to the ongoing influence of sin. True spiritual healing of trauma and sin is found through the presence and unconditional love of God.

The next component in trauma healing is an openness to understand and face the reality of what has happened. From a gospel perspective, this means acknowledging the reality of sin—including the sin of others and one's own sin. This is significant because healing does not require us to be innocent victims. A true understanding of sin allows each of us to acknowledge areas of our own sin as well as anyone's sin against us. This frees us from the need to rationalize ways we might have contributed to our trauma

or ways we have hurt others out of the pain of our own unhealed trauma. It is vital to process the story behind the trauma and identify false guilt, which is also common in trauma, but we need not be blameless to seek healing. God's unconditional love allows us to openly acknowledge the reality of sin without fear of rejection.

The remaining component of trauma healing is insight into a true identity. We recognize that we are inherently significant, having been created in the image of God. With confession of sin and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, we recognize that we are cleansed, worthy, pure, and spiritually whole. We are no longer defined by brokenness, wounds, or sin. Our identity is made new.

Spiritual healing allows us to have loving, sincere relationships with imperfect people. A few signs of spiritual healing are the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and the absence of bitterness, malice, slander, and rage (Eph. 4:31). Spiritual healing is an event (justification) and a process (sanctification). The indwelling Holy Spirit provides us with a clear lens through which to see and understand the world in place of the blurry, warped lens of trauma and sin.

North America is wrestling with the problem of trauma. The year 2020 has offered Christians an open door to speak the truth of the gospel. **B**

**Tricia is not a real person, but her story is an amalgamation of stories I have come across in my counseling practice.*



Arielle Wellons is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Associate in Gastonia, N.C. She grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and is now part of the Presbyterian Church in America along with her husband and son.

BIG QUESTIONS

Relationships

What is gaslighting, and how do we respond to people who gaslight us?

The word “gaslighting” was coined after Patrick Hamilton wrote a hit 1938 play called “Gas Light.” The play depicts a marriage in which the husband psychologically abuses his wife by lying and bullying. Psychological abuse is always insidious, like mental and emotional stalking. In the play, the wife begins to doubt her own experience because her “concerned” husband tells her she must be crazy or is imagining things. His lying and manipulating seeks to replace their shared reality with an alternate reality. The wife slowly discovers his treacherous plans for personal gain and begins to fight back.

“Gaslighting” has since come to denote psychologically abusive tactics from one person or group toward another that can occur in many settings besides a marriage, including the workplace, the schoolyard, a sports team, or a friend group.

So how does one counteract being gaslighted? This is a complex question. Every situation is unique and depends on many personal, interpersonal, and social circumstances. However, an



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

effective response begins by noticing that someone who appears to be charming, but also bullies and lies, is gaslighting for personal power. Others might be blind to a gaslighter's attempts to sow falsehoods. Recognize that some will only ‘see’ the behaviors that fit with their love and/or admiration for the gaslighter.

Most often, the only defense against a gaslighter is to name the truth in the face of lies and then to remove yourself from the gaslighter's orbit. Remember, too, that Satan, the father of lies, enslaves, but that Jesus' truth sets us free. Psychological warfare might require spiritual warfare.

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

Faith Formation

I've reached the third third of my life. What does faith formation look like after a life of going to church and being serious about my faith?

In many ways, the life of faith for those in the third third of life (after about age 60) looks a lot like it did before. As gardeners know, even if you've weeded and cared for a garden for many years you still have to do that going forward. To use another analogy, if you have been married for years, you can't

simply ignore your spouse and expect to have the relationship continue as it has in the past. The life of faith is similar. Relationships and gardens, like our faith, need tending if they're going to flourish. So expect to continue learning with others, attending worship, and engaging in Bible study, prayer, and other faith practices—just as you have been doing. There are, however, some new opportunities that come with age.

Some people find they have more time to listen and watch for the Holy Spirit's movement in their lives, congregation, family, and community.

Developing the practice of gratitude is important. Gratitude blesses others, and research shows that the practice helps older adults to flourish too.

As we age, we also accumulate wisdom. We've seen more joy and sadness in our lives than most younger people have. Those experiences have given us personal knowledge of God's faithfulness. Reflect on those things and share them with others in your family and your congregation. Older people are often good candidates for being mentors to teens or young adults.

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 University and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.

Missional Living

Jesus tells us to proclaim that “the kingdom of God has come near” (Luke 10:11; Matt. 10:7; Luke 9:2, 60), but what does that really mean?

We don’t get a straight answer to this question. Jesus describes the kingdom with metaphors and parables about ordinary, often seemingly insignificant things, such as mustard seeds, bread, and fish.

Jesus also declares, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21). Here and throughout the gospels, we discover that the reign of God breaking in and changing everything among us is Jesus himself. As John Timmer explains, “Just as Jesus’ parables proclaim the kingdom of God, so does Jesus’ life. His entire mission—his life, teaching ministry, death, resurrection, ascension—proclaims the kingly rule of God. The story of Jesus discloses to us a new way of living that is marked by total submission to the rule of God. ... At the same time Jesus is both proclaimer and proclamation of God’s kingly rule” (*The Kingdom Equation*, 12).

“Kingdom,” Eugene Peterson affirms, “is what Jesus reveals, patiently but insistently, word by word, act by act” (*The Jesus Way*, 21).

In other words, if we want to know what the kingdom of God is like (and how to proclaim it), we need to know what Jesus is like. Jesus is like a warm welcome (for the outcast and marginalized), a listening ear (at a well and on a road), trust extended (to fishermen and tax collectors), a healing touch (so the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame and the lepers leap, and the dead live) and a dinner table where dirty feet, deniers, sleepyheads, liars, and betrayers feast together.

So, if we want to bear witness to God’s kingdom come near, perhaps a good place to start is by paying attention to the people and places in our neighborhoods that look like Jesus—where kingdom things are happening—and join in! We join in, like Jesus, by welcoming the other, listening, caring, and enjoying the table with our neighbors and our own dirty feet. Perhaps in so doing we too will exclaim, “God’s kingdom is near!”

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

Ethics

Should Christians receive a vaccine that uses aborted fetal cells in its production?

The death, disruption, and anxiety wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic have reminded us of the importance of vaccines. The situation also has raised concerns about what the Christian community’s moral obligations are in the face of the vaccine production process and the public health threat posed by the pandemic.

As your question suggests, for Christians committed to the dignity of unborn life, the use of cells derived from aborted fetuses in the production of vaccines is concerning. While none of the COVID-19 vaccines contains fetal cells, some manufacturers have used such cells in the development and testing phases of the process. Other manufacturers have used them only for safety testing. Their source is a small number of cell lines initiated from a few abortions decades ago. Accordingly, the current process does not produce additional demand for abortions today.

It is striking how so many pro-life ethicists have supported Christians receiving these vaccines due to the gravity of the situation and the lack of alternative vaccines produced without the use of fetal cell lines. Most such ethicists have concluded that those receiving the vaccine are in no way responsible for the original abortion.

However, moral unease might remain—perhaps appropriately so. The current situation reminds us that being a consistent advocate of life sometimes involves difficult tensions. The dignity of the unborn is part of a consistent ethic of life, as is wise action in the face of a devastating disease. The vaccines are a life-giving good, but that does not remove the lamentable aspects of the production process. At the same time, it is impossible to avoid some cost/benefit analysis given the need to stop the pandemic—also in the name of respect for life.

On this side of the New Creation, the Christian life cannot always avoid moral tragedy. Moral permissibility and even moral desirability aren’t always the same as moral purity. Opposition to abortion naturally produces an element of discomfort even in those of us who choose to be vaccinated out of concern for our community and our world.

Matt Lundberg is the director of the de Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development at Calvin University. He and his family are members of Boston Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



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Stories of Summer Ministry

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Iowa Church Loves Their Neighbors with ‘Mission Mahaska’

Members of First Christian Reformed Church in Oskaloosa, Mahaska County, Iowa, remounted a love-in-action outreach to their community this spring. What had been a three-day service-based mission in 2019 became a few different projects spread over a longer period in 2021.



Volunteer crews from First CRC in Oskaloosa, Iowa, showed their neighbors love in 2019 by painting a deck.

Sharon Spoelstra, part of the mission’s organizing team, said the team gathered “to meet and pray about where God could use us.” After contacting some local people, city officials, and organizations, the church members found use for their gifts in building with Habitat for Humanity; renovating the local branch of Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC); and installing windows for a community member who lives with disabilities. “She didn’t know where to turn, but a city official was able to tell her about our group,” Spoelstra said.

When the mission launched two years ago, Spoelstra said, the prayer was “to build relationships within our church and in our community.”

That year Pastor Jon Spronk led volunteers through devotions each morning before teams headed off to worksites.

“It was a joy to witness a cross-section of our congregation serving in grand and

small ways, from a 6-year-old scraping and painting to a 90-year-old fixing a neighbor’s picnic table to dozens of men erecting a new, large building for a youth Bible camp,” Spronk said. “Not only did these projects make an impact in the neighborhood and ministries that were served, but also our church greatly benefited from the fellowship that working alongside fellow church members can bring.”

—Alissa Vernon

Michigan Church’s Summer Market Is Community Builder

A farmers’ market running twice a month on the grounds of New Era (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church has provided a community-connecting place for live music, children’s activities, and sharing local produce.

“We are working to try to meet the needs of our community,” organizer Sandy Whitaker said. This summer, that included giving space to District Health Department #10 to run a pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinic. Last year, the health department supplied a “food navigator” to help patrons make healthy food choices.

Whitaker said that before the church started this venture in 2016, it learned that 60% of people in its county (Oceana County) qualify as obese, and few households reported consuming five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. The market partners with the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Michigan’s Project FRESH to make buying fresh produce more accessible. Many aspects of the New Era Farmers Market are supported by community grants, including a 2021 grant from the Oceana County Youth Advisory Council that supported activities for children ages 4 to 14. Kids participating in the Power of Produce Club receive a \$2 token each time to spend on market produce; registering seniors receive \$4 in tokens.



New Era CRC draws in community with a twice-a-month summer market.

Church members volunteer in many ways, from staffing the booth that distributes tokens to arranging for the live music that helps draw the crowd. The outdoor stage and viewing platform built for the market performances also allowed the church to conduct outdoor worship services through 2020. Whitaker said she sees God's hand in all the moments of provision.

The last market for 2021 is scheduled for Sept. 14.

—Alissa Vernon

Ontario Church Creates Young Adult Summer Community Experience

Pastor Willemina Zwart and Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Simcoe, Ont., welcomed seven young adults into an experience of Christian community with the South Coast Beach Project this summer.

Zwart, working as a partner with Resonate Global Mission, wanted to create for young people an environment that would allow them to explore God's vocational calling and to learn together "the habits of life and heart" that are needed for a "long-term trajectory in following Jesus." Zwart calls this "a robust kingdom imagination."

The young people lived in two cottages in Port Dover, Ont., from May to August and took up seasonal work while living communally. They worked jobs ranging from creative

arts at Immanuel CRC, landscaping, working as a cashier at a local greenhouse, and doing administration work for a day care and day camp, Zwart said. The discipleship part of the experience included reading through *A Spiritual Formation Workbook* by James Bryan Smith (Renovare), participating in a small group vocational video series and Bible study, and hearing from a series of guest speakers and presenters.

Jessie Zantingh, a Redeemer University student who participated in the project, said, "The theme of reliance on God and trusting him has come up a lot in my prayers and quiet time in preparation for the project, specifically John 15:5 about the branches and the vine. During this summer, I hope to learn how to exercise spiritual muscles through spiritual disciplines



South Coast Beach Project 2021 participants Maddy Zomer, Sarah Gysbers, Victor An, Pastor Willemina Zwart, Jessie Zantingh, Nathan Visser, Makayla Meinen, and Alex Knopp.

that help me to continually be turning my gaze back to him."

Zwart hopes this will be the first of many cohorts. "The goal each summer is to look at what kingdom living and discernment look like and how we delve into it and live as disciples," she said.

The 2021 group included six Ontario residents and one student from British Columbia. An American student originally selected for the program was unable to participate due in part to ongoing pandemic travel restrictions.

—Kristen Parker

Noteworthy

In a judicial review of a government of Canada decision about eligibility for Canadian summer jobs funding, the **Federal Court of Canada declared Redeemer University "was denied procedural fairness" in the consideration of its application for a Canada Summer Jobs grant**, and it ordered the government to cover the school's legal costs. The judgment was delivered June 29.

Redeemer, a Christian university in Ancaster, Ont., had requested the review after its 2019 application was rejected despite having provided to the government its personal respect policy when asked for "further information to show that it provides a workplace free of harassment and discrimination."

Christian Legal Fellowship, a Canadian association of Christian lawyers and law students and an intervener in the case, applauded the finding. In a written statement, it said, "There is no room in our free, democratic, and pluralist society for religious tests or other discriminatory means of administering publicly funded benefits."

(For more background on the case, see "Federal Judge: Redeemer University Treated Unfairly" at thebanner.org.)

READ MORE ONLINE

CRC in Canada Parts Ways with Canadian Ministries Director



Rev. Darren Roorda

The Christian Reformed Church in North America Canada Corporation announced July 6 that it was parting ways with Canadian Ministries director Darren Roorda, effective immediately. The dismissal happened after the CRC's Council of Delegates adopted a new leadership structure that frustrated many Canadians on the Council.

The new structure will have to be approved by Synod 2022. (The Council of Delegates acts on behalf of synod, the annual CRC leadership meeting. Canadian delegates to the Council make up the Canada Corporation, the legal name for the CRC in Canada.)

"Darren has been a faithful servant of the church for many years. He will certainly be missed," said Andy DeRuyter, president of the Canada Corporation. "Unfortunately, it has become clear that our ideas about how to move forward with our goals and objectives have differed.

Eighty-six ministry leaders in Canada who are unhappy with the board's decision sent a letter to the Canada Corporation, received just before the

board's July 24 meeting. "The only information that we have regarding Darren's dismissal is that there was a difference in vision," the letter read. "If the case for dismissal is a difference in vision, then we are eager to know what the vision is that we are being led into."

DeRuyter said that there is no new vision and that the board and Roorda agreed on the end goals of a contextualized ministry in Canada, compliance with Canadian tax law, and remaining a single denomination. "It's how we get there where the difference came in, and the style of leadership," DeRuyter said. "It became kind of a stumbling block."

The board recognizes the letter warrants a transparent response and will work toward opening dialogue with this group. "It's a rather large group that signed that letter," DeRuyter said, "and it brings up a lot of old feelings." Three past Canadian Ministries directors left their positions between 2000 and 2012. "The letter is too important to ignore," DeRuyter said.

Delegate Ralph Wigboldus (Classis Huron) agreed, saying the letter represented "a groundswell of concern that we need to respond to well" and that individuals "talking amongst themselves" could lead to misunderstandings.

The board appointed Terry Veldboom, the CRC's director of finance and operations (Canada), to a 12-month term as acting executive director (Canada). The search for a candidate to serve as the new executive director for Canada is underway but won't be finalized until the CRC's next synod in June 2022.

Roorda, an ordained minister in the CRC, served as Canadian Ministries director since 2014. Before coming into denominational leadership he pastored two churches in Ontario. Contacted for comment, Roorda said he was unable to speak at this time.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

Canadian Board Supports Restructuring, Wants More Canadians on Council

As a new governance structure is implemented in the Christian Reformed Church in anticipation of approval from Synod 2022, the denomination's Canada Corporation says it wants more Canadians appointed to the Council of Delegates, and will continue to stress the Canadian perspective for governance structure. The Canada Corporation met July 24 by video conference.

(The Council acts on behalf of synod, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church. Canadian delegates to the Council make up the Canada Corporation, the legal name for the CRC in Canada.)

Canadian Voice in Restructuring

The governance proposals going to Synod 2022 include two offices: a Canadian Office of the CRC with an executive director-Canada, and an Office of the General Secretary comprising two denomination-wide leadership positions: general secretary and chief administrative officer. That is different from the current structure of a single executive director of the CRCNA and a Canadian ministries director. The plan is meant to address concerns that the current arrangement is not in compliance with Canadian tax laws for charities, which require that Canadian nonprofits retain direction and control of all resources acquired in Canada.

The restructuring plan differs from an earlier proposal agreed to in principle, and its adoption in May frustrated many Canadian delegates who saw deficiencies in the new proposal, such as a lack of recognition of cultural differences between the U.S. and Canada,



Wendy de Jong (Classis Niagara) serves on the Council's steering committee and recognizes she's "representing the voices of a constituency that believes it has not always been treated fairly."

not enough emphasis on partnership, and ambiguity about how proposed joint ministry agreements meant to bridge U.S. and Canadian ministries would be used. (See "New Leadership Structure Recommended Amid Much Disagreement," May 2021, p. 20.)

Bev Bandstra (Classis B.C. South-East) said at the July 24 meeting that she "wants recognition that Canada is still not happy with this report."

A Council steering committee is guiding implementation of the proposed structure. The Canada Corporation will forward to that committee a 40-page report it produced regarding restructuring proposals. Andy DeRuyter (Classis B.C. North-West), Canada Corporation president, said, "There is good hope for us to see that many of the things that were brought forward will be heard."

Wendy de Jong (Classis Niagara) is one of two Canadians on the steering committee. Terry Veldboom, acting executive director for Canada, is the other. De Jong said she's aware that she's there



Andy DeRuyter (Classis B.C. North-West): "There is good hope for us to see that many of the things that were brought forward will be heard."

"representing the voices of a constituency that believes it has not always been treated fairly." She said she's hopeful for a good outcome and recognizes that sharing the Canadian structure report produced in January offers the weight of "what the constituency said to us."

Add More Canadians to Council

The Canada Corporation considered a request from the Council's nominating committee about adding one or two more Canadians to the Council. It noted that finding Canadian members to serve on the various committees of the Council is a challenge given their smaller numbers. There are 14 Canadian delegates: one for each of the Canadian classes and three at-large delegates. There are 40 U.S. delegates; one for each U.S. classis plus two at-large. Synod has approved up to 10 at-large members. The Canada Corporation is recommending that the Council seek to fill five of those at-large positions with Canadians.

Roorda Dismissal

The Canada Corporation addressed questions about its decision to dismiss Canadian Ministry director Darren Roorda. The board said its decision was due to a difference in how to reach its goals of contextualized ministry in Canada.

The board received a letter signed by 86 Canadian ministry leaders requesting clarification. DeRuyter said the board should "open lines of communication with this group." It also received a letter of lament signed by nine Canadians who have held various board positions over the years, including two former Canadian Ministry directors and two previous board presidents.

The letter addressed what it called longstanding frustrations with governance structures that have consistently limited the flourishing of ministry of the Canadian church. "We cry 'enough!'" the writers said, and they asked for a third party to investigate "this dysfunctional pattern of frustration."

Bandstra, secretary of the Canada Corporation, told *The Banner* that the board will write a response to the lament. "We agree with the need to examine existing historical structures that have limited the flourishing of the ministry of the CRC's in Canada, perhaps even bringing in an outside consultant as the letter suggests," she said. "We will look at this issue in conjunction with beginning the search process for a new executive director Canada."

The Council's implementation steering committee meets every three weeks. The full Council will next meet in October by video conference.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Henry T. Karsten

1931-2021

Pastor and church planter Henry Karsten had a huge heart for evangelism and wanted others to know the Jesus he loved. Karsten died April 26.

After high school Karsten worked several jobs before experiencing God's call to ministry. He graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, was ordained in 1958, and began serving New Hope Fellowship in Monroe, Wash.

A few years later he was called by Christian Reformed Church Home Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) to be a church planter, first planting Akron (Ohio) CRC and then Crossroads City Church in Jacksonville, Fla. Both churches were blessed with growth and successful building programs. Karsten then pastored Alger Community CRC near Bellingham, Wash., and Bethel CRC in Sun Valley, Calif.

After developing some health issues, Karsten retired in California in 1995. His retirement years included volunteering with CRC World Missions (now Resonate) in five different countries. Having lost his son to cancer, he also gave significant time as a chaplain to various cancer support groups.

Predeceased in 1989 by his son Mark, Karsten is survived by Evelyn, his wife of 66 years; three children and their spouses; a daughter-in-law; 13 grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Ontario Church Forms Support Team for LGBTQ Members and Families

Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont., passed a mandate for a new ministry team in May, forming a group it believes to be the first of its kind in the denomination. "In response to Synod (1999)'s call to repentance for the way churches have failed to minister to LGBTQ+ members," the mandate reads, "we recognize and lament the hurt that Meadowlands' failure in this area has caused our LGBTQ+ members and their families. We believe that 'the church must reach out with love and compassion, creating a fellowship of mutual honesty, caring, and support' (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 257). Therefore, rather than perpetuating a painful silence regarding the belonging of our LGBTQ+ siblings in Christ, we seek to actively demonstrate our welcome and care for them and their families."

Meadowlands faith formation ministry coordinator Marja Fledderus said the church has many focused ministry teams, including three formed in the past two years. Teams can form at any time, Fledderus said, and after having a mandate approved by the church's board (administrative elders, pastor, and a deacon) they fit under one of five pillars of ministry, each led by a staff person.

"With the LGBTQ Support team, the board approved the mandate," Fledderus said, "but it was felt that the congregation should approve this team, which is not our usual practice. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, the board felt the need for transparency, so it was brought before the congregation." The meeting took place in May, and the team was "overwhelmingly approved by 99%," said Bettie VanGils Kloet, the team's lead contact.

VanGils Kloet said while their church knew of similar groups working in other congregations without an official mandate, "we really believed we could be more useful as change-makers if there was a way to fit within the reporting structure and then the official conversations of our own church." The team will meet four times a year and report

to Meadowlands' pastoral elders at their monthly meetings.

The formation of this team at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC comes at a time when the Christian Reformed Church prepares to formally receive at Synod 2022 a report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. The report was released to the churches last fall. While it asserts that any expression of sexuality outside of a marriage between one man and one woman is contrary to Scripture and sees this view as already having confessional status in the church, it also admonishes the church for failing to live up to recommendations in the 1973 synodical report that call for acceptance, recognition, and compassion for people with a homosexual orientation. "It is a sad truth that the Christian community, including our Christian Reformed denomination, has failed in its calling to empathize with, love, and bear the burdens of persons who are attracted to the same sex, making it very difficult for them to live a life of holiness," the 2020 report reads (p. 95). The 1973 report made a distinction between same-sex orientation and practice and characterized only the latter as sinful. The 2020 human sexuality report maintains that distinction.

VanGils Kloet said she responded to a question at the Meadowlands congregational meeting about whether the support team would "make a distinction between members of the congregation who are same-sex attracted or transgendered and celibate versus those in same-sex relationships or marriages" by saying, "That question (of distinguishing between) is not part of our mandate."

—Alissa Vernon

Michigan Church Offers Parking Lot Prayer



Brookside Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., hosted its sixth drive-thru prayer hour June 22. Members started offering this in January as a public way “to stand in the gap for people” and to demonstrate that Brookside “is a praying church,” Nicole Davis said. Davis is Brookside’s faith formation coordinator and one of the two initiators of drive-thru prayer. The outdoor format originally was conceived to fit with pandemic protocols, but Davis said she “absolutely” wants to keep this experience of showing Jesus’ love to others through prayer. “For me, COVID or no COVID, this is something I think is very important to continue,” she said. The church expects to resume the practice this month.

On a prayer day, a Tuesday afternoon from noon to 1 p.m., two volunteers hold signs along the drive in front of the church while Davis and one or two other volunteers meet the drivers to pray in the parking lot. About 30 people have stopped for prayer.

Nicole Davis and her husband, Ryan, are two of the prayer volunteers with Brookside Christian Reformed Church’s drive-thru prayer.

“It’s so important to know the people in our community,” said Davis, who has been moved by the stories of people who stop. “God placed this church in this community for a reason. We want people to know when they pass this church, this is a praying church, this is a church where you are welcome.”

Other forms of prayer ministry at the church include a Wednesday meeting prayer group with the pastors, “prayer servants” available after worship on Sundays, and a once-a-year prayer and worship event where attendees pray through stations with different prompts.

—Alissa Vernon

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Robert J. Holwerda

1929-2021

Bob Holwerda loved the Lord his God with all his heart and soul, and his passion was obvious and contagious. He served as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church for 45 years and is remembered for his gentle spirit, patience, and passion for preaching. Holwerda died April 30, just two months after the death of Joyce, his wife of 71 years.

“Dad was larger than life, a family man and a people person with a boyish grin, a twinkle in his eye, a hearty laugh, a compassionate soul, and firm convictions,” said one of his sons. “Every stranger was just a friend he hadn’t met yet,” said the nephew who officiated at his funeral.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Holwerda was ordained in 1963. He served Parkersburg (Iowa) CRC; Harderwyk Ministries in Holland, Mich.; Calvary CRC in Pella, Iowa; First CRC in Mount Vernon, Wash.; and Bethel CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. He retired in 1994. He loved to discuss the issues and health of the church with anyone, but especially with his brothers.

Holwerda is survived by five children and their spouses, 15 grandchildren, and 32 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Ronald Dennis Baker

1937-2021

"You are the most humble, honest, and unpretentious pastor I have ever known," said Ron Baker's brother-in-law at Baker's memorial service. "Only God knows the hundreds or thousands you have led to Jesus ... with no fanfare." Baker died May 5.

After becoming a Christian at age 25, Baker was known for always wearing a cross made of square nails about four inches long, resembling nails used in crucifixions.

He graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary and was ordained in 1971. Baker pastored Eastern Hills Christian Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Mich.; Bravo Community Church, Fennville, Mich.; Ocheyedan (Iowa) CRC; and Covenant CRC, Grand Ledge, Mich. He served as chaplain for My Brother's House III in Holland, Mich., a community for people with developmental disabilities.

Baker retired in 2003 and then served part time as associate pastor at Messiah CRC in Hudsonville, Mich. He and his wife volunteered with World Renew in disaster response. He blessed many people with his proficiency in auto mechanics and said his best sermons were made under the hood of a car.

Baker is survived by Dena, his wife of 57 years; three children and their spouses; eight grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Carroll Eugene Keegstra

1934-2021

Quiet and humble, with a great sense of humor and a wonderful laugh, Carroll Keegstra was dedicated to his congregations and to his chaplaincy ministry with the Michigan Department of Corrections. Keegstra died May 4 in Spring Hill, Fla.

Born in Grand Rapids, Mich., Keegstra graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary then completed a master's degree in religious history at the University of Chicago in 1962. He was ordained in 1963. He served Kenosha (Wisc.) Christian Reformed Church; West Park CRC, Cleveland, Ohio; Franklin Lakes (N.J.) CRC; Charlotte (Mich.) CRC; and the Michigan Ecumenical Forum. He then served the CRC as a chaplain, working for the Michigan Department of Corrections at Riverside Psychiatric Center in Ionia, Mich., and at Huron Valley Center, Ypsilanti, Mich.

After retirement in 2002, Keegstra lived in Tucson, Ariz., and Spring Hill, Fla. He and his wife liked to hike, enjoyed music, and traveled extensively, including taking many cruises. They visited all the continents except Antarctica. Family was important, and even though children were scattered across the country, they tried to get together as much as possible.

Keegstra is survived by Patricia, his wife of 63 years; four children and their spouses; and three grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Program Changes at Redeemer, Calvin Universities

Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ont., and Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., two schools with ties to the Christian Reformed Church, are each starting this academic year with new business programs and a reduction in other degree programs.

The schools announced the changes in the spring, with Redeemer cutting French and theater programs and Calvin cutting major or minor focuses in global development studies, classical studies, and Dutch, German, Greek, and Latin. Calvin also cut its astronomy minor.

Redeemer's senate received recommendations after an academic planning group reviewed the long-term sustainability of all of the school's programs. David Zietsma, Redeemer's interim president, said, "The senate made decisions with respect to closing French and theater as a result of their difficulties in sustaining the programs and the low enrollment."

Three faculty positions ended in the summer as a result of the cuts.

Redeemer does not share current enrollment numbers for any of its programs. The total number of Redeemer students for 2020-21 was 896. Over the past six years, the average number of graduating students from the theater arts program was 3.3 and from the French program 2.6.

Zietsma said the school will work with each of its French and theater students to find the best pathway toward graduation, ensuring that senior students can finish with their major.

Calvin University underwent a similar academic program review process with recommendations from its Planning and Priorities Committee. The school is phasing out seven minors and five majors. "The closure of these programs and the involuntary elimination of two faculty positions are truly difficult decisions. We have worked hard, however, to reduce the impact to our faculty, and all currently enrolled students will be able to complete their degrees in these areas of study," President Michael Le Roy said. This academic year is Le Roy's last as Calvin's president. He announced in June his intention to retire.

—Kristen Parker



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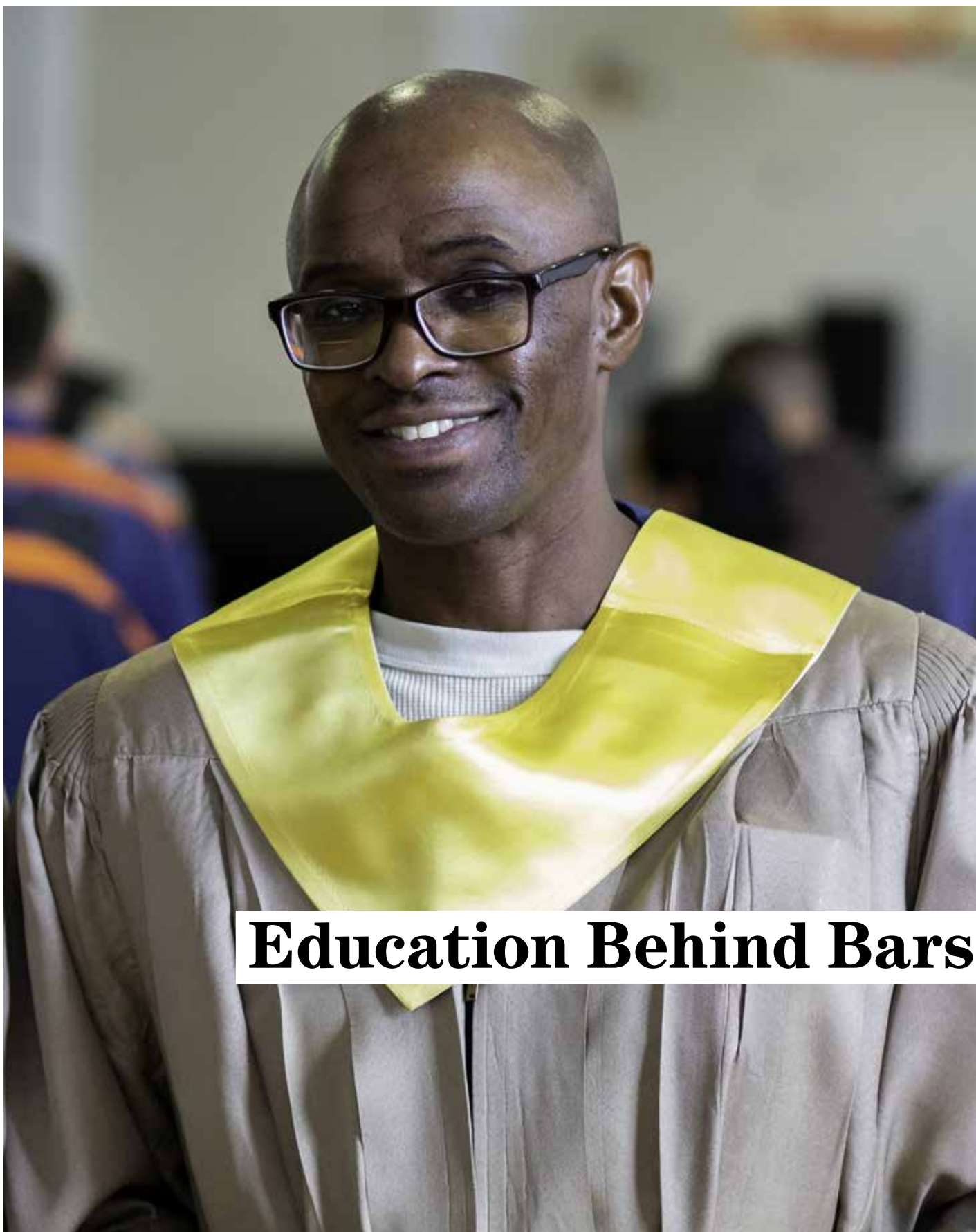
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Education Behind Bars

By Matt Kucinski, Calvin University

I never thought I'd be here today," said Patrick Campbell. "I consider myself the least of the least." The last time Campbell's name was published publicly, it was in reference to his worst mistake—one that would cost him his freedom.

"I was separated from my feelings and emotions because of my drug use," Campbell recalled about that time of his life. "I felt like nobody really loved me; my emotional security was off."

Hitting Rock Bottom

With no father figure, little money, and no roadmap for life, Campbell turned to the streets, doing drugs as a way of socializing. "I thought this was the best life had to offer," he said.

But one night in 1997 while he was high, he hit an ultimate low. At age 28, he was headed to prison for second-degree murder. That destructive decision, which he continues to deeply regret, changed his life. Now, at age 54, he's still behind bars.

Over the past 26 years, his scenery hasn't changed much: he's surrounded by barbed-wire fencing and is confined most of the time to a 5-by-8-foot cell. His wardrobe consists of blue pants and a blue shirt with a number on the back.

A Call to Christ

But his outlook on life couldn't be more different from what it was in 1997. The reason can be boiled down to two big decisions.

The first came shortly after his arrest. He was in Kent County (Mich.) Jail, and a chaplain was ministering to him. Campbell said the chaplain explained John 15 to him, and Campbell gave his life to Christ. He remembers being told at that moment that he'd have great opportunities to bless a lot of people.

That first big decision set him up for the second. But this one took some convincing.

From Comfort to Calling

Campbell had gotten comfortable at the Earnest C. Brooks Correctional Facility in Muskegon, Mich. Yes, it was a prison, but his setup was pretty good. He had a kitchen job that

he liked and had just graduated from the Urban Ministry Institute, an initiative of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

In 2015, he heard about the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI), a first-of-its-kind program in the state offered by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary that would offer a bachelor's degree to inmates.

"I thought that the workload was going to be heavy; I wasn't sure I could keep up with it," Campbell recalled. While he had some education under his belt, he had arrived in prison with just a fifth-grade reading level and had poor communication and writing skills.

Not only that, but if he were to take on this opportunity, it would mean transferring from Brooks to Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

"This (Handlon) prison was called 'gladiator school,'" said Campbell—"people getting hurt, people getting stitches, sometimes emergency situations."

It was more dangerous than Brooks, and the living quarters were smaller. Campbell struggled to see this as an opportunity.

"I gotta think about it," Campbell remembered telling Raymond, one of his peers at Brooks. "He asked me, 'What's to think about?' I told him, 'I got to talk to my mother.' He said, 'There's nothing to think about.'"

So Campbell and Raymond applied and were accepted. In fact, five inmates from Brooks would be transferred, joining 15 others from facilities across the state to form CPI's first cohort.

Forming a New Community

From the beginning, Campbell felt supported by his new peers.

"Dustin was teaching me English; Shawn and Nick were teaching me study skills; Grady was teaching me a lot of stuff. There's a lot of great people just in that first cohort. I'm glad I got to journey with those guys. Those guys poured a lot into me. It's like I'm coming into this room where I felt cared for."

His peers poured time and encouragement into him, and his professors helped lay a foundation for the road ahead, helping Campbell and his classmates develop the study skills and the framework they needed through classes like Developing a Christian Mind.

"I can't forget the professors. Many of them took time out of their schedule to help. Some are still a big part of my life today," Campbell said. "That first semester was probably my

Patrick Campbell, seen here in his choir robe, is part of the Handlon Tabernacle Choir.



Patrick Campbell at his convocation ceremony in 2018.

greatest semester because it gave me that hope and will to say I can make it through this, I can make it through another one (semester) and another one."

A Momentous Achievement

Ten semesters later, on May 22, 2021, Campbell graduated from Calvin University with a Bachelor's in Faith and Community Leadership. His name was read and his photo shown on the big screen at a commencement ceremony at LMCU Ballpark.

"This is a great program and is probably one of the best programs out there," said Campbell. "You should have this kind of training behind bars because education shapes lives, and it gives everyone a new mindset to think critically, especially in the days we are living in right now."

"By God's grace, the support of the CPI community, and hard work, Patrick defied all odds," said Todd Cioffi, director of CPI and professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin. "Without a doubt, Patrick embodies the mission of CPI."

A Calling Without Constraints

Campbell's life sentence has the opportunity for parole in the future, but his calling isn't limited by his surroundings. Whether he remains at Handlon, gets transferred to another correctional facility, or gets released, he's equipped to be Christ's agent of renewal.

"When we came into prison, people always told us, 'You got no hope,' and that's how I looked at it before I got this

education. It was hopeless," said Campbell. "This education has equipped me so I can take the hope I have (because of the gospel), and bring it to the next person and to the next person and on down the road."

"Patrick's story is not unique," said Gary Burge, dean of the faculty for Calvin Theological Seminary. "Having taught in the CPI program for four years, I have met numerous men whose lives have followed a parallel path. Education is about transformation as well as about equipping. We give students knowledge to equip them for the world they will enter and serve. But we also teach to transform. And no place is this transformation more dramatic than what we see at Handlon Prison."

"Nothing happens without prayer. It all happens through the Holy Spirit," Campbell said. "Liberation means we take the gospel everywhere with (all) people, everywhere we go, and none of God's plans happen without action."

Bold Steps of Obedience


It took bold steps from Campbell and his cohort to be in the vanguard of this new program. It also took bold steps from Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Michigan Department of Corrections.

"I never envisioned myself where I am right now," Campbell said. "I think that leading does that: it causes you to go into places you are uncomfortable. I think that's what the Good Samaritan story is too: it causes you to go to places you wouldn't often go."

"To say that we had no idea what we were getting into when we started CPI is an understatement," Cioffi said. "All we knew was that God was calling us to go behind bars. We went, God was abundantly faithful, and now Patrick is fulfilling his calling. God is good."

By going to those places, change happens. People's lives are transformed, and prison culture is reformed.

"Twenty-eight years ago, people would have said I was a mess, that I didn't know what direction I was going," said Campbell. "Today, people everywhere are coming around me from all walks of life. Everyone wants to talk to me, everyone wants to hear what I have to say. I'm full of love and encouragement, a brother they love that has compassion. I want to be part of their life; back then I was around people just because it involved my habit of choice."

"This program transformed my life, it shaped and formed me into a person who really thinks critically about making good decisions and how I can help someone take that same path." 

Relational Learning Around the World

“Please pray for more workers in the mountain region, because the majority of churches there are led by pastors who have not had any academic, theological, or pedagogical training.”

THIS REQUEST FROM A PASTOR in Peru is a good example of some of the challenges faced by people in ministry around the world. Some might be called to lead others but have no training in basic church leadership. In other contexts, people are disconnected



Global Coffee Break invites people to find fellowship and study the Bible to grow in faith together.



Timothy Leadership Training equips pastors to better lead and serve their faith communities.

from the church. They have questions about Christianity, but with no one to answer them, they leave their Bibles on their shelves. In other places, Christian teachers feel a lack of calling and haven't been equipped to integrate their faith into their classrooms.


That's why the programs of Raise Up Global Ministries—Global Coffee Break, Timothy Leadership Training (TLT), and Educational Care—use adult dialogue education (ADE) to train and equip people around the world. ADE is a relational way of learning that encourages participants to own and contextualize their learning. By learning and discussing things with others,

participants in ADE begin to see God's call, God's world, and God's Word in a new light. They can then implement their plans or Bible discoveries in real-

life situations and see personal and community transformation.

Centered around dialogue, this type of learning builds on the relational way God has designed our brains. Julie, for example, felt lonely, so she accepted an invitation to a Coffee Break group. She dusted off her Bible and wondered how strange, distant stories would help her. But Coffee Break's *Discover Your Bible* series encourages participants, no matter how familiar they are with the Bible, to engage relationally with each other and with the Bible. By joining Coffee Break, Julie found a new way to discover the Word for herself as it seeped into her life.

TLT came alongside the pastors in Peru to help them in their learning. TLT encourages church leaders from all educational backgrounds to engage with each other around specific topics and form practical action plans tailored to their communities. By listening to and learning from each other, the leaders in Peru were able to grow in their own abilities and better serve their local congregations in ways they couldn't do on their own.

One couple from a church in Nepal explained TLT's unique method this way: “We have been to seminary classes, but nothing has taught us the practical things we should do to minister to our people and grow our church like this Timothy class on caring for God's people.” 

—Gillian Ferwerda,
Raise Up Global Ministries

The View from Here

Restorative Leadership

IN HIS BOOK *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*, Paul David Tripp notes that “one of the most beautiful, hopeful, and encouraging gospel themes that courses its way through Scripture is the theme of fresh starts and new beginnings.”

We are all flawed people. We make mistakes, and we hurt each other by what we say, do, and leave undone. Yet this is only part of the story. God requires that we all—regardless of our background, education, or status in life—repent of our missteps, seek forgiveness and restoration, and begin again. This God-directed process of sanctification continually purifies us as we submit ourselves to him. The more we submit, the more we see God’s work in our lives, changing us and offering us a new start.

Carol Dweck, Ph.D., a professor and researcher from Stanford University and the author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, reminds us of a similar truth. Much of the source of stagnation and inequality that we see around us today, she says, is due to a mindset that does not believe in hope. This fixed mindset does not believe in the possibility of growth. It confines us to our present state and prevents us from trying new things.

Yet we know that trying builds us. Moreover, as Christians we are called to be people of hope and

We are to think
of ourselves
and each
other as God’s
image bearers.

restoration—people who expect God to do great things and to change them. We are called to have what Dweck calls a “growth mindset.”

I believe that Dweck has stumbled upon a foundational principle created in us by our Lord: We are to have high expectations of each other. In fact, we are to think of ourselves and each other as God’s image bearers.

This is the highest possible expectation of anyone. If we are an image bearer, then we are to be in a state of continual growth as we encounter our day-to-day realities. In short, we are to have a growth mindset as we experience God’s sanctification and grow to be what God wants us to be.

In this issue of *The Banner* you will hear from Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary about their prison initiative—an initiative to grow God’s people toward him. There is also information from Raise Up Global Ministries about its adult dialogue education programs. These are just a couple of stories of how God uses tools developed by the family that is the Christian Reformed Church

in North America to train, to stretch, and to transmit hope into people and places that the world has discarded or deemed hopeless.

I am reminded of my own experience using one of Raise Up’s programs, Timothy Leadership Training, while serving as executive minister of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, N.J., several years ago. I was leading a men’s Bible study, and we decided to use TLT to train the group leaders. After three of us came to Grand Rapids and were trained, we returned to New Jersey and developed a strategy for training others. There are numerous stories of what God did with that simple act of obedience.

In some of our sessions, individuals who would ordinarily be viewed as incapable of leadership—people who were formerly incarcerated, formerly drug addicted, or formerly homeless—found themselves learning alongside local pastors, church council members, and other community leaders. We saw the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:11: “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Whatever our condition, though we might be viewed as hopeless in the sight of people, when seen through the eyes of God there is hope. May we always remember this truth and continue to have a growth mindset as we allow God to sanctify us day by day.



Colin P. Watson Sr. is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He is a member of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Good News for the Days to Come

THE NUMBERS IN INDIA'S second wave of the coronavirus were staggering—7 million cases and 48,000 deaths in April 2021 alone.

“On the ground, these numbers translate to a heart-wrenching tragedy,” reported Rev. A.K. Lama, ReFrame’s Hindi ministry leader who serves in India’s northeastern region.

Throughout the pandemic, ReFrame’s ministry partners in India worked to provide new online, radio, and video programs for Hindi-speaking Christians and seekers. The programs received great responses. But during this time of especially high numbers of COVID cases, they wanted to do even more.

Knowing that many of their listeners are part of India’s lowest classes and out of work, the staff ultimately collected extra funds to provide about 500 meals for the nearby communities.

“Special projects like these are why we’re always striving to work with local, on-the-ground partners,” said Kurt Selles, director of ReFrame Ministries. “We can provide tools and resources to produce new programs, but our local partners know how best to share the love of Christ in their own ministry context.”

At Just the Right Time

“Thank you so much for reaching out to us with these food supplies,” said one recipient named Rajeshwari. “I wish all blessings to your ministry as you reach out with love and compassion to the people who are desperately in need.”

Pramond said he received the supplies “at just the right time,” adding, “Lockdown directly affected me and my



ReFrame’s Hindi ministry team delivered about 500 meals to the communities near their offices in northern India.

six family members at home. I lost my work and was getting hopeless.”

As ReFrame’s staff in India continued recording and sharing their hopeful gospel messages, they had people like Rajeshwari and Pramond in their hearts.

Reframe producers and staff say they are continuously available to people for prayer and counseling online and offline as well.

During COVID-19, the Hindi ministry team also has been using a new tool to connect with their different audiences: the popular smartphone app called WhatsApp. Using group chats, staff have been praying for listeners, answering questions that come up in response to the audio programs,

and sharing more content from the ministry.

“We believe that our new efforts during COVID-19 have made our ministry holistic in its service,” Lama said. “I also believe it will impact the hearts of the people with the good news for the days to come.”

If you would like to encourage a believer in India, ReFrame is collecting messages that will be sent to staff and listeners. You can email your message to Hindi@ReFrameMinistries.org.

—Brian Clark,
ReFrame Ministries

‘We Would Not Let Our Children Lose Their School Year’

LIAMARY HAS A LEARNING

DISABILITY. When she started school three years ago at Espacio de Gracia (Space of Grace) Christian Reformed School in the Dominican Republic, she received personalized attention that empowered her to thrive in the classroom.

But then, like many people, her father lost work because of the coronavirus pandemic. The family could no longer afford the tuition for Liamary’s education—not on top of the costs to care for her mother’s chronic illness. Although Liamary’s parents wanted the best for her education, they had no choice but to send her to a public school in the community.

“The girl’s learning disabilities would be a major challenge for her in the public schools. ... It was almost guaranteed that Liamary would not be able to keep up academically,” said María Laura Frías, the director of Espacio de Gracia.

Espacio de Gracia is part of Colegios Cristianos Reformados (COCREF), a Resonate Global Mission ministry partner. COCREF is a coalition of Christian Reformed schools in the Dominican Republic that provide quality faith-based education for students whose families struggle financially.



Resonate Global Mission grants helped make it possible for Liamary to continue her faith-based education at her school in the Dominican Republic.

For these schools throughout the past year, Liamary’s story has been all too common.

The COVID-19 pandemic made many families’ financial situations even more stressful. Many parents lost jobs and could not afford tuition or the resources for at-home learning. Schools did not have enough computers for every student and teacher, and many homes did not have reliable internet or electricity.

“We had to become creative and improvise. We would not let our children lose their school year,” said Mario Matos, a Resonate missionary who serves as the director of COCREF.

Several educators, including Frías, started visiting students and their families at home to check in with them and assist them with any barriers.

“Since many of the students at Espacio de Gracia have learning disabilities and many of the families have very limited resources, these visits really encourage(d) the students to continue,” said Resonate missionary Steve Brauning, who provides leadership and support for COCREF.

It was during one of these visits that Frías learned Liamary could not return to Espacio de Gracia—but Frías did not want money to stand in the way of Liamary’s education.

Resonate’s partnership with COCREF made it possible for Frías to award a scholarship for Liamary’s education at a school capable of providing her with the personalized attention she needs to succeed. Thanks to the school’s care and concern for students, Liamary recently completed her fourth year at Espacio de Gracia.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over, and it is likely that schools and communities will be struggling from the effects for many years to come, COCREF continues to support educators, students, and their families.

“Through Resonate grants to COCREF, Espacio de Gracia has the opportunity to assure that students like Liamary do not miss school or have to drop out altogether,” said Matos. “We continue to support our learning leaders with ongoing training, financial support, and coaching as they continue to love and serve their communities through Christ-centered education.”

—By Cassie Westrate,
Resonate Global Mission

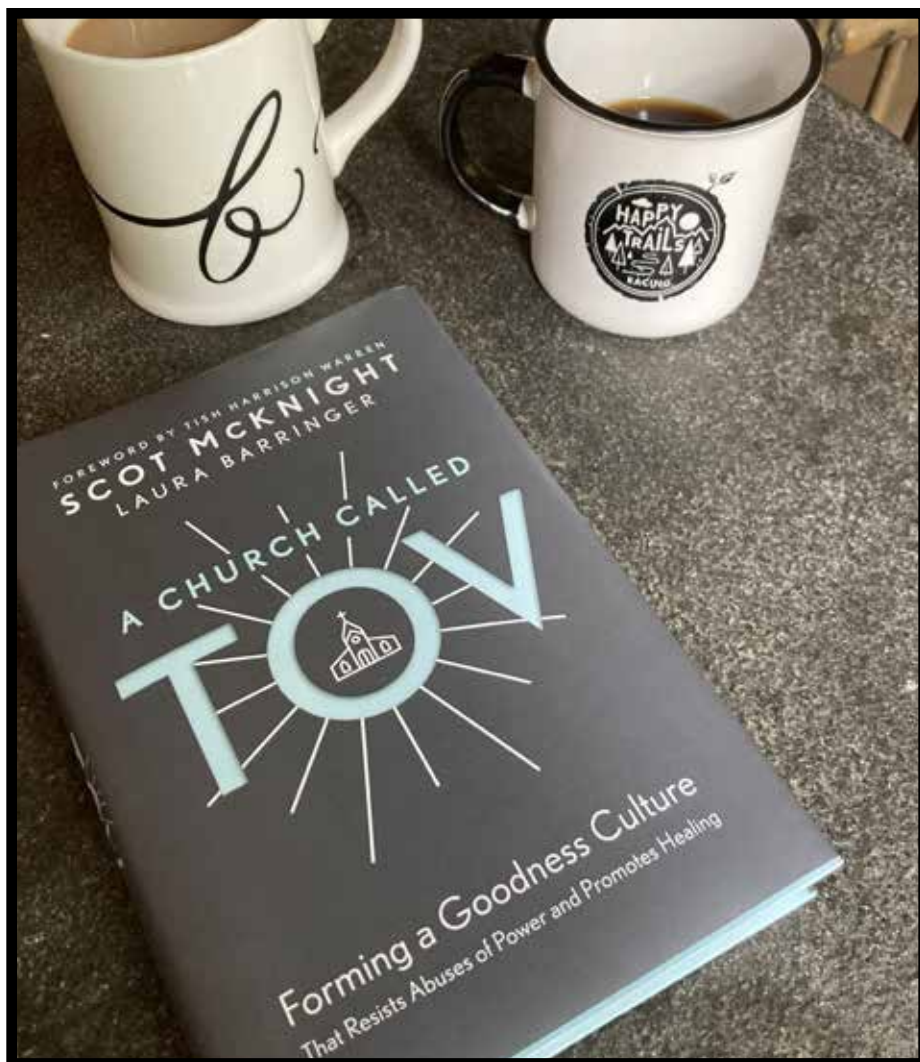
A Church Called Tov

MY UNCLE IS A RETIRED PASTOR of a Baptist church that he served for over 30 years. As I get more involved with abuse prevention within the church, I often find myself deep in conversation with him about his years spent in Christian ministry and the challenges that the church as a whole has faced and continues to face today.

This time, as we sat together over coffee, we lamented the horrific stories of abuse within the Indigenous residential schools in Canada, noting the connection these stories have to the church. We tried to comprehend how abuse can grow within spaces that are to represent a caring and loving God. While what happened at the residential schools is an extreme example of abuse that is heartbreaking for Christians to come to terms with, it certainly highlights how far we have fallen from the original design God had for us when he created the world and all its inhabitants.

During the past several years, a significant number of church leaders have been removed from office as issues of abuse have been brought against them. Consider the recent revelations about author and speaker Ravi Zacharias (see bit.ly/wakeofzavi); Christian apologist, author, and speaker Bill Hybels, founder of Willow Creek Church; or James McDonald of Harvest Bible Chapel. We are living in a season of deep disconnect as a community of believers. Why? Because we have structured our churches in ways that allow narcissism and abuse of power to thrive. To dismantle those structures, we need to make space for a new form of community—one built on goodness, on respect, and on the other characteristics of leadership Jesus himself demonstrated for us (see Phil. 2:7).

Recently, the Christian Reformed Church's Safe Church Ministries



invited Scot McKnight, author of *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuse*, to its webinar series to talk about a new way forward for the church (bit.ly/ChurchCalledTov). He spoke of the Tov way. As McKnight noted, “Tov sometimes means beautiful—it’s used many times in the first chapter of Genesis for what God thought of his creation. Tov means ‘excellent’ and sometimes means ‘God’s tov design.’ When it summarizes a person’s life, tov means a flourishing, faithful moral character. God is tov. God’s design is always tov. God’s redeemed people are to do tov.”

This fall, Safe Church Ministries will host a book club featuring *A Church Called Tov*. The book club will meet Mondays at 7:30 p.m., starting Sept. 27. We invite you to join in this important conversation about how we can foster church cultures that resist abuse by registering at bit.ly/TOVbookclub.

Together, we can create a church built on tov.

—Becky Jones,
Safe Church Ministry



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Children

Finding the Way

EVERY YEAR, BILLIONS OF BIRDS fly south from Canada and the United States. There is much more to migration than robins disappearing and honking flocks of geese flying in V's. Migration is mysterious and amazing. Many birds migrate under cover of darkness while we are sleeping. If you listen, you might hear their peeping flight calls. These calls might let other birds know where they are so they don't crash into each other.

The Amazing

Many birds gather into huge flocks to migrate. Flocks that look like rivers of blackbirds in the sky have been estimated to hold millions of birds.

Flocks of migrating birds can be detected by weather radar! Check out birdcast.info for bird migration "forecasts."

The tiny ruby-throated hummingbird (weighing less than a nickel) flies solo across the Gulf of Mexico in a nonstop 500-mile flight.

The arctic tern travels about 25,000 miles every year, from Antarctica to the Arctic and back again.

The Mysterious

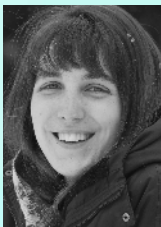
How do birds find their way? We don't exactly know.

Birds use many of their senses to navigate. They might recognize landmarks and use the sun and stars to help orient themselves. A bird's sense of smell also seems to be important; researchers think birds can create a "smell map" of the landscape. Finally, birds are able to detect the earth's magnetic field and seem to have a built-in compass.

You can visit [nps.gov/articles/compass.htm](https://www.nps.gov/articles/compass.htm) to learn how to make your own compass at home. A compass can't help you, though, if you don't know where you are going! One of the amazing mysteries about bird migration is that young birds that never have migrated before know where to go, often migrating apart from their parents and sometimes even taking different routes. There is something inside them that knows where to go.

God Is Our Guide

While we might never fully understand migration, we do know that God made birds, and it is God who enables them to find their way. In finding our own ways in this world, we should always be looking to God to be our guide. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." **B**



Rachel Lancashire is a freelance writer with an educational background in wildlife. She grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and currently attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.



My Favorite Teacher

By Lorilee Craker

Mrs. Bassett changed my life for the good, and she wasn't even *my* sixth-grade teacher. As she was teaching my husband Doyle's sixth-grade class at Twin Lake Elementary School near Muskegon, Mich., I was attending Grade 6 at my neighborhood elementary school in Winnipeg, Man., Canada, 1,000 miles away.

Yet this compassionate soul was powerfully influencing my future husband in ways that still ripple in our present lives. Etched into Doyle's life is the day she took him aside privately in the hallway and spoke words that sank deep into his future. "You know," she said kindly, "you can always come to me for help anytime." Doyle was shocked. He thought she was going to scold him for giving himself good marks on his self-graded and undone homework. He had just bombed his last test, and he was scared he would be in trouble with his parents if they

found out. School was a relentless grind for him. A fifth-grade teacher who humiliated him in front of the class for his "slowness" had stamped him with feelings of worthlessness. Enter Mrs. Bassett with a gentle nudge in the right direction. It changed everything for Doyle (and for me and our kids). He didn't actually ask her for help very often, but suddenly he felt that if he tried, he could complete his work and do better on his tests. Doyle ended up graduating from high school with honors and completing a Bachelor of Science in biology.

It just goes to show that young people carry what they are taught at a tender age throughout the rest of their lives. We are shaped by our teachers. Whether it's a favorite Sunday school teacher, a teacher in public or Christian school, or a college professor, our teachers inspire, motivate, and encourage us in profound ways. Teachers have the most important job in the world because they have the power to change lives.

I think of my high school Bible teacher, Mr. Peters, who always taught his Grade 12 students the book of Amos, still my favorite Old Testament book. Or my journalism professor, the refreshingly iconoclastic Professor Haines at Moody Bible Institute, who brought in guest speakers from *Rolling Stone* magazine and one day looked me in the eye and told me that I could make a living as a writer someday. But it is probably Mrs. Derksen, my childhood Sunday school teacher at McIvor Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church, whose love and example embedded her most deeply in my soul. More than the Sunday school curriculum I remember her personal testimony, which she shared in almost every class. She was raised in a Mennonite colony in Chortitza, Ukraine, during Joseph Stalin's holocaust and suffered the loss of her father, who was taken in the night to be tortured and killed in a Soviet gulag. Her faith shone brightly as she regaled her 10-year-old students with stories of her life as a child of war, a teenage refugee, and

then an immigrant to what she called “the great country of Canada,” a country she gave thanks for every class.

When she died in 2016, I was unexpectedly emotional. This humble lady with painful arthritis embodied a mighty faith. She wasn’t just a Sunday school teacher; she was a role model for a lifetime.

Which teacher has had a lasting influence on you? When we asked some of our some CRC staff members and *Banner* contributors for stories about their favorites, they did not disappoint. As you think about those teachers who left their imprint for good in your life, pull up a chair (or slide into a desk) as you listen to stories of teachers whose words, example, and direction still hold sway years later.

**James Forrest, Ph.D.,
Professor of English Literature**

By Shiao Chong

I had only one university course with James Forrest, Ph.D., now deceased, but he made a huge impact on me. Forrest was a Scotsman with white hair, white eyebrows, and a serious, wrinkled face. He gave lectures on Shakespeare that were old-school and boring to some but crammed with substance. He had a dry wit coupled with a no-nonsense demeanor. Once, after a rather arrogant young student rambled on about his opinion in class, Forrest slowly remarked with a poker face, “Thank you, Mr. X. Unfortunately, that was total BS. Eloquent, but BS nevertheless.”

I took his advice to read Shakespeare’s plays aloud to myself, as they were originally meant to be heard. One day, sitting at a study table in the English department, I was immersed in reading *Othello*, aloud but under my breath. Suddenly I realized someone was standing behind me. I turned and saw Forrest peering over my shoulder. He smiled and said, “Good for you.” And he walked away without another word. I think that was the only time I saw him smile.

If we as children
of God are placed
in a loving and
supportive
environment, we
can excel in ways
preordained by
God—ways

I will never forget one great insight he taught us from Shakespeare’s tragedies. Forrest taught me that sometimes our virtues and strengths, the very things that we rely on to be successful, can be our undoing in certain scenarios. And that’s why it’s tragic. “Read the Bible’s book of Job,” Forrest said, “if you want to understand tragedy.” It was a life lesson for me.

Mr. Kamphuis, Grade 9 Geography

By Micah van Dijk

I began Grade 9 at a Christian high school, petrified of standing out and being uncool. My faith was the last thing I wanted to talk about in front of my friends. My homeroom geography teacher was supposed to give a 10-minute devotional at the beginning of each class. His devotions often lasted 30 minutes or more.

We quickly learned that a few years earlier Mr. Kamphuis had been a “stale” Christian even while going to church and teaching at a Christian school. He simply went through the motions and nothing more. Then he experienced a reawakening that showed him how “dead” his life was and how exciting following Jesus really could be.

I did my best to act uninterested and “cool” during these devotions. However,

I was surprised by Mr. Kamphuis’ boldness and intrigued to learn more. I secretly valued the spiritual reflection activities he would have the class do. I didn’t want my classmates to see, but I felt empty and wanted to be filled. I craved the love and acceptance that Mr. Kamphuis explained Jesus could give.

Mr. Kamphuis was vulnerable and passionate. His devotions showed me that faith was more than going to church or knowing the right answers in Bible class. I was still petrified of being uncool at school. But I began to see that neither Mr. Kamphuis nor Jesus cared if I was cool or not.

Rodger Rice, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology

By Michelle Loyd-Paige

I have three degrees in sociology—a B.A., an M.S., and a Ph.D. I can honestly say that if I had not taken Sociology 151: Introduction to Sociology with Rodger Rice, I likely would not have studied sociology, attended graduate school, or had an academic career at what is now Calvin University. I loved that class. It helped me to make sense of the world in ways that would shape who I am today.

Rice became my adviser for my undergraduate work. He encouraged me to think about attending graduate school. He attended my wedding. When he found out I was back in the area working on my dissertation, he persuaded me to teach a class on my dissertation topic for a January term in 1985. Teaching that course was the beginning of a 36-year career at Calvin. It was a bit of a surreal moment when our relationship moved from professor and student to colleagues in the same department. Years later we would even co-author a book. Rice is still in my life, though we do not see each other often. But when he comes to campus for an event, we quickly begin catching up. He has always looked out for me and encouraged me. I am beyond grateful for his mentorship and friendship.

Mr. Ward, High School Teacher

By Andrew Zwart

My favorite high school teacher, Mr. Ward, wasn't my favorite at the time. He wasn't the funny or cool teacher.

What has stuck with me is Mr. Ward's clear and charitable thinking. Every time he raised an issue, he presented the best arguments for all sides. He admitted his own uncertainties about complex questions. In essence, he taught our class never to settle for the too-easy answer.

On one occasion, a few of us were discussing a popular movie. When we asked for his opinion, he unexpectedly asked in a gentle and warm tone why the movie needed to include a sex scene even if it wasn't explicit. What message did the scene send its audience? What did it tell us about popular entertainment? These questions stopped me in my tracks. I would never even have thought to ask them.

That's why Ward became my favorite teacher years later, when for the first time I found myself thinking, "I wonder what Mr. Ward would make of this." I suddenly felt grateful for the faith it took for him to believe that one day the squirrely teens in front of him might make good on the tools he gifted us. And now in my own classroom I aspire, however imperfectly, to his example: to ask questions, to listen carefully, to teach in such a way that the cross is always plainly in view.

The Teacher I Never Had

By Carol Bremer-Bennett

The favorite teacher I never had looked like me. She moved through the worlds of Indigenous knowledge and Western education with fluidity and honored both. She taught me how to stand tall in the footsteps of my ancestors

and to walk humbly on paths that might take me further than they had ever traveled. This teacher spoke my language, the spoken language of my people, the Diné (Navajo), and also the felt language of my heart. She knew God as the creator of this incredible world, understood that Jesus redeemed brokenness throughout generations of trauma, and breathed in deeply the Holy Spirit.

The teacher I never had connected the past, present, and future in a circle, not a line marching forward without dimension. She rejoiced in the humor of the world and brought laughter into the learning spaces. She taught me only enough to keep me curious so that I would continue to seek answers to my questions. In this way she gave me more than she could carry, and she instilled confidence and courage within me. She affirmed me and saw another Indigenous woman who would pass on this Elder knowledge to future generations.

In all my years of formal education, from preschool through my Master's in Education, I have never had a teacher who was Indigenous. This is a sorrow I carry, one I did not want other Indigenous children to experience, so I became the favorite teacher I never had myself. I pray that all my students, some who are now teaching in the classroom where I once stood, are now traveling further than I could take them.


Mr. Spencer, Headmaster

By Colin Watson

At about age 8, I was attending an Anglican elementary school, All Saints Anglican, in New Amsterdam, British Guiana. The year was 1960. Several classes met on church grounds in a large hall with minimal partitions, creating a cacophony as teachers raised their voices to compete with

other teachers. Our class size was about 35. Even before the end of the school year, my teacher called my father and discussed my overall progress. I had placed 31st in the overall standing for that term. I was clearly not thriving. Mr. Davis recommended a change of school, and my parents agreed.

Enter Mr. Spencer, the headmaster of St. Aloysius Boys School, a Catholic school in the same small town. From my first day, Mr. Spencer made me feel at home. He made me feel as if I could succeed. I don't recall his words, but I definitely recall feeling special. He placed me under the care of one of his teachers for the rest of that year. I exhibited remarkable academic improvement by the end of the year. Mr. Spencer selected me to be a member of a class that he personally taught for the next year, and I felt as if I had found a new family. There was warmth, acceptance, love, and significant challenge. I carry the memories of this faith-filled, love-in-action environment with me to this day.

If we as children of God are placed in a loving and supportive environment, we can excel in ways preordained by God—ways often much greater than the lower expectations we humans often have for each other. 



Lorilee Craker, a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba, lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The author of 15 books, including *Anne of Green Gables*, *My Daughter*, and *Me*, she is the Mixed Media editor of *The Banner*. Find her at Lorileecraker.com or on Instagram [@thebooksellersdaughter](https://www.instagram.com/thebooksellersdaughter).

In Awe of Jesus

There never has been, is not now, nor will there ever be anything that is too hard for Jesus.

I AM IN AWE OF JESUS. This is true for many reasons, one of which is the miracles he performed while on Earth.

As I look at the miracles recorded in the four gospels, I see four general categories in which these miracles were performed: healing the body, casting out demons, controlling nature, and raising the dead. They illustrate the depth and breadth of Jesus' authority in this world. My training in the sciences causes me to wonder in amazement at the miracles of Jesus and to appreciate his awesome power.

There are hundreds of things that can and do go wrong with our physical bodies. There are 24 miracles mentioned in the gospels in which Jesus healed diseases such as blindness, dropsy, leprosy, internal bleeding, deformed limbs, and more. How could something as intricate as the eye or as complicated as bone deformation heal instantly? Jesus spoke or touched, and the body was healed—quickly and perfectly. Even with all the advancements in medical technology, such healing remains far beyond human capability. But for Jesus, the impossible was simple.


The realm of demons might be difficult for us to understand but is very real. There are five instances when Jesus demonstrated his authority over demons. Jesus could recognize the presence of a demon, could communicate with them, and with a word would cause them to leave. The demons recognized Jesus' authority and obeyed immediately. Though invisible to us, they were visible to Jesus, and he knew just what to do. His word was final.

In nine instances, Jesus demonstrated his authority over nature—by changing water to wine, calming a storm, causing a fig tree to wither, causing bread and fish to multiply, and causing fish to enter nets. I wonder

how two cooked fish could increase so greatly and so quickly. I cannot begin to grasp how this could have happened. The process for making wine is lengthy and involves many steps, and large trees simply do not wither within hours. Yet at Jesus' commands, water, wind, plants, and animals defied natural laws to do his bidding. Again, it happened rapidly and easily. Nothing was too hard for Jesus.

Lastly, Jesus demonstrated his authority over death. Decomposition of a body begins shortly after death and is irreversible. However, at Jesus' command, two children and a man each returned to life—immediately and in full health. In an instant, decaying bodies became living, functioning beings. Death gave way to hearts that beat, lungs that breathed, and eyes that could see. The biologically impossible was done as quickly and easily as the other kinds of miracles. Who can comprehend this?

Jesus was in control then and remains in control today. Jesus said, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father" (Matt. 11:27, ESV) and "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth—what we can see and what we cannot see. There never has been, is not now, nor will there ever be anything that is too hard for Jesus. It follows, then, that we can put complete trust and confidence in him.

Jesus understands all the challenges we face and has invited us to bring everything to him as often as we want, big or small, difficult or easy. He specializes in and welcomes things that are too hard for us. Jesus is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-sufficient. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. I stand in awe of my King. 



Stan Koster and his wife, Melissa, are members of Sunshine Community Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Stan has a Ph.D. in biology from Michigan State University and is retired from teaching and research.

How Sept. 11 Changed Me

We felt, rather than saw, the impact. One moment we were standing on the terrace, and the next we were lying on our backs.



Christina Ray Stanton is the director of missions at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. For more information on her 9/11 book and her background, visit christinaraystanton.com.

“GET UP! GET UP!” Brian was shaking my arm violently. “Someone’s bombed the World Trade Center!”

I struggled to sit up in bed, and I blinked at the clock. It was 8:47 a.m. One glimpse of the fear in my husband’s eyes jolted me fully awake.

I jumped out of bed and followed him out to our terrace on the 24th floor. Thick, black smoke was rolling out from the North Tower of the World Trade Center six blocks away.

Turning on the TV, we learned a plane had hit one of the towers.

We raced back out to the terrace, where we had a bird’s-eye view of the city. The tower was still burning. Emergency vehicles raced toward the World Trade Center—lights flashing, sirens blaring. It’s almost 9 a.m. on a Tuesday, I thought. Thousands of people are already at work.

Suddenly something caught my eye. Looking over my right shoulder, I saw a plane flying low—too low. With a thunderous roar, the jet swooped like a hawk between the buildings and banked to the left.

We felt, rather than saw, the impact. One moment we were standing on the terrace, and the next we were lying on our backs in the middle of the living room floor.

I shook my head and realized that Brian was speaking to me. I could hear his voice, but my ears were ringing, and his words were distant. “Let’s get out of here—hurry!”

I was still wearing my nightgown, but there was no time to waste.

Voices echoed in the staircase as we raced down 24 flights to the street. Outside, hundreds of people filled the streets, racing away from the burning buildings. Men and women rushed by wearing business attire. Paper and

scraps floated through the air. We joined the crowds and crossed the highway. With the towers to the north of us, there was only one way out—Battery Park, at the tip of Manhattan.

At the edge of the park, with nowhere else to go, people stopped running or collapsed with exhaustion. I felt a sense of relief: surely the worst was over. We stood gasping for breath and turned around. For the first time since we left our apartment, we could see both towers clearly. The top halves of the towers were engulfed in a black cloud, smoke rising half a mile into the bright, blue sky. *Oh, Lord, those poor people. Those poor people.*

Suddenly, the ground began to shake violently, and I heard a rumble like a freight train. “Brian, a tower is coming down!”

A communal scream rose from the park. I froze in terror as a mass of something hit me in the face. It felt like someone had thrown a bucket of sticky sand over me. Gunk filled my nose and mouth, covered my pajamas, and coated every pore of unprotected skin.

I opened my eyes slowly. Brian hadn’t moved, but he looked completely different—like an upright mummy.

It looks like we’re on the moon.

“What is this? Where’d it come from?” I sputtered, spitting out gunk.

“I think it’s the tower,” Brian said.

Another shriek from the crowd. The wind had changed direction and was blowing thick clouds of smoke into Battery Park, threatening to asphyxiate us. Pandemonium ensued as people rushed to escape this new threat. We ran too and took cover by an old fort.

We hugged its stone wall, trying to catch our breath. We turned toward



each other. "Brian, is this it? Are we going to die?"

He hesitated, then looked me in the eye. "I don't know. ... Maybe," he said. He took my hands in his.

Barefoot, covered in yellow dust, and surrounded by smoke, my husband and I said goodbye to each other.

I closed my eyes and prayed.

God, is this the end? Is this what you have planned for me? Lord, I'm sorry I've spent so much of my life without you. I've haven't been to church. I haven't been thinking of others. I've only cared about myself. I haven't been serious in my relationship with you. I want a second chance. Please forgive me!

As a teenager, I always dreamed of living in New York. Growing up in a small town in Florida, I longed for an adventure. After graduating from college, I packed my bags and bought a plane ticket. Eventually I made friends, got a job as a New York City tour guide, and rented a 400-square-foot apartment. It was small, but it was mine, and I loved it.

Seven years later I met Brian, and within six months we had married. We moved into a 24th-floor apartment. It was the New York apartment I always dreamed of living in—great view, with a beautiful terrace overlooking the boats on the Hudson River and the

lights beaming from the windows of the Twin Towers. The towers shined like beacons of power and made me feel powerful too.

I did it! I made it! We have everything we want.

Brian's words slowly brought me back to the present moment. He was reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Suddenly a dust-caked man appeared, yelling and waving his arms. "The second building is coming down! Run to the river!"

We left the protection of the fort and ran to the bank of the Hudson with moments to spare. The second tower collapsed with another thunderous roar. Surrounded by smoke, the burning ruins of the towers, and the Hudson River, I sank to the ground by the river walkway, feeling trapped.

Unexpectedly, people near us began yelling and waving their arms at firefighting boats that were racing up the river.

The boat came alongside the seawall, and ropes were flung over the railing. The river railing towered 10 feet above the boat floating in the water below. We would have to climb the railing and jump.

I saw two muscular men in blue short-sleeved shirts lowering people into the boat. Finally it was our turn. Brian

jumped in, and the guys took my forearms and eased me down. At last we all were on board.

As the ferry pulled into the river's current, I watched my city burn. We had survived the attacks, but as we soon discovered, thousands had not, including a close friend who had died in one of the towers.

Unable to return to our apartment for months, we were homeless. Brian's job prospects dried up, and in a city without tourists, I was unemployed.

We couch surfed from one home to another, not wanting to impose on anyone for too long. But the bills continued to pile up. Reluctantly, we applied for financial aid from a 9/11 church fund. We were approved, and the church gave us a check to cover our rent. Curious, we went to one of their Sunday church services and loved it. We joined a Bible study group and formed deep friendships. Brian began working for the church as their finance manager, and I led the short-term missions ministry. We were employed again.

Several months later, the downtown restrictions lifted, and we moved back into our apartment. With the skyline permanently altered, I wasn't sure I wanted to see the view from the 24th floor. But I knew I had to face this new world we lived in. The city would never be the same, and neither would I. But New York would recover, and I would rebuild my life—a life with Christ at the center of my being.

Sept. 11 will mark the 20th anniversary of the attacks on America. I'm not the same person I was 20 years ago. I never forgot the promises I made to God on that fateful September day. God did give me a second chance. And I will never forget.

We will never forget. 

How to Talk to Youth About the Sex-positive Movement in Pop Music

POPULAR MUSIC teaches youth about sex on a daily basis—that’s nothing new. What is new is a generation of female musicians who openly talk about the pleasures of sex from the female perspective. This sex-positive movement includes pop stars like Ariana Grande (“34+35”) and Cardi B (“WAP”) as well as lesser-known artists like ppcocaine.

According to the International Society for Sexual Medicine, “The term sex positive ... involves having positive attitudes about sex and feeling comfortable with one’s own sexual identity and with the sexual behaviors of others.” Children and youth learn about sex from popular music. As parents, church leaders, or educators, we should be aware that attacking and shaming a song creator does not lead to constructive conversation. We must start with the ideas presented in each song and explore the complexity of human sexuality together. The goal: youth who are empowered to discern healthy sexuality from a Christian framework.

When I asked a class of 10th-grade Christian high school students what new artists they were listening to, one male student mentioned ppcocaine. As the student played a song for the class to hear, many guys laughed at the crude language and sexual imagery. Most of the female students in the room remained silent and some visibly cringed. At this point, parents, church leaders, and educators might be tempted to attack and shame such a song, but this approach backfires.

I’m thinking of a prominent conservative commentator and a video he put out in which he attacked and shamed the sex-positive song “WAP,” by Cardi B with Megan Thee Stallion. He quickly shifted his critique of the song to Cardi B herself. Most of his time was spent shaming Cardi B rather than

unpacking the ideas she presented. The result was a polarizing video that shut down meaningful conversations about sexuality.

A better approach is to focus on the ideas within the song. The 10th-graders I spoke to discussed how the sex-positive movement influenced the ideas in ppcocaine’s songs. They learned how culture shaped their own ideas about sex. The boys discussed how ppcocaine’s song might sound attractive but is really false and misleading. The girls talked about ppcocaine’s reaction to a society that tells women that they should feel shame for feeling pleasure during sex. Both boys and girls explored what healthy sexuality might look like in their own context.

Youth absorb ideas about sex from popular music. We can help them by discerning healthy sexuality. Ephesians 6:12 implores us to avoid seeing people as the enemy, so we must not shame the artist. Both Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 2:8 guide us to engage with someone’s ideas and philosophies. As we engage, we must also humbly repent of our own unhealthy ideas about sexuality. If we mentor our youth well, they will see how the sex-positive movement aligns with and diverges from Christian sexuality. **B**



Micah van Dijk is a popular music expert who speaks and writes to help audiences understand the impact popular music has on their faith and identity. micahvandijk.com



Say It

By Jordan Feliz

Reviewed by Paul Delger

Jordan Feliz offers personal and transparent lyrics in his third full-length CD, *Say It*. The music provides a heavy dose of electropop with some dance elements, plus a few ballads. “Wounds” is heart-gripping, based on Feliz’s wife’s miscarriage and the universal feeling of loss. “I’ve seen the light come in / to my darkest rooms / I can tell you, friend / that his love heals wounds / Look into my heart / Let it be the proof / I’m only standing here / ‘cause his love heals wounds / Yeah, his love heals wounds.” Another strong cut, the No. 1 radio hit “Glorify,” comes in three versions and features guest artists such as TobyMac and Lecrae. Listeners will find hope and encouragement in this record. (Centricity Music)



Stella Díaz Dreams Big

By Angela Dominguez

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Stella is passionate about her role as the president of the Sea Musketeers, a conservation club she started to raise awareness of the importance of taking care of the world's oceans. Stella can't resist taking swimming lessons, too, even though she is busy. Her hero, oceanographer Jacques Cousteau, overcame his physical weakness by learning to swim and eventually explored the world. In this chapter book for children ages 6 to 10, author Angela Dominguez portrays a delightful, zesty protagonist immersed in her family's vibrant Hispanic culture and life. Stella's story of joy and passion as she encounters the world and the life lessons she learns on the way make this book a gratifying and worthy experience for young readers. (Roaring Brook Press)



The Librarian of Boone's Hollow

By Kim Vogel Sawyer

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1936, Addie Cowherd's life changes dramatically when she's forced to leave her postsecondary education and become employed in one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration programs, serving as a packhorse librarian delivering books to poor coal-mining families in the Kentucky hill country. Author Kim Vogel Sawyer presents an absorbing window into the hardships of the Great Depression, the courage and resilience of packhorse librarians, the social ills of alcohol abuse and domestic violence, and the unwelcoming-to-outsiders culture of the Kentucky hill country. A Christian fictional romance geared to female readers, the novel contains many biblical truths and realistic insights into the characters' faith struggles. However, when characters occasionally quote passages of Scripture verbatim, the dialogue seems unrealistic and improbable. (WaterBrook)



The Boy Who Loved Everyone

By Jane Porter, illustrated by Maisie Paradise Shearring

Reviewed by Li Ma

Preschooler Dimitri says "I love you" to his friends, the class guinea pig, and the tree with heart-shaped leaves. Some friends giggle and then run away. The tree and the class pet have no voice. But this does not stop Dimitri from saying "I love you" to more friends, his teacher, and an old man sitting on a bench. None of them reciprocates, and Dimitri is disappointed. Soon he learns about different ways of saying "I love you" without uttering the words. The boy begins to observe many signs of love around him. When friends ask him to join them in feeding the birds, a warm feeling grows inside. And at story-time that morning, everyone wants to sit by Dimitri, the boy who loves everyone without hesitation, fear, or shame. (Candlewick Press).

The Lowdown

Voices from the Margins: *Abuelita*

Faith tells the story of unnamed and overlooked theologians in society and in the Bible—mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and daughters—whose survival, strength, resistance, and persistence teach us the true power of faith and love. (Brazos Press)

Marvel's First Asian-led Superhero Movie:

In *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, Shang-Chi (Simu Liu of *Kim's Convenience*) must confront the past he thought he left behind when he is drawn into the web of the mysterious Ten Rings organization. (Marvel Studios)

Only Murders in the Building:

Three strangers, played by Steve Martin, Martin Short, and Selena Gomez, share an obsession with true crimes and suddenly find themselves wrapped up in one. (Netflix)

A YA Romance Set in the COVID-19

Lockdown: In *Hello (From Here)*, Maxine and Jonah bump into each other in the canned goods aisle of the grocery store just as the state of California is going into lockdown, when everything changes completely. Could there be a worse time to meet? (Dial)

Why Would God Need People to Worship Him?

Reformed theology has always been allergic to the idea that God needs our worship to be fulfilled.

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

—Psalm 95:6

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED how people outside the church might hear this verse or the many other commands in Scripture to bend one’s knee or lift hands to God in worship? Richard Dawkins, one of Christianity’s fiercest detractors, declared in his best-selling book *The God Delusion* that “the God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction.” Dawkins and his friends find God repulsive for many reasons, among them that Scripture seems to depict God as a megalomaniac who needs—even demands—worship.

If God needs us to worship him, then what does that say about God?

Perhaps we could soften Dawkins’ accusation: God doesn’t need our worship; he simply wants us to glorify him. But doesn’t this only soften the tyrant into a narcissist? “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him” (1 Chron. 16:29). Now God appears to need fawning admirers in order to boost his self-esteem, much like a celebrity requires Instagram followers to stay relevant.

While we initially might be startled by Dawkins’ accusation, after a little reflection most of us probably feel there’s something not quite right about his argument. Yes, it’s unpleasant when a person demands praise and honor from us. But “God ain’t us,” as the country singer Steve Earle says—“God is God.” Further, most believers have a deep sense that we need to say “Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise” (Ps. 96:4) more than God needs to hear it. For God loves us and wants to give us the one thing without which we can be neither happy nor fulfilled: God. We worship not foremost for his sake but ours.

Indeed, Reformed theology has always been allergic to the idea that God needs our worship to be fulfilled. “God does not depend on anyone or any force beyond himself,” writes Laura Smit of Calvin University in an article on God’s nature. She’s expressing what the old theology called “aseity,” or God’s total self-sufficiency. God’s aseity is good news! It means that God is not a divine tyrant who needs groveling slaves or a cosmic celebrity who needs adoring fans. God can be utterly gracious to us because God doesn’t need us or anything from us (such as our worship). The triune God created the world, redeemed humankind, and is reconciling all things not because God must but from “sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will” (Canons of Dort, 1.7).

That God deals with us out of freedom rather than need unburdens us from having to satisfy that need through our worship or obedience. Those modern philosophies and trendy spiritualities that insist God is incomplete without us should admit the crushing expectation this places upon us. Honestly, most people are overwhelmed simply trying to satisfy the finite needs of family and friends. It’s a mercy we don’t have to satisfy God’s needs through our worship or obedience.

All this being said, perhaps Reformed Christians can still say in a careful way that God does need our worship. God freely and graciously chooses us and binds himself to us in covenant. And when his people “live for the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12, NRSV) through our worship and witness, we do play an essential role in making known the Father’s “plan ... to gather up all things in him” (1:10, NRSV) through the Son. God has freely chosen to depend on the worship and prayers of his Spirit-filled church in order to make his kingdom known. **B**



Todd Statham is the Christian Reformed campus pastor at the University of British Columbia—Okanagan.

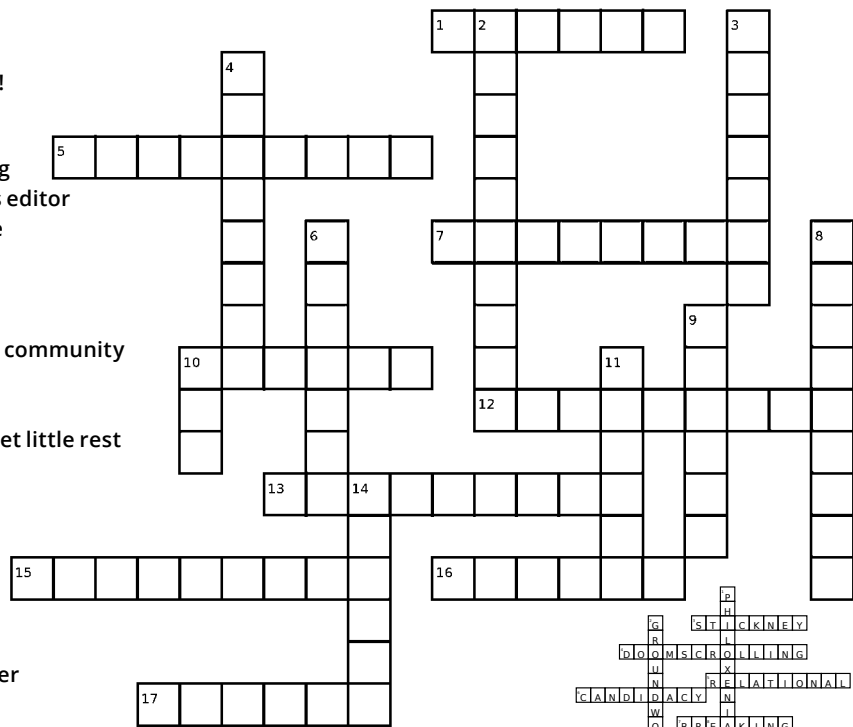
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

Down

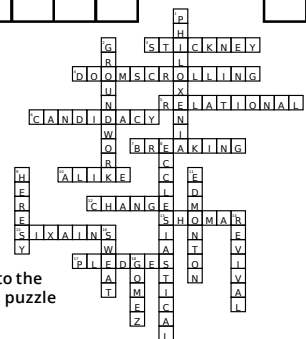
- 2. Raise Up Global Ministries uses this type of learning
- 3. This professor made a huge impact on *The Banner's* editor
- 4. This university received a favorable ruling from the Federal Court of Canada
- 6. Star of *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*
- 8. The author of *Stella Diaz Dreams Big*
- 9. A _____ helps a New Era, Mich., church to build community
- 10. A Church Called _____
- 11. Calvin _____ Initiative
- 14. The day church volunteers—and their spouses—get little rest

Across

- 1. Christians are called to have this mindset
- 5. Writer of *The Banner's* "In Memoriam" columns
- 7. These help us be in awe of Jesus
- 10. An emotionally intense experience that floods a person's brain with fear-activated impulses
- 12. *The _____ of Boone's Hollow*, by Kim Vogel Sawyer
- 13. The South Coast Beach Project helps young adults learn to live as _____
- 15. When birds fly south for the winter
- 16. Where you can find more and longer news stories from *The Banner*
- 17. It has been _____ years since the Sept. 11 attacks



Answers to the June 2021 puzzle



Los Angeles, California • Wyoming, Michigan
 Bellingham, Washington • Toronto, Ontario
 New York City, New York • Surrey, British Columbia
 Edmonton, Alberta • Jacksonville, Florida
 Winnipeg, Manitoba • Houston, Texas
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Church Positions Available

FULL-TIME TEACHING PASTOR Hope Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Courtice, Ontario, is actively seeking a full-time Teaching Pastor passionate about preaching God's word within dynamic worship, with a focus on cross-generational shepherding and discipleship and a passion for engaging the next generation. Hope Fellowship embraces and lives out God's redemptive plan by inviting people to believe in Jesus, belong to God's family and bless every neighbour. Send questions and resumes to Search@hopefellowship.ca

IMMANUEL CRC WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY SEEKS LEAD PASTOR to take our small dynamic congregation into the future. Please contact Mike Toth at mi.toth@yahoo.com for our church profile and any further info.

LEAD PASTOR - Aylmer CRC is prayerfully seeking a Lead Pastor to join our ministry team. The Lead Pastor we are seeking would ideally be self-motivated, compassionate, devoted to providing engaging preaching, passionate about nurturing spiritual growth, and able to equip us for community outreach. If you would like to live and work in the beautiful, thriving town of Aylmer, Ontario, conveniently located near the shores of Lake Erie and close to larger urban centers, we would like to speak with you. Please contact Lisa at 519 520 1220 or email bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com. Job description and church profile are available on the portal. Housing is available if needed.

LEAD PASTOR - South Olive CRC in Holland, MI focuses on being a gift-based ministry and is searching for a passionate leader with gifts in preaching, engagement through all generations, and ultimately equipping the church to impact the world for Jesus. If interested, please send a resume or questions to secretary@southolivecrc.org. More information and a job description are located at southolivecrc.org

LEAD PASTOR Covenant CRC in Cutlerville, MI is seeking a Lead Pastor with gifts in Biblical preaching and spiritual leadership to help our congregation in their spiritual formation and to live out our mission of being "Captivated by God's Grace; Compelled to Love" to the community around us. The job description and church profile are available on our website www.covenant-crc.org Applicants can send their resume, or questions to: search@covenant-crc.org

LEAD PASTOR Mill Creek Community Church (MCCC) is actively seeking a full-time Lead Pastor who is passionate about nurturing our spiritual growth and equipping us for community outreach. We are prayerfully searching for a seasoned Pastor whose Biblical messages are enlightening and relevant, within a dynamic and inspiring worship. MCCC is located in Mill Creek, Washington, in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. If this position sounds like something you feel led to be a part of, please contact the church office: Millcreekchurch@comcast.net or the church office at: 425-745-2094

PASTOR First CRC in beautiful Thunder Bay, ON is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our congregation. Please email your resume or inquiries to search@fcrctbay.ca.

PASTOR Opening for a pastor position at Green Meadow Community CRC. Job description and church profile on the portal. For questions, contact Dan Elenbaas at 406-443-1991.

Church Anniversary

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 125 YEARS

WITH THANKS TO GOD, the Christian Reformed Church of Pease, MN celebrates 125 years! Former pastors and members are invited to a day of celebration on Sunday, Sept. 12, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 100 YEARS

EAST MARTIN CRC in Martin, MI, is celebrating its 100th anniversary year. Our church was organized on June 23, 1921. A celebration event will be held Saturday, September 11 from 4 - 7pm. Activities and a meal are planned. Details on the church's Facebook page: East Martin Christian Reformed Church.

Birthdays

BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS

LES BEIMERS, 2105 Raybrook #3059 GR 49546, will celebrate his 100th birthday on Oct 7. His family is thankful for the blessing he has been in their lives.

BIRTHDAY 95 YEARS

MARGE BALLAST Will be celebrating her 95th birthday on September 20. She resides at Samaritas in Grand Rapids, MI.

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

HIL MUHLENA celebrates his 90th birthday on September 4. Celebrating God's grace and faithfulness in his life are his dear friend Phyllis and his 7 children: Doug, LaRae, Tom, and Scott Muhlena; and Barbara, Ruth, and Janet Van Kampen and spouses, 10 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. We love you and are thankful for your love and Godly example. Birthday greetings are welcomed and can be sent to 958 Fern Ave, Elmhurst IL 60126.

REV JAMES KOK Celebrated his 90th birthday on August 29. His family thanks God for his life of faithful service. Birthday greetings can be sent to 2479 S Clermont St Apt 412 Denver, CO 80222.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS

LOUWERSE, Rev. Tony and Esther celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on August 22. Six children rejoice with them: Tim and Ruth, Eric and Jill, Brian and Keri, Keith and Jen, James and Julie, and Rachel, along with 17 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. On September 16, they will celebrate the 55th anniversary of Tony's Ordination in the CRC, and on the 24th, Esther's 80th birthday. To God be the glory for all blessings. Greetings can be sent to 2111 Raybrook St. SE Apt 4000 Grand Rapids, Mi. 49546 or email to telouwerse@gmail.com

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS



GENZINK, Rev. Terry and Mary (nee Hulst) celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 21, 2021. Their children Ryan & Gwen Genzink and Anita & Dan Lautenbach, along with their grandchildren, praise God for their faithfulness to the Lord and to each other. Greetings can be mailed to 5800 Lincoln Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426.



STEENWYK, Ron and Kathy will celebrate 50 years of marriage on October 1, 2021. Their children Mark and Sherry Steenwyk, David and Emily Romero and 6 grandchildren rejoice and thank God for them and the Christ like example they imparted to us. They reside at 2229 College Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

Obituaries

BRASSER, JoAnne (nee Waanders) of Brookfield, WI passed on to her eternal home at the age of 84 on June 4, 2021. She was preceded in death by son Bill, daughter Jean Roskamp, and husband Lewis of 58 years. She is survived by children Jane Brassier and Steve Shaver, Bob and Linda Brassier, Sue and Scott Hoeksema, son in law Mike and Sandy Roskamp, daughter in law Lynda Latzko Brassier; grandchildren Justin and Hilary Brassier (Sillas, Lewis), Meghan Brassier, Nathan Brassier, Katelyn Roskamp, Kyle and Kristen Roskamp, Daniel Hoeksema, Steven Hoeksema; foster grandchildren Joseph Diing, Kuening Par, Jiech Jagah and their families; brothers and sisters: John Waanders, Cora Mae Sinke, Marilyn Waanders, Jeane/Tony Diekema, Bill/Pat Waanders, Judy/Bob Wiers.

DYKSTRA, Benjamin, age 93, of Evergreen Park, Il., passed away peacefully on June 26, 2021. U.S. Navy Veteran. Member of Grace Community CRC. Beloved husband of 65 years to the late Angeline "Ange" Dykstra, nee Stoit (2014). Loving father of 7, grandfather to 19, great-grandfather to 43, and great-great-grandfather to 1



NUTMA, Alida, wife of Rev. J. Nutma. In our mom's 94th year she went to be with our Lord. Our Dad was called to be a pastor in 8 Christian Reformed churches. Alongside him these churches got the privilege of having our mom join him in his calling. She was and is the epitome of what it means to love the Lord with all your heart and soul and to love your neighbour as yourself. She gave food to the hungry and homeless. Whenever there was someone in need she was usually the 1st voice. With a cup of tea and a cookie, she would have a remarkable listening ear, kindness and compassion and had a way of helping people see things in a different light. We are so grateful for her faithfulness to the Lord, to our family and to the church. Love The Nutma Family.

POORTENGA, James, 89, of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away on June 13, 2021. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Sue, and by his second wife, Vonnie; and is survived by his sons Ken, Dan, and Doug (Ann) and his many grandchildren.

TAMMINGA, Jean, 86, passed away on July 13, 2021 in Grand Rapids, MI. Jean was born on December 24, 1934 in Chatham, ON to Timon and Catherine (Horlings) Hagen. As a child she lived in Canada and The Netherlands, landing post-WWII in Holland Marsh, ON where she met the love of her life, Louis Tamminga, who had also recently emigrated. They were married in Holland Marsh on June 18, 1954. Their 67-year partnership was infused with faith,

hope, and love - an inspiration to their family and all who were blessed to know them. Jean was preceded in death by her parents and sons, Ben and David. She is survived by her beloved husband Louis and children, Tim (Sandra Guay and children Mark and Andrea); Karen (Dale Paton and children, Carley Paton & Kevinton Brown and son, Jayden; Mollie and Kestrel); Mark (Joany Verschuuren); Ken (Nancy Hofland, and children, Meredith Tamminga & Daniel Singer; Aaron Tamminga & Danielle McEachern; Mila Tamminga & Peter Maple); grand-daughter, Nicolette Jurgens-Tamminga (Jason Vander Meer and son Lieuwe); sister, Pat Claus (daughters Cathy, Joanne, Michelle and Elaine and families). Memorial contributions may be made to World Renew's Covid response in India.

VAN SOMEREN, Gertrude (Laarman), age 97, June 18, 2021, Zeeland, MI. Survived by children Randall Van Someren (Marcia), Mary Van Someren Cok (David), Ellen Smith (Philip), Janice Meister (Glenn); step-daughter Jennifer Dailey (Andrew); grandchildren Elizabeth Knighton (Morgan), Jonathan Thomas (Melanie Correia), Joseph Henderson (Sara), Alexandra Cok, Paul Henderson (Maren); eight great-grandchildren; step-grandchildren and step-great grandchildren; sister Jeanette Hulst; in-laws Richard Van Someren (Carol), Delores Van Someren, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Preceded in death by sister Josie Laarman, infant daughter Linda, parents Gerret and Sieberena (Ludema) Laarman, step-father Peter Mesbergen, beloved husband of 63 years, Rev. Bernard A. Van Someren. Memorial contributions: Resonate Global Mission (CRC World Missions).



VERHOEVEN, Henrietta (Bruininks), age 102, of Grand Haven, MI, passed peacefully through heavens gates on April 19, 2021. She was born on March 31, 1919 in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. She grew up in New Era, MI, and moved to Grand Haven following her marriage to Jacob M. Verhoeven in 1940. He preceded her in death in 1964. She was a member of 1st CRC and also attended 1st Reformed with her family. She was active in Christian School and her church for many years. She enjoyed traveling, reading, music, walking, and socializing with friends. Always kind, helpful and cheerful, she was always thankful for the day God had given her. She is lovingly remembered by her daughter Marilyn (John) Buikema; three grandchildren, Mitch (Katherine) Buikema, Tamara (Bruce) Nelson, and Hunter (Karen) Buikema; 7 grandchildren. Memorial contributions to : Intersity Christian Fellowship - ministry of Hunter Buikema, or Christian Haven Home in Grand Haven, MI. To leave a memory go to Klassen Funeral Home, Grand Haven, MI.

ZEVENBERGEN, Lilian, 82, Ripon CA; called Home: November 10, 2020; buried: Sibley IA June 5, 2021. Siblings: (the late Gene-Avonne; Yucaipa, CA); Loretta-Allen Rowe, Harris IA; (the late Don) Marilyn, Sibley IA; Pearl-Charles Vander Pol, Ashton IA; (the late Dick) Ruby Jonas, Belleville KS; Ruth-Rick Sikma, North Pole AK; Larry-Sylvia, Hollandale MN. 21 nieces/nephews, 3 deceased.

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Blessings of Not Fitting In

More times than I
care to remember,
I've been made
to feel like
an outsider.



John Lee is an administrator at an independent school and an interim pastor of Newtown Reformed Church. His book, *On Generosity*, will come out in the fall of 2021 from Stone Tower Press (stonetowerpress.com).

WHEN I WAS IN SEVENTH GRADE, my parents sent a note to my homeroom teacher to ask for an excused absence. I was headed to a federal building in Newark, N.J., to get my citizenship. The immigration officer asked me a number of questions—a few irrelevant ones to make me feel comfortable, and then a number of substantive ones about the workings of government. The last question was whether I would take up arms for the United States. My answers were succinct, and I stated that I would fight for America with zeal. It was the year “Red Dawn” hit the theaters, a movie about high school students fighting for America in the midst of a foreign invasion. I was ready to bleed for New Jersey.

I went back to school the next day, and my teacher asked how things went. I spoke as any seventh-grader would: tersely. “OK,” I said.

I never felt like a citizen, but I was happy to be one.

My grandfather told me that America is a great country. He remembered how American soldiers helped his beloved Korea in the war. Moreover, he recalled the stories of American missionaries who brought the gospel. His father became an early Presbyterian pastor and died a martyr. My grandfather also told me to remember that I was Korean. He even went so far as to say that I would never completely fit in because I looked different. He was right. More times than I care to remember, I've been made to feel like an outsider in school, sports, and even the church.

This dual perspective—love for a country and the thought that I would never fit in—has served me well. I do not see them as contradictory, but beautifully complementary, especially from a theological perspective. We do not love because something or

someone is lovable, but because we have been loved. Moreover, we are able to love best when the object of our love does not form the basis of our identity. Love that weathers storms, endures deprivations, and gives sacrificially comes from above.

I love my country even with all of its problems. To me, it is a work in progress, not a finished product; a step in the exercise of liberty, not a paragon of freedom; an ideal to live out, not a mature nation with answers; an adolescent tree that is pliable, not a hardened oak full grown. Messy? You bet.

For me, not fitting in has made all the difference. I know this answer is paradoxical, but only when I realized that I am a citizen of a heavenly country was I able to serve this country well. Had my identity been wrapped up in being an earthly citizen, I would never have found peace or a country that could love me; fallen things don't love very well.

I don't know if there is a rise in anti-Asian sentiment. If I had to take a guess, it has always been present. Like all other sins, it lurks in recesses and cavities, in the chests of people and in their guts. I love my country, even more than I did in seventh grade. I also believe that I won't fit in, but I made peace with that a long time ago. B

The Last Time I Saw My Grandmother

I was wearing this same blue top,
ten years and one month ago.
She was wearing a matching hue—
a blouse or sweater in royal blue—
our point of connection in a
space where names were long gone.
I held her hand, looked into her
eyes, and saw them sparkle
with recognition—a glint of knowing
that I was someone special, even
if she didn't know why.

We gathered around her wheelchair—
aunt, uncle, cousin, mom—
in an otherwise vacant visiting room.
Upholstered chairs lined the walls;
an old piano stood sentinel.
We sang a hymn—she loved to sing—
and read from Psalm 103:
“He heals all your diseases.”
Sometimes on earth,
sometimes after.

I got the call in my empty California
classroom, a month and a half later.
I wouldn't be flying cross-country.
I'd already said goodbye when
we'd shared blue and music and heart
and hand and somehow knew:
we were loved.



Rachel Kramer Hibma writes poems and essays inspired by her experiences with chronic illness. A former English teacher and school counselor, she now does freelance writing and editing. Rachel and her husband, Dane, attend Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Finding True Peace



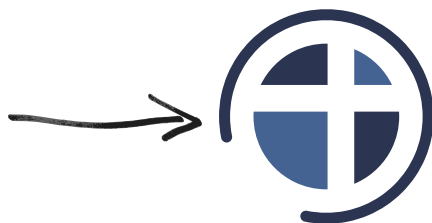
Natasha had a lot going for her before the coronavirus changed everything. A professional athlete in Russia, she was physically attractive and wealthy.

But when COVID-19 completely changed her world, her earthly riches began to feel trivial.

Like so many others who have been stuck at home, Natasha began spending more time online. She began to search for answers to questions she had never considered before. And she found her answers through ReFrame's Russian ministry programs.

The CRC's support for ReFrame allowed our follow-up staff in Russia to reach out to Natasha. They shared that although the uncertainty of COVID-19 fuels anxiety, we can be certain about our standing with God. Thank you for helping Natasha find true peace!

The Christian Reformed Church's media ministry may have a new name, but that won't change the way God's story reaches Natasha.



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