

BANNER

APRIL 2022

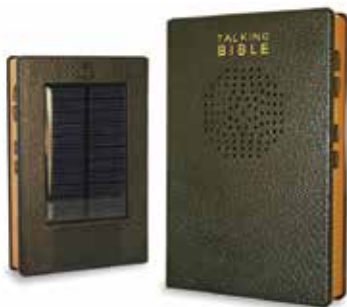
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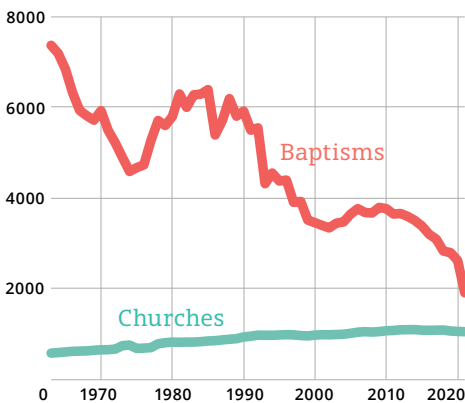
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BANNER

BY THE NUMBERS

Understandably, 2021 wasn't a great year for baptism in the Christian Reformed Church. That got us wondering about baptism over time in the CRC. That information can be found online at crcna.org/Yearbook. Here's the past 60 years or so of children's baptisms. (Adult baptisms are included as part of the New Members Through Evangelism category.)

Children Baptized In the CRC



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.)

- » Church Worldwide: *Grappling With the Future of Online Services*
- » News: *Couple's Justice-seeking Journey Began With an Invitation*
- » Music: *Confessio: Irish American Roots*, by Keith and Kristyn Getty
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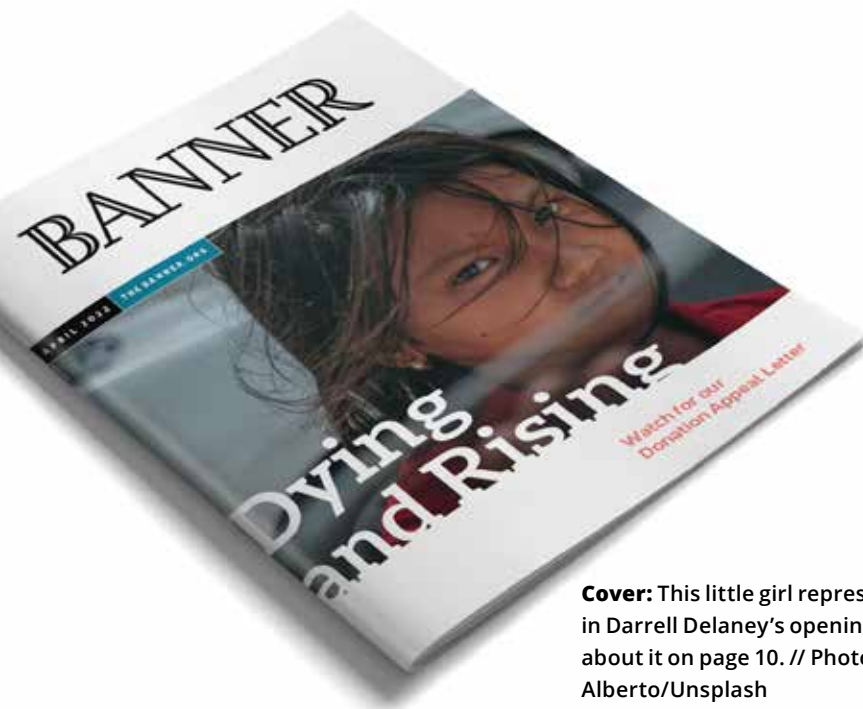
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BANNER

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Editor Shiao Chong

Associate Editor Sarah Heth Sundt

News Editor Alissa Vernon

Mixed Media Editor Lorilee Craker

Art Director Dean R. Heetderks

Designer Pete Euwema

Contact Us 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407 info@TheBanner.org

Address Changes and Subscriptions 800-777-7270 or visit TheBanner.org

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Conform or Transform

I believe the inner transformation we all need flows first out of a deep experience of God's love for us.



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.

I AM WRITING this mere days after Russia invaded Ukraine. I don't know what the war will be like by the time you read this. It was my turn to lead the congregational prayer in church the Sunday after the invasion. Of course I prayed for peace. But I didn't simply pray for a ceasefire.

The world often creates peace through external coercion. Either the winner forces the loser to surrender, or more powerful forces coerce both to stop fighting. The latter is more about "keeping the peace," akin to parents stopping their kids from fighting. But these are false and temporary forms of peace.

Genuine peace requires transformation of hearts and relationships. That Sunday I prayed that God might transform the hearts of "power-hungry warmongers," turning their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, that they may turn from war to love, from violence to mercy, from power to justice.

According to David Bailey, peacemaking is part of our Christian spiritual calling. His article "Polarization as a Spiritual Problem" (p. 32) is the third in our "Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Polarization" series in partnership with The Colossian Forum. Bailey reminds us that peacemaking is not optional for Christians.

Bailey has in mind not wars between nations, but polarized conflicts between Christians. We know we have our own battles in the Christian Reformed Church. If genuine peace comes from transformed hearts and relationships, not from external coercion and control, then our Christian peacemaking must be transformative.


Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Notice that it does not say, "but be now conformed to the pattern of the

church!" It's not replacing one set of conformity with another (progressive or conservative). Conformity focuses on compliance with rules and standards brought on by control and coercion. Transformation, however, is far more radical and holistic, including change from the inside out.

Are our church's default practices and attitudes centered on conformity or transformation? Which will foster true peace, and which will foster more polarization? Sure, some level of conformity might still be needed, but ultimately, is Jesus in the business of conformity or transformation?

I don't believe outward conformity will lead to inner transformation. Renewing our minds requires more than simply exchanging one set of ideas and beliefs for another. The apostle Paul's use of the original ancient Greek word for "mind" in Romans 12:2 has more the sense of a "disposition, ... an inner orientation or moral attitude" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 637). It's not our Western idea of "mind" as rationality. It's more like renewing our spiritual and moral compasses.

Ultimately, I believe the inner transformation we all need flows first out of a deep experience of God's love for us. This experience of being loved by God leads us to faith and to change. And we need God's people to channel God's love.

As we celebrate this coming Easter, may we experience God's love for us and be transformed from the inside out into agents of God's peacemaking. 

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REPLY ALL

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

Women in the CRC

I appreciated very much Will Katerberg's article "Women's Suffrage and the CRC" (January 2022) as well as the whole series of which it is a part. Learning from the past is essential. It was ironic, however, to notice that five men who contributed to the outcome of that controversy were named, but none of the women, though surely it must be a matter of public record who was "the woman from Indiana" who bravely protested at classis. » Wilma van der Leek // Surrey, B.C.

The 'Curse of Ham'

My brother, Dr. Donald Bouma, one of the first sociology professors at Calvin College (now University), had several favorite lectures. One gave these same arguments for rejecting the "curse of Ham" ("Racism and the Bible," February 2022). Since this was new and against current beliefs at that time (1950s), the lecture was popular but also controversial, of course. Obviously we need to be reminded of these facts again. » Dawn Bouma Gebben // Grand Rapids, Mich.

The publication of "Racism and the Bible" refers to the "curse of Ham." Perhaps a more apt naming would be the "curse of Canaan," as Canaan was the only one of Noah's grandsons who was issued such a demise. In reality, the curse God put on Canaan and his descendants displayed God's sovereignty. The land of Canaan was the same area that God promised to the Israelites when he brought them out of Egypt. But when Joshua led the

Israelites into the Promised Land, the Canaanites were still living there. The Canaanites would have spent years clearing and tilling the land, planting orchards and vineyards, constructing houses, and building fences for pasture. Just as God prepared the land of rest for the Israelites, we are told that a "Promised Land" is being prepared for all believers too: a new heaven, and a new earth, a land without darkness and without night, for God and Jesus will be dwelling among us and be our light (Rev. 21). Hallelujah! » Nicole Strampel // Sarnia, Ont.

Inclusive Praise and Worship

In response to the article "Inclusive Praise and Worship" in the February *Banner*, her words are so very true. A few years ago, after being members of our church for more than 70 years and always being a part of the music program, suddenly our council decided to go with all contemporary music. We went through all the proper channels to make our voice heard, but it was to no avail. Even if a familiar-sounding hymn was chosen it was sung in the contemporary version and not the way the hymnist intended it to be sung with beautiful harmonization. After much prayer and tears we left our church and now worship where we can once again sing our beautiful hymns. » Cliff & Helengene Doornbos // Grand Rapids, Mich.

I totally agree with Ms. Bezemer in her article. We seniors truly miss hymns in the worship services, and we really don't care if it's accompanied by an organ. We would actually recommend at least two hymns per service. » Dale Vander Ploeg // Hudson, Fla.

The description of hymns and praise songs in this article is shared by many, but the delineation is arbitrary at best. All music in a worship setting could be categorized as both hymns and songs of praise, regardless of style or instrumentation. This article seems more about familiarity than measurable genre. To be transparent, I would also love my worship gathering to reflect personal preferences. However, I am reminded that worship is not about me, and that I have many hours throughout the week to commune with God through different modes of worship. Like the author, I attend a congregation that has historically been known for exuberant singing, but I pray fervently that in the surrounding community we will be known for exuberant loving and embodiment of Christ. There is richness and depth to many expressions of worship music, both old and new, and across cultures. Perhaps an appreciation for styles is not gained by splitting the difference in corporate worship, but through dialogue between generations and cultures so that insights on worship can be shared. » Todd Pheifer // Lakewood, Calif.

Sin No More

We were gratified and thankful for Shiao Chong's challenge to our churches to reach out to our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters with compassion and grace rather than a judgmental and condemning "sin no more" approach. Please allow us to go one step further and add the challenge to not apply the old "bait and switch" trick either, where we draw them into fellowship and then tell them how unacceptable they are and set about restricting their service. This trick is unloving and pharisaical. Jesus invited ALL to come to him, to be baptized, to gather in his name,

to work in his kingdom, and to use our spiritual gifts. The invitation to follow Jesus is not predicated upon another's, or the church's, approval. It is predicated on God's unconditional love and invitation to each of us.

» Steve and Laurie Scholten // Horicon, Wisc.

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Correction

The article, "A Biblical Woman," in the March 2022 issue should have said, "By faith we know that the world and all varieties of its inhabitants (Col. 1:19-20; Rom. 8:19-21) are destined by God for renewal and that even now history moves steadily toward the day when Christ will come again and God's reign will be established in fullness—a new heaven and a new earth."

As I Was Saying

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

- » Technology and Religious Decline
- » Quitting Online Church Is Abandoning the One for the 99
- » Searching for Love in All the Wrong Seasons: Song of Solomon for the Single

The Root of Unconditional Acceptance

AS I ENTER MY FOURTH decade of life, I'm learning that I struggle to accept who I am in the present moment. I get caught up in who I could or should be or what I could or should be doing.


Acceptance is something all humans crave. We long to walk into a room and have the full assurance that whoever is there will welcome us with open arms, even if we are filled with anxiety, depressed, or just having a bad day. We want to know that we aren't a burden or "too much." We want to be our authentic selves and not have to put on a show. As my colleague often says after venting about the woes of ministry, "Thanks for giving me the space to let my hair down." It's what Anne Lamott means when she calls grace the WD-40 of life. Grace for ourselves and grace for one another are what give us space to let our hair down, be ourselves, and be loved.

However, experiencing love as unconditional acceptance does not come by striving to love more, but by embracing the love God has for you. The inner acceptance we long for is found not within ourselves, but within God.

David G. Benner, emeritus distinguished professor of psychology and spirituality at Richmond Graduate University, writes in his book *Sacred Companions*, "Only love is capable of genuine transformation. Willpower is inadequate. Even spiritual effort is not up to the task. If we are to become great lovers, we must return again and again to the great love of the Great Lover" (34). In order to be filled with love for self, our neighbor, and God, we must go back to the source of love time and again.

My wife, Annie, and I are avid fans of Catholic priest and spiritual writer Henri Nouwen, so much so that our son's middle name is Henri. Nouwen's writings have been a reliable

The inner acceptance we long for is found not within ourselves, but within God.

companion in the darkest and happiest times of our lives. The other day, Annie recited a prayer from Nouwen: "Accept me amid my anxiety." Those words struck a chord deep within me. I'm someone who struggles with chronic anxiety, and my prayers are often "Relieve my anxiety" or "Make these feelings go away"—simple prayers that cry for healing from the pain. Yet Nouwen's prayers don't ask God to make him anyone else than who he is. He doesn't ask for the pain to go away. Nouwen just asks God to accept him, with all the anxiety strings attached. Perhaps we could all benefit from asking God to accept us, even when we can't accept ourselves. I wonder if I might start accepting myself in the process? 



his wife and two children.

Travis Jamieson is the director of spiritual care at Beacon Hill at Eastgate, a retirement community in Grand Rapids, Mich., and the minister for congregational care at Central Reformed Church. He resides in Grand Rapids with



Dying and Rising

By Darrell Delaney

This story is based on a true story: Once upon a time there was a girl who grew up in a dysfunctional home. She had been raised by a single parent. As she grew older, she saw her mother become addicted to drugs, and as a result she suffered from neglect and was parentified at an early age. She lived in a situation that made her the built-in babysitter because her mother often would leave the younger siblings with her. She missed a lot of school. She had to make big decisions no child should have to worry about. How would she eat? Would she go to school today or stay with the siblings? Where was Mom? She grew up in a situation that made her act out in inappropriate ways. She sought ways to cope with her frustrations and pain. Did I mention she was a Christian? Yep, since she was 11 years old. However, she did not see how Jesus could speak into her current

situation Monday through Saturday. Sundays were cool, though; she was able to go to church. But the preacher did not do a good job of helping her see how Jesus mattered for everyday life.

This brings me to a point. Easter is a season where we learn of the resurrection of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Every year we teach and share the good news that he is risen. We remember that all our sins are paid for, that Christ took the punishment we so deserved, and that we get the gift of eternal life and a new status: heir and forgiven child of God. That is good news. I happen to believe that although Advent is important and the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth is vital, the resurrection is far more important because our sin debt was paid in full at the moment Jesus said, "It is finished." The fact that he rose is the part that encourages me. Many important people live and die, but because he is alive again and

dies no more, it gives me hope. Our old life also dies, and a new life arises in its place.

Playing on the English meaning of the word "testament," I was recently thinking about insurance policies, because I'm at that age. I am married and have children. Sooner or later I'm going to go home to be with the Lord. When that happens, I want to make sure my affairs are in order and my estate is dispersed to my family in the way I wish it to be. As a family we go to see a lawyer who helps us plan our estate. I designate my wife as benefactor. I have assets I want our children to receive. I name who gets what. It's my last will and testament. Isn't it interesting that the good news of Jesus is found in the New Testament? The good news of Christ's resurrection is found in God's "last will and testament" to us, where all of his promises to us are "Yes and amen!" And then Jesus died! When Jesus died, all the heavenly

inheritance was unlocked and passed to us by faith. We have inherited it because the proof of death was shown to the Father. Then Jesus changed the game when he rose from the dead. That. Changed. Everything.

If the resurrection didn't happen, then none of this matters, and I suppose you can live however you want, do whatever you want, and sin to your heart's content. But because the resurrection did happen, it changed everything. Now how we live matters. Now we have hope that God will sort out everything. Now we can tell people there's more to life than the repetitive rat race, the corporate ladder, and the life that is shallowly glazed over with pleasures and frivolous living. There is more to life thanks to the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection means God has the last say, and that word is good for those who hope in Jesus, live in Jesus, and die in Jesus. The resurrection truly does matter.

It mattered for the girl. What happened to her? She got involved in a Christian group in college, and they walked with her. They helped her sort out her pain and disappointments. They were the church to her. She also met her now-spouse in the group. Thanks to the newfound hope that the resurrection gave her, she was able to talk to her now-sober mom about the past and reconcile. Things are improving in their relationship. She also has a therapist that helps her rewrite some of the unhelpful scripts and internalization that happened in her early life. She began the long and slow process to put away the things in her old life and embrace the new life in Christ. She is going to be OK.

All of the strength to do all of this comes from the fact that she serves a risen Savior who has helped her along the way, encouraged her when she made mistakes, wiped her tears, and


The resurrection
means God has
the last say, and
that word is good
for those who
hope in Jesus,
live in Jesus, and
die in Jesus.

hugged her scarred soul. We serve a wounded Savior who hugs us with his wounded hands as if to say, "I too have wounds, and I understand." The girl is now a woman with a family of her own. She has broken the generational curses of addictions and poverty. She gives all glory and credit to God for breaking unhealthy cycles and patterns in her life. That is why the resurrection matters: because the power God used to raise Jesus from the dead is present and available to every believer.

Our God is also one who works with those in between death and life. Some of us don't have such a triumphant story and are still waiting for God to do miraculous things. Some of us are waiting for God to do small things. History has shown us that prayer doesn't always get answered immediately. Sometimes it doesn't get answered at all, or if it does, it is in ways far different from what we expect. Our God works there too. We have a faith that says we trust the Lord when we get the answer, and we trust when we don't. We trust not in manifested blessings, but a God who is able. He is who he is whether we get the answer to prayer or not. We have a relationship with the Creator of the universe, who came down into

the middle of difficult circumstances and therefore understands firsthand the already-but-not-yet nature of our world. He meets us where the longing still is, where the kingdom has come but not yet fully. The resurrection of God's Son is a promise that things will get better, and he sits with us in the difficult times, the pain, the waiting, the disappointments, and the setbacks. He sits with us either way—on the high mountain or in the low valley. We serve a God who loves us that much.

Our God is one that specializes in bringing dead things back to life. Sin has put to death many things, including relationships with God and with one another. But thanks be to God that we serve a risen Savior who can give us new life! Our life with him changes, and our life with one another changes as well. And if he can help that little girl, he can help you as well. Our God is a helper.

To God be the glory. 



Darrell L. Delaney lives in Allegan, Mich., and is pastor of spiritual formation at campus ministry at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. He and Kia, his wife of 15 years, have three children.

1. In your own words, without resorting to spiritual jargon, how would you explain what Easter means to you to someone who has never read the Bible or heard of Easter?

2. What story do you know and can share that reflects how Easter matters?

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BIG QUESTIONS

Stewardship

Should Christians be adopting modern financial innovations such as cash apps or cryptocurrency?

Innovations aren't necessarily bad. They can certainly make life easier, more convenient, and in some cases less risky. Among the advantages to cash apps on a smartphone are no longer needing to carry cash, a ready record of purchases, and a higher level of security because a smartphone usually either is password protected or can only be opened biometrically (with a fingerprint or facial recognition). There is always the potential that the company managing the financial application (Apple, Google, Samsung, etc.) might get hacked and your financial data might get compromised just as a credit card's information might, but that risk is similar whether you use a credit card or a smartphone. It's your choice whether to do it the old way or the new.

The cryptocurrency conversation is a different matter. I'd suggest keeping a healthy distance between yourself and the crypto craze. While there might be some legitimate uses for cryptocurrency, much of its use is speculative and unregulated, which is both its appeal and its danger. It is highly volatile, boasting tremendous returns in a short period and also huge losses. Swings of 50-80% either way aren't unusual. More than one analyst has compared cryptocurrency to the tulip mania that swept the Netherlands in the 17th century. Speculators drove up the price only to see the bubble burst and their fortunes disappear overnight. Most wise voices are saying stay away. Crypto is, one might say, a virtual embodiment of Proverbs 5:8: "Cast but



Illustration for The Banner by Gisele Bohórquez

a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."

One side note about cryptocurrency from an environmental stewardship angle: it's an energy hog from tracking crypto transactions. Bitcoin, the largest of the cryptocurrencies, by itself uses as much energy as some small countries.

Rolf Bouma is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church who teaches religion, ethics, and ecology in the Program in the Environment at the University of Michigan.

Vocation

Is it greedy to ask for more money for doing my job?

The Bible says that a laborer deserves to be paid (1 Tim. 5:18, Luke 10:7). It is thus not greedy to expect to be compensated appropriately for the work that we do. If we have specific experience and talents, then asking to be paid for those is a way to recognize these good gifts God has given us and invite others to recognize them as well. If we have paid to learn skills, such as by going to university or college, we can reasonably ask for more so that we can pay back debts. Last of all, we can ask to be paid a living wage—enough to pay for food, housing, and other necessary expenses.

Yet the Bible also cautions us not to think more highly of ourselves than

we ought (Rom. 12:3). Recognizing the gifts God has given us is different than thinking we are better or deserve more than others. We should consider what our peers are making, whether that be others in the same organization, others with similar jobs and experience, or others living in a similar location. Sometimes asking for more money for a job includes opening up a conversation about how much everyone is being paid. It is not good if I am paid well but some of my coworkers are not, especially when minorities and women are still often paid less than their peers.

Sometimes we are asked to work for less than we deserve or even for free. Talking with those with more experience than us can help us see whether this is wise, including whether everyone's contribution, big or small, is being valued. Talking with those in the organization about how much we are getting paid can lead to God showing us new ways to save and use money. God delights in who we are; it is good and fitting to expect others also to delight in that, even as we all strive together to "advocate meaningful work and fair wages for all" (Our World Belongs to God, 48).

Brenda Kronemeijer-Heyink is the Christian Reformed chaplain at the University of Toronto. She attends Willowdale CRC in Toronto, Ont.

Church/Bible/Doctrine**What's the status of a congregational meeting and a congregational vote—especially when it comes to extending a call to a pastor?**

In the Christian Reformed Church, the council is the governing body of the local church, so it is the group that makes decisions for the church, including nominating officebearers and calling and ordaining them to office. Congregational meetings and congregational votes are required by most churches' articles of incorporation and by state or provincial laws for matters such as approving the annual budget and electing officebearers (which includes calling pastors). But in Christian Reformed polity, "although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the council as the governing body of the church, except in those matters stipulated otherwise in the articles of incorporation or by law" (Art. 37).

Questions often arise about what the council should do when the congregational vote is very close. A simple majority of the congregational vote gives the council warrant to move ahead on a recommendation. Reformed polity has a long history of majority votes based on discussions in deliberative assemblies that seek to understand how the Spirit of Christ is leading the church. Just as classis and synod do, the church council seeks to discern the Spirit's guidance, and a simple majority is an indication of that discernment. The simple majority rule also avoids the minority rule that can result if more than a simple majority is required.

In some matters, a council might decide that a slim majority indicates the need for caution or even postponement of a decision. It is within the council's power then not to move forward with a congregational decision. However, the council is also called by God and the church to lead. If a congregational vote is not an overwhelming majority, the council still must discern whether it believes this is the direction in which God is calling the church. It's good to remember that regardless of the percentage of a congregational vote on a call, when the council extends that call it is presented as a unanimous call. Many pastors who receive a slim majority in a congregational vote go on to serve entire congregations very effectively.

Rev. Kathy Smith is senior associate director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, adjunct professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and adjunct professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin University. She is a member of First CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Digital Life**I know what we do online is tracked one way or another, but what does *The Banner* know about me?**

Compared to social media, not much. But like all publishing since Gutenberg's Bible rolled off the press, we want your attention.

Part of my job involves *The Banner*, so I might be biased, but I'd compare *The Banner* to a good friend—you know, someone who tells you what you want to hear but also what you might need to hear. Social media, on the other hand, is more like that jealous guy who wants to be your only friend, so he tells you only what you want to hear—for his gain.

Sorry, back to the question.

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A longer version of this answer (including pictures!) appears on the *Behind The Banner* blog on our website, thebanner.org/behind-the-banner.

Dean Heetderks is co-director of Ministry Support Services of the CRC and art director of *The Banner*. Wondering about any part of the digital side of your life? Tell him about it at dean.heetderks@gmail.com.



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

COVID Check-in: How Are Pastors Coping?

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Photo by Diana Polekhina on Unsplash

Ongoing clashes over masks, worship practices, and more are wearying pastors and parishioners alike.

After two years of living in pandemic times, words like “exhaustion” and “burnout” have become more common than “unprecedented” and “global.” Teachers, health care workers, and small business owners are overwhelmed, apathetic, and stressed. The same is true for pastors.

In November 2021, research firm Barna Group reported that “there has been a dramatic increase in the number of pastors who are thinking about quitting ministry entirely.” At the beginning of that year, 29% of Barna’s polled pastors said they were concerned about their well-being and are “on the brink of burnout.” Less than a year later, 38% of pastors answered the same way.

Sixteen months ago *The Banner* published “Your Pastor Is Stressed: Reports of Struggle for Pastors” (Dec. 2020, p. 20), based on a conversation with Pastor Church Resources staff. This is a check-in.

From ‘Crisis Management’ to ‘Residual Fallout’

Pastor Dave Jolman of First Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., noted the different reasons for burnout and stress from the beginning of the pandemic to now. “A year ago, pastors were

in more of a crisis-management mode,” Jolman said. “Today, pastors must deal with the residual fallout of membership decline, fractured relationships, and mistrust. Those realities will not resolve quickly.”

He and Pastor Marc Nelesen are co-regional pastors for Classis Georgetown (a regional group of CRC congregations), and together they have encouraged church councils to take note of the wear and tear pastors have experienced the past two years. “That encouragement was, in part, an effort to raise awareness among church leaders of the emotional strain felt by pastors. Our encouragement to councils was that they identify strategies to help pastors restore the margins, which the pressures of the past year had squeezed very thin.”

Sabbatical for Spiritual Growth

Pastor Dirk vanEyck, a regional pastor for Classis Thornapple Valley, is talking with different church councils to encourage them to create a sabbatical policy for their pastors. VanEyck, who took a sabbatical in early 2021 after 10 years of ministry work, found it vital for spiritual growth.

“Our job is to equip,” vanEyck said. Delegating to the congregation is

Noteworthy

equipping it to do God's work. "I can't delegate my own spiritual readiness and growth," he continued. "If I'm not close to Jesus, the church will suffer."

For so many pastors, preaching to a camera or over Zoom has led to burnout. "All the joy points are taken away because the people are missing," vanEyck acknowledged. Much of what's replaced the "joy points" is conflict over policy and politics.

Grieving Losses

Grant Vander Hoek of Mission Hills Community Church in Mission, B.C., grieves the loss of in-person gatherings and the invisible lines of division that have now become apparent. "There's a certain beauty about not being of one mind and still doing the work of Jesus," Vander Hoek said. "We were getting people together who'd never do life together, and it worked miraculously. That's a missed opportunity now."

Pastor Church Resources, the CRC's ministry to help equip pastors and their congregations to do ministry together, recently created a program of grants for weary pastors. As of the end of February, the grants have funded from two to four weeks of leave for 38 different applicants. "Congregations can support their pastors and each other through simple things such as regular words of encouragement and consistent prayer," said ministry consultant Zach Olson, and councils can have honest dialogue with pastors, seeking mutual accountability and "deepening intimacy with Christ."

Vander Hoek admits that while this time might be challenging, none of this ought to stop us from loving Jesus. "It's always been tricky to do church. It's always been tough," he said.

"Throughout history, the church has faced deeper challenges than this," Jolman said. "I am confident that, by God's grace, we will make it through this challenge as well."

—Callie Feyen



Caroline Short, an elder and the clerk at First Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver, B.C., and her brother, **Simon Vanderloo**, a member of New Westminster (B.C.) CRC, seen here with bars of their handmade soap, **tied for first place in a provincial entrepreneurial competition**. Simon's Soapbox, a social enterprise with a mission to create meaningful work for people with developmental disabilities, received a \$500 prize from the British Columbia Institute of Technology's Student Association.



Pella (Iowa) Christian High School's large group speech team staged two performances Feb. 19 at the All-State Speech Festival in Ames, having **achieved "Outstanding Performers" recognition at the state speech competition Feb. 5**. The school's Readers Theater performed *The Long View*, and its One Act troupe performed

Elephant Graveyard. The two groups comprise 21 students from grades 9 to 12. This is the highest honor that the Pella Christian's speech program has ever received.



Ruth Padilla DeBorst, who serves with Resonate Global Mission leading the Comunidad de Estudios Teológicos Interdisciplinarios, a learning community of Latin American theological students, is the recipient of the **2022 Abraham Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life**. "For decades, Ruth's been working essentially on a theology of integral mission, an idea of evangelicalism that's holistic with discipleship and formed by a Kuyperian understanding of God's sovereignty and human responsibility in response to that sovereignty," said Jul Medenblak, president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

The prize will be awarded this month at the Kuyper Conference, hosted by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. The April 5-7 gathering, themed "Tribes, Tongues, and Nations: Global Christianity and Reformed Public Theology," marks the first in-person Kuyper Conference since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council of Delegates Considers Structure Tweak, Makes Plans for Synod 2022

The Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates met Feb. 16-18 by video conference and took actions on several things, many of which will go to Synod 2022. (Synod is the broadest assembly of the CRC. The Council acts on behalf of synod between synod meetings.)

The Council nominated Zachary King to become the denomination's general secretary pending a successful interview at synod (see p. 20). While taking this step forward in implementing the structure the Council endorsed in May 2021, delegates also gave a green light for the denomination's current executive director, Colin P. Watson Sr., to explore a possible tweak to the overall plan.

What's Newly Proposed?

The latest proposal is to move the new office of the general secretary out of the CRC's U.S. Corporation to a separate ecclesiastical corporation. Historically, the denomination's executive director or most senior leader was located in the U.S. Corporation.

Watson, who is set to retire in July, presented the proposal. He told delegates that every employee has to be located inside a legal corporation. "For the sake of having abundant clarity, it makes sense to move the office of the general secretary completely away from the U.S. Corporation," he said. The office includes synodical administration, standing committees of synod, the office of communications and marketing, and the new position of chief administrative officer.

Watson's proposal also calls for the ministry leadership council—the senior leaders from all CRC ministries—to transition from being a decision-making body to being a roundtable for discernment and strategic conversation.

Additionally, Watson recommended that the U.S. Corporation name a senior executive to be the point person responsible



Bev Bandstra, Classis B.C. South-East, said the proposed move of the Office of General Secretary to a new ecclesiastical corporation would go "a long, long way in improving relations ... within the denomination."

to the U.S. board. It would not be an executive director position but rather a senior ministry director who would assume the reporting role as an additional responsibility. The Canada Corporation has an executive director.

The journey toward a new governance structure, begun more than two years ago, has been fraught. It has seen the resignation of an executive director, the dismissal of a Canadian ministries director, and conflict between Council members. (See, most recently, "Canadians Meet to Discuss Leadership Structure," March 2022, p. 16.) And it has been complicated by the fact that the denomination's synod, which would ordinarily review governance decisions, has not met since 2019.

One point of contention has been the lack of a parallel structure between the U.S. and Canada, something that had been agreed to in principle in 2020.



Discussing an implementation plan for the previously adopted CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders, Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland, said extending it to all officebearers goes further than synod requested.

Bev Bandstra (Classis B.C. South-East) was happy to see the new proposal. "Thank you so much," she said. "This goes a long, long way in improving relations between the U.S. and Canada within the denomination."

The Council did not act on Watson's proposal, but the executive committee asked the executive director to bring a comprehensive report and proposed bylaws back to the Council's next meeting in May.

Reviewing Implementation of Past Decisions

The Council also acted on other items it had worked on previously. Citing the current fluidity of COVID-19 protocols, the Council dropped the COVID vaccine requirement for in-person meetings that had been put in place last October. Delegates will be responsible for following travel protocols at borders, and

attendees still will be required to observe the protocols put in place by the venue.

After reviewing a plan to allow delegates to Synod 2022 to hear more LGBTQ perspectives before discussing the human sexuality report, the Council determined delegates would not be required to participate in specific discernment groups. By a vote of 28-17 (vote counts are provided by the chair when requested by a delegate), delegates rejected a plan that included hearing stories from people who identify as LGBTQ via video and interacting with a series of guiding questions.

Instead, delegates asked Watson to “create an appendix of diverse LGBTQ+ voices (to be) made available to synodical delegates as well as strongly encourage delegates to engage local LGBTQ+ voices in their context, with humble attention to Scripture throughout.”

The Council also spent time discussing an implementation plan for the previously adopted CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders. While the Code is a fulfillment of a task requested by Synod 2019, the implementation plan goes further than the original request, with suggested Church Order changes requiring all officebearers to sign and follow the Code.

Tyler Wagenmaker (Classis Zeeland) said some of the elements of the Code are subjective and the “intentions are not clearly spelled out.” Because of that, he said, there is a potential harmful consequence that “officebearers will cower from living into their office.”

The Council did vote to endorse the plan and recommend it to synod for adoption. Five delegates registered votes against the endorsement. To be enacted, any change to Church Order requires two synods: one to propose and one to adopt.

The Council is expected to next meet May 4-6, 2022, in Grand Rapids, Mich., its first in-person meeting since February 2020.

—Gayla R. Postma

READ MORE ONLINE

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. William (Bill)
Adrian Huyser*

1924-2022

Bill Huyser, who died Jan. 4, served in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church for almost 70 years.

He graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, was ordained in 1953, and then pastored Prosper CRC, Falmouth, Mich.; Crossroads CRC, Madison, Wisc.; and Westwood CRC, Kalamazoo, Mich. He was campus pastor at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo for 10 years, staying in touch with many former students well into the last years of his life. Before his retirement in 1991, he also pastored Knollwood CRC in Kalamazoo and Bethel CRC in Lansing, Ill.

In retirement Huyser served Fellowship CRC in Grandville, Mich., and then for 10 years, until he was 91, he was visitation pastor at Roosevelt Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. “Bill provided a warm and winsome approach that people loved,” said Roosevelt Park’s former pastor, Reggie Smith. “Along with his wife, Alvina, they saw the image of God in all people, stood with them in their struggles, and prayed for God’s grace to usher them home to be with the Savior. ... I miss him.”

Huyser is survived by Alvina, his wife of 72 years; five sons and their spouses; nine grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Clarence Van Essen

1927-2022

Clarence Van Essen’s love for the Lord, his desire to be God’s servant, and his love for Christ’s church was obvious to all who met him. Van Essen died Feb. 4.

Van Essen grew up on a farm in Edgerton, Minn. In 1946 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and spent nine months in Japan, witnessing the devastation of World War II. Afterward, although he had completed just two years of high school, Van Essen passed a college entrance exam and went on to graduate from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary.

Ordained in 1956, he pastored the Christian Reformed congregations of Cedar, Iowa; McBain, Mich.; and Platte, S.D., as well as First CRC, Fulton, Ill.; Maple Heights CRC, Cleveland, Ohio; and Harrison (S.D.) Community Church. Retiring from full-time ministry in 1992, he continued to preach most Sundays until he was 80.

Various classes facing conflict often called on his humble, soft-spoken wisdom. He served on many denominational boards.

Van Essen enjoyed spending time with family, sharing a bowl of popcorn, and playing the card game Rook.

He is survived by Henrietta, his wife of 70 years; five children and their spouses; 19 grandchildren; and 52 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Classis Watch: Winter 2022

Christian Reformed classes (regional groups of churches) meet two to three times a year, acting on matters with the guidance of the CRC's Church Order, the rules that member churches agree together to follow. Articles of Church Order are noted here for actions taken by classes in the past several months. Quotations come from classis minutes.

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** (Art. 6 and 10) include candidates Bart Eisen, Nathaniel A. Schmidt, and Joshua Grimes.

Those welcomed into ministry in the CRC **from other denominations** (Art. 8): Revs. Gerhardt Venter and Jinseok Park.

Ministers released from a congregation (Art. 17-a): Rev. Kevin teBrake from Exeter (Ont.) CRC.

Revs. Marcel Kuiper (Classis Ontario Southwest) and Marc Van Berkum (Classis Holland) are **eligible for call**.

Leaving Ministry in the CRC

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

Greg Fluit was **honorably released** (Art. 17-c).

Paul Van Stralen was **released** (Art. 14-b).

Rev. Peter Kelder was **granted emeritus status** (Art. 18). His retirement is effective May 31, 2022.

Commissioned Pastors

Approved as **commissioned pastors called to specific roles within their classes** (Art. 23): Rob Golding (Classis Greater Los Angeles) and C. William Southard III (Classis North Cascades).



With a Christ candle in the center, delegates to Classis Alberta North conversed in a circle, deliberating over proposed overtures about the human sexuality report coming to Synod 2022.

Commissioned pastor emeritus status was granted to John Hoffmaster (Classis Illiana).

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

An emerging (unorganized) church does not have its own council and is under the care of the council of a neighboring CRC. An organized church has its own council (Art. 38).

Rise Up Church in Cedar Springs, Mich., was recognized as an **organized congregation** of the CRC.

Gibson CRC in Holland, Mich., organized in 1976, is now recognized as **emerging**.

Pathway CRC in Dyer, Ind., **disbanded**.

Toyee Chapel, a church plant of Crownpoint (N.M.) CRC, **closed**.

Churches **merged**: Bethel CRC with Forest City Community Church, both in London, Ont.; L.A. Global Mission Church with Rapha Mission Church, both in Los Angeles.

Other Matters

Classis Zeeland voted to officially adopt recommendations of the CRC's human sexuality report at the classis level, declaring "that the church's teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status" and "that Church Order Article 69-c ('Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God') is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in the (human sexuality) report."

The report has yet to be presented to synod. Requested by Synod 2016, it was released to the churches in 2020.

Synod

Classes may direct requests or communications to synod, the broadest assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, awaiting its next convening.

Classis Quinte is asking synod to "envision the CRCNA as two distinct national Christian Reformed Churches," make

the necessary reorganization changes, and “declare that the CRC in Canada and the CRC in the United States are Churches in Communion.” As a ground for the request, the classis states, “The CRC in Canada has long expressed its need to have a distinct voice and presence within its national context. Steps toward ensuring a distinct Canadian voice within the binational structure have been thwarted by bodies dominated by the United States.”

Additionally, Classis Quinte is asking synod to **take actions towards creating “a set of guidelines, along with a group insurance plan, for covering salaries of church employees during leaves of absence due to illness”** and also asks synod **not to accede to the recommendation of the human sexuality report that would declare the church’s teaching on a list of sexual activities (see above) to already have confessional status.**

Classis Greater Los Angeles asks synod to **“formulate and put into action a plan to inspire and support CRC members to embrace and embody biblical justice in opposition to the belief systems of white supremacy and systemic racism.”**

Classis Huron asks synod to **postpone a decision on the human sexuality report for a minimum of one year** because, among other reasons, “the consequences of adopting the HSR need to be more clearly spelled out.”

Classis Zeeland asks Synod 2022 to **“publicly admonish all office bearers serving on councils in Grand Rapids East in 2021 and 2022 that have not filed a formal appeal regarding Neland’s covenant breaking.”** In 2020, Neland Avenue CRC, a member congregation of Classis Grand Rapids East, appointed as a deacon a woman who is married to a woman. The CRC holds the position, from a 1973 synodical report,

that homosexual practice “is incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Scripture.” The CRC’s Council of Delegates, acting on behalf of synod in June 2021, issued a communication of grave concern over Neland’s action, reiterating an earlier letter. Classis Grand Rapids East had requested that the first letter be rescinded (*Agenda for Synod 2021, Overture 11*). Synod did not meet in 2021, but the Council refused to rescind the letter. Classis Zeeland further asks that **Synod 2022 unseat all delegates of Grand Rapids East “that have been admonished by this synod” and not allow the privilege of the floor (the opportunity to speak at synod) to any admonished officebearers.**

Classis Red Mesa asks synod to **approve all of the recommendations of the human sexuality report coming to Synod 2022** and proposes “that Synod appoint a committee to write practical guidelines as to how the conclusions of this report should be carried out by our congregations in our society which seems not only opposed to them, but also where secular leaders are actively working on many levels to promote very different moral standards.”

Classis Alberta North convened a **consensus-seeking meeting** Feb. 5, 2022, **to address overtures from member churches about the human sexuality report.** It concluded: “Classis withholds action on the overtures presented at this meeting without prejudice, understanding—and encouraging—that the churches that presented them will forward the overtures to synod so that synod has the information and (the) concerns and considerations recommended in them.”

Previous communications and requests related to the human sexuality report have been noted in Classis Watch reports since April 2021.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

The Hessed Project: A Response to the Human Sexuality Report



The Hessed Project, taking its name from a Hebrew word sometimes translated “unfailing love,” is the work of an informal group of Christian Reformed people from across North America in response to the human sexuality report, expected to come to Synod 2022. The project’s website, *hessedproject.org*, invites people “to explore, discuss, and discern what this kind of embracing love means in relation to human sexuality.”

The site launched Feb. 24. Kathy Vandergrift, a member at Kanata CRC in Ottawa, Ont., was involved in creating the website. She said the group began asking questions and sharing resources in spring 2021. Vandergrift said the project “is designed to fill a gap for those with questions about the report.”

Questions the project addresses include “Is the Bible clear in its teachings on sexuality?” and “Does the approach of the HSR (human sexuality report) cause harm?”

Jacqueline Donkersloot, a member of Mapleridge (B.C.) CRC, collected and wrote some of the site’s stories from LGBTQ+ individuals. She said, “Theology doesn’t exist in a vacuum, but it impacts how we live and interact with one another. For many people, the LGBTQ+ issue is a theoretical theological issue until we personally know someone impacted, and then we see it’s not an ‘issue.’ It’s a reality, and we see the impact theology has on people’s lives.”

—Kristen Parker

Zachary King Nominated as General Secretary of the CRC



At its February meeting the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates nominated Rev. Zachary King to be the denomination's general secretary. The nomination will go to Synod 2022 for final approval. (The Council acts on behalf of the annual CRC synod between synod meetings.)

The role of general secretary is newly created, and, if approved by Synod 2022, King will be the first person to hold it. The position is part of the denomination's leadership restructuring in the U.S. and in Canada. (See "Council of Delegates Considers Structure Tweak ...," p. 16.)

King is no stranger to newly created roles. He became the first director of Resonate Global Mission in 2017 when synod approved the merger of the CRC's World Missions and Home Missions agencies. He guided the new agency through the complicated process of merging two ministries with long legacies and different cultures.

In his interview with the Council on Feb. 18, King told delegates he knows he is coming to the new position at a time when the CRC is in flux. He acknowledged that there are no easy answers but that the CRC is "more resilient than we give it credit for." In his application, he wrote, "There has never been a greater opportunity for spiritual repentance and renewal, and (for) engagement in God's mission to this hurting world."

A search committee working since October 2021 recommended King to the Council, noting he was selected from an initial field of 13 applicants, some serving in denominational roles and some serving in parish ministry. "Zach King's ministry in Haiti, through the merger of Home and World Missions, and other life experiences demonstrate his capacity to stay present in dark valleys, in seasons of grief, conflict, and uncertainty," the search committee wrote.

King spent 12 years leading the CRC's mission in Haiti, including through the earthquake in 2010. He also taught for a year at the Veenstra Seminary in Donga, Nigeria. He has varying levels of proficiency in four languages, including English and French.

If approved by synod, King will start July 1.

The denomination is also seeking to fill two other senior-level leadership positions: chief administrative officer and a transitional executive director-Canada. Those searches are ongoing.

—Gayla R. Postma

Campus Ministry Helps Students Explore Scripture with Art Kits



Inspired by an earlier experience of art as a discovery tool, Fanshawe College Campus Ministry in London, Ont., is using Art at Home kits to connect with students. Preparing art materials, Scripture readings, and reflective questions on themes such as anxiety, emptiness, and depression, chaplain Helena Human has delivered 85 kits to 15 different participating students since October 2021. The project is supported by an innovation grant from Resonate Global Mission.

—Callie Feyen

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dr. John David
VanRegenmorter*

1948-2022

John VanRegenmorter, a gentle man of grace and integrity, lived his life for the Lord, walking the talk every day. "Most important to him," said his family, "was that he knew he was a sinner saved by grace, and he wanted that to be each of our testimonies as well as that of those to whom he ministered." John lived with Parkinson's disease for more than 14 years. He died Feb. 1.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, John also earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from North American Baptist Seminary in 1985. Ordained in 1974, he pastored Northside Christian Reformed Church, Clifton, N.J.; Shalom CRC, Sioux Falls, S.D.; and First CRC in Denver, Colo. He then served for 15 years as chaplain and director of Stepping Stones, a ministry of Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids, Mich., for couples experiencing infertility. He authored two books on infertility and wrote numerous articles on Christian faith, infertility, and adoption.

John loved travel, had a great sense of humor, and enjoyed swimming, walking, reading, and writing.

He is survived by Sylvia, his wife of 49 years; three children and their spouses; and five grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Sending Easter Hope

This Easter, many people will step into churches for the only time in 2022. Others will remember and reflect on times when they knew about Christ but haven't sought a relationship with him in years. Easter is a time when people search for meaning and reflect on their own experiences with religion.

With your help, people can find the answers they are looking for—whether they turn on the radio or visit their favorite social media platform or website. Your gifts to ReFrame can help our media ministry partners around the world provide the answers that hurting people need to find.

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—Nina

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**Beyond Accessibility:
Involving Young Adults
So That Everybody Belongs,
Everybody Serves**

By Becky Jones and Megan Herrema

When you consider your church congregation, how active are the young adults? How involved are they in the conversations of your church? In what areas of church life are they participating? These types of questions are ones with which every congregation should engage.

As two Christian Reformed Church in North America staff members we have been seeing these questions play out in different areas of ministry.

Becky Jones, communications specialist with Disability Concerns and Safe Church Ministry:

As a young adult, I watched the church I grew up in disband, and many other young adults fell away from the church as a result. As a child I would often visit my grandparents' church. Their membership consisted primarily of seniors. I watched their membership naturally decline as members passed away. As a congregation, they had ignored the need to reach out to the younger population within their community. By the time I was a young adult, their church had been torn down, and now a seniors residence stands in its place.

Unfortunately, these kinds of stories are not unfamiliar to many of us. Aging congregations are a common theme across North America. As a result, addressing how we can support and equip our youth is a conversation we all must engage in. These conversations intersect with conversations we must have about disability inclusion.

Within the Christian Reformed Church, both Disability Concerns and Faith Formation Ministries value the faith formation of people of all ages and abilities. Disability Concerns encourages congregations to intentionally remove barriers that keep people from being able to participate. Faith Formation provides tools and coaching to congregations to help them walk alongside people at all stages and ages of their faith journeys.

Here are some ways in which these ministries have leaned into this conversation and developed training specifically geared to embracing and supporting our young people.

How Disability Concerns Expands the Conversation on Youth

Today, people under 30 expect public spaces and institutions to be accessible and welcoming in every way. They desire

As part of the Disability Advocacy Journey, Zoie Clarise Sheets, a disabled scholar, speaker, and consultant, has been sharing about her experiences as a young adult with the disability community.

inclusion and fair treatment of everyone and have grown up with education systems that understand and respond to this value. Unfortunately, they are often disappointed by what they see and experience in their churches.

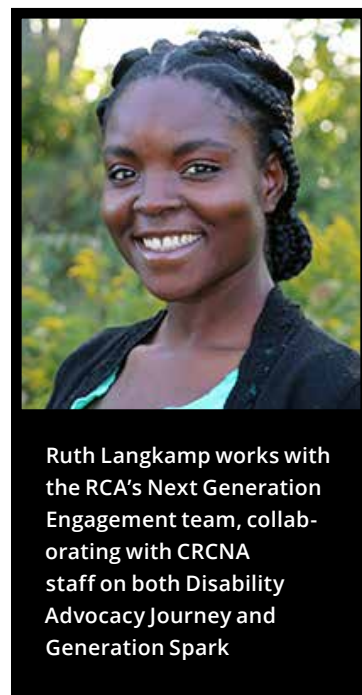
"The unique perspective of young adults is vital if we want to have thriving churches now and in the future," said Lindsay Wieland Capel, director of CRCNA Disability Concerns. "With this in mind, Disability Concerns is using a planning framework called the Horizon Storyline to establish a process to engage and train young adults in disability advocacy."

At the beginning of August 2021, almost 100 people came together over two days to be challenged by the question "Who's missing in my church?" They explored this question through the lens of disability, acknowledging the fact that if churches fail to meet accessibility standards from a physical and attitudinal point of view, young people who have grown up with an expectation of access will turn away from the church.

Following this training event, Disability Concerns partnered with RCA Next Generation Engagement to develop and implement the Disability Advocacy Journey (bit.ly/disabilityadvocacyjourney), a yearlong project aimed at equipping youth for the work of disability advocacy.

Together, this cohort of disability advocacy participants are learning from dynamic activists about historical and current experiences of people with disabilities, meeting local practitioners and activists who have been urging their regional areas to make improvements, and discovering how they can turn their passion into action.

The DAJ model has led to an ongoing training module called "Equipping Pathways to Engage Young Adults in Disability Advocacy." In cohorts of four or five, seasoned disability advocates guide young people through three one-hour online sessions, using a variety of media resources to teach the basics of advocacy. Prework is assigned for each session, and upon completion participants are invited to engage in



Ruth Langkamp works with the RCA's Next Generation Engagement team, collaborating with CRCNA staff on both Disability Advocacy Journey and Generation Spark

ongoing advocacy efforts through the Disability Concerns network. (To learn more or to sign up, email disability@rca.org or disability@rcna.org.)

“We’re encouraged by these creative approaches that speak to young people and challenge us all to recognize and support them for ministry today and tomorrow,” said Rev. Terry DeYoung, coordinator for RCA Disability Concerns. “For too long we have disempowered young people and discriminated against disabled people, and it has harmed the body of Christ. Dismantling these practices requires courage and creativity, and RCA Next Gen staff have welcomed this opportunity to collaborate with Disability Concerns in the challenging work of raising up new generations of advocates to help our churches become places where everybody belongs and everybody serves.”

How Faith Formation Ministries Joins RCA Partners to Invite Youth Into Church Leadership

Megan Herrema, communications coordinator with the Office of Social Justice and Faith Formation Ministries:

In addition to equipping young adults with disability advocacy skills, the ongoing process of becoming churches where everybody belongs and everybody serves includes inviting youth into the leadership of the church. One way to do that is through intergenerational mentoring. Generation Spark, a joint initiative of the CRCNA and the RCA, helps mentors and mentees to work together on a solution to a problem in their church or community.

Before churches launch intergenerational mentoring, team members from CRCNA Faith Formation Ministries and RCA Next Generation Engagement facilitate a training process. Ministry leaders from CRC and RCA churches in the U.S. and Canada involved in the current cohort of Generation Spark met virtually for the first time Jan. 25, 2022.

Are You Coming to Inspire 2022?

Disability Concerns and Faith Formation Ministries will host workshops throughout this three-day event, including these:

Disability Concerns

- » What Your Church Can Do About Ableist Practices
- » Indispensable: How the Gospel Subverts Weakness and Strength

Faith Formation Ministries

- » Keychain Leadership and Why Key-Hoarding Leadership Does Not Help the Church in 2022
- » Engaging “Nones” and “Dones”



Annalise Radcliffe works with the RCA’s Next Generation Engagement team, which partners with the CRCNA on Generation Spark, an initiative focused on intergenerational mentoring.

“The ministry leaders who are learning about mentoring are deeply committed to serving their young people well,” said Rev. Annalise Radcliffe, coordinator for RCA Next Generation Engagement. “This is essential when participating in Generation Spark. It’s elevating the voices of all people, including those who are heard less often.”

The cohort participants continued training through February and March. After completion, they were encouraged to launch intergenerational mentoring at their church when appropriate and to invite people of all ages at

their churches to participate.

“When people hear that we’re working with young leaders,” Radcliffe said, “they often assume that we’re working only with young leaders. Intergenerational relationships formed through a process like Generation Spark work to create relationships across generations. The impact reverberates beyond the relationship. It forges empathy, good listening skills, compassion, and energy to love others in the community. We’ve seen these relationships elevate young leadership and help congregations better serve their neighborhoods. Young people feel recommitted to their congregations, all because they have a close relationship with someone at the church who shows up, listens, and is willing to learn.”

Working in collaboration, our ministries can pair their unique focuses and strengths to fulfill our biblical calling and directions from synod.

“Synod gave Faith Formation Ministries a broad mandate that describes the kind of discipleship and faith-formative work we are to engage through five adjectives: intentional, lifelong, intergenerational, missional, and holistic,” said Rev. Chris Schoon, Ph.D., director of Faith Formation Ministries. “We’ve realized that this mandate encourages us—maybe even expects us—to collaborate with others like Disability Concerns, Safe Church, and the Office of Social Justice, especially as we lean into the missional and holistic aspects of our calling.” **B**

A Decade of Advancing Diversity and Inclusion

“THIS PAST DECADE (Calvin University president) Michael Le Roy really raised the profile of diversity and inclusion at Calvin University, getting us closer to our From Every Nation vision,” said Michelle Loyd-Paige, executive associate to the president for diversity and inclusion at Calvin. “We’re not there yet; we have a ways to go, but we’ve come so far in these ten years.”

For decades, Calvin has been working toward that From Every Nation vision—to become a Christian community that celebrates cultural diversity and is shaped by the biblical vision of the kingdom of God, a kingdom formed “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9-10).

Loyd-Paige has been leading this work at Calvin University for many years. From 2006-15, she served as dean of multicultural affairs. Reporting to the provost and housed in the academic division, Loyd-Paige led the multicultural affairs committee, shepherded the cross-cultural engagement requirement for students, and successfully guided the college through an anti-racism institutional audit.

But in 2015 Calvin significantly elevated that important work, and after a national search, Loyd-Paige was appointed to the newly created position of executive associate to the president for diversity and inclusion.

“I think under Michael (Le Roy)’s leadership, this work of diversity and inclusion became more institutionalized, and awareness became a higher priority,” Loyd-Paige said.

A Strategic Move

This was no accident. One of the six themes of the 2014-19 strategic plan



Michael Le Roy



Michelle Loyd-Paige

was “Strengthen Calvin’s Pursuit of Diversity and Inclusion,” and that included adding a position to the president’s cabinet. Loyd-Paige’s position is within the office of the president, and her desk is just steps from Le Roy’s door.

“He trusts my judgment (for me) to be the senior spokesperson for the university when it comes to decisions about diversity goals or how to respond to something,” Loyd-Paige said. “I’m not just a figurehead, and I know a lot of my colleagues at other institutions can’t say the same thing. I know I can say (to Le Roy), ‘You’re off on that,’ because I have. He’s not defensive; he says, ‘Okay, help me to see where I’m off. Now let’s do the corrective.’”

A University-wide Commitment

Le Roy and Loyd-Paige also partnered in recent years to form a president’s advisory team for diversity and inclusion composed of various stakeholders from every division of the university. The team’s purpose is to support the university’s vision for diversity and inclusion and to partner with Loyd-Paige to coordinate deep, pervasive, and meaningful change in the university’s understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion. The team’s

work includes monitoring the progress of the diversity and inclusion goals, providing updates on diversity initiatives or concerns within each division, and encouraging professional development in cultural competency through sponsorship of events.

The university’s leaders also have sought the advice of students. In 2020, the president’s office formed the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of

color) student advisory group, which meets regularly with Le Roy and Loyd-Paige.

“Michael could enter into that space and suck all the air out of the room by saying ‘I am president,’ but he shows up as Michael. He’s the last person to speak as opposed to the first. He is there to listen,” Loyd-Paige said.

Le Roy and Loyd-Paige listen to the experiences of the students and, at the request of students, have invited both campus and community leaders into these conversations, including the mayor of Grand Rapids and the city’s police chief.

“Those conversations have gone really well,” Loyd-Paige said. “Michael leaned in to listen—not to tell, not to sell Calvin, but to listen to the student experience and to try to understand it.”

While Le Roy is leaving his position in a few months, the strategic work that’s been done over the past decade has helped Calvin lean further into its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Both the current strategic plan and Vision 2030 make clear that this remains a core institutional value. **B**

—Matt Kucinski,
Calvin University

The View from Here

Leaning Into the New Normal of Church

WE ARE IN OUR THIRD YEAR of dealing with COVID realities. The church, like so much else in our society, has changed as a result. After being forced to adapt during COVID lockdowns, many congregations have realized that they can extend their reach and do more ministry if they continue to embrace the lessons learned when they went online.

While online church has its drawbacks, it also provided a pathway to worship for newcomers who were too intimidated to come in person, those who struggle with anxiety about being in large groups, those with mobility issues or lack of transportation, and a whole host of others. While there are costs to not being physically together for worship, there are also gains in making worship more accessible to these other groups. Rather than returning to what life was like before COVID, many congregations are living into a “new normal”—a future that includes both online and in-person ministry.

In this issue you’ll read other stories about ways that Christian Reformed ministries are helping congregations think about how to serve, care for, and welcome all of their members. This includes faith formation for people of all ages, raising up disability advocates, and helping women develop their leadership skills in a variety of roles in congregations.

What I appreciate most about these stories is that they remind us that church is for everyone. I’m sure that as you reflect on Christ’s many commands, his words about children and the most vulnerable immediately come to mind:

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14).

And further, in the same gospel according to Matthew, Jesus expounds on his love for those who are far off

It is clear that we are called to minister to all in our community, yet in our new COVID reality, figuring out how to fulfill this command can be complex.

and sets the expectation that we, his disciples, will show the same love out of our reverence for him:

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me’” (Matt. 25:45).

It is clear that we are called to minister to all of those in our community, yet in our new COVID reality, figuring out how to fulfill this command can be complex and challenging. It certainly has been taxing for our pastors and leaders who have been on the front lines of adapting during COVID. Yet we know that it is not too taxing for our Lord, on whom we depend. These difficult times call for greater and greater dependency on him.

I recently started a weekly prayer time with pastors, rotating through representatives from various classes, and we have been praying in the rhythm of the Lord’s Prayer using two passages:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:4-7).

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23).

These verses challenge us to remember that we are called to lay our anxieties and stresses on Christ, the only one who was able to perfectly bear them and continues to do so today.

My prayer for all of us is that we will come to know the truth that is the gospel of Christ. This includes remembering the parables as we strive to be good Samaritans, reaching out to those in need and feeding the hungry. For us leaders, as we feel the weight of increasing leadership stresses, may we depend on God and seek solitude with Christ as our Lord along the way.

To God be the glory!



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.

At the Doorstep with Olga

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. As Olga opened her front door, she found a former Miss Ukraine standing there. Olga's life was about to transform.

Olga lives in a small village in Moldova. Though she had grown up in a Christian home, she had lost touch with her faith when she was a teenager.

Over the next few years, Olga's life had taken many turns for the worse. Her relationship with her family became strained. She began to struggle with alcohol abuse and eventually became addicted.

That's why, when Olga responded to that knock at her door, she was ready to give up her old life and start something new.

The knock came from ReFrame Ministries' Russian-language ministry partners in Ukraine. Among the small group was Lika Roman, winner of the Miss Ukraine title in 2007. Since then, Lika has been using her platform to partner with ReFrame in sharing the good news with Russian-speaking viewers and listeners, both online and in person.

"Lika's online videos gain the attention of young followers," said Kurt Selles, ReFrame's director. "What's more, her in-person events help these young people connect with churches in their area."

As Lika and Olga began to talk, Olga quickly began to open up. Lika had brought along some clothes and toys to share with Olga's children, and when Lika explained that she was from a Christian ministry group, Olga knew that God was giving her an opportunity to renew her life in Christ.

Soon, Olga's boyfriend began to wonder to whom she was talking at the door. Hearing words like *Lisus Khristos* and *tserkov* ("Jesus Christ" and "church" in Russian), he became angry.



During the pandemic, Lika Roman (left) hasn't been able to host as many in-person ministry events as she normally would. Still, God uses her online events and occasional in-person visits to share his love with people who speak Russian.

"He sounded upset and aggressive at first," Lika recalls, "but somehow the words of the gospel made him very meek and peaceful."

Olga's boyfriend had also come from a Christian background. He too had turned away from the faith, but he was willing to listen to the group's story. ReFrame's Russian ministry partners shared the gospel, invited them to the church that many of the group attended, and showed their compassion. Both Olga and her boyfriend were ready to recommit their lives to Christ.

"The whole team prayed over them afterward," Lika added. "They were in the local church on the first Sunday after that prayer. We hear from our local partners that they continue faithfully attending the services."

Pray that Olga and her family will continue to stay connected with their reignited faith and their church.

—Brian Clark,
ReFrame Ministries

A Church for People of All Abilities Starts in Grand Rapids

FOR PEOPLE LIVING with a disability, it can be difficult to find a church where they feel like they can belong.

“We know that those impacted by disability often feel they do not have churches that they can call home,” said Dave Vander Woude, a church planter with Resonate Global Mission. “The picture of the kingdom is that we’re equally made in God’s image, so how are we worshiping as the church together?”

That’s the question driving the mission of City Hope GR, a new Resonate partner church plant in Grand Rapids, Mich. City Hope GR is a church where people of all abilities can worship, serve, and grow together.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one in five Americans lives with a disability. Statistics Canada reports similar numbers for Canada. For people with disabilities, church can be overwhelming and difficult to navigate. This can include everything from the way the buildings are designed to the atmosphere of the worship service to the way ministries and programs are run. People on the autism spectrum, for instance, can be sensitive to bright lights, loud sounds, and certain paint colors. Some people have difficulty sitting still and listening quietly to a sermon. Some people get nervous in large crowds.

As a result, people with disabilities might choose to avoid church altogether.



City Hope GR, a new Resonate Global Mission partner church plant in Grand Rapids, Mich., is a church for people of all abilities.

While some churches make accommodations for people with disabilities, that does not necessarily mean that people with disabilities are included in the life and community of the church. They might worship in a room apart from the rest of the congregation or be limited to a program specifically designed for people with disabilities.

“Disability is not a priority for many churches, so many people with disabilities are isolated and excluded,” said Pete DeRitter, one of the people starting City Hope GR.

But City Hope GR considers everyone in the decisions they make. They share Monroe Community Church’s new building, which was built with universal design standards; they incorporate

a variety of worship and communication tools in the service; and everyone is given an opportunity to participate in worship, serve, and use their gifts.

That’s why DeRitter and his daughter, who is affected by disability, are part of the core team starting the church.

“I’ve never experienced the camaraderie and care I’ve seen for each other here,” he said.

Kelli Straayer and her family also joined the church. Her son and daughter both have autism, and she said they wanted to be part of a church where her children could serve and where their gifts could be recognized.

“Just knowing that we’re accepted and loved, ... it’s a relief,” said Kelli. “It’s such a relief to feel like we’re not alone in it. ... It’s something you don’t experience everywhere.”

“I love it,” Elison Frazine said. “It’s a lot quieter and not too many people. ... I’ve served at other churches, but this one feels like a good fit for me. I don’t feel like an outsider.”

Joni Lee and her husband are helping to start the church with their son, who has autism. “Our son can be in a place where he belongs,” said Joni. “Everyone, no matter their ability, can come and be part of a church body and be just as involved as the next person.”

Vander Woude said that everybody gets to be the church at City Hope GR. He said they are still learning what that means—and discovering how best to include everyone—but being inclusive remains central to their mission.

“We know that God is going to bring healing and hope to people who have been left on the margins. He’s going to continue to change lives,” said Vander Woude.

—Cassie Westrate,
Resonate Global Mission

The Brave Way of Women's Leadership

WHEN PLANS TO MARK the 25th anniversary of women in ordained offices at Synod 2021 were disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Women's Leadership Ministry created alternative opportunities to gather women and invest in their development. Plans took shape around the central theme that motivated men and women to advocate for opening the offices to women more than 25 years ago: releasing the gifts of women in the church to pursue God's mission.

The discussion about women holding ecclesiastical offices in the Christian Reformed Church in North America has been long. The denomination began talking about it in 1970, but it wasn't until 1996 that synod formally adopted a position that recognized "there are two different perspectives and convictions on this issue, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God." That same synod said that any congregation in the Christian Reformed Church in North America may allow women to serve in the office of minister, elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor. At the same time, it acknowledged that some congregations and classes might, because of their convictions, choose not to allow women to serve in these roles.

Aware that this dual-perspective system means women might encounter systemic barriers and personal development issues as they seek to contribute their gifts to the church, Women's Leadership Development created three events with guest presenter Ellen Duffield of BRAVE Women and Girls intended to support, encourage, and equip women, including women who seek to serve in ecclesiastical office and those who serve and lead in their congregations in other ways.

Using Duffield's book *The BRAVE Way*, the first event, a webinar, focused on developing women's voices and building stronger support networks.



Women's leadership developer Rev. Elaine May (third from left) with other women ministering in the CRC (from left): Rev. Gina Dick, Sandy Ralya, and Laura DeGroot.

Duffield led the group of 60 women through an interactive session about how to use their voices for the sake of others and a reflection on why women keep silent. Many remarked how powerful it was to gather with other women experiencing similar challenges.

In some contexts in the CRCNA, women leaders experience less than hospitable environments and find that contributing their voice and gifts to ministry takes increased courage. After the initial webinar, one participant from the Midwest wrote, "I am not alone in the specific struggles I've been facing! Wow—to see my pains and doubts and the debates I've had in my head articulated by so many others and backed up by data was powerful and so good for me! Thank you for bringing this community around me!"

Our views of power can significantly affect our confidence and how we use our voices. Using Janet Hagberg's research on stages of power development, the second webinar was meant to help women, particularly those who have experienced abuse of power,

develop a neutral and healthy view of power as a tool to affect positive change. For women to contribute their gifts to the flourishing of the church, we must abandon the perception that power is only used for selfish promotion. "It is only as we reframe power as something helpful, authentic, and life-giving that it can be fully embraced," Duffield writes.

One woman commented, "This was timely and inspiring."

An in-person celebration of the 25th anniversary of women in ecclesiastical office in the CRC will take place Aug. 3-4, 2022, in Chicago ahead of the Inspire 2022 ministry conference. Two events are scheduled: a banquet to celebrate and reminisce with keynote speaker Ruth Haley Barton, and a workshop with author Rob Dixon to address systemic issues related to men and women working together. Dixon's book is *Together in Ministry: Women and Men in Flourishing Partnerships*. Additional information is available at crcna.org/womensleadership.

—Elaine May,
Women's Leadership Ministry

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Things We Need

HAVE YOU EVER been told to eat your vegetables because they are good for you? What about drinking your milk to have strong bones, or going outside to get vitamin D from the sunshine? Maybe you even take daily vitamins. But just what are vitamins, and why does our body need them? What do they do?

Vitamins and minerals are the things our body needs in small amounts. Without them, the body cannot grow and function as it should.

Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamin A is also called retinol. It is used by the body to build important molecules in the eye that react to light. You can get your vitamin A from meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Our bodies can also make vitamin A from certain fruits and vegetables, such as carrots.

When the sun shines on our skin, our bodies can make vitamin D. This vitamin helps the body absorb and hold on to the mineral calcium. Calcium, which we can get from dairy products and dark leafy greens, is needed to build strong bones. It also makes our muscles work.

Many of the minerals the body needs are metals. These include calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium, and copper. Iron is needed to help red blood cells carry oxygen from the lungs to the heart and all over the body. Not having


enough iron can make you feel tired, weak, and cold.

Traveling for Health

Animals need vitamins and minerals, too. In Africa, an amazing migration of more than a million wildebeests, zebras, and gazelles takes place every year. This huge herd travels 124 miles (200 km) from the far north of the Serengeti ecosystem to the southeast, where they give birth to most of their young. Scientists think that these animals travel to this area for the mineral-rich grasses.

How Much Do We Need?

The body can store some vitamins and minerals, but others must be eaten regularly. Because of this, it is possible to get too much of some of them. Too much or too little can cause health problems. Our bodies need just the right amount.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus says, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Just as we need vitamins and minerals for our physical health, we need time in God’s Word, the Bible, for our spiritual health. And don’t worry—you can never have too much time with God! 



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.





Polarization as a Spiritual Problem

By David M. Bailey

Editor's note: This article is the third in our series, "Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Polarization." The series, in collaboration with The Colossian Forum, aims to examine the state of polarization in the U.S. and Canada and explore Christian strategies to overcome it. To read more articles in the series right now, visit TheBanner.org.

I have a sister who is two years younger than me. While we've been relationally close most of our lives, when we were in elementary school we would get into little sibling arguments. Mom would often encourage us to learn how to work out whatever problem we were arguing about, but on the occasions when one of us was being uncompromisingly difficult, she would jump in and say, "Stop being obstinate and work with your brother/sister."

As I've gotten older, I've realized my mom understood that children need to develop these skill sets: understanding their desires, being able to articulate those desires, learning how to disagree with someone, and developing the ability to resolve conflict. She also understood that being obstinate is a different thing.

It's common for humans to have arguments because of our various perspectives. But being obstinate with other people should be rare. Unfortunately, we live in a time when being obstinate has become a norm. If someone is on the opposite side politically or ideologically, being obstinate is often justified,

and trenches are dug deeper to keep the "other" away.

This scenario is often called "polarization" or "toxic polarization." The question we have to ask ourselves is, "Is polarization a problem?"

I grew up in the Pentecostal Holiness Christian tradition. One thing we would hear at least once a week in the King James vernacular was "Be ye holy!"

The idea was that Christians ought to be different from those who don't follow Jesus. There should be something distinct in the way we live. It seemed every other week we would hear one of these two verses: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14), and "Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:1-2).

The writer of Hebrews is reminding us that there is a connection between loving our neighbors and loving God. "Every effort" is a lot of effort. It's illuminating that one of the key themes of the book of Hebrews is the revealing of God's gift of redemption to all of humanity for us to receive, yet the one area in which we are exhorted to give a lot of effort is in living in

peace with everyone. "Everyone" isn't only the people we like or agree with. "Everyone" includes those we don't like or don't agree with—even our enemies.

When we consider the notion of holiness, or being set apart, the author also reminds us that a distinct set-apart life is connected to seeing God. What does a set-apart life look like in the 21st century in our North American context?

In Romans 12, we're encouraged to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God. In response to the mercy of God in our lives, we should be motivated to live differently. Paul gives us a warning not to be conformed to the way this world thinks, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Paul wrote this letter to a church that was in the capital of the greatest empire of the day. His encouragement to be careful how to think is a warning to pay attention to how the culture of the greatest empire of the day influences how followers of Jesus think and live.

Transformational thinking leads to a transformational way of engaging with the world. As we engage in transformational thinking, our experiments of living into a life marked by the ways of the kingdom of God will help us discern what is God's good, pleasing, and perfect will.

What would it look like if we took these Scriptures seriously and applied them to our American and Canadian social contexts, where polarization has become a norm?

What would it look like if Christians received the invitation to be set apart, holy people opened to the transformational thinking of the kingdom of God in experiments of peacemaking for all people, not just those we agree with or like?

I think if the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in America or Canada, he would probably copy and paste words from his first letter to the church in Corinth: “Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1).

When Paul unpacks how the Corinthian Christian community was being worldly and immature, he named quarreling as one of the practices of such immaturity. In the Corinthian Christian community, they identified more with Paul and Apollos, but in America, and somewhat in Canada, we tend to identify more with our political ideology—“I am of the right” or “I am of the left.”

But what if Jesus was our true identifier? What if we recognized that we all are image bearers and also sinners who can’t fully see the kingdom of God clearly? What if we believed that God, the master gardener, sees the bigger picture, knowing some people are planting and others are watering?

When we trade in peacemaking for polarization, we cease being people who can see the bigger picture of the truth. God has given people different experiences and ways of seeing things. When we pursue peace with all people, we create opportunities to see God in new and fresh ways.

When we trade in peacemaking for polarization, we see our enemies not as fellow image bearers, but as caricatures at best or the embodiment of evil at worst. That faulty vision opens the door


When we trade in peacemaking for polarization, we opt out of the family business.

for us to then respond to other human beings as the embodiment of evil, and as a result we become malformed in ways we can’t imagine. When we engage with human beings as image bearers, we create opportunities for God to work in us in new and fresh ways.

When we trade in peacemaking for polarization, we opt out of the family business. Jesus tells us that the children of God are to be involved in peacemaking as it is our Father’s business; we learn it through vocational apprenticeship with our big brother Jesus. When we engage in the tactics of polarization, it’s like dropping out of the family business to join a gang. No matter what the gang is called, it’s not as great as the family business.

When we trade in peacemaking for polarization, we taint our witness. Every family has identifying markers to distinguish between one family and the next. Holiness, healing, reconciliation, and peacemaking in the midst of brokenness are several of the key identifiers of God’s family as described in the Scriptures. They are marks of being a set-apart, peculiar people. People need to see this kind of witness today.

Although the extreme voices of the left and the right are loud, they shouldn’t be leading the way. The “left” and the “right” are mirrors of each other, and they are tearing apart so much of the fabric of our society. When Christians join in this problematic activity, abandoning the call to pursue peace with all humans and holiness, the next generation has a hard time seeing Jesus; they often don’t want anything to do with the kind of Jesus we’ve made into our own image.

Polarization is not only a spiritual problem. It’s a practical problem. Sometimes after a long day of work, my mom likely just wanted to kick up her feet without listening to children bicker! Yet being a wise Christian woman, she understood the spiritual importance of teaching her children skills in peacemaking and reconciliation. 



David M. Bailey is a public theologian and the founder and CEO of Arrabon, a nonprofit organization based out of Richmond, Va., that cultivates Christian communities to pursue healing and reconciliation in a racially divided world. He is also co-author of the *Race, Class, and the Kingdom of God* study series and executive producer of the documentary *11am: Hope for America's Most Segregated Hour* and the Urban Doxology Project. He and his wife, Joy, attend East End Fellowship, where he serves on the preaching team.

1. The author asks, “Is polarization a problem?” What do you think? Why?
2. What are some ways you can “make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy”?

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A Letter to Our American Partners: Canada as a Distinct Ministry

We are a distinct culture, which means we have a distinct way of doing ministry.



Peter Schuurman is a Calvin University graduate, a former binational Christian Reformed campus ministry leader, and currently the executive director of Global Scholars Canada, a Christian academic guild with an American partner. He also wrote *The Subversive Evangelical*, a book about Canadian perceptions of American religion.

DEAR AMERICAN PARTNERS

and friends:

We are one denomination straddling two divergent legal and cultural systems.

There are a multitude of things for which we give thanks with respect to our American partners. In our religious tradition, we share one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, not to mention confessions, church polity, and recent history. In our North American identity, we share the world's longest undefended border, a similar language, common pop-culture reference points, and many shared defense interests.

So my effort below at contrast might seem to overlook what we share. But it might just be that those obvious similarities obscure a multitude of deep differences that are especially less visible to you, our American colleagues, family, and friends. We are a foreign land with not only different charitable laws, tax policies, and legal requirements, but a qualitatively different spiritual geography. We are a distinct culture, which means we have a distinct way of doing ministry.

This might not be on your radar, but many of us (not all, to be sure!) in Canada believe the proposed binational restructuring report (SALT report) before synod this June perpetuates the lack of parity we feel in leadership of our ministries in Canada.

I want to explain a few key differences that many of us in Canada perceive as significant for the posture, pattern, and priorities of a contextualized ministry. I'm only talking about cultural context here; specific ministry differences flow from this context.

Toboggans and Toonies

Consider some everyday things: We go tobogganing in toques rather than sledding with hats, and afterward we

drive a few clicks and slide over some toonies to enjoy a box of Timbits. We'll then end the day watching government-sponsored television (CBC) with some Tourtère and a 341-ml bottle of Cracked Canoe. To complete the day, we wipe our faces with a serviette because there are no napkins around.

That's not every Canadian's ideal, to be sure, but it's a gently humorous way of suggesting we have different languages, money, sports, and food, and different ways to measure them.

I hope you can hear me out. I am now going to describe more substantial matters than the stereotypes of Mounties, moose, and maple syrup.

While we both have ties to Britain, Americans chose the path of revolution and a melting pot; in Canada we chose the way of evolution and a French-Canadian mosaic with a now well-worn multicultural policy.

Your American slogan of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" champions the freedom of the individual, and that often means a resistance to perceived government overreach, so health care remains a mostly private matter.

Meanwhile, up in Canada, our motto of "peace, order, and good government" takes a different posture toward governing institutions. We generally have higher taxes, a more extensive welfare state, and universal health care. We tussle in a shared marketplace with the U.S., and we are protective about keeping our own particular civil society. And that's where ministry matters.

Bison and Beavers

It cannot be overstated: there is an enormous difference between a superpower and a commonwealth. When you rely on alliances for self-protection and mutual support, the view

from the top comes with different responsibilities and liabilities, especially in foreign policy.

Let me try a light-hearted comparison. The bison is the national mammal of your country. Weighing in at 2,000 pounds, they cut an intimidating figure, and while not invulnerable, they are considered unpredictably dangerous. Our official mammal is the beaver, reaching 60 pounds, tops. Beavers can be industrious and annoying to landowners, but they are not exactly formidable.

Given the Revolution and the Civil War, the American relationship to violence is more pronounced than in Canada. "All Canadian revolutions are failed revolutions," said writer Margaret Atwood. Gun violence, homicide rates, and imprisonment statistics are vastly different here. To be sure, we are equal as sinners in need of saving, but we wrestle with some different demons.

When it comes to matters of racial prejudice and colonialism, we share this tragic history. But while you struggle with the legacy of slavery and Black/white tension, our history and politics are more selectively focused on wrongs to our Indigenous peoples and ongoing tensions with Quebec.

Then there is the government itself. Differences between parliaments and senates, prime ministers and presidents are obvious. But our political cultures are also very different. Your two-party system naturally polarizes public life in a way that is less likely here with our multi-party options. We do have divides, and recent truck blockades suggest some brewing resentment, but the unrest doesn't map onto the political options as easily.

Insecure and Secularized

One thing is embarrassing to say: Canadian identity is a little

underdeveloped. University of Toronto professor Marshall McLuhan put it this way: "Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity."

But there is one thing we mostly agree on up here, and that is that we are Not American. I'm sorry to say it's a favorite pastime of Canadians to distinguish ourselves from our most influential and globally dominant neighbor. It's part of our very consciousness as a people.

Of course we need to talk about religious differences, too. Historians have said that we used to be the more Christian country, with higher rates of church attendance and stronger denominational ties. But things have reversed in the past 50 years: while we are officially a multicultural country now, we have become the more secularized nation, especially in our politics, university culture, and broadcast media. The historical privilege, popularity, and prestige of Christianity is more often met here with disdain, if not outright hostility. A selective memory has reduced our faith's legacy to our worst failures: residential schools, sexual misconduct scandals, anti-scientific postures, and exclusionary policies related to women, sexual minorities, and religious others.


We are said to be a more apologetic people already, but this secularized multicultural context makes us as a Christian minority even more cautious. We can't take it for granted that our faith is recognized and respected. And we generally feel less entitled to the halls of power.

Vive La Différence!

I'm worried that you will take this in the wrong way or that you won't understand how important these differences can be.

I'm asking you to imagine what it feels like to be a minority group. Korean, Hispanic, Navajo, and Black colleagues in the Christian Reformed Church can color in the details of this experience more vividly. It's not a perfect analogy because Canada has different legal and cultural systems, but some of the feelings are similar. We live in someone else's shadow. We remain vastly outnumbered in the CRCNA, and many of us feel at times ignored, regularly out-voted, and often misunderstood.

So we are asking you, our American friends, to remember this: We share a faith, but we often minister in different ways in distinct cultures. Canadians tend to be more alert to these differences, and if that is hard to understand, it might just be something we have to ask you to accept. I hope this leads to deeper mutual respect and the development of binational structures that free us to say things with a distinct accent, to form alternative approaches, and to lean into some different priorities.

Someday I hope we can say joyfully together "Vive la différence!" for the sake of ministry, partnership, and the gospel. 

Editor's Note: A version of this letter appeared in the Christian Courier on Sept. 15, 2021.

Queens CRC: The Future of a Signature Congregation in Dispute

By Clay Libolt

What will be the next chapter for Queens Christian Reformed Church? Several years into a long-simmering dispute between the signature Christian Reformed ministry in the Jamaica area of New York City and Classis Hudson, the regional body of churches that includes QCRC, there seems no easy answer to the question. Recently, *Christianity Today* brought the dispute to the attention of the church world beyond the CRC.

QCRC was founded in 1956 under the leadership of Paul Szto. It was the first Mandarin-speaking church and one of the first Chinese congregations in the CRC. Szto had an influential career in the CRC. Ordained in 1957 as the first Chinese pastor in the CRC, he fostered Chinese ministries in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, served on denominational boards, was delegated many times to synod (the CRC's annual general assembly), and became a trusted adviser for Chinese ministries across the denomination. In 1968, QCRC was the first Chinese church to build its own building.

Educated at Westminster (Philadelphia) and Union (New York) seminaries, Szto brought an innovative approach to theology and ministry, including at QCRC. He retired in 1986 but continued in active ministry until the early 2010s. In the later years of his ministry, the QCRC congregation diminished in number, prompting the congregational leadership to invite a Chinese-speaking Presbyterian Church of America congregation, Covenant of Grace, to use the QCRC building for its ministry. Since 2012, CoG has held worship services in the QCRC building. The remaining



QCRC was founded in 1956 under the leadership of Paul Szto.

members of QCRC worship with CoG. Szto died in 2019 at age 95.

The relationship between QCRC and the CRC became increasingly difficult in the last decade of Szto's life. In 2011, Szto wrote a letter to Classis Hudson informing the classis that QCRC "would leave the CRC," referencing the CRC's policy on women in church office.

The letter led to a series of interactions between QCRC, Szto, and Classis Hudson. The classis determined that QCRC no longer had enough members by the rules of Church Order to support a functioning council, and in September 2013 it declared QCRC to be an "emerging" congregation (not officially organized). This decision was contested by QCRC representatives, but in 2019 the classis reaffirmed its decision. QCRC representatives appealed the classis decision to synod. The Council of Delegates (the denominational board of trustees), acting in lieu of synod, denied the appeal in 2021.

As an emerging church, QCRC was placed under the council of Faith

Community CRC in Wyckoff, N.J. Classis also appointed an oversight committee to work out the future of QCRC. This began a decade-long negotiation between Classis Hudson and the QCRC representatives. The negotiation throughout has been characterized by the reluctance of the QCRC representatives to participate at all in the process—which they characterize as unbiblical and contrary to the Church Order—and, equally, the determination of Classis Hudson to bring the process to a clear and certain conclusion.

In this process Classis Hudson has been represented by an ad hoc committee, which until recently had three members: Joel Vande Werken, a former Classis Hudson pastor now pastoring in Whitinsville, Mass.; Richard Ostling, longtime religion writer for *Time* magazine and a member of Ridgewood (N.J.) CRC; and David Dykhouse, a bankruptcy attorney and member of Faith Community CRC in Wyckoff. Ostling recently stepped down from the committee (his term expired in 2020) and has not been replaced.

The question of who should represent QCRC in negotiations with classis has been contentious. The congregation, now only 10-15 members, has been represented by longtime elder David Lowe, who lives in New Jersey, and by two children of Paul Szto, Peter and Mary, professors, respectively, in Omaha, Neb., and Syracuse, N.Y. At a pivotal January 2020 meeting of Classis Hudson, David Lowe was given the right to speak, but Peter and Mary Szto were not; classis ruled them ineligible because they lived too far away and were no longer members of QCRC.

The Classis Hudson ad hoc committee presented a long report on QCRC to the classis in January 2020. The report

included seven recommendations. Classis adopted all of them. A central recommendation called for “the active QCRC members in regular attendance to initiate a dialogue with the leadership of Covenant of Grace for the purpose of negotiating a detailed plan to formally unite the two congregations on the existing site.”

Under the recommendations of the report, the new congregation could either affiliate with the PCA or with the CRC. The QCRC property would become the property of the union congregation with classis retaining some rights to the property, including for 25 years the right of first refusal if the property were to be sold, and if the congregation affiliates with the PCA, half the proceeds of the sale. Classis would be required to devote the proceeds of the sale to purposes that befit the legacies of QCRC and Paul Szto. The proposed agreement also allows CRC church plants to make use of the building rent-free for 10 years, provided such use is “reasonable and does not displace the ministry of the united congregation.”

Classis further required that QCRC provide classis with a list of documents related to the ownership and finances of the congregation and any existing agreements with Covenant of Grace. A final agreement for the proposed union was to be submitted to classis by Dec. 15, 2020. If QCRC failed to meet this deadline, the classis asserted its right to take legal action.

That deadline has long since passed, and the proposed union between QCRC and CoG has not taken place. In September 2021, the classis decided to authorize its Classical Interim Committee to take legal action against QCRC, if necessary, to secure the QCRC property and other assets. Thus far no legal action has been taken. The representatives of classis and QCRC

It is apparent
that there is little
trust between
the parties.

reported to *The Banner* that the two parties continue to negotiate, but neither is willing to share specifics about those negotiations, including how often they have met and what they have talked about.

What’s at issue in this lengthy and convoluted dispute? In the ad hoc committee report to Classis Hudson, the ownership and maintenance of the property looms large. The committee contends that the present arrangements between QCRC and Covenant of Grace are “informal and tenuous,” depending heavily on a single QCRC leader, David Lowe, who does not live in the area. This, the committee alleges, “exposes the valuable QCRC properties to legal risk because the congregation does not have the necessary structures in place to carry out the responsibilities of ownership.” According to the committee, classis finds it necessary “to enforce some kind of accountability and timeline upon the discussions that have consumed the energy of classis” for now over nine years.

David Lowe, principal QCRC representative, sees it differently. Lowe believes the process has been flawed from the beginning. In a Dec. 31, 2021, communication, he said, “We believe Classis Hudson has been a stumbling block to ministry, resistant to open and honest dialogue, and has taken neither a pastoral or covenantal approach to

solutions.” In a list of “process queries,” he contends that Hudson has failed to follow church order, excluded QCRC representatives from their deliberations, appointed as council of care a church geographically and culturally distant from QCRC, and threatened to sue in civil courts, an action he believes is contrary to 1 Corinthians 6.

It is apparent that there is little trust between the parties. In September 2021 *Christianity Today* ran an article on the QCRC dispute. In it, Mary Szto alleged that the actions of the classis are “a form of anti-Asian violence.” Responding to Szto’s allegation, Colin Watson, CRC executive director, in a letter to classical stated clerks, pointed out that roughly half of the ministers in Classis Hudson are Asian.

James Lee, a Korean-American pastor of a majority-white congregation in East Islip, N.Y., and ethnic adviser to Classis Hudson, also praised the classis’ inclusiveness, noting that several New York City Asian congregations have inquired recently about joining the classis. “I love Classis Hudson. I love the colleagues I have met,” he said, seeing not much need for change.

Still, the divisions between QCRC and Classis Hudson run deep, with a long history of misunderstandings, slights, and suspicions. It’s not easy to see how it will come together. And, perhaps because of the looming possibility of litigation, neither side is willing to speak openly about what is likely to happen in the near future. For now, the talks go on. **B**



Clay Libolt served for many years as pastor of River Terrace Church in East Lansing, Mich. More recently, he has served as interim pastor for several congregations in the Pacific Northwest. He blogs at www.peripateticpastor.com.

Why Youth Don't Like New Worship Songs

I RECENTLY GAVE A TALK on popular music to a local church youth group. I decided to slip in a popular new worship song for discernment. The song sounds similar to a country song, so I thought it would spark interesting discussion about the blurring of music genres. The conversation that followed surprised me and revealed that churches might be approaching youth and worship wrongly. As the last notes faded, several students immediately voiced their displeasure with this song and those like it. Three themes to their discomfort emerged:

- 1) The music. They complained how predictable the song is musically. One youth said, "From the first note, I knew what it was going to be and that it would be the same (as other new worship songs)."
- 2) The lyrics. They hated how simple the song is lyrically. One youth sarcastically summed up in one sentence the message of most new worship songs: "I found God, I have hope, and now all my problems are gone. Yay!"
- 3) The repetition. They could not stand how often they have to endure hearing new worship songs. When I asked where they hear worship music, they exasperatedly said, "Everywhere! At home, at church, in the car with my parents."

Most high school students in the room that night made it clear that they are sick of new worship music. One youth went so far as to say, "I wish my church would sing more hymns (so I don't have to listen to this type of music)."

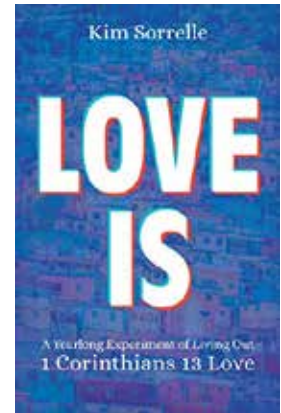
As I drove home, a big problem became clear. Many worship leaders pick new songs for Sunday mornings because they think youth like these songs and find them helpful for worship. But based on my conversation with the teens that night, albeit a small sample, I think just the opposite is true,

and their criticisms about the music, lyrics, and repetition were insightful. Here's why.

- 1) Historically, church music has adapted for worship the popular musical styles of the day. New worship music does not use musical styles youth enjoy. New worship music builds on a foundation of guitar-based country and rock and roll, while the musical taste of most youth tends toward sampling, hip-hop, and pop.
 - 2) New worship music often includes short verses, building bridges, and repeating choruses. In order to be memorable and singable, the lyrics do not dive deeply. These youth wanted worship songs that speak to their difficult life situations and emotional challenges.
 - 3) Youth are not able to choose the songs they hear in many contexts, such as at church, at home, and in the car with adults. The more they hear worship songs they don't connect with, the more frustration they feel.
- Finding worship music that connects with high school students is difficult. There aren't many worship songs that are based on samples, hip-hop, and pop. Worship songs that authentically engage with the emotions and experience of youth are rare. In fact, the worship songs that will best serve our youth might still need to be written. **B**



Micah van Dijk received a master's degree in popular music studies from the University of Glasgow and has worked for several years in the music industries as a musician, critic, and band manager.



Love Is: A Yearlong Experiment of Living Out 1 Corinthians 13 Love

By *Kim Sorrelle*

Reviewed by Ann Byle

Kim Sorrelle thought it would be fairly easy to live out the "love is" descriptions in 1 Corinthians 13 over the course of a year. She knew all about what is often called the "love chapter." She knew a lot about love herself, having seen it in action in her marriage, with her children, and through her work with an international nonprofit.

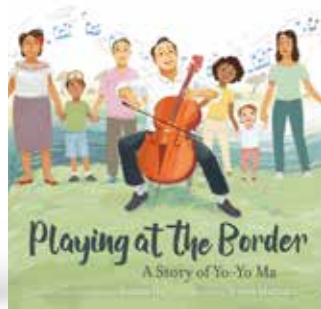
Sorrelle takes readers on a journey through 1 Corinthians 13 as she takes us to Haiti, a place she loves and has visited and worked in many times. Readers will come away challenged, amused, and delighted at Sorrelle's journey and her unique voice as she digs deep into 1 Corinthians 13. (Kregel)



Hawkeye

Reviewed by Darrell L. Delaney

Hawkeye, a streaming series from Disney+, is another spin-off of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. It takes place after the events of *Avengers: Endgame*. There are many themes in the show that caught my attention, but the most interesting aspect of *Hawkeye* is how Clint Barton has to face his dark past once again. Unlike Hawkeye, we have a God to whom we can take our embarrassing or shameful secrets as well as the pain, anger, and possible despair that lie underneath the poor choices we have made. Barton carries his guilt around with him, but we have someone who has redeemed us and to whom we can turn for comfort, friendship, and strength. (Disney +)



Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma

By Joanna Ho,
illustrated by
Teresa Martinez

Reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

In this lovely tribute to the world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, author Joanna Ho celebrates the man who was a child prodigy who memorized Bach's Cello Suites when he was 4 years old.

Lyrical and celebratory, this children's picture book narrates a well-known event in which Ma played his cello for crowds on both sides of the Rio Grande at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Illustrator Teresa Martinez's energetic, affecting artwork and Joanna Ho's sparse, inspiring text capture the passion and power of music to open hearts and unite people across human-made divisions.

Sharing this book with young children will allow Christian parents and caregivers an opportunity to rejoice in all of God's children, no matter their ethnic backgrounds or where they now live. (HarperCollins)



Indigenous People and Jesus: Making the Bible Come Alive

By Parry Stelter

Reviewed by Agnes Mastin

Christian Reformed pastor and author Parry Stelter speaks to the tension between Indigenous people who find comfort in cultural traditions, those who have abandoned those traditions, and those who look to redeem their culture for the glory of God. He encourages those who are working to redeem their culture to consult Scripture, pray for guidance, and seek godly counsel.

The author further weaves a metaphor for the cross out of the Indigenous dream catcher that filters the good from the bad and ultimately finds its meaning in Jesus.

I recommend this book for those who are struggling to find where their identity in Jesus and Indigenous culture can meet, as well as for those who intend to be allies to Indigenous Christians across Turtle Island. (Tallpine Press)

The Lowdown

My Body Is Not a Prayer

Request: Written by Amy Kenny, a Christian who is disabled, this book shows that the church is missing out on the prophetic witness and blessing of disability. (Brazos Press)

Dropping on Earth Day:

The documentary film *Polar Bear* tells the story of a new mother whose memories of her own youth prepare her to navigate motherhood in the increasingly challenging world that polar bears face today. (April 22, Disney+)

Based on the Book by

Min Jin Lee: *Pachinko*, a limited series, encompasses the hopes and dreams of four generations of a Korean immigrant family. (March 25, Apple TV+)

WW2 Fiction: In *The School for German Brides*, by Aimie K. Runyan, a young woman who is sent to a horrific "bride school" to be molded into the perfect Nazi wife finds her life forever intertwined with a young Jewish woman about to give birth. (William Morrow)

Why Does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Matter?

If Christ has not been raised, this whole enterprise that we are involved in—church, university, denominational magazine—is silly.



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

AS A UNIVERSITY PASTOR, every funeral I lead is a tragedy. This student, staff member, or professor died too young. A car accident. Suicide. Cancer. Whether 22 or 58, whether just starting out or just hitting their stride, they have died too young. They had more life to live.

I'm the one who has to somehow make sense of it all. I have to stand up and say that this life—this precious, too-short life—mattered. I have to say that God loves that person and God loves us—this God who could have prevented the death and didn't.

If Jesus has not been raised, I have nothing to say. Nothing. No one cares if this person leaves a legacy of kindness or brilliance, if their family and friends were all better for knowing the person, or if their research influenced scholars around the world. No one cares. Because the person is gone and we are sad. Deeply, deeply sad. It's wrong. It's not the way it's supposed to be. We feel that in our guts, in the tightness behind our eyes, in the weight of sorrow in every breath.

If Christ has not been raised, I have nothing to say. I have no hope to offer. If Christ has not been raised, this whole enterprise that we are involved in—church, university, denominational magazine—is silly. Jesus might have healed, fed, and taught, but none of it matters if we still die. Jesus might have made some people's lives a little better while he was here and left the rest of us with some good ideas to think about, but if he did not rise from the dead, then who cares? As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot" (*The Message*).


But that's not at all the case. Jesus did rise from the dead, and because of that, death loses. Because Jesus rose

from the dead, this person we loved will rise too. Death is not the end of that person's story, and it won't be the end of ours. That's the difference the resurrection makes.

Everything—*everything*—we do as followers of Jesus we do because of the resurrection. The resurrection is the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith—its foundation, its center, its core. Everything radiates out from this.

It's the resurrection that makes Jesus different from every other faith leader who has ever existed. It's the resurrection that makes Christianity different from every other religion that has ever existed. God the Son became human, died, and rose again—and not just to show that he could, but for us. Because we were sentenced to death. We were sentenced to hopeless funerals. We were doomed to eternal loss, sorrow, and despair. Those were the stakes.

But God said no. Because of his great love for us, Jesus took on death, hopelessness, sorrow, and despair and said, "No more." In Christ's death and resurrection, all of those things lose. They are all sentenced to an end. They are terminal, and we are not. The resurrection means that we get to live in deep hope that someday Jesus will return with a loud shout and a trumpet call, and God will raise the dead again, and he will wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4).

The resurrection of Jesus is just the beginning. Thanks be to God. 

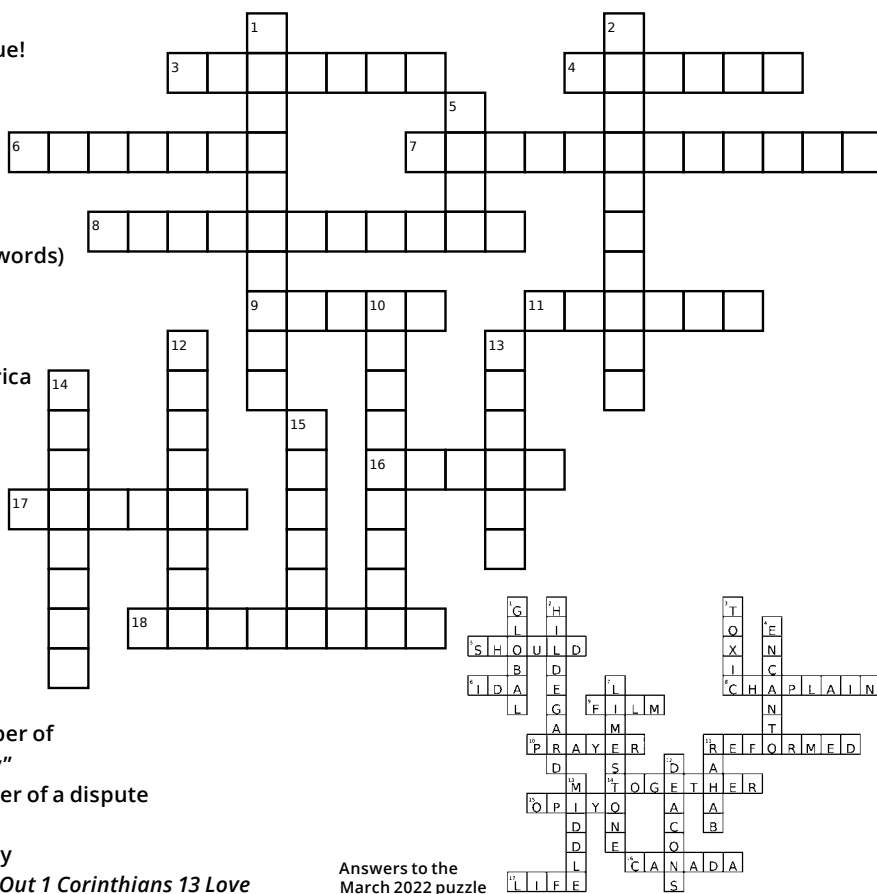
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

Down

1. Young people expect institutions to be this
2. Christ took the _____ we deserved
5. Art at _____ is a project of Fanshawe College Campus Ministry in London, Ont.
10. Thanks to COVID, we are all living into this (two words)
12. Series based on the book by Min Jin Lee
13. Henri Nouwen asked God to _____ him
14. Taking these daily helps nourish our bodies
15. _____ Island is another term for North America used by some Indigenous peoples

Across

3. First name of the Council of Delegates' nominee for general secretary
4. Ruth Padilla DeBorst is receiving the 2022 _____ Prize
6. ReFrame Ministries has ministry partners in this country
7. *The Banner's* newest series is about this topic
8. We are asked not to conform but to be _____
9. _____ Group reports an "increase in the number of pastors who are thinking about quitting ministry"
11. A church in this New York community is the center of a dispute
16. Church _____ regulates denominational life
17. Michael and Michelle both work at this university
18. Author of *Love Is: A Yearlong Experiment of Living Out 1 Corinthians 13* Love




Answers to the March 2022 puzzle


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News



DENOMINATION
Denominational Survey Opens

The annual survey for the CRCNA is now open. One survey respondent shares his experience.


[Learn More](#)



WORSHIP
A Catch of Fish

During the Calvin Symposium on Worship, John August Swanson spoke of how Luke 5's miraculous catch has inspired his art and helped him through some hard times.


[Read Story](#)



INSPIRE 2019
Windsor Welcomes You to Inspire

Ambassador Community CRC in Windsor, Ont., invites you to attend Inspire 2019 in their city. Registration is now open!

[Read Story](#)



INTERNATIONAL
Helina Yeman

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS



BOVEN, Jim and JoAnn (VanderRoest) will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 28! Their blessings include 3 children—Mike (Amy), Beth, and Dave (Beth)—and 6 grandkids. They thank God for His faithfulness to their family and many blessings over the last five decades. Greetings can be sent to 1090 S Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, IL 60126.

Obituaries

DYKSTRA, Thomas, passed away peacefully on February 10, 2022. He loved the church, music, sports, and travel. He directed the choir at Rochester Christian Reformed Church for many years, served on the school board of Rochester Christian School and the Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church. Tom is survived by his daughter Linda (Peter) Jonker of Grand Rapids, his beloved grandchildren Katherine, Patrick and Abby, and a dear cousin Meridell (Vince) Gracias, along with many loved nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his wife Lois (with whom he shared 62 years of laughter and joy) his son, Bryan and his daughter, Susan. Tom is a member at the LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

FABER, Warren T., after 89 years of life on this earth, passed away on January 31, 2022, into eternity with his Lord. He lived his life in service to his family, church and community; furthering God's kingdom in word and deed. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Verna (Veltema), children, Marcy Faber, Jim (Dawn) Faber, Melinda (Bob) Hardy, 7 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren

HOEKSTRA, Evelyn G. (Schurman), age 95, of Demotte, IN went to be with her Lord on February 2, 2022. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband of 62 years, Drewes, (Duke) Hoekstra. She is remembered as a loving mother to her four sons: Jim (Cindy) Hoekstra, Jack (Lynn) Hoekstra, Dave (Barb) Hoekstra and Don (Lisa) Hoekstra. Evelyn is also survived by 8 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

HUIZENGA, Jerry Alan, age 80, of Grand Rapids, passed away suddenly on December 4, 2021. Jerry was born and raised in Munster, Indiana. He will be lovingly remembered by his wife of 55 years, Joyce; children Mark and Kris Huizenga, Amy and Michael Luce, Theodore and Leslie Huizenga, Jacquelyn and Jon Tilburt and 14 grandchildren. He was a graduate of Calvin University with a masters from Western Michigan University. Jerry was a lifelong educator committed to serving the Godfrey-Lee School district over his 35 years. He lived out his Christian faith and leadership while serving on the Calvin Christian board, was a founding member of the Mission India Super Thrift Store and volunteered at Calvin's Car Lot. Jerry loved his church and partici-

pated in singing in the choir and serving as an elder and deacon. Jerry enjoyed working on his muck farm raising vegetables for the past 50 years. Funeral services were at LaGrave CRC with Rev. Peter Jonker and Rev. John Steingenga officiating.

POEL, Norman, age 97 of Grand Rapids, MI, entered his eternal rest on January 22, 2022. Norm was the loving father of Sue (Bill) Lemkuil, Mary (Rick) Kruis, Barb (Jeff) Anderson, son-in-law Mark (Melissa) Kauk, Rick (Nancy) Poel, Lisa (Mike) Broekhuis. He is survived by 15 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. Norm was preceded in death by his wife, Lucile (deStigter), son Randy Poel and Randy's wife JoEllen Kauk.



Partners Worldwide CEO Search

The Board of Directors is seeking the next CEO to build on our 20-year vision to end poverty so all may have life and have it abundantly.

Key Responsibilities of the CEO Include:

- Delivering our vision of ending global poverty through our mission to use business to create flourishing economic environments worldwide
- Providing inspiring leadership to our organization, its various teams, and its diverse global constituents
- Communicating our vision and mission through speaking, writing, and engaging forums and dialogues around the world
- Ensuring leadership accountability, operational excellence, and financial integrity throughout the organization and its programs
- Developing and executing a global performance plan with the leadership team
- Participating in major donor fundraising efforts and actively partnering with the Engagement Team in fund development strategies
- Developing revenue generating initiatives for sustainability

The new CEO will possess a personal and mature faith in Jesus Christ, a clear sense of calling to end poverty through business along with a passionate agreement with our Calling and Spiritual Foundations.

Please join our search by reviewing the full CEO profile here: www.partnersworldwide.org/job-opportunities/.



2022 GUIDED ITINERARIES:

ADVENTURES IN SCANDINAVIA

May 4 – May 17 | *Johannes & Lynda Witte*

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS IN TURKEY

May 23 – Jun 4 | *Dr. Jeffrey Weima*

IRELAND PAST AND PRESENT

Jun 16 – Jun 25 | *Debra Freeberg*

EUROPEAN HANDBELL FESTIVAL

Jun 18 - Jun 29 | *Deborah Rice & Keith Cole*

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

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POSTMA, Gary, 65, of Morrisburg, Ont. died peacefully on February 27, 2022, after a long illness. Loving husband of long-time Banner news editor Gayla Postma, father of Michael, Daniel (Mira) and Steven, grandpa to Sophia, Abigail and Benjamin. He was ready to meet the Lord. He will be missed by his brothers and sister, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters-in-law and many nephews and nieces, as well his family in Ukraine.

SYBESMA, Shirley (Stoepker), age 88 went to be with her Lord and Savior February 21,

2022. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren give thanks to the Lord for the long, full life of this beloved mom.



VAN ANDEL, Phyllis DenBraber, age 95, passed away peacefully to her heavenly home on December 10, 2021. She was preceded in death by her husband of 56 years, John VanAnDel, her brothers Carl (Dorothy) DenBraber

and Bob (Evie) DenBraber, and her brother-in-law Clare Wuerfel. She is survived by her sister Joann Wuerfel, her children Bob (Peg) VanAnDel, Kurt (Dorothy) Frisch, and Joe

(Muffie) VanAnDel, two grandchildren Kurt (Kayt) Frisch and Sarah Frisch (Chris Embree), two great-grandchildren Peter and Annika Frisch, many nieces and nephews, and many friends. Phyllis was born in Grand Rapids, MI to Henry and Josephine DenBraber and graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High School. In 1947, she was the first speech major to graduate from Calvin College. Phyllis had a lifelong interest in learning. She was active in organizing the CALL program, and, at an advanced age, taught a CALL program herself on the wives and mothers of four U.S. presidents. She was a patron of the arts, supporting organizations such as GRAM, Meijer Gardens, and the Calvin Alumni Choir. She sang with a strong voice in the choir of Woodlawn CRC for many years, retiring from that role at age 90. She was a beloved presence at Woodlawn CRC, both morning and evening services, for her 22 years of independent living at Raybrook (through 2018). She also cultivated lifelong interests in flower-arranging, reading, book clubs, Bible study groups, writing, and traveling, including numerous Road Scholar trips. The Celebration of Life will be held April 22, 2022 at 1 p.m. in the Chapel of Calvin University. Memorial gifts may be given to one of Phyllis's scholarships at Calvin University (the Henry VanAnDel Memorial Scholarship <https://calvin.academicworks.com/opportunities/20117> or the Phyllis DenBraber VanAnDel CAS Scholarship <https://calvin.academicworks.com/opportunities/19612>) or to Woodlawn CRC, 3190 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.



WIERINGA, Gerald "Jerry" Wieringa, age 84, of Glen Ellyn, went to be with his Lord on February 26, 2022. 450 Raintree Ct. #2K, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137. Beloved husband of Carole Wieringa, nee Boeringa; loving father of Bradley (Evelyn), the late Robert (Laurie), Pamela (Steven) Goudzwaard, Norman (Brian), Joel (Kathi), and Eric (Laura) Wieringa; cherished grandpa of 19 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren with 2 more expected this year; fond brother of the late Marilyn Swierenga, the late Donald, Garry (Barbara), the late Norman, and Judy (Paul) Eshmann; brother-in-law of Sharon (the late Ray) Rozendal, Alexander (Diane Echols) Boeringa, and Joseph (Eunice) Boeringa. Longtime member of Faith Christian Reformed Church. Memorials to Faith Christian Reformed Church, 1070 S. Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, IL 60126, are appreciated.

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Reconciling the Tension Between Healing and Curing

The better we know someone, the more we might be able to form our prayers and our support around what will bless them.



Chantal Huinink is a motivational speaker, author, and social justice advocate who serves as the coordinator of organizational and spiritual life for Christian Horizons and recently founded Faith and Wheelpower Ministries. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and a Master of Divinity and Social Work.

MANY PEOPLE'S AWARENESS that God can heal is in tension with their own experience of illness or disability. There is, however, an important difference between healing and curing. Healing relates to the restoration of humanity's relationship with God. All people require healing. Healing was and is Jesus' primary emphasis throughout the gospels. We see this when Jesus says to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven," followed by, "Pick up your mat and walk" (Mark 2:5-9). The miracle cure demonstrated God's power and that the man's healing, the restoration of his relationship with God, had taken place.

I was born with cerebral palsy, I have a visual impairment, and I am not able to walk. A campus minister once said to me, "When I first met you, I assumed that I should pray for your physical healing because of your disability, but when I got to know you better, I realized the healing you seek pertains to restoration of relationships, so that is what I pray for you." His insight highlights that different people desire healing for different reasons. The better we know someone, the more we might be able to form our prayers and our support around what will bless them.


I have been liberated from many limitations through my wheelchair and other assistive technology. I am blessed by many personal care attendants who communicate their care and God's love for me in the practical ways they support me. I am intimately connected to many members of my extended family and my church family. I have a great job and a strong sense of purpose. These represent healing for me because they make me ever mindful of God's continuous work in my life.

One reason I have not yet and might never experience a cure from cerebral palsy might be that God can do

more with me in my power wheelchair than if I was an average, walking woman. My disability often gets others' attention. It allows me to speak to them about what really matters: finding purpose in Jesus, living life abundantly, and sharing that life with others so they want to draw closer to Jesus too.

Another reason I have not experienced a cure might be that I don't really want one. If I was suffering from cancer or another life-threatening, unstable health condition, I would pray for a cure. However, I have been using a power chair since I was 2 years old. This is the only life I know, and it is a life I love.

There have been deeply spiritual moments in my life where I have imagined my body differently. In the movie *The Shack*, there is a scene where Jesus and Mac run across the water together. When I saw that I thought, "Wouldn't it be so cool if the first time I ran was with Jesus?" I resist the idea of my disability falling away when I meet Jesus because I don't think my disability is necessarily a sign of brokenness that will be cured in heaven. However, I was deeply encouraged by the pilot episode of *The Chosen*, when the leg brace of the shepherd who had difficulty walking fell away as he ran to meet baby Jesus.

One question asked in the song *I Can Only Imagine* by MercyMe is "Will I stand in your presence?" This resonates with me because I don't know if I will run toward Jesus in heaven using my legs or if I will travel toward him full throttle in my power wheelchair. Either way, I will move toward him as quickly as possible. I hope that you will do the same! 

Dear Chris

It quickly changed as right there, in the middle of the long line that was behind me, you did something that made me uncomfortable: you asked if you could pray for me.



Kelly Vander Woude is the pastor of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Fort Collins, Colo. He loves smoking all kinds of food, hanging out with his wife and kids, and trying to build things, which usually just means he has sore hands, lots of mistakes, and tons of sawdust.

I DON'T KNOW if you remember, but we met in line a while ago and struck up a conversation. You opened up that you recently lost your daughter and that her death affected you tremendously and propelled you toward Jesus. You mentioned that her passing made you realize the important things in life, and none of them were worldly. What you realized was that Jesus and his glory were now your focus. I was saddened by her death yet elated to hear of your newfound focus. Our conversation quickly moved to church and where we worshiped, and all was pleasant, good, and nice. But, Chris, it quickly changed as right there, in the middle of the long line that was behind me, you did something that made me uncomfortable: you asked if you could pray for me.


Chris, you don't know this, but I've always felt awkward with personal prayers loud enough for all to hear. And while I know that your voice was quiet and just between you, me, and God, I struggled to focus on your words as I wondered what all those in line thought about two strangers praying in public. Instead of focusing directly on your prayer, I was busy worrying about other people. And then it happened: "Next!" was called out—and you, Chris, were next! And I know you heard this because you started to wrap it up, but you did so at a pace that acknowledged your next-ness but wasn't motivated by it.

But, Chris, I wasn't only uncomfortable. I was blessed and challenged. While I'm concerned about prayer snoopers and how they feel about our prayers, none of that should be trumped by my love and dedication to God—something you clearly embody.

So thank you. Thank you for your prayer. Thank you for reminding this pastor that it's not about what others think; it's about what God thinks. Thank you for challenging me to worry first about the One above, and then the

one beside me, and lastly me. Thank you, Chris, for leading by example. Thank you, Chris, for reminding me that there are always people watching, and I want them to see Christians living out their faith and hope in action. I want strangers to know that I don't worship God just behind doors in the quiet of my home, but everywhere. That no matter where I am or to whom I am talking, if I am prompted to pray, then on my knees you will find me. Thank you for being open to being used by the Holy Spirit to bless someone else. But also I want to ask you to continue to pray for me as I stop trying to dictate what the Holy Spirit is doing and become more submissive to his movements.

Thank you, Chris. Thank you for who you are, your prayer, your challenge, and your reminder of how I need to be.

Sincerely, Kelly 

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Denominational Announcements

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U.S.) In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer—when people from different faiths are called to pray for the United States and its leaders. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 5.

The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969).

"Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow [citizens] on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958).

Colin P. Watson, Sr., Executive Director of the CRCNA

Church Positions Available

1ST CRC DEMOTTE INDIANA SEEKS FULL TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR Job description and contact information are on our website: www.1stcrcdemotte.org under the About tab.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR Appleton, Wisconsin, Covenant Christian Reformed Church is a growing, family-oriented, multi-generational congregation of over 120 regular attendees. We seek to add to our staff a full-time Associate Pastor to lead our youth ministries, organize and equip our discipleship ministries, and occasionally preach. A job description and church profile are available by contacting Mike at 920-410-1459 or email mikeivy4@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH, Full Time. Christian Reformed Church of Midland Park, NJ. Job Description and contact information is available on mprcc.org/employment

COIT COMMUNITY CHURCH in Grand Rapids is seeking a part-time pastor to serve a church that has a long history of serving the 'least of these.' Located near the Medical Mile in downtown Grand Rapids, Coit also is looking for a pastor to help bolster its ministry to bring the message of Jesus to young professionals moving into the neighborhood from the nearby hospitals, research centers and medical facilities.

FULL-TIME TEACHING PASTOR Hope Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Courtice, Ontario, is actively seeking a full-time Teach-

ing 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

HOPE CRC IN RIVERSIDE CALIFORNIA, is prayerfully seeking a Pastor to lead our congregation. We desire a pastor who is faith-centered, compassionate, engaging, has a heart for evangelism and an ability to successfully reach out to our diverse community. Our Church is located in sunny Riverside California and has the distinction of being 45 minutes away from the mountains, the desert and the ocean. Parsonage is available if desired. To learn more about us, visit our website at: <http://www.hopecommunitycrc.com/> Please email your resume or inquiries to: hopecrcsearchcommittee@gmail.com

INTERIM ASSOCIATE PASTOR Bethel CRC, Listowel, Ontario is seeking a part time Interim Associate Pastor. Request job description or submit your resume to WilB@w-u.on.ca

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.

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE (GRANDVILLE, MI) Ivanrest Church is seeking an ordained CRC or RCA minister to provide pastoral care in coordination with the Senior Pastor in this important part-time position. To learn more about this opportunity or to apply, visit www.ivanrest.org/job-openings or email applications@ivanrestcrc.org.

SONLIGHT CRC (LYNDEN, WA) SEEKS SENIOR PASTOR gifted in preaching, leadership and pastoral care of congregation. To learn more about Sonlight and the Senior Pastor position, visit <https://www.sonlightchurch.com/senior-pastor-job-opportunity>.

Church Anniversary

150 YEARS

EAST SIDE CRC By God's grace, East Side CRC in Warrensville Hts., Ohio, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Our church was organized on April 9, 1872. A celebration is being planned for Saturday, August 20, 2022.

50 YEARS

PEACE CRC of Cedar Rapids, IA will be celebrating 50 years of God's providential care on Aug. 20-21. We invite all friends, former staff, and past members to join us. For more information visit www.peacechurch-cr.org.

Birthdays

BIRTHDAY 96 YEARS

NAOMI ALLSPACH of 410 4th St. Parkersburg, Iowa celebrated her 96th birthday Mar 26, 2022. She taught Christian Schools in Iowa for many years.

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

AGNES HULS (VANDERSTELT) of Chatham, Ontario celebrated her 90th birthday on March 6, 2022. We thank God for His faithfulness and for Agnes' strong faith. Children: Charles Huls, Janette Aukema and Albertena & Lou Praamsma and 7 grandchildren. Congrats can be sent to Agnes Huls at 7 Brown Crescent, Chatham, ON, Canada N7M 5E5



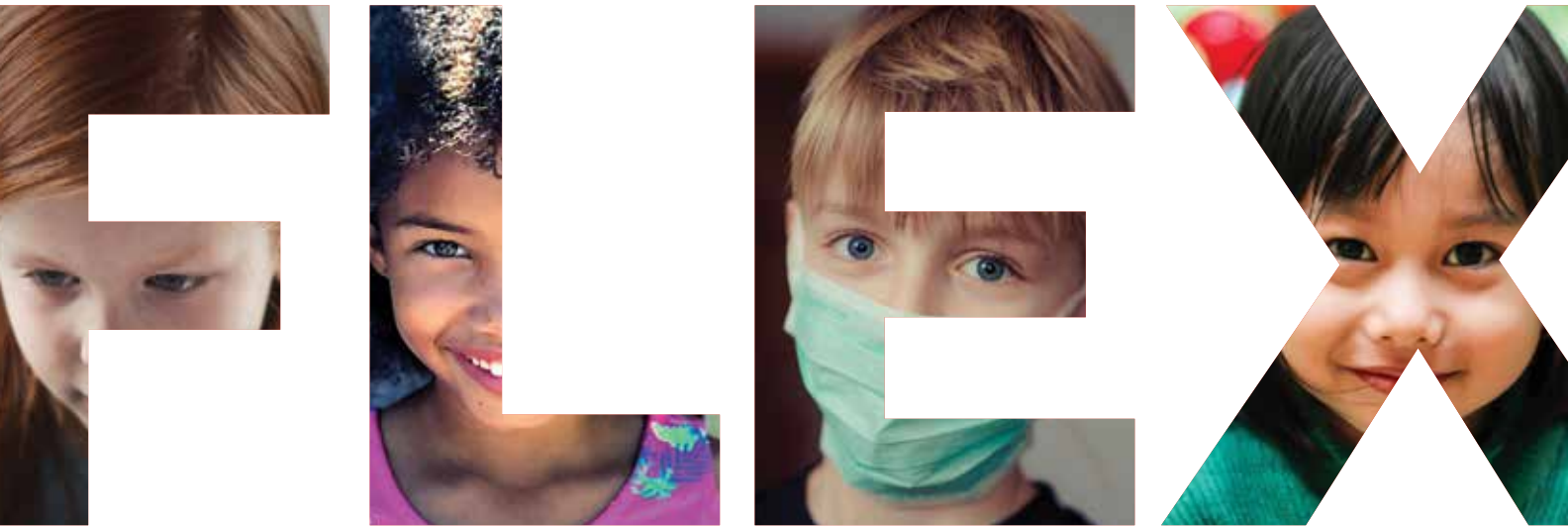
WILMA GRASMAN celebrated 90 years of God's faithfulness on January 28. She was honored with a family gathering and a multitude of well wishes from her church, family and friends.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS

VERWOERD, Walter & Sylvia. April 6 1957-2022. Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path. John & Pat Verwoerd, Kelowna, BC Debbie VanStarkenber, Pembroke, Ont Rick Verwoerd, Kelowna, BC Bert & Cindy VandeRiet, Neerlandia, AB 15 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild.

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