

BANNER

September 2009 | www.thebanner.org

¹⁸ Oil, Planks, Tax Collectors,
and Tolerance

³⁸ Jesus Christ's Vital Society

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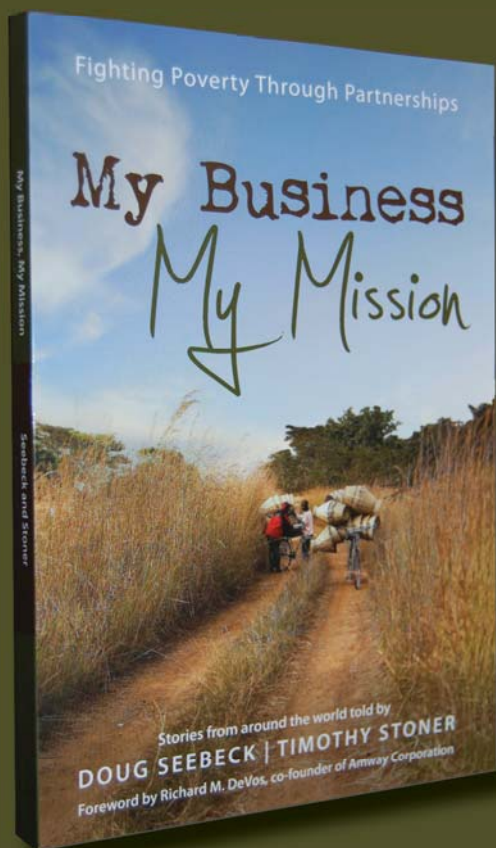
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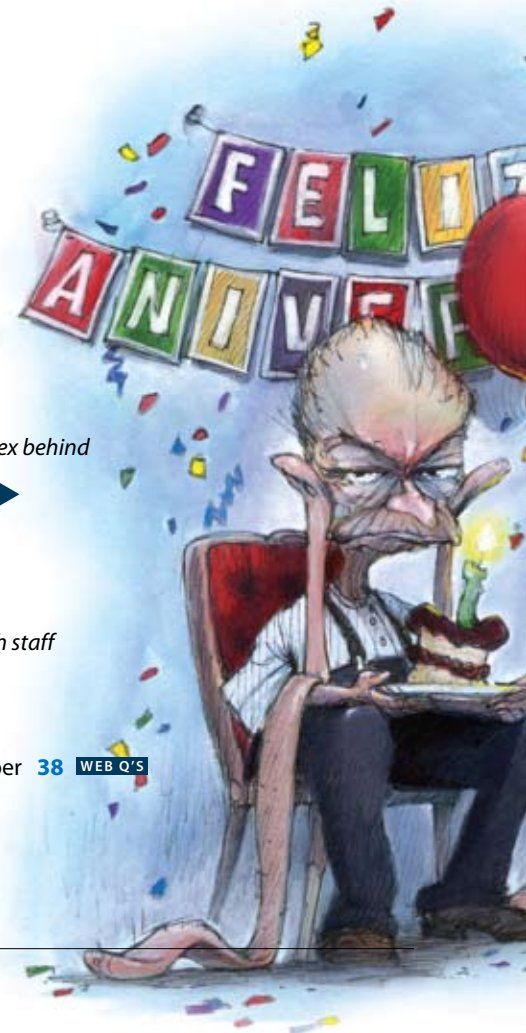
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But he wouldn't dream of leaving it.*

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So What Is *The Banner*?

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS *THE BANNER*?

After 143 years of uninterrupted publishing, you'd think we would have figured that out by now! But in an active church within a rapidly shifting cultural context, it's important to ask that "dumb" question now and again.

What is *The Banner*? According to our masthead, it's "The Magazine of the Christian Reformed Church." It's the official publication of the CRC, directly accountable to synod (the denomination's annual leadership meeting), that comes into your home as a "member benefit." We pray that most of you *do* actually find it a benefit! Thanks so much, by the way, to all of you who support this publication through your ministry share contributions and to those who again responded so generously to our one and only yearly donation request.

For decades synod has given *The Banner* a fourfold mandate: to inform, inspire, educate, and challenge the members of the CRC. (It's usually that fourth part of our ministry that gets us into trouble with some of our readers.)

A number of years ago *The Banner* added an online presence (www.thebanner.org) that mirrors much of the content from each issue in text and audio form. A while back we added "Bob's Blog," allowing readers to interact with our editor. Through reader contributions it has informed, inspired, educated, and challenged many of us, especially the editor himself!

Presently the *Banner* staff is seriously contemplating expanding our online presence. Electrons are cheap these days. And the next generation of *Banner* readers expects to find us online and have opportunities to interact with our content.

It's those fresh possibilities that make us ask whether *The Banner* is just a print magazine or whether it can be more than that.

We dream of having our readers provide much more content than we could ever host in the print *Banner*. For example, readers might someday post

- media reviews on the latest movies, television programs, books, CDs, and whatnot;
- discussion of our feature articles, including conversations with authors(s) who would value such interaction;
- links to related resources for those who want to dig deeper.

Beyond that we want to establish a presence on such sites as *Facebook* and *Twitter* to widen our reach and invite others into our conversations.

So is *The Banner* a print mag, and should it remain so for decades to come? We believe the answer is yes—print as a medium won't disappear anytime soon. It makes its own unique contribution: carefully selected, crafted, edited, and illustrated fare. But *The Banner* could be, and should be, more.

When we began the every household *Banner*, we laid out the vision that it would be "the kitchen table of the CRC"—the place where we gather together for family conversations that are edifying, frank, open, fun, and that speak the truth in love.

The Web now lets us add some new leaves to our table, allowing us to expand our conversation. ■

The next generation of readers expects opportunities to interact with content online.



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Songs in the Night, Songs in the Day

Lately I've begun to notice a pattern in my life. It's one that I'm excited about and increasingly anticipate. Why? Because God is its originator, and it reveals his character to me.

It's not a pattern in nature that reveals God as "the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them" (Ps. 146:6), even though that is who God is. Neither is it a pattern that reveals him as Mother (Isa. 49:15), Father (Luke 15:11-32), Housewife (Luke 15:8-10), Visitor (Genesis 18), or Host (Luke 14:16-24)—though those are all dimensions of God's character.

Rather, through fragments of songs given to me, sometimes in the night, sometimes in the day, I've met God the Song-Giver.

Long ago, Elihu, one of Job's acquaintances, acknowledged that God gives songs in the night (Job 35:10). That's nothing new; God has been doing it for centuries. It just took me a long time to notice. Once I did, I began to record in my journal the song-gifts and the circumstances surrounding them.

Allow me to share a few of them.

This past summer while camping, I was worrying about one of my adult children. As I sat on a huge rock overlooking a lake, I cried out to God for my child. While I prayed, the Song-Giver sang fragments of a long-forgotten baptismal hymn into my mind, encouraging me not to be anxious: "We dare your steadfast word to prove. . . . And visit us in grace today. . . . O keep and help them by your power in every hard and trying hour."

Those lines were all I could recall from a song I sung often as a child at baptisms, but hadn't sung in years. I repeated the phrases as I walked back to the campsite, recognizing them for what they were: a gift. I jotted the words down, and back at home I discovered that they were from "O God, Great Father, Lord and King" (*Psalter Hymnal*, no. 274).

The Song-Giver also used a neighbor's bagpipes to sing his comfort into my heart. Two days after the death of Harry, a dear mentor of mine, "Amazing Grace" floated across the street from Kelly's bagpipes into our home. The words that entered my mind were not those of the first verse, which speak of being lost and then found; nor the words of the second verse, which speak of fears being relieved; nor the words of the third verse, which speak of God's promised good to us.

The words of the fourth verse came through loudly and clearly: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home" (*PH*, no. 462). The words comforted me with the knowledge that my friend Harry had finally arrived home after a long, difficult journey, and that I will too, someday.

In the past when I've taken on the challenge of a new writing project, I've often been overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy. Then the Song-Giver has spurred me on to accept the challenge he has placed before me. Often he has brought this line from "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" to my mind: "Ponder anew what the Almighty can do as with his love he befriends you" (*PH*, no. 253). As I ponder the guiding, embracing friendship of my Lord, I feel reassured that I can take on any task he assigns to me.

Years ago when phrases from songs flitted through my mind, I didn't pay attention. Now I do. How can I ignore them when I know that God—our encouraging, compassionate, and challenging Song-Giver—is singing them for his glory and my benefit? ■



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer and a member of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Listen
carefully . . .
with the ear of
your heart.

— SAINT BENEDICT

A Note from Afghanistan

Jesus had a perfect opportunity to push a nonviolent agenda, but he didn't.



WHILE I AGREE with Rev. Berghoef's appropriate frustration over the July 4 church announcement calling for victory with no mention of peace ("Reflection for Independence Day," June 2009), I do not agree with his call for nonviolence.

I write from Afghanistan, where I am serving a 12-month deployment—training, advising, and fighting alongside the Afghan National Army as they promote peace through security in this war-torn land. Like Berghoef, I, too, have read and been thoroughly challenged by authors Shaine Claiborne and Chris Haw—by their courage and passion for the gospel of Christ lived out.

However, I believe the nonviolence movement is an overreaction to the religious conservative right. Yes, it's frustrating that the church has not been the voice of our Savior's call for peace and justice. Yes, it's frustrating that our identity as "church" is often more loyal to our citizenship in earthly nations than to the kingdom of heaven. But let's not miss out on becoming an empowered community that can rise above those barriers.

Let me use Korea as an example to explain my point. If you visit the Korean

peninsula, please don't talk to an 80-year-old South Korean woman about nonviolence. While that woman knows firsthand the absolute tyranny and horror of warfare, she also knows that the sacrifices of a generation of Koreans, Americans, and their allies, fighting an incredibly violent war, brought peace to her nation.

When you witness how people in North Korea continue to suffer while people in South Korea thrive, you cannot help but be grateful for the nations that sacrificed violently in the cause of Korean freedom.

My point here is that the plea for national nonviolence does not stand up to the test of history. Yes, there are countless examples of misused violence, but there are too many examples of violence used to obtain peace and justice for us to justify abandonment of the national use of violent force.

On the other hand, does the church in North Korea still exist and, in some cases, flourish? Yes, it does. And to the south, have many been infected with the greed of capitalism? Yes, without a doubt. But the church is bigger than communism. The church is bigger than democracy. It's bigger than human freedoms. It's countercultural. It's organic. It transcends national borders. The church doesn't need democracy. The church is the church, and a nation is a nation. Nations fight wars. Churches do not.

Yes, Romans 12 says, "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath. . . ." The church should not be about taking revenge, but maybe there is a time for a nation to do so. The error would be when the church takes on the identity and the mission of the nation, as did the church Berghoef mentions in the beginning of his article.

In Matthew 8, when Jesus healed the servant of a Roman army commander, he had a perfect opportunity to push a nonviolent agenda, but he didn't. He lauded the centurion's humility and faith. I think that's pretty significant. Perhaps Jesus needed that centurion, someone who could live out the message of Christ on the thin line of war and terrorism. Someone who could walk amid the fog, confusion, and horror of war with wisdom, while leading his soldiers to do the same.

It's time for the church to be bigger than the community that wants victory more than peace, but it's also time for the church to be bigger than nonviolence and pacifism. It's time to be a church that calls its people to vocations that engage the world in which we live. ■



Mark Hamstra is a captain in the U.S. Army, currently stationed in Kandahar, Afghanistan. He grew up in the CRC in the Chicago area.

LETTERS



Promoting Peace

It was good to read Rev. Brian Berghoef's "Reflection for Independence Day" (June 2009). Berghoef raises important questions about our patriotic observances and how our casual acceptance of war and violence in the campaign against terror are contrary to Christ's teachings.

There is, of course, a place for a moderate defense of life and property, but we have gone far beyond that into a Rome-like international posture of power and dominance.

We have "nationalized" our Christianity and forgotten (or ignored) Jesus' teachings on love and peace and a kingdom that "is not of this world." That nationalism has co-opted our faith so that we no longer detect the fundamental difference between the two.

—George De Vries Jr.
Orange City, Iowa

I had been wondering these years, Where are the prophets in the CRC?

Thank you.

—Jake Prins
Grand Rapids, Mich.

I was incredibly surprised and dismayed that *The Banner* would print such a skewed line of thinking. Rev. Berghoef asks, "Is our confidence for well-being based on our military might?" No, it is not, which is why we pray to God for the safety of our soldiers

and for men and women of any country who are killed as bystanders to war.

"Shouldn't our prayers go out for peace rather than victory (which equals peace at the cost of more deaths)?" Yes and no. Peace can sometimes be achieved only through victory. Ask those who suffered slavery but were freed through the Civil War. Ask those who suffered under Hitler but were liberated by soldiers with weapons. Do we pray for peace? Yes, but we also sometimes must pray for victory.

—Rose Frasier
Grand Rapids, Mich.

I appreciated this article and "The Presence of Christ in a War Zone" by Rev. Gordon Terpstra, also in the June *Banner*. Iraq is no longer a front-page story. I believe that it is important for the CRC to remember that currently there are more than 2 million Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. Among them is a high percentage of Iraqi Christians. Before the 2003 American invasion, Iraq had between 800,000 to 1 million Christians. The invasion has been a disaster for the Iraqi Christian church. For a long time now, I have encouraged the CRC to at least offer a cup of cold water to the displaced Iraqi civilians, which includes a good percentage of Iraqi Christians. It is the least that we can do, and it is what Jesus would have us do.

—Neal Bierling
Ada, Mich.

Thank you. We plan to run a special report on the Iraqi church in the next few months.

—Editor

Youths at Synod

The editorial "More Bounce in Our Step" (July 2009) encourages the Christian Reformed Church to turn youth observers into youth advisers at synod. I agree wholeheartedly! However, when they reach age 24 and perhaps are serving as deacons in their home churches, who will

tell them they are no longer welcome at synod? When will this discrimination be dealt with? When will the CRC properly recognize the importance of this vast work of mercy and its essential influence in synodical decision making? (And how will the average age of representatives to synod ever drop below age 60?)

—Greta Luimes
Stittsville, Ontario

I totally agree with you that our younger members need to be given the opportunity to speak and be heard at synod (and in many of our other ministries as well). I'm hoping this can move forward quickly rather than take years to provide, as that is one of the concerns of our younger folks—that the CRC moves much too slowly and doesn't always respond toward positive changes very quickly, while the world and other parts of the church are changing and adapting much more rapidly.

—Cal Jen
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Belhar

Our first and greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and, second, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31). If Christians won't obey these commands, what audacity makes some feel that the manmade doctrine of the Belhar Confession is superior and thus more likely to be honored and obeyed?

—Janet Dunning
Kentwood, Mich.

Since we are considering the adoption of a new confession (the Belhar), it seems good to mention the Accra Confession adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Since it has been adopted by the WARC, might it not be a good time to get on board?

—William (Bill) Steele
Toronto, Ontario

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Nursery Kidnapping Highlights Need for Safe Churches

A child abduction at a Kentwood, Mich., church highlights the need for churches to have comprehensive child-safety policies and procedures, said Beth Swagman, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Safe Church office.

On June 21, a 19-year-old woman posed as a nursery volunteer at Cutlerville (Mich.) East Christian Reformed Church, but then left suddenly. Parents there became suspicious and called police.

According to police, the woman subsequently abducted an 11-month-old child at Kentwood Community Church, where she is a registered nursery volunteer. The child was found unharmed at the suspect's home.

"The story revealed the importance of every church having a comprehensive child-safety policy," Swagman said. "It worked as it should at Cutlerville East."

Ensuring a Safe Nursery

- Write and enforce a policy regarding the care of children, indicating who may serve as volunteers.
- Assign additional volunteers if using the bathroom requires a child to leave the nursery.
- Use a practical physical process to identify a child with his or her parents, such as matching tags, pagers, or photos.
- Obtained signed releases from parents to allow siblings or grandparents to pick up a child from nursery.
- A church nursery coordinator should assign volunteers to each nursery and approve all substitutes. All nursery workers should be known by the nursery coordinator.
- Install video cameras to record who enters and leaves the nursery or the church.
- Use cell phones, walkie-talkies, or a panic button to alert ushers or church officials if there is a problem in the nursery.
- Lock outside doors near the nursery during the church service.

For more resources on nursery safety, visit www.thebanner.org and scroll down to the September news stories for the appropriate links.

Jerry DeRuiter, executive pastor of Kentwood Community, said the experience was a painful learning process. "Churches are not immune to this kind of activity, because we all come to

churches with messy lives," said DeRuiter.

DeRuiter emphasized that a church's entire congregation must work together to ensure that a safe environment exists for chil-

Cadet Counselors Converge in Iowa

One hundred eighty Calvinist Cadet Corps counselors, spouses, and children converged on West Des Moines, Iowa, for the 2009 Calvinist Cadet Corps Convention.

Calvinist Cadets is the ministry to boys offered in most Christian Reformed churches.

The men spent a large portion of the event in workshops, where they learned about new merit badges, various activities suited for the Cadet program or their personal lives, and current social and cultural issues.

Wayne Mersbergen, a Cadet leader and an organizer of the convention, said personal interaction was an important aspect of the gathering.

"We can pray and laugh with each other as we catch up on the happenings in our lives," he said. "Counselors can share with each other things that are happening in their Cadet clubs."

—Paul Delger



ROBERT DEJONGE

dren. "There were some people who knew what was going on in [the suspect's] life," DeRuiter said. "We're working on getting people in the congregation to be OK with sharing information, and we will handle that information in an appropriate manner. That could prevent an incident from happening."

Swagman said that although screening volunteers is important, supervision and awareness are even more important.

"As far as nursery is concerned, the issue is rarely screening," Swagman said. "The key to a successful nursery is adequate supervision." Other than the parents, she added, "no one leaves the nursery with a child, except in an emergency situation." —*Christian Bell*

Vancouver Church Brings Playground to Life

On one recent Sunday afternoon, children climbed, swung, and slid on two colorful and strong playground structures in East Vancouver, British Columbia.

Two days earlier, before it was filled with volunteers, the playground was a vacant lot in one of Vancouver's most diverse and economically impoverished neighborhoods.

The playground is a stone's throw from First Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver. A community initiative called MOBY (My Own Back Yard) and MOSAIC, an adjacent children's center, spearheaded the project.



EDWARD WESTERHUIS

Vancouver's First CRC helped build a new playground directly below the Skytrain, part of the city's public transit system.

Rev. Julia Prins-Vanderveen, co-pastor of First CRC, served on the planning committee that worked out designs, applied for grants, and raised funds.

"I am most amazed by how a number of our neighbors who were previously anti-church or really in the dark about what kind

of people Christians are, made comments about how great they thought it was that we became involved," she said.

Rebecca Bokma, 21, a member of First CRC, was one of the construction volunteers. "I see this playground as the redemption of land in this neighborhood, and I believe God is pleased with the efforts of those who worked so hard to see this project through," she said.

—*Jenny de Groot*

Miami Church Fights Domestic Violence



Participants in the domestic-violence training at Vida Nueva CRC show their certificates of completion.

an open house information night led by a local expert on domestic violence. About 70 people attended, and several learned that their home life would be considered a domestic-violence situation.

"They had the feeling that something was wrong, but they were not sure what," said Paprocky. "[I grew] up in an environment where domestic violence was viewed as normal. I want to be part of educating people and telling them that this is not OK."

The support group is held on Wednesday nights for about an hour.

The church also offers a group that introduces Christian beliefs as a 12-step program to better one's life.

—*Roxanne Van Farowe*

A survey of neighborhood needs prompted a Miami Lakes, Fla., congregation to start a domestic-violence support group.

"As Hispanics, we're brought up that men are supposed to be macho, and [domestic violence] is more acceptable than in American culture," said Blanca Paprocky, a member of Vida Nueva Christian Reformed Church and a volunteer with the support group.

A congregation of just 19 families, Vida Nueva held

Learning from Life on the Street

A night spent sleeping on the street in a cardboard box helped sensitize 15 students to the issues of hunger and homelessness.

The students, from Shalom Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, S.D., went on a juice fast and constructed a cardboard village where they would spend the night. According to youth director T.J. Link, the hard ground, passing traffic, and even a disgruntled individual throwing stones in the middle of the night added to the experience.

"It went well," said Link. "We have everything, and [we] take it for granted."

—*Sherry Kooiker*

Christian Thompson, Conner Thompson, Shane Schaap, and Mitch Dorhout construct their cardboard sleeping quarters.



CRCNEWS

CALLS ACCEPTED

From Bethel CRC, Brockville, Ontario, to **Rev. Jacob (Jack) Van de Hoef** of First CRC, Guelph, Ontario.

From Green Meadow CRC, Helena, Mont., to Ministry Associate **Don Jabaay** of Bravo Community CRC, Fennville, Mich.

From Grace CRC, Cobourg, Ontario, to **Rev. John D. Suk**, formerly president of the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.



Cadets from Oak Lawn and Burbank, Ill., help clean up the Wolfe Wildlife Refuge.

Illinois Cadets Take Out the Garbage

Cadets from two Illinois Christian Reformed churches hauled away trucks full of garbage during their annual cleanup of the Wolfe Wildlife Refuge on Stony Creek in Oak Lawn, Ill. It was part of earning their ecology merit badge.

Wading in the water and searching along the riverbank, the boys and their leaders found all sorts of metal, plastic, paper, and cloth garbage that had been dumped there.

The annual spring cleanup is organized by "Friends of the Chicago River." The wetland is home to 100 species of birds, raccoons, frogs, and other wildlife.

The Cadets belong to a club that includes Calvin CRC in Oak Lawn, Ill., and Immanuel CRC in Burbank, Ill.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

Three Michigan Cadets Earn Top Honor

Dustin Attema, Josh Feikema, and Ben Attema have earned the top honor of the Calvinist Cadet Corps—the Servant Leader Award. All three are members of North Blendon CRC in Hudsonville, Mich.

Calvinist Cadets is the boys' club ministry offered in most Christian Reformed churches. The Servant Leader Award was established in 2000, but prior to this year Chad Huisman of Kelloggville CRC in Kentwood, Mich., was the only person to have earned it.

To attain the award, a Cadet must progress through all the

ranks, from Recruit to Advanced Guide, earning at least 11 merit badges and six of the more difficult guide trails. Among other requirements, they must also participate in a Christian service project of at least five days.

Dustin Attema worked with a group to build a house in Tecate, Mexico. Feikema, who is also an Eagle Scout, spent two weeks in

Dustin Attema, Ben Attema, Josh Feikema

Quito, Ecuador, helping to construct a ministry building for a local church. Ben Attema has worked in inner-city Chicago for the past seven years.

—Calvinist Cadets



Bike Trip Begets After School Club

While cycling on the Christian Reformed Church's Sea to Sea 2008 bike tour, Jim Beezhold was inspired by two urban ministries he visited that serve youths in Indiana and New Jersey.

That got him thinking about the children living on the Rincon Indian Reservation in North San Diego near his home and about using his teaching experience "to help students with their homework in a community where English is a second language and ending the cycle of poverty is an ongoing problem."

The San Marcos Valley After School Club, which arose from Beezhold's vision, began with 10 to 12 elementary students and one high school student. They met in a dirt clearing surrounded by trailer homes, but moved to the Pauma Valley Community Center when the weather turned cooler. Enrollment continues to increase.

The program received a grant for the purchase of materials and equipment from the funds raised by the Sea to Sea tour. With the assistance of a tutor from the program, a senior at a local high school also applied for and received a scholarship to attend a local community college.

"This should prove to be a real incentive and [the] hand up others need to avoid dropping out of the educational process," said Beezhold.

—Heidi Wicker



The San Marcos Valley After School Club

JIM BEEZHOLD

Leadership Exchange Director Appointed

Chris Pullenayegem has been appointed as the first director of the Christian Reformed Church's new Leadership Exchange. His appointment was approved by the executive committee of the denomination's Board of Trustees.

In celebration of the CRC's 150th anniversary, Synod 2007 approved the Leadership Exchange. Its purpose is to help prepare leaders by coordinating leadership training resources offered by other institutions and to supplement such training resources as needed.

Pullenayegem said the exchange will offer training resources from inside the CRC and perhaps the business, industrial, and educational worlds as well.

"I am deeply honored to work for the CRC and to work in this capacity," said Pullenayegem, 52. "I hope to leave a legacy of leadership."

The new director grew up in the Sri Lanka Reformed Church and said he learned a great deal about leadership and other things from CRC missionaries. "This is an investment by the CRC that has, in essence, come home," he said.

Pullenayegem and his family are members of Friendship Community CRC in Toronto.

—CRC Communications

Chris Pullenayegem, director of the CRC's new Leadership Exchange



Navajo Leaders Share Gospel on Horseback



Riders participate in the Saddle-Up 2009 Trail Ride near Beklabito, New Mexico.

JACK KLUMPENHOWER

The gospel is spreading on horseback across the Navajo Nation's high desert in New Mexico and Arizona.

Leaders in the region's Christian Reformed churches have organized an annual trail ride to meet people where they live and reach out to fellow horse enthusiasts.

Saddling up his horse at the start of this year's two-day outing, rider Tom Chee explains that in ranch country a pastor with spurs beats one in a necktie.

"This is partly Christian fellowship," Chee says, "but it's also an effort to introduce Christ to people other than by saying, 'Come to our church.'"

As if on cue, a local man walks up to CRC Home Missions Regional Team Leader Rev. Stanley Jim to ask what's happening. They speak briefly in the Navajo language, and after hearing the explanation the man seems to approve.

Jim says, "I told him we do this because we enjoy God's creation. We enjoy each other's company. We pray for the land, and we pray for our communities."

This year's ride went from Beklabito to Sanostee, N.M., a distance of about 60 miles (96 km). Christian Reformed congregations in Red Valley, Ariz., and in Sanostee and Tohatchi, N.M., provided meals and sleeping space along the trail. Along the way, this year's riders stopped for lunch at a sheep camp, where they prayed for the people and their animals. Many of the 30 or so riders were Christian Reformed believers or other Christians, but others had no church background.

Stanley Charley of Bis Dootl'izh Deez'áhi Fellowship CRC in Newcomb, N.M., said he likes the mix of believers and unbelievers. He organized the first ride 7 years ago, with the goal of reaching people who wouldn't ordinarily visit a church.

—Jack Klumpenhower

Indiana Church Hosts Parking Lot Parties



JOHN KOSTELYK

Having fun at Hammond CRC's parking lot party

Every Wednesday night in July the parking lot of Hammond (Ind.) Christian Reformed Church jumped with activity.

Three years ago the church switched from offering traditional vacation Bible school to parking lot parties, a move that Rev. John Kostelyk said has been positive. "It's a great first step for families to get to know people in the church in a nonthreatening way," he said. One family has since joined the church, and others are regular visitors as a result of the parties.

Each week's party follows a different theme, with a Bible lesson or skit presenting the gospel after the activities. Activities have included an inflatable moonwalk, pop-bottle rockets, water games, and a petting zoo.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

CHRIS MEEHAN

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John H. Stek

1925-2009

Rev. John Henry Stek, pastor, Bible scholar and translator, meticulous exegete, diligent professor, and role model for a generation of seminary students, died June 6.

Stek entered the gospel ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in 1955. He served one congregation in Minnesota before being appointed by Synod 1961 as professor of Old Testament studies at Calvin Theological Seminary, where he remained until his retirement in 1991.

Stek was a soft-spoken, somewhat introverted scholar, godly and sincere, beloved by students and colleagues alike. He was widely respected for his Bible knowledge and his exegetical skills.

He was an acknowledged leader among evangelical Bible translators. Much of his scholarly energy was focused on the New International Version (NIV) Bible translation, published in 1978, and the Today's New International Version (TNIV), published in 2003.

Stek is survived by his wife, Nadine, and by their four children and spouses, 16 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

—*Louis M. Tamminga*

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Stek, please see www.thebanner.org. In addition to being posted online, further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.



WILLIAM REITSMA

New Jersey Churches Offer Immigration Help

The Community Diaconal Network of Northern New Jersey, a partnership of six Christian Reformed churches, sponsored a free immigration forum at Unity Christian Reformed Church in Prospect Park, N.J.

Immigration lawyer David Nachman led the discussion, highlighting the issues important to citizenship and immigration. He emphasized the importance of providing reputable references and stated that churches and communities can provide useful help in the process.

Immigrants from Jordan, Honduras, Guatemala, The Netherlands, India, and Nicaragua attended the forum and were able to question Nachman and other attorneys about their specific situations after the presentation.

One woman, who took in a South American child 12 years ago to help her get access to treatment for severe burns, said, "We have been trying to get

legal status for this young woman for two years. It is so confusing, expensive, and frustrating. Thank you for doing this for us."

The Diaconal Network was assisted by Al Santino and the Northeast Community Transformation organization. Nachman and Associates will also lead citi-

Tamara, Keyla, Christy, Maya, Felix, and Jackie were some of the participants in the New Jersey immigration forum.

zenship classes in the fall using a government grant they received for immigration education.

—*Calvin Hulstein*

Running for Ugandan Wells in New Jersey

Rev. Craig Broek, pastor of Ridgewood (N.J.) Christian Reformed Church, and Bruce Bohuny, also from Ridgewood, recently competed in a sprint triathlon that raised \$3,300 for wells in Uganda through Touch the World Ministries.

The sprint triathlon, which consists of a one-half mile swim, a 17-mile bike ride, and a 5-mile run, is a mini version of the Olympic triathlon.

"I love testing the limits of these incredible machines God gave us," said Bohuny. "Working for a great cause helps me. I feel obligated to perform better knowing that people are sponsoring me."

—*Calvin Hulstein*

Rev. Craig Broek at the finish line of a sprint triathlon



Getting Down and Dirty in Indiana

Teens and adults from six Christian Reformed churches in the Chicago area recently got “down and dirty” in Gary, Ind. They were there to help homeowners clean up moldy messes resulting from flooding in 2008.

The group of 23 mucked out and gutted five homes in one day. The volunteers came from Hyde Park CRC and Pullman CRC in Chicago, Orland Park (Ill.) CRC, Calvin CRC (Oak Lawn, Ill.), Bridge Community CRC (Frankfort, Ill.), and First CRC (South Holland, Ill.).

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung



Part of the team from the Chicago area that helped clean up in Gary, Ind., after flooding.

LOUIS OUVREKERK

CRC Authors Win Awards

Two Christian Reformed writers were recently recognized at the Word Guild Canadian Christian Writing Awards 2009.

Robert VanderVennen, a member of Grace CRC in Scarborough, Ontario, won an Award of Merit (second place) in the Leadership/Theoretical category for his book *A University for the People: A History of the Institute for Christian Studies*.

Rev. Peter Slofstra, pastor of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice, Ontario, received an Award of Merit for *In Tandem: A Sea to Sea Cycling Odyssey*, in the Independently Published Nonfiction category.

Slofstra’s book is an adventure narrative about the CRC’s 2005 Canadian Sea to Sea bike tour.

For ordering information for both books, please see the September *Banner* at www.thebanner.org and click on the link “CRC Authors Win Awards.”

—Sophie Vandenberg



Philippines candlelit AIDS ribbon.

Filipino Teens Embrace AIDS

In June, teens from the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (CRCP) held a candlelight vigil as part of a weekend workshop to help them become part of the solution to the global AIDS crisis. The group is part of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee’s global iEmbrace AIDS youth campaign.

Ontario Church Holds Prayer Service for Troops

Peace and safety was on the minds of many people in Whitby, Ontario, when Hebron Christian Reformed Church hosted a community prayer service for troops around the world, particularly those serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

About 70 people spent an evening praying together for the military, their families, and for governments and countries. They also lit candles and listened to the personal stories of others.

Paul and Jacqueline Mack, whose son serves as a chaplain in Afghanistan, spoke from the parents’ perspective. Christine Caswell shared her experience of losing a son in combat.

Joey Buwalda, a member of Hebron CRC, said, “God’s sustaining love was evident from both speakers, and their honest reflections enabled the attendees to pray with informed empathy.”

—Brenda Visser



(above) Paul and Jacqueline Mack shared about having a son serving in Afghanistan at a recent prayer service in Whitby, Ontario.

(right) Christine Caswell shared her story of losing a son in combat in Afghanistan.



Homosexuality Hot Topic for Churches Worldwide

Issues surrounding ordination and even membership of gay persons in churches continue to dominate the agenda of many denominations.

In the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), a decision to ban discussion about ordination of gay clergy for two years, as an attempt to avoid a split in the denomination, is being criticized by both those for and against such ordinations. The church formed a commission that will report in two years.

The Church of Sweden (Lutheran) elected a bishop in Stockholm who is the first person in that church to live in a same-sex partnership that has received a church blessing. Lutherans worldwide hold different views about the ordination of homosexuals and blessings for same-sex relationships.

In June, a British legal tribunal ruled that Roman Catholic and other adoption charities must accept same-sex couples as

adoptive parents or risk going out of business. The decision means that some agencies, including the respected Catholic Care charity, will have to choose between their religious principles or abandoning their adoption services.

The Catholic Diocese of Leeds, England, said in a statement that "it seems likely that the charities will need to close their adoption services."

In the United States, the Episcopal dioceses of Minnesota and Los Angeles both nominated gay and lesbian priests. The nominations come just weeks after the Episcopal Church lifted a *de facto* ban on openly gay bishops.

The Episcopal Church is the American branch of the Anglican Communion, the world's third-largest body of Christians. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion, warned that the Episcopal Church is out of step with other Anglicans and may have to take a secondary role in the communion.

Since gay bishop V. Gene Robinson was elected in 2003 in New Hampshire, numerous Anglican parishes and four U.S. dio-

ceses have broken ties with the Episcopal Church, and legal battles over property are making their way through the courts.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) left in place wording that calls for its officers to live in "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman or chastity in singleness." This language effectively bars non-celibate gays from becoming ministers or elders.

The General Assembly of the PCUSA had proposed that presbyteries have a local option to ordain gays and lesbians to ministry, but it failed to get the approval of a majority of presbyteries as required in that denomination.

United Methodists (UMC) declined to open church membership to all Christians regardless of sexual orientation. A proposed amendment by the UMC's General Conference to open membership failed to gain support from two-thirds of the denomination's annual conferences, as required by church law. The UMC has 8 million members in the U.S. and about 3.5 million more in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

(REC, RNS, ENI)



Katrina Relief Groups Say Work Is Half Finished

A consortium of Hurricane Katrina relief groups say they are approaching the \$25 million mark in money, muscle, and material donated to about 1,000 families around New Orleans.

Even so, they estimate the region's recovery is only at the halfway point, at best.

An accurate calculation of the total private relief figure is largely unknowable, some relief managers say.

But \$25 million is the value of volunteer aid, materials, and donations the consortium believes it has supplied to about 1,000 families, said Tom Costanza, board chair of the consortium called the Greater New Orleans Disaster Recovery Partnership.

The \$25 million is considered a small fraction of the total outpouring of private aid that flowed, and still flows, into the region since Katrina roared ashore in August 2005. It does not include tens of millions of dollars worth of aid the consortium's 80 or more member agencies have distributed solely out of their own relief operations since 2005. (RNS)

MAKINGNEWS

South African Church Not 'Moving Beyond Apartheid'

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa), or NHKA, is not ready for readmission to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, according to WARC's general secretary Rev. Setri Nyomi. "Our discussions showed a deep division in the church about moving beyond apartheid," he said.

Obama May Attend a Number of Washington Churches

President Barack Obama said he may attend "a number of different churches" in Washington rather than just one. Obama said his experience with his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, made him "very sensitive to the fact that as president the church we attend can end up being interpreted as speaking for us at all times."

PKN Marks First Five Years

At its five-year mark, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) has received mostly positive marks, even from early critics such as the Reformed Alliance (Gereformeerde Bond). The Alliance recently pledged its continuing support for the united church.

See the story behind each headline in the September Banner online at www.thebanner.org.

FAQs

Health

Q I recently delivered twins who had Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome. With laser treatment at 19 weeks gestation, there was a successful outcome. I am concerned that not many people, including doctors, know about this problem.

A Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) occurs when an abnormality in the vessels of the placenta (afterbirth) sends more blood to one fetus than to the other. The result is often fetal death or neurological damage. You will appreciate that I cannot comment on your medical care, nor is this space designed to deal with relatively rare problems. But you raise an interesting point about the perceived lack of knowledge about your twins' condition by the medical community and others.

The practice of medicine is full of rare and semi-rare conditions, and medical practitioners will never know them all. Most of us will go to our books and computers to investigate puzzling symptoms, and most of us learn greatly from our missed diagnoses. This still leaves us imperfect. The perfect Healer was on earth two millennia ago.

Raising awareness of a condition helps both the patient(s) and the doctor. I am sure that more than one doctor will be asked a question about TTTS because of your letter.

In situations where you are unsure of a diagnosis or treatment, optimum medical care requires trust in your doctor. Reading medical articles (the Internet is a common source) gives you much information, but frequently the information is incorrect or misinterpreted. Your history, physical findings, and investigations should be interpreted as they apply to *you*. Do not avoid asking about your concerns, wherever they come from. Very few doctors resent being questioned about genuine issues.

—Herman Borkent

Dr. Herman Borkent practices medicine at Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta.

Calling/Mission

Q I've heard the term "missional" lately in relationship to church. What does that mean?

A We all know that "church" is not a building or a place. Rather, "church" is the people of God, the "called out" ones, the bearers of Jesus Christ in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and world. But members of the church, rather than remaining in one location, must also see themselves as the "sent ones."

On his website www.friendofmissional.org, Rick Meigs writes, "Missional is a helpful term

When it comes to children doing social networking over the Internet, it's a question of when, not if.

used to describe what happens when you and I replace the 'come to us' invitations with a 'go to them' life—a life where 'the way of Jesus' informs and radically transforms our existence to one wholly focused on sacrificially living for him and others and where we adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture."

How do we do this? By seeking to put the good of our neighbor over our own, by practicing hospitality and welcoming the stranger into the midst of our community, and by simply and purely placing ourselves into the lives of others around us and loving them as Jesus would.

—Victor Ko

Rev. Victor Ko is pastor of Mosaic House Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

Culture

Q Are there general guidelines regarding when kids should be allowed to have a Facebook account or use e-mail?

A When it comes to children doing social networking over the Internet, it's a question of when, not if.

And it probably won't be you who introduces your child to electronic culture. In most schools now, children are using computers as early as kindergarten or first grade.

However, responsible Christian parents will guide their children in the ways they should go. That requires you to be well-informed about what they are doing on the computer.

Everyone says this, but one of the most important things you can do is to keep your family's computer in a public place in your house. When your children know that either you *are* watching or *could be* watching at any moment, they monitor their own behavior better.

Talk with your children about what they are doing online. Talk with them quite explicitly about the danger of putting personal information on the web and of chatting or e-mailing with strangers. Be sure to engage in conversation with them instead of interrogating and lecturing.

Check the history of the sites your child visits. Trust, but verify. Tell your children you will be checking, and then carry through (and make the history settings password-protected so your children can't change them).

Join Facebook (and other sites your child may use) yourself. Become a "friend" on your children's sites so you know what they are posting there. Knowing what they are doing puts you in a good position to intervene if they start down a wrong path.

This is a case where being as "wise as serpents, but as gentle as doves" makes sense (Matt. 10:16).

—Helen Sterk

Dr. Helen Sterk is chair of communication arts and sciences at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. ■

BY OTTO SELLES

Oil, Planks, Tax Collectors, and Tolerance

What it truly means to love our neighbor



Oil

“Fill the earth and subdue it”

(Gen. 1:28).

IT'S A SUMMER DAY, I'M 9 OR 10, and my father and I are in the garage. He passes me a small can of engine oil and says: “Take care of this.” I comply by digging a hole in the flower bed and pouring the oil in. I slowly toss dirt into the hole and enjoy watching it drown in the gooey oil. Once the hole is filled, I pat down the surface and return to the garage, my job done.

What was I thinking? Well, I was doing my father's will. But I didn't stop to consider whether he wanted his garden turned into a toxic wasteland. He didn't ask how I'd disposed of the oil, either, because he was busy fixing something. Maybe my father expected me to pour the oil down the storm sewer rather than bury it. Dumping oil and other contaminants was not a big issue back then. Creation care meant keeping the weeds subdued and the lawnmower working.

Not reflecting, not being clear, not asking, and not noticing—for those reasons our best intentions can have negative consequences. The Heidelberg Catechism notes that “even the holiest” don't come close to fully honoring the Ten Commandments (Q&A 114).

Even those with the keenest spiritual vision somehow miss their most obvious mistakes. It's often only with ample hindsight that we finally see the error of our ways, that attitudes change and we realize engine oil shouldn't be dumped in the flower bed *or* the storm sewer.

Planks

“First take the plank out of your own eye”

(Matt. 7:5).

Maybe you're thinking, “Hold it with the catechism lesson! What a foolish kid, and what a negligent parent!” OK, let me ask you this: have you ever slipped an old can of oil paint into the trash? Or left a car to rust in a field? Never? Then how about this: have you ever driven somewhere when you could have biked or walked? Or failed to reuse or recycle every plastic or

paper item your hands touched? Think carefully before you criticize my father or me.

I'm taking an environmental angle to make a point about judging. As a carpenter, Jesus explained the point differently. He said that before judging anyone, we should first look for the plank in our own eye (the mega-fault we need to get rid of) before pointing out the speck (the mini-fault) in our neighbor's eye.

Even in the 21st century, Jesus' illustrations are usually easy to visualize: a sower in a field, a hidden treasure, a lost sheep. Other illustrations can be harder to picture, and a plank in the eye is one of them. This exaggerated illustration, however, underscores the way selfishness stops us from seeing ourselves. Is the simple speck of dust also a simple exaggeration? I'm not so sure. Remember, any time you get something in your eye, you have a hard time seeing anything at all.

This passage is not saying that Christians may never judge. In fact, Jesus is assuring us that judging is beneficial because it can bring complete vision to us and to those around us. The entire chapter contains warnings about strays, swine, false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing, bad trees, bad fruit, and foolish builders. In sharing the gospel's pearls, we must not be naïve about people, and that involves judging—seeing clearly—their motives and actions.

Such judging requires careful self-examination. If we're naïve about our own ill-considered motives and actions, we risk poking out someone else's eye. In other words, our good intentions of judging someone by the gospel run the risk of blinding that person to the gospel.

Tax Collectors

“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’”

(Matt. 9:11).

I have often heard pastors explain that in Jesus' day tax collectors got much less respect than IRS or Canada Revenue agents do today.

Tax collectors robbed from the poor, gave to the Romans, and kept the rest for themselves. In rubbing shoulders with »

Tolerance recognizes that love is difficult, that it requires effort.

them, Jesus was, according to the Pharisees, compromising his morals and acting as a traitor to his people. But what I'd never noticed before is that in this passage the NIV includes quotation marks around the word "sinners."

The NIV translators were likely pointing out that the Pharisees labeled certain people as unworthy of their attention. In contrast, Jesus dined with tax collectors and other "sinners" because he saw something in them. He knew he could change their hearts. One tax collector, Matthew, became Jesus' disciple; Zacchaeus, another tax collector, climbed down from his tree and gave back to the poor.

So whom do *you* consider—or treat—as a tax collector, as a "sinner"? The way we apply that label to people can change according to the moral, political, or theological issues of the day. But can you give a real, human face to the labels you put on people? If not, do what Jesus did—spend some time getting to know your "tax collector." Maybe you will build a relationship while disposing of some planks and sawdust found in each other's eyes.

Tolerance

"Love your neighbor as yourself"
(Matt. 22:39).

The real focus of this reflection is on tolerance. I didn't begin by talking about tolerance because the word is understood in different, sometimes opposing, ways today. For example, we define the verb "to tolerate" as

- *to allow* (The art teacher tolerates graffiti in his classroom.)
- *to endure the objectionable* (I tolerate her love for very ripe cheese.)
- *to respect different opinions and beliefs* (The mayor said our city must learn to tolerate difference.)

Christians often condemn tolerance, particularly when the term is used to mean "respect." I've encountered comments such as "Today's tolerance is a form of moral relativism that respects various opinions and beliefs, but has no room for

Christian truth" and "Our tolerant society (ironically) cannot tolerate Christianity, which it views as being intolerant."

Daniel Taylor offers a useful response: "It's difficult to argue with a straight face that Christians are unfairly accused of intolerance when I so often see the very attitudes of diseased intolerance. . . . Suspicion, mean-spiritedness, aggressive ignorance, close-mindedness, primitive anger, and refusal to dialogue" (*Is God Intolerant? Christian Thinking About the Call for Tolerance*, Tyndale).

Tolerance plays a useful role in helping us act out our faith. How about defining tolerance as a step toward love, a step founded in the respect we owe our neighbors as participants in God's creation? Tolerance recognizes that such love is difficult, that it requires effort.

I am not saying that we need to agree with everyone. But we can only have meaningful dialogue—or disagreement—if we realize our limitations and work toward building trust.

If we don't, our Christian witness may be diminished to someone shouting down from a mountaintop, with people below wondering what all the noise is about. Or worse, people may see the oil in our lamps as nothing better than oil dumped into a hole in the ground. ■

WEB Q'S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner's* website: www.thebanner.org.



Otto Selles is chair of the French department at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and was the 2008-2009 Calvin College Wordview Lecturer. His lectures examined the boundaries of tolerance.



It has nothing to do with a superiority complex.

NEXT

Proud to Be CRC

IS IT WRONG TO BE PROUD of the Christian Reformed Church?

To some people it seems as if belonging to any denomination makes you guilty of a superiority complex, as if you're saying, "We're right and everybody else is wrong."

True, at one time many of us may have declared ourselves "Christian Reformed" with a tone of arrogance. But today it seems the trend has gone in the opposite direction. It's as if we're embarrassed by the association. A co-worker once told me she went to Victory Church (or something like that), and I asked if the church was Pentecostal. Another co-worker standing nearby interjected, "It doesn't matter."

Every individual has reason to find esteem in and give thanks for their gifts or achievements. I think the same is true for every church. All churches have been used in unique ways by God to do his work. Taking pride in being part of the CRC does not suggest my friend can't be proud of belonging to the Reformed Church in America or the Missouri Lutheran Synod or the Assemblies of God or the Wesleyan Church. We can appreciate another denomination's unique contribution to God's kingdom while also holding up the contributions of our own.

While the CRC is by no means perfect, here are a few reasons I'm proud to be part of this particular faith community:

- In sharing the good news of Jesus, the CRC has made remarkable moves. World Missions has been active for more than 100 years and currently supports 250 missionaries working in 25 countries around the world. Back to God Ministries International sends the gospel over the airwaves into 131 countries around the world. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee actively shows God's love in 36 countries by helping existing local churches and organizations with relief and development.
- In spite of being a relatively small denomination, the CRC has made significant contributions toward Bible translation

into English. The NIV Bible is the best-selling English translation of the Bible, and it was originally the brainchild of the CRC. (See the Preface to the NIV.)

- Grand Rapids, Mich., has been called the "Christian publishing capital" thanks to the Zondervan, Eerdmans, and Baker publishing houses and the CRC's publishing ministry Faith Alive—all of which were founded by Christian Reformed members.
- For a historically Dutch, Caucasian church, the CRC has become remarkably inclusive. More than 170 CRC congregations speak a primary language other than English or Dutch. All together, CRC congregations speak 21 different languages, including Korean, Navajo, Laotian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Swahili.
- Our commitment to Christian education is seen in the multiple colleges connected with the CRC: Calvin, Dordt, Trinity, Redeemer, Kuyper, King's, and the Institute for Christian Studies. Moreover, Calvin College is often considered one of the top Christian colleges in the United States.
- The CRC has produced many Christian scholars who have made major contributions in theology, biblical studies, philosophy, and other fields: Nicholas Wolterstorff, Lewis Smedes, Louis Berkhof, Alvin Plantinga, Cornelius Plantinga, Richard Mouw, Cornelius Van Til, Geerhardus Vos, John Stek, and David Engelhard, among others.
- The CRC has played important roles in developing major interdenominational organizations: The Bible League, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Gideons International, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Wycliffe Bible Translators, to name a few.

The CRC has definitely been used by God in powerful ways, and surely there are more exciting things in store for us. I'm proud to be part of that. ■

Rev. Aaron Vriesman is pastor of North Blendon Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich.

Carl Bosma teaches a Libronix biblical studies seminar in a "smart classroom."



Flourishing in the Electronic Age *by Duane Kelderman*

What do you do when your wife is on bed rest in another country because of pregnancy complications and you need to finish your semester of seminary studies in Grand Rapids, Mich.?

Albert and Karissa Postma faced that situation last spring. Medical and insurance considerations meant that Karissa had to stay in Canada while Albert continued his studies at Calvin Theological Seminary.

But thanks to recently installed video capture technology in seminary classrooms, all lectures and discussions can now be videotaped. That enabled Albert

to continue his studies and be with his family too.

"The video capture made a huge difference during this difficult time," he recalls with gratitude. "Thanks to the video capture, the helpfulness of seminary professors, and the support of our parents and friends, I was able to complete my final year at the seminary as scheduled."

This is just one example of the positive impact technology is having on seminary education today. From a revolution in how students use biblical languages to classroom technology to online courses available anywhere in the world, education at Calvin Seminary is changing in exciting ways.

Libronix and Biblical Studies

Without a doubt, the greatest impact of technology on theological education is in the area of biblical studies.

Though students at Calvin Seminary still study Hebrew and Greek, that learning is greatly assisted by the use of Libronix biblical studies software that not only helps students learn the languages but also enhances their ongoing use of those biblical languages in their ministry.

Chris Cassis, pastor of Calvin Church in Holland, Mich., took a Libronix seminar led by Calvin professor Carl Bosma. Cassis's reaction was enthusiastic: "Since the seminar, I use Libronix every

“Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.”



Albert and Karissa Postma with daughters Lydia and Jayda.

week as I prepare sermons. I still need to use my creative abilities in crafting the sermon, but Libronix helps me understand the text better and more quickly.”

Pastors across the continent who take the Libronix seminar also appreciate its impact on their preaching. After attending a Libronix seminar in Orange City, Iowa, for pastors in Classes Heartland and Lakota, RCA pastor Jamie Dykstra of Lennox, S.D., wrote, “I especially appreciated the approach that Carl took in teaching us by doing exegesis. It made what could be a tedious task of computer work into a refreshing journey in God’s Word.”

Biblical studies software has removed much of the intimidation of learning biblical languages, especially for those with learning disabilities, a group far larger than most people realize.

“My anxiety prior to attending Calvin Seminary was at epic levels, knowing that Hebrew and Greek were going to be part of my education,” Brian Seifert recalls. “However, Libronix allowed me, a person with learning disabilities, to identify key components in the study of Hebrew and Greek with the simple wave of my computer mouse.

“The program kept me organized and on track. Wonderful color schemes and parsing guides, instant dictionaries, syntactical resources, and theological encyclopedias replaced my fears with confidence.”

Calvin Seminary is a recognized world leader in combining computer-assisted biblical language study, interpretation, and preaching. An extensive manual developed by Bosma has been picked up by the producers of Libronix and hailed as the only resource of its kind that doesn’t just give computer training, but integrates language study, biblical interpretation, and preaching.

CTS also will host a consultation this fall with biblical scholars from around the world interested in enhancing teaching and learning strategies for the use of biblical studies software and the preparation of pastors for gospel ministry.

“Smart Classrooms”

By the end of this year, more than half of Calvin Seminary’s classrooms will be “smart classrooms” that not only electronically capture the classes held in those rooms, but also link professors and students to the web and to a host of teaching/learning resources.

International students for whom English is a second language have particularly

appreciated the option of reviewing classes through video-capture technology.

“In the beginning of my study at Calvin Seminary, it was difficult to follow lectures as I was still learning English,” student Sung-Joon Moon recalls. “But the video capture technology has greatly helped me and many other international students. I regularly use it to go over what I missed in class and increase my English-language skills.”

National studies of schools with “smart classrooms” indicate that all students »

CTS at a Glance

Calvin Theological Seminary

- is offering a revised Master of Divinity (M.Div.) curriculum beginning this fall.
- is switching to a two-semester schedule (with January and May interims) this fall.
- offers advanced-standing opportunities to incoming students with Bible and theology degrees.
- offers Master of Arts (M.A.) degrees in Educational Ministries, Evangelism and Missions, New Church Development, Pastoral Care, Worship, and Youth and Family Ministries.
- offers a one-year M.A. degree in Bible and Theology for persons with sufficient college Bible and theology courses.
- offers certificate programs in Church Planting, Educational Ministries, English Bible, Ministry, Missions and Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Theology, Worship, and Youth Ministry.
- offers master (M.T.S. and Th.M.) and doctoral (Ph.D.) degree programs for those interested in teaching Bible and theology.
- has approximately 300 students, representing more than 40 different denominations around the world.
- is a leader in the innovative use of technology in biblical studies courses.

Other Benefits of Technology

Here are a few other areas where technology is having an impact at Calvin Seminary:

- The seminary is currently negotiating an arrangement whereby all alumni will have free electronic access to more than 140 major religion and theology journals selected by leading scholars, theologians, and clergy.
- The days of the seminary catalog are over. Websites not only carry all vital institutional and academic information; they communicate the school's ethos and values. Since most students decide for or against a seminary based on the initial impressions of the seminary they gain online, CTS has recently refreshed its website.
- CTS has always had many international students. The process of recruiting, communicating with, and matriculating international students has been vastly simplified by the instant communication of the Internet and by online application forms.
- Financial constraints at the seminary last year led to the first-ever webinar board meeting, where trustees from across North America were connected by phone and computer. While such web-based meetings won't replace all face-to-face meetings, the board was pleased by how effectively it could conduct its business using a webinar. Because travel can sometimes be treacherous depending on the severity of winter weather, the board discussed the option of an annual web-based February board meeting at a considerable savings in money and travel time.

—Duane Kelderman



Student Steve Dozeman with his laptop

benefit from and strongly prefer such technology. Making up for a missed class, watching lectures on demand, and improving retention of classroom learning are just three of the benefits students regularly report.

Online Courses

Another area of technological innovation at CTS is online education.

Certain courses are designed to be taken by students at multiple locations across North America and often use online discussion boards, where students are required to discuss with each other the concepts being presented in class that week. Professors monitor the discussion and offer their wisdom and insight at key points throughout the week.

Some people are skeptical about the quality of learning and spiritual formation that can take place in front of a computer screen as opposed to in a classroom. Yet studies show that online courses can be very formative, especially when combined with an in-residence component where students are together for one or two weeks of intensive learning.

Professors who have had the same students in on-site classes and then online often remark how the online courses help quiet students find their voice in the class.

While Calvin Seminary has not gone into online education as extensively as some schools, it sees the value of online education and has been strategic in its use of technology. The best example is Calvin's EPMC program (Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy), designed for students who have attended other seminaries but who desire to be ministers in the Christian Reformed Church.

When coming to Calvin presents a hardship to such students, the denomination's Candidacy Committee grants a residency exemption and allows students to take the EPMC courses online wherever they live.

Iranian-born Ladan Jennings was grateful for the online program as she worked to become a pastor in Mill Creek, Wash. "God used technology to answer my prayers," she said. "It was almost impossible to leave the ministry, my husband, and our two children for 12 weeks. But the greatest challenge was to leave my elderly mother, who does not speak English. She needed medical attention, and I was the only one who could speak her language.

"If I were not allowed to do the EPMC courses online, I would have had to set aside the call to be an ordained pastor in our denomination. God opened a way

for me through technology to do what he had called me to do. I came to appreciate technology as a great tool for advancing God's kingdom."

Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants

The many technological changes noted in this article are not without their challenges. Along with virtually every other educational institution, Calvin Seminary faces the daunting but delightful challenge of bridging the chasm between "digital natives"—students who have grown up with videogames and the Internet—and "digital immigrants"—their teachers who may use technology effectively but for whom it is not their native language.

Students who are in their mid-20s have spent their entire lives surrounded by computers, videogames, digital music players, videocams, and cell phones. Today's average college grads have spent fewer than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but more than 10,000 hours



Students use Calvin Seminary computers

playing videogames (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). Computer games, the Internet, and electronic social networking are integral parts of their lives.

In an article titled "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," educational expert Marc Prensky makes this unsettling pronouncement about the entire education enterprise in North America: "Our stu-



International student Joon Wan Bae studying online

dents have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach."

Virtually every pastor and teacher can relate to the challenge of teaching students who often seem to be wired differently and who learn differently.

Observers of these massive changes in society tend to be either overly optimistic or overly pessimistic about their

impact on people in general and on learning in particular. Faculty and staff at Calvin Seminary try not to underestimate the challenge of teaching and learning in a "digital natives/digital immigrants" world.

But neither are they prone to despair.

The image of God is an enduring feature of all human beings, and students' hunger for learning, truth and beauty, and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit cuts across divides of culture, language, education, class, and political and economic systems. Pastors and teachers have good reason to believe that the iPod will neither cripple the Evil One nor stymie the Spirit's ongoing work, whether through us or in spite of us.

Technology and Spiritual Formation

By now, readers may be wondering exactly where God is in all this talk. Does all this fancy technology make us more Christlike? How does Calvin Seminary's commitment to the holistic spiritual formation of pastors—heads, hearts, and hands—fit with all this technological innovation?

Church members ask the same questions after the church installs expensive technology in the sanctuary: "But does it make us more Christlike?" Absolutely not. Whether in sanctuaries or classrooms, technology at best offers the church *tools* that can help the church in its ministry. But they are only tools, means to a greater end, not the end in itself.

Calvin Seminary is well aware that the obstacles to effective ministry are not outdated computers. Our battle is against flesh and blood and the principalities and powers of the age, and seminary education is always centrally about forming students into the image of Christ through the transformation of mind, heart, and will.

Only the Spirit of God in and through a community of learners committed to Christ and to formation in him can effect that transformation. ■



Duane Kelderman is vice president for administration at Calvin Theological Seminary.

The Network

Our home computer died recently. After a few feeble efforts on my part to repair it, I realized that it required the attention of an expert. The diagnosis: for nearly the price of a new computer it could be restored—maybe. That was enough to persuade us to move from the repair department to the sales department.

But after a few minutes with a salesperson, it was evident that this process was far more complex than I had imagined.

Rather than providing simple answers, the salesperson asked more questions: Did we need a laptop or a desktop?

How much did we intend to spend? How much RAM? How many gigahertz? What make and model? What programs do we use?

By the time we left the store, I was ready to buy a box of pencils, a pad of paper, and a roll of stamps.

When I got home I decided to take a different approach. Using another computer I began to research computers online. But I soon discovered that I could never begin to assimilate the information from thousands of computer-related websites. I still felt lost.

It was then that I decided to turn to my best source of information: others who had recently purchased computers. I asked coworkers, friends, and family members about their computers. My best recommendations came from people under 40. They were overflowing with information, knew what questions to ask, and gave me good, practical advice. I realized that I should have started the process with my network.

In my work as a pastor and church member, I have often discovered that the best information doesn't come from one source but from many. Good, healthy, vital churches and strong, compassionate leaders can benefit from a multitude of resources and connections.

“The Network is one tool that churches can use to strengthen the connections that enhance ministry.”

Experts in church life can provide insights and information. Books and the Internet can bring the latest and some of the best thinking to the table. Other churches and church leaders are great resources. While all these resources are valuable on their own, the combined wisdom they provide is even more helpful.

That's the thinking behind the recent establishment of something called “The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry.” This new ministry initiative of the Christian Reformed Church will connect churches with resources to help them enhance their local and global ministries. Churches will

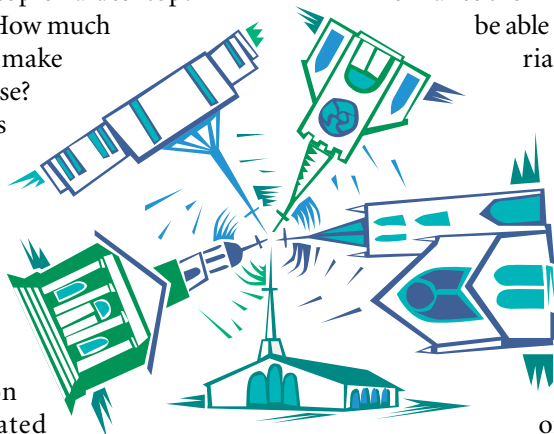
be able to connect with experts. Reference materials and resources will be readily shared and matched to specific needs.

Most important will be the ability of churches to connect with other churches that are facing similar opportunities and challenges. It has been my experience that the best ideas are discovered and shaped when church leaders share ideas and resources. While experts are important, and the right tools make the work of ministry much more effective, it is the network of connections that most enhances the work of the local church.

Paul describes the church as the body of Christ, where every part is linked to every other part. That is certainly true within the church, where every part and every gift is needed. It is also true in the denomination and in the broader church of Jesus Christ around the world. The Network is one tool that churches can use to strengthen the connections that enhance ministry.

It will be some time before The Network is fully up and running. Tools are being developed; websites and connection points are being created; volunteers are being recruited; staff members are being trained. All of this takes time, but we hope to begin to have resources available within the next few months.

I hope that this new network will serve you well. We are the body of Christ, called to do his work. Together we can and will transform lives and communities worldwide. ■



Rev. Jerry Dykstra is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Finding God Through Google

Like many young people in China, Xiou H. is interested in learning English. One day while searching Google for websites that could help him do so, he came across *www.chinese-goodnews.org*, the Chinese/Cantonese website of Back to God Ministries International.

Xiou e-mailed Cheung Yun, producer of the “English World” and “Listen to My Heart” programs on the website: “At first I meant to learn more Cantonese and English, but beyond my expectations, I’ve got more than that—a spiritual revival! Though I have been an atheist all my life, from your program I am starting to learn that religion is very important to each human being.”

When the time seemed right, Cheung invited Xiou to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and earlier this year Xiou committed his life to the Lord. He now wants to lead his family “to walk in the path of God.”

While Xiou is searching for a church to join, Cheung encouraged him to grow in faith by reading the daily devotional at *www.chinesetodays.org*. Xiou said the May 5 issue spoke to him personally. “In surrender to Christ, we find that destructive behavior is no longer dominating our lives. Each day our freedom grows and flourishes as we depend on God’s power and we grow in fellowship with other people Jesus has liberated.”

Xiou says he is grateful for all who make this ministry possible. “Thank you for your programs that have helped me. I know I still have a long way to go.” ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, *Back to God Ministries International*

Cubans Rejoice in Receiving CADA DIA

For most people, access to printed material isn’t a big deal, but for many in Cuba, recently printed materials are a novelty and a reason for rejoicing.

A year ago Back to God Ministries International’s Spanish team, under the direction of Rev. Guillermo Serrano, began sending *CADA DIA* (TODAY) devotional booklets to contacts in Cuba. Soon grateful recipients began sending letters back to BTGMI.

“*CADA DIA* is greatly appreciated and considered a ‘hot item,’” wrote Meslin.

Loly G. responded, “Thanks be to God for allowing the devotionals to arrive in our home without being tampered with and in perfect condition. You are a blessing to us, and we want you to know your mission is fruitful in our country.”

Luis Alberto, a pastor in Vueltas, reported that *CADA DIA* has motivated many people to seek God. “To see it reflected in their lives: the joy, the transformation, the testimony, and the impact! As we do not have a booklet for everyone, we decided to rotate those that are already read, even though the issue doesn’t coincide with the current month. I hope that God will open doors and you can see the

fruit planted by *CADA DIA*.”

Linnet Z., of Villa Clara, writes that he was given a sample *CADA DIA* and that “the reflections were a great inspiration to my life.” He lent it to some friends, who were equally

printing of the *CADA DIA* Christmas edition.

“Our Brazilian brothers and sisters responded far beyond our expectations, which allowed the delivery of more than 5,000 extra booklets to Cuba,” Gama reported.



Pastor Obel Garcia of Remedios decided to reproduce and distribute the *CADA DIA* devotional from his home, using technology he has available.

inspired. He said they would like to subscribe, but that they do not have financial resources to do it. “Please, if you can send some more, even old editions, we would appreciate it,” he wrote.

BTGMI Portuguese ministry leader Rev. Celsino Gama is director of the ministry center in Brazil, where *CADA DIA* is produced in partnership with BTGMI Spanish ministry.

Seeing the enthusiasm and the desire of Cuban pastors to reach others with the gospel message, Gama decided to challenge Brazilian churches to support a special increased

“From the island of Cuba we are very thankful to receive *CADA DIA*,” wrote Isaac Green, a pastor. “As [*CADA DIA* continues to arrive] through these many months of the year, I see that we are in the plan of God. We are not able to send a contribution, but you will always have the support of our prayers.” ■

—Emma Castro and Nancy Ayala, *BTGMI Spanish follow-up coordinators*



PHOTO BY LYNN ROSENDALE

Faith and Adolescence

“We know relatively little about the religious lives of American adolescents,” said researchers writing in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* in 2002.

It’s a statement that Calvin psychology professors Laura DeHaan and Julie Yonker agree with but would like to change.

“Research in this area has not kept up with research in other areas of developmental theory,” said Yonker. “We know much more about cognitive, social, identity development, but not with respect to faith formation.”

The research duo are contributing to this area of study, thanks to a grant from the Calvin Center for Christian Scholar-

ship. Aided by student researcher Carolyn Affholter, DeHaan and Yonker will review and compile the literature that has already been published on the topic of religious faith in adolescents and young adults.

“We start by finding what is out there and what has been done,” said DeHaan. “We need to begin with what we *do* know.”

While initial data indicates that not a lot of study has been done, it also suggests that studies have been hampered by a lack of clarity.

“There are myriad definitions of what faith is,” said Yonker. “It has been defined

by church attendance, how often one attends youth group, prayer frequency. None of those, though, really gets at the spirituality of a person.”

Through their research, DeHaan and Yonker hope to develop a clear definition of what identifies a person as religious or spiritual. “I hope that someday we can create a 10-or-so item scale that will include ways to get at how much your religious faith impacts the decisions you make,” said DeHaan.

“The little evidence we do have suggests that religious faith does impact adolescent and young adult behavior,” said DeHaan. “In terms of overall well-being and risk-taking, religious belief is associated with many positive outcomes.” ■

—Lynn Rosendale, *communications and marketing, Calvin College*



Todd Murphy is planting a church in Providence, Rhode Island.

Murphy started Sacred Journey Church in Providence two years ago with the support of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Why? Because he says that people in the area are truly searching for something spiritual in their lives.

“While many in Providence have abandoned the church, they have not given up on God, and they have a need to hear the truths of the gospel in relevant, timely, and compassionate ways,” he says.

But reaching this population isn’t easy. Through experiences and wisdom from others, Murphy has learned to engage in spiritual conversations but to avoid a forceful or aggressive approach. Rather, he listens and challenges gently.

“For ministry to have an impact here, you have to start

with Jesus and go from there,” he says. “It will take time for people to work through their questions and understand.”

Murphy, who is married with five children, is working with his team to develop various stages of discipleship training, possibly through seminars or small groups. These stages will give an introduction to the gospel, discuss spiritual questions, explore what church is and does, teach and encourage spiritual disciplines, and further develop the vision of Sacred Journey.

Through this, the young church aims to enrich the spiritual lives of its members and to help others progress along their journeys. ■

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

Filling Providence’s Spiritual Void

When church planter Todd Murphy and his family moved to Providence, Rhode Island, eight years ago, he was told that ministry in New England could not be successful.

It was hard to argue with that. “Providence is a spiritual black hole,” Murphy says. “People there are cautious and often consumed with their own lives.”

Additional challenges include the presence of organized crime, a sex trade, and the highest number of adult bookstores per capita in the U.S. On top of that, the area’s unemployment rate is among the highest in the nation.

Many residents also possess a general distrust of the organized church. About 73 percent of the county considers itself Roman Catholic, though actual church attendance is estimated at below 20 percent and shrinking.



Walkers approach the first learning station at a local “Walk the Micah Road Experience.”

Walking the Micah Road

For the 50th anniversary of GEMS this year, the girls’ clubs focused on Micah 6:8, learning together about what it means to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Now GEMS is taking the “Walk the Micah Road” theme a literal step farther. GEMS leaders in 23 communities across North America are hosting an intergenerational walk-a-thon.

“The ‘Walk the Micah Road Experience’ is designed to bring families together to see clearly the injustices in our world and understand that each person can truly make a difference,” said Jan Boone, executive director of GEMS.

Along each walking route, girls and their families encounter three learning stations—one to coordinate with each of God’s directives in Micah 6:8. At the stations, participants can stop and get hands-on as they learn about orphans, poverty, and victims of natural disaster, as well as practical ways to reduce waste by recycling and reusing items in their homes.

Mary Jo Vis, a GEMS leader from Hope Community Christian Reformed Church in Riverside, Calif., helped to host an event with more than 160 participants from 10 churches.

“I think seeing the stations and experiencing each activity helped girls see, touch, and feel the concepts they learned

throughout the year at GEMS,” she said. “The families and other visitors also learned a lot about how people in other parts of the world live, how much waste we have here, how wealthy we really are in North America, and what we can do to make a difference, even though we are just one person.”

Fostering change is another objective of the walk. The goal is to teach girls that they can actively make a difference for God’s kingdom—right here, right now. At each event, walkers are presented with various ways to get involved in God’s work, to truly be God’s hands and feet by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with him.

“The participation was awesome,” noted Evelyn Tilstra, a GEMS leader from Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock, Ontario. “I know for myself I have a whole new picture and understanding of [Micah 6:8]. . . . Now I’m praying and waiting for how God wants to use me. It was a beautiful, awesome, God-glorifying day!”

Walkers raised pledges. A portion of the proceeds will remain in each community, while a portion will go toward the Esther School that GEMS is building in Zambia. ■

—Amy White is publications and web coordinator for GEMS Girls’ Clubs.

Birthdays in Many Ways

Cake. Ice cream. Candles. Presents. All of these items together in one place can mean only one thing—a birthday!

When I was 3 years old my family threw a huge birthday party for me. Tons of friends

and family members flocked to my house. A real live clown was supposed to come too, but at the last minute a magician came instead. The only memory I have of my party was when the magician made a bird appear

out of a hat, and the bird left droppings on our living room floor!

No matter how old you get, birthdays are always special because they celebrate the day you came into this world!

Parties Around the World

Many years ago, European kings were the only people who had birthday parties. (They were considered the only people important enough to be remembered on their birthdays.) Later on, birthday celebrations became more common among other people.

The first children's birthday parties took place in Germany. They were called "Kinderfest," which means "children's party." But now kids all over the world celebrate their birthdays! Here's how some of them do it:



Australia

Children in Australia celebrate their birthdays by eating "Fairy Bread"—tasty buttered bread covered with colorful sprinkles.



Brazil

In Brazil, people wish someone a happy birthday ("Feliz Aniversário!") by pulling his or her earlobes once for every year of age. (Their ears must get pretty sore by the end of the day!)



China

When a baby turns one year old in China, family members gather together and place items like coins, pens, and books on the floor. Tradition says that the first item the baby picks up tells what he or she will be as an adult. For example, if the child picks up a book, he might become an author. If another child picks up a coin, she might become a rich person!



Denmark

Families in Denmark tiptoe into the birthday child's room while the child is sleeping to surround his or her bed with gifts. What an exciting way to start a birthday!



Mexico

Ever heard of a piñata (peen-YA-ta)? This fun birthday tradition began in Mexico. Families buy or make a piñata out of papier-maché and fill it with candy. Children are blindfolded and take turns hitting the piñata with a bat or stick until the candy spills out—then everyone makes a dash to grab as much candy as possible!



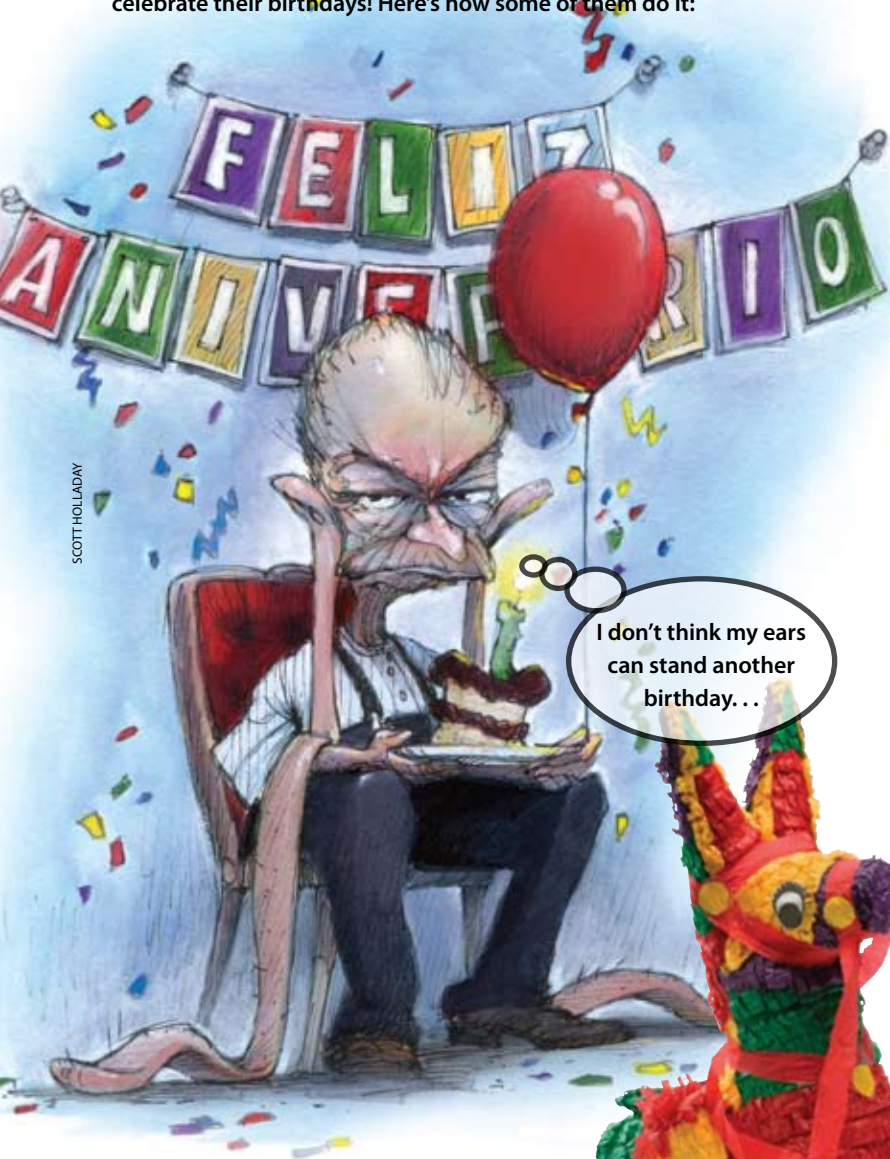
Nigeria

In Nigeria, 1, 5, 10, and 15 are considered extra-special birthdays. Those birthday parties are huge—sometimes as many as 100 people attend! Some Nigerians celebrate these milestone birthdays by roasting an entire cow or goat!



Vietnam

Traditionally, people in Vietnam have celebrated their birthdays at the same time! That's during Tet, their New Year's holiday. Children are given "lucky money" in red envelopes.



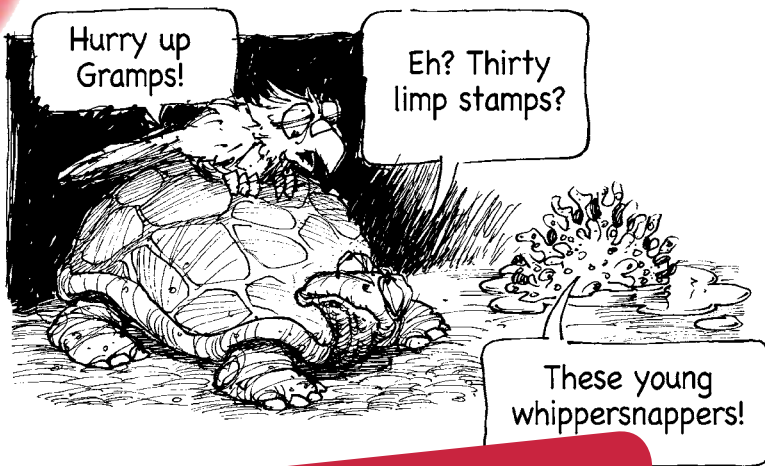
SCOTT HOLLADAY

So Many Birthdays!

Check out this incredible list of the longest-living organisms!

- The Antarctic sponge grows very slowly in the chilly waters of the Antarctic Ocean. One sponge has been estimated to be around 1,550 years old!
- Tortoises are some of the longest-living reptiles around. A Galapagos tortoise named Harriet lived to be 175 years old before she died in 2006.
- Parrots have also been known to have many birthdays. One blue-and-yellow macaw lived to be 110 years old!
- The oldest person in the Bible, Methuselah, lived to be 969 years old! (See Genesis 5:27.)
- According to historic birth records, the oldest person born after Bible times was a woman named Jeanne Calment of France. She lived to be 122 years old.

—information gathered from Wikipedia.org



No-Bake Birthday Cake

Try making this yummy no-bake ice cream cake with a cookie crust for your next birthday celebration!

What you'll need:

- 1 half-gallon of ice cream—you pick the flavor!
- 1 package of chocolate chip cookies, Oreos, or vanilla wafers (depending on your choice of ice cream)
- ½ cup melted butter

What to do:

- Take the ice cream out of the freezer and let it soften in the refrigerator while you make a cookie "crust."
- Crush the cookies into tiny pieces by putting them in a large zip-loc bag and pounding them with something heavy like a rolling pin.
- Pour the cookie crumbs into a large bowl. Take out about half a cup of cookie crumbs and set them aside for later.
- Pour the melted butter onto the cookie crumbs in the large bowl and mix together.
- Spoon the cookie mixture into a 9 x 13 pan and use your hands to flatten the cookie mixture on the bottom of the pan.
- Spoon the softened ice cream onto the cookie crust and spread it evenly in the pan. Sprinkle the rest of the cookie crumbs on top of the "cake."
- Cover the pan and put the cake in the freezer overnight.
- Take the cake out of the freezer 10 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

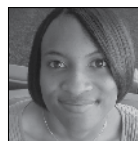
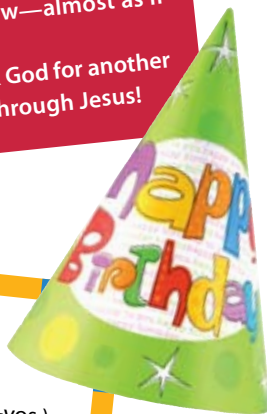
Born Again

Though it's great to remember the day we were born, we can also celebrate being born into God's family. Let's rewind time to about 2,000 years ago. Jesus was talking to a Pharisee (a Pharisee was kind of like a Bible teacher) named Nicodemus. Jesus told Nicodemus that "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again" (John 3:3). Nicodemus was pretty confused! How can someone be born a second time if they've already been born? But Jesus wasn't talking about a physical birthday. He meant a spiritual one! When we believe in Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit makes us new—almost as if we've been born again!

The next time your birthday rolls around, thank God for another year of life and for the eternal life that you have through Jesus!

Happy Birthday

- Spanish:** Feliz cumpleaños! (Feh-LEES coom-pleh-ahn-yos.)
- Dutch:** Hartelijk gefeliciteerd met je verjaardag! (HART-a-lik ghe-FAY-lis-ih-TAIRD mett yeh fer-YAR-dagh)
- French:** Joyeux Anniversaire! (Zhwah-yeh ah-knee-ver-sair!)
- Korean:** Saeng il chuk ha ham ni da!



Christin Baker is a 4th- and 5th-grade teacher at the Potter's House Christian School in Grand Rapids, Mich. She attends Resurrection Fellowship Church with her husband and baby daughter.

Who Leads Your Church?



ASTOR STU'S FIRST CLUE that it might be a long Monday came in an e-mail from Jane, one of the deacons at Friendly CRC. Jane had participated in the Sunday-morning worship service and was asking, not for the first time, why worship planning takes 20 hours a week.

The next clue was a knock on Pastor Stu's office door. Harry, the church's half-time director of worship, had a burning question to ask. Harry wondered why the worship service he had so thoughtfully planned had been changed so dramatically during the rehearsal, at Jane's insistence. Harry wanted to know whose side Pastor Stu was on.

This scenario is not unusual. There is a growing awareness in the CRC that the relationship between members of the church council and members of the church staff can present challenging dynamics.

Why is this, and why is it happening now?

On the face of it, the second question is easier to answer.

More and more, congregations are adding paid staff, in addition to pastors, to help meet the ministry challenges they face. These staff may have specialties in worship, youth, children, outreach, education, or administration, but they all fall under the category of paid staff. As such they receive paychecks, evaluations, vacation, and, at times, termination of employment. They are "employees" of the congregation, and they are given job descriptions that suggest they are to provide leadership in a particular aspect of congregational life.

On the other hand, the council consists of elders and deacons, none of whom are paid for their service, but who, from a historical point of view, are the recognized "leaders" of the church. Through a congregational selection process this group of elders and deacons is entrusted with providing oversight to the congregation and its ministries. To complicate matters, they rotate in and out of office every two to four years.

The natural question then arises: who, besides the pastor, is leading the church? In most cases, the pastor is both a member (perhaps chair) of the council and the leader of the staff. It's no wonder that the relationship between council and staff is not always clear and simple! And it's no wonder that the lead pastor often feels like the connecting ligament between competing forces.

Best Practices

Additional complicating factors arise. In many cases church staff are members of the church whose participation in the church did not begin with being hired as staff, nor will their participation necessarily end if they no longer continue on staff. Furthermore, it is not unusual that staff persons are wives, husbands, sons, daughters, cousins, or in-laws of persons on the council. A conversation between a council member and a staff member might also be a conversation between a brother and a sister-in-law.

Whether you compare this situation to an extended blended family or to a family business, the challenge of navigating the relationship between council members and staff is daunting. So how do congregations provide effective guidelines and protocols to ensure healthy interaction?

The lead pastor often feels like the **connecting ligament** between competing forces.

There are "best practices" that can strengthen this complex interaction:

- Writing clear job descriptions not only for staff members but also for elders, deacons, and pastors is a place to start. Clarifying who has responsibility and authority over what can be a daunting task, but it is always a big help in the long run.
- Providing contexts in which council members and staff get to know each other, hear each other's stories, and celebrate ministry together is an important aspect of these relationships. The pastor can provide leadership in this and can make sure that council meetings include prayers for staff and that staff meetings include prayers for the council. In all of this, it's wise to provide frequent reminders that the leadership of a congregation, both by staff and council, is team leadership.

Strengthening the team with all its members needs to remain a high priority.

- Forming a personnel committee that helps the church wear the “employee hat” fairly and proactively is essential. When staff members are hired, it is important they know the permissions and limits of the job, how and by whom evaluations will be done, who they can talk with about employee/employer dynamics, and what the established termination procedure is. Although this may seem awkward with congregational members who become paid staff, it is doubly important in such situations. Evaluations, promotions, and terminations can be awkward if handled in a less-than-professional manner.
- Behavioral covenants can also be helpful. These covenants identify the kinds of behaviors that are supportive of key relationships, as well as what kinds of behaviors undermine healthy relationships. These covenants can be written for staff, council members, and congregations. Many helpful examples are available, but there is often added value when teams work together to develop their own behavioral covenants.
- An executive committee or personnel committee can also help guard against relational binds. For example, congregations will often include extended families. It is very difficult to do employee evaluations when it involves family members. Setting up qualified ad hoc teams to address particular tasks and situations is one way to address this potential problem.

The good news is that there are a growing number of congregations where the staff/council relationship is rich, vital, and encouraging to these key leaders’ congregational ministry. And when the leaders of the church are doing well, congregations also seem to flourish. ■



Norm Thomasma is director of Pastor-Church Relations. This CRC ministry offers retreats and seminars that help build healthy relationships between church staffs and councils. Contact **Jeanne Kallemeyn**, Staff Ministry Specialist, at jkallemeyn@crcna.org, 616-726-1152.



Growing Trend

More and more Christian Reformed churches in North America are hiring ministry staff other than pastors. Most of these staff members are not ordained, and many are part-time employees. The Staff Ministry Committee (part of the CRC’s Office of Pastor-Church Relations) created a database of non-ordained church staff ministry leaders several years ago and updates it regularly. The following charts the number of staff members from five ministry areas:

STAFF POSITION (full or part time)

Administration/Ministry Coordination

October 2007: 120
January 2009: 130
Increase: 8%

Education (not including youth ministry)

October 2007: 229
January 2009: 243
Increase: 5%

Outreach/Evangelism

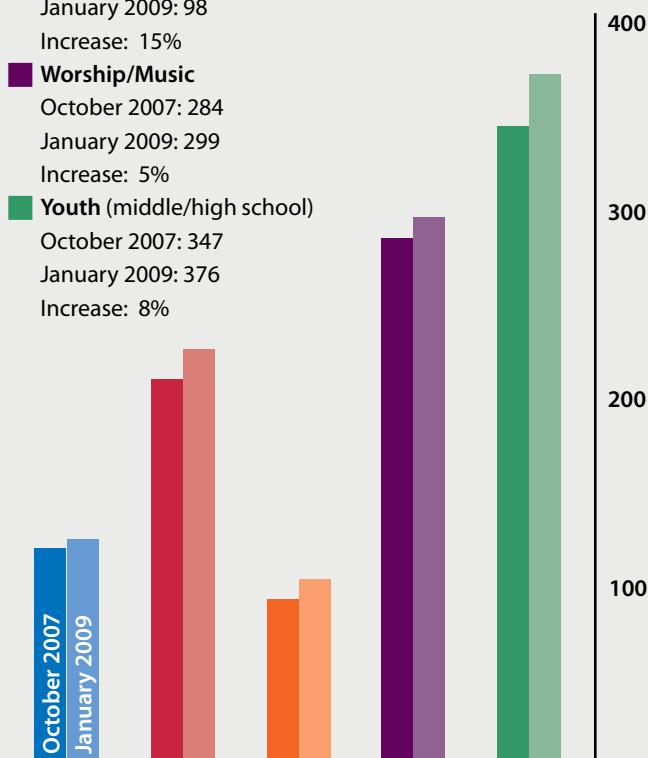
October 2007: 85
January 2009: 98
Increase: 15%

Worship/Music

October 2007: 284
January 2009: 299
Increase: 5%

Youth (middle/high school)

October 2007: 347
January 2009: 376
Increase: 8%



—Jeanne Kallemeyn, Staff Ministry Specialist for Pastor-Church Relations

"God Is Love, Gaius"



LATELY, I'VE BEEN GIVING FRIENDS this pop quiz: "Quick, name one TV show with characters who believe in God in a realistic, sympathetic way and whose faith affects their actions and the plot of the show."

The usual response is an expression that resembles a horse staring over a fence. And equine silence too.

Change the question slightly, though, to "Name one *science fiction* show," and the answers come tumbling out: "Babylon 5," "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," and "Battlestar Galactica."

For whatever reason, in order to explore humanity's spirituality—which guides the day-to-day actions of so many people here on earth—television shows must be set in space.

Unfortunately, science fiction's reputation for cheesy special effects and bumpy-headed, pointy-eared aliens turns a lot of people off. And that's unfortunate, because science fiction often contains startling moments of spiritual and religious insight.

"Battlestar Galactica," which recently ended its four-season run, was filled with such moments. One character, Gaius

Baltar, who begins the series as an utterly selfish atheist, ends up acknowledging the existence of God and offering to lay down his life for his fellow man. Another character, Laura Roslin, leads her people through faith to the Promised Land, which, like Moses, she cannot enter. And, in a beautiful twist, humans worship multiple gods and believe in fate, while the robots worship one God and believe in free will.

Almost every week the show touched on big questions: Why are we here? What does God want from us? Is humanity worthy of salvation? The characters wrestled with their belief and unbelief, with notions like predestination and free will. The same character could be guided by the angels of his better nature one minute, and by personal demons the next—a trait you don't need to travel to space to see, but one seldom explored so boldly in shows set on earth.

This past spring, "Battlestar Galactica" ended with a scene that takes place right here on present-day earth. Two characters talk about God's plan for humanity, and whether or not humanity will willingly choose to follow that plan.

If only more shows would be so brave.

Look for all four seasons on DVD (Sci-Fi Channel). ■



Lloyd Rang is a speechwriter and communications manager for the government of Ontario. He is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville.

Quick, name one television show with characters who believe in God.

A Plumm Summer

reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**



If you're still pining for summer and looking for a family movie, *A Plumm Summer* will do the trick. Starring Henry Winkler and William Baldwin, *A*

Plumm Summer is a quirky mystery about the disappearance of a child entertainer's puppet during a performance in a small town. Brothers Rocky and Eliot Plumm must compete with the FBI in solving the mystery while dealing with dysfunction in their home. My kids under age 12 were riveted by this film, and on a recent class bus trip to New York City, 45 high school kids loved it too. (Paramount)

God Is Back

by **John Micklethwait & Adrian Wooldridge**

reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**



Two *Economist* writers, a Catholic and an atheist, show how and why religion is booming around the world and reveal its vast effects on the global

economy, politics, and culture. Arguing that "the secularization theorists are wrong to claim that modernity and religion are incompatible," *God Is Back* shows how 21st-century religion across the world has been fueled by a uniquely American free-market approach to salvation, characterized by (evangelical) entrepreneurship, choice, and personal revelation. "The most important development is not quantitative but qualitative" as these religious ideals spread worldwide. (Penguin)

www.hulu.com

reviewed by **Otto Selles**

You don't have time for TV but want to know what everyone is talking about? Then go to *hulu.com*. Founded by NBC Universal and News Corp, Hulu offers easy access to popular shows such as "Saturday Night Live" and "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." Classic TV shows and some films are also available. While the image quality is much better than YouTube, commercial interruptions can be annoying. Registration is required to view "mature" material, but titles are not categorized according to ratings. At the moment, the site is available only in the U.S.



THE LOWDOWN



Follow the Yellow Brick Road: The 70th Anniversary Edition of *The Wizard of Oz* is due out on DVD and Blu-ray this month. (Warner)



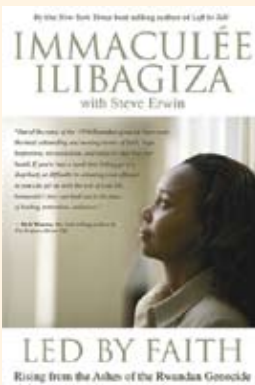
Wedding Bells: *Archie Marries Veronica Part 2: The Wedding* is available this month—will he really marry Veronica over Betty? (Archie Comics)



Get Your Boogie On . . . Your Phone. *Dance Praise* is now available for your iPhone at the iTunes App Store.



Sound Familiar? The blog "Stuff Christians Like" (<http://stuffchristianslike.blogspot.com>)—note the three f's in "stuff"—lovingly pokes fun of and shines a light on the habits and experiences of North American Christians. It's also scheduled to be translated into book form by Zondervan next year.

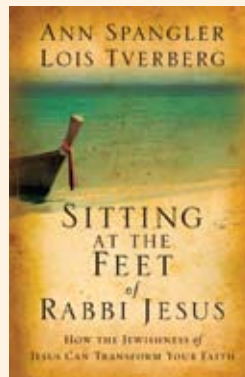


Led By Faith

by **Immaculée Ilibagiza with Steve Erwin**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In her sequel to *Left to Tell*, Immaculée Ilibagiza, Tutsi survivor of the 1994

Rwandan genocide, shares "deeply personal experiences and memories connecting and highlighting the events that most profoundly influenced my spiritual growth." Warning Christians never to take faith for granted, she worries that Rwandans will reject God because of the genocide. Having personally visited and forgiven her family's murderer, she has devoted her life to proclaiming God's forgiveness as the only path to Rwanda's healing. (Hay House)



Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus

by **Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg**
reviewed by **Wayne Brouwer**

Riding the wave of recent fascination with the Jewish background of Jesus and many New

Testament writings, Spangler and Tverberg provide devotional essays on lessons they have learned. Although little is new in this volume, the reflections are engaging and thought-provoking. The 14 chapters are long enough to develop ideas about prayer, eating rituals, feast practices, and the like, and short enough to be used in Bible study groups, especially with the helpful study guides following each. (Zondervan)



Cora Cooks Pancit

by **Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Cora's desire to do the grown-up jobs when she cooks with Mama is realized when her older siblings leave for the afternoon. Choosing the menu, chopping the chicken and vegetables, checking the noodles, and listening to stories about her Filipino grandfather (a cook for farm workers)—it all becomes a celebration of Cora and her mother's love for each other, their cultural heritage, and Cora's excitement and joy because of her family's approval of her successful cooking venture. Vibrant, enchanting illustrations enhance this joyous children's story. (Shen's Books)

Check thebanner.org for links to find out more about these titles.





Living Room Compassion

Ministering to parents whose children have left the church

MY SON doesn't go to church anymore because he thinks God is a myth." "My daughter says she still believes in God but just has no use for the church."

"My son married a girl of another faith, and now neither of them goes to church."

"Our grandchildren have no idea who God is."

The words come out in short bursts between moments of conversation. Tears

quietly fall. People ask, "Why has this happened to our family?"

All this took place within the confines of a living room on a Sunday evening in Edmonton, Alberta.

The month before, a concerned elder had asked what our congregation could do for parents whose adult children no longer attend church. He noted that many parents in our church were hurting and carrying this burden alone. As a pastoral staff we decided to host an open meeting with interested parents for discussion and prayer on this topic.

We honestly wondered if anyone would come. We knew many people who were struggling with this issue, but they were struggling alone, not letting others in the church know of their situation.

A Shared Burden

Much to our surprise, and to the surprise of the other attendees, 18 parents filled the living room where we met. A dozen or so stories were shared—stories of adult children who refuse to go to church, who have doubts about whether God is real, who are not bringing up their own chil-

The living rooms we meet in have been transformed into holy ground.

dren to believe in Jesus. Each scenario had unique aspects, but all the scenarios struck a common emotional chord.

When parents present their children for baptism, they don't imagine that the day may come when their children reject that baptism. Parents entrust their children to God, and then they do their best to raise them in the love of the Lord. Along with the community of faith, they hold their children in prayer and try their best to set a good example as disciples of Christ.

But no parent is perfect. No church community is perfect. And the mysteries of why one child embraces the Lord and another does not may remain unsolved. Many parents are filled with questions, doubt, guilt, and shame. They may also feel anger toward God and the church. But there is no one balm for all these emotions and no one answer to all the questions.

Coming together as parents and pastors was not about finding answers. It was about supporting one another through a difficult and sometimes long journey. At subsequent meetings, parents shared ideas for how to reach out to one another's children, but more than that, they simply reached out to one another with love and compassion.

Meeting and praying together has meant sharing both the sorrow of adult children who are not attending church, as well as sharing the joys of observing God at work in the lives of their children, no matter how small that work may seem.

Some of you reading this article are going through the same struggles as the parents in our group. If we could invite you into our living room meetings, I think you would find four themes to be evident. They capture the best of what I think the parents in our group would want to convey to you.

1. You Are Not Alone

Many parents carry this burden on their own, all the while feeling guilty and ashamed. They wonder what they did wrong. But instead of sharing their feelings, they keep quiet and the burden grows.

But after having met together, the parents in our group know they are *not* alone. They can look across the church sanctuary or fellowship hall and see other parents they've met with who are also struggling. They can approach one another and share a knowing look, a comforting touch, or a word of encouragement.

One parent shared a familiar proverb to explain the experience: "A sorrow shared is but half a trouble; but a joy that's shared is a joy made double."

2. There Is No Easy Solution

There is no quick recipe or three-step plan for bringing your children back into the church. Some efforts may produce fruit; others may not. And even within one family, siblings may have different responses to the faith and to the life of the church.

You may find some books and articles you can read together as a group. You can share your stories of what has worked and what has not worked with your own children. But the parents in our group readily acknowledge that there is no simple solution.

3. Look to Your Church Community for Support

Be willing to tell your story to a group of friends, to your elder, or to your pastor. Join, or better yet, start a support group for parents in your church community.

Trust that you are not alone and that you will find others willing to travel this painful journey with you.

The simple act of coming together to share stories and to join in prayer for one another is very powerful. It may not lead to an immediate change in your situation, but it will lead to a change in you.

4. Trust in the Lord

Trust that the Lord has not given up on your children. Trust that the Lord loves and cares for your children. And pray. Pray for changed hearts in your children and in yourselves as parents.

You do not have to trust perfectly. When your sense of trust is waning or when it's hard to pray, allow others to lift you and your children up in prayer.

There is strength and comfort to be found in meeting together, especially through painful times in our lives. There is power and grace in abundance when we take time to pray together. The living rooms we meet in have been transformed into holy ground as hurting parents share their hearts with one another and with the Lord.

Many of the parents in our group would tell you this is a long road to travel. Many of them have been quietly praying for their adult children for more years than they wish to count. And they keep on praying. They keep praying, over the years and through the pain, because they love their children and are deeply convinced that God loves their children even more. ■



Rev. Karen Norris is pastor for congregational life and outreach for West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

Jesus Christ's Vital Society

SWELLING WITH PRIDE, a mother was all too glad to tell me recently how well her daughter is faring in her graduate studies at a prestigious university. Only one thing could have been better: “Her father and I wish that she’d find a church to attend.” And then, with an “Oh well, nothing’s perfect” shrug of her shoulders, the woman added: “Lisa tells us that for her it’s ‘Jesus, yes; church, no.’”

I can’t count the number of times I heard that refrain from young people during my years as their pastor. And whenever I did, I tried to slip a word in edgewise from John Calvin. I wanted them to know that Calvin, who had more bones to pick with the established church than they’ll ever *think* of having, never dreamed of leaving that church for no church at all. Despite the church’s obvious flaws, Calvin cherished it and gave his life’s energies to it. He called the church “the society of Christ.”

The Church is vitally necessary to the welfare of God’s children.

The church is God’s gift to God’s people, a concession to their weakness. As Calvin wrote, “In our ignorance and sloth (to which I add fickleness of disposition) to beget and increase faith within us we need outward helps. And in order that the preaching of the gospel might flourish, he deposited this treasure in the church” (*Institutes* IV.1.1).

But not just any church will do. Calvin says a faithful church nourishes its members through reliable Scripture teaching and careful serving of the sacraments. “Wherever we see the Word of God purposely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered, there it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (IV.i.8).

Nor will any church that’s worthy of its salt—and of its high calling—ever chart its course by anything other than God’s Word. It will never merely do what’s popular. The test of a “successful” church is not whether people find its music, liturgy, and preaching fitting to their taste and flock to it in

droves. Only one thing finally matters: “where it rests upon God’s Word [the church] will not waver with any distrust or doubting, but will repose in great assurance and firm constancy.” Accordingly, a faithful church “will distrust all the devising of its own reason” (IV.8.13).

Because the church is vitally necessary to his children’s welfare, God has been preserving the community of the faithful from age to age, often amid heavy opposition. “Although the melancholy desolation which confronts us on every side may cry that no remnant of the church is left, let us know that . . . God miraculously keeps his church as in hiding places” (IV.1.2).

God the Father intends the church to serve as both mother and teacher to his children. “For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels. Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives” (IV.1.4).

Calvin is emphatic: God cannot—cannot—be Father to his children unless they honor the church as their Mother/Teacher. He writes, “Away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation. . . . From this it follows that separation from the church is the denial of God and Christ” (IV.1.4).

Calvin’s final appeal to (young) people about the church today is this: “Never leave home without it. If you do, you’ll become tired and famished—you’ll starve to death.” ■

WEB Q’S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner’s* website: www.thebanner.org.



Rev. Dale Cooper is chaplain emeritus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. In honor of John Calvin’s 500th birthday, he is writing a special series for *The Banner* this year on Calvin’s central teachings.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: Oct. 2009 issue is 8/31/09. Nov. 2009 issue is 10/5/09. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

Prices: Most ads are \$0.33^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.26^{US} per character applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements. Photos are \$22^{US} extra.

To Advertise: Place your classified ad online at www.TheBanner.org/classifieds. If you are unable to submit your ad online you may continue to email it to classifieds@TheBanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. If you have questions, call 616-224-0725.

Publication of advertisements implies neither endorsement nor approval by *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, or the Christian Reformed Church. We reserve the right to refuse or edit any ad for appropriateness.

Denominational and Classical Announcements

General

Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan approved a request from the High River CRC to release their pastor, Kevin J. Vryhof, from the office of Minister of the Word to their congregation. The Synodical Deputies to Classis AB South & Sask. concurred with the decision of classis. The release is effective July 1, 2009. Kevin Vryhof will take up fulltime additional education with the intake of new students in Fall 2009.

Al Brander, Clerk of Classis

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that Zachary I. Olson has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Meetings of Classis

Classis Atlantic Northeast will meet in regular session on October 7-8, 2009 at the Lakeside Retreat Center in Pittsfield, MA. Following dinner at 5:30 PM, the meeting will convene at 7PM, continuing the next day. Any items for the agenda should be submitted to the stated clerk as soon as possible (valleycrc@msn.com; 1452 River Rd., Binghamton, NY 13901; 607-648-8224 - fax). Al Gelder, stated clerk

Classis Northern MI meets in regular session on Tuesday, September 29, 9:00 AM at Aetna CRC. Contact stated Clerk at 231-599-3290.

The fall meeting of **Classis Niagara** is planned for Wednesday, October 21, at 2:00 PM at the Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, ON. Please forward any materials to be included in the agenda, or requests to address Classis, before September 1 to John TeBrake, S. C., 41 Stella Street, P. O. Box 985, Fonthill, ON, L0S 1E0; or e-mail to statedclerk@classisniagara.ca.

New Addresses

Pastor Jack Van de Hoef's new mailing address is P. O. Box 345, Brockville, ON K6V 5V5; his new email address is pastorjack@bethel-crc.com

Congregational Announcements

Church's 50th Anniversary

Portland in November! Parklane (formerly Calvin) CRC in Portland, OR, celebrates her 50th anniversary November 13-15, 2009. Banquet the 13th (reservations required; 200 people max), reunions the 14th, worship and celebration the 15th. For more info contact Larry Niemeyer (theniemeyers@comcast.net) or Pastor Vance Hays (vancehays@juno.com). See you there. God has been good to us!

Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, MI invites friends and former members to celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on October 10 & 11, 2009. For more information or reservations, contact the church office (616-452-3191) or go to: www.brooksidecrc.org

Retirement

Pastor Robert and Carol Timmer are retiring after 38 years of faithful service to God in the CRC. His farewell service will be Oct. 4,

2009 in the AM service at the Inwood CRC. For more info email inwdccrcoff@alliancecom.net or phone 712-753-4467.

Rev. Neville Koch is retiring following 40 years of faithful ministry and service (28 yrs. with the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, 12 yrs. with San Diego CRC). A celebration honoring him and wife Lorraine will be on Sept. 19, 2009, 11:00am at SDCRC. For more info email: sdccrc@sbcglobal.net

Announcements

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY BOARD TO MEET The Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary will meet in the Seminary on Thursday, October 8, 2009, at 8:30 a.m. and the following day.

Kevin J. Adams, Secretary

125th Anniversary The members of the Luctor Christian Reformed Church of Prairie View, Kansas invite you to their 125th anniversary celebration July 24-25, 2010. Please call (785) 973-2793 or email luctorcrc@ruraltel.net for more information.

Highland Christian School is celebrating its 100th anniversary. We want to invite all alumni, current and former students and staff, parents, grandparents and friends to an Alumni Open House on Saturday, November 28, 2009 from 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Come and see how God has blessed us. For more information and to RSVP, contact us at www.highlandchristian.org or call 219-838-0356.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

Driek Wolma, 930 Edison Apt.204 GR, MI 49504, celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. We thank God for her strong faith and love. Her son Dale and husband Maurice are with the Lord.

98th Birthday

Peter Buteyn, 49 E 32nd St, Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate his 98th birthday on Sept 19. His family is grateful to God for his life of faith, contentment, and love.

95th Birthday

Marion Konyndyk of 725 Baldwin, Jenison MI 49428 will celebrate her 95th birthday on Sept 22. Her nieces and nephews praise God and thank Him for her long life and the love she has shown to us and so many others.

90th Birthday

Jessie Alderden (Sluis), W. 154th Place, # 53, Orland Park, IL 60462 celebrates her 90th birthday August 12, 2009. Celebrating Mom's life of reliance on her Lord are her children Jim, Lynnay Kallemeyn, Leona Vande Vusse, John and Joan (Cook). Her 12 children and 18 great grand children join in congratulating her for her faithful, loving and joy filled testimony.

REV. CLARENCE AND REV. JOHN VAN ENS, will celebrate their 90th birthdays on Sept. 25, 2009. Praise the Lord! 321-951-3697 and 407-770-7278.

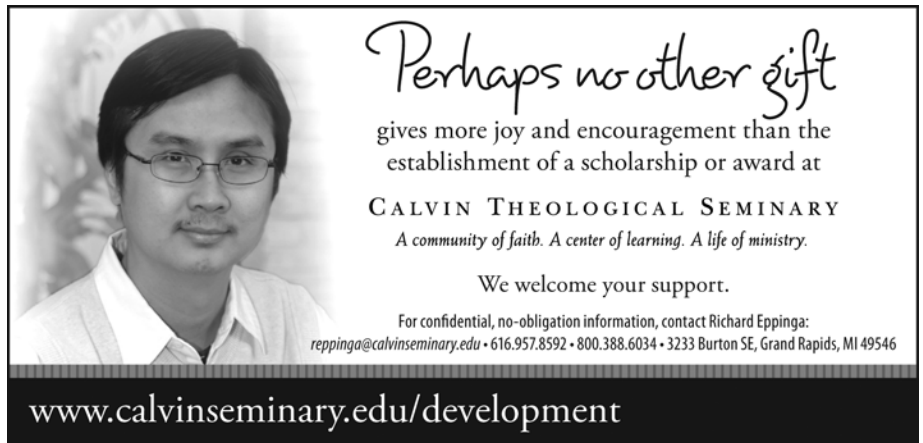
Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

Lieuwen, Cornelius and Eleanor (Zylstra), Box 32, New Holland, SD 57364, celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary on September 12, 2009. Praising God with them are their children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren: Bea and Terry Pheifer (Todd, Laura, Emma, Jonathan, and Meg Pheifer; Teresa, Brian, Jacob and Audrey Bierenga; Tracy and Jeff Willett); Fran and Marlin De Vries (Sarita, Jerod, Sadie, Jayna, Adam Smeenk; Michelle, Chuck, Silas, Naomi, and Lydia Ware); Jan and Ron Van Zee (Kendra, Rob, Connor, Jaden, and Addison Van Hill; Brian Van Zee); Percy and Vicki Lieuwen (Brady, Sarah, and Ella Lieuwen; Krissa Lieuwen; Bethany Lieuwen); Gail and Alvin Punt (Colin Punt, Jacklyn Punt, Eric Punt). The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy!

60th Anniversary

Bouma, James & Lorraine (Jabaay) 220 Center St., Edgerton, MN 56128. Celebrated their 60th anniversary on August 5. Congratulations and love from your children: Rob & Pat, Jim, Tom & Arla, Becky & Fritz; your grandchildren: Seth & Missy, Micah & Brittany, Heidi, Brett & Kim, Jordan & Chelsey, Nathan; your greatgrandchildren: Caden, Mikayla. We thank God for blessing our family. Great is Thy Faithfulness!



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www.calvinseminary.edu/development

De Wit, Al and Ann (Van Velzen), 708 S. Stephen Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57103. Parents of Carol & Tom Van Den Bosch, Dale & Jeanne De Wit, Vince & Diane Bonnema; Grandparents of 10 grandchildren; "Grandpa and Grandma Great" to 6 great-grandchildren. Happy 60th Anniversary on September 1 with love from your family!

Holwerda, Rev. Robert & Joyce (Bouma): Sept. 16, 2009. 3427 Brookview Ct., Hudsonville, MI 49426. Children: Bob & Gayle (Karen & Mark Guzicki [Morgan, Gavin, Riley]), Kris and Wade Eldean [Ryan], Kelli & Dave Slager [Adalyn], Kathy), Dan & Trish (Renee & Ben Saarloos [Alex], Karla & Zac Sorenson, Stacy & Ben Brenner [Grace, Olivia], Kelly

& Jilliane Buekema), Marilyn & George Lanting (Heather & Kelly Kuchera, Rebecca & Mike Sales [Michael, Jack], Anna & Pete Graham [Noah, Dylan], George & Andrea [Emma, Jordan, Bridgette], Ken & Jill, Jennifer), Sherri, Steve & Sheri (Jonathon, Amanda, Jason). An Open House will be held on Sat., Sept. 19 from 1:30 to 3:30 at First CRC, 32 St., Hudsonville, MI.

Hunderman, Henry & Emma (Valk) 938 Amber View, Byron Center, celebrated 60 years of God's blessings Aug. 25. Thank the Lord for family, Doug & Dorothy Hunderman, Bob & Marcia Mulder, Don & Bev Hunderman, 11 Grandchildren, 12 Great Children

Vander Woude, Stewart & Carolyn (Hendrikse), 13802 S. Lawler, Crestwood, IL 60445, celebrated 60 years of marriage on Aug. 10. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren. Cheryl and Charles Marcus, Marcia and Charles Kooger, James and Jayne Vander Woude, John and Jana Vander Woude, 18 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Walcott, Elmer and June (Pruim), 4468 Spruce Ct, Muskegon, MI 49441. We praise God with our parents for 60 years of marriage on August 5. Thank you for sharing with us and showing us His love and grace in your lives.

Wallinga, Louis & Ethel (Mulder) of Grand Haven, MI, celebrated their 60th Anniversary on August 3, 2009. We rejoice with you and praise God for His faithfulness! Love, Jerry & Gay, Jack & Mary, Joel & Beth, Jim & Patti, and families.

55th Anniversary

Van't Land, Ted and Irene, August 26. We wish you God's strength and love in the years to come. With love from your children and grandchildren.

50th Anniversary

Balkema, Andrew & Marguerite (Vanderby) 12708 Raven Way, Cedar Lake, IN 46303 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on September 4, 2009. Children and Grandchildren: Larry & Beverly Musch (Kyle), Robert & Patricia Balkema (Melissa), Howard & Carlene Jabaay (Tyler and Travis), Patrick & Lavonne Ganzel. We give thanks to God for all His blessings!

Brace Dave and Rose 3424 Fruitvale Rd. Montague, MI 49437 celebrate 50 years of marriage on Sep. 11, 2009 with their family. "Tell it to your children and your children's children, Jesus must be Lord of their lives."



Brouwer Dale and Barb (Mersman) of Hudsonville, MI celebrated their 50th anniversary on August 6. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren! We thank God for the Christian home He provided us through you!

Daane, John & Gail (Slager) of Huntley, IL, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Sept. 5, 2009. Their children: Larry & Jan Overzet, Rick & Judy Cook and Roger & Sandy Wishnew. 10 Grandchildren. Thanks be to God

DeBlaey, Gordon and Marcie (Koning), 2120 Rolling Hill SE, Grand Rapids 49546, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 21. Children and grandchildren: Bob and Mary Jackson (Philip, Ellen, Griffin, Drew), Michael DeBlaey. Thank God for many blessings.

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Church Positions Available

New Hope Community CRC, Kincheloe, MI, is seeking a pastor. We have an exciting, diverse congregation with a passion for community outreach. We have strong ministries in place, and there is the potential for more to be developed. We are a small rural community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our current membership is about 40 member families. To obtain more information or a church profile please contact Joni Andary at 906-478-3205 or jandary@centurytel.net.

Bethel CRC of Waupun Wisconsin is accepting resumes for a Youth Pastor position available May 2009. Please submit resumes by email, waupunbethelcra@att.net.

LaGlance Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full time pastor. The hamlet of LaGlance is located in North Central Alberta. A church profile is available from the search committee by emailing natashavandellen@hotmail.com or by calling Nick (780)568-3906 or John (780)568-4141.

Youth Director Clinton CRC seeks a dynamic and energetic leader for our youth and young adult ministries. We are praying for a person that has a love for Christ, a passion for youth, good interpersonal and leadership skills. Working with an advisory committee you will develop

a relational ministry from a reformed perspective. For a complete job description, send résumés to Clinton CRC, P. O. Box 697, Clinton, ON NOM 1L0 or email to clintoncra@tcc.on.ca and we will send the description to you.

Interim Pastor Kincardine CRC of Kincardine Ontario Canada is seeking an Interim pastor. We are a small congregation located on the shore of Lake Huron. Assist us in carrying forward our ministry. For more information please Contact Stuart Vandervaart at stuvan@hurontel.on.ca

Sully CRC, a multi-generational congregation of 145 families, in the heart of Iowa, is seeking a full-time pastor, due to the retirement of our pastor in October, 2009. We place a high value on the ministry of the Word from a solid Biblical worldview. We are seeking an effective preacher and a good communicator committed to the Reformed faith, who will challenge us to be obedient in our daily lives. The candidate should be able to establish Christ-centered relationships, be compassionate, and have strong inter-personal skills, not only with adults, but also youth. Direct inquiries to Rick Fopma, 641-891-0483, rcfopma@netins.net.

Ann Arbor CRC The Ann Arbor CRC (Michigan) has an exciting ministry opportunity for a full-time pastor. We are looking for a qualified person to join our pastoral team taking on primary responsibility for the needs of family and youth. He/she will also participate in worship leading and preaching with our Pastor of Worship Ministries. The job description comes with the built-in flexibility to shape the position based on the selected candidate's gifts and interests. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.aacr.org/about/pastor-position>, e-mail AACRCSearch@aacrc.org, or call 734-255-1452.

Trinity Christian Reformed Church is seeking a Spirit-filled pastor who is focused on Biblically-centered preaching and is comfortable with a blended worship style. Trinity CRC is located in the welcoming community of Fremont, MI, which is forty-five miles north of Grand Rapids, MI. Desired person will challenge and encourage listeners in their daily walk with God as well as help them explore their gifts in various areas. Members at Trinity have a heart for people and desire leadership from the pastor to build on existing outreach programs. For more information about this position, please contact Search Committee Chairperson, Lon Vredevelde, at (231) 924-0893 or email at vred@ncats.net

Dykstra, Tom & Lois (Dykehouse) observed 50 years of marriage on August 11. A time of remembering and celebration was spent with children and grandchildren. We thank God for His goodness

Hoekstra, John & Sally (Dykstra), 2553 Kraft Ave. G.R. MI 49546 will celebrate 50 years together on Sept. 25. Children: John & Deb Hoekstra (Jonathan, Emily), Rick & Michelle Ehinger (Doug, Parker), Andy & Lori Idema (Mike & Matt), Erik & Vicki Decker (Zach & Rochelle), Mike & Bonnie Barstow (Hannah & Mia). We love you.

Honeyford, Jim and Jerri, of Sunnyside WA, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Sept 1. Love and Thanks from your children; Jeanne & Carl Boersen (Kari, Kevin & Kyle), Julie & Sanjeev Vaishampayan (Alex, Nicholas, Zachary & Isabel), Jayne & Henry Hammingh (Jack & Joshua), Jim & Michelle (Ben & Kate).

Huttenga, Ron & Wilma (Koster) are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary Sept. 25, 2009, with children and grandchildren, Terry, Lisa, Jacob, Jared, Kelsey, and Kyleigh; Kevin & Sharon Van Drie, Eric, Andrew & Sarah; Larry, Becky, Allyson & Joshua. An Open House will be held at Aetna CRC fellowship hall on Sat. Sept. 26, 2009 1-4 p.m. at 3459 S. 8 Mile Rd, Falmouth, MI 49632. "Please no gifts."

Laniga, Vernon and Anna Marie (Schmidt) Sept. 5. Children and grandchildren: Karla Laniga, Myra and Gary Warners (Leah, David, Adam, Hannah), Keith and Kerry Laniga (Kinsey, Kane), Paul Laniga (deceased). Congratulations! Lam. 3:23b



Rice, Dr. Rodger and Ruth, 2310 Ridgewood Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, celebrated 50 years of marriage on May 28. Way to go Mom and Dad! Your children and grandchildren love you dearly. We marvel at your graceful, grounded approach to life. We thank God for the legacy of faith

you implanted in us and that is further sown in our children. We are moved by your rugged faithfulness through life's peaks and valleys. We laugh that you can laugh at yourselves. We are astounded at the strength of two hearts, bound as one in love. May God continue to bless you as you have blessed us. Mark and Caroline (Harrison & Josie), Sheri and Paul Mulder (Stephen & Lydia), Eric and Beth (Olivia & Jack).

RINDELS, Ken & Christina (VandeVoort), celebrated their 50th anniversary on July 16. Congratulations and love from your children: Brian & Carolyn, Shari, Sheila & Rob and your 3 grandchildren.

Obituaries

Broene, Mrs. Ruth; age 88; July 26, 2009; She was preceded in death by her husband Richard G. Broene. She is survived by her children: Ellen and Gary Bouwens, Rick and Glenda Broene; brother: John and Maegene Selvius; brother-in-law and sisters-in-law: Herman (Ruth) Broene, and Annette Broene, several grandchildren and great grandchildren, and nieces and nephews.

Euwema, Josephine, nee Wezeman, 99, 05640 Poplar Av, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Member of Lombard CRC. Wife of the late Harry Euwema. Aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Hamstra, Mr. John Martin; age 89; July 25, 2009; John was preceded in death by his dear wife, Evelyn. He is survived by his daughter: Carol; sons: Phil (Judi), Dave (Renee), Steve; grandchildren: Amber (John), Ashleigh (Micah), Alex, Luke, Keith, Ben, Andrew; great grandson: Ezra; brother: Mart (Laurie); brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Bud and June Koorndyk.

Ippel, John; aged 86; July 16, 2009; 2342 Radcliff Village Dr. S. E. Grand Rapids, MI 49546; and formerly from Sheboygan, WI; He is survived by his wife, Ruth (Zylman); children: Jack (Cindy), Steve (Kathy), Jane (Phil Hilbrand) and Patricia (deceased); 8 grandchildren; 8 great grandchildren; brothers: Henry (Marion), Les (Janet); sisters: Marie Ten Pas and Anne Brasser.

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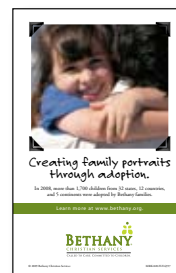
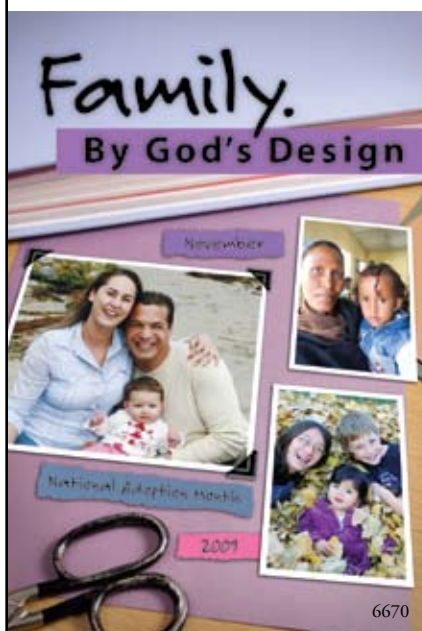
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Kars, Mrs. Dena (Versteeg); aged 91; July 29, 2009; 1443 Lancashire Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508; She was preceded in death by her husband John Kars and infant daughter, Gloria Mae Kars. She is survived by her children: Ruth and Paul Bajema, Robert and Marilyn Kars, Leroy and Vickey Kars, Norman and Joan Kars, Calvin and Kari Kars; 15 grandchildren; 8 great grandchildren; brother-in-law: Allison Sluiter.

Lautenbach, Mrs. Frances J.; age 87; July 27, 2009; 1440 Hazen St. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507. She was preceded in death by her brother, Robert Rietema and sister, Elaine Rietema. She is survived by her husband of 60 years, Sidney; children: Tom and Sheila Lautenbach, Carol and Bill Schuster; grandchildren: Tricia and Thomas Stortebom (great grandson, Ian), Ross Lautenbach & special friend Katie Egli, Lisa Lautenbach, Todd Schuster, and Brent Schuster; sister: Mary Lou and Frank Diepstra.

Medendorp, Mrs. Christine; age 87; July 27, 2009; 2043 Mallard S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by her daughters: Christie Lynn and Joni Sue Medendorp. She is survived by her husband: Rev. John C. Medendorp; daughter: Heidi and Ron Hofman of Grand Rapids; son: Rev. John W. and Susan Medendorp of Houston, TX; grandchildren: Laura and Matt, Mark and Stephanie, Sarah and fiancé Joey, Isabel and Michael, Belkis, John C., Scott, William, Charis; great granddaughter: Anna; brother: Marvin and Irene Veltkamp; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: Helen Veltkamp, Virginia Medendorp, Wayne and Gen Medendorp, Sheryl Medendorp.

Ouwehand, Rev. Tony John. The council of the first Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, is sad to announce that one of their own has finished his journey on earth on July 27, 2009. Tony was a much appreciated member of First Church and as pastor of visitation he will be missed. We commend his wife Anna and his children as well as the extended family to God's comforting presence. The Council of First Hamilton CRC, Hamilton, Ontario.

Rodenhouse, Edward J.; aged 76; July 21, 2009; 3594 Reeds Crossing Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Gloria (VanderGalien); sons: Edward C. (wife Tina, daughters Ashleigh

and Alisha), and Randall (wife Haley, children Lacey and Robert); sisters: Barbara VanDyken (husband Seymour) and Maxine (Dennis – deceased) Verberg; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Sid and Louise VanderGalien, Bill and Hanky Willemstyn, Henry and Joan VanderGalien, Jim and Judy VanderGalien, and Sally (Bill – deceased) VanderGalien.

Rottman, Theodore A., 77, went to be with his Savior on July 17, 2009. He will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Ellen; children: Russ Rottman, Jill (Ron) Hausmann, Julie (Dave) VanHaitma, and Matt (Sarah) Rottman; and grandchildren: Stephanie, Samantha, Mitchel, Carissa, Jackson, Grace, Corynn, Annaliese, Madelynn, and Katelynn. He will also be missed by his brothers Bob Rottman, Jack (Freddie) Rottman, Fritz (Carol) Rottman and brothers-in-law Duane (Adele) VanderBrug, Mel (Barb) VanderBrug, and Gord (Cathy) VanderBrug.

Scholten, John, age 89, of Jenison Mich. went to his heavenly home on June 15, 2009. He is lovingly remembered by his wife of 67 years, Stevena, his daughters Judy (Peter) Staal, and Linda Dykema; 7 grandchildren, and 19 great grandchildren; brothers Gerrit and Jay, and sisters Gladys Warners and Joanne Dekoster.

Van Andel, Stena (nee Vander Meer), age 99, July 8, 2009 at the Bethany Home in Ripon, California. She was preceded in death by her husband Michael Van Andel in 1997. Surviving are her children: Geri (Bruce) Hekman, Anita (Gary) Hasper, and Michael (Evelyn) Van Andel, 11 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren, and 2 great-great grandchildren

VanNiejenhuis, Anje (Scheper) 91, of Edmonton, Alberta, August 1, 2009. Born in Holwierde, Groningen, The Netherlands, she immigrated to Canada in 1949. She was predeceased by her husband of 52 years, Jan (1997) and her daughter, Cathy (1998). She is survived by sons Bert (Erna), Herman (Deadre), Cecil (Karen); daughters Geri (Norm) Mantel and Monica (Ron) VandenBrink, 16 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren and one brother in The Netherlands.

Employment

Ada Christian School is seeking candidates for the position of principal beginning in the 2010-2011 school year. The principal is the top administrative position at Ada Christian School and is responsible for all aspects of instruction, personnel, operations and public relations.

Ada Christian School is a member of Christian Schools International, an association of Christian schools in the Reformed tradition. It is located ten miles east of Grand Rapids, Michigan in a growing and economically vibrant area. The school has grown to serve its current enrollment of more than 500 kindergarten through 8th grade students and 130 preschoolers and moved to a new expanded campus in 2002. In its 50-year history, the school has maintained a reputation for integrating Christian faith with academic excellence. Additional information about Ada Christian is located on the school website at adachristian.org.

For more information please visit our website at www.adachristian.org or to request an application packet, please contact searchcommittee@adachristian.org.

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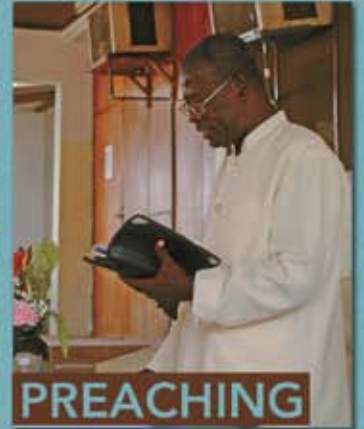
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TEACHING

in their synagogues



PREACHING

the good news of
the kingdom

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless,



like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:35-38



For over three decades, the Luke Society has been following its unique call to equip Christian health professionals to serve the needs of their own people. We come alongside these visionaries who have a passion to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the poor. Over these three decades, the Lord has led us to ministry partnerships in 30 countries on five continents.

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Kuyper College alumni are making a difference in more than 50 countries around the world. As social workers, pastors, teachers, worship leaders, professors, accountants, healthcare providers, and in many other professions they are helping to build God's Kingdom.

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Kuyper's high-quality education is very affordable. Compared with other Christian colleges, Kuyper's tuition is significantly lower—an average of \$6,000 less per year. In addition, Kuyper offers many scholarship opportunities.

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As a ministry-focused Christian leadership college we put biblical faith first in the educational experience of our students, and nurture that faith in every aspect of our academic and professional majors. We also put it to work in service to others through internship opportunities. A Reformed worldview, and the results-driven commitment of our students to lives of service, make Kuyper College unique—and set it apart from other colleges.

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Punch Lines

Construction began on a bar in a small town. The local church started a campaign of prayers and petitions to stop it. A week before the bar was to open, lightning struck the building and burned it to the ground.

The bar owner sued the church, stating that the prayers were responsible for the loss of the building. The church, through its lawyer, denied any responsibility.

The judge looked over the paperwork and said, "I don't know how I'm going to decide this. We have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer, and a church that doesn't!"

—Dick Bylsma

A father is telling his son bedtime stories to help him sleep. The only sound is the murmur of the dad's voice.

Two hours pass, and there's silence in the room. The mother creeps to the door and whispers, "Is he asleep, dear?"

"Yes, Mommy," says her son.

—John Veltkamp

T rue story:

Little Brother: "Someday when I'm older, I want to fly an airplane up to see Jesus."

Big Sister: "No, Jesus is higher than that. You'll need to take a rocket!"

—Ryan Van Der Bill

My 5-year-old grandson was in the den with me and saw a picture of me on the wall. It was taken several years ago. He asked me who that was, and I told him it was Grandma.

After studying it a few minutes he asked, "Is that when you were new?"

—Nancy VanLopik

One Sunday my wife and family traveled to a very small country church to witness a baptism. The church had no nursery, so our four kids and two foster children nicely filled a pew in the tiny sanctuary. When it came time for the offering, I thought it proper to have even the younger ones participate. So I gave a quarter to D.J., my 3-year-old foster son on

my left, and told him to put it in the plate. Then I turned to Christian, my other 3-year-old son, with the same instructions.

I soon realized I hadn't been quite precise enough.

While I had my back to D.J., he exuberantly ran to the pastor at the front of the church, the quarter in his outstretched hand, cheerfully shouting, "Here's your money! Here's your money!"

If only all church members gave so joyfully.

—Greg Schinkel

Q Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Q. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

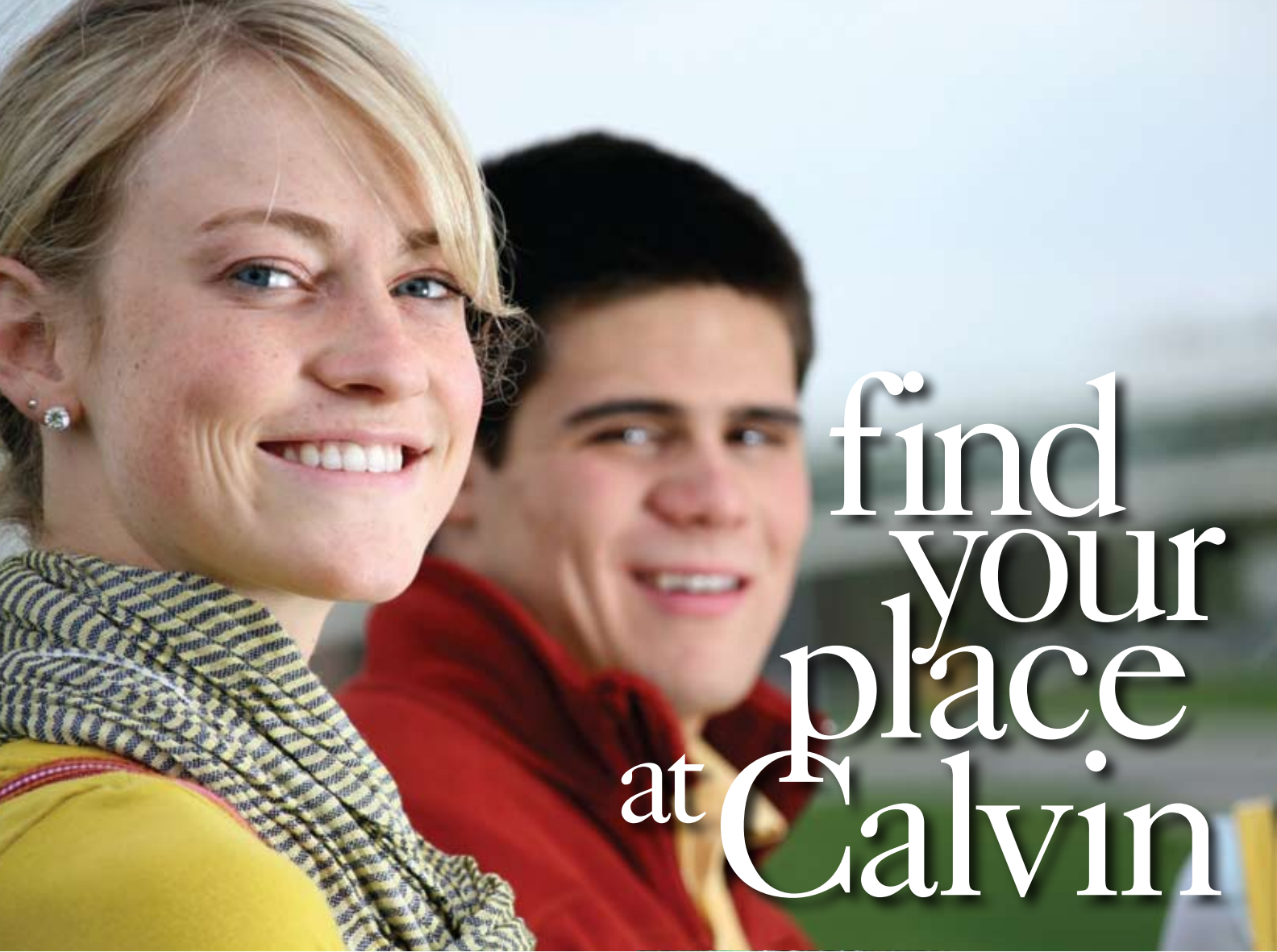
A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

—Cyndi Boss



John Calvin traveled with Calvin College alumnus Rick Persenaire in May to visit with the children at Bweya Christian Children's Home. Bweya is an Anglican ministry started for the care of children orphaned by Idi Amin. They currently care for 67 children orphaned by AIDS.

Calvin College alumni Bonnie (Persenaire) Zigterman, Paul Zigterman, Rick Persenaire, and Troy VanDyke and Calvin Seminary alumnus Rev. Cal Aardsma have joined with several others to form Ugandan Orphanage Relief Fund (UORF). This fund provides resources to eight Ugandan churches and organizations, which care for nearly 1,000 orphans in foster care or residential children's homes. For more about UORF, visit www.uorf.org.



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