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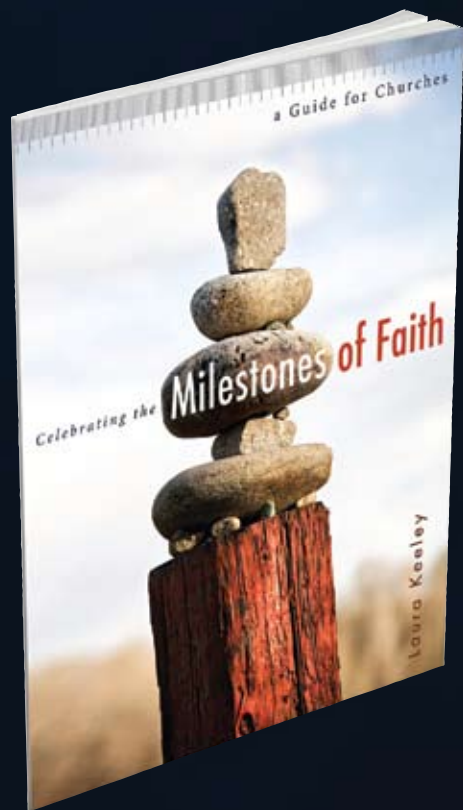
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BANNER

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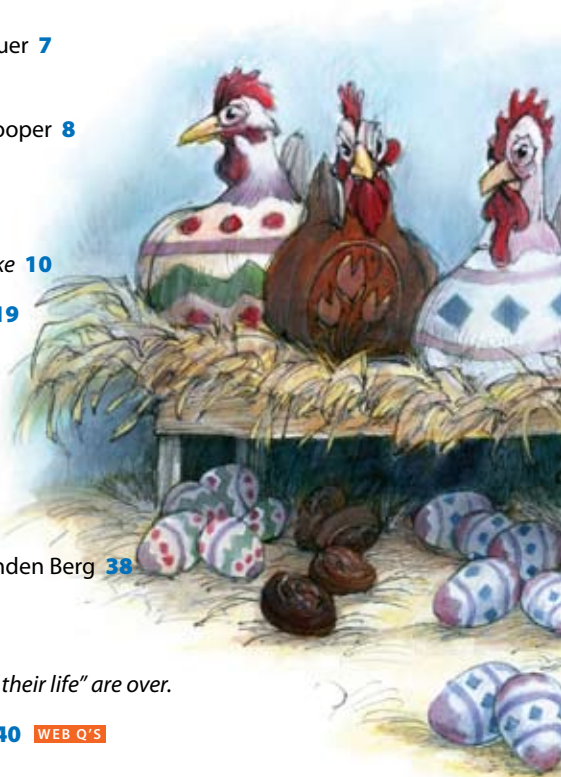
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Cover: No, they're not fishing. From left, Nate De Koster, Rick Duimstra, Troy Boeskool, Sherwin Koning, and Dave Duimstra from Trinity CRC in Grandville, Mich., donned waders to clean up a portion of Rush Creek, which runs through the church's property (see "Earthkeeping in Action," p. 35).

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERRY KONING

Numerical Nonsense?

AT THE STOVE, WAITING FOR THE RICE TO BOIL. Just finished Stephen De Wit's article "When to Stop Being a Christian" (p.18). The rice still isn't done. Now what? Can't leave the stove. Eureka! A calculator is within reach. Let's see what feats of numeric legerdemain can be accomplished before dinner's on.

De Wit quotes the apostle Paul: "If for this life only we have hoped . . ." Hmm. Subtract the years I can't remember from those I can, the result is 54. Subtract the years I don't *want* to remember, and I get 52. Park that number in Memory Plus. Now calculate the average life span of all my immediate family members: 78. Take the stored number and divide by that average. Tadah! I've blown through 0.66666666 percent of my anticipated conscious earthly existence.

Interesting number. The simple division defeats my calculator's ability to provide an accurate result. It's a never-ending, repeating number: 0.6666 . . . spiraling off into infinity. Yet "6" is the biblical number for anything *but* infinity. It's the number of humanity, that being the day on which Adam was created. *Adam* comes from *adamah*, Hebrew for *earth*—from which Adam was created and to which he returned, as we shall too, if Jesus tarries.

Symbolically, 6 is the number that approaches but never reaches the number of perfection (think Psalm 8). It approaches God's number, the number 7, the number of a fully complete and hallowed week.

That's a surprisingly good numerical reminder for me "to count [my] days" (Ps. 90:12).

Our culture thinks it's morbid to reflect on our death. It covers beneath tons of feel-good entertainment focusing on the here and now. Yet the "forever young" generation is inexorably moving into the winter of life. We need more reminders—for wisdom's sake (Eccles. 7:2). See Al Hoksbergen's article on cremation (p. 20).

The rice has boiled and needs to sit. Now what to calculate? Hmm. Jesus *gives* us what we cannot hope to achieve ourselves: eternal life. Can he deliver?

He's the Son of Man, the best man who ever lived. So let's assign him the highest possible human number, 6.9999 . . . repeated to infinity. The Greek letter *chi* starts the word *Christos*, meaning *Christ*. It's our letter *X*. So let's let $X = 6.9999 \dots$

Now let's play with that number. Multiply both sides of the equation by 10 and we get $10X = 69.9999 \dots$ Now subtract the former equation from the latter and we get $9X = 63$ (the repeating 9's all cancel out). Now we divide 63 by 9 and we get $X=7$, the number for God! That proves that one number, 6.999 . . . actually *equals* another: 7. The highest number of man equals God's number. So it is with Christ. This greatest man is also God, and, therefore, *able* to defeat death.

Amazing how a bit of meaningless play away from screens and earbuds allows our minds to wander into things eternal.

The rice is done. Christ has risen. Time to tuck into the first of 20,805 meals I can reasonably expect to consume before joining *him* for dinner. ■



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta.

The highest
number of
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So it is with
Christ.

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Life Is Like Cheese

I F I WERE AN ATHEIST (you'll be pleased to know I am not), I would scan my fellow lumps of biomass and conclude, "Human life is the highest form of cheese." It would be hard to conclude otherwise.

Each person is unique, each flavored by a lifelong accumulation of moments, each person best enjoyed when surrounded by things that complement and contrast. Just like cheese.

Brad Kessler writes about cheese in his marvelous book *Goat Song: A Short History of Herding and the Art of Making Cheese*. He talks about the fact that no two cheeses are alike:

Every raw-milk cheese is an artifact of the land; it carries the imprint of the earth from which it came. A cheese—even the fresh *chèvre*—is never just a thing to put in your mouth. It's a living piece of geography. . . . Winemakers talk about the *terroir* of a particular wine, how a place's geology, drainage, soil, plants, and weather all contribute to its vintage. You can't create *terroir* artificially. It's the gift of a place. . . . Everything around us contributed to our *terroir*.

I like that. As human beings, everything around us, every moment of each day, contributes to our *terroir*, resulting in what we call a life.

But unlike cheese, we don't age on a shelf as inactive bystanders in our own progress. We are a living piece of geography, our story shaped by where we have been, who our traveling companions are, and what we bump into and chase each day.

Maybe the apostle Paul smelled the pungent aroma and watched the curds separate from the whey as goat's milk was poured into molds at a stall next to his tentmaking shop. Perhaps it prompted him to say, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be trans-

formed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

Paul knew that either the world will flavor us or Christ will. Everything contributes to our *terroir*.

It is amazing how tragedy can deepen faith in one person while ransacking it from another. The death of an infant moves one parent to cry out, "How can I believe in God?" Another asks, "How can I not?" Everything flavors us—joy and sorrow alike. But how, exactly? Why does faith sour with age in some individuals while it ripens in others? It's amazing that the same universe that causes one person to fall down before God in worship causes another to just keep looking.

Carl Sagan spent a lifetime gazing at the stars. He once gave a lecture at Cornell University where he showed the fantastic portrait of Earth shot from Voyager 1 at a range of 4 billion miles. In that photo the earth appears as a single pixel against the empty black of space, a pale blue dot. Sagan commented, "There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known."

Yes, we ought to deal more kindly with each other. But what a wonder that a little lump of cheese on a dot in space could contemplate such thoughts!

Thank God for his loving work of molding us into his image, day by day, grace upon grace, each person meticulously handcrafted by the Artisan, just like cheese. ■



Rev. Jay Knochenhauer is enjoying his first year as senior pastor of Third CRC, Zeeland, Mich. He and his wife, Mabelle, dream of a

sizable grant that will enable them to tour Europe to research a book on the historic relationship between Christian monasteries and the art of making wine and cheese.

WHERE GOD HAS
GIVEN YOU GOD'S
INTIMATE NAME,
YOU ALSO HAVE BEEN
GIVEN YOUR OWN
NAME. IT TAKES
AWHILE; IT TAKES
SOME LISTENING,
SOME SILENCE,
SOME SUFFERING,
PROBABLY. IT TAKES
SOME WAITING,
DESIRING; IT TAKES
SOME HOPING. BUT
FINALLY WE
DISCOVER THAT
PLACE WHERE WE KNOW
WHO WE ARE;
WE KNOW WHAT
GOD SAID.

— RICHARD ROHR

Ending the U.S. Embargo on Cuba

“This is an injustice that causes suffering for the very weakest people.”

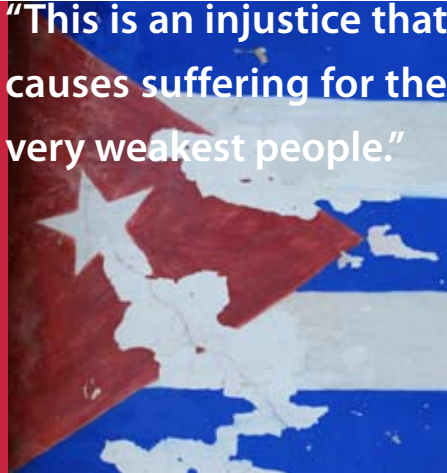


PHOTO BY TWICEPIX

FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY our denomination has maintained a close bond with the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. As the February *Banner* highlighted, through God’s faithfulness the Cuban churches have grown and flourished despite years of oppression by the Castro regime (“The CRC’s Cuban Bond”). But an important addition to that story is how the U.S. embargo has continued to hurt Christian ministry in Cuba.

Although the Christian Reformed Church in North America almost never takes official stances on specific policy reforms, the denominational leadership began advocating to end the embargo in 1998, believing it detrimental to the ministry of the church in two ways.

First, the embargo restricts the ability of U.S. members to fulfill the great commission of Matthew 28. Although Canadian members can engage in ministry in Cuba without restriction, the U.S. government denies its citizens the freedom to travel to and give financial support to Cuban churches. Missionaries face criminal prosecution by the U.S. government for visiting without a permit. In 2004 the U.S. Treasury Department increased restrictions on religious organizations and denied Christian Reformed

World Missions a travel license altogether. Although the license was regained after substantial lobbying, the Treasury whittled it down to only a handful of predetermined names.

Second, the embargo hurts the people of Cuba. So great is their concern that our brothers and sisters in the Cuban CRC formally requested our assistance in advocating for reform: “As a church, the feeling of the majority is that this is an injustice that causes suffering for the very weakest people,” they stated. “For this reason, we condemn it and pray to God that it disappears very soon. . . . We request that our churches . . . use their good relations with the government of the United States to let it know our desire. It is inadmissible that such a noble and giving nation, where there are so many Christians, could allow a law that greatly harms the children, the elderly, the sick, and the most weak.”

After prayerful consideration, the boards of World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, along with the CRCNA Board of Trustees acting on behalf of Synod, approved this powerful request in 1998. More than a decade later, our advocacy efforts continue.

God calls us to spread the gospel, to nurture Christ’s church, and to work for the removal of barriers that prevent the fulfillment of that mandate. The U.S. embargo of Cuba is one such barrier.

To learn how to take action to stop the U.S. embargo of Cuba, visit crcjustice.org. ■



Catherine Cooper works for the Christian Reformed Church’s Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Kudos

Seldom do I read *The Banner* and come away greatly blessed and encouraged, but with the March 2010 issue I certainly did. Several articles were just great, among them “Studying the Belhar in Iowa,” “The Journey of Grief,” and the piece to be framed by all of us: “Our Great Treasures.” The piece on “True Confessions” was pretty good also.

Keep up this kind of work, and I will read with much anticipation.

—George McGuire
Springville, Ala.

Thank you for “Decoding Our Good News” (February 2010). So often I find myself caught up in jargon when explaining the gospel. This was brought home to me in our GEMS club, when, after a particularly moving time of worship, one little girl came up to me and asked in a concerned tone, “I’d like to let Jesus into my heart, but if I do, will he be able to get out again?” Bryan Berghoef’s article “How (Not) to Talk About God” was also a great reminder. Like the apostle Paul, we need to “become all things to all people, that some might be saved” (1 Cor. 9:22).

—Valerie Van Kooten
Pella, Iowa

In his excellent article “Be Perfect?” (February 2010), Shiao Chong gives us the kind

LETTERS

of helpful insight into the Scriptures that we need more of. For many of us, the Bible contains lots of passages that are hard to understand. Well-trained, clear-headed ministers can help a lot. Thank you.

—W.S. Vanderploeg
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Invisible Disability

As the parent of an adopted FASD child, I feel compelled to respond to Joan Rinker's article on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder ("An Invisible Disability," February 2010).

Rinker described my son perfectly. However, as sad and grief-laden as the article is, my story has a lovely twist: God placed my son into my life to teach me some priceless lessons through the horrific effects of FASD. Through my son, I learned not only to lean on God like never before, but above all discovered the unconditional love God has for each one of us—even during the years I was blamed for nearly all my son's troubles. My son is a gift from above, but I need my heart near God's to carry on.

—Theresa Bakker
Townsend, Ontario

I am an obstetrician with subspecialty training in maternal-fetal medicine and complicated pregnancies. That training was at Wayne State University, which has done long-term research into FASD. While it would seem common sense to avoid all alcohol during pregnancy, no science suggests that *small* amounts can cause injury to fetuses. To suggest otherwise puts undue burden on those who have special-needs kids and who had an occasional drink during pregnancy.

—Dr. Russ Jelsema
Grand Rapids, Mich.

In all my work in child welfare, alcohol was the consistent part of the picture—

I estimated it to be in at least 90 percent of the cases. More sophisticated measures today cite 90 percent of cases as stemming from all forms of addiction, but alcohol is still believed to be the leading cause of family breakdown. And generally other drugs don't cause permanent damage the way alcohol consumption does. Even a small dent in these numbers would be great and well worth the cost.

—Jake Terpstra
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Peace Talks

I was heartened to read that both the CRC and the Mennonites agreed on a Remembrance Day service that focuses on all war dead, rather than on only those who have died in military service ("CRC, Mennonites Discuss War and Peace," February 2010).

According to Johns Hopkins University, the Iraq war has caused the deaths of more than 500,000 children. And that figure does not include the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Americans—men, women, and children—who have been injured and psychologically traumatized.

—Dave Thomas
Paterson, N.J.

Hair Reformers

I would like to tell you the story of "Calvin's: The Hair Reformers," whose sign was featured in Punch Lines in the February *Banner*. Phil, the owner, said that as he considered options for the name, he thought of his beloved dog, Calvin. Knowing the history of John Calvin, he thought of the word *Reformed* and made the connection to hair.

On a side note, I was puzzled by the following comment with the photo: "[They] spotted this sign in—of all places—Bozeman, Mont." There are four Christian Reformed churches in the valley and dozens of other churches here as

well. I'm not sure why it would be such a surprise to see a sign like this here, but as they say, Montana is the "last best place" of all places.

—Anne Kingma
Manhattan, Mont.

Neglected Training

Christian Reformed World Missions' vision "to walk alongside local congregations" can't happen unless the churches also want that ("Ministry Shares Promote Missions," p. 29, January 2010). The attendance at all three missions-training conferences I attended was atrociously low. CRWM and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee are sending out staff to lead full-day gatherings, but apparently the churches don't see the worth. Encouraging speakers go unheard; excellent workshops, unattended. In my experience, only well-prepared short-term missions teams should be sent out, so come and get training! Delegate deacons and mission committees to attend. See the online schedule at crwm.org, under Resources: Missions Education & Engagement.

—Rev. Lou Wagenveld
(retired missionary pastor)
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Corrections

The Banner apologizes to Howard Van Dam, especially, for giving him the wrong spouse and employer in the March 2010 news feature "Horror, Hope, and Help in Haiti" (the title of which we also messed up). Howard is married to Ruth Van Dam, and both work for Christian Reformed World Missions.

You may also be amused to know that the error in the March corrections (p. 9) was not intentional.

NEWS

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Helping Haiti

From a spaghetti supper in a church basement to a lavish dinner for high society, Christian Reformed people have been raising money to help Haiti rebuild following the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince.

By the end of February, donations to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee topped \$6.7 million, the most ever raised by CRWRC from churches and individuals after a natural disaster. More than half of that came from Canadians, which means the

Canadian federal government will match each dollar.

In addition to the food-aid distribution well underway, CRWRC recently worked with a local group to distribute 900 tarps in one day, crucial as Haiti's rainy season begins.

CRWRC U.S. director Andrew Ryskamp said the outpouring of support for CRWRC was both overwhelming and humbling. "It confirms the trust that our supporters and churches have in our strategy of supporting the local economy in our relief purchases, and rebuilding the communities with the resources already present," he said.

He noted that in situations like this, donation of funds is always the best approach. "It helps CRC ministries come alongside of Haitian believers to rebuild Haiti together," he said.

There isn't enough space to cover everything church members have been doing to raise money for Haiti, but these pages contain a few of those stories. For more information, see www.crcna.org and click on "Help Haiti."

—Gayla R. Postma

Rocking It for Haiti

Within days of the earthquake in Haiti, students at Southern Heights Christian Reformed Church, in Kalamazoo, Mich., organized a rock-a-thon to support the ministry of a Christian orphanage located just outside of Port-au-Prince.

For nine hours, 18 middle- and high-schoolers rocked non-stop in chairs at the church. They raised nearly \$4,600 for God's Littlest Angels, the Haitian orphanage where a young member of Southern Heights spent the first part of his life.

The orphanage's building survived the earthquake, but the orphanage anticipates working with many more newly orphaned children who will need love and assistance. It is also helping the surrounding community with clothing, medical supplies, and more.

Ken VanderLugt, director of student ministry at Southern Heights, sees the call of God's Spirit in the effort of the young rockers, whom he characterizes as mission-minded with a passion for service to others.

"They are truly the hands of Jesus for our hurting world," he said.

—Henry Huisjen



KAREN VANDERLUGT

Gina Seifert (left), Kate McLain (center), and Morgan Locker rock for Haiti.

Concert of Prayer

When local pianist Serge Mazerand wanted to offer his musical talent in aid of Haiti, Betsy Gesch, a deacon at Telkwa Christian Reformed Church in British Columbia, came up with a creative solution: a prayer concert.

For 75 minutes, while Mazerand played his quiet, healing music in a lamplit sanctuary, people offered prayers to God for the people of Haiti and for the world community, guided by psalms and written prayers.

Mazerand and participants received information about the work of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in Haiti, especially regarding CRWRC's disaster response following the Jan. 12 earthquake there.

"We are small and need to do things in our own way," said Gesch. "Music and prayer move us to give, even though giving was not the intent of the concert."

—Jenny deGroot

Vancouver Foodies Dine and Donate

There was strength in united culinary efforts as chef Jeff Van Geest and fellow chefs and musicians pulled off a gala dinner in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia.

Van Geest, who grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and has been a chef in Vancouver for 15 years, said he “was moved to do something” to help after the Jan. 12 earthquake hit Haiti, and his friends and colleagues jumped at his idea.

A seven-course meal, which included seared Pacific scallops,

coconut cream braised pork cheek salad, and local wines, was complemented by local musical talent.

With only 10 days from idea to reality, Van Geest was pleased with the final result. “Social networking, Facebook, Twitter, and old-fashioned email were huge in making this event happen,” he said. “It was a mix of CRC folks, local ‘foodies,’ and well-heeled socialites.”

Van Geest suggested Christian Reformed World Relief Committee as the beneficiary of the dinner because of the assurance

that funds raised would go directly to relief and rebuilding in Haiti. The \$31,000 raised at the dinner will be matched by the Canadian government to total \$62,000.

Van Geest’s brother, Matthew, who has worked for CRWRC and is presently in Haiti, challenged the diners to make a difference by “considering your own lifestyle and its impacts, by caring. And you do care. That is why you are here, and I thank you for that.”

—Jenny deGroot



Chef Jeff Van Geest (right) with CRWRC staff member Judy Eising.

Crazy Horse Raises Funds

Crazy Horse, a popular eatery in Holland, Mich., is usually closed Sundays, but on Feb. 21, the restaurant opened its doors for a fundraiser buffet featuring Haitian food.

Heather Laninga, a manager at the restaurant, knew her boss would support the idea. Laninga and Mark Herman, owner of Crazy Horse, are both members of Watershed, part of Harderwyk Christian Reformed Ministries.

Laninga, who has been on six mission trips to the Dominican Republic and has connections with Haitian children, wanted to serve Haitian food.

Some 20 volunteers helped put on the buffet, which included griot (marinated, fried pork), Haitian pulled pork, fried plantains, red beans and rice, and some items that are on the restaurant’s regular menu.

The restaurant received “an overwhelming outpouring of people wanting to help,” Laninga said. Crazy Horse server Sarah Bolman was happy to donate her time. “Why not? We are all on board and can give back to Haiti,” she said.



KAREN GORTER

During the three hours the restaurant was open that Sunday, 612 people came through the doors, donating \$9,800. The money went to GLOW Ministries International. According to Amber Snyder of GLOW, the money is enough to send 280,000 meals to Haiti.

—Karen Gorter

Holland, Mich., residents enjoy Haitian food in support of Haiti.



RUTH MOBILARD.DEYOUNG

Singing for Haiti

On a snowy evening in early February, 300 people basked in the warmth of the music of Supremacy 4, a group of four vocalists and a pianist, all born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

The benefit concert was held at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., and included the college’s gospel choir and a student group. A \$5 admission charge plus a free-will offering raised \$5,700 for the work of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Elim Christian Services, and two other charities.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

NEWS

Susanna Heystek organized a benefit concert for Haiti.



Alberta Girl Hosts Benefit Concert for Haiti

Susanna Heystek, 11, knew she had to do something when she watched news of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. "I knew lots could be done, and I wanted to be a part of it," she said.

Susanna and her parents, Neels and Dina Heystek, members of First Christian Reformed Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, organized a benefit concert—since Susanna plays the violin—and auction.

Neels and Dina said they were humbled by their daughter's actions. "We became aware of God's hand in leading us to deeper compassion for others through

the faith and obedience of a child," explained Dina.

Nearly 600 people attended the concert held at the church,

raising almost \$12,000 for a Christian school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and the Red Cross.

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

CALLS ACCEPTED

From CrossPoint CRC, Brampton, Ontario, to Rev. Jana VanderLaan as Pastor of Congregational Care, and to Candidate Michael VanderLaan as Pastor of Discipleship and Small Groups.

More Stories at thebanner.org

Stranded travelers find lodging at an Ontario Christian Reformed church; a pastor fights fires; a church provides warm-weather gear for an entire military unit; a chaplain runs his car on vegetable oil; and a Charlottetown GEMS group grows a daughter group on Saturdays. All these stories and more can be found on *The Banner's* website at www.thebanner.org

Chaplaincy Gets New Director, New Name

Rev. Ron Klimp has been appointed director of the Christian Reformed Church's Chaplaincy and Care Ministry by the denomination's board of trustees.

Klimp, ordained in the CRC in 1977, has a decade of chaplaincy experience, in addition to more than 20 years in parish ministry.

Klimp told trustees that a big part of his work is to recruit more chaplains. "The opportunities [for ministry] are tremendous," he said. "When people go through crises, that's when chaplains are there."

Klimp began his new role on March 1.

The office, formerly known as Chaplaincy Ministries, was renamed Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, as its mandate includes facilitating care ministry in congregations and other mission agencies.

Klimp describes the additional aspect as the intersection of clinical care and pastoral care, taking the experience of chaplains and using it to help local churches and the broader church better care for people.

—Gayla R. Postma



Rev. Ron Klimp is the CRC's new director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

GAYLA R. POSTMA

GEMS' Gift to Haiti

The annual spaghetti supper hosted by the GEMS girls club of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., had a different outcome this year. The supper is usually a fundraiser for the club's activities.

"We were planning the supper when Briannea Mansfield raised her hand and asked if we could give the money to Haiti," said Marie Ippel, one of the counselors. "Briannea told us, 'I saw on the news that thousands of kids lost their homes and thought that this would be a good way to help them.'"

Ippel said the 30 other girls in the room erupted with a cheer of agreement. They received \$400 for Haiti, double the amount their supper usually raises.

—Gayla R. Postma



PAUL J. HART

Briannea Mansfield, 13, helps serve supper to raise money for Haiti.

Canadian Justice Group Accused of Anti-Semitism

KAIROOS, an ecumenical social justice organization that includes the Christian Reformed Church, was accused of being anti-Israel or anti-Semitic, a suggestion that caused a media firestorm in Canada.

The controversial comments came from Jason Kenney, Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, shortly after the Canadian government cut funding to KAIROS. (See *The Banner's* web article at <http://tinyurl.com/yds6p7h>.)

Kenney was speaking in Israel when he said that KAIROS has taken "a leadership role in the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign [against Israel]."

The CRC has been on the KAIROS board since its inception in 2001. The CRC's director of Canadian Ministries, Rev. Bruce Adema, said the charges made about KAIROS are false.

"We continue to urge the government to reconsider the funding cut to KAIROS," he said. "The accusation that KAIROS, and therefore all member churches, is anti-Semitic is absurd. Together we have affirmed the state of Israel's right to exist, encouraged a two-state solution, and prayed for justice and peace for all—both Israelis and Palestinians."

KAIROS responded to the allegations by condemning the apparent politicization of aid that led to its funding being cut by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

"Minister Kenney's charge against KAIROS is false," KAIROS's media release stated. "Criticism of Israel does not constitute anti-Semitism, and CIDA was developed to fund international aid and not to serve political agendas.

"Minister Kenney's statement ... raises very disturbing questions about the integrity of Canadian development aid decisions."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Peter Ipema

1922-2009

Rev. Peter Ipema, 87, a gracious missionary and linguist, died Oct. 29, 2009.

Ipema graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1948. He spent much of his career in Nigeria among the Tiv people, teaching their language to many missionaries and establishing a reputation as a world authority on Islamic thought. He was greatly loved by the Tiv people, who addressed him as "Baba" (Father).

In 1974 Ipema was seconded to be the general advisor to the "Islam in Africa" project. In 1981 he became the director of the Mid-East Fellowship Center in Chicago.

In 1986 he became pastor of Terra Haute CRC in Indiana. He retired in 1987.

Ipema was predeceased by his first wife, Alice Jean Steenmeyer, in 1989. He is survived by his wife Martina "Tina" Van Staaldunin, three children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Ipema, please visit www.the-banner.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.

Colorado Minister Seeks Release from CRC



Rev. Mark Tidd

Rev. Mark Tidd is resigning from ministry in the Christian Reformed Church because the church he leads in Denver, Colo., does not comply with the denomination's position on homosexuality.

Tidd leads Highlands Church, a nondenominational church that welcomes persons involved in same-sex relationships to full participation in church life, including leadership roles.

Tidd's CRC credentials are held by Horizon Community CRC in Highlands Ranch, Colo. He has been considered "on loan" as an urban missionary to his current church.

Tidd, ordained in the CRC in 1984, said that years of pastoral work and listening to the stories of gay Christians have led him to rethink traditional interpretations of various Scripture passages.

"The same rules of interpretation that keep us from supporting slavery and preventing women from using their spiritual gifts in the church are applicable to our understanding of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters," he said.

Tidd said that while Highlands Church supports the pursuit of lifelong covenantal relationships between people, both gay and straight, it in no way encourages promiscuity.

Tidd does not accuse the Christian Reformed Church of being homophobic or hateful, and he is grateful for his many years in the denomination.

"However," he said, "I cannot in good conscience keep my credentials with the church that first grounded me as a young man in the gospel and taught me well at Calvin [Theological] Seminary."

The official position of the CRC is that homosexual orientation is not a sin, and that the church should lovingly support persons of same-sex attraction—but that explicit homosexual practice is incompatible with obedience to God as revealed in Scripture.

The denominational position can be read in full at www.crcna.org/pages/positions_homosexuality.cfm.

—Henry Huisjen

Olympic Fever Captures Canadians

Olympic fever captured the hearts of many Christian Reformed Canadians in February as the 2010 Winter Games came to Vancouver, British Columbia. But some did more than just watch the Games on television. They carried the torch, housed guests, and even won gold for Team Canada.



Eric Staal, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, won a gold medal with Canada's men's hockey team.

Rebekah Posthuma, Heidi Siebring, and Dave Alexander each took a turn carrying the Olympic torch as it wound its way across Canada.

Posthuma, a member of Maranatha CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, was chosen for being physically active and environmentally green. Siebring, a member of Terrace (B.C.) CRC, was nominated for her work with the Canadian Wildlife Federation. And Alexander, a member of Immanuel CRC in Langley, British Columbia, was nominated for his environmental efforts, including selling his second car and cycling to school.

Others volunteered for the Games, providing rides, security, lodging, or fulfilling other



Dave Alexander (photo at left) Heidi Siebring (above), and Rebekah Posthuma (right) were each honored to carry the Olympic Torch before the 2010 Winter Games.

duties. Tim VanHemert, a member of Wiloughby CRC, Langley, offered his computer skills. "I was statistician during the men and women's gold-medal curling events," he said. "It's a thrill!"

Roommates Meghan Mast and Sheri Poelman, both members of First CRC, Vancouver, opened their apartment to Olympic guests. "We'd heard so much about the negative aspects of the Olympics, about all the people being displaced in the Downtown Eastside,



and this was a tangible way we were able to turn that into a positive." The young women are donating the money they will receive to two charities.

The Olympics were literally in Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma's backyard. Bouma, the pastor of "downtown friends," a CRC church plant in Vancouver, participated in silent vigils held at strip bars and hockey games, organized by a group seeking to raise awareness of the harm done to women and children in the sex trade. "This campaign [was] not anti-Olympics but anti-exploitation of women and children," she said.

—Jenny deGroot

Hockey Stars Build Rink for Christian School

Brothers Jared, Jordan, Eric, and Marc Staal, all members of First Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, recently donated an outdoor hockey rink to their alma mater, Thunder Bay Christian School.

They also all happen to be hockey stars. Eric, Marc, and Jordan play in the National Hockey League, while Jared, the youngest, plays in the Ontario Hockey League. Both Eric and Jordan have both won Stanley Cup Championships.

"It was a different way to give back to the school," said Eric. "[I hear] the rink looks great. The kids love it—that's the main thing."

The school and the church were important foundations for the Staal brothers. "We learned a ton growing up going to Christian school and First CRC," Eric said. "We became close to God being in those places."

The brothers still live in the Thunder Bay area during the off season. "We are all very close," Eric said. "We train together every day in the summer."

The new \$40,000 rink was unveiled in January.

—Paul Delger



From left, Jared, Jordan, Eric, and Marc Staal at home in Thunder Bay, Ontario, with hockey's ultimate prize, Lord Stanley's Cup.

CRC Signs Climate Change Declaration

At its February meeting, the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees voted unanimously to sign a declaration on creation stewardship and climate change that was written last July by evangelical leaders from around the world at a meeting in Kenya.

It states that humans have not always been faithful stewards of creation and have harmed the earth through ignorance, neglect, arrogance, and greed, causing the current environmental crisis that is leading to climate change and a rise in global temperature.

Peter Vander Meulen, director of the CRC's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, presented the declaration to the trustees. "This is not about policy, about mitigating climate

change," he said, "it's about agreeing that it is happening and that humans have something to do with it."

Vander Meulen said that making this a CRC priority is not about policy and legislation but education. "We need to wait for more reports before coming out with opinions on policy," he said. "We need to take the rhetoric down and talk about the ethics of this."

Some trustees worried about the fallout of signing the declaration. Trustee Rev. Dan Mouw said, "My concern is the CRC taking a precise stand on an issue so widely debated, with strong opinions. If we endorse this, we risk politicizing it even more."

Vander Meulen pointed out that the declaration was drafted by 156 leaders of evangelicals

from around the world, not just people in North America. "We have to read it in that context," he said. "This is a moderate statement that reclaims the middle ground, without falling into the right or left ditch."

Trustee Rev. Ken Boonstra agreed that the declaration is moderate. He quoted from the CRC's own Contemporary Testimony, "Our World Belongs to God."

"We've already endorsed a document that laments our abuse of creation that has brought lasting damage to the world we've been given," he said. "Now that is a dangerous declaration."

Trustees endorsed the statement and agreed that it should be a denominational priority.

—Gayla R. Postma



Hubert Krygsman, new president of Redeemer University College

Redeemer Appoints New President

Hubert Krygsman was recently appointed president of Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

Krygsman comes to Redeemer from Dordt College where he is associate provost and director of the Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship.

Ray Pennings, chair of Redeemer's board, said, "Dr. Krygsman has a demonstrated understanding of both teaching and research at the university level, which are the two pillars of Redeemer's mission."

Krygsman, Redeemer's third president, will succeed Justin Cooper, who retires in June 2010 after 16 years in that position.

—Sophie Vandenberg

Colorado Church Repents and Reconciles

"What God has led us through is an extremely precious gift. It was a beautiful thing," said Adie Johnson. She was referring to a service of reconciliation held at Crestview Christian Reformed Church in Boulder, Colo., where she is an elder.

Back in 2004, the church made some program and schedule changes that some members found exciting, but others found too drastic. The church abandoned the changes the following year, but wounds lingered. Elder Marty Huisjen explained, "What really hurt a lot of us was that people who worshiped together, who were close friends in Christ, were now starting to doubt each other's motives."

Last fall Crestview's elders decided that reconciliation needed to be made with members both past and present. They contacted more than 80 families who had been affected—some still with the church, others who had left. Through telephone calls and



Elders Adie Johnson and Rob Cuthbertson lead a prayer of repentance.

face-to-face meetings, they attempted to right past wrongs. The final act was a service of reconciliation, held Jan. 31.

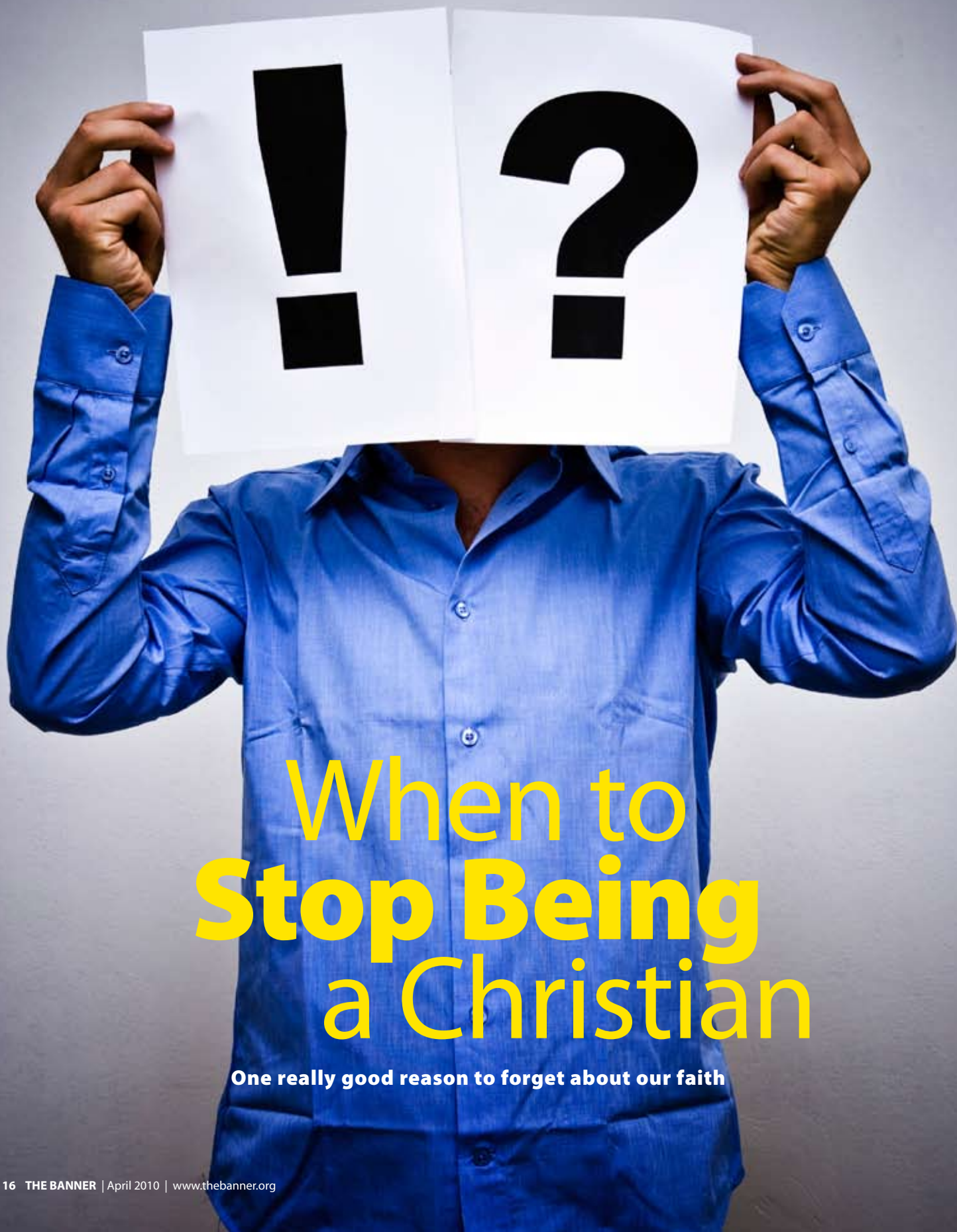
On their knees, the leaders led a prayer of repentance. "We want to confess to those times when we as a church have held too tightly to that which is not ours, the church itself," Huisjen prayed. "We acknowledge that when we put anything, even good things, before loving You and loving others, we have stepped outside Your will!"

The service concluded with communion and a prayer led by both the former pastor Rev. Mark Tidd and current pastor, Rev. Art DeBruyn.

A former Crestview attendee, Karen Boelts, reflected, "Crestview taught us a lot about love and held us up when we needed it. I don't think I ever grieved the loss of that community until the service. I am grateful to have been able to be a part of it."

—Sarah Boonstra

BY STEPHEN DE WIT



When to **Stop Being** a Christian

One really good reason to forget about our faith

● WAS ABOUT 12 YEARS OLD.

I woke up on a Sunday morning, trying to process a dream from the night before. In my dream the sky broke open (in the biblical sense) and everyone on Earth saw the silhouette of a person coming down out of the sky. For a few hours, the silhouette hovered, descending very slowly.

The world panicked. But I was pretty sure I knew what was going on. It was Jesus! He was coming back to Earth just like he'd said in the Bible.

After a few hours, the silhouette landed. But immediately I could tell something was wrong. It wasn't Jesus!

And he was very clear about that. He wanted our allegiance, he wanted our praise, but he didn't want to be called Jesus. It even seemed to offend him that some of us assumed that's who he was. He wasn't the God of the Bible, he said. He was the true god.

I woke up from this dream and didn't know what to think.

For the first time ever it occurred to me that my faith, my Lord, the religion of my family, might not be true.

It was a cruel epiphany.

From where I stood, Christianity couldn't have been more authentic. It was as real as an apple in my hand. I'd never had a reason to doubt the validity of Christianity because nothing in my world had exposed me to the possibility that my belief might be misplaced. My mail carrier was a Christian. My teachers were Christians. The mayor of my town was a Christian. Our newspaper, the *Sioux Center News*, had Bible verses on the front page.

Everything in my life reinforced the unquestioned reality that God is the one true God, the Bible is his Word, and Jesus is coming again. This was the first time I faced the intellectual possibility that Jesus was a farce.

After throwing on my church clothes and scanning my memory verse one more time, I ran upstairs to tell my parents about my dream. I looked them in their eyes and asked, "What if that really happened? What if God showed up and he wasn't our God? What would we do?"

Duped?

"Is there ever a good reason to stop being a Christian?" I asked my parents.

The apostle Paul says, "Yes." There is at least one perfectly good reason not to become or to stop being a Christian.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes to the Christians in the city of Corinth: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (vv. 13-14).

During Paul's time in history, a popular philosophical argument centered on whether it was possible for someone to be raised from the dead. (Socrates and his colleagues, in fact, fought this battle long before Jesus was born, let alone resurrected.) The debate remained at the heart of what made a Pharisee different from a Sadducee. And the Corinthians, too, clearly had questions about it.

"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith," Paul tells them. In other words, "This conversation you so casually debate is the foundation of your entire belief system!"

If not for the resurrection, our faith, according to Paul, is "useless." Later in the chapter he uses the word "futile."

If the resurrection did not actually, physically, literally happen, then Christianity is worthless.

If the resurrection did not actually, physically, literally happen, you and I should stop following Christ right now because we're wasting our lives.

If the resurrection did not actually, physically, literally happen, we Christians

should be pitied more than anyone else because we've been duped (v. 19).

Paul makes a very aggressive claim—that without the resurrection, everything Christians have ever done in the name of Christ is useless.

Is that true? Think about all the good things Christianity has given to the world.

I'm not suggesting that everything Christians have given to the world has been good—that's not the case—but there have been many good things.

Think about the millions of hungry people who've been fed by people who believe in Jesus.

Think about all the good art that came from the church—

from Beethoven, Bach, Michelangelo. Though I've never seen it, I'm told Michelangelo's statue of David is one of the most beautiful manmade objects on earth, carved out of stone by a Christian person for the Church—but useless, Paul says, without the resurrection.

Think of all the Christians who've contributed so much to the world—Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr.—don't their efforts and successes mean anything without the resurrection?

If you're like me, you want to argue with Paul and say, "But Michelangelo's statue is still beautiful and Mother Teresa was still loving and Augustine was still a genius, even if there were no resurrection. Why would their work be pointless?" >>

It was the first time I faced the intellectual possibility that Jesus was a farce.

If the resurrection did not actually, physically, literally happen, then Christianity is worthless.

Yet I think Paul would say, “If Michelangelo’s Savior is dead, the life and passion of his art is based on a lie. And if Mother Teresa’s Savior is dead, she only gave suffering people bread to live another day. If Augustine’s Savior is dead, he wasted his genius wrestling with a God who doesn’t exist.”

Christians are the most pitiful people on earth if the resurrection isn’t true. Why? Because we’ve got all our spiritual eggs in one basket, and if that basket tips over we’re left with nothing.

It seems strange, but the validity of Christianity hinges on the authenticity of one weekend of events.

Dumb Investment?

It’s not like us to invest everything we’ve got into something we can’t know for sure—something we can’t prove. We’re smarter than that. We diversify our financial portfolios. We don’t put all our money, if we have any, in the same place. We buy insurance policies so that if things take an unexpected turn we’ve got a Plan B. We value stability. We plan for the worst-case scenario.

So why would we put our faith in one thing?

That would be so unlike us. But even more so, it would be so unlike Paul.

Let me explain what I mean. There’s a great story in Acts 25-26 where Paul is standing trial in front of Festus and Agrippa for preaching the gospel. Paul is making his case, talking about the actual, physical, literal resurrection of Jesus, when Festus interrupts him: “Paul, you’re out of your mind . . . all of your great learning is driving you insane.”

From the perspective of Festus, someone as brilliant and reputable as Paul was the last person who should believe all that resurrection nonsense. Paul was a scholar. He was a poet; he was a philosopher; he was a Roman citizen.

Even though Festus knew Paul was a Pharisee, and therefore believed in resurrection, he was aghast to think that such

a person would stake his life on something so unbelievable.

So are there legitimate reasons to believe in an actual, physical, literal resurrection?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives us three brilliant ones (with thanks to the exegetical work of N.T. Wright and Tim Keller):

1. Verse 4 says, “Jesus was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” There is a certain amount of information about Jesus that is believed by almost everyone to be historical fact. Nearly everyone agrees that Jesus was crucified on a cross, placed in a tomb, and three days later was no longer in that tomb. Something happened to him—something. After three days, his body was gone.
2. Think about verses 5 and 6: “Jesus appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. And after that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living.” This is Paul’s second argument: many people saw Jesus—and not only his followers, who might be tempted to fabricate a story together.

Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians only 16 to 18 years after the resurrection of Jesus, so many of the people who saw Jesus and touched Jesus and ate with Jesus after his resurrection were still alive. Paul tells the Corinthians that if you would find these people and ask them about the resurrection, they would grab you by the shoulders, look you in your eyes, and say, “It’s true!”

3. In verses 9-10, and really throughout the rest of the chapter, Paul writes, in effect, “There are hundreds of people who say they interacted with the resurrected Christ, and all of them to this day, myself included, are willing to die for what we saw. How can that be unless the resurrection is true?”

Those who said they saw the resurrected Jesus were willing to endure torture and death. They certainly had

no earthly motivation to make up a story about Jesus and then get killed for it.

The Greatest Evidence

In summing up his arguments, Paul writes, “And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord” (15:30, NRSV).

Again, my interpretation of what Paul is saying: “Look closely at my life, and you’ll find two things that are objectively true of me. The first thing you’ll see is that my life is worthless—I die every day. Nobody wants to be me. The second thing you’ll notice is that my joy is off the charts.”

The greatest evidence of the actual, physical, literal resurrection of Jesus is Paul or you or me saying “It is well with my soul” when something goes wrong.

The greatest evidence of the resurrection is you when your seemingly monotonous 9-5 existence becomes your canvas for a brilliantly grateful life.

The greatest evidence of the resurrection is when a Christ-follower prioritizes her life by putting worship, sacrifice, and love over security, power, and appetite.

Why? Because if Christ is resurrected, the physical world and our monotonous lives have divine significance. If Christ is resurrected, the cosmos has already seen a glimpse of the glory to come, and we can prioritize accordingly. The reality of the resurrection changes everything.

Look again at Michelangelo’s David and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s ministry. Look again at Martin Luther King’s fight for justice. Apart from the Scriptures, these people and their lives are the greatest evidence of the resurrection we will ever find. And that same opportunity to live the resurrection is ours every day. ■



Rev. Stephen De Wit is co-pastor of Alger Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Becoming Earthkeepers

WITH BUDGETS facing ongoing strains, saving money isn't a tough sell in most congregations these days. We're all looking for ways to be better stewards of what we've got.

But what about the gifts that don't come with dollar signs in front of them—especially the raw materials that God has given us “dominion” over?

Today lots of congregations are seeking ways to be more responsible with God's gift of creation (see pp. 34-37), though they might admit it can be a challenge to get everyone on board. We asked congregations who applied for the denomination's 2009 Green Grant—\$500 of seed money to help a church “green their corner of the CRC”—what creation care practices they'd tried so far, and what advice they had for others. Here is some of their collected wisdom:

- 1. There's strength in numbers.** Start by finding out who is “on your team.” Is there a farmer, professor, landscaper, vegetarian, college student, or a master gardener who might have some passion, expertise, and extra time to share? Maybe a home-schooling mom, a heating-and-cooling specialist, or an accountant in your congregation is looking for a meaningful ministry opportunity and can impart some wisdom. Try announcing in the bulletin that all are welcome to a meeting for coffee and conversation about how to care for creation.
- 2. Pray.** Your group might have great ideas—but God might have better ones. When we forget to pray, it's easy to see creation care as a project rather than as a ministry or a spiritual discipline that stems from a grateful heart. A prayerful walk around your church's space might open up new ideas. For instance, some churches have discovered that their buildings are located near the mouth of a threatened salmon stream. What an opportunity! God calls each church to be and do something unique. Prayer helps us see how our heart for creation care fits in with God's unique call for each church as a whole.
- 3. Be worshipful.** It seems the dearest truths in our lives are the ones we lift up in worship through song. Is there a way to integrate themes of creation care into your church's hymns and praise songs? Or might you make a point to pray together for environmental issues? Would your pastor consider a sermon series on being earthkeepers? Creation is one of God's most lavish gifts, worth

It's easy to see creation care as a project rather than as a spiritual discipline that stems from a grateful heart.

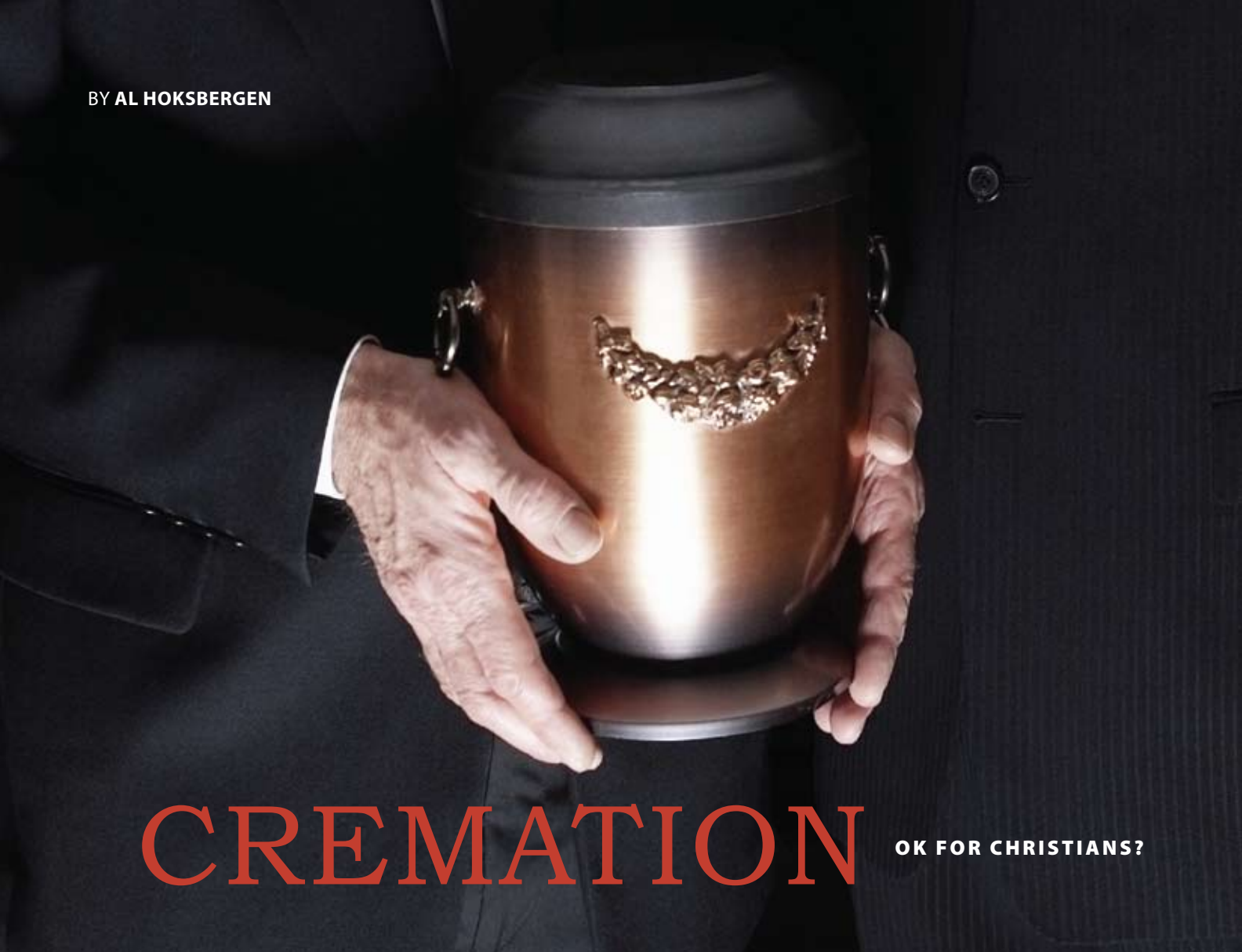
remembering and giving thanks for through our Sunday morning worship.

- 4. Find and include all stakeholders.** Is your pastor the gatekeeper to real congregational change? Is it the coffee committee? The deacons? The custodian? Once you have an idea of where to begin (maybe switching to non-toxic cleaning products, for example), discover who has been lovingly caring for that part of the church's ministry. Invite those people to learn and grow with you, rather than demanding change. It's easy to see why someone would resist washing 200 mugs every week based on the no-more-Styrofoam demands of a new group that never seemed to care about the logistics of coffee fellowship before.
- 5. Don't get discouraged!** Changes, even seemingly small ones, are difficult for churches. Take your time and encourage one another. Celebrate small victories—a 6-year-old switching off the lights in an empty room, a rousing second verse of “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” someone who brings their own mug to coffee after the service. Thank people for those small efforts; make it fun to join the cause. After all, being named as caretakers of God's creation is a gift, not just an obligation, so work on being a gracious recipient of that gift.

For more ideas, helpful hints, and success stories, see the Creation Care page of the CRC's Office of Social Justice: www.crcna.org/pages/osj_creationcare.cfm. ■



Kate Kooyman is congregational justice mobilizer with the CRC's Office for Social Justice.



CREMATION

OK FOR CHRISTIANS?

WHEN OLDER FOLKS get together, the conversation often drifts toward ailments, surgeries, and medications. But it's also become rather common to talk about cremation.

Today many of us have had friends or family members who were cremated, and cremation is sounding more and more like something we might consider for ourselves. But is cremation an acceptable option for Christians?

Historically, cremation has not been part of the Christian tradition. Early Christians agreed with their Jewish ancestors that cremation was not an option they would consider, even though the Bible includes no specific mandate prohibiting it. Pagans practiced cremation. Christians did not.

In 1886 the Roman Catholic Church officially banned cremation. There does not appear to be a formal rule against cremation in the Orthodox tradition, but there is a heavy weight of custom and sentiment in favor of burial. Most Protestant churches, including the Christian Reformed Church, have made no official ruling on the matter. Perhaps the CRC made no study of it because burial was long the common practice. But

now a growing number of Christians, including CRC members, are opting for cremation.

In view of that, let's take a look at each practice and consider how each relates to our understanding of Scripture.

Traditional Burial

The first biblical account of burial is found in Genesis 23. Abraham and Sarah believed the promises God gave them about receiving a new land and having descendants beyond number. Sadly, they had no children until nearly the end of their lives, and they remained foreigners in the land they thought God had promised them. When Sarah died, Abraham did not own a burial place. So he bought the cave of Machpelah from the Hittites. He used that cave as the burial place for Sarah's body. When Abraham died, he was buried in the same cave (Gen. 25:7-10).

When Moses died, God buried him in a gravesite that was never revealed (Deut. 34:6). King David was buried in the "City of David" (1 Kings 2:10).

The burial of Jesus is recorded in all four gospels. Had Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus not asked for the body of Jesus and buried it, his body might have been discarded along with

the bodies of other crucified criminals. The burial of Jesus is so significant that it is one of the important points of the Apostles' Creed.

After Herod murdered John the Baptist, John's disciples buried his body (Matt. 14:12). And friends of Stephen buried his body after he was stoned to death (Acts 8:2).

The apostle Paul used the sowing of seed as a metaphor for burial and eventual resurrection: "Someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?' How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body" (1 Cor. 15:35-38).

Cremation

It's challenging to evaluate cremation from a Christian perspective, especially since the practice is relatively new to us.

One of the first things we should consider when it comes to either burial or cremation is the matter of respect. Burial is thought to show respect for the deceased, whereas the use of fire at the time of death may convey an image of destruction, disrespect, and judgment. But Christians who opt for cremation point out the following:

- While fire was used at times to convey the judgment of God, it was also used to convey the presence of God. Think of the burning bush out of which God called Moses to be his servant, the pillar of fire that led Israel through the desert, and the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.
- It's true that the body God gives us must be respected because we are made in the image of God. But cremation need not be a destructive act. Even an embalmed body buried in a vault decomposes within a relatively short time; cremation only hastens an inevitable process.
- The ashes that remain after cremation can be dealt with in a respectful manner by survivors.

When choosing between burial and cremation, we should also consider the matter of cost. Traditional burial may be a financial hardship for some. Even in biblical times it could be expensive. Abraham paid an exorbitant price for the cave of Machpelah. Only a few people in his day could afford that. Even the body of Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb. In the Middle Ages, only the wealthy could afford to be buried in a church building. (The very wealthy paid to be buried as close to the altar as possible.)

Today the average cost of a funeral is between \$12,000 and \$15,000. That does not include the cost of a burial plot in a cemetery nor the opening and closing of a grave nor the cost of a gravestone. Yet there is the matter of allowing grieving survivors time to deal with the passing of a dear one. Many believe the services offered by funeral homes provide needed time for closure.

In recent years, some churches have begun setting aside space for memorial gardens. These gardens usually include a wall on which to attach plaques that state the name and dates of birth and death of people whose remains were cremated.

When considering cremation, sometimes Christians ask about the wisdom of it in light of our belief in the resurrection of the dead. Burial does conform to the imagery Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15.

However, we should not assume from Paul's metaphor that we are *required* to bury a body and provide an identifiable grave before we can count on God's promise to one day raise the dead. After all, most bodies buried throughout history have decomposed, and no remains can be identified by anyone. Many bodies have been destroyed at death; many have been buried in unmarked graves. It's important to remember that God does not need material

with which to work when the day of resurrection arrives.

We don't know what is involved when God gives someone a spiritual, glorified body. All we know is that Jesus could do things in his resurrected state that were beyond human ability or comprehension. When Paul reflects on this, he writes: "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49).

Grief is a difficult process. We each deal with it in different ways. Whether burial or cremation is the better option for a loved one or for ourselves should be left to personal decision. Whichever choice we make, believers can look ahead with confidence to "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." ■

We should not
assume
that we are
required
to bury bodies.

Cremation Options

When Christians opt for cremation rather than burial, they may ask a funeral home to embalm the body, provide a casket for viewing the body, arrange for visitation by relatives and friends, and be on hand to supervise the funeral service. When such services are provided by a funeral home, cremation takes place after the funeral.

However, family members may decide to use the services of a funeral home only minimally. In such instances, their loved one's body may be taken soon after death to the crematorium. Afterward the ashes are placed in a container and given to the family. The family may then choose to bury the ashes in a cemetery or scatter or bury the ashes in some other place significant to them. If the family chooses not to use the services of a funeral home, they may hold a memorial service several days after the death.



Rev. Al Hoksbergen is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Spring Lake, Mich.

PHOTOS BY PAUL JEFFREY/ACT ALLIANCE



Haiti Earthquake

What Was God's Role?

by Paul Mpindi

I know what a place like Haiti is like. I came from a torn place myself: the Congo. I grieve like everyone else over this terrible tragedy. I also ask, as do many others, "What was God's role in this?"

The main biblical question we ask after a terrible tragedy such as the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti is, "How can a good God allow such a bad thing to happen to his people?"

Some say, "Satan allowed it; not God." But the Bible says disaster cannot come to a city without God allowing it (Amos 3:6). We Christians believe in providence—that everything is within God's control.

We are dealing here with evil. Biblical teaching says that evil disrupts nature. If

evil becomes prevalent, sometimes it brings pain beyond understanding. By the same token, it is foolishness to say that the Haitian people are the most sinful on earth. They are no different from the rest of us. But tragedy can be a time for people to examine themselves, to see if there is a spiritual reason for such pain.

In the Bible, rebellion and belief in the occult are two main sins that always bring disturbance in the lives of people and nations. A situation like this earthquake calls on the whole world to reflect. What are we doing to ourselves to lessen or weaken our well-being?

Was the earthquake a punishment from God? We don't know. We don't know

why it happened. But, whatever it was, as human beings and Christians we must pray for God to put his protective hand over the people of Haiti and the whole world.

It is easy to blame, to say that there is voodoo in Haiti. Voodoo is evil. But abortion is also evil. Injustice is evil. As it says in Psalm 130:3-4, if God counted all of our sins against us, who would be left standing?

Instead of judging Haiti, let us encourage Haiti to work toward what brings God's blessings. Like the rest of us, Haitians should seek justice, stay away from idol worship, and embrace Christ.

Back to God Ministries International had just started to expand its work in

Haiti before the earthquake. Many FM stations carry our broadcasts. Our new follow-up center, where people can go for pastoral counseling, discipleship, and spiritual assistance, is still standing in Port-au-Prince. In the countryside, we have contact people who can help. We have tools to minister to people at this time of their direst need.

In the messages I will be giving to Haitians over the radio, I will talk about voodoo, rebellion, about those who kill others, and how evil things contribute to weaken a nation, not to build it up. But I will do it in a calm way, after people have had a chance to mourn and get settled.

My message to the people of Haiti will be to ask them to reflect on their lives and their spiritual well-being. I will do this without judging. But I will ask people to face reality and ask themselves if they

“ Instead of judging Haiti, let us encourage Haiti to work toward what brings God’s blessings. ”



PHOTOS BY PAUL JEFFREY/ACT ALLIANCE



Haitians in Port-au-Prince participate in a worship service for survivors of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

have profound spiritual changes to make. If so, they need to make them. Without self-examination, there can be no real healing or growth.

This is the time for us to challenge and encourage the people of Haiti to move to a new place, to a place of shalom, of Christlikeness. My prayer is that this earthquake will be the last of the troubles Haiti has seen over the years. Because the capital of Port-au-Prince was struck, rebuilding will begin from the nation’s

heart. My prayer is also that as the nation rebuilds materially, it will rebuild spiritually as well.

The Haiti situation has highlighted for me how fragile we all are. We really don’t have our own destinies in hand. God is our only refuge of safety and meaning. This situation helps us to fall into God’s hands.

In human terms, the process of rebuilding will give Haitians a chance to get out of the mess of poverty and violence. In the end, though, Christians also have to deal with the spiritual aspect of things. We will need to plant the cross very high in Haiti, so that a new light of God can shine there. ■



Rev. Paul Mpindi is the French-language ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International.

An Enduring Lament *by Ron Nydam*

We can only begin to imagine what it must be like these days to be a Haitian citizen. But we must try. The people of Haiti have experienced deep trauma piled on top of poverty.

The thought of being crushed inside falling concrete buildings gives us shivers. Many surviving Haitians know this horror—they themselves were in those buildings. Many lost parents, husbands, wives, sons, or daughters.

All this seems like pain too awful to know. How do people cope in the midst of such an apocalypse?

The Spirit of God has ways to help us handle the incredible pain that sometimes comes our way. Especially with trauma of this magnitude, God helps us first by numbing us to the pain.

It's very automatic, this way of entering shock and not feeling a thing. "Denial" does not quite capture the strength of the numbing force that adrenaline sometimes offers when trauma strikes. Not unlike the manner in which our bodies go into shock when we break a leg, so the human heart becomes numb when there is pain and suffering too awful to know.

The Throbbing Begins

This numbness wears off slowly and the throbbing begins as men, women, and children start to face the reality of their huge losses. Numbness gives way to sadness and anger, fear and despair—and to tears.

Trauma has its own mind and runs its own show. People wake up in fright from nightmares that are true; they startle at the sudden feel and sound of aftershocks. Feeling post-traumatic stress does not mean that a person is past the trauma; bodies and minds and hearts can remain stuck inside the trauma for years.

Offering help in the context of such horrendous experiences has to do with *presence*. We human beings, created as



Center, volunteer Lee Mys helps assess needs.

“Theirs is a spiritual challenge that God puts before all of us.”

we are in the image of God, do not do well “walking through the valley of the shadow of death” by ourselves. We usually freeze up to some degree; we shut down to manage our distress. We then exist off-balance, fearful of remembering the tremors of trauma.

The presence of another is critically important to moving forward to higher emotional ground and redeemed spiritual well-being. Being present with survivors of trauma means sharing the load and “so fulfilling the law of Christ.” Caring for those in deep sorrow means commit-

ting ourselves to suffer along with them, to join in the hurt and pain of their stories.

Naming the Suffering

After tears come words. As long as things go unspoken, they may seem not quite real. But putting language to our suffering brings both the sting of reality and the hope of relief.

Moaning the words “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”—the cry of the cross, the lament of our Lord—is the road to redemption. Talking about what happened, over and over and over, names and tames the suffering.

People who will not speak of trauma will keep it, sometimes to their graves. But lament—putting pain in language, crying out to God, even holding God accountable in anger and defiance, sorrow and despair—is the human path to recovery. As one teacher of ministry put it, “It took Job 39 chapters of complaint and lament, of wrestling with God, before he could get to the profession of reconstructed faith that finally begins in chapter 42.”

Enduring such lament takes time. Our neighbors in Haiti will be living in a world of hurt for years to come. Theirs is a spiritual challenge that God puts before all of us in the global community.

How soon will Haiti become relegated to the back pages of our newspapers? All of us are heartened by the massive response we have witnessed thus far. God is to be praised for the good that has been done. Our challenge is to endure this lament side by side with the people of Haiti in their suffering. ■



Rev. Ron Nydam is professor of pastoral care at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Next Steps for Haiti

by Leanne Talen Geisterfer

Even before the Jan. 12 earthquake brought much of Haiti's infrastructure tumbling to the ground, many people wondered how sustainable communities could ever be built in such a poor country.

Now the question has become even more urgent. Our hearts break at the devastation we see in Haiti, but when we think of rebuilding the country we wonder how it can be done in a way that also addresses the country's endemic poverty.

How can we respond to the needs of the earthquake survivors in a way that builds communities and helps them to become strong and self-sufficient? The lessons learned by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in its 48-year history and applied during its five-year response to the devastating 2004 tsunami can provide some insight.

Rely on God

First and foremost, we need to rely on God. When people experience a disaster of this magnitude, they think seriously about their worldview. How they hold to their faith and express it in the wake of such a disaster speaks to those around them.

In Haiti, the vibrant faith of Haitian Christians was evident in the days immediately after the earthquake. Believers marched through the streets, singing praises and trusting God to care for them.

If the rest of the church can model this kind of faith and can also reach out to meet people's physical needs, it can play a key role in rebuilding Haiti.

This was the case in Indonesia, where predominantly Muslim communities were hit by the tsunami. In responding to the



Homes are being rebuilt in a country that is in desperate need of renewal.

needs, Christian churches had an opportunity to explain that they were doing it as an expression of Christ's love. Muslims and Christians learned to trust each other and work together.

Rebuild Community

Fostering a sense of community is also important. Many Haitian neighborhoods have lost large numbers of people. This includes the thousands who were killed by the quake and many more who left to stay with family elsewhere.

These losses can shatter the sense of community. On the other hand, those who remain have shared the experience of surviving this disaster and can unite around common goals.

If people in Haiti can intentionally share their stories, cry together, and reach out to each other, a new sense of community can be built.

Take Ownership

Taking ownership of the rebuilding process is the third important lesson to consider. Instead of seeing themselves as victims, it's important for the earthquake survivors to be active contributors in the planning and the work.

CRWRC used this community-centered approach in Indonesia. Staff invested a great deal of time in community plan-

ning meetings and encouraged homeowners to participate in selecting the housing designs and making other important decisions. Homeowners also participated in the reconstruction.

Since they invested their own sweat and resources in the rebuilding, the people of Aceh have a sense of pride in what they accomplished.

Find New Leaders

Very little will happen without solid leadership. In Haiti, many community leaders perished in the quake. Their knowledge and skills perished with them.

Haitians must select new leaders, who must be given plenty of support and on-the-job training. They, in turn, can equip their communities to respond on their own to future needs.

For example, in parts of Indonesia, CRWRC distributed rice seed following the tsunami. First, however, it helped farmers organize themselves into groups and elect leaders. When people needed more seed, they went to their group leader. As a result, the seed was used where it was most needed, and the community had a system in place for addressing future needs as well.

With these lessons in mind, Haiti and the international community will be able to tackle the tough challenges ahead. This will include rebuilding Haiti's infrastructure—roads, markets, health centers, and schools.

It will also include strengthening people with programs in areas such as literacy, improved agriculture, small business development, and health care.

If the rebuilding is handled well, it may actually provide Haiti with an opportunity to overcome poverty in a real and lasting way. ■



Leanne Talen Geisterfer is the Latin America team leader for CRWRC and currently lives in Honduras. Previously, she lived and worked in Haiti for 12 years.

What Do You Want to Be?

Recently my 5-year-old granddaughter Nettie came home from school with a paper that read, “When I grow up, I want to be _____.” Nettie’s response: “When I grow up, I want to be Nettie.” And she drew a picture of herself.

As a loving grandfather, I chuckled. It was only later that I felt the full impact of her simple response. I could not help but wonder how I, at age 60, would respond to the same question. What do I want to be when I grow up? The answer seems quite obvious: I have grown up and I am a pastor.

But is that all there is to the question? As a boy growing up, at different times I wanted to be everything from a firefighter to an astronaut. I dreamed of being a preacher and a teacher. I considered becoming a doctor or a lawyer. But I don’t recall ever wanting simply to be *me*. My world was less about who I was than about what I would do.

One of the first questions we ask when we meet someone for the first time is “What do you do?” We judge people by their vocational status, and we respond to people differently based on their answer. Don’t believe it? Ask any pastor what happens when he or she responds to that question.

Why is it that we put so much value on what we do? In some ways, I suppose, what we do sheds light on who we are. After all, our actions nearly always speak louder than our words. Trust is formed or broken by our actions. Jesus himself said, “By their fruit you will know them” (Matt. 7:16, 20).

Often as I visit with Christians from around the world, the discussion centers on what the Christian Reformed Church is doing. Together we celebrate the transformation of lives and communities. We talk about our opportunities for service in



ISTOCKPHOTO

response to God’s call to proclaim his love and grace. We share stories of our experiences as relief workers, community developers, teachers, agriculturalists, entrepreneurs, and missionaries.

The agencies and related ministries of the church form the heart of what we do together as a denomination. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is saving lives and rebuilding communities in Haiti and elsewhere. World Missions is proclaiming the gospel on the ground; Back to God Ministries International is doing so through radio waves, the Internet, and print media. Home Missions is coming alongside church planters, college and university chaplains, and existing churches. Faith Alive is publishing excellent educational and discipleship material. Local churches are united in supporting these ministries and others, even as they reach out into their communities with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Can there be any doubt that what we do speaks volumes about who we are? Yet we can never forget that all the activity of ministry springs from the hearts of men and women who are children of God, followers of Jesus. It is God who has made us and we are his. He has redeemed us and equipped us for acts of service.

First and foremost, life is not about what we do, but about who we are. In her simple response, Nettie had it right all along.

Shortly after Nettie brought that paper home, her story was posted on Facebook. When a friend saw Nettie’s story, he responded by writing, “Beautiful—that is so much her! And in truth the more dissatisfied among us (including me at times) would do well to be as satisfied to be who God made us!”

God has made us—each one of us—to be his children. Each person is unique. Each person was created with God’s purpose in mind.

So what do *you* want to be when you grow up? ■

“First and foremost, life is not about what we do, but about who we are.”



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

South Olive CRC's Broader Vision

A lone steeple serves as a reminder of where South Olive Christian Reformed Church stood for more than 100 years.

Nearby, however, is the new church building, built in the late 1990s. Stained-glass windows, wood trim, and the belfry bell from the old church are part of the new structure.

Located north of Holland, Mich., South Olive is emblematic of many small- to medium-sized Christian Reformed congregations. Generations have worshiped here, yet new people have been drawn as well.

As with every church, South Olive CRC wrestles with the balance between supporting local ministries and paying the ministry shares that support the denomination's national and global ministries. The recession has made this tougher in recent years.

The CRC's ministry shares program raises about \$25 million a year to help support ministries across North America and around the world in places such as Haiti. Congregations are asked to contribute based on their number of active adult members.

In the past, South Olive paid 100 percent of its ministry shares to the local classis (regional group of Christian Reformed churches) and to the denomination. Recently, the congregation has kept up their commitment to the classis, but their ministry shares



Praise and song rings out in the sanctuary of South Olive CRC during the congregation's 125th-anniversary celebration.

to the denomination have dropped somewhat.

However, they remain committed to the CRC and do what they can to support the mission of the broader church. "We are not a well-heeled congregation, but we are gen-

erous," says Rog Brandsen, whose family roots go back to the church's founding.

"The CRC has done a great job over the years by reaching out to the world," says Brandsen. "We are proud to be part of that. Denominational identity is very important to the people of this church. We are part of something bigger than just our church."

CRC, RCA Launch 'Groundwork'

The media ministries of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America have combined resources to launch "Groundwork" on April 18—a new half-hour audio program that teaches the Christian faith.

ReFrame Media, the English-language ministry of Back to God Ministries International, and Words of Hope, the media ministry of the RCA, are leading this project.

Recognizing the changing needs of today's audiences, the programs known as "The Back to God Hour" and "Words of Hope" have been reformatted and combined under the new name. Rev. David Bast, president of Words of Hope, and Rev. Robert Heerspink, director of BTGMI, will host "Groundwork," exploring



"Groundwork" hosts Rev. David Bast, president of Words of Hope, and Rev. Robert Heerspink, director of BTGMI

Scripture from a Reformed perspective.

"Groundwork" is meant to turn the soil of Scripture and cultivate growth in faith," says Heerspink. "We're excited about a program that continues the teaching ministry of 'The Back to God Hour,' but in a format that will attract new listeners."

"We are working to broadcast 'Groundwork' on many

About 330 people belong to the church, and many of its ministries exist to reach young people who will form the next generation of the church.

Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRC, visited South Olive CRC recently for its 125th-anniversary service. He says he was pleased to see how healthy and vibrant the church is. There are many churches in the denomination like this one, Dykstra noted, saying he was moved by the "engaging spirit" of South Olive. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

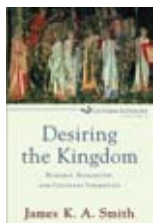
of the same stations that currently air 'The Back to God Hour' and 'Words of Hope,'" notes Rev. Steven Koster, ReFrame Media ministry leader.

Fans of "The Back to God Hour" will still be able to access archived programs on *BackToGodRadio.net*. A new "Groundwork" website is being developed for Web listeners and for those wishing to ask follow-up questions about the Christian faith. *GroundworkOnline.com* will also feature a look at future topics and a site for listeners to share prayer requests.

Before "Groundwork" launches on Sunday, April 18, the April 11 episode of "The Back to God Hour" will both look back on 70 years of media ministry and look forward to the new "Groundwork" format. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International

Calvin Authors Win Awards



Two Calvin college professors have received awards for recently published books. Calvin professor of philosophy James K.A. Smith has been honored by *Christianity Today* for *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Smith's book was honored in the 2010 Book Awards theology/ethics category. Meanwhile, *The Wednesday Wars*, a book for young adults by English professor Gary Schmidt, will travel the world this year as part of an international library after being selected as the U.S. winner of the 2010 International Board on Books for Young People award, which honors books considered representative of the best in children's literature from each country.

Calvin in Top 10 in Study Abroad, International Students

Calvin College is in the top 10 in the United States in two categories, according to the 2009 Open Doors report, a survey of both U.S. students who study abroad and international students who study in the U.S. The report, from the Institute of International Education, honored Calvin for offering numerous off-campus programs. The school had 606 students studying abroad in 2007-2008. Noting a record number of international students studying in the U.S., Calvin was highlighted for having 357 international students on campus during 2008-2009.

Roels Named NetVUE Coordinator

Shirley Roels, director of Calvin College's Van Lunen Center, will coordinate a new initiative by the Council of Independent Colleges called NetVUE: the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education. NetVUE will encourage the theological exploration of vocation on college and university campuses across the continent. Along with regional gatherings, it will host a large national conference on the theological exploration of vocation in undergraduate education, a NetVUE website, and a mentoring and consulting service to match institutions with successful programs to institutions developing similar programs. Roels will work with an advisory panel as she provides part-time direction to NetVUE. ■

—*Calvin College Communications*

Seminary President Reflects on Job

When he became president of Calvin Theological Seminary in 2001, Rev. Neal Plantinga Jr. thought fundraising would be hard.

Plantinga had taught many years in the seminary and written many articles and books, including *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. He also served as the first dean of the chapel at Calvin College. Reformed theology and finding ways to express it were his foremost preoccupations.

It turns out that Plantinga, who steps down in 2012, found fundraising and meeting donors delightful. "It has been such a joy to go out and represent the seminary to our constituency," says Plantinga.

CTS supporters he's met have been "really interesting, resourceful people—risk takers and hard workers," he says.

It's also been a pleasure interacting with trustees and colleagues, especially in revamping the seminary curriculum to be more responsive to students while maintaining CTS's rigorous Reformed character.

Getting the Bible message into a person's heart, soul, and head defines the new approach. "We've made some small turns over time and have gotten some pretty dramatic results," he said.

Plantinga graduated from Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary. Before teaching, he served as a CRC pastor in Webster, N.Y. After



Rev. Neal Plantinga

earning his Ph.D. at Princeton, he came to CTS.

Plantinga says the next president will face challenges. Tuition revenue has been shrinking as students attend seminaries closer to home, often for financial and family reasons, although fall enrollment this year was up.

Making the faculty more ethnically and racially diverse and nurturing the new curriculum will also be challenges, he said.

Once he leaves, Plantinga hopes to write a book about biblical virtues. But his first project will be to prepare six B.B. Warfield Lectures to present at Princeton Theological Seminary in March 2012. He will also continue to preach, teach, and lecture. In addition, he plans to return to one of the great loves of his life: playing the violin.

To read a longer version of this story, visit the newsroom at www.crcna.org. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Call to Missions Runs in the Family

Growing up in Japan, Ben Spalink always knew the importance of mission work. That's because his parents, Larry and Ruth Spalink, had been called by God to work with Christian Reformed World Missions in Tokyo.

Larry and Ruth have planted and overseen the growth of Christian churches in Japan for more than 30 years. Larry Spalink serves as a field director for World Missions, while Ruth is a school nurse at Christian Academy in Japan.

"We believe it is critically important to build a thriving church in this nation that has the potential to impact so many other countries," says Larry.

Their work has had a big impact on their son. "From a very young age, I had a strong sense that being a Christian means reaching out and caring for the lost," says Ben, who lived in Japan until he left to

Larry Spalink (left) baptizes a Japanese woman.



Larry and Ben Spalink

attend Calvin College in the mid-1990s.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary, Ben went through a church-planting assessment with Christian Reformed Home Missions.

"I was drawn to be a church planter by my desire for freedom and adventure, and also by the strong emphasis that new churches place on evangelism," Ben says. He was also influenced by the fact that his great-grandfather had been a church planter years before.

After an internship at Bridgeway Community Church in New Jersey, Ben and his wife, Christy, moved to New York City in 2007 to help fellow church planters Steve and Dana Wolma start City Grace Church, a Home Missions-supported ministry in lower Manhattan. The church focuses on reaching young urban professionals.

As community pastor at City Grace, Ben shares preaching duties with Steve Wolma and also manages the church's growing network of small groups.

Ben says he sees many similarities between the mission fields of New York and Tokyo. For instance, less than 1 percent of the 1.6 million people living in Manhattan claim to have a relationship with Christ. Similarly, less than 1 percent of metropolitan Tokyo's 13 million people follow Christ.

"People in New York City are often very successful and focused on their careers," Ben remarks. "They seem to have everything they need, but they don't have the hope of the gospel in their lives." His father adds, "In Tokyo, breaking the first and second commandments is not only commonplace, it's virtually expected in this land of '8 million gods.'"

God has worked through Ben and his parents, though, to make an impact in both places. City Grace Church now averages close to 70 people in worship each Sunday. "We've doubled our number every year since we started," he says. "And our small groups con-

Reaching Your World

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

— Romans 1:16

This year, Christian Reformed Home Missions and World Missions have joined efforts to shine a spotlight on how God is using the Christian Reformed Church to bring the message of salvation to people in North America and around the world. From Easter to Pentecost, they will focus on a shared theme from Romans 1:16, "Reaching Your Community and the World with the Power of the Gospel."

For a downloadable devotional and two ministry highlight videos, please go to www.crcna.org/powerofthegospel.

tinue to grow and attract new people."

The work in Japan has shifted from outreach to developing the ministry capacities of Japanese churches to effectively proclaim the gospel.

"World Missions offers a variety of training programs for Christian school teachers, Coffee Break Bible study leaders, and those who can mentor young people to help them develop new skills and confidence," says Larry Spalink. "We believe we can offer new tools and paradigms to help our partner churches experience richer worship and develop their ability to draw more seekers to the God we love." ■

—Ben Van Houten is a senior writer with Christian Reformed Home Missions.



Eggsellent Easter

Have you ever wondered what eggs have to do with Easter? Or why we hunt for Easter eggs? (Why not painted rocks or marbles instead?)

Many centuries ago, Christians began celebrating a special time in our church calendar called Lent—the 40 weekdays before Easter Sunday. Millions of Christians today still honor this sacred season.

During Lent the early Christians stopped eating (fasted from) foods like meat and eggs. Any eggs that chickens laid during Lent were boiled and stored away.

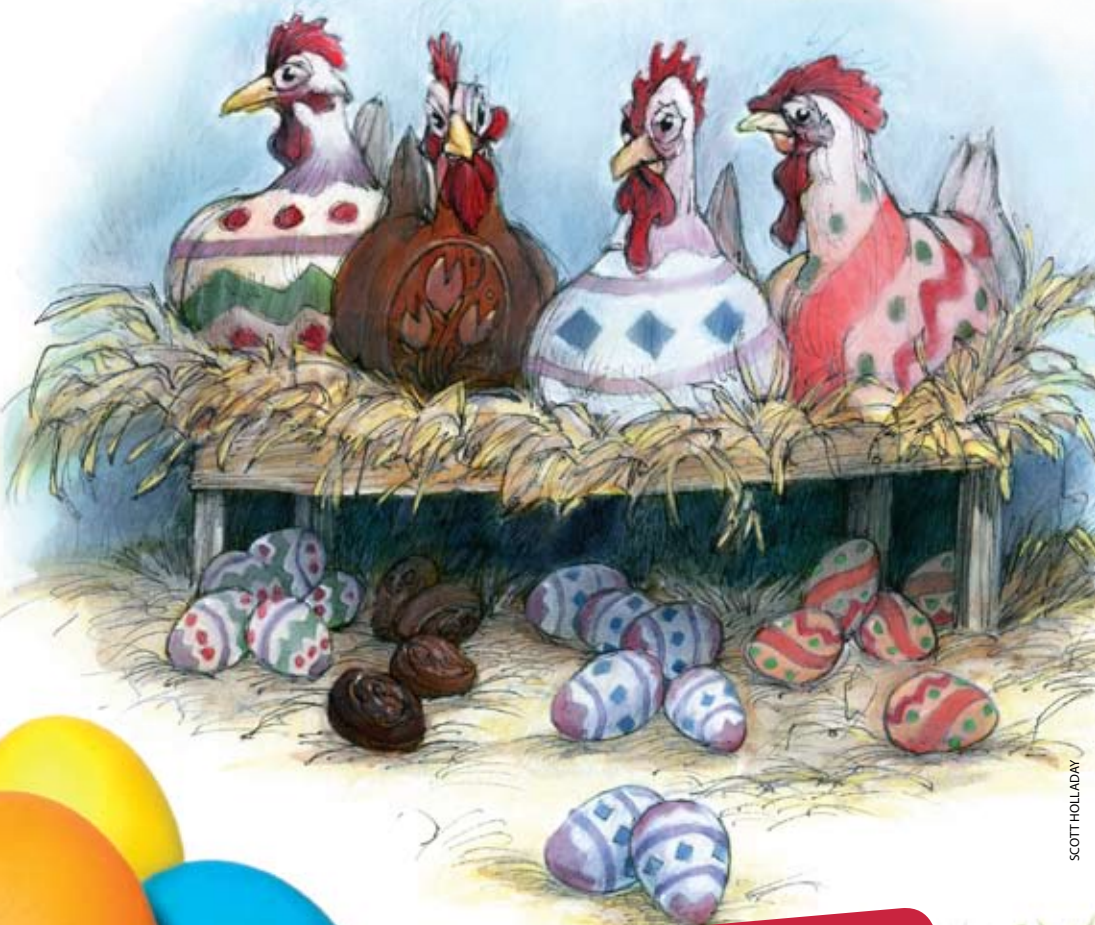
On Easter Sunday, Christians cooked special dinners to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the end of the Lenten season. They served eggs and meat as part of these elaborate feasts. Some parents hid the eggs for their children to find throughout the home. Some even boiled the eggs with certain flowers and plants to give the eggs a special color. These festivities eventually became the Easter traditions we observe today.

—information from www.theholidayspot.com/easter

World's Largest Easter Egg Hunt

What do 9,700 children plus 510,000 candy-filled Easter eggs equal? If you answered 519,700, think again. It really equals the largest Easter egg hunt in the world!

According to www.guinnessworldrecords.com, Cypress Gardens, a theme park in Winter Haven, Fla., hosted the world's largest Easter egg hunt in 2007. Nearly 10,000 kids and their parents ran around the lawns of the park searching for more than a half-million brightly colored Easter eggs. One thousand of those eggs contained special prizes from local businesses. One egg even held a scholarship (money) to attend a community college!



SCOTT HOLLADAY

Did You Know?

The word *Lent* comes from the word "lengthen," which refers to spring—when the days get longer. *Fasting* means to give up something important for a length of time in order to pray to and think about God instead. Many Christians today still choose to give up something of value during Lent (certain foods, television, video games, etc.). What are *you* willing to sacrifice?



What's Cookin'?

Circle the foods that have eggs as a main ingredient:

- pancakes
- chocolate cake
- sugar cookies
- pepperoni pizza
- french toast
- bean soup
- meatloaf
- spaghetti
- eggnog

Answers: chocolate cake, eggnog, meatloaf, sugar cookies, pancakes, french toast

Happy Hunting!

Looking for candy-filled eggs is tons of fun. The same way we eagerly search for Easter goodies, we can also search for God. He doesn't hide from us. If we want to know who God is, all we have to do is search in his Word to us, the Bible. In Jeremiah 29:13, God tells us, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Try This

Plan an Easter egg hunt with your friends and family. Fill plastic eggs with lots of goodies, but set aside four special eggs to be prize eggs. Write the following verses on strips of paper, and put a verse along with a special prize in each egg. Hide the all eggs in your home or yard and enjoy the hunt. Invite those who found the Scripture eggs to read the verses to the whole group. Remind everyone that the best prize we can ever hunt for is Jesus!

- "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)
- "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." (Psalm 105:4)
- "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." (Psalm 119:2)
- "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)



Christin Baker teaches 4th and 5th grade at The Potter's House Christian School in Grand Rapids, Mich. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church.

An Eggsellent Treat

Try making these delicious Easter "eggs"!

What You'll Need:

- ½ stick of butter
- 1 10-ounce bag of regular marshmallows
- 6 cups of Rice Krispies cereal
- small bowls of colorful sprinkles
- small tubes of colorful frosting (optional)



What to Do:

Ask a parent to help you make Rice Krispie treats using the following instructions:

- Melt ½ stick of butter in a large pot on medium heat. Pour the bag of marshmallows in with the butter and stir until melted and smooth.
- Stir in six cups of Rice Krispies.
- Butter your hands, then take handfuls of the cereal mixture and shape them into egg shapes. Place each "egg" on a plate.
- Roll each egg in a small bowl of colorful sprinkles. (Make sure to do this while the eggs are still warm!) Set the eggs on a plate until cool.
- When your eggs have cooled, you can decorate them with frosting or just wrap them in colorful sheets of plastic wrap. Happy Easter!

Farewell, Amazon

I FIRST HEARD OF AMAZON.COM in 1997 from a library-science student I had a crush on. At the bottom of all of her emails ran an automatic signature: “AMAZON.COM: World’s Largest Bookstore.”

That was a bit of cheekiness, as Amazon was not a true “bookstore” at all. Rather—and rather revolutionarily—it was a cyber-hub from which books could be ordered anywhere and sent anywhere.

Like every book lover I know, I came for the convenience—and stayed for the prices, the customer reviews, the “So You’d Like To . . .” guides. Amazon combined the coolness of a great bookstore with the ghost-convenience of Internet shopping. One knew, quaint fact, that they were headquartered in Seattle, but Amazon seemed the perfect emblem for an era whose buzzwords were *multinational*, *network*, and *globalize*. And if this new era had its dangers—*maquiladoras* in Juarez, plant closings in the Midwest—hadn’t it also given activists the tools to plan uprisings like the 1999 protest in—of all places—Seattle?

Time passed. Amazon moved into e-books, and things got complicated. There were whispers of monopoly, of the

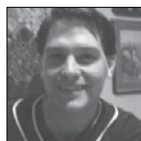
There were whispers of monopoly, of the strong-arming of publishers.



ISTOCKPHOTO

strong-arming of publishers. Some e-books, notably George Orwell’s, were abruptly deleted from the Kindles of people who’d paid for them. Then in January, as part of a spat over e-book pricing, Amazon stopped offering new copies of all Macmillan titles. So if you want to buy Marilynne Robinson’s next book, you might have to get it from an actual brick-and-mortar store—or you can buy a used copy, to neither publisher’s nor author’s profit, from, yes, Amazon.

In the age of globalization, nothing seems quaintier than calling for a boycott. But those worries about monopoly don’t seem quaint at all now, and this customer, at least, is walking away. For good. ■



Phil Christman Jr. is a student in the MFA-Fiction program at University of South Carolina.

Angel Time

by **Anne Rice**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



Throughout his violent childhood, Toby O’Dare dreams of becoming a priest. However, in the wake of tragedy, he rejects God and becomes an assassin.

Spiritually lost, Toby prays to his guardian angel for help, and Malchiah answers. The Seraph offers Toby a chance to help Jews in 13th-century England who have been accused by Christians of ritual murders. Carried back in time, Toby becomes a priest who fights for justice on behalf of a Jewish couple, and, in doing so, seeks God once again. (Knopf)

Web 3.0

reviewed by **Lloyd Rang**

You’ve got the whole world in your hand: Web 3.0 is here. That’s the buzzword experts use to describe the ability to surf any site on the Web using a cell phone or BlackBerry. You can take the power of Wikipedia, YouTube, or Facebook with you wherever you go. And, for the first time, virtually any information is available to anyone, anytime. What this means for our culture is still an open question, but to paraphrase a Web expert, “a technology doesn’t truly transform our lives until it is everywhere and invisible.”



Everything for a Dog

by **Ann M. Martin**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Three lives—a stray dog named Bone, a boy named Charlie who suffers two painful losses, and Henry, a lonely boy who wants a dog more than anything else—are masterfully woven together in this juvenile novel, which movingly portrays the healing role dogs play in people’s lives. Author Ann Martin hopefully, sensitively, and age-appropriately deals with the theme of loss in its different manifestations—aging, death, separation, depression, and loneliness. (Feiwel and Friends)

The Life of the World to Come

by **The Mountain Goats**
reviewed by **Elizabeth Gonzalez**

The Life of the World to Come is a curious tour through singer-songwriter John Darnielle’s own troubled life as told in the context of well-loved stories. These songs don’t shy away from the moments when God is silent, as with Rachel and Jacob in “Genesis 30:3,” or when the future is uncertain, as in “Deuteronomy 2:10.” With a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the Bible as the backbone, the Mountain Goats create a collection that, as diverse as the book it draws its titles from, depicts mercy in the midst of chaos. (4ad Records)



Lost Channels

by **Great Lake Swimmers**
reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**



The Great Lake Swimmers’ latest album is what is referred to as an “atmospheric creation.” *Lost Channels* continues a tradition of recording music in isolated places. The band traveled to the Thousand Islands region of

Ontario and was inspired by the mystery and history of the area. Lead singer Tony Dekker’s ethereal voice is perfect for this project. The hypnotic sound of “She Comes to Me in Dreams,” “River’s Edge,” and “Still” is like nighttime waves singing hauntingly against the groaning hull of a docked ship. (Netzwerk Records)

Green Revolution: Coming Together to Care for Creation

by **Ben Lowe**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**



Ben Lowe
Foreword by Shane Claiborne

Environmental evangelist and activist Ben Lowe, a 20-something recent Wheaton College grad, presents an informative and inspirational case for Christian involvement in climate change and creation care issues. Sharing real-life stories from churches, communities, and particularly Christian college campuses, along with plentiful research case studies, the author shows how we can make a big difference when we all work together. Lowe issues an impassioned call for an “incarnational earthcare.” Particularly relevant to youth groups and college students wanting to go green. (InterVarsity Press)

THE LOWDOWN



It’s History:

Carole Boston Weatherford teams up with

illustrator Tim Ladwig for a picture book called *The Beatitudes: From Slavery to Civil Rights*. (Eerdmans)



Washed Up:

The next Disney nature film hits theaters this month. *Oceans* is in the tradition

of *Earth*, except it’s about—you guessed it—oceans.



Rapturous Reading:

The main character in the novel *Mercury Falls* by Robert Kroese is

a journalist jaded by “years of covering the antics of End Times cults for *The Banner*, a religious news magazine.” Don’t be left behind. (St. Culin Press)



Gotcha Covered:

Band Angels bandages look like Band-Aids with

a twist—the bandages feature cartoon angels and one of three Bible verses for your little cherub. Available at BandAngels.net.



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



Earthkeeping in Action

Last April *The Banner* asked readers to tell us what your churches have been up to in caring for the environment—in keeping with God’s plan to redeem not only people but creation too. Turns out you’ve been up to a lot! Here’s a sampling of what we discovered. We hope you’ll find these stories as inspiring as we did.

Rain Garden Witness

John Ausema, a high school biology and environmental science teacher, spearheaded the installation of a rain garden at Silver Spring (Md.) Christian Reformed Church in 2008. In a grant application to

the Chesapeake Trust, Ausema explained that the purpose of the rain garden is to capture rainwater from the roof and dramatically reduce runoff into a nearby stream. This trust, partially funded by

“Save the Bay” license plate fees, approved the grant for \$3,311 and the rain garden was built with volunteer labor provided by church members. The volunteers planted herbaceous, water-tolerating plants selected on the bases of native status, water tolerance, shade tolerance, and resistance to deer browsing.

Ausema explains that a secondary objective of the project is to teach the surrounding neighborhood something about rain gardens, low impact development, problems caused by storm water runoff, and the importance of landscaping with native plants. The church communicates these concepts with an attractive sign near the sidewalk that runs by the site. “This information helps the community to make the connection between the actions they take on their property and the larger watershed that surrounds them,” Ausema said, “from Sligo Creek, to the Anacostia River, to the Chesapeake Bay.”

—Calvin Hulstein



Grocery Bags

Boston Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., gives out reusable grocery bags that church members can use in place of the disposable paper or plastic bags found at grocery stores. The bags promote both sustainability and the church at the same time. “They’re a lot more popular than magnets,” said Rev. Jay Blankespoor.

—Christian Bell



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN BELL

Let's Talk About It

For Westwood Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich., a focus on creation care has led not only to the development of a community garden on church grounds, but to serious discussions about a Christian approach to climate change, the environment, energy efficiency, and economics.

The 10-plot garden provided fresh produce for individual families and the church's food pantry last year. Discussion during the Sunday educational hour has addressed global climate change issues as well as local concerns, including sustainability and practical ways to reduce personal energy use.

Bob Fegan, a Westwood CRC member and certified energy manager, led the Sunday morning sessions. He said that whether you believe climate change is caused by humans or by other forces, it is a fact that toxic and unsustainable consumption threatens creation.

"Creation cannot support the entire world population today, not to mention in the future, if consumption continues at the same rate in developing countries as in already developed countries like the United States," he said.

Churches and individual Christians must use resources responsibly, Fegan said, and guard against being abusive or wasteful.

"It is inconsistent to say that we love God but not to care for his creation," Fegan said, "or to say we love people but then not care about the condition of the environment in which they live."

—Henry Huisjen

Vancouver's Prize-winning Garden

Church potlucks are not unusual. But when members of First Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver gathered for a meal this past fall, much of what was served came directly from community garden plots on the church's property: carrots, onions, potatoes, kale, salad greens, and squash.

"The garden started from a few seeds," says Joel Pel, a member of First. The idea for the garden itself began with a door-to-door survey two years ago that placed a community garden high on the list of neighborhood needs. The first year the church created two garden boxes. Last spring the garden grew by six



First CRC member Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning tends a garden plot in Vancouver.

more plots, which the community gardeners hope to expand again. The garden plots have become a prominent part of the property.

"Most of the gardeners are young people under 35," says Pel, a 27-year-old elder in the church. "But everyone wanders there before or after church, encouraging us as gardeners, giving us seeds and garden advice. As a whole church we are excited about the garden."

The gardeners' dreams for expansion will be realized in part by receipt of a CRC Green Grant of \$500 (see "CRC Awards Second Annual Green Grants," February 2010). The funds will go toward adding a garden shed, expanded beds with flowers, and places to sit and enjoy the garden.

Sarah Nicolai-deKoning, another young gardener, describes how the garden supports the church's mission statement: "Our community garden is one way we explore our call to be stewards of God's good gifts to us. We hope this stewardship continues to be a focus of our church. The garden also acts as a connecting point for our church to be a hospitable neighbor."

—Jenny deGroot »

Eighteen-month-old Ben Halton gets an early introduction to gardening in Vancouver.





Mugs vs. Styrofoam Cups

Instead of using and throwing away Styrofoam cups each week, members of Boston Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., sip their Sunday morning coffee from “Mugs with a Mission.” The mugs were hand-painted by children in the church’s Vacation Bible School program. In addition to being reusable, many mugs have the name of a child painted on the bottom of them, and church members are encouraged to pray for the children after enjoying a beverage.

—Christian Bell

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN BELL

Give Us Your Garbage

When the junior high youths from Friendship Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., knock on their neighbors’ doors, they’re not selling candy or collecting pop cans. Every spring they invite neighborhood people to give them their garbage.

The young people gather truckloads of trash from about 300 homes, separating the items that can be recycled from those destined for a landfill. They also clear trash from streets and vacant lots in a designated area. Their “treasures” have included tires, appliances, wood, paint, yard waste, and even an old organ. Although there’s no charge for this service, some people offer donations, which the youths put toward funding mission trips.

In another cleanup project for a summer SERVE program, the 60 teens the church hosted visited about 400 homes on a two-day trash hunt. They sorted out metal, batteries, and electronics, and also toured an electronic recycling company called Comprenew.

—Carolyn Koster Yost



PHOTO BY GERRY KONING

Restoring Rush Creek: from left, Adam Vander Stelt, Kevin Quist, Gabriel Quist, Nate De Koster, Rick Duimstra, Troy Boeskool, Sherwin Koning, and Dave Duimstra

A Creek Runs Through It

Members of Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Mich., didn’t mind getting wet and dirty last year in order to clean up a creek that runs through church property. They hauled out slimy cans, Styrofoam, bottles, discarded carpet, and other junk.

“Why is it so easy for some to dump their garbage into waters that flow?” mused Rev. Gerald Koning, on his blog. “Perhaps it is not thoughtlessness that leads people to pour their garbage into running water, but rather an unspoken idea that once in the water it is gone. The trouble is that what was once our mess now becomes the mess of somebody else living just a bit farther downstream.”

Trinity volunteers who call themselves the “Stream Team” restored a 2-mile portion of Rush Creek’s serenity and beauty last summer and fall. In April the volunteers partnered with the West Michigan Environmental Action Council to assess habitat conditions and inventory aquatic organisms in the creek, a tributary of the Grand River.

“There is a sense of accomplishment in cleaning up a stream. Somehow it makes sitting on the bank and watching it flow a little more peaceful,” Koning said.

—Carolyn Koster Yost



Every spring junior high kids from Friendship CRC collect trash from about 300 homes.

Churches Clean Up 'Reformed' Watershed

Calvin College biology professor David Warner jokingly calls the Plaster Creek watershed in West Michigan “the most Reformed watershed in the world.” That’s because its boundaries include the U.S. headquarters of the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, numerous Christian Reformed churches, and the homes of many CRC people.

It’s also heavily polluted—so much so that the water is unsafe for human contact.

In response to that paradox, four Grand Rapids churches are teaming up with professors at Calvin College, the State of Michigan, and a local nonprofit group to clean up the water and, in the process, learn how even a small body of water can speak profoundly to the way we interact with creation.

The Plaster Creek watershed encompasses 58 square miles (151 sq. km) in Kent County. Runoff from urban, suburban, and agricultural sources has contaminated the water, affecting the wildlife population and causing a buildup of bacteria—particularly *E. coli*—that makes the water dangerous. The polluted waters of Plaster Creek empty into the Grand River, and eventually into Lake Michigan.

“The condition of the stream is an expression of our influence on creation,” said Randy Van Dragt, professor of biology at Calvin College. “Water is so intimately connected with life and the Father and Son. I hate to think of dead streams as acceptable.”

Van Dragt is one of a group of Calvin professors who have worked with area churches to raise awareness of Plaster Creek’s problems and to develop solutions to them. The four churches—Woodlawn CRC, Madison Square CRC, Alger Park CRC, and Roosevelt Park CRC—took part in workshops last summer to learn about Plaster Creek and are encouraging members of their congregations to get involved.

Rev. Mike Abma of Woodlawn said his church is planning a spring cleanup of part of the watershed and hopes to have church

members learn how to plant rain gardens and take home rain barrels, both of which help to contain excess water and prevent it from draining into the creek, carrying with it contamination.

“Plaster Creek is a real issue, and when we talk about it, other creation care issues come to the fore,” Abma said. “It leads to a conversation about many different things.”

—Christian Bell

Ringling Bells for Climate Justice

At the height of the global climate talks in Copenhagen, the World Council of Churches coordinated an ecumenical celebration for climate justice. Churches around the world rang their church bells at 3 p.m., creating a 24-hour chain of sound that proclaimed, “There is only one world, and in order to preserve it, bold action needs to be taken now.”

Good News Church in London, Ontario, has no church bells, but with a little creativity they found a way to participate. From the youngest to the oldest, church members gathered outside with pots, pans, cowbells, whistles, and drums, making some joyful noise to promote caring for God’s creation.



—Raquel Flores Lunshof

Plotting for the Future

In surveying their neighborhood, Fellowship CRC of Barrhaven, Ontario, near Ottawa, heard several times about the desire for fresh, good quality food. Looking at their own two acres of property, they knew God was leading them to grow a community garden.

Church members created three large beds, and technology students at Redeemer Christian High School helped design and implement a rainwater collection system.

“There were many ‘God moments,’” said Andrea Norg, the church’s office administrator, such as when a greenhouse was donated.

A mother who lives in the area, Sandy O’Connor, helped out and said her children loved snacking on the fresh vegetables and watching the beautiful caterpillars and adorable toads attracted to the garden. She shared her extra produce with friends. Everything harvested was given to people of the local community or to church members who took it home to share with neighbors.

This year neighbors will be able to sign up for their own plots.

—Brenda Visser ■



PHOTO BY PETER HISKES

Children in Plaster Creek near Dutton Park.

Palm Sunday in Jerusalem

IT WAS PALM SUNDAY 2009, and instead of sitting in a pew in my home church watching the Sunday school children walk down the aisles waving palm fronds, I was standing on the edge of a crowded processional in the sunny streets of East Jerusalem.

My brother, then a Jerusalem resident, led my husband and me boldly into the center of this stream of celebration. We were quickly surrounded by the energetic crowd on the Mount of Olives as they headed toward the ancient city gates.

This was no humdrum scene. Palestinian boys played trumpets, tubas, and drums with all their might, singing loud praises in Arabic. American nuns sang familiar hymns in English, and everywhere there was excitement and joy and conversation in many languages. Pilgrims from around the world waved the flags of their countries. Many waved palm branches high above their heads. My brother waved his hands, greeting many friends.

The Dome of the Rock, the famous Muslim shrine, glistened in the sun. We made our way down the sometimes steep, curvy streets toward the ancient city gates, past photographers wielding large cameras, past one tourist-ready camel, past an enormous graveyard, and past several heavily armed members of the Israeli army.

Perhaps an hour later, we entered St. Stephen's Gate. The narrow stone streets grew even more crowded, busy with commerce and tourism.

I felt energized and blessed especially by the enthusiasm of the local Christians, a minority group living among one of the most long-lasting and violent of family feuds—Arab vs. Jew. Sometimes caught in the crossfire, Christians have dwindled to a minute percentage of the population. Yet here they were, boldly proclaiming Christ's name.



I look forward to someday walking together toward a different gate.

Later that week my husband and I toured many religious sites, including Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and multi-denominational churches and chapels. Fascinated, we eagerly soaked up the culture, the beauty, the history, and the rituals, such as the Greek Orthodox service with centuries-old black lanterns hanging from cavernous ceilings, the scent of incense, the hidden priests reading the ancient text in a foreign tongue.

Those experiences and others highlighted again for us the vast and passionate differences in belief and practice of those who call themselves followers of Christ.

It's not often that we get to join fellow Christians of different garb, different church practices, and different languages to celebrate the one overarching thing that unites us. A year ago on Palm Sunday, I experienced it. I look forward to someday walking together toward a different gate, again boldly singing praises to our King—who this time sits not on a donkey, but on a throne. ■



Susan Vanden Berg is a member of Fourteenth Street CRC, Holland, Mich. A former English teacher, she is now a stay-at-home mom and freelance writer.

FAQs

Outreach

Q I often wonder if I'm a genuine Christian because I'm not actively sharing my faith. My attempts at outreach or evangelism seem phony and inappropriate. What should I do?

A If you're trying to talk to someone about your faith because you feel pressured to or because of some misconception about what a genuine Christian is, your attempts *will* be phony and inappropriate.

In our cultural context today, relationships are the most fertile ground for the gospel. The days of showing up and knocking on people's doors with a "plan for their life" are over. Think of the last time a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon knocked on your door. What was *your* reaction? Exactly.

Now think of the last time someone shared with you a favorite recipe or a story about how his child just learned to ride a bike or about a great movie she just watched—no doubt it was natural and unrehearsed. Sharing a story about God can and should be just like that.

A true Christian witness doesn't need to think about saying the right thing or inserting the right verse because his or her life is focused on following Jesus and living out the kingdom of God. This kind of authentic faith speaks for itself.

Develop friendships with people outside of your Christian circle—people you meet at

With much appreciation for their fine work, every once in a while we retire some of the contributing voices to this column and invite a few new ones. This month we're pleased to introduce Bryan Berghoef and Greg Mellema.

The days of showing up and knocking on people's doors with a "plan for their life" are over.

the bookstore, a favorite restaurant, or at the office. Invite a casual acquaintance over for dinner. Offer to help him with a house project. Get to know her over coffee. Seek such a person out as a friend rather than as a target, and your words and life will be seen and heard differently.

In this context faith issues can become a natural part of your conversations, rather than a forced and sudden presentation. Relax and entrust the whole thing to God. As you do, you'll find that God has a way of arriving in unsurprising ways and places.

—Bryan Berghoef

Rev. Bryan Berghoef is pastor of Watershed Church, a Christian Reformed church plant in Traverse City, Mich.

Christian Morality

Q At the checkout in a store I pointed out to the cashier that I had been given too much change, and as a result she was fired from her job. Now I am reluctant to point out errors in my favor. Am I right to keep silent?

A Are you sure that what you said was the sole cause of the cashier's being fired? Might it have been the final straw in a series of errors? In any case, you cannot keep silent in situations when you realize that an error is in your favor, even if your intent is to protect an employee.

But point out errors in a way that is charitable and does not cause a commotion or attract the attention of a manager. If you discover an error after leaving a cashier's work station and you are still on the premises, you must return, even if it means getting back in line to do so. It is simply unacceptable to do otherwise; depending on the precise circumstances, it can qualify as a form of theft.

If you suspect there might be an error in your favor but don't actually check to make sure, that is also wrong. As Aristotle taught us, willful ignorance cannot spare us from bearing responsibility for wrongdoing.

—Gregory Mellema

Dr. Gregory Mellema is a philosophy professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Bible

Q Because of the increase in identity theft, terrorism, and natural disasters, some have suggested having our social insurance or social security number imprinted on our bodies. Should I say no to that in view of Revelation 13:16-17, regarding the "mark of the beast"?

A While most of us would probably applaud efforts to monitor mad cow disease, some Christian farmers appealed to this passage when they refused to place computer chips in their cattle to assist in tracking this disease.

While most of us probably can't imagine a legitimate reason for doing something similar to humans, such proposals should be decided on their own merits, not by an appeal to this text.

A note in the NIV Study Bible (Zondervan 2006, p. 2136) indicates that "the mark of the beast apparently symbolized allegiance to the demands of emperor worship. In the final days of the antichrist it will be the ultimate test of loyalty."

Christians should say no to any "mark" that indicates that our primary allegiance is to someone or something other than our Savior.

—George Vander Weit

George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. ■

The Apostles' Creed

MANY PEOPLE MAKE THE HONEST MISTAKE of referring to the most famous creed as the “Apostle’s Creed” (note the placement of the apostrophe). Having made the mistake myself during my first several years of ministry, I do not typically point it out to others.

After I printed it incorrectly in the church bulletin one week, a member of my second congregation asked, “Just which one of the apostles is responsible for this creed?” His wry question reminded me that this creed is properly the creed of *all* the apostles.

This is not merely a matter of grammatical nitpicking. Even though this creed came into its final form seven centuries after the last of the apostles died, the Church has always called it the “Apostles’ Creed” because the truths contained within these brief lines represent the gospel faith as it was handed down through the witness of our Lord’s chosen apostles.

In one form or another, this creed goes back to the very earliest days of the Christian Church. It appears to have its most ancient origin in three questions asked of those being baptized: “Do you believe in God the Father?” The one being baptized would reply (in Latin), “*Credo*” (“I believe”).

“Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God?”

“*Credo.*”

“Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?”

“*Credo.*”

This is the basic Trinitarian formula that undergirds the Apostles’ Creed to this day.

It goes back to the **very earliest** days of the Christian Church.

Over time, pastors and theologians added content under each of the headings of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in order to give believers a handy way to summarize the basics of the Christian faith. So God the Father was described as the almighty Creator of heaven and earth. The Son’s work was summarized by tracing out the essentials of his virgin birth, sacrificial death, and resurrection from the dead. The Spirit’s work was filled in along the lines of the Spirit’s work in the Church, assuring us that the Church is finally one body that preaches a forgiveness of sins and a resurrection of our bodies that will usher us into everlasting life.

When we recite the Apostles’ Creed today, we can read it from a page in our hymnal or projected onto a screen. Much

has changed since the creeds were first written. For nearly 1,500 years prior to the invention of the printing press, there were no books, pamphlets, or screens. Knowledge had to be carried around in people’s memories. Relatively brief creeds were easy to memorize and provided a tool for witnessing in case someone in the marketplace or at work would ask, “I hear you’re one of those Christians. So tell me, what do you believe?”

We 21st-century Christians can easily look up doctrinal and biblical teachings on our BlackBerries, iPhones, and the like. We’re no longer limited to our memories. But in our increasingly diverse and religiously pluralistic world, we do well still to know the basics of our faith by heart so that we can speak those truths *from* the heart in case we are asked, “So, what do you believe?” ■

Side Note

Because of uncertainty about what the creed really means by “[Jesus] descended into hell,” some church traditions have dropped that line. Recite the creed with them, and they’ll finish ahead of you.

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places*



Rev. Scott Hoezee is director of Calvin Theological Seminary’s Center for Excellence in Preaching in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: May 2010 issue is 4/5/10; June issue is 5/3/10. 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.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

General

ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER— Wednesday, March 10, 2010

Synod has designated Wednesday, March 10, 2010, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, for crops and industry, and for the church worldwide.

Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U.S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U.S.) is May 6, 2010.

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY BOARD TO MEET The board of trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary will meet in the Seminary on Thursday, April 22, 2010 at 8:30 A. M. and the following days.

Kevin J. Adams, Secretary

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U.S.)

In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 6.

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

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

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

Financial Aid

Students from Classis Rocky Mountain preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2010-2011 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westenbroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303)400-6723 or e-mail robertwestenbroek@comcast.net. All requests to be received by May 31, 2010.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS KALAMAZOO will be meeting in its regular session May 11, 2010 at Third CRC, Kalamazoo, 9:30 AM. Please send materials or requests to jweeda@mcn.net or Jake Weeda, 1782 5th St, Martin, MI 49070.

CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, May 20, 2010, 4PM, at the Bethel CRC of Zeeland. Agenda deadline is April 8.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Congregational Announcements

General

FIRST CRC OF DETROIT will celebrate its building addition with a reunion and dedication on Sunday, May 16, 10:00 am. We welcome friends and former members to join us. Dinner will be provided fol-

lowing worship, for which a RSVP is requested (313-824-3511 or grossepoincecr@yahoo.com). Informal tours and refreshments will be provided on Saturday evening, the 15th. Please send First Church memories to gjbatts@aol.com.

GRAND OPENING German Valley CRC, German Valley, IL announces the Grand Opening of our new worship center. Friends and former members are invited to help celebrate on Sunday, May 2. Worship service begins at 10:00 a.m. followed by the open house until 2:00 p.m. For more information please e-mail us at gvrcc@aeroinc.net or call 815-362-6601.

Church's 75th Anniversary

The Christian Reformed Church of Morrison, IL will be celebrating its 75th anniversary June 12 & 13, 2010. We are planning a special program Saturday evening followed by a service of celebration on Sunday Morning. All former members and friends of our congregation are invited to be a part of our celebration. For information contact the church at 815.772.4657.

CHURCH'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY Newton CRC of Newton, IA. will be celebrating its 75th anniversary Aug. 8. We invite all former members, pastors, and friends to join us! For more information, E-mail elcovanze@yahoo.com.

Church's 25th Anniversary

SUNRISE CRC PONOKA, AB hopes to celebrate its 25th anniversary. Friends and former members are invited to join us for events on May 29 and 30. For more information and to register contact Jan Star 1403-783-4279 or kjstar@xplornet.com

Retirement



FIRST CRC OF PRINSBURG announces the retirement of their pastor, Rev. David A. Zylstra, after 36 years in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. A dinner and farewell program will be held at the church on Saturday, April 17. His farewell message will be on Sunday, April 18, Please join us, friends and former parishioners, in honoring Pastor Dave and Claudia. For additional information please contact the church at office@firstcrocprinsburg.org, or call Tim Slagter, 320-664-4212

OAKDALE PARK CRC, GR, MI announces the retirement of their pastor, Rev. William Vanden Bosch. Pastor Bill began his ministry in Lake City MI and celebrated his 30th Anniversary at Oakdale Park Church in October 2009. His farewell message will be on May 2, 2010 at the 10:15 am service. A reception and dinner will follow the service. We give glory to God for His blessings on Pastor Bill and Lyn's many years of service and wish them His continued blessings in retirement.

Announcements


MILLBROOK CHRISTIAN SCHOOL'S CLOSING CELEBRATION: Join us on Friday, April 16 to honor our retirees and celebrate God's faithfulness to our school for the past 55 years as we are moving to our new campus next year. The evening begins at 6:30 pm with a service of Praise and Worship at Millbrook CRC. This will be followed by an Open House at Millbrook Christian School honoring Janna Grimberg, Bruce Joldersma and Kathy Miedema and our history. The evening will conclude at 8:30 p.m.

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 luctorcr@uraltel.net for more information.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA SCHOLARSHIP Geneva Campus Ministry is receiving applications for the Jason Chen Faith and Learning Scholarship. For freshmen and transfer students starting UI in the fall of 2010. For information: geneva@uiowa.edu or 319-594-2621. Deadline: May 1.

Birthdays

DR. JERRY BULTHUIS, 5E.8th. Ave, Holland, MI 49423, celebrates his 95th birthday on April 23. His children, Mary & Neil Van Regenmorter, Sally Bulthuis, Linda & Tom Spaman, George & Trudy Bulthuis, Gayle & Ron Byker, his 10 grandchildren & 10 great grands wish him God's continued blessing. His life & faith are an inspiration for us all. We love you, Dad.



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gives more joy and encouragement than the establishment of a scholarship or award at

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90th Birthday

EDWIN W. HOOGSTRA of 2500 Breton Woods, Grand Rapids, MI, 49512 celebrated his 90th birthday on Feb. 17. Wife: Betty Children: Ed and Joyce, Don and Louise, Ron and Mary, Pam and Roger along with their Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren give thanks to God for continued good health.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

GEEELHOED, Martin and Beatrice (Herrema), 7440 Ambler Lane SE, Calendonia, MI 49316 celebrate 65 yrs of marriage on March 22, 2010. Children Pat Kooienga, Tom & Linda Wierenga, Tim Geelhoed (dec.),

Terry Geelhoed & Barbara Lenemann. 12 grandkids (2 dec), 24 great-grandkids. Great is thy faithfulness!

60th Anniversary

FRIDSMAN, Bill & Audrey (Cok) 2500 Breton Woods DR SE #2047, Grand Rapids, MI 49512 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on March 29.

SCHOLTEN, William & Shirley (Gorzeman), 1801 Kok Road, Lynden, WA 98264 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary April 17, 2010 with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We give thanks to God for his blessings and faithfulness.

50th Anniversary

BEEZHOLD Joe & Judy (Stob) of Chicago, IL will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 16. Congratulations with much love from your family. We have been abundantly blessed and continually thank God for His faithfulness!



HUIZINGA, John Sr. & Pat (Piebenga), Wyoming, MI celebrating 50 years of marriage on April 7. Children: Tim & Donna Huizinga, Ben & Ruth Cook, John Jr. & Heidi Huizinga, 8 grandchildren. God has been good.

ROSENDALE, Donald and Elizabeth (Workman) of 24711 Sycamore, Elwood, IL 60421 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 29th. Congratulations and much love from your family!

WIERINGA Jerry & Carole (Boeringa) 452 Verret, Elmhurst, IL 60126. will celebrate their 50th anniversary on April 1st. Children: Brad & Evelyn, Bob & Laurie, Pam & Steve, Norm, Joel & Kathi, Eric & Laura, 19 grandchildren, 1 great grandson. Great is Thy Faithfulness

Church Positions Available

NEW CHURCH SEEKS PASTOR: Living Water Community Church is a new and vibrant congregation in Orange City, IA, eager to share the Living Water with all who thirst. We are searching for a full-time pastor with a vision for outreach and a passion for teaching God's Word. To view our church profile, visit the Christian Reformed website. For inquiries please e-mail or call Scott Groeneweg at 712-548-8131 skgroen@yahoo.com or Al Schuiteman at 712-441-6352 cfs@longlines.com.

FIRST CRC OF EDMONTON, ALBERTA is seeking a senior pastor. We are looking for a pastor who is a strong preacher and mentor, with the ability to relate well to the many generations represented in our church while challenging and aiding us as we move forward in the calling God has for our congregation. If you have any questions, or to forward us your resume or profile please contact Melissa at melissa@haarsmafarms.ca.

WESTVIEW CRC located in Grand Rapids MI is seeking a full time Minister of Worship. The Minister of Worship is the primary leadership position for all ministries at Westview but most particularly for those related to worship and will work in coordination with our Minister of Congregational Life, Director of Music, Senior High Youth Directors, Middle School Youth Director, church Secretary and other staff at Westview. In addition to preaching 75% of the services, he will want to diligently promote evangelism and outreach through dynamic leadership of the 166 families / 485 professing members of Westview. For more information or to receive a Church Profile please contact the search committee (Bob Zwiers - Chair) at search@westviewcrc.org or call the church office 616-453-3105 www.westviewcrc.org

CAMPUS MINISTER AT GVSU, Allendale, MI. Classis Zeeland is inviting applications for this full time position at Grand Valley State University. Email gvsucampusminister@gmail.com for a detailed position description. Deadline for submission is April 30th, 2010 or until position is filled.

SENIOR PASTOR Northern NJ: America's Best Kept Secret? Are you adventurous enough to consider a new location for your life and ministry? Contrary to popular stereotypes, Northern NJ is a beautiful area conveniently proximate to nature, New York City and everything in between. A mid-size congregation situated on a 10 acre suburban campus, Covenant CRC is seeking an intelligent and energetic Senior Pastor with strong preaching skills, leadership ability, and passion for engaging the lives of those within our walls and in our community. The Lord has blessed our church with robust youth ministry programs and an active congregation diverse in age and talents but united in the goal of becoming more like Christ. If he puts us on your heart, we would love to hear from you. Please visit our website www.covcrc.org and contact Mark Reitsma at mreitsma@optonline.net or 666 Godwin Ave., Suite 210 Midland Park, NJ 07432. A copy of our Church Profile is filed with the Office of Pastor/Church Relations.

SENIOR/LEAD PASTOR Christ Community Church of Plainfield (CRC) is seeking a dynamic pastor who will lead our staff and congregation in solid biblical teaching. Our mission is: "To draw unchurched and previously churched people into a maturing relationship with Christ." We live and worship in the fast growing Chicago suburb of Plainfield, IL. We have 206 families in membership with an average of 500 people attending each week. Our worship style is contemporary with

some traditional elements. We are seeking the person God has chosen to lead our congregation. For more information please visit: <http://www.aplacetoconnect.com/pastor>

LEAD PASTOR Wolf Creek Community Church in Lacombe, AB is seeking a Full-time Lead Pastor. Are you gifted to preach in an engaging and authentic style? Do you have strong leadership gifts that enable you to work well with other staff and lay leaders? Do you have a love for people ranging in spiritual maturity from seeker to mature believer? Can you help us to live out our vision of reaching and enfold-ing others for Jesus? If the Spirit is nudging you, please call or email our Search Team Leader for more information: Gary Barnes at 403-885-5187 or barnes.gw@gmail.com

OCHEYEDAN CRC (IA) is seeking a full time pastor. Please contact Ken Haack at (712)331-4151 or thelmaandken@hotmail.com

VICTORIA CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in the capital city of British Columbia on beautiful Vancouver Island is looking for a pastor who, with the members, can fulfill our vision to become more inclusive, inspire and teach from a reformed Biblical perspective to all ages, both members and the surrounding community. Our goal, with God's help, is to become a welcoming and enfolding culture. We seek to provide inspiring worship, a structure that provides opportunity for all members to use their God given gifts and to become more effective communicators, leaders, and coordinators of our ministries. If you feel God challenging you to work with us as we seek to become the kind of church God wants us to be, please contact: Joyce Masselink, Chair Search Committee, jandjmasselink@shaw.ca; or call 250-721-0066

SENIOR PASTOR The town of Grimsby is a rapidly growing community located on the southern shores of Lake Ontario in the heart of Niagara. Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, ON is seeking a full-time ordained Pastor. We need a caring and visionary leader with a commitment to our vision of Reaching Up, Reaching In and Reaching Out. The Pastor God has selected for us will be able to dynamically preach and teach the word of God, embrace the members of the congregation, welcome visitors and provide strategic leadership to the congregation, to the Council and to the Pastoral Staff. We are an 800+ multi-generational congregation led by a staff ministry team which presently includes a Youth Pastor and the newly filled position of Pastor of Congregational Care. Inquiries can be sent to: Search Committee, Mountainview CRC, 290 Main Street East, Grimsby, ON L3M 1P8 or email searchcommittee@mountainviewcrc.org. Further information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.mountainviewcrc.org or by contacting Harry DeVries, chair of Search Committee, at 905-945-1872 (evenings 7pm - 10pm EST).

CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR Areopagus, a campus ministry in Ames, IA, is seeking a leader to work with Trinity CRC in reaching out to students at Iowa State University. For information contact AmesCRC@aol.com.

FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY CRC, IN, is seeking a part time lead pastor. We are a small congregation but are committed to a ministry that is outward focused and mission based. We are looking for a pastor who is strong in preaching the Word and has the ability to rally us and

teach us to share Christ's love in our community. If interested please submit your pastoral profile or resume to vrail@verizon.net, also to obtain more information or our church profile, please contact Rick Van Laar at the above email or call me at 260-486-2461

MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER Missional church (600+ attendance) reaching the unchurched is looking for a gifted musician and worship leader. Must have a growing relationship with God, the ability to build and develop a team, and good stage presence. Excellence on keyboards and/or guitar and experience with a praise band is essential. Call or e-mail for an application. Crossroads Church, 1538 Janice Drive Schererville, IN 46375 - 219-322-6400 www.aboutccc.com - jbuss@aboutccc.com

DIR. OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION Christ Presbyterian Church in Madison, Wisconsin has opened a search for a full-time Director of Christian Formation for Children and Youth. We're seeking an individual who is committed to Jesus Christ and has a heart for children in an active, diverse community. Director will oversee all aspects of Youth Ministry for ages 0-18, working closely with church staff and volunteer teams. Prefer college degree plus experience in teaching or children's ministry. Required skills include: Administration (implement programs, plan activities/events); Leadership (train, discern, delegate, support parents/volunteers); Communication (write, speak, report, recruit); and Mentoring (form relationships, guide spiritual growth of youth/families). 608-957-4897

ALLISTON CRC, located 1 hour north of Toronto, ON is seeking a full time pastor with strong leadership qualities and effective preaching skills. Successful candidates must have the ability to incorporate both traditional and contemporary worship styles in service planning, and must be able to apply sound biblical preaching to daily life. Alliston is best known for farming (potatoes) and manufacturing (Honda), and being the birthplace of Sir Frederick Banting. Alliston is centrally located, and is close to a multitude of cultural and physical activities. Please contact John VanLoenen at 905-936-2550 or jvloenen@solve.net to obtain more information.

WILLARD CRC located in the quaint village of Celeryville just south of Willard OH is actively seeking a full-time pastor. We are a congregation of about 70 families who are involved with active church life and Christian education. We are looking for a caring leader who will lead us in Bible-based preaching, nurture our multigenerational members and encourage and enable our congregation to continue in spiritual and congregational growth. We are a rural community in the heart of agricultural Ohio. We are not far from Lake Erie and are on the edge of an industrial community. For more information and to obtain our church profile, please send inquiries to Willard Christian Reformed Church, attn: Allison Wiers, Secretary of the Search Committee, 4163 Broadway Rd, Willard, OH 44890.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan has an exciting opportunity for a MINISTRY COORDINATOR. This FULL TIME staff member will recruit, equip and organize volunteers in worship and music leadership, youth ministry, education, evangelism, service and fellowship. Preference will be given to candidates with administrative and worship leadership experience. For position description and to apply, contact Pastor Everett Vander Horst at (616) 452-6971 ext. 101 or everett@shawneepark.com. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Obituaries



ASMA, Lois Doreen, age 77, December 26, 2009. 6031 Bradford St. Portage, MI 49024. She was preceded in death by her parents, George Wilkinson and Myrtle Wilkinson (Macdonald), and infant sister Margaret, brother Donald and many relatives in Canada, U. S. A. and the Netherlands.

Surviving are her husband, Nick, to whom she was married for almost 35 years; two sisters and their husbands: Carol (James) Lyons, Audrey (Patrick) Greaves. Several in-laws in North America and Europe. Lois was born in Cheltenham, Ontario, where she was an elementary schoolteacher and library supervisor in Peel County. She was an active member of Third CRC in Kalamazoo, MI where she served as deaconess, deacon, and in the Coffee Break ministry since its inception. Her favorite Bible passage was Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV. Her Godly life was an inspiration to all of us.

BEUKEMA, Herman, aged 85, of Grandville, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, September 23, 2009. Mr. Beukema was a teacher at Cutlerville Christian and Calvin Christian High School where he was the Athletic Director for 23 years. He was a lifelong Cubs fan. He was preceded in death by his son, Corky; grandsons, Ed Burdick and Jeffrey Blake. He is lovingly remembered by his wife of 62 years, Gertie; children, Jan Baker, Sandy and Tom Jelinski, Chris and Jerry Black, Jody Beukema; 15 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; brothers and sisters-in-law, Cork and Grace DeHorn, Audrey and George Hiskes; Sas Cooper; several nieces and nephews.

BOS, Hermina H. (Uiterdyk), age 96, of Manhattan, MT, entered peacefully into her eternal Heavenly Home on Feb. 18, 2010. She was preceded in death by her husband John J. Bos in 1993. She is survived by 5 sons & their wives: Ken & Marlene, Harv & Millie, Al & Joan, Loren & Gwen, & Glenn & Kathy; 14 grandchildren & 10 great grandchildren.

BRINK, Mrs. Alta Mae; age 89; February 08, 2010;. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. William P. Brink in 1999. She is survived by her children: Paul and Karen Brink, Esther and Daniel Bos, John and Merri Brink, Daniel and Cheryl Brink, Stephen and Rhonda Brink; 18 grandchildren; 15 great grandchildren; brother-in-law: John Boss.

BRONKEMA, Ethel Louise, 79, died suddenly February 8, 2010. She was for 57 years the wife of Rev. Ralph W. Bronkema, 421 Eagle Drive, Satellite Beach, FL. Louise founded the Orlando Christian School in 1961 while her husband was pastor at the Orlando Christian Reformed Church. Messages of condolence may be sent to ameknorb@aol.com, and memorial gifts may be sent to the Shalom Christian Reformed Church, 4100 Southeastern Drive, Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

BROUWER, John, age 77; Feb 7, 2010; Duncan, BC. Survived by his wife of 57 years, Jennie (Meindersma); children: Gloria, Doug (Diane), Ken (Debby), Rob (Karen), Randy (Wilma), Darren and Jane (Rob), foster daughters, Wendy and Lorrie, plus many grandchildren. A memorial service was held at the Duncan CRC on Feb 13, 2010.

BUURSMA, Althea; age 86; February 13, 2010. Predeceased by daughter Sheri. Survived by husband of 59 years, Rev. William Buursma; sister, Dr. Corrine Kass; 3 sons, Bruce, Dirk, Mark; 12 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren.

BYKER Rev. John J.; age 85; February 4, 2010; 4070 Leonard St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525; He was preceded in death by his son, John and granddaughter, Christina Kennedy. He is survived by his wife of 63 years: Dorothy; children: Cynthia and Christopher Kennedy, David A. and Roelie Byker, Barbara and Peter Grutter, Ruth and Calvin Long, Paul Byker, Mary and Dr. Larry Arnhart, Deborah Byker Benson, Rachael and John Bouma; 30 grandchildren; 16 great grandchildren; sisters: Stephena Scholten, Beth Jansen, and Dorothy Van Manen.

DAVIDS, John. Age 84 of St. John, IN and Ft. Myers Bch, FL. Went to be with our Lord Feb. 3, 2010. Survived by his wife Jean (Doot), son Jack (Nancy) Davids, daughters Claudia (John) Littleford, and Patricia (Craig) Menninga, 12 grand children and 13 great grandchildren. Also survived by brother Ted (Marilyn) Davids, sister Helen Noort, sister-in-law Rita Davids. Preceded in death by brother Jacob Davids and brother-in-law Clarence Noort.

DOEZEMA, Rev. Lambert, age 97, passed from this life on February 23, 2010, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Lamb was born on December 8, 1912, to Riner and Reka Doezema in Grand Rapids, MI. He graduated from Calvin College in 1935 and from the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1938. He and Joanne Hoeksema were married on December 21, 1938, in Grand Rapids and soon thereafter moved to California where he served a church in Bellflower. From 1954 to 1956 he studied theology at the Free University of Amsterdam, where he received the Doctorandus Degree in 1955. Lamb subsequently served churches in Grand Rapids, MI; Drayton, Ontario, Canada; and Parchment, MI. He retired from the ministry in 1977. After retirement Lamb and Jo served two years in mission schools in Nigeria and one year in the Philippines. Lamb was preceded in death by his wife Jo, a son Tom, and by his brothers Charles and William. He is survived by his children Ryan (Mary Ellen), Herman (Frances), David (Linda), Ruth (Carlos), Lambert Lee (Sarah), and Mary (Joel) and by 19 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. He is also survived by brothers and sisters Angie VanderWal, Harriet (Edward) Knott, Edward (Betty) Doezema, Annette (Herman) Hoeksema, Katherine Doezema, and by many nieces and nephews. Lamb is remembered in gentle love by family, friends, and former parishioners.

GROENENDYK, (Van Dyk) Wanda, of Leighton, Ia. went to be with her Lord on February 15, 2010. She is survived by her husband of 55 years, Edwin, her sons, Bruce (Lisa), Mike, Keith (Neva), a daughter Marsha (David) Workman, and seven grandchildren.

HELMUS, Martin A., age 51 went to be with our Lord on January 29, 2010. He was preceded in death by his mother, Marilyn Helmus. He is survived by his father, Tunis; his brother Tunis Jr. (Sheryl); his sister Cindy (Bill) Engelsman. Loving uncle to Jena (Rey) Phillips, Shelly and Tracy Helmus, Donelle, Carissa and Billy Engelsman.

KEUNING, Evelyn, 3/4/41-2/7/10 Survived by husband Bruce, son Dan/Lisl and daughter Julie/Robert Poindexter plus six grandchildren. P. O. Box 4385, Pagosa Spring, CO 81157

KINGMA James (Jim), 78, of Wheatfield Indiana, passed away February 15, 2010. He is survived by wife Betty (VanKeppel), children: Joan Keown, Mark (Linda), David (Brenda), Cathy (Jim) Dykstra, and daughter-in-law Brenda Boelens, and 8 grandchildren. Also surviving are siblings: Dr. Roy E. (Sonya), Harold (Eleanor), and Henrietta Kingma. Jim was preceded in death by his son Chris and brother Sam. Jim was a Korean war veteran and was buried with full honors. Thanks Dad for being a lifelong example of a humble servant of God.

KORTLEVER, Casey A., age 84; Nov. 3, 2009; 1096-2 Fountain View Cr., Holland, MI 49423. Survived by his loving wife of 62 years, Jane (Texer); 3 daughters Donna (John) Van Noord, Mary (Dean) Duistermars

& Judy (Rob) Wilson; 9 grandchildren & 15 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents Tony & Marie Kortlever; & sister, Jean Potts of Belgrade, MT. Case was born in Helena, MT on Feb. 14, 1925 & raised on a 600 acre farm in Conrad. He enlisted in the Navy in 1942 & was assigned to the 6A Division of the USS Colorado Battleship and discharged in May, 1945. Case received the greatest spiritual guidance from traditional, Scripture based hymns of praise that he played on his guitar. A Memorial service was held on Nov. 7 in the Chapel at Christ Memorial Reformed Church.




MAATMAN, Rebecca Jean, age 55, February 24, 2010, Columbia, MO. Becky fought a life-long battle with Juvenile Diabetes. She will be remembered for her dry sense of humor and uncanny ability to say just the right thing. Becky is survived by her parents, Russell and Jean Maatman; one brother and sister-in-law, John and Anne Maatman of Sioux Center, Iowa; two sisters and brothers-in-law: Sue and Larry Meyers of Sheldon, Iowa, and Ruth and Roger Carter of Columbia as well as numerous nieces and nephews. She is preceded in death by her grandparents and a sister and brother-in-law, Deborah and Steven Baker.

NOTEBOOM, Lanay; age 80; December 7, 2009; South Sioux City, NE. Loving and devoted wife & mother is survived by husband of 56 years, Marvin; Children: John & Frances Noteboom, Terry & Dawn Noteboom, Marla & Brian Moore, David Noteboom, Jack & Barb Noteboom, Dawn & Chris Conover and Julie & Trent Stulich; 20 Grandchildren and 8 Great-grandchildren; Sisters Nell Piersma & Teri VanWyk

RIETKERK, Irene (nee Elders), 101, on Feb. 23, 2010, Ontario, CA. Preceded in death by husband, Bill, and son-in-law, Elmer Meendering. Survived by daughter Betty Meendering of Ontario, CA; daughter Willene and her husband Walt De Groot of Grand Rapids, MI; son Bill and his wife Eleanor Rietkerk of Mill Creek, WA; sister Sarah Wigboldy of Ontario, CA; 12 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

SCHOLTEN, Hilda, age 82, Lynden, WA went to be with her Lord on Sept 5, 2009. Survived by her husband of 62 years Evert. Children: Arlene (Dave), Marilyn (Ron deceased), Carol (Dwayne), Al (Laura), Dwayne (Lisa), 11 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren.

STAAT, HERMAN F. Safe in the arms of Jesus at age 87, Feb. 9, 2010, Artesia, CA. Survived by children Charlotte, Harold, Paul, Dorothy (Luke) Bruining, sister Johanna List, numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. Predeceased by wife Charlotte, and son Robert. Memorials to Salem Christian Home, 6921 Edison Avenue, Chino, CA 91710-9057



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SWEETMAN, Ivan R., age 82. Called to his eternal home on February 12, 2010. Beloved husband of Shirley (nee Smith), loving father of Christie (Edward) Miedema, Linda Sweetman, Sally (Clay) Ireton, Ross (Tamsyn) Sweetman, 8 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren, brother of Carolyn Gesink, 3 nieces, 2 nephews. 8080 Dartmouth Ave. #27 Denver, CO 80231

TUINSTRA, Clasina (Tamminga), 93 entered heaven March 1, 2010. Her husband Fred and siblings, Ann, David and Dorothy preceded her in death. Children: Priscilla (David) Boersma, and Lori (John) Balkema. Grandchildren: Cristin (Derek) Lenters, Daryl (Trisha) Boersma, Russ (Kris) Boersma, Steve (Traci) Balkema, Scott (Leann) Balkema and Rick (Kim) Balkema. She especially enjoyed her 8 great-grandchildren.

TUIT, Richard; age 83, of Pompton Plains, NJ, went to be in the presence of his Lord and Savior on February 3, 2010. He will be greatly missed by his wife of 58 years, Wilma (Heerema), four sons: Ron, Rick, Glen, Bob, and one daughter, Janis Warden, 13 grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. His life of faithful service to Jesus Christ has served as an example to many. Memorials may be made to the Back to God Ministries Int'l, or Eastern Christian School Assoc.

VANWYKE, Gerald J., age 95, of Holland, MI, passed away peacefully on Feb 6, 2010. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Margaret and daughter-in-law Helen Van Wyke. He'll be deeply missed by his children; Gerald (Mary) VanWyke, Paul (Jane) VanWyke, Ruth (Edward) Zeilstra, William (Salvadora) VanWyke, Peggy (Jack) Klaasen, and his 22 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to CRWRC or Pine Rest.

VERHOEF, Janet E.; age 82; February 1, 2010; 725 Baldwin, #3047, Jenison, MI 49428; She was preceded in death by her brother, George Ver Heek and brother-in-law, Gerritt Ver Hoef. Surviving are her husband of 60 years, Albert; children: Marcia (David) Vander Ploeg, Susan (Tom) Van Dyk, Sharon (Dirk) Van Wyk, Karen Ver Hoef, Steve (Barb) Ver Hoef; grandchildren: Tracy (Randy) Bass, Brian (Shannon) Vander Ploeg, Kelly (Nick) Burri, Caitlin and Ryan Van Dyk, Jeremy and Nick Venlet, Becky, Linda, Mark and Brian Van Wyk, and Richard Ver Hoef; great grandchildren, Gabriel and Owen Bass, Zachary and Coleton VanderPloeg, Tegan and Kailand Burri; sisters-in-law: Alyda VerHoef, Lucille Ver Hoef and Jane Ver Heek.

Employment

AJJIC, MEXICO 10,000 retired Americans and Canadians live on the shores of Lake Chapala, near Guadalajara. One year ago, King of Kings Presbyterian Church daughtered Lakeside Presbyterian Church to make disciples among these expatriates and now is looking for new pastoral leadership for this ministry. If you have relative financial independence (a retired or semi-retired pastor might be ideal) and sense God prompting you to inquire into this opportunity, please contact Ray De Lange at contact@englishfellowshipdgl.org.

CAREGIVERS NEEDED Are you interested in working for the best living assistance services company in West Michigan? Visiting Angels is looking for people who can be excellent, not average; make a connection with our clients; be perfectly dependable; practice compassion and work with integrity. Contact Heather at 616-243-7080 or heather@vangels.com or visit our website at www.vangels.com and complete an online application.

DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) - US, a non-profit organization, seeks a Regional Development Representative to work toward established promotional goals for WWCS programs including student sponsorship and short-term missions. Four-year college degree and five years of experience in development, fund-raising, and/or sales/marketing desired. Learn more at us.wwcs.org. Send resume with cover letter to sponsorship@wwcs.org.

DRIVERS NEEDED: Local greenhouse looking for Semi and Straight Truck Drivers for Spring season. Competitive wages paid. Please contact Paul Blauwkamp for more information. 616-836-1014

LECTURER IN OLD TESTAMENT The Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, is seeking to appoint a full-time lecturer in Old Testament. The expected starting date is January 2011. The position is suited to someone who has a postgraduate research degree in Old Testament and is able to teach Hebrew, biblical theology, hermeneutics and Old Testament exegesis. Proven ability in teaching, extensive

ministry experience, good communication and inter-personal skills and a strong commitment to Reformed theology are essential. For further information email principal@rtc.vic.edu.au or write to: The Principal Reformed Theological College 125 Pigdons Road Waurn Ponds VIC 3216 Australia Applications close 30 April 2010

KANAWHA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, located in Kanawha, Ia is seeking a full-time teacher/administrator for the 2010-2011 school year. This position includes full health benefits and a pension plan. Contact Kanawha Christian School at 641-762-3322 or KCS@comm1net.net for an application form.

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MISSION FIELD: NOVA SCOTIA Target: Young people grades 3-12. Impact: Share the good news of Jesus Christ. When: July/August 2010. How: Head Cook, 4 days a week. Benefits: accommodation, salary, beachfront, sunshine. Contact: info@malagashbiblecamp.com; 902-257-2838

Volunteers

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED to serve in the Lighthouse Variety Store at Mississippi Christian Family Services in Rolling Fork, MS for the months of May thru September. Air conditioned housing and store. This is such a rewarding area of service to those so much less fortunate than we. We ask for a minimum of two weeks. Call or email Cliff & Huddy Doornbos, (616)453-1984 or huddyd@gmail.com.

Real Estate: Sales and Rental

ANNA MARIA ISLAND, FL Condos pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. redekercondos.com

HOUSE SWAP Pastor on sabbatical looking to swap CA home (1.5hrs from Tahoe, 2 hrs from SF) with W. MI area vacation home. 3-4 wks during Jn, Jly 2010. 916-543-3506

KISSIMME HOME FOR RENT New, 6 bedroom, 4 bath, fully furnished home with private pool, 3 miles from Disney. www.floridavacahome.com. 708-372-2586

VACATION RENTAL Oceanfront 2BR deluxe at Panama City FL Apr 3-10, 2010. 616-452-1152.

OCEANFRONT CONDO RENTALS, 2BR/2BA New Smyrna Beach, FL (Units 403, 501, 503), Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates. Reference Banner ad for 10% discount. 800-874-1931 or OBCRENTALS.COM.

FT. MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT 2 bed, 2 bath, sleeps 10, heated pool, hot tub, bikes, quiet cul-de-sac. 9 mi. to beach. Photos available. 905-332-6711

NEW 2000 SQ FT LOG COTTAGE on Reed lake, Baldwin, MI. Sleeps 10. Dock w/ boats. Near golf course, river & town. \$675 per week April -October. 616-335-0119. wrkarsen@sbcglobal.net. Brochure available.

LAKEFRONT LOG CABIN Priv. frontage. sandy swim area. Sleeps 6-8. 30 min N of GR. All sport lake. Kayak, fishing boat, swim raft, call for photos \$695. 616-583-0407

COTTAGE FOR RENT Hess Lake, Newaygo, MI. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths. Sleeps 12. \$1300/week. Call Lonnie at 616-942-0048.

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba--comfortably sleeps up to 14. Very close to downtown Saugatuck & Douglas. Call 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info & reservations.

PENTWATER COTTAGE & EFFICIENCY On Lake, with boat dock, near village, furnished, sleeps 6-8, \$895-1300/wk. 616-299-4294

COTTAGE FOR RENT: Hutchins Lake in Fennville Mich. Summer weeks available 3BR near Saugatuck/ Holland/ S. Haven All sports lake. \$750/wk (630)782-5261

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FOR RENT, Big Star Lake, 4 bedroom, 2 bath home, sleeps 8 for \$875/wk or up to 12 for \$1225/wk. Great beach, many weeks available. 616-669-9130 or 616-813-5972.

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE FOR RENT Holland MI, near Tunnel Park. Lake view, 2/3 bedrooms, pvt beach access, \$1000/wk. 616-455-2850 or sarahdv17@yahoo.com

COTTAGE FOR RENT Peaceful lakefront cottage on beautiful Winfield Lake - 45 min north of Grand Rapids, MI. Completely remodeled. 2 bedrooms. Sleeps 6. Deck/Rowboat. Great fishing. \$650/wk OR \$400/Mon thru Fri special. Call 616-669-2714 or email kimk@schepersbrothers.com for info or pics

NORTHERN MI RENTAL- On Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boat-ing, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Weeks in Aug still available. BLcottage@comcast.net

BIG STAR LAKE Cottage for rent. 2 bedroom sleeps 8. \$800 weekly in June and \$850 weekly in July and August. Call Amy at 616-662-9659.

HOLLAND MI nice 1 bedroom guest house with kitchen and living area, near South Lake Macatawa. \$375/wk \$80/nt www.hollandplace.com 616-335-8766

SUMMER WEEKLY RENTAL Grand Haven cottage two blocks from waterfront and downtown. Sleeps 8. 616-846-6229

GRAND HAVEN COTTAGES -Summer Weekly Cottage Rentals in Lovely Grand Haven, MI Just two Blocks from downtown shopping and restaurants. We have 1-five bedroom cottage, and 1-three bedroom cottage. Please visit our website for pictures/pricing @www.grandhavensummerbreeze.com or www.grandhavencottagecharm.com or call 616-204-8500 for more info and availability.

COTTAGES on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

COTTAGE RENTAL Very nice 3 BR/2BA Cottage on Stony Lake. Private 75 foot of beachfront w/dock, rowboat and paddleboat. Great lake for fishing, skiing or swimming. Approx. 2 miles from beautiful sandy Lake Michigan beach. For info and photos e-mail request to dadema@mail.com or call (231)861-4004 for available dates.

COTTAGE FOR RENT Big Star Lake, sleeps 8 plus loft, kayaks, canoe, boat for use, sliders with beck decks. \$625 June, \$700 July and August. Call Bill at 616-516-0548.

FOR RENT BIG STAR LAKE cottage sleeps 10. \$750 p/w. Guest cottage sleeps 7 - \$250. additional. 616-886-2839

CONDO FOR SALE Whispering Springs III Grandville, MI. End Unit, 2 stall garage, 2 decks, 3 seasons porch, 2 Bed, 2 Bath, Living room with gas fireplace, Kitchen/Dining. Plenty of Storage. \$119,900. 616-374-0913

COTTAGE FOR RENT: Upper Silver Lake, Mears, MI, sleeps up to 8. \$750 per week June 2010, \$800 per week July/August 2010. Contact jdcountryclipper1@yahoo.com or 616-490-1623 for more info.

GUN LAKE COTTAGE FOR RENT- Gun Lake (Wayland, MI) 3bdrms/1bath, sleeps 6, no pets, no smoking, \$750-\$850. Call Sally (616)531-5545

FOR SALE/LEASE: 20k industrial/commercial building. Holland, MI 415 West 21st St. Good location/office. Looking for new, very affordable location? Call owner Bill Vogelzang 616-392-2200

COTTAGE RENTAL Miner Lake, Allegan, MI. All sports lake. New 2 Lrg BR/2BA, sleeps 7-8. \$700-800/wk. 616-669-6534 or minerlkrbs@att.net

COTTAGE RENTAL MI. lakefront on 800 acre Little Platte lk. fully equipped 3br near TC and Sleeping Bear dunes. Beautiful view/private lot. \$825/wk incl. boat/canoe. 616-914-7811

COTTAGE FOR RENT: Upper Silver Lake, Mears, MI. Like new, four bedrooms, 2 baths, clean, quiet, waterfront, sandy beach. Call (616)669-6774.

GREAT FAMILY COTTAGE RENTAL on Miner Lake, Allegan, MI. 3 bdrm. Available weeks of June 18, 25; July 9, 16; Aug 20, \$850/wk, call to reserve at 616.786.9031 today!

LAKEFRONT COTTAGE FOR RENT, Silver Lake, Oceana County. Sleeps 6, West of Shelby, Michigan, call 231-744-2659.

CONDO SANTA FE NM MLS #903382 pics Ground level Gated patio Bamboo/tile floors Washer/dryer Heat incl Clubhouse pool sauna

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OAKDALE REUNION WEEKEND! Oakdale Christian School in Grand Rapids (MI) is planning a final reunion weekend for April 30 and May 1, 2010. Friday includes a dinner and show (tickets required) and Saturday a community carnival (free). For more information, please contact oakdalereunion@gmail.com or call 616-574-5700

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Punch Lines

Got a photo of something funny related to Reformed history, culture, or tradition? Send it to *The Banner* and you might see it in print! You can email photos to editorial@thebanner.org or send them to 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

A man called 911 and frantically exclaimed, "Quick, quick, send an ambulance. My wife's having a baby. Tell them to hurry!"

"Sir, please calm down a moment," the dispatcher said. "Is this her first baby?"

"No, of course not!" the man replied. "This is her husband."

—George Vander Weit
Troy, Mich.

During the summer of 2009, Pastor Bill Tuininga joined our church. At one of the Sunday services he stated that before he preached, he would pray for God's leading. Lauren, our 4-year-old, didn't hear that quite right and yelled out, "WHAT?! God's LEAVING?!"

—Michelle Drost
Bethel CRC
Edmonton, Alberta

I look forward to November, when the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee sends out its gift catalog. I enjoy looking through it and donating to purchase different aid items each year.

The day I decided to go to town to mail my gift, it was raining. I put the envelope in my coat pocket and went to the end of the porch closest to where I had parked my

car. There are no steps there, just a vertical drop of a few feet. A large puddle had formed, so I watched carefully where I jumped. That's when I saw that the envelope had fallen into the puddle. I grabbed it immediately, tearing a small hole in it as it was all wet.

In my car I saw through the tear that the contents were dry. I seriously considered making out a new envelope—until I came up with the brilliant idea of turning the heater all the way up and placing the wet envelope over one of the vents.

By the time I got to the drop-off box behind the post office, the envelope was dry but had lots of wrinkles in it. As for the tear, I put a piece of black electrical tape over it. Again I seriously considered going home and making out a new envelope. But in the end I decided it didn't look that bad and, since I was already at the post office, I dropped it in the box.

Two-and-a-half weeks later I got a letter from CRWRC.

Inside was a return envelope, my order form with the end of my check poking out, and a note. Deeply puzzled, I read, "Please sign your enclosed check and mail it back to us."

—Ronald Dean Rutgers
Lynden, Wash.

An old painter named Smokey MacGregor was very interested in making a penny where he could, so he often thinned down his paint to make it go a wee bit further. As it happened, he got away with it for some time. But the day came when the Lutheran Church decided to

restore the outside of one of its biggest buildings.

Smokey put in a bid, and because his price was so low, he got the job. So he set about erecting the scaffolding, setting up the planks, and buying the paint—and, yes, I am sorry to say, thinning it down with turpentine.

Well, Smokey was up on the scaffolding, painting away, the job nearly completed, when suddenly there was a horrendous clap of thunder, the sky opened, and the rain poured down—washing the

thinned paint off the church and knocking poor Smokey to the ground among the gravestones, surrounded by telltale puddles of the useless paint.

Smokey looked up to see the church's pastor looming over him. He knew he was busted. "Reverend," Smokey whimpered, "Forgive me! I'm so sorry for what I did. What should I do now?"

The pastor replied, "Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more."

—Sue Beattie
Lewiston, Mich.

Send Us Your Photos!

Dean Koldenhoven, a member of Palos Heights (Ill.) CRC, sent us this unposed photo of his great-granddaughter. Stella Foster, age 1 at the time, is obviously engrossed in some very compelling reading. We'll take it as proof that our young readers believe *The Banner's* worth chewing on.





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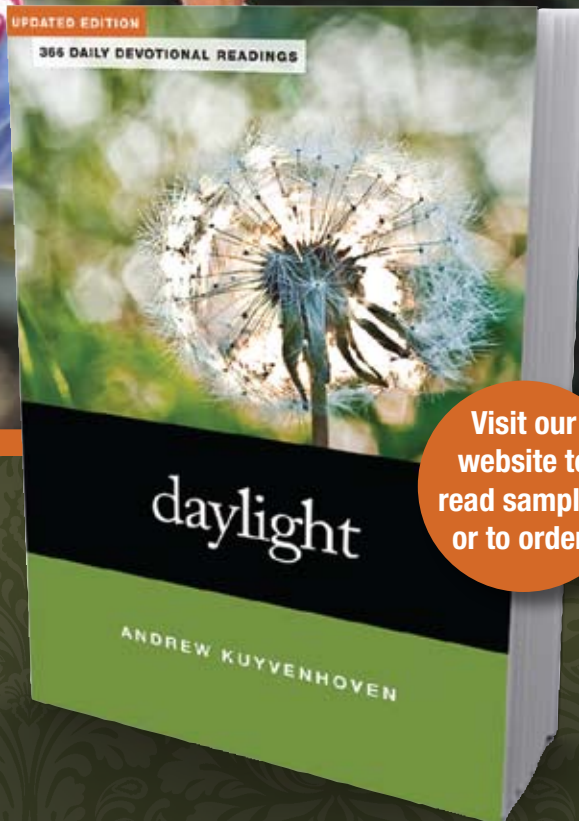
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