

# BANNER

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# Christ Has Risen Indeed!

**AS BELIEVERS WE CERTAINLY HAVE OUR DIFFERENCES.** We can and may question and debate points of doctrine, biblical interpretation, morality, and mission—and still find ourselves firmly within the household of faith.

But we may never deny the actually-happened, literally historical reality of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead. It is the heart of the gospel and of our faith. The apostle Paul drives it home: if Jesus has not risen, then we are pitiable chumps who have bet our lives and our souls' salvation on a horrible sham (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

But Paul assures us that Christ *has* risen, flesh and blood—really. CNN would have caught it on tape if it had existed back then.

John Updike, in his poem "Seven Stanzas at Easter," poignantly warns that if Jesus did not physically rise from the dead, then "the church will fall." He's right. Not only *would* the church fall, it would *deserve* to fall, and the sooner the better. Despite all the nice things churches might provide—community, social interaction, inspiration, love—it would all be without foundation, based precariously on empty hot air. The church, any church, would then just be a parasite with no life of its own, drowning us in pious, feel-good fraud.

When my family and I lived in Grand Rapids, Mich., our neighbor across the street served as a pastor in a large Protestant denomination that doesn't always witness to this Good News. I asked her if she believed that Jesus actually walked out of the grave and left real footprints in the dust. She could only say, "I believe God could bring new life. . . ." That's as far as she could take it.

While on vacation in San Francisco one Easter morning, my spouse and I attended a large, prominent church from that same denomination. The service included top-notch talent, a fabulous choir, and even a fascinating interview with the chief of police. But first-class as it was, during the entire two-hour service they managed not to mention Jesus' resurrection even once.

But the *heart* of the church is the proclamation of that very Good News. In all the many words read, said, sung, prayed, and confessed, this must always be our joyous cry: Christ is risen! That lends us solid hope through even our most bitter tears:

- we are no longer in our sins (see 1 Cor. 15:20ff.); we are forgiven by God;
- death is "swallowed up in victory" and even our final enemy cannot separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 8:39);
- the miracle is real: we shall live forever (John 11:25), even when we die;
- the new life in the Spirit that has already sprung up in us is not just a phantom; it's real and it transforms our very being (John 15:5);
- it's a *living* Savior and Lord who befriends us, not just the memory of some dead hero (John 15:15).

Let this be the connecting tissue that joins true believers from every nation, tribe, and denomination into the one, true, apostolic church: the simple, joyous confession that "our Lord is risen indeed." ■



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

If Jesus did not  
physically rise  
from the dead,  
"the church  
will fall."

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## Hitting the Wall

**S**OMEHOW, watching my younger sister Jessica cross the finish line of the Boston Marathon convinced me that it would be a good idea for *me* to run a marathon too. It was a moment of insanity, I know—running 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) *for fun?!*

Race day arrived, several months and many training sessions later. Jess and I were ready to go, and the streets of Chicago were lined with cheering crowds and Gatorade stands. I double-knotted my shoes, nearly bursting out of them—it felt like they were tied to coiled springs.

The starting gun sounded, and as soon as I found some space, I zipped through the pack of runners, with my sister trying to keep up. Pacing? Pssh! Who needs it?

All marathoners “hit the wall”—usually around mile 18 to 21 or so, with only a few miles to go. You hit the wall when you’ve used up all the energy stores in your muscles. You’re completely out of gas, just running on fumes.

I expected to hit the wall, but I was surprised by just how quickly the wall hit me. At mile 12 I was cruising along without a care in the world—actually on pace to qualify for Boston!—but by mile 13 I was barely hobbling. Cars don’t feel pain when they’re running on fumes but, trust me, people do. Every step is agony. Joints ache. Muscles cramp. Any dirty sidewalk looks like a good place to take a nap.

Good thing Jess was running the course with me. She’d run the race before; she’d hit the wall—hard!—and she’d finished anyway. She knew exactly what I was going through: I was helpless and ready to drop. I told her to go on ahead so she could qualify for Boston again. I didn’t

want to hold her back. I’d meet her at the finish line.

But Jess, with that younger-sister tenacity, stuck by me. She patted me on the back, encouraging me: “Let’s make it to the next stoplight. . . . There’s a Gatorade stand coming up. . . . We’ve just passed another mile marker. . . .” She was barely exerting herself by this point, since I was going so slowly. When I stopped to stretch, she’d wait. When I was able to hobble again, we’d continue together.

Finally, we crested that last hill and glimpsed the finish line. We crossed it *together* that afternoon, hand-in-hand, arms held high. Somehow, finishing seemed like more of a victory after hitting the wall.

Jessica never left my side. She had been on pace to finish an hour sooner, qualifying for Boston. But she gave up her race so I could finish mine, even though I could barely hobble.

I’ve never seen Jesus as clearly as I saw him that day in my sister Jessica.

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. . . .* ■



Rev. Trevor Payton is pastor of Hagersville (Ontario) Community Christian Reformed Church.

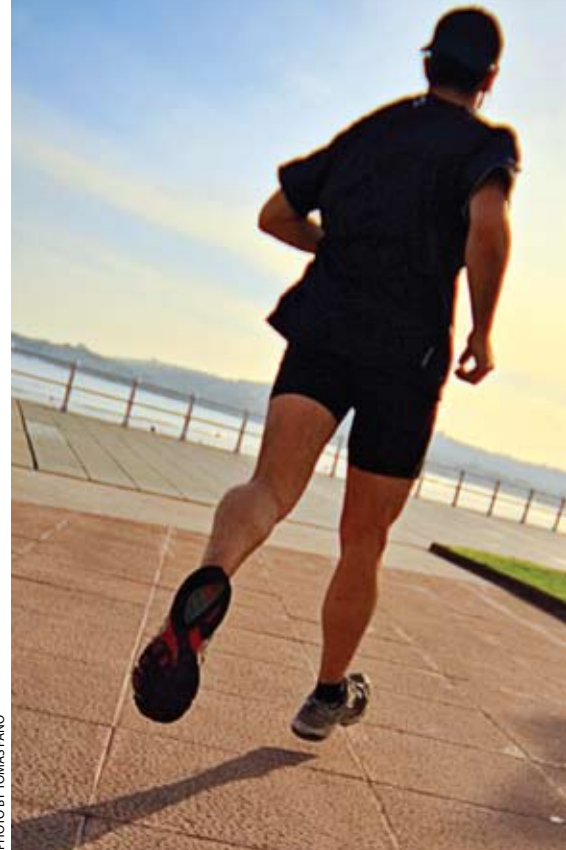


PHOTO BY TOMAS FANGO

**Anything** can become a **spiritual practice** once you are **willing** to **approach** it that way—once you let it **bring** you to your **knees** and show you what is **real**, including who **you** are, who other **people** are, and how **near God** can be.

—BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR



# Get Off the Global Warming Bandwagon

**IMHO** Some of us will not board peacefully or quietly participate in the politicization of Christ's church.



PHOTO BY NASA

**IN MY HUMBLE OPINION**, our leaders should end their crusade to prod our denomination onto the Global Warming Bandwagon. Some of us will not board peacefully or quietly to participate in the politicization of Christ's church.

Swedish climatologist Hans Jelbring speaks for objective scientists when he exclaims, "The dysfunctional nature of the climate sciences is nothing short of a scandal." Nobel Prize-winning physicist Robert Laughlin agrees: "Please remain calm: The Earth will heal itself. Climate is beyond our power to control. . . ."

How then do we account for alarmist hysteria?

Climate alarmism is a profitable business. Tabloid scientists cash in on research grants; skeptics need not apply. The media fully understand that sensationalism sells. Activist organizations require a crisis to keep donations flowing. Climate tycoons like Maurice Strong and Al Gore are positioned to amass staggering fortunes through consolidation of the energy industry.

Alarmist scientists make no pretense of objectivity. Their operating philosophy is termed "post-normal science." According to proponent Eva Kunzeler, "scientific goals are controlled by political or societal

actors." Influential global-warming alarmist Mike Hulme admits, "'self-evidently' dangerous climate change will not emerge from a normal process of truth-seeking. . . . Scientists—and politicians—must trade truth for influence." In other words, "science" has become a perverted technical means to a political end.

The problem for Christians is far more serious. Climate alarmism is pursued with religious fervor. The late scientist and popular author Michael Crichton observed that environmentalism has become "the religion of choice for urban atheists." Likewise, atmospheric physicist John Reid warns, "Global warming is the central tenet of this new belief system in much the same way that the Resurrection is the central tenet of Christianity."

This subject is powerfully explored in a new 12-part DVD series titled *Resisting the Green Dragon*. The project was headed by Presbyterian pastor and scholar Calvin E. Beisner. He enlists today's top Christian-worldview thinkers to expose this eco-heresy. The series, along with its companion book by physicist James Wanliss, provides a mandatory curriculum for anyone seeking to effectively discern between authentic biblical stewardship and the green serpent. It is particularly critical for our church leaders, who have the responsibility to direct our denomination toward a position that is consistent with revealed truth in Scripture and our Reformed heritage. ■

See another IMHO online: "Why Christians Should Care About the Environment" by Kathryn Guindon.



**Paul Rhoda** is a support analyst and a member of Sunshine Community CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

LE



## Islamic Teaching

Rev. Paul Hansen is of course entitled to his humble opinion ("The Muslim-Christian Chasm," IMHO, March 2011). I would like, however, to correct one popular error that appears in his description of Islam. It is not, in fact, a "principle teaching" of Islam that Muslims ought to lie, whether to believers or non-believers. Presumably he is referring to the rather obscure doctrine of *taqiya*, invoked by Muslims as reassurance that God knows the heart even when under persecution their mouths tell lies to protect themselves. It is something like the righteous Gentiles who during the Nazi years lied so as to not reveal the whereabouts of Jews they were hiding. We do not therefore suppose that the entire Christian tradition encourages falsehood. Nor does Islam.

—Douglas Howard  
Professor of History  
Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Immigration

As an Arizonan, I see the immigration issue in a different light than Kurt Rietema ("Illegal," February 2011). I work with students whom teachers identify as struggling in their classrooms. This year I have had almost 70 students—all of whom but



# LETTERS

one are Hispanic. One of those students recently told me she wished she were dead. I said that made me sad and asked why she would say that. I knew before she answered, though, that her dad has been deported, she is living with relatives where there is a lot of fighting, and her mom has a boyfriend. If her parents had chosen legal options, I feel that she and her brother may have been spared every one of those concerns.

Moreover, imagine yourself teaching a class of 25 students in which one or several students understand little of what you say. Are you really ready to sacrifice the other children's educational achievement for reasons of compassion? California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada now rank as some of the lowest educationally achieving states. Are all the bad teachers and poor teaching methods in the southwestern U.S., or could this have something to do with the states' proximity to the border? (See a revealing article on immigration and education at [www.cis.org/california-education](http://www.cis.org/california-education).)

The education and health-care cost to Arizona of undocumented immigrants is more than \$2 billion a year. At one point that was the Arizona deficit. To make up the debt we are all paying higher taxes and some of our services have been reduced. Yes, we do need to show compassion, but what is happening in the southwest now is bankrupting our states.

—*Florence Smith*  
*Phoenix, Ariz.*

## More on Science and Faith

Thank you for your news article "Calvin Profs Say Evolution Evidence Conflicts with Reformed Creeds" (February 2011) about Daniel Harlow's and John Schneider's recent publications. It is encouraging to hear about Christian scholars engaging in scientific discourse and investigating the

conflict between recent scientific evidence and the Reformed confessions. Moreover, I was glad to see that the two authors chose to consider our interpretation of church doctrine, as opposed to simply dismissing the science, or worse, denying it.

—*Peter Dove*  
*Burlington, Ontario*

Calvin professors Harlow and Schneider use "current science"—which is by definition flawed because "current" means it is fallible and changeable—to question the reality of Adam and Eve, the Fall, and original sin. With "current science" as a basis, how could the virgin birth and the resurrection ever have occurred?" The answer is in the infallible, unchangeable, inspired words of Scripture, starting with Genesis 1:1. That is the only truly reliable foundation of belief.

—*Michael DuMez*  
*Oostburg, Wis.*

I invite everyone in the CRC to read Harlow's and Schneider's articles. They are readily available on the Internet and are self-explanatory. No one denies that Christian scholars need to investigate issues regarding human origins, but, in a denominational school like Calvin, we engage such research from within a clearly defined confessional framework. Harlow's and Schneider's writings are not even remotely within the bounds of our confessions, and I am beginning to question what signing the Form of Subscription means in the CRC.

—*Rev. Ken Benjamins*  
*Brantford, Ontario*

## Our Position on Abortion

The contrast between "Fish and Wonder" and "Our Real Position on Abortion" in the February *Banner* certainly made me catch my breath. In the first article, the precious value of human life, even at a

difficult end, is celebrated. On the next page we are encouraged to allow the deliberate taking of human life at a difficult beginning. Of course, we should have nothing but compassion for the victims of abortion, including the women who've suffered it, often under great stress. But, in my humble opinion, we should also stand firm in promoting the sanctity of human life created in God's image and precious whether preborn, disabled, seriously ill, or elderly. It's all part of "Loving the Broken" (article on p. 36)!

—*Lynn Wielenga*  
*Hull, Iowa*

How can we be a light to a broken and hurting world if our official position on abortion offers the same destructive options the world provides? Far better to offer God's sufficient grace, mercy, and strength as we walk beside people during the hard times.

—*Anneke de Jong*  
*Hanford, Conn.*

Praise God that our son's birthmother did not consider her unborn baby a "hard case."

—*Karen Vanderploeg*  
*Hollandale, Minn.*

## Correction

In "Flood Aid for New Brunswick" (p. 10, March 2011), the accompanying photo incorrectly identifies, from left, Debbie vanOord of Providence CRC, Beamsville, Ontario, and Diane Boonstoppel of Fredericton (N.B.) CRC.

*The Banner* apologizes for the error.

## More letters online!

Read more letters at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

# NEWS

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## Illinois Church Makes Symbolic Pro-Life Statement

**R**ows of 2,000 white crosses are planted in a grassy area next to Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Lansing, Ill., for the Easter season, forming a symbolic graveyard for the fetuses aborted each day in the United States.

"Bethel has a real heart for the sanctity of life and wants to encourage the protection of life,"

said Rev. Cal Aardsma, pastor of the church. "We want to offer hope and healing to those who are struggling with the pain of abortion."

Susan DeJong, who first proposed the display, said, "The true number of [daily] abortions is closer to 4,000, but the 2,000 puts out the message we want."

The display includes information on where people who are

experiencing emotional pain from past abortions can get help.

DeJong said, "Fifty million babies have been aborted in the U.S. since Roe v. Wade, affecting 100 million men and women. So many people are living with this in their hearts. God wants to restore them."

The church plans to continue setting up the month-long display every year.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

## Church and Prison Hold Joint Worship via Video Link

**O**n Sunday, February 6, the members of Elmhurst (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church held a combined worship service with inmates of Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, even though the two congregations were separated by nearly a thousand miles.

Using the technology that was designed for inmates to make court appearances by video link, there was audio and video feed from the Angola chapel to the large screen at

Elmhurst CRC. Simultaneously the Elmhurst congregation was present in Louisiana by audio/video feed.

Most of the 5,100 prisoners at Angola are there for life. The facility is the largest maximum security facility in the United States. Elmhurst is an affluent suburb of Chicago.

During the worship service, singing and prayer were offered in a back-and-forth fashion, led first by the worship team at Angola, and then by the worship team at Elmhurst. The sermon was delivered to both congregations

by Rev. Sidney Deloch, an inmate and pastor at Angola.

The service was opened by prison warden Burl Cain. He has introduced significant changes that have led, among other things, to several chapels on the prison grounds.

Rev. Bert DeJong, pastor at Elmhurst CRC, and several parishioners have been nurturing relationships at the prison for several years.

Kyle Olson, technical director for Elmhurst CRC, said coordinat-



## Alberta Church Draws Protesters

The Sunday Rev. John Van Sloten used the new mayor of Calgary, Alberta, as part of his sermon “text,” protesters who don’t like the mayor turned up on the sidewalk in front of the church.

Van Sloten, the pastor of New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, has a reputation for incorporating new media into his services and looking for God in contemporary culture.

“The Gospel According to Naheed Nenshi” began as a response to the mayor’s unusual leadership, Van Sloten said.

In October 2010, Nenshi became the first Muslim mayor of Calgary, or of any Canadian city. Nenshi, who doesn’t necessarily embody traits associated with a city known for its Stampede and cowboy nature, got more votes than the total votes cast in the previous election.

Van Sloten said, “God built into you and me as citizens . . . an insatiable yearning for wise, humble, real, authentic leadership,” he said, “a deep desire for somebody who has that powerful position but is selfless, who cares more about us, the city collectively, than he does about himself.” He sees those traits in Nenshi.

In his sermon, Van Sloten talked about what it means to be a better citizen, how God uses



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Protesters showed up at New Hope CRC when they heard the sermon was about the new mayor.



A praise band leads worship at the Main Campus Chapel at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana.

ing sight and sound was challenging, but “we’ll take lessons learned and do it even better next time.”

For video of the worship service, please visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

—Doug Evenhouse

those in leadership, and how God is truly a democratic God.

Church members were very positive about the service, Van Sloten said. Some spoke to the protesters.

Barb Bronson said protesters were comparing Nenshi to Hitler and Saddam Hussein. “I didn’t take what they were saying about Nenshi too seriously,” she said, “but I was glad we’re a city that people can peacefully protest in and say what is on our minds.”

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. John Vander Lugt

1926-2010

Rev. John Vander Lugt, 84, devout child of the Lord, accomplished storyteller, one-time school teacher, war veteran, and faithful minister of the Word, passed away on Dec. 19.

After serving in both the U.S. Army and Air Force, Vander Lugt taught school and then graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary to enter the gospel ministry in 1963.

He served Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota before retiring in 1991. He then served ten congregations that were without a pastor.

Vander Lugt’s ministry was marked by a sincere concern for the well-being of his parishioners. His carefully selected illustrations enhanced the effectiveness of his sermons. His years as a school teacher continued to strengthen the educational side of his ministry.

Vander Lugt was predeceased by his first wife, Grada. He is survived by his wife Margaret, three children and their spouses, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church’s annual Yearbook.

## CALLS ACCEPTED

From First Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton, Alberta, to **Rev. Michael Van Boom**, formerly pastor of Maranatha CRC, Lethbridge, Alberta.

From Sonrise CRC, Ponoka, Alberta, to **Rev. William Delleman**, formerly of Bridge Community CRC, Langley, British Columbia.

From Wolf Creek Community CRC, Lacombe, Alberta, to **Rev. Leon Johnston** of Agassiz (B.C.) CRC.

From Eastern Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich., to newly ordained candidate **Steve De Ruiter**, to lead the church plant Square Inch Community in Grand Rapids.



GAYLA R. POSTMA

While the Diversity in Leadership report was debated, members of Meadowvale Community CRC in Mississauga, Ontario, gathered in a nearby room to pray for the discussion. They are (l-r) Faye Dundas, Rev. Sam Cooper, Geneva Hunte, and Anita Van Zeumeren.

## Board of Trustees Adopts Diversity Report

**T**he Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church adopted a report stating that all future hires will be made in accordance with the church's diversity objectives, including the goal of having 25 percent of the

denomination's top leadership tiers filled by people of color.

The report came from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group. Other recommendations adopted include

- Reinstating the director of Race Relations as part of the Ministries Leadership Team—the group of agency directors and other senior leaders who help set ministry policy and direction for the church;
- 35 percent of the membership of all search committees will be persons of ethnic minority;
- The mandate of the office of Race Relations will be revisited, "... ensuring that the denominational commitment to ethnic diversity will be strengthened and move forward."

Bing Goei, a member of the Planning Group, is a former director of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR).


"Our commitment [is] to reach out and make disciples of all nations. Unity without diversity is uniformity. This is not what God wants," he said.

Not all the trustees were comfortable adopting the report. Rev. Scott Greenway said he appreci-

ated the work of the committee and didn't want to frustrate them, but was unsettled about it. "Questions linger," he said.

The Planning Group was a task force mandated by Synod 2009, after the Board of Trustees adopted a change to the denomination's administrative structure that removed the director of Race Relations from the Ministries Leadership Team (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 28).

The structure change also meant that there was no longer any person of color represented in the top management tiers. Synod 2009 deemed that unacceptable and instructed the CRC's executive director to convene a task force to come up with a plan for increasing diversity in senior management (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 589). This report was the result of the task force's work.

The report now goes to Synod 2011 for final approval. 

—Gayla R. Postma

## Alberta Pastor Hosts Weekly Radio Show

**R**ick Abma, ministry associate and youth pastor at Woody-nook Christian Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, has spent Sunday mornings for the past five years tying together his love of radio with his love of ministry.

Before Abma entered the ministry as a youth pastor, he spent five years in broadcasting. Now he gets to do both.

Sunday mornings at 8 a.m., his radio show called "Sunnyside Up" is heard all over central Alberta. His station receives the top ratings in the area on Sunday mornings.

The power of story, particularly the parables in the New Testament, is the show's theme.

"It is the parable form that teaches, inspires, and engages the listener," Abma said. "It is a privilege to be on public radio and to use parables and stories that speak of God's kingdom and the hope we have in Christ."



RACHEL DEKONING KRAAY

**Rick Abma, a youth pastor in Lacombe, Alberta, prepares to begin his weekly radio program.**

—Rachel deKoning Kraay



## Swagman Resigns from Safe Church Ministry

**A**fter more than 16 years as the first and only director of the Christian Reformed Church's Safe Church Ministry, Beth Swagman resigned effective March 31, 2011.

Safe Church Ministry established protocols and provides advice when church leaders are alleged to have abused another person. The office also provides education and training on abuse prevention.

Swagman declined to comment on the specific reasons for her resignation. However, the advisory committee that oversees the work of Safe Church Ministry noted in its minutes that a lack of budgetary support resulted in the resignation of its director.

In particular, adoption by Synod 2010 of the Victims of Abuse task force report meant additional tasks for the Safe Church Ministry, but no additional funding was provided for the work.

The committee noted in its minutes that "if the desire was there, the money could be found. Lack of support from the denomination—dollars being the most tangible—has led to the current untenable situation facing the Safe Church Office."

Swagman said her time as director of Safe Church Ministry included many high points:

- 600 churches adopting a child safety policy, reducing the risk of abuse for thousands of children;
- a denomination better educated about abuse dynamics;



**Beth Swagman**

- a level of safety in our churches that other denominations envy.

But, Swagman noted, there are still challenges in overcoming denial about abuse and partnering with church councils to increase awareness, conduct risk management, and offer pastoral care.

Swagman, a member of Roosevelt Park Community Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., does not know what her next role will be, but it may possibly include a law practice focusing on issues of aging and abuse of the elderly.

"My service to the Christian Reformed Church has been a greater blessing to me than I was to it. I give thanks to God for the privilege," she said.

According to Sandy Johnson, the director of denominational ministries, the administration will work with the Safe Church advisory committee to determine what will come next for the ministry. "We will need to engage an interim director, but no appointment has been made," she said.

Rev. Mark Vermaire, chair of the denomination's Board of Trustees, said, "We regret receiving this resignation and are very thankful for the groundbreaking and faithful work Beth has blessed the denomination with."

—Gayla R. Postma

## New Home Missions Director Appointed

**R**ev. Moses Chung was appointed as the new director of Christian Reformed Home Missions by the denomination's Board of Trustees.

Chung will take up his duties on May 1.

Chung graduated from Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and served two congregations in California before moving to his current church in South Korea.

Chung told the board that his vision for Home Missions and the Christian Reformed Church is to be a leading voice for mission in North America in the 21st century. "It's a dream," he said, "but as I pray more about it, why not?"

He said he sees his role as part of a team that helps pastors and lay leaders in local congregations. "I think our strategy needs to be to help leaders in congregations among the people."

*Contextualization* is a key word in mission today, he said. "Context, context, context," he told the board. "Where you are, that's your neighborhood, that's where God wants you to live as his people. Ministry in Pella has to be different from Seattle, Grand Rapids different from L.A., Navajo different than New York."

Chung takes over from Ben Vandezande, who is currently serving as interim director of Home Missions.

—Gayla R. Postma



**Rev. Moses Chung**

GAYLA R. POSTMA

### IN MEMORIAM



#### **Rev. Hilbert Vander Plaat**

1928-2010

Rev. Hilbert Vander Plaat, family man, devout pastor and preacher, scholar, organist, and lover of nature, passed away Aug. 23.

Born in Haarlem, The Netherlands, Vander Plaat graduated from the Free University of Amsterdam and served congregations in the Gereformeerde Kerk before emigrating to Canada.

In Canada, Vander Plaat served four congregations in Ontario and Nova Scotia before retiring in 1993.

Vander Plaat continued to study throughout most of his ministry, completing his doctoral work at the Free University and receiving a Ph.D. from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Vander Plaat will be remembered as a scholarly theologian; a compassionate pastor; and a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

He loved to preach, read, camp, golf, cycle, and play the organ.

Vander Plaat is survived by his wife, Lynn, five children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

—Louis M. Tamminga



KAREN GORTER

## West Michigan Girl Named MDA Ambassador

**N**atalie Draisma has been named the Michigan Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) for 2011.

The spunky nine-year-old, a member of East Saugatuck (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church, has a rare condition called nemaline rod myopathy—a congenital, hereditary neuromuscular disorder that causes muscle weakness.

The ginger-haired girl is quick to describe herself. “I’m pretty, weak, funny, red-head, rare—because that is what my muscle condition is,” she said. Her condition makes it difficult to walk and she tires quickly.

Draisma’s mother, Mary Jo, said Natalie has an adjusted school day in order to conserve her energy.

Natalie has donated to MDA on Labor Day weekend for years, giving the money she earns selling her chickens’ eggs as well as money she makes at her summer lemonade stands where she also sells coffee and dog bones.

Her duties in the coming year will include traveling throughout the state, making appearances and speaking at various events.

—Karen Gorter

**Natalie Draisma is a 2011 Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.**

## Kelderman to Leave Seminary Post

**R**ev. Duane Kelderman, 58, announced that he will leave Calvin Theological Seminary at the end of July after 10 years serving as vice president for administration. The school is the seminary operated by the Christian Reformed Church.

His departure will coincide with that of current president Rev. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., who also leaves after 10 years at his post.

“I came to the dance with Neal and it now feels so right to leave with Neal, too,” Kelderman said.

Kelderman said that he and Plantinga made good progress in their efforts to “turn the seminary more toward the church and improve the relationship between the seminary and the church.”



Rev. Duane Kelderman

A high point for Kelderman was the development of a new curriculum that flows out of making “the formation of the whole person for ministry” the central focus of theological education, without losing academic rigor.

Kelderman noted that there is “pressure from every corner of the church to not require formal theological education for pastors.” He said the only way for seminaries to survive is “to deliver a product, namely their graduates, who clearly are superior preachers and leaders because they’re seminary trained.”

Kelderman, a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., is unsure what his next steps will be, but he is not in a hurry. He looks forward to spending some time with his wife at their cottage. “After that, who knows what will develop? We’re excited!”

—Doug Evenhouse

## Apple Bible Trivia App Benefits Halifax Church

**S**oftware developer Aaron Eisses created a new Bible trivia game application (app) for Apple electronic devices as part of his church’s “talent challenge” fundraising campaign.

Eisses, 33, belongs to All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A veteran creator of apps, Eisses created an Old Testament trivia app that is available worldwide.

Church members were challenged to use their talents to multiply \$10 given to them by the church in order to raise funds for repairs to the church’s foundation.

Eisses particularly enjoys creating trivia apps, so he used his \$10 to buy the internet address (url) <http://www.useyourtalents.org>. He developed 250 trivia questions based on five categories: The Torah, Judges, Kings, Psalms, and Other.

The app is available through the Apple store online for free on iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch devices. Users can make a tax-deductible donation to the church using the Canada Helps account.

Rev. David Vroege, pastor of All Nations, said that what he loves about this challenge is that it brings many aspects of ministry together: “. . . it’s not simply about getting dollars. This brings us together as a church community, and is just plain a lot of fun.”

—Brenda Visser

**Aaron Eisses of Halifax, Nova Scotia, designed a Bible trivia app for use on iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch to raise funds for his church.**





## Mosaic Brings Joy in the City

In a Philadelphia, Pa., neighborhood that is often marred by graffiti, members and neighbors of Spirit and Truth Fellowship Christian Reformed Church installed a large, colorful mosaic proclaiming "Joy in the City."

The mosaic, installed on the wall of an old warehouse used by the church for ministry, is made up of small pieces of tile, ceramic, and glass collected by the neighbors.

Designer Michaelanne Harriman, a member of the church, said the art depicts things that bring joy in our lives. The central image is of a young child cooling off in front of an open fire hydrant with water spraying out in all directions, a joyous activity for kids in the inner city.

—Calvin Hulstein



A mosaic brings beauty and joy to an inner-city neighborhood in Philadelphia.

MICHAELANNE HARRIMAN



Chelda Leininger prepares to ride the lift of her family's custom-equipped van.

## Minnesota Church Raises Funds for Specially Equipped Van

When Sandy and Chuck Leininger arrive at church on Sunday mornings, some people describe it as an "event" that amazes and humbles other members of Unity Christian Reformed Church in Prinsburg, Minn.

Three of the Leiningers' eight children have disabilities that require the use of wheelchairs.

Joshua, 17, their youngest biological child, has cerebral palsy. Josiah, 4, and Chelda, 9, are children with disabilities that the Leiningers adopted from Haiti.

As the three children grew and it became more difficult for Sandy and Chuck to lift and carry them, it became clear that the family would need a specially equipped van with a hydraulic lift.

Chuck found the right van in Idaho, but the \$35,000 pricetag was pretty steep. That's when the church stepped in to help pay for the van.

The church organized a fund-raising dinner and auction on January 26, hoping to raise \$2,000-\$3,000 toward the cost of the van.

Everyone was surprised and delighted when friends, neighbors, and church members turned out in large numbers and more than \$12,000 was raised.

—Doug Evenhouse

JOANNITA RETSMA

Jason enjoyed the lighthearted mini-golf event at Oak Hills CRC.

## Oregon Church Provides Family Fun with Mini-Golf

In the Pacific Northwest, where it rains day after day in the winter, coming up with inexpensive family-friendly events can be a challenge.

So the congregation at Oak Hills Christian Reformed Church in Portland, Ore., held a light-hearted mini-golf competition to provide some mid-winter fun.

On January 22, 72 people from age 2 to 93 turned out for dinner and a golf tournament. All participants got a putter, a plastic ball, and a map to help them find the putting greens spread throughout the church.

Sherry Kragt, the ministries coordinator at the church, said it was all very relaxed and fun. "It is extremely laid back and people visit and harass each other along the way," she said. "It allows us to be together strictly for fun and social time . . . no business or serious agendas."

This is the second year Oak Hills has hosted the event.

—Amy Toornstra

## Wanted: A Few Good (Conservative) Men

Classis Minnkota, a regional group of Christian Reformed churches, has set aside funds to help churches hire seminarians as summer interns—with the unusual stipulation that those interns must believe that it is unbiblical for women to serve as elders and pastors.

Classis Minnkota, which has churches in Minnesota and the Dakotas, voted to use its [seminary] student fund to give two churches \$4,000 toward hiring a theologically conservative student intern from Calvin Theological Seminary for each of the next two summers.

“Churches really look at the theological fit with the classis when looking for leadership,” said



Rev. Roger Sparks, chair of the classis’ ministry leadership team, which came up with the idea. “This is just the context in which we are doing ministry in the CRC today.”

“Some could perceive this [internship program] as exclusive,” Sparks added. “My take is in a more positive light: this gives an opportunity for students to someday fit into the context of our classis, to build bridges for seminarians to possibly serve in our classis someday down the road.”

Classis Minnkota has about \$30,000 in its student fund, which is traditionally used to supplement the tuition of seminarians who hail from that classis—but no one from the classis has been attending the seminary for the last few years, said Rev. LeRoy Christoffels, the stated clerk. “We thought we might as well spend the money on something that has to do with ministerial training.”

Thus far, only one church is looking to use the funds, probably because the funding is only partial and it would cost about \$9,000 to fully support an intern, according to Sparks.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Writer Needed

*The Banner* is seeking a news correspondent in lower Michigan/northern Ohio to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. If you live in this region and you like to write, we’d like to hear from you. We’d especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. All expressions of interest should be addressed via email to Gayla Postma, News Editor, at [gpostma@crcna.org](mailto:gpostma@crcna.org). Please include a resume or letter outlining your news-writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

## Building Friendships with Food in Indiana

Hammond (Ind.) Christian Reformed Church has been building friendships in its community by serving free meals.

During the summer months, hot breakfasts are provided on Sunday mornings before church. For the rest of the year, dinners are served on the last Thursday of each month.

Volunteers produce the dinners for about 100 people. Church members eat with their guests and get to know them.

Rev. John Kostelyk said, “Because a lot of the same folks come each time, we have gotten to know them well. This has opened the door for members of our congregation to pray with them when they are going through crises or trouble. I have been called to visit people in the hospital because of their contact with us at the free dinners.”

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

Church members and community guests enjoy dinner at Hammond CRC.



LOUIS OUIWERKERK

## Grand Rapids Gym Provides Mentoring for Youths

“Is he buff?” This was the question Kevin Rigg heard a young teen ask upon learning that his uncle had been released from prison.

Rigg was concerned by the positive associations that some youths in urban neighborhoods of Grand Rapids, Mich., had with incarceration. So he gathered men whom he’d known from his past 25 years of urban youth ministry, and with support from several Christian Reformed churches in West Michigan, a vacant McDonalds restaurant was transformed into a power lifting gym.

One coach is Jason Botbyl, a member of Madison At Ford, a satellite location of Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has been weight training since he was fifteen years old and had been praying for a way to connect his love for weightlifting with a passion for youth ministry.

Rigg was affirmed in the ministry’s impact early on when he heard one of the youths ask his coach, “How did you get so strong?” The response: “My strength comes from the Lord.”

—Noah J. K. Kruijs



Jason Botbyl coaches Nantakitao “Chase” Makura in proper form for squats.

NOAH KRUIJS



SengMun Layang helps other Burmese women learn basic computer skills.

Check [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for the expanded story.

## Reaching Out to Refugees in Washington

The members of Family of Faith Christian Reformed Church of Kennewick, Wash., are helping refugees from Burma thrive in the United States.

In an apartment complex that houses many of the refugees, the church operates the Family Learning Center where clients can get English classes, homework assistance for children, computer coaching, driver's training, and cooking classes.



Theresa Roseendal

SengMun Layang, 18, is one of the recent arrivals taking English. "I have begun to believe in myself," she said. "I am pretty sure I will go to college in a few years."

Layang is also helping others learn computer skills. She noticed

that some of the Burmese women did not know how to turn on a computer. "I believe that everybody should know these basic things in this modern age. I hope this will help them to find a job more easily," she explained.

—Amy Toornstra

## Canadians Partner with Hondurans to Brew Justice

A group of Canadians from Calvary Christian Reformed Church, in Flamborough, Ontario, recently created a partnership with Honduran coffee farmers to import 5,700 pounds of direct-trade coffee to ensure a fair wage for the growers.

The direct-trade coffee program pays farmers a premium for their crop, eliminating middlemen called "coyotes," while making high-quality, reasonably-priced coffee available to Canadians. Profits return directly to Honduran communities.

"And it's fantastic coffee!" said church member Ken Bosveld.

The program was developed by a group from the church who call themselves The Carpenteros (a blend of the Spanish and English words for *carpenters*).

Over the past decade they have raised as much as \$70,000 in some years. With the help of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, they supported initiatives that include micro-finance cooperatives, community development, education, health, and nutrition, and now—fair trade coffee.

"We are working on creating a business relationship between the growers in Honduras and a specialty coffee company in Toronto," said Bosveld, who hopes the effort represents the beginning of a long-lasting partnership.

Receiving a fair price for their crop means workers no longer need to pull their children out of school to make the harvest profitable. In addition, the farmers, many of whom are members and elders of the local El Carrizal CRC, use environmentally sustainable farming techniques.

—Sophie Vandenberg



Coffee grower Raul Padilla looks through a brochure, prepared by The Carpenteros, that tells the story of the Rio Olancho Direct Trade Coffee project.

## Denver Church Magnifies Traditional Sunday School Lessons

First Christian Reformed Church in Denver, Colo., magnified its Sunday school program to incorporate many activities and generations of the church family.

Called *Focus & Magnify*, it blends hands-on learning with quieter, more focused lessons for children in grades three through eight.

The Sunday school hour is split into two segments, with the first spent in hands-on learning led by various members of the congregation.

Children can choose to get involved in children's choir, chimes choir, card making, origami, and other selections. Each session lasts five to six weeks.

"I like that [it] covers a variety of generations. We've done a lot of things with the elderly, getting kids actively involved in the church, both behind the scenes and in worship. It helps to bring continuity to the church," said Laurie Sanderson, coleader of the program.

An added benefit: "It's easier for people to volunteer because the sessions are shorter and they are working on a topic that they are well versed in."

The second half of the Sunday school hour is spent focusing on more traditional Sunday school curriculum using Faith Alive Christian Resources's *Walk with Me* and *Kid Connection* materials.

—Sarah Boonstra



Sarah Boonstra

Hayden Posthumus works with magnets as part of Sunday school.



MARIA SMILDE

About 80 women of all ages attend the Zumba exercise program at inSpirit CRC.

## West Michigan Church Stays Fit with Zumba

inSpirit Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., is drawing more than 80 women a week to the church through its Zumba fitness classes.

Zumba is an international fitness program that includes dancing to Latin music.

Sarah Kloostra VanderVeen, a member at inSpirit, is an accredited Zumba instructor. "It's been a great outreach for our church," she said.

Each session opens with devotions. "I've chosen verses that reflect why we need to be healthy and that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit," said VanderVeen.

Kim Bostelaar, also a church member, attends the classes.

"I support it because our church is doing it. It's really fun to meet people, to spend time with women, and to dance."

VanderVeen ends the session with an added contemporary Christian song.

—Ryan Struyk

## Grace and a Few Good Men Help Ex-Prisoner Live Life on the Outside

Richard Stewart wasn't sure how to live life on the outside. He credits God and a few good men from a Montana church with helping him figure it out.

Stewart had spent most of his life in prison, including a 29-year sentence for homicide. While in prison, he spent a lot of time reading the Bible and asking questions. He was also partnered with Layne Klompfen, a member of Gallatin Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church in Bozeman, through a mentoring program called T.E.A.M.

In 2002, Stewart received parole. When he walked out of prison that day, there were five men ready to help him reenter society, including Klompfen.

"I didn't know how to rent an apartment, get my electricity



Richard Stewart makes his living by painting since leaving prison.



turned on, none of that stuff. Without Layne and a couple other people in the church, I never would have made it," said Stewart. "Since then Layne has not only mentored me, but we're best of friends."

Stewart has been out for nine years, living in Bozeman and attending Gallatin Gateway.

Adamant that it is only by God's grace that he has recovered, Stewart said, "If you want to help change a man's life, you have to help change his heart, and the only one that can do that is Christ Jesus."

—Sarah Boonstra

## Good Stewardship Means Giving Up Car for Halifax Pastor

Rev. David Vroegge, pastor of All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, might be the only active CRC pastor who does not own his own car. Instead, for more than a year Vroegge has taken part in a car-share arrangement.

He and his family live in the heart of the city, and found that they were increasingly choosing to walk, bike, or bus, so they decided to forgo their car.

When they need a vehicle, they book a car-share vehicle from a business around the corner from the church, whether it's for an hour or a weekend.

The Vroeges felt like this was a great way to accomplish many of their ideals: care for creation, good physical care, meeting the neighbors, stewardly use of money, and setting an example for others.

Vroegge said the biggest advantage of being a no-car family is talking to people. "Being on foot in the city so much is a great way to meet people—a pretty essential part of following Jesus!"

—Brenda Visser



CARRIE VROEGE

Rev. David Vroegge and his family opted out of car ownership, choosing walking, cycling, public transit, or car-sharing to get around.



# FAQs

## Outreach

**Q I don't feel comfortable telling my Muslim and non-Christian friends that they are going to hell. What is a gracious way to have interfaith dialogue with people who don't follow Christ?**

**A** Issues of eternity are never easy to talk about, especially if we're claiming to know any one person's particular destination. You really can't claim to know a person's standing before God. That would make you God.

What you can do is articulate that your Scripture and faith tradition encourage people to find God through the person of Jesus, and that following Jesus has been the path that has connected you to God.

True dialogue, of course, requires that you listen to what someone else says and believes and do so without attempting to correct them or preempt them mid-statement. It is easier to discount anything anyone else might have to say than to do the hard work of actually listening, turning it over in your mind and heart, and then allowing your own faith understanding to be reappropriated in light of it. Fear of doing that might indicate less trust in your own faith, rather than more.

Interfaith dialogue is very important in our increasingly pluralistic world, and I think the first step in that dialogue for Christians is to listen before they witness to their own faith.

—Bryan Berghof

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

**True dialogue requires that you listen to what someone else says and believes.**

## Electrons

**Q I've got all these digital photos. How do I manage them if I'm not a computer whiz?**

**A** Digital photos are easy to share, back up, and edit. And you only need to print the ones you want. But, just like those film days, keeping all your photos organized can be a challenge.

First, you need to have good software. If you're a Mac user, you already know about iPhoto. You can skip to the end of this answer.

If you're a PC user like me, forget whatever came with your computer or camera. It's better to invest your learning curve in a leading tool. The one I use is Google's Picasa and it's free (also for Macs).

Another option is Adobe's Photoshop Elements. It's like Picasa but with a price tag. So why use it? The price is still cheap compared to the learning curve. So if your kid or your best friend is using it, don't let the sticker stop you from sponging off their expertise. Also, if you want to do video, Adobe has Premier Elements for that.

Whatever software you choose, it's critical that you back up your photos! Hard drives fail. Often.

These days, online backup is the way to go. All three of the tools I've mentioned can automatically back up your photos online. Google's service costs only five bucks a year for 20 GB (enough for 10,000+ photos). That's great peace of mind for five dollars. Plus it makes sharing photos a lot easier.

One final option to consider is going straight from camera to "cloud" (storing your photos on the web). For that, check out *Flickr.com*. The editing features aren't as robust as traditional

software, but all the basics are there. And it doesn't tie you to a particular computer.

—Tim Postuma

*Tim Postuma is web manager for the Christian Reformed Church in North America. You can connect with him at [Twitter.com/postuma](https://twitter.com/postuma).*

## Church

**Q I am deeply concerned about how our council has interpreted the Safe Church guidelines. Our church has many senior widows, and all of them have the same complaint: the minister never visits them in their home. If I wanted to talk to my pastor about a sensitive issue, I would not do this in a public place. Has my council taken these guidelines too literally?**

**A** The guideline says, "Acknowledge the risk of meeting alone in a congregant's or counselee's home. Ministerial personnel may choose to bring a spouse or another office-bearer to such a meeting . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 780). Even though it seems that your council has transformed this guideline into a rule, please note that this rule still allows a meeting in your home as long as another adult is in the house.

The church I most recently served also had many senior widows/widowers living at home or in care facilities. Sometimes my wife accompanied me on visits; most often I went alone. My ministry to our aged saints would not have been as easy or as effective had my council transformed this guideline into a rule. Synod adopted the guidelines to ensure safe and healthy ministry, not to decrease or impede ministry.

—George Vander Weit

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



BY SYLVIA KEESMAAT

# THE KINGDOM ON EARTH OR IN HEAVEN?

Living into the reality of the resurrection we await

**D**OES THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS make a difference in our lives here and now? Does it give us a sense of the coming of God's kingdom? Or does it just point to some future hope, a life forever in heaven when we leave this earth?

For many Christians, the question doesn't seem that urgent. Many of us have a pretty good life: jobs that put food on the table, holidays by the lake or seashore, enough clothes to keep us warm in the winter, a house or apartment with enough space for us and our toys. And safety. We don't worry too much about whether we or our families will be alive in the morning.

In such a situation the question of the coming of the kingdom just isn't that pressing. We have it pretty good right now. Sure, we want to be with Jesus someday, but not just yet. We have a movie or two we want to see and a trip we want to take before Jesus returns. It is no wonder that our lives aren't that different from those of our secular neighbors. We go to church on Sunday, but the rest of the week we look like everybody else.

For Jesus' followers who lived in the first century, however, the coming of the kingdom was a burning issue. How will the kingdom come? Will it come in our lifetime? Will God bring the kingdom or do we have a role? And belief in the resurrection was central to these questions.

You see, for Jews at the time of Jesus, the resurrection was a social and political hope. When God returned to establish his kingdom he would strip the rulers and the rich of their power. He would end hunger and violence and bring peace, healing, and forgiveness. Those who had died would not be left out; they would rise to a continued life on the earth. They would be part of God's kingdom on earth, building houses to live in, growing food for celebration, and bearing children who would live long and healthy lives (Isa. 65:20-23).

Oddly enough, that is why the resurrection was so controversial. The Sadducees, who were the big-shots in Jerusalem with money and power, didn't believe in the resurrection. They didn't want God to come and bring healing and justice and peace for all Israelites, past and present. They wanted God to leave things as they were because they had it pretty good, thank you very much.



The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived in the villages with those who had suffered the violence of the Roman army and those who had no way to feed their children. They waited eagerly for God to come and turn everything upside down, to establish the kingdom here on earth and bring back to life all those who deserved to share in God's good gifts of healing, peace, and justice.

As much as I hate to say it, my life—and the lives of most of my friends—resembles that of the Sadducees. We have it pretty good. We aren't looking for any kind of radical change, certainly not one that will cause us to lose any of our privileges. As a result, we aren't waiting for the resurrection to turn our world upside down. We put our hope in continued blessing with God in heaven, after we die (but not too soon, please).

This is tragic. Not just because we miss the radical power of the resurrection, but also because it means we ignore the needs and hopes of the majority of Christians in our world today.

## What is the word of hope that Jesus' resurrection brings to the grieving in El Salvador or the single mother in Philadelphia?

### Hope amid Darkness

Before Jesus' birth, Mary sang a song about the hungry being fed and the mighty being brought down. And Jesus made it clear throughout his ministry that his kingdom was one that would come "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Jesus began his ministry by announcing that "today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Which Scripture? The one that says Jesus will "proclaim good news to the poor . . . freedom for the prisoners . . . recovery of the sight for the blind . . . and set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18). Jesus didn't say, "I'm telling you that these things are coming when you get to heaven." No, they have begun here, on this earth. And someday the meek shall inherit the earth, along with those blessed peacemakers and those who are persecuted for the sake of justice (Matt. 5:5-10).

Paul continued this emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15, where he argues that our actual physical bodies will be raised when Jesus comes again. Why does this matter? Because there is a new heaven and new earth. In fact, the earth is *waiting* for the redemption of our bodies, Paul tells us in Romans 8:23. The resurrection of our bodies will be good for all of creation.

According to Paul, we aren't waiting for a spiritual life in heaven; we are awaiting the redemption of our bodies on a new earth.

In fact, the wonderful vision of Revelation 21 makes this even clearer: we await a new heaven and a new earth, where God will come to dwell with us. The picture is not one of believers being whisked away to heaven; rather, God comes to dwell with us on the new earth (Rev. 21:1-5). And when that happens, the old order will pass away. All those societal structures that caused mourning and crying and pain. All the sickness and frailty. All the violence and despair. All of it gone, when God comes to dwell with us.

That is our resurrection hope. But there are always two sides to that hope: the future coming of the kingdom and the way that we see that kingdom in the present. Because where Jesus is, something amazing happens. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!"

Throughout history, wherever followers of Jesus have gathered to eat his bread and drink his cup, new creation has come. Tears are dried, mourning turns to joy, forgiveness overcomes hatred, the hungry are fed, and God has answers before his name is called. We live into the reality of the resurrection that we await.

For the majority of Christians in the world, this is good news indeed. What is the word of hope that the resurrection brings to the grieving in El Salvador whose brothers and fathers have been taken and killed? Or to the poor in Africa whose children work in the cocoa fields? Or to the single mother in Philadelphia who cannot afford to heat her home? Or to the civilians of Iraq whose hospitals are now rubble?

For Christians in these places, the resurrection promises a kingdom of hope that begins now in their place of darkness and that will be finally fulfilled when Jesus comes again. We see signs of that kingdom whenever food is shared with the hungry and reconciliation is offered to the enemy. We catch a glimpse of that kingdom when Christians demand that the food on their tables not be grown by child labor in Africa and when comfort is offered to the grieving. We know the welcome of that kingdom when we welcome the landless immigrant to our table and eat, like Jesus did, with those whom no one else will welcome.

In a world of suffering, we cannot afford the luxury of waiting for the kingdom to come in some heaven light-years away. Jesus made it clear that where he is, the kingdom brings healing, forgiveness, and hope. Those of us who follow him can only show the truth of that kingdom in our lives as we wait for him to come and make all things new. ■



Sylvia C. Keesmaat teaches biblical studies at the Toronto School of Theology. She is a member of Lindsay (Ont.) CRC.



## Gospel-Centered Renewal: The Philadelphia Story

by Natalie Hart

**S**pirit and Truth Fellowship, a church in a primarily Hispanic and African-American low-income community of Philadelphia, Penn., recently lost half its members, most of its deacons, and its praise team.

But this was an occasion for praise, not panic. That's because those who left Spirit and Truth were sent out to form two new Philadelphia church plants, both part of an urban neighborhood that is being transformed by the gospel.

The neighborhood, which includes Puerto Ricans, Koreans, and African-Americans, now boasts seven new Home Missions-supported CRC churches and a house church. These churches are located near a community center, a Christian school, an art program, a legal

department, and a training seminary for urban church planters, all either launched by or closely affiliated with Spirit and Truth.

In the winter of 2012, another corner of the neighborhood is to be occupied by the Esperanza Health Center. The center will work closely with Spirit and Truth and the other nearby ministries.

This holistic, gospel-centered community renewal effort began 37 years ago,

when Manny and Blanca Ortiz and Randy and Sue Baker began ministering together in Chicago. They planted five churches and related ministries. Since planting Spirit and Truth in Philadelphia 23 years ago, Manny and Sue have become co-directors of Home Missions' Philadelphia Initiative for Church Planting.

Spirit and Truth always planned to plant churches, but it wasn't until 1999, when Ortiz and Baker started praying

“Most of these ministries reflect their parent: they're small urban churches that are deeply rooted in their neighborhoods.”





The congregation of By Grace Alone

with some seminarians about church planting, that they started active work.

Every church planted by Spirit and Truth was launched by someone closely connected with the congregation. For example, church members who lived in the nearby Germantown neighborhood met as a small group for two years. They then launched Germantown Hope Community Church in 2002, led by Kyuboem Lee, one of the seminary students who had been in conversation with Ortiz and Baker.

Pastor Allen Drew was a member of Spirit and Truth for several years before God called him to plant Mt. Airy Community Church, which became the fifth church plant in 2009.

The pastor of one of the newest plants, Rob Whitmire of Grace and Peace Fellowship, became a Christian as a teenager at Spirit and Truth.

Most of these ministries reflect their parent: they're small urban churches that are deeply rooted in their neighborhoods. They are "walk-to" churches that reflect the ethnic and class make-up of their respective neighborhoods.

Germantown was started with mostly Caucasian members, but is now as multiethnic as its location. Lee points to the neighborhood potlucks they organized after Sunday evening services for putting them on "neighbor-to-neighbor footing, sitting together as peers with no difference in status."

Four core values shape how Ortiz and Baker enact their vision for urban ministry.

First, rely on God. Sue Baker describes their ministries as growing organically through prayer, always waiting for the Lord to provide the leaders and the people. Meetings for the Christian school stalled until the spring of 1999 when 20 people, including a prospective principal, attended a meeting; the school opened that September.

Second, receive visionary teaching. As Baker puts it, Manny Ortiz's teaching and preaching flow from a kingdom view of horizontally reaching the neighborhoods. The vision for urban missions is always before the congregation.

Third, keep it rolling. Baker describes the shift in the congregation's perspective after that first church plant as "catching the bug." Those with a passion for urban missions were drawn to them, and others caught the bug while they were there. Robert Wafula was so energized by his involvement with the Germantown plant that he started a church for Africans in Philadelphia.

Fourth, don't run everything. Spirit and Truth supports its church plants financially for a time, and they meet together for prayer and fellowship every six weeks, but each plant has its own leadership and organization.

The congregation of Spirit and Truth is still finding its way after the departure of so many members, but it has confidence. God has provided before. As Baker says, "the more he provides, the more our faith grows." ■



Natalie Hart is a freelance writer based in Grand Rapids, Mich.

### Cluster Helps to Grow Ministries

God is using Home Missions' Philadelphia Initiative for Church Planting to start a growing cluster of CRC ministries.

The Initiative comprises several components. First is the development of a cluster of new CRC church plants that meets every five to six weeks for encouragement, sharing, and prayer. Over the last few months, the church planting strategy has shifted from being initiated by Spirit and Truth to being initiated by this cluster, with the goal of seeing other clusters of two to three churches in close geographic proximity developed throughout the city.

Another aspect of the Initiative is the coaching and mentoring of all of the church plant pastors and leaders, which is done by Manny Ortiz, Sue Baker, and Drew Angus. Angus is the regional leader for Home Missions' Eastern U.S. Mission Leadership Team.

Finally, a new training institute, the Philadelphia School of Bible and Urban Mission (PSBUM), was established to assist church plants with the development of emerging and indigenous leaders.



Manny Ortiz



Sue Baker

### reNEW COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

These three words capture the essence of Christian Reformed Home Missions' work with partners in North America:

- **reNEW:** We serve as a catalyst to start new churches and campus ministries and cultivate renewal in churches that are following the mission of God.
- **COMMUNITIES:** God calls us to form new communities of faith that engage our context, so that lives and communities are transformed.
- **TOGETHER:** Community transformation and new ministry happen best when we partner with local churches in a shared commitment to follow God in mission together.

To find out more, visit [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org).

### Ethnic Leaders Grow Ministries

One of the most striking aspects of Home Missions' ministry is the intercultural way it works to bring the whole gospel to people in many diverse contexts.

Home Missions' four ethnic leaders have formed an Ethnic Ministry Council to provide leadership in this effort. They are Rev. Stanley Jim, Native American Ministries; Rev. Robert Price, Black Ministries; Rev. Javier Torres, Hispanic Ministries; and Rev. Tong Park, Korean Ministries.

In their roles on the council, the four will champion the



Robert Price



Javier Torres



Stanley Jim



Tong Park

need to integrate ethnic ministries into the geographical regions and classes where they are located.

They will also have a voice in deploying new ethnic leaders, as well as authorizing funding for the start of new ethnic ministries. As their roles on the Ethnic Council emerge, they eagerly look forward to having influence and making an impact on the CRC regarding all ethnic groups.

The ethnic leaders are enthusiastic about the future and about the opportunities the council will have to empower and direct the multi-ethnic culture within the denomination.

"I see the Ethnic Ministry Council as an answer to prayer," says Torres. "It allows us an opportunity to break down walls and work in an environment of inclusiveness instead of segregation.

"It moves us from ethnic islands to a place where multi-ethnicity is celebrated and together we can work with our partners in fanning the flames of multiculturalism."

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

#### Easter to Pentecost Missions Highlight

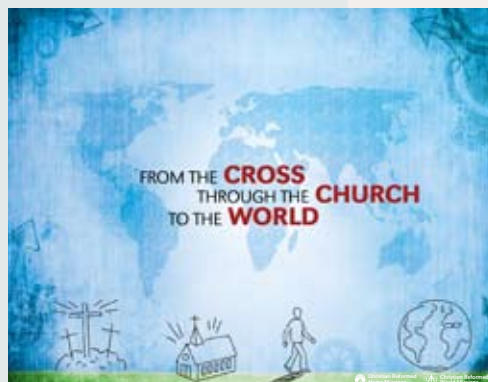
*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*

Home Missions and World Missions are again collaborating to help churches celebrate the period from Easter to Pentecost.

From Easter Sunday, April 24, through Pentecost Sunday, June 12, Home Missions and World Missions will share how they are jointly following God's gospel "From the Cross, Through the Church, To the World." Resources include

- a 28-day, downloadable, interactive family guide with daily family activities
- lids and labels for children's banks
- a poster and DVD
- children's bulletins
- bulletin covers and inserts

For more information, visit [www.crcna.org/fromcrossthroughchurchtoworld](http://www.crcna.org/fromcrossthroughchurchtoworld).





# An Incarnational Presence in Ottawa

When the new University of Ottawa (Ont.) campus ministry begins this summer, it won't only serve Christian students on campus. It seeks to be a gospel presence in the entire city, reaching out by being involved in community activities and social justice initiatives.

The ministry, launched out of a partnership between Home Missions, Classis Eastern Canada, and four Ottawa-area Christian Reformed churches, will serve the more than 70,000 students living in the area. That includes students at the University of

Ottawa, Carleton University, and Algonquin College.

"Our goal for this ministry is to form an incarnational Christian community that is also an incubator for future leaders," says Sheila Murphy, outreach ministry developer with Classis Eastern Canada. Murphy says the hope is that the campus minister will work to build bridges from campus to church and to surrounding neighborhoods.

The idea for a community-focused ministry was inspired by Home Missions-supported campus ministries at the University of Guelph in Ontario, led by campus pastor Jamie

VanderBerg; and Dalhousie University in Halifax, N.S., led by campus pastor Brad Close. Both of those ministries are focused on their communities, seeking to connect the campus with the community through worship, hospitality, discipleship, and social justice efforts. They also collaborate regularly with local churches and community development groups.

The new campus minister, expected to be hired in July, will seek to bring the gospel to life by working with various campus and community groups to foster awareness of the links between learning and community service.

The new ministry will also focus on faith and education within the university context, according to Larry Vandergrift, professor at the University of Ottawa and one of the originators of the ministry.

"University is a challenging time full of questioning for many students," Vandergrift says. "There is a dearth of spiritual services on the university campus, and we want to fill that void by helping students who face challenges to their faith and want to integrate their faith with learning." ■

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

# Coffee Break Goes Global

Coffee Break, the popular outreach-oriented small group Bible study for women, is going global.

Christian Reformed Home Missions is partnering with Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), and Faith Alive in a number of countries as they grow Coffee Break programs locally.

Coffee Break, which began in a Chicago suburb more than 40 years ago, is popping up in China, South Korea, South Africa, and elsewhere. The hope is to develop local leaders to train others to lead Coffee Break and Bible studies and to help grow disciples.

As part of Home Missions' small groups ministry, Coffee Break usually uses the Discover



A Coffee Break leadership training event in Indonesia.

Your Bible series from Faith Alive to structure inductive Bible studies led by a trained leader. This person leads a small group discussion focused on specific Scripture passages and their applications.

Each of the four agencies is bringing its own strengths to this

partnership. Home Missions, for example, focuses on providing training to prospective Coffee Break leaders; Faith Alive is publishing and translating Coffee Break materials; and BTGMI and World Missions are helping to find people to assist in developing the program.

Global Coffee Break is scheduled to be launched in Indonesia this summer, with other programs planned for Dubai, Brazil, Mozambique, and South Africa. A Global Coffee Break website is being designed, and leader training is in the works.

"From a suburb of Chicago, God has used Coffee Break, first in North America, but now in many parts of the world," says Sam Huizenga, ministry developer coach for Home Missions. "It has become a global mission strategy! When you think of Coffee Break, think of it through the eyes of people around the world." ■

—Ben Van Houten

## Rendering to Caesar—and Thanking God

It's tax time. April is the month when both Canada and the United States require that their citizens "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mark 12:17, KJV). Whether the due date is April 15 or 30, tax time demands that we review what we have earned over the past year, determining how much of that income we must pay in order to enjoy the privileges of living where we do.

But tax time is more than a calendar deadline; it is also a time to reflect. As I gather my receipts and other documentation, I take time to reflect on a number of things.

Honestly, my first thought is how much money I pay in taxes. It seems that every year local, state or provincial, and federal taxes continue to rise. It is expensive to live in a place where there are good roads, beautiful recreational areas, just court systems, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and representative governments. Costly? Yes. Worth the price? Absolutely!

That is not to say that I want to pay more than I must, however, so part of my preparation is sorting receipts into different categories. I always find it interesting to see the many different ways in which my family spends its money. There are mortgage payments, property taxes, donations, utilities, groceries, restaurants, insurance, vacations, car expenses—the list goes on.

I also take note of what my family and I earn each year. The humbling reality is that while the majority of people around the world live in or on the edge of poverty, my family has everything we need, many things we want, and plenty to share.

As we prepare our annual tax returns, I invite you to consider with me what God has done.



PHOTO:ISTOCK

God has blessed me with so much. He has provided not only all my material needs, but so much more. I live in a wonderful place and was raised by loving parents. I have a great spouse and wonderful children, not to mention 10 grandchildren. Life has been good, and God has been a wonderful provider. I am blessed beyond measure.

Since God has done all this for me, in addition to the great gift of salvation through his Son, Jesus, how can I not thank God by giving back? For you and I are not only citizens of a country, we are citizens in the kingdom of God. Our allegiance is to the creator and redeemer of all. If we pay taxes to an earthly "kingdom," should we be surprised that God asks us also to contribute to his kingdom projects?

God has given us everything that we have. We profess together that our world—our entire world and everything in it—belongs to God. He cares deeply about the world and the people he has created. God also cares about our wealth and how we use it. The book of Proverbs is filled with directions for how to use what God has provided. Jesus spoke time and time again about the same thing.

Of course, as we reflect on all this with grateful hearts, we also remember to pray for and reach out to those who do not experience the blessing of paying taxes. Poverty, unemployment, and so many other factors may make April seem like just another cold, dreary month in a long winter of ongoing need.

So as we prepare our annual tax returns, I invite you to consider with me what God has done and is doing in our lives. Consider how we can say thank you with our gifts and with our talents. This year, rather than complain about high taxes and government spending, I plan to thank God for all his provisions. Please join me. ■



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





Back to God Ministries International provided a radio on which to listen to their programs.

## The Gift of a Radio

**N**estled in the northernmost region of India lies a remote village where there are no churches and the majority of the people practice animism.

In that isolated area, Back to God Ministries International was reaching people whose only link to biblical teaching was the ministry's Hindi gospel broadcast. But then the village's one battery-powered radio died.

One of the listeners wrote to BTGMI's local producer telling of their dilemma. "Our team traveled to the village and met with seven families," reports the Hindi ministry leader. "They learned that these families were getting a blessing from the radio broadcasts. They were so excited about receiving the messages and songs and didn't want to lose contact."

The ministry team learned that one of the village leaders is a Christian. They presented him with a new wind-up radio that needs no batteries or electricity. The leader agreed to take responsibility for sharing the radio with others in the village. Two weeks later, BTGMI's producer returned to the village and learned that three persons who now had access to the broadcasts had become Christians.

"This radio has become a great tool for people who have no other way to listen to the Word of God," he reported.

The specialized radios are purchased with funds from Back to God Ministries International and Words of Hope, BTGMI's media ministry partner in India. With more radios, people living in isolated parts of India will be able to hear the gospel. To help, visit [www.backtogod.net](http://www.backtogod.net) and designate a gift for the Hindi ministry. ■

—Back to God Ministries International

## Seminarians Learn about Pastoral Identity on Retreat

**I**n January I had the opportunity to go to Camp Geneva on the shores of Lake Michigan for a "Pastoral Identity Retreat" with my fellow first-year Master of Divinity students.

Being at the lakeshore in January as opposed to July was different, but it was no less impressive. The ice piled up on the shore, making jagged cliffs that were both beautiful and dangerous. The blue-gray water that rolled up against these jagged winter shorelines was dark and uninviting.

Back within the warm walls of the conference center, I had the pleasure of getting to know some of my Calvin Theological Seminary classmates better as we shared our calling stories, talked about our gifts for ministry (and the lack thereof) and uttered some of our fears about and motivations for becoming pastors and teachers.

The experience was both humbling and affirming for me. I heard some amazing stories of God's work in the lives of my classmates—stories of great sacrifice and genuine wrestling

with God. There was a young woman who is following God's call on her life despite rejection and anger from her family; a young man who was recaptured by God on a hilltop outside of Guantanamo Bay in Cuba while guarding the Muslim detainees there; and a man who rededicated his life to God after surviving a severe car accident more than 20 years ago.

For me, the opportunity to share my story about how God has led my family and me to this point was further affirmation that we are, in fact, right where God wants us. I gained an even deeper sense that the upbringing, schooling, careers, opportunities, and experiences that I've had up to this point have prepared me well for this adventure. I have and will continue to draw on my past experience as I learn about and enter into a career in ministry. ■

—Michael Ten Haken is a first-year M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary. This article was first published on his blog at [michaeltenhaken.blogspot.com](http://michaeltenhaken.blogspot.com).



Calvin Theological Seminary students spent time at a retreat near Lake Michigan.

Women attend an educational meeting on women's health issues.



## Protecting Young Girls in West Africa

**E**arly one morning, a woman in West Africa was awakened by the screams of a young girl.

“My neighbor had had her niece, who was 11 years old, excised. . . . The next morning she was dead from hemorrhage.”

This is not an isolated case. Excision—the practice of “circumcising” young girls—is common in many parts of West Africa. The United

Nations estimates that in Mali alone, 92 percent of women have been excised.

Given the serious health consequences this practice can cause, such as infection, hemorrhage, future infertility, or complications during delivery, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is working with a local partner organization to educate people and prevent excision in West Africa.

The partner organization uses a “training of trainers” method to teach Christian

women about issues related to excision. Most of the women who have been trained have suffered due to their own excision. Some have seen their own daughters die due to the procedure.

“I watched my daughter shed blood from the morning to the afternoon after she was excised,” one woman stated soberly, “Later she passed away.

Only during the training did I realize why she had died. I will never again excise one of my daughters.”

These women then go on to train and educate others. Yet they face great challenges. Parents want their daughters to conform to those around them. Excision is believed in many communities to be necessary for keeping a girl chaste for marriage.

“The innocent suffer terribly because of unquestioning adherence to tradition,” said CRWRC West Africa staff member Marie Harouna. “The elders think that they are helping their young victims be accepted into society; but they are leading them to the slaughter.”

CRWRC’s partner does not limit its training to the mothers of young girls. Instead, the organization educates many Christian men, women, and leaders about the risks of excision, sharing personal testimonies and encouraging people to stop the practice.

“This is the first time that I have been at a training like this,” said a 65-year-old Christian woman.

“I had heard that excision is not good, but that did not stop me from having my daughters excised. . . . This training on excision opened my eyes and my mind . . . [to] this practice that has caused so much suffering.” ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, CRWRC Communications

## Nigerian Denomination Grows Missionary Program

**J**olly Tanko and Elisabeth Bako first served as missionaries with the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) in Nigeria’s Niger State almost 20 years ago. Now, eight years after moving on to other things, the Bakos are back to help groom leaders for the expanding church.

When they first worked in Niger State, few people there were Christians. Sliding onto a motorcycle, Jolly Tanko drove from village to village in underdeveloped areas to share the gospel. He told Bible stories and taught villagers to read and write. As one of a few ordained pastors in the area, he also baptized many believers.

Last year, the CRCN sent the couple back to Niger State, this time to teach at Warari Bible School, a theological school for local leaders. Along



Jolly Tanko and his wife, Elisabeth, are busy with ministry in Nigeria.

with teaching, Jolly Tanko is the school’s principal.

“Jolly’s task is to develop church leaders and help disciple the many new Christians into mature believers,” says Matthew Lanser, a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary at Warari Bible School.

Since the 1990s, the church in Niger State has grown from a handful to more than 1,000 people.

This growth has opened the door for further evangelism. Many Warari Bible School students, baptized by Jolly

Tanko during his first time in Niger State, are now preparing to share the gospel in Niger State communities.

The CRCN has taken increasing responsibility for missions within and outside of Nigeria in the last few years. Recently, the CRCN shared its vision for expanding ministry in the next 10 years into 10 cities, predominantly in northern Nigeria. In addition to Niger State, CRCN missionaries currently work in Taraba State, in northern Nigeria, in Nigerian urban centers like Abuja, in Niger, and in Sierra Leone.

CRWM missionaries in Nigeria rejoice at the CRCN’s move into missions. Mike Van Der Dyke, a missionary, says, “God has transformed the CRCN from a missionary-receiving church to a missionary-sending church with a vision to reach out with the gospel to many other areas of West Africa.” ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, Christian Reformed World Missions



## A Hero in Honduras

**G**ilbert Espinoza started listening to Rev. Juan Boonstra present *La Hora de la Reforma* over the airwaves in the mid-1960s.

Spanish ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) from 1961 to 1991, Boonstra was host and preacher on the program. Living in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Espinoza and other leaders of a small evangelical house church wanted to become affiliated with a denomination whose roots and doctrine were thoroughly Reformed.

After listening to Boonstra, they decided to write what was then The Back to God Hour in Chicago, asking for assistance and for a missionary to



**Radio preacher Rev. Juan Boonstra helped to start the Christian Reformed Church in Honduras.**

help them build their Reformed faith.

Eventually, the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) complied with the request, stationing a series of CRC missionaries and workers in Honduras. Ultimately a new denomination was born.

Sponsored by BTGMI and Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), Boonstra also visited and, in 1979, conducted revivals in a Teguci-

galpa stadium.

The revivals drew even more people to the Reformed faith. BTGMI continues to broadcast by radio and television in Honduras under the leadership of Rev. Guillermo Serrano.

“Juan Boonstra was a hero of the faith in our country,” says Espinoza, who helped to found the first CRC of Honduras (HCRC) congregation.



There always has been a close relationship between the CRCNA and the HCRC. As CRC missionaries branched out, they kept Honduran church members aware of

the work they were doing.

“There is a lot of history, and a lot of different missionaries came here. They taught us a great deal,” says Espinoza.

Caspar Geisterfer, the CRWM missionary stationed in Honduras now, helps oversee theological education of church leaders, as well as the overall ministry of the HCRC.

He has done quite a bit of traveling over bumpy Honduran roads to meet with HCRC pastors and members of their congregations. He also meets with representatives of the six HCRC classes.

“I’m kind of a church consultant for World Missions,” he said. “I work with churches, and give them ideas of how to be innovative in their ministries.”

A big focus of his work, he said, is to “train CRC youth to be mentors to at-risk young people.”

Even after some time in Honduras, Geisterfer is still learning the complex nature of the history of the CRC congregations. Each has a story to tell. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

## Building Community While Using Less Energy

**D**uring the month of January, students living in Calvin College residence halls participated in “Kill-a-Watt,” a creation-care awareness contest.

“The goal of Kill-a-Watt is to educate students about sustainability and how their faith intersects with sustainability and how caring for creation is part of our faith,” said Becki Levad, the resident director who headed up the contest.

Throughout interim, residence halls competed with one another to lower their electricity usage, earning points in a variety of ways. By taking such actions as eliminating extra appliances, unplugging cords not in use, turning on computers’ power-saving modes, or using natural light instead of electricity, 470 students worked to get their rooms Dorm Room Environmental Awareness Movement (DREAM) certified.

The program also included a “Meatless Monday” challenge in the dining hall, where students opted to skip meat for one meal and learned about the environmental effects of meat production. Hundreds of “Lifestyle Challenges” were taken on, providing students a chance to try out a new lifestyle habit by going without meat, clothes dryers, room refrigerators, bottled water, and/or long showers for all of interim.

In addition, student leaders organized numerous campus-wide and residence hall-based educational events related to creation care. Events included a screening of the documentary *No Impact Man*, faculty lectures, plant-potting, field trips, water-scarcity simulations, *lectio divina* (praying with Scripture), and more.

As a result of this challenge, residence halls reduced their energy usage by an average of 8 percent when compared to last January’s totals. ■ —Calvin College Communications

# Cool Creation Facts and Care Tips

God made an amazing world. He put millions of cool creatures in it, then tied them together with tiny threads of life. God gave lifeless things like air, water, and dirt some surprising features, then fine-tuned them to support our life. Then God told us to care for it all.

Soon this amazing world will burst out in joyful glory, because spring is here. There's no better time to go outside and enjoy God's wonderful creation!

But first, read these pages. They'll give you some cool facts about the things you see, tips on creation care, and reasons to thank God for this amazing world.



## Pop-up Plants

Plants pop up in the strangest places: a gravel driveway, a broken sidewalk, an old building, even your unmowed lawn or old garden.

People call these pop-up plants "weeds." A weed is just a plant growing where someone doesn't want it, but God obviously created plants to pop up all over the place.

Maybe that's because we can't live without them. Green plants are the only things in creation that breathe opposite of us. They inhale (breathe in) carbon dioxide, a gas we exhale (breathe out) because we can't use it. Then they exhale oxygen, the gas we need to live. So, we and green plants give each other the gasses we each need to live. Isn't that cool?

**CARE TIP:** Keep green plants growing whenever and wherever you can.

**TRY THIS:** Adopt a corner of your yard and leave it alone all summer—no mowing or weeding or spraying. Keep track of what kinds of plants pop up there.

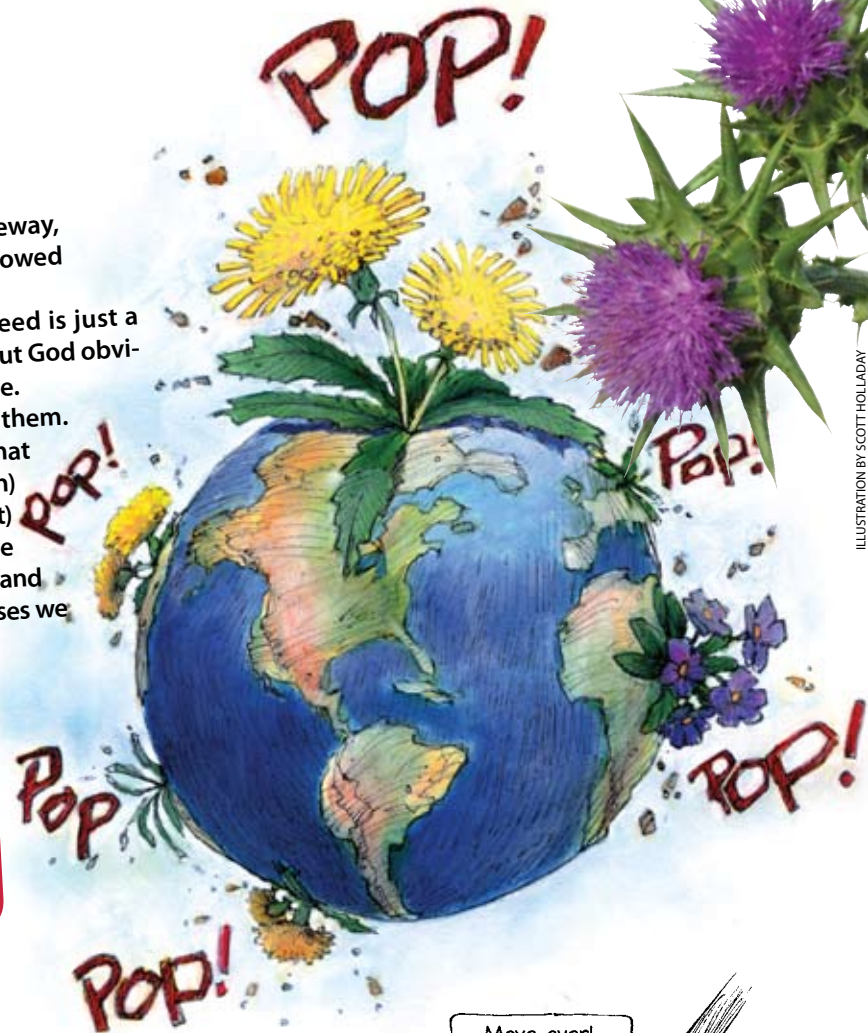


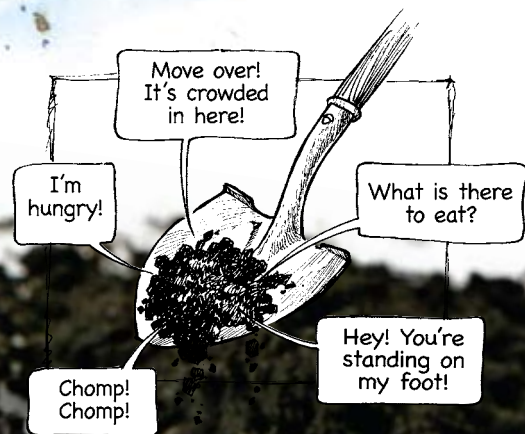
ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## The Scoop on Soil

Here are some cool facts about soil.

- **It's full of life.** There are more microbes (microscopic living things) in a tablespoon of soil than there are people on earth.
- **It recycles.** Those billions of microbes need to eat. So they chew apart anything natural that falls into their world. They break it back up into minerals that plants can use. Plants live only because soil recycles.
- **It takes time.** It takes about 500 years for one inch of good soil to form.

**CARE TIP:** Why not grow a small garden this summer? Set aside a part of your yard, or plant some things in a large pot. Dig in the dirt, pick your own food, and then recycle the plants back into the soil.







## A Little Something Extra

Here's a fact about sunlight: It contains all the colors of the rainbow, usually blended to form "white" light. But sometime those colors are separated by dust or water in the air. That's when we see rainbows, colored sunsets, and beautiful sunrises.

Here's a really cool fact: This scattering of colors isn't at all necessary for life on earth. It's an extra, a gift of beauty to us from our Creator.

**NO-CARE TIP:** Rainbows, sunsets, and sunrises need no care. Relax, enjoy them.

**TRY THIS:** Enjoy your own rainbow. Pour water into a flat container (like a cake pan). Place that in a sunny spot in the house. Take a mirror; hold it half-in and half-out of the water. Turn the mirror so that the part underwater catches the sunlight and reflects it onto a wall. Presto, a rainbow!



## Wonderful Water

Drop an ice cube into a glass of water and what happens to it? It pops to the top, doesn't it? That's because ice is lighter than liquid water, so it floats.

Most liquids shrink when they freeze. They drop to the bottom of wherever they are. Water is one of the few liquids that expands and becomes lighter-weight when it freezes.

Water can carry more substances than most liquids. Wherever it flows it carries minerals and nutrients in it.

Water can also carry more heat than most liquids can. So oceans pick up heat in tropical regions and carry it north, to colder sections of the world.

Now imagine an earth where water didn't shrink or carry heat and nutrients. Could we live there?

**CARE TIP:** Fresh water is precious. Never let it run straight from the faucet to the drain. Think about that when you're brushing your teeth, washing your face, filling a glass of water, rinsing dishes—whenever you turn on the faucet.

**TRY THIS:** Fill a bottle half-full of water. Put a mark at the water line. Then put the bottle in the freezer overnight. Look at it the next morning and you'll see how the water expanded. Then try the same experiment with cooking oil and see what happens. What's different?

## Our Space Blanket

It's going to be cold tonight. Do you want to sleep warmly? Then cover yourself with a nice, thick blanket to keep your body warm.

That is just what God did with Earth. He wrapped it in layers of air called *atmosphere*. That acts like a blanket. It keeps warm air near the earth at night. And it keeps dangerously strong sun rays away from the earth during the day.

Without our space blanket, we'd freeze at night and broil or vaporize by day. Nothing could live on earth without our space blanket, our atmosphere.

**CARE TIP:** Bike or walk everywhere you can, rather than asking an adult to drive you. Exhaust from cars pollutes the atmosphere.



Joanne DeJonge is a park ranger in northern Michigan.

## Point to Ponder

Now read Genesis 9:8-17, and thank God for rainbows, beauty, and an amazing creation.







## Getting a Job Faithfully in Tough Times

AN ESSENTIAL, GOD-FOCUSED STRATEGY THAT CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

**WHEN OUR RECENT BOOK** about resume-writing for college students came out, my co-author and I expected to hear from seniors and recent graduates worried about their job prospects. Instead, we immediately began receiving emails and letters from midlife job seekers who were changing careers or reentering the job market.

Thanks to those unexpected correspondents, I soon realized that the job-search problem is essentially the same for fresh graduates and older job seekers: how to persuade potential employers to interview them when they seem to lack career-specific experience. Moreover, I realized that the answer to this dilemma is identical for both groups: translating God-given *life experience* into job-specific *career potential*.

### The Whole You

My holistic view of career development focuses on transferring all of your life experience into employment potential. The “whole you” is not just your paid work experience, but your entire life

experience. It includes everything from volunteer activities to hobbies and family life. Moreover, the whole you includes “transferable” experiences from previous employment, even if on the surface the old and new jobs don’t seem related.

The three key categories to consider in your life experience are *skills* (what you can do), *knowledge* (what you know about), and *traits* (your qualities of character). Too often job seekers concentrate only on the specific skills they seem to lack—such as a particular technological skill. They fail to see that they might have the traits (for example, being a quick learner or being self-motivated) or knowledge (how people should relate to one another or how an organization works—or doesn’t work) that would convince an employer they can acquire new skills quickly and effectively without taking up a lot of coworkers’ time.

### God’s Preparation

God is always preparing followers for new tasks. As Paul puts it, we are “God’s workmanship” (literarily, God’s art or poetry), created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God has already prepared (Eph. 2:10). These good works are not just church or



# Where we've journeyed in life is crucial to knowing what good works we are being prepared to accomplish.

career tasks. They are our everyday actions, from speaking encouraging words to a colleague to writing an email to a relative. They even include unnoticed good works, such as silently praying for someone in need.

Receiving each day gratefully is itself a deeply good work that implicitly serves those around us. Cynical, unappreciative, critical people are a time-consuming, energy-zapping drain on others. Grateful friends and colleagues are a blessing. Which type of person would you rather work with?

God's providential sense of humor is evident in the inexplicable career changes and reversals that practically everyone knows firsthand. Jesus can call us to specific careers, but he first calls us to follow him faithfully wherever he leads us, preparing good works along the journey.

I ended up being a professor of communication after growing up in a deeply dysfunctional family that lacked helpful role models. I had no particular interest in or gift for communication. I lacked a vision for the occupational future that I would eventually inherit. Yet along the way I began seeing how even my challenging childhood was preparation. In fact, overcoming life's obstacles is among the best career preparations. God's future glory is often evident in our responses to current weaknesses, not just in our application of apparent strengths.

One of the best ways to discern God's unfolding will for our occupational lives is to consider how we have already been prepared for good works. What have you been doing over the past few years or even the past decade? What do those life experiences tell you about your potentially transferable skills, knowledge, and traits?

I encourage you to create a "Master list" of your 10 most life-shaping activities or experiences from the past 10 years. Again, don't limit the list to paid work. What has God been up to in your life? Which experiences or activities have given you the most insight into your skills, knowledge, and traits? List them. Then begin adding to each item on your list the specific kinds of skills, knowledge, and traits evident in that. Meditate on your experiences, asking God for insight. Be honest with yourself. Don't worry about what you want to do. Consider what God has already done.

## The Master's Work

A developed Master list will provide the evidence you'll need to support the items on your resume and the claims you make about yourself in interviews. Think of your Master list as a record of God's preparation, not just a journal of your life experiences. Some of the items might be too personal to include on a resume. Yet such personal entries, along with your other, more public ones, will together reveal to you much about your career potential.

One of the letters I received after the book came out was from a 50-something woman who had been out of the job market for 10 years while raising a family. She had recently written and circulated a resume without receiving a single response, let alone an interview.

When I glanced at her resume I immediately identified the problem. The resume was nothing more than a list of long-past

jobs along with her long-ago academic accomplishments. The resume gave the impression that she hadn't *lived* for the past decade! Indeed, she believed that she hadn't been doing anything that "counted" as legitimate experience.

After struggling with her Master list for a week, she had some amazing breakthroughs. She realized that she had been doing all kinds of organizational work for her family, neighborhood, and church. Without receiving any compensation, she had initiated and completed many short-term projects by using her communication skills to organize, equip, and support people. So she completely rewrote her resume to highlight volunteer experiences and added a summary at the top of the resume that captured the organizational skills, knowledge, and traits she discerned in her Master list.

In short, this seemingly inexperienced woman discovered that the Master had already been preparing her for particular kinds of organizational good works. Her whole attitude about herself—and about God's providential preparation—changed. She gained not only a compelling resume but considerably more self-confidence. With a bit more guidance, she learned how to write position-specific cover letters that linked her life experience to each position she applied for. She received callbacks to interview at the next three places she applied and was soon satisfactorily employed.

## Life Beyond Careers

One of my greatest joys is teaching students the fact that they'll always be more than their careers. In God's economy, careers come and go. Human plans change. Doors open and close. I still can't say for certain what I want to be when I grow up, even though I'm approaching 60. I don't want to reduce myself to any so-called *career*—a word that comes from the French and means "racetrack." Careerists are people running around a track in circles, typically so focused on the race that they don't know where they have already been.

Where we've journeyed in life is crucial to knowing what good works we are being prepared to accomplish. That's why it's so helpful to get off the track and consider the route we've already taken. God has been with us, forming our undisclosed futures. His works give us transferable value in the marketplace, regardless of whether we are college students, midlife career seekers, or retirees. ■



Quentin Schultze is Arthur H. DeKruyter Chair in Faith and Communication at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He is the co-author of *How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes and Cover Letters* (Edenridge Press).

## The Hunger Games: Not Just Child's Play

**COMBINING THE THEMES** of child soldiers with a reality show, author Suzanne Collins created a young adult trilogy that struck gold—and a nerve. In an NPR interview, Collins said she was flipping channels one day and came away with an idea: gladiators.

*The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay* (Scholastic) feature teen heroine Katniss Everdeen, who lives in a future North America, now called Panem, divided into districts and ruled by the sinister Capitol. As a reminder of an unsuccessful rebellion, the Capitol demands that each district send two “tributes,” a boy and a girl, to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a survivalist fight to the death that is also a reality show broadcast across the districts.

These tight, tense novels have moral depth. The *Hunger Games* trilogy is about the pain of being manipulated, the horror of war, and the horrible choices one is forced to make in such situations, where few are innocent.

The contestants’ suffering may constitute entertainment for the Capitol viewers, but not for the reader. Through Katniss’s eyes, it is evident that life is sacred. Other themes that make the books ripe for discussion include the plight of oppressed people and injustice toward the poor in a consumer society. The cost of survival is also apparent. Given the child soldiers who provided the author’s

*The Hunger Games* leaves us with deep questions and no easy answers.



inspiration, this makes perfect sense and is made painfully clear to the reader.

Dystopian young adult novels are on the rise. Some of the best include Lois Lowry’s Newbery-winning *The Giver* (Delacorte) and *Sharp North* by Patrick Cave (Atheneum). A new novel, *Matched* (Dutton), by Ally Condie, may be the start of the next popular trilogy (read a review at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)).

Global warming, uncertain economic conditions, and instability around the world have entered the consciousness of our children and the literature that they consume.

The *Hunger Games* trilogy is grim, but it does offer hope and moments of beauty. The hope is found wholly within the power of human beings. As a parent, I’d like to see the hope and beauty show up a bit earlier or in larger doses for my child. Contrarily, as a reader myself, I feel that more hope and beauty would just negate the horror that the characters experience. And let’s not delude ourselves—there are horrors, as well as beauty, everywhere.

Our response? Can we ignore injustice while still appreciating the world’s beauty? And can we constantly view horror, detached and safe, without becoming jaded to what it really is?

*The Hunger Games* leave us with deep questions and no easy answers. Like many dystopian novels, there is no sense of God. Though these and other books are true to the fact that we do not know what the future holds, it is important that we remind young readers who holds the future. ■



**Kristy Quist** is Tuned In editor for *The Banner* and a member of Neland Ave. CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. Her enthusiasm for fiction is rubbing off on her three children.



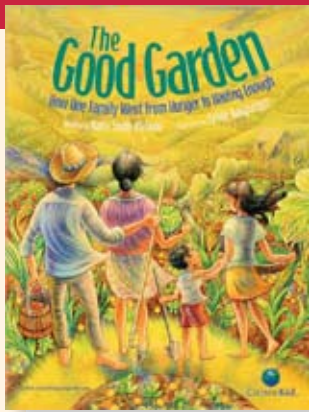
### Gloria

by **Nidarosdomens Jentekor**  
reviewed by **Randall Engle**

You might already own Vivaldi’s *Gloria* on CD. But replace whatever recording you own with this one. Unlike most past recordings, Jentekor does away with overworked tempi and uses a chorus and instrumentalists of Vivaldi’s intention. Further, this disc includes two *introduzione* (introductory motets) that Vivaldi meant to be sung before the *Gloria*. The result is like hearing angels singing “Glory to God in the highest . . .” over the fields at Bethlehem for the first time. Glorious indeed. Available at [spinningdogrecords.com](http://spinningdogrecords.com).







## The Good Garden: How One Family Went From Hunger to Having Enough

by **Katie Smith Milway**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Hunger is a constant threat to young Maria Luz and her Honduran community. Scarce rains, insects, depleted soil, and greedy middlemen often make food security an unattainable dream. However, change occurs when a new teacher (a character based on the life of Honduran teacher Don Elias Sanchez) arrives in the community. He introduces Maria Luz and her classmates to farming practices that eventually produce good crops and “a feeling of hope spreading from garden to garden.” Vivid illustrations highlight the narrative’s hopeful message. Ages 8-12. (Kids Can Press)

## The Long Surrender

by **Over the Rhine**  
reviewed by **Allison Backous**

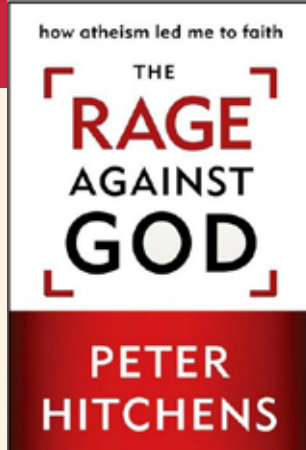
Fans of Over the Rhine will hear *The Long Surrender* and agree that it is one of their top albums. Rich and mournful, it will accompany you through suffering and joy, and it will welcome you into beauty. It will welcome you because, when you hear their words, you know that Over the Rhine has been where you are. “All my favorite people are broken,” they sing, “believe me, my heart should know.” (Great Speckled Dog)



## The King’s Speech

reviewed by **Josh Larsen**

This historical drama, which follows England’s King George VI (Colin Firth) and his struggle with a speech impediment, is genial and uplifting—and misleadingly rated R. The scene in which the King literally curses the speech impediment that has plagued him most of his life is humorous rather than vulgar, and in line with the picture’s theme of personal redemption. With the help of an unconventional therapist (Geoffrey Rush), King George overcomes his stutter in time for the most important speech of his life. Out on DVD this month. (Weinstein)



## The Rage Against God: How Atheism Led Me to Faith

by **Peter Hitchens**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

At a young age, Peter Hitchens, brother of prominent atheist Christopher Hitchens, burned his Bible and repudiated Christianity, later becoming a Trotskyist. While serving as a journalist in Moscow, Hitchens witnessed the spiritual bankruptcy of an atheistic state that tried to destroy Christianity. Troubled and disillusioned, Hitchens eventually returned to Christianity. *The Rage Against God*—Hitchens’ successful attempt to debate religion with his brother—gives a somber warning to Christians in the West, especially his native Britain, to guard and nourish their spiritual heritage. (Zondervan)

## THE LOWDOWN



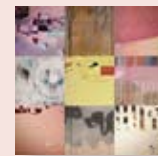
**Queen Karen:** Karen Kingsbury, Christian fiction fans’ favorite author, begins her new

Bailey Flanigan series of novels with the just-released *Leaving*. (Zondervan)



**Loving Ways:** The small, daily interactions between

mother and child are the subject of *The Ways I Will Love You*, a sweet board book by Rachel Boehm. (Orca)



**Modern Prayer:** Derek Webb’s latest, *Feed-*

*back*, an “instrumental electronic album based on the Lord’s Prayer,” becomes widely available this month. (INO Records)



**Calming Fears:** The audio program *Turnaround* is a valuable tool for parents who want to help their children deal with anxious thoughts and feelings. Includes CDs, a workbook, and a parent guide. Find it at [www.myanxiouschild.com](http://www.myanxiouschild.com).

Check [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for links to find out more about these titles.



BY ALISON BACKOUS

# Liz Lemon in the Pew

We need to stop viewing **singleness** as a **"problem"** to be fixed.





**I****N THE NBC PROGRAM** *30 Rock*, the character Liz Lemon bears a life marked by the “problem” of singleness. Now in middle age, Liz has had a hard time finding a workable romance and spends the show bouncing between various relationships. In one episode, Liz proclaims to her boss, Jack Donaghy, that she has better things to do than worry about relationships. “I would think,” Jack responds, “that the single woman’s biggest worry would be choking to death in her apartment.”

Jack’s response represents a conventional attitude toward single people, men and women, of all ages: their singleness is a problem, one that they should spend all their time and energy to fix. At the same time, contemporary culture encourages singles to party it up or live for work or, in Liz Lemon’s case, try to “have it all.”

But when it comes to involvement in the church, singles face even more misleading, complex, and painful issues.

Singles often carry their own particular set of wounds: personal loneliness and disappointment; cultural misunderstanding, along with assumed differences between men and women; hurtful comments by family members and friends who expect their single loved ones to marry by a certain age. And Christian culture has not done much to affirm the lives of singles beyond telling them that if they pray hard enough God will provide a spouse.

As disciples of Jesus and as Reformed believers, however, we have an obligation to view singleness through a different lens. Instead of patronizing people who are single, we need to affirm them as individuals with gifts and stories. And as single people, instead of harboring bitterness or anger, we should name our disappointments as singles and look to

live into the community of the church. By naming the difficulties single people face, we can recover a more honest, authentic way of living with each other as sisters and brothers in the family of God, rather than seeing unmarried people as “problems” to fix.

### **Single for Many Reasons**

As someone who has struggled with singleness, I have found it frustrating to hear comments from family members who think that if I just “put myself out there” my “problem” will be solved. “We just want you to be happy,” they say. But people do not find themselves single just because they are not “putting themselves out there.”

People of all ages are single for a variety of reasons. Some of us are single because our life circumstances keep us

you will see a wide range of Christian writers who speak about singleness and relationships, and about our roles as men and women. Books like *Captivating* and *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* were offered to me when I was in high school and were meant to help answer my questions about not only relationships, but my identity as a Christian. When I didn’t find myself in these books, I questioned God’s plan for me: was it sinful for me to desire a relationship? If I wanted a career, did that mean that I would never get married? Was being “rescued” really what I wanted from a man, as John and Stasi Eldridge told me? And what was I supposed to do with this prayer from writer Leslie Ludy, whose book *Sacred Singleness* opens with “Lord, I’d love to be married, but until that day comes . . . please be the Husband of my heart”?

## **Christian culture has not done much to affirm the lives of singles.**

from having a romantic relationship: we are in school or caring for dependent family members or have jobs that require a high degree of time and attention. Other people choose to be single, enjoying their independence and using their free time for service and ministry. Some Christians find themselves single after the loss of a marriage or significant relationship. Some have experienced sexual trauma and are recovering from abuse or violence. And, more often than not, many are single for no discernible reason—no relationship has worked or come along. We do not know why, and we carry disappointment and frustration.

### **An Unhelpful Message**

The response to singleness within the church is often isolating, unhelpful, and patronizing. Take a look at the Christian book section at Barnes and Noble, and

While there is a rich tradition within Scripture and Christian theology that describes our relationship with God in love language (the Song of Songs, for one), that prayer hit me the wrong way—and still does. God presents himself as the heavenly bridegroom, but to appropriate God as the substitute “Husband of my heart” is problematic. Why would God’s love come *only* in the form of a spouse? What about the images of Christ as my brother and the church as the *family* of God’s people? And why was I being told to look at God as my husband, while the books offered for men (such as *Wild at Heart*) told them to be like warriors, just as God is a warrior for their souls?

These books claim a particular story about God’s relationship with us: God communicates his love to us primarily through the image of romantic relationships, and the best way to understand »

# What would happen if **we** reached out to others in terms of their **gifts** instead of their **marital** status?

God's love for us is through the coming of romantic relationships in our own lives. If we are patient enough women or warrior-like men, we will find ourselves in relationships that bless us according to these particular visions of biblical manhood and womanhood.

These books offer a vision of relationships and discipleship that seems based more on popular culture than on the story of Scripture, and that proclaims a certain kind of prosperity gospel: if you pray long and hard enough, God will grant you a spouse, either the warrior ready to steal your heart or the blushing bride, waiting for you to "reclaim her beauty."

While many of my students find deep value in these books, I question how the books will help them—along with my sisters and brothers in Christ who carry questions about singleness and identity—live faithfully into their lives. What will my male students do if the image of a warrior disturbs them? What about the single women I know who live bravely and independently and who do not want to be rescued but to have a companion?

Authors Christine Colon and Bonnie Field, who are well-acquainted with singleness, stress that singles need a different message: "We need a message that will address the complex realities of our situations," they write, "but too often [singles] are at best ignored or patronized and at worse ridiculed or made to feel inferior or sinful" (*Singled Out*, Brazos Press, 2009).

## A Broader Identity

As Reformed believers, we stand on a different kind of identity, one based on God's big, ongoing story of creation, fall, and redemption. We believe that God made both men and women good and that we carry God's image equally. We believe that we are broken by sin and

that our interactions with each other, romantic and otherwise, bear that brokenness. We believe that through Christ's redemptive work we are not only redeemed but made new. And we see the church as a picture of that newness, a growing glimpse of the coming kingdom, where we will truly know who the Spirit remakes us to be in Christ: "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female . . ." (Gal. 3:28).

Our Christian identity affirms both singleness and marriage, and that truth should transform our ideas about relationships, for we are all one in Christ.

Yet our practices do not reflect that truth. We preach sermons whose only metaphors are about marriage. We create singles groups focused on pairing up a congregation's unmarried adults, or we treat singles like they are not fully grown, even if they have mortgages and responsibilities. We pressure our single family members and friends and even criticize them for not having romantic relationships.

The damaging practices go both ways. Those of us who are single and hurt by that can isolate ourselves from those who are married, further separating ourselves from community. We can nurse our disappointments into bitterness, rejecting friendship with married people because they "don't understand"—forgetting that marriage also carries its own heartaches and loneliness. All of us proclaim the truth of our identity, but we do not know how to live it out, and we risk living an inauthentic, inhospitable Christian life together.

Instead of trying to fix the "problem" of singleness, instead of prescribing formulas or hurling insults, let's look at the church for what it is supposed to be: a place to wait and work together for

God's kingdom. Henri Nouwen described it this way:

Christian community is the place where we keep the flame alive among us and take it seriously so that it can grow and become stronger in us. Waiting together, nurturing what has already begun, expecting its fulfillment—that is the meaning of marriage, friendship, community, and the Christian life.

What would happen if we reached out to others in terms of their gifts instead of their marital status? What if our church programs were more intergenerational, mixing single 30-somethings with high schoolers, single 20-somethings with older folks? What if singles groups focused less on their separateness and more on service and shared interests? What if, instead of simply hanging out with people who share our marital status, we made friends the way our Lord did, associating with many kinds of people, seeking to relate to others as human beings rather than stereotypes? What if both marriage and singleness and the other relationships that mark our lives are all ways to live as disciples, and we are called to share in those relationships together?

Each of us has a unique way to live into relationships; there is no specific formula or cookie-cutter approach. God calls his disciples to be imaginative, reaching out in ways that are gracious and original, repenting of harsh words and attitudes, caring for and enfolding each other not according to marital status but as sisters and brothers in God's family.

Rather than trying to fix the "problem" of singleness, we should seek ways to address each other's hurts and to kindle the flame of God's love and truth among us, warmly welcoming everyone into the family of God. ■



**Allison Backous** teaches at Kuyper College in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church. For further reading, she recommends Albert Y. Hsu's book *Singles at the Crossroads: A Fresh Perspective on Christian Singleness* (IVP Books, 1997).



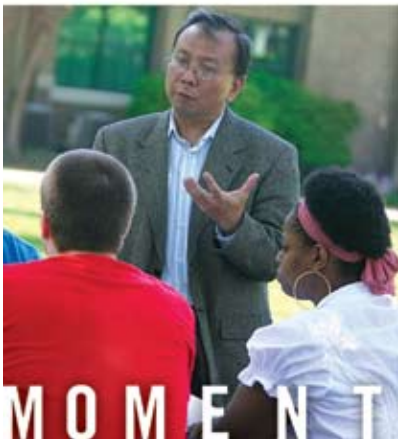


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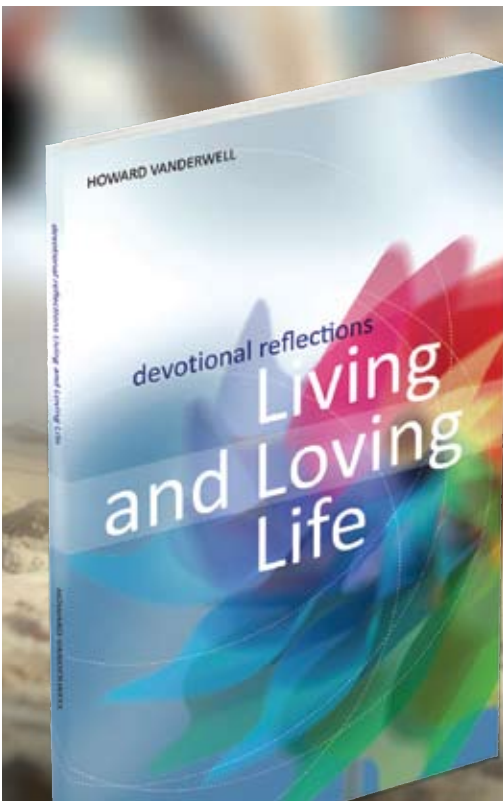
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## Why Infant Baptism?

**SOME YEARS AGO**, while I was visiting a church for a baby dedication, a friend asked me, “Why do we only dedicate babies in this church and not baptize them? What’d be the difference if we just went ahead and baptized them?”

I found his question interesting, since his church believes only in adult baptism, also known as believer’s baptism.

I told him that really, on the surface of things, many Christians believe there isn’t all that much of a difference—though Reformed believers would be quick to point out that dedication focuses more on the action of Christian *parents*, while baptism highlights *God’s* action in the infant’s life.

Yet the question needs to be asked: Why *infant* baptism, when so many churches today believe in adult or believer’s baptism *only*?

The latter belief is actually a relatively new phenomenon in the history of Christianity, becoming much more prominent in the past 50 to 100 years. Even more significantly, it wasn’t until the Reformation that the question of “adult or believer’s baptism only” surfaced in any kind of significant way in the history of the church.

In the early centuries of Christianity, a few groups did practice various forms of adult or believer’s baptism only. But they were, for the most part, small and usually heretical. Throughout church history (including today), the vast majority of Christians have practiced infant baptism along with adult/believer’s baptism.

John Calvin, one of the leading personalities of the Reformation, made an interesting statement in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* about why the church worldwide had long practiced infant baptism. The main reason, he explained, was because it could be traced back as a historic practice and teaching to the earliest days of Christianity. (He wrote this in response to the Anabaptist or adult/believer’s-baptism-only movement of his time that was challenging the biblical basis for infant baptism.)

Calvin makes a good point. Until the time of the Reformation, there were never any questions historically concerning the reliability of the practice of infant baptism. That’s significant because in the first 400 years of the church’s existence, there were many, many theological disputes over many, many esoteric and philosophical issues, great and small. Yet the legitimacy of infant baptism was never seriously questioned at any church synod or council.

## Baptism highlights

**God's action**

in the infant's life.

### Is It Biblical?

So is infant baptism biblical?

I believe there is a biblical basis to both teach it and practice it. Twice in Acts 16 we read of entire households being baptized in the city of Philippi. First a businesswoman named Lydia becomes a believer and has her entire household baptized, then a Philippian jailor does the same. The implication here is that children and infants were in all likelihood baptized along with the adults in these households.

On what basis may we conclude that? We may do so mainly because these stories parallel exactly what the Old Testament patriarch Abraham did back in the book of Genesis concerning circumcision. Abraham obediently circumcised all the males born in his household, slave and free, as God commanded him to do as a sign of the covenant God had made with him (Gen. 17:23-27).

We also know from Leviticus 12:3 that, as descendants of Abraham, the Hebrew people were to circumcise infant boys “on the eighth day.”

The inference here, then, is that Abraham circumcised all the males of his own household—adults, children, and infants. History tells us that the early church did exactly the same thing with baptism because it saw water baptism as the sign of God’s new covenant with us (through Jesus’ saving work), replacing physical circumcision as a sign of the Old Testament covenant. Therefore, baptizing infants would be a logical church practice.

In Colossians 2:11-12, the apostle Paul explains how water baptism replaces circumcision: “In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”



There is, of course, one important difference in water baptism replacing circumcision as a sign of the covenant between God and humanity: while circumcision was done only to males, water baptism is for everyone.

Galatians 3:26-29 speaks to this: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

In the two Scripture texts above, then, the apostle Paul clearly unites the two covenant signs.

You may still ask, “Isn’t there any biblical text in the New Testament that specifically says *infants* were baptized?”

The honest answer is no.

Yet letters written in the first few centuries of Christian history clearly say that infant baptism was practiced in the church—and very early on. Letters from second- and third-generation church leaders of the apostles of Jesus mention infant baptism being practiced in the church of their day and even before.

In other words, we should have every confidence that these early church leaders were carefully following the teachings and practices laid down for them by the apostles of Jesus themselves, infant baptism included. ■ **WEB Q'S**



**Rob Braun** is a salesman, a freelance writer, and a member and ministry associate of Bethel CRC, Princeton, Minn.

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**Denominational and Classical Announcements**

**National Day of Prayer**

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 5. The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969). "Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow 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

**Admitted into the Ministry**

It is with thankfulness that the Council of Wallaceburg CRC announces the ordination of **REV. JOSH TUININGA** to the office of Minister of the Word. The ordination service took place Friday, February 11, 2011.

**CANDIDATE GEORGE DEN OUDSTEN** was examined by Classis Yellowstone on Friday, January 21, 2011 for the Ministry of the Word

and Sacraments in the Christian Reformed Church. He successfully sustained his examination, and his ordination was held on January 23, 2011 at Gallatin Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church, Bozeman, MT. May our loving heavenly Father continue to embrace and equip George in his lifelong journey of service within the Church.

Del VanDenBerg, Stated Clerk, Classis Yellowstone.

**Eligible for Call**

**WE ARE PLEASED** to announce that Thomas S. Vander Ploeg has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

**Meetings of Classis**

**CLASSIS ZEELAND WILL** meet on Thursday, May 19, 2011, 4PM, at the Beaverdam CRC. Agenda deadline is April 7.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

**Congregational Announcements**

**Church's 125th Anniversary**

**1ST CRC OF FULTON, IL** is celebrating it's 125th anniversary. We have set June 19-26, 2011 as our week of celebration. We would like to extend an invitation to all former members to join us as we celebrate. Those planning to attend or for more information contact the church office at 815-589-3790 or e-mail [firstcrcfulton@live.com](mailto:firstcrcfulton@live.com).

**Church's 100th Anniversary**

**100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RIVER** The River Christian Reformed Church of Redlands, CA is celebrating 100 years of Christian Reformed presence in Redlands. First CRC was organized on May 11, 1911. We plan to celebrate that occasion as well as God's faithfulness to his people over the years since on Sunday, May 15 with an extended worship service in the morning led by our Pastor Scott Elgersma followed by a potluck meal. We would like to extend an invitation to all former members and pastors to join us for these events. An anniversary booklet and a DVD will be available. Information on activities and order information will be posted on our website: [www.theivercrc.com](http://www.theivercrc.com) or contact the church office: 909-798-2221. Email: [frontdesk@therivercrc.com](mailto:frontdesk@therivercrc.com)

**Church's 50th Anniversary**

**FAITH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP** of Walnut Creek, CA, is celebrating 50 years of God's grace and faithfulness on July 30-31, 2011. We invite friends and past members to attend. For more information, visit [50years.faithfellowship.com](http://50years.faithfellowship.com).

**Church's 25th Anniversary**

**NEW LIFE CRC** of Abbotsford, BC is celebrating 25 years of 'Touching Lives with the Transforming Love of Jesus' on May 28 & 29, 2011. We invite friends and past members to attend. For more information visit [www.newlifecrc.ca](http://www.newlifecrc.ca).

**FIRST CROWN POINT CRC** of Crown Point, IN. will celebrate its 50th Anniversary May 1, 2011. Open House 2:30p.m. Service at 5:00p.m.

**General**

**NEW CHURCH AT SENIORS HOME** In what may be a historic moment for our denomination Heritage Fellowship Church in Brampton, Ontario plans to celebrate its organization within the CRC as an independent

congregation of seniors, within Holland Christian Homes. With an evening of celebration on Friday, April 8, 2011 beginning at 7:00 pm, and with a special service of worship at 10:00 am. on Sunday, April 10 we hope to express our thanks to God, and seek his blessing. We are also grateful for our local sister congregations for their help and encouragement on our journey. We invite you to attend or send best wishes. Heritage Hall @HCH, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, Ontario L6Y 5A7, [hfcchurch@hch.ca](mailto:hfcchurch@hch.ca)

**Announcements**

**GUELPH COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**, formerly known as John Calvin Christian School, is celebrating 50 years of nurturing, educating and inspiring children. All former staff and students are invited to attend celebration festivities on April 16, 2011. For more information please contact us by phone 519-824-8860 or email [50celebrations@guelphccs.ca](mailto:50celebrations@guelphccs.ca) Check us out on the web <http://www.guelphccs.ca/50th.html>.

**SWIM CAMP AT CALVIN** Come spend a week this summer in the new Venema Aquatic Center on the campus of Calvin College. Coach Gelderloos invites swimmers of all abilities to come learn from the best. Calvin offers two opportunities, including a comprehensive camp for ages 10-18 that focuses on all 4 competitive strokes and an elite sprint camp that brings in top sprint coaches from around the country. Both camps also have opportunities to talk about how to be a successful athlete from a Christian Reformed Perspective. For more information and registration, go to [www.tpscamps.com](http://www.tpscamps.com).

**Birthdays**

**100th Birthday**



**LUERAN JANE (MANNI) NEWHOF**, 4320 Kalamazoo Ave SE, Kentwood, MI 49508, celebrates her 100th birthday on April 19. Children are Karla Randle, Ned (Rinda) Newhof, Dale Newhof (deceased). There are 14 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grand

children. A woman that fears the Lord is to be praised.

**MARCUS VAN WYCK**, 1620 West G Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49009, will celebrate his 100th birthday April 13. His children and their families thank God for his faith and Christian example, and we are grateful for the sharp mind and sense of humor he still enjoys.

**99th birthday**

**MARTHA SMITH** 3400 Wilson Ave, Grandville, MI 49418 will celebrate her 99th birthday on April 25, 2011 with an open house in her honor from 2-4 pm on April 23 at Brookcrest. Love and congratulations from her friends and family - daughters Ann (Don) Herring, Kathy(Bernie) De Young, 4 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness in her life.

**95th Birthday**

**CORNELIA (DEKKER) GABRIELSE** will be celebrating her 95th birthday on May 4. Join her family in congratulating her with a note or card sent to 610 Mark Ave, Suite 627, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085. Her children are Ed and Jane, Dave and Judy, and Bern and Carol. She

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has 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Praise God for her love and faithfulness to Christ.

**JEANETTE (SCHEMPER)** Vander Wal Meninga, 1001 Northfield Ct, Modesto, CA 95350, celebrated her 95th birthday on March 1, 2011. We are thankful to God for his faithfulness and blessings in her life.

**HENRIETTA WOLTJER** 500 West Main #14, Zeeland MI. 49464 celebrates her 95th birthday on April 6. Her children, Jean Woltjer, Pauline & Dick Hengst, Anne & Bob Drnek, Betty & Glenn Kotman, Janie & Dick Venema, 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren. To God be the glory.

#### 90th Birthday

**LOIS (VEENSTRA) BRINK** celebrates her 90th birthday on April 16. Wife of the late Peter L. Brink. Her family is thankful for her love for Jesus and her life of Christian service. 12855 Poplar Ave, Grant, MI 49327

**LOIS G. DE BOE**, 25920 Elm St., Olmsted Falls, Ohio 44138, will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 2, 2011. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are thankful for God's faithfulness and blessings. Happy Birthday - We love you!

**JOYCE DYKSTRA** (Van Driel), 3660 Portman Ln. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508, celebrates her 90th birthday April 11. Her children Gayle & Dale, Deborah & Al, Brent & Judy, & Craig, 7 grandchildren give thanks to God for her good health and example of love and faith.

**PEGGY KNOLL** of 2105 Raybrook Dr. S. E. Apt 5035, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 23. Her husband Arnold preceded her in death. Her children Bob and Ruth, Pat and John Timmerman, Randy and Marijo, 10 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren thank God for her health and for His faithfulness to her. Her loving Christian example and faith continue to radiate from her life.

**MARTHA LERCHE (RUSTHOVEN)**, 3737 Highland Ave. #208, Downers Grove, IL 60515, celebrates her 90th birthday on 4/3/11. Husband Robert, children: Bob and Nancy (Brian), Ken and Jan Tameling (James and Christine Breuker), Great-grandchild Anna Breuker. We give thanks to God for her and the blessing she is to our family.

**MATTHEW M. PAUL** 1015 Heather Circle #4, Mt. Vernon, WA 98273 celebrates his 90th birthday on April 12. We love you; God bless you Dad and Grandpa!

**SIK POSTMA** 10 Baldwin Dr, Sussex, NJ, 07461 celebrated his 90th birthday on March 25. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren give thanks to God for his love and long life.

**ALVIN STARKENBURG** 515 Samara Ave #4, Volga, SD 57071 will be 90 on April 17. Open house April 10 (2-4), Volga Community Ctr., 109 Samara Av. Happy birthday from 5 children, 14 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren!

**LOUISE A. M. VAN LONKHUYZEN** (Clousing), 15233 S. 73rd Ct., Orland Park, IL 60462, will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 1. Wife of the late Calvin G. A. Van Lonkhuyzen. Her children Curtis Van Lonkhuyzen (celebrating in Glory), Diane (Thomas) Teune, Robert (Lisa) Van Lonkhuyzen, Sandra (Gerald) Swets, Nancy (Michael) Rhodes, 17 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren give praise and thanks to God for her faith and the blessing she is to our family. Romans 8:28

## Anniversaries

#### 70th Anniversary

**HOEKEMA** Joe & Alice, 905 Aaron Dr #235, Lynden, WA 98264, celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary Apr 10, 2011. Thanking God for His faithfulness: Truman & Eileen Sterk, Paul & Cheryl Roorda, Percy & Lois Hoekema, Brent & Becky Hoekema, 15 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

#### 65th Anniversary

**HOGAN**, Wilmer & Marie (VanLoenen), 170 Jamestown Lane #1102, Lincolnshire, IL 60069, will celebrate 65 years of marriage on April 18. Thanking God with them are their children, Leon (Linda), New Jersey; and Lauren (Joyce), Illinois; and two grandchildren, Brett and Saman-

tha, Illinois. Wilmer & Marie are faithful members of the Luctor Christian Reformed Church in Kansas.

**TIMMER** Gerrit & Fannie (nee Jager) of Wayland, MI will celebrate their 66th wedding anniversary on Mar. 30 D. V. with our family. Jay & Cheryl Seadorf, Paul & Connie Dungey, Douglas & Carol Tiemeyer, and Cindy and Winn Jewett. 25 grandchildren (1 deceased); 14 great-grandchildren (1 deceased)

**VAN DYKEN** Seymour and Barbara M. (Rodenhous), 3604 E. Fulton St. #344, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on March 30, 2011. We thank God for the blessed life we have had thus far.

## Church Positions Announcements

**BRIDGEWOOD CHURCH** of Savage, MN is seeking a full time pastor. We are looking to grow through outreach and community missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical teaching and passionate preaching that is relevant to both established believers and 'seekers'. Bridgewood Church - People changed by the love of Christ creating a ripple effect in our community. - Check us out at [www. Bridgewood.org!](http://www.Bridgewood.org)

**CORNERSTONE CRC** of Chilliwack, BC is seeking a Senior Pastor to lead our staff and congregation. Contact [search@cornerstonecra.ca](mailto:search@cornerstonecra.ca) ([www.cornerstonecra.ca](http://www.cornerstonecra.ca))

**OUTREACH DIRECTOR** Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, AB is seeking a part-time Outreach Director. Interested candidates should visit [www.inglewoodcra.org](http://www.inglewoodcra.org) for details.

**LAKEVIEW CRC** by Valentine, NE seeks a senior pastor to lead our congregation. Contact Don at 605-429-3374; Vern at 605-429-3315 or [mlogterm@esu17.org](mailto:mlogterm@esu17.org)

**NEW JERSEY:** Covenant CRC is seeking a pastor to lead us during our next chapter. We are located in suburban North Jersey, a largely un-churched area. We are evangelistic and have an influential youth ministry in our community. We are blended in worship style and desire strong preaching and teaching. Please contact Dan Steenstra at [dan@scnorthjersey.com](mailto:dan@scnorthjersey.com) and check out our website at [www.covcra.org](http://www.covcra.org) if you are interested in this unique opportunity.

**BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED** Church in Zeeland, MI is seeking a new pastor. For more information or to send a resume, contact Cork Steenwyk at [steenwyk@charter.net](mailto:steenwyk@charter.net)

**YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER** The American Protestant Church of The Hague in the Netherlands is seeking a gospel driven, energetic, person with superb relational skills and with vision and motivation to lead and oversee our Children and Youth Ministries. This person will work within a diverse multicultural community presenting the gospel and nurturing faith of children from pre-school to high school. To apply, send a letter of introduction and resume to [APCHyouthcall@gmail.com](mailto:APCHyouthcall@gmail.com). Candidates must have a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited College or University and a minimum of three years of youth and children's ministry in a primary leadership role. International experience preferred.

**MUSIC COORDINATOR** Ebenezer CRC in Trenton, Ontario. We are seeking a gifted musician and leader to direct our music ministries. A position description and contact info can be found at [www.ebenezercra.ca](http://www.ebenezercra.ca).

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES** The CRC of Williamsburg, Ontario, is seeking a full time director to develop and coordinate a program for youth and young adults, ages 14-29, focusing on equipping them to be faithful disciples of Christ. For more information or to submit a resume, please e-mail: [mtgkids3@gmail.com](mailto:mtgkids3@gmail.com), before April 30

**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. Iowa State is home to 25,000 students including many internationals and is a large part of the Ames community. Is God calling you to join us in bringing the gospel

**YONKER** Wendell and Dorothy, 12447 S. Natchez, Palos Heights, IL 60463, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on March 8. Their children (Cathy and Dave Larsen, Wendy and Eric Van Vugt, and Tom and Judy Yonker) nine grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren rejoice in Dad and Mom's example of faith and joyful living, and praise God for his faithfulness to them.

#### 60th Anniversary

**BERKENPAS** Willard & Grace (Groothuis) 1781 Lisa Dr. SW, Byron Center, MI 49315, celebrated their 60th anniversary March 15, 2011. Congratulations and love from your family: Rob & Pat, Steve & Laura, Bill & Anola, Pete & Marci, 12 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness!

to these future leaders? Send resume and letter of interest to Rev. Tom Niehof at [AmesTCRC@aol.com](mailto:AmesTCRC@aol.com).

**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP** Georgetown CRC in Hudsonville MI is seeking candidates for this thirty hour per week position. For more information or to send resume, contact Preston Kallemeyn at [search@georgetowncra.org](mailto:search@georgetowncra.org)

**MINISTRY COORDINATOR**- Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Woodstock, Ontario is seeking to hire a full time Ministry Coordinator with an emphasis on youth. Maranatha is a growing church of about 500 members including many young families. We are blessed to worship and minister in a new facility and are learning to embrace the changes necessary to make us culturally current. Our mission is "Helping people grow in Jesus Christ by celebrating God's grace". Our friendly and inviting environment is one that embraces potential members and stimulates current members in all areas of ministry. We are seeking an individual with a strong commitment to the Reformed faith, and who is able to nurture healthy relationships with people of all ages. Want to know more? Interested applicants should contact the Ministry Coordinator Search Committee at [mcsearchcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mcsearchcommittee@gmail.com). The application deadline is May 31st, 2011 with the start date being September 2011.

**PASTOR** Wayland Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Interested men should send their resume to [office@waylandcra.org](mailto:office@waylandcra.org) or 303 E. Elm, Wayland, MI 49348

**PASTOR** Chandler CRC in SW Mn would like to find a bilingual minister who can serve as a pastor to our 45 family congregation while leading us in our efforts to reach out to the growing Hispanic community around us. Contact Al Vis (507)677-2232 or Ivan Vogel ([Ivan75vogel@yahoo.com](mailto:Ivan75vogel@yahoo.com))

**YOUTH DIRECTOR**, the congregation of the Charlottetown CRC in Prince Edward Island, Canada is prayerfully seeking a full-time Youth Director who is spiritually committed to cultivating the relationship between our youth and Christ and to those around us. Position available August 1st. Experience and training with youth necessary. For more information, or to submit a resume contact Alan McIsaac at (902) 569-3656 or [jamicisaac@assembly.pe.ca](mailto:jamicisaac@assembly.pe.ca). Website: [www.charlottetowncra.org](http://www.charlottetowncra.org).

**YOUTH PASTOR** Lindsay CRC, Ont. is looking for a part-time candidate with formal training in Youth Ministry and a passion to walk with youth on their spiritual journeys. Please contact Rob Hoogsteen at 1-705-799-3223 or [rmhoogsteen@i-zoom.net](mailto:rmhoogsteen@i-zoom.net)

**CASCADE FELLOWSHIP** Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI, is seeking an un-ordained or ordained person to fill a full-time position of Executive Pastor. This person will report to the Lead Pastor. Job description will include supervision of the un-ordained staff; responsibility for the day to day operations; supervision of the educational programs; strategic leadership in outreach and evangelism; participation in worship services; oversight of the facility's usage and policies; and the monitoring of budgetary expenditures. For a more complete job description, visit our web site: [www.crcra.org](http://www.crcra.org). Submit letters of interest, applications, and resumes to [executivepastorsearch@crcra.org](mailto:executivepastorsearch@crcra.org). For inquiries, call Jim Van Dyk (616) 949-4342.

**DE WIT**, Albert & Alice, #206, 4512 52 Ave Red Deer, AB T4N 7B9 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on March 8, 2011. Their children & grandchildren praise and thank God for the unconditional love that they share.

**50th Anniversary**

**BOSS** John and Sharon (Van Dyke) celebrated their 50th anniversary on March 24. We thank God for the gift of their love to each other and to us! Sandy & Bill (Tony & Nick); Susan & Ken (Sam & Sally); Jim & Joan (Matthew & William); Bob & Diane (Kayla, Kinsey, Brendan & Steven); Tom & Francie (Andy, Luke & Allie); Karen & Ken (Anna & Sarah)

**KUIPERS** Richard and Carol (Op'tHof), 2300 Raybrook SE #102, Grand Rapids, MI, rejoice in 50 years of marriage on April 8th. We thank God for his faithfulness and for our children, Jennifer, Jason & Shelley, and grandchildren, Justin, Natalie and Mark.

**Obituaries**

**BUIKEMA**, Alice, nee Hoekstra, 95, Jan 19, 2011, 9616 Mozart Ave, Evergreen Park, IL 60805. Survived by daughter Karen. Preceded in death by husband Robert and daughter Nancy. Sister of George, the late Gertrude Bruinius VanderVeen, the late Sam.

**BULTHUIS**, Dr. Jerry, age 95; died November 30, 2010; Holland, MI. Wife: Marian Vander Ploeg Bulthuis (deceased 1998); grandson Philip Van Regenmorter (deceased 1969); children: Mary and Neil Van Regenmorter, Sally Bulthuis, Linda and Tom Spaman, George and Trudy Bulthuis, Gayle and Ron Byker; special family friend: Jane Rademacher; 10 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; brothers: Glenn and Alida Bulthuis, Donald and Elaine Bulthuis; sister-in-law: Genevieve and Clair DeMull; many nieces and nephews.

**COLE**, Doris (Terpstra), age 66; January 16, 2011. 410 Slow Draw Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46383. She is survived by her husband, Howard; children, Jodi (Richard) Meyer, Hudsonville, MI; Brenda (Dave) Normoyle, Ripon, CA; and Gregory (Julie) Cole, Hudsonville, MI; and fifteen grandchildren.

**HAVERT** Shirley, nee Bolt, 78, 1/8/11, Grandville MI. Survived by husband, Rev. Ken Havert; children: Leanne & Ben Harkema, Kevin & Shaun Havert; 7 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; sister: Mary (Larry) Bogaard.

**IPPEL** Marian (Ribbens), age 90, entered her eternal home on Sunday, December 26, 2010. She is survived by her husband, Henry, of 68 years and her children, David and Barbara, Paul and Trudi, Chuck and Sheri, Randy and Beth Zylstra, Tim and Linda, Bob and Mary, and Lester. Marian was blessed with 26 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren. We thank God for her life, her witness, and her gifts.

**IWEMA**, Hermina, nee Kerkstra of South Holland, IL, age 85 passed away on January 3, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband James Iwema in 1982, and is survived by her children, Sandra(Donald) Zylstra, Nancy(Thomas)Kerkstra, Robert(Janis)Iwema, Paula Iwema, and David(Jeanne)Iwema; 14 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. She was a sister of the late Jennie(late Herman)Matthuis, late Grace(late John)Spoonstra, late Raymond(Edna)Kerkstra, and late Annie(late James)Rathje; cherished aunt of many.

**PETERS** Herbert, age 80, (3211 Log Ave. Sheldon, IA 51201) gloriously arrived Home on Jan. 18, 2011. Cherished by his bride of 60 years: Theresa (nee Venema), children: Cori & Jerry Vreeman, Jacki & Tom Vreeman, Bart & Deb Peters, Mart & Deb Peters, 15 grandchildren & 10 great-grandchildren. Isaiah 61:3~an "oak of righteousness".

**RIBBENS**, Minnie, age 90 on January 23, 2011, left her wheelchair behind & now walks the streets of gold with her precious Lord and Savior. Preceded in death by her husband, Paul, 4 years ago, she now leaves her children Dot & Pete Goudzwaard, Marge & Bill VanDerHeide, Marie & Jim Miedema, Ray & Sue Ribbens, Lorretta & Steve Jahnke, 14 grandchildren & 20 great-grandchildren. Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you. I Peter 5:7

**STELLINGWERF** Mr. Dick; age 92; February 12, 2011; He was preceded in death by his dear wife, Hilda (Schuurmans). Dick was a loving father and grandfather to: Ruth and Lyle Boerman (Rick and Melanie, Jennifer and Chris, Todd and Erica), Gary and Trudy Stellingwerf (Michele and Kevin, Melissa and John, Holly and Andrew, Katie), Jim Stellingwerf, Phyllis VanderMolen (Jody and Tyler, Kristen and Kedrick), Cathy and Jeff Clousing (Elizabeth, Rachel, Anna); 18 great-grandchildren; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Lammy and Margje Stellingwerf, Jan and Boukje Schuurmans, Romkje Pruiksmas, Tina and Gerrit Schoemaker.

**SYTSEMA WARSEN**, Betty, 64, of Upton, MA died January 26, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband Calvin. She is survived by her children: Bradley (Gretchen) Warsen of Nashua, NH and Catherine (Brian) Marchionni of Waltham, MA and 4 grandchildren. She is also survived by 3 brothers, 6 sisters and many nieces and nephews.

**TERPSTRA** Johanna Marie, (nee, Polinder), aged 92, February 26, 2011. Lynden, WA. She was pre-deceased by her husband Erwin in 1983 and her son Robert in 2010. Children are son Harold and wife Mavis of Lynden, daughter-in-law Nella of Lynden, Rev. Gordon and wife Cheryl of Bellingham, WA, daughter Doris Libolt and husband Robert of Lynden. She leaves behind sixteen grandchildren and twenty-seven great-grandchildren. She was organist for 52 consecutive years at the Second Christian Reformed Church of Lynden. She left a legacy of kindness, generosity, and tender-heartedness. Her family is grateful for such a wonderful mother and grandmother, and we call her "Blessed!"

**VAN BEVEREN** Therese, nee Decker, age 92; 3460 Saratoga Blvd, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Beloved wife of the late Mark Sr.; loving mother of Mark Jr. (Tina) and Timothy Van Beveren; devoted grandmother of Matthew (Sarah), David (Nella), Karla and Eric Van Beveren; great-grandmother of Ava and Lucy; fond sister of the late Jean (the late Ed) Rozema, the late Margaret (the late Herman) Van Stedum, the late George (the late Barbara) Decker, the late Ann (the late John) Van Byssum, the late Herman (the late Grace) Decker and the late Melvin (the late Jeanette) Decker.

**VANDERSLOOT** Marvin, died February 15, 2011 in Mesa, AZ. He is survived by his brother Charles Vandersloot, his daughter Vicki Longhini, son Jim Vandersloot and grandson Maxwell Vandersloot. 612-987-3802


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**VANDER WALL (BETTEN)** Necia, 58 of Kentwood, MI went home to dance with Jesus Jan. 3, 2011. She is survived by husband of 40 years, John; children, Charalet (Ed) Dunnigan, Betsy (Chris) McDaniel, Rev. Emily (Ryan) VandenHeuvel, Katie (Tim) Costello; six grandchildren. A 1998 Reformed

Bible College graduate, she was a wonderful youth pastor at Pathway CRC, Sherman Street CRC, and spoke at several Youth Unlimited conventions and Serve Projects. Necia co-owned Bay Window Bakery.

**VANMEURS** Ruth E. (Bronksema), 79, 1261 Linden, Muskegon, MI 49445, went to be with her Lord Feb 9, 2011. She is survived by husband of 57 years, Peter; children Deb, Daniel, Douglas, Dorace, Dave, Derek; 13 grandchildren; 2 great grandchildren; sister-in-law Doris Bronksema; nephews and nieces.

**VEURINK** Mrs. Sally, age 75, of 16952 Landing Drive Spring Lake, MI 49456, went to be with the Lord on January 22, 2011. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Gordon, her children, Gary (Helena) Veurink, Sheri (Ralph) VanDuyn, Kathy Veurink, and Mark (Lori) Veurink, all of Spring Lake. Also surviving are 13 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren, two brothers, Jack Grimm and Gordon (Judy) Grimm. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

**VISSER**, Gerrit, 90, passed away on February 22 after a short illness. 18437 S. Marks, Riverdale, CA 93656. Gerrit is survived by his wife Johanna of 67 yrs. Father of Darlene (Paul) Hesse, Ken (Susan) Visser, Gary (Marnie) Visser, Darrell (Jan) Visser, Marlene (Jim) Chandler, Joeline (Al) Schaap, Dan (Teresa) Visser; 21 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, 1 deceased grandchild, 1 sister, Darlene DeKleer & many nieces and nephews. We praise God for His faithfulness to all generations.

**VISSER** Jenny, nee Masselink went to be with her Lord and Saviour on Feb. 20, 2011. Dearly beloved wife of Murray. Lovingly remembered by her children Jessica and Peter, John and Michelle, Alicia and Mike, Yolanda and Craig, and nine grandchildren.

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# Punch Lines

The content on this page comes directly from *Banner* readers. Please join in the fun and send us your funny story or joke (nothing already published elsewhere, please). Mail contributions to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email them to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**T**wo dog owners were arguing about whose pet was smarter.

"My dog is so smart," said the first owner, "that every morning he waits for the paperboy to come around. He tips the kid and then brings the newspaper to me, along with my morning coffee."

"I know," said the second owner.

"How do you know?"

"My dog told me."

—John Veltkamp

**W**hen my grandsons, Zack and Bailey, were much younger, they used to love to go to yard sales with me. I would give them each \$5 so they could buy something—as long as it went home with them. One day we were driving past Second Christian Reformed Church, and, being a member of First CRC, Zack read the sign with interest. Then he said to me excitedly, "Look, Grandma, we beat them reforming!"

—Sharon Baddis

**W**e were celebrating our granddaughter Kate's 5th birthday when she proceeded to ask me, "Grandma, how old are you?" Feeling rather smug about

being a relatively young grandma, I said, "I'm 54."

"Wow," Kate said, "you're going to be dead pretty soon!"

—Jan Dirksen

**T**he Goemans moved from a two-bedroom home to a three-bedroom home. Their children were quite excited. Claimed 4-year-old Melissa, "Jeannie and I are twins, so we have to stay together forever. Angie [the 6 year old] has her own room. Maybe someday we can move to a four-bedroom home, then Daddy can have his own room too. Now he has to stay in the same room as Mommy."

—William Veldboom

**O**ne of our family traditions is my calling each of our children and singing "Happy Birthday" to them early on the mornings of their birthdays. One year I was in the hospital on my youngest daughter's birthday, which is April 1, so my husband carried on the tradition.

He dialed early that morning, and finally the phone was picked up on the other end. With his best effort, he bellowed out "Happy Birthday" loudly and off-key. When he finished, an angry voice on the other end—definitely not our daughter's—said, "Did you get me out of the basement to play an April Fool's joke?"

Thus ended my husband's singing career.

—Henrietta Beyer

**I** see that your husband has a new suit," a member of the congregation remarked to my wife.

"Oh, you noticed?"

"Yes, I saw a sales tag dangling from one of the sleeves when he pronounced the benediction."

—(Rev.) Harry A. VanderWindt

**W**hile stopped for a red light, a trucker glanced in his side-view mirror and saw a man running up to his truck. The man knocked on his door, and when the trucker lowered his window the man said, "Hi, my name's Jerry, and I thought you'd like to know that you're losing some of your load."

The trucker ignored the man and proceeded down the street. When he stopped for another red light, the man jumped out and ran to his truck again: "Hi, my name's Jerry, and I don't know if you heard me before, but you're losing some of your load."

The trucker shook his head in disbelief and continued down the street. When stopped at the next light, the trucker got out and knocked on the window of the man's car. After the man lowered it, the trucker said, "Hi, my name's

Kevin. It's winter in Michigan, and I'm driving a salt truck."

—George Vander Weit

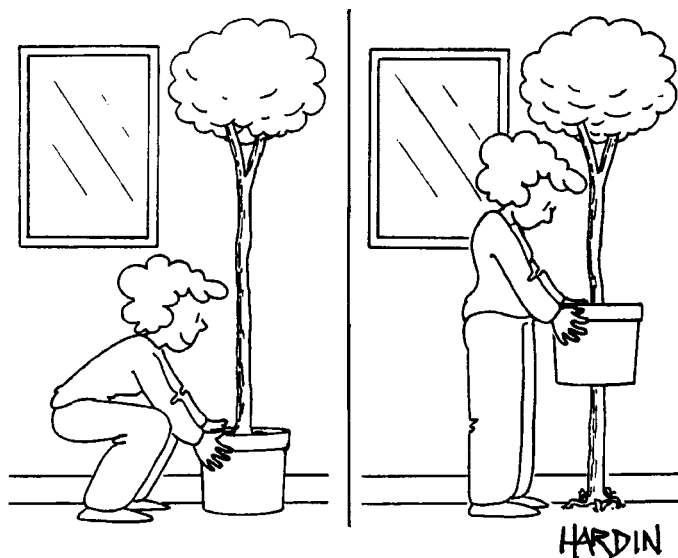
**A** minister is out for a walk when a brand-new Lexus driven by an elder of his congregation pulls to the curb. Suddenly a truck sideswipes the Lexus, tearing the driver's door off.

The elder climbs out and begins shouting that his car is ruined, it will never be the same, not even the best body shop can make it new again.

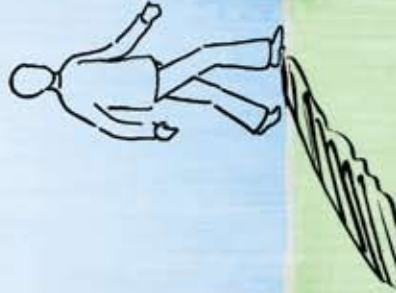
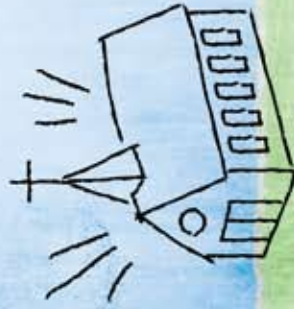
Stunned by the man's outburst, the minister chides him, saying that he is shocked by the elder's materialist attitude. The minister tells him there are many more important things than a car—didn't the elder realize that in the collision his left arm was torn off?

Stunned, the man stops yelling for a few seconds and looks down at the vacant place where his arm had been. Then he yells, "Oh no, my Rolex too!"

—Dave Hollander



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