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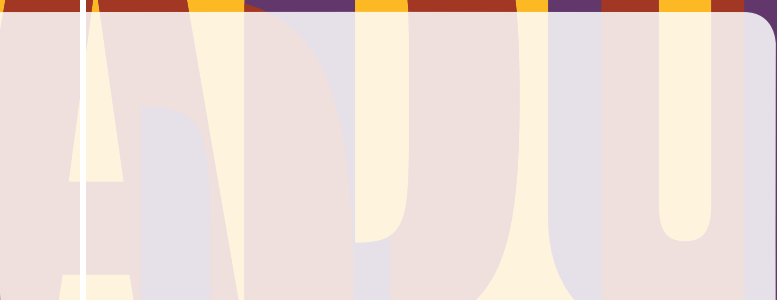
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# Breaking Barriers

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ISSUE #90 Summer 2011

A Ministry of Christian Reformed Church and Reformed Church in America Disability Concerns

## More Than a Ramp

Accessibility Encompasses Facilities, Communication, and Attitudes

Mark Stephenson, Director of CRC Disability Concerns

**H**ealthy churches work to overcome the barriers to involvement by people with disabilities.

### Facilities

“Church buildings have changed over the years,” says Dianna Wassink of Redeemer CRC in Sarnia, Ontario. “People have developed an awareness of what a building should be. If even one person in the church uses a wheelchair, other people see how hard it is for him to be involved.”



**Marcia Van't Land with her granddaughter**

Marcia Van't Land of Chino, California, would agree. Van't Land, a wheelchair user for many years, says that the most significant changes in attitudes result when people with disabilities are involved in church and society.

“Things have gotten so much better with ramps and accessible parking and bathrooms,” Van't Land observes. “The number of people with disabilities out in public has really increased since the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed [in 1990]. Now things are better for us. With new and remodeled buildings being accessible, we're going to come.”

### Communication

As a child, Katie Prins sat quietly in church paging through the Bible or reading a Christian book. Being deaf, Katie could not participate in worship because her Southern California congregation offered no accommodations for her.

Then a kind and dedicated woman began transcribing the sermons for Katie. During worship, 12-year-old Katie would read the transcription of the previous Sunday's sermon. “Like others in the congregation, my pastor's words now inspired me, and I grew in my faith,” she says.

A few years ago, after finishing college and graduate school Katie moved to West Michigan for her job. She visited various churches until she found a church that was the best fit for her: First Cutlerville CRC. Because they did not offer sign lan-



**Katie Prins**

guage interpretation during worship, Katie asked and the church agreed to have worship services interpreted.

She says, “I am the only deaf individual in my church, just as when I was a child in Southern California, but this time I am right there with the congregation every sermon of the way.”

### Attitudes

Mark started attending Chelwood CRC in Albuquerque, New Mexico, about 25 years ago with his parents, because he became involved in the Friendship group there. Though Mark's parents have passed away, Mark participates actively at Chelwood. He explains, “I like the people. They're nice. I learn things, and I help with different stuff.”

Chelwood Christian Reformed Church in Albuquerque has done exceptionally well at including people with intellectual disabilities. A typical congregation has about

one member who has an intellectual disability out of every hundred people in the congregation, but at Chelwood the ratio is one to eight.

Mark received such a loving welcome at Chelwood that he invited fellow members of his group home to become involved. Some did, and they invited their friends and family members who in turn invited other friends and family members.

At Chelwood, members with intellectual disabilities contribute to the congregational life alongside nondisabled members in ministries such as greeting, receiving the offering, leading various aspects of the worship service, and leading Bible studies.

Fellow member Dick Weeda observed, “We minister to Mark, and Mark ministers to us in the way he draws people around him and takes interest in people.”

## ▶ theme

**Summer:** Much of church business happens in meetings of teams, committees, councils, consistories, classes, and synods. Find more articles on our website in which we explore **meeting accessibility**.

**Fall:** Are you a parent who has raised or is raising a child who has a disability? Please send a brief story (500 words) about your experience with **parenting a child with a disability** by August 15, 2011.

# SYNOD 2011

## NEWS

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# Denominational Governance: Time to Get Back to Reformed Basics

**TALK ABOUT CHURCH GOVERNANCE** and denominational structure is dull as dust. Yet it is important enough so that the past three decades have seen as many debates about structure at synod (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church) as there have been about hot-button issues such as women's ordination.

Why? Because how our structure and governance function relates directly to how responsibly and effectively we, as churches, carry out our mutual ministry.

In this extended editorial we contend that, over time, the CRC has drifted into a centralized model that is in danger of losing its Reformed genius.

Dull as it may be, we believe it's time for our denomination to do the hard work of carefully reexamining that structure. With the recent resignation of our executive director, this is definitely the time to do it—before we appoint somebody else.

## How Did We Get Here?

Let's be clear—the CRC's move toward greater centralization has never been a power grab.

No one set out to deliberately erode the authority of synod and/or the churches. Changes were made by people of good will with good intent for a church they love. And it happened so gradually over three decades that only occasionally have voices of caution been raised, warning about the negative consequences.

Part of the problem is that no one ever planned the structure that governs the denomination's ministries in the first place. The late Rev. John Kromminga, former president of Calvin Theological Seminary and a former interim *Banner* editor, wrote in a 1993 editorial, "The agencies were not part of a master plan. They 'jest grewed'" (*Banner*, April 26, 1993).

Churches saw ministry needs that couldn't be met locally, so they banded together with the denomination to carry out ministries they couldn't do alone. By the 1980s, after a span of more than 125 years, the CRC sported two

schools of higher learning, five major ministry agencies, 14 standing committees, and one synodical interim committee with a general secretary to keep the daily business of the church running between synods.

As one report to Synod 1987 stated, "Brought together, the resulting structure is like a house in which each room was designed during a different period, by a different architect, working with different materials."

The ministry agencies each had their own boards and executive directors, functioning independently. Each came annually to synod

The CRC has  
drifted into a  
centralized model  
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of losing its  
Reformed genius.

with its own report, its own requests for funds.\* But, as Kromminga pointed out, "Uncharted as it was . . . it enabled churches to provide valuable services . . . and gave local churches a sense of ownership of the programs."

## Dis-integration in the 1980s

However, that uncharted structure had pitfalls. Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, synod after synod heard about fractious relationships on the mission fields where both Christian Reformed World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) had personnel. It seemed that no one could decide who was in charge and how the two agencies would operate in an integrated fashion. Synod after synod told the

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The CRC's drift toward centralization is moving authority away from synod.



PHOTO BY KAREN HUTTENGA

interim committee to promote coordination, but didn't give it the authority needed to effect real change, fearing too much centralization.

Throughout that decade, synodical committees and commissions studied the CRC's structure and wrote lengthy reports. In 1985 synod created a Board of World Ministries with authority over both World Missions and CRWRC, hoping in that way to coordinate their efforts.

The same period saw a strong desire to run churches and denominations with more businesslike efficiency. Well-intended people who thought a lot about organizational forms derived from corporate life pushed to apply those to CRC life as well, hoping to provide better support for our mission work and to spend ministry dollars more wisely.

But as Rev. Roger Greenway, a veteran of church agencies and first director of that newly created Board of World Ministries, wrote later, "We expect sound management, [but] ministries do not run like businesses" (*Banner*, April 26, 1999).

### The 1990s

In response, Synod 1990 decided that what was good for the two overseas agencies would be good for all the agencies. In 1992 it replaced both the fledgling Board of World Ministries and the synodical interim committee with what we now know

as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (BOT).

The boards of the agencies and institutions remain in place, still in charge of those ministries, but they are now also subject to the authority of the BOT. The result is an uncomfortable and lingering ambiguity in the lines of authority—in trying to nail down who exactly governs what.

With the formation of the BOT, an executive director of ministries (EDM) was appointed to look after administrative functions of the denomination, including that of coordinating the work of the agencies, institutions, and ministries. The CRC's general secretary continued to look after ecclesiastical matters, such as ecumenical relations, synodical study committees, preparations for the annual synods, and the like.

The Board of Trustees managed its workload by meeting four times per year and dividing the work between two committees: polity (the work associated with the general secretary) and program and finance (the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries).

Overall, the CRC got what it had asked for: greater accountability, more ministry coordination, cost savings from single-source support services, and, for a few years, a lot less griping at synod about inefficiency or confusion about who was in charge. »

## Efficiency at What Cost?

But there has been a price to pay for those results. For example, Canadian ministry, which had for 25 years flourished in its unique setting under the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, morphed into the Canadian Ministries Board. But after three short years that was folded into the bi-national Board of Trustees and now exists pretty much in name only. So the formerly close structural connection between the Canadian churches and these ministries has been allowed to dissolve within the more centralized structure.

Another cost has been the staff time and financial resources spent on crafting and managing the goals of a Denominational Ministries Plan and enjoining agencies to work together to fulfill them. While those goals have been laudable, they diverted agency personnel from their own specific missions. Cross-agency teams were convened to find projects to do together, which in practice made collaboration the goal, rather than a means to fulfilling the respective mandates the agencies received from the churches.

But perhaps the greatest cost has been the ongoing difficulty that agencies and their boards experience working within such a centralized structure, with its multiple levels of administration and accountability.

As Kromminga presciently pointed out in that 1993 editorial, “The [agencies] are doing what the churches appointed them to do, and the work is dear to their hearts. Centralized authority must concentrate on coordinating, not managing the ministries.” He warned that any central authority should not presume to know more than the agencies themselves about how to carry out their mandates.

We find it ironic that as local churches are learning to start with the giftedness of their members for ministry rather than with filling unyielding administrative pigeonholes, the denomination seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

A central board has not proven to be a definitive solution for getting cooperation and integration, either. Getting multiple previously-independent boards and agencies on the same denominational ministries page has been akin to herding cats.

In September 2000, the BOT invited all the boards to convene in one place. The keynote speaker was Calvin College President Emeritus Anthony Diekema, who had participated in study committees regarding the CRC’s structure. He told board members the CRC structure was “the most bizarre organization I’ve ever seen. . . . The governance is redundant, competitive, independent. Administrative authority is shared at best, non-existent at worst.” Diekema said the agencies would need to shift from a culture of independence to one of common cause (*Banner*, Dec. 4, 2000).

## The CRC’s Main Ministry Agencies and Educational Institutions

- Back to God Ministries International (formerly the Back to God Hour)
- Calvin College
- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Christian Reformed Home Missions
- Christian Reformed World Missions
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)
- Faith Alive Christian Resources (formerly CRC Publications)

## The CRC’s Specialized Ministries

- Chaplaincy and Care
- Disability Concerns
- Ministries in Canada
- Office of Social Justice
- Pastor-Church Relations
- Race Relations
- Safe Church Ministry (formerly Abuse Prevention)

## Building Common Cause

A key way for the agencies to build common cause was through a Ministry Council (initially called the Ministries Coordinating Council). That council comprised directors of the larger agencies and educational institutions, one director selected from the smaller agencies (Specialized Ministries), the director of personnel, two staff members from the Canadian office, and the general secretary of the CRC. It was chaired by the executive director of ministries.

While retaining passion for their individual ministries, as a group they were charged to look toward the common goals of the denomination. They brainstormed ways to work together, ironed out spats, and eliminated inefficiencies and overlap.

Because it was chaired by the EDM with the general secretary in an advisory position, the two people working most closely with the Board of Trustees were also closely tied to the work of the individual ministry agencies.

## Centralization with Checks and Balances

In 2002, as the retirement of both the EDM and the general secretary approached, a plan for leadership succession was needed. Out of that came a proposal to further improve efficiency by combining the positions of EDM and general secretary. The report supporting that merger said, “It is an established



fact that a dual-headed organization is inherently unstable and less efficient” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*). Thus the two were joined into one position, now called the executive director (ED).

Because no one person could do all the tasks formerly done by two people, the executive director would have a deputy: the denominational director of ministries (DDM). The agency directors would now report to the DDM instead of the executive director. The intent was to free up more time for the executive director to interact with the churches to lessen the

up only of directors of the main ministry agencies plus a few directors of the smaller programs. The directors of finance, Canadian ministries, and personnel, as well as representatives of the college and seminary, are no longer members of MLT. The move also excluded from the table the director of Race Relations, who was at that time the denomination’s only ministry director who is a person of color.

It is unclear whether BOT members fully understood the scope of the change they were making. Had the proposed

## "We expect sound management, [but] ministries do not run like businesses."

perception of a growing distance between the churches and the denomination.

Concerns about centralization were addressed in the rationale accepted by Synod 2004: “To avoid placing too much authority and leadership responsibility in just one position . . . it is being proposed that the [structure] include a cabinet” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 44-45).

That “cabinet” would be the Ministry Council, which would now include not only agency directors but also the DDM, the director of finance, the director of personnel, the Canadian ministries director, and the director of Race Relations (non-voting). In early 2008, the latter was given a vote. The council was to be chaired by the executive director.

The senior denominational leaders, functioning as a group, would provide the checks and balances for the additional authority placed in the office of the executive director. If the Ministry Council disagreed with the ED on major proposals or budgets, that disagreement would be formally communicated to the Board of Trustees.

So the structure continued to grow more vertical, with the agency directors now reporting to the DDM, who reports to the ED, who reports to the BOT, which reports to synod. The administrative steps between the agencies and the churches increased—precisely the concern Kromminga expressed a decade earlier.

Still, with the executive director chairing the Ministry Council, there was a direct link between the BOT (synod’s agent) and those ministries.

However, in late 2008, the executive director—with agreement from the Board of Trustees—reduced the Ministry Council to less than half its original size and put the DDM in charge of chairing it (see *Banner*, June 2009). Now called the Ministries Leadership Team (MLT), the former council is made

change gone before a full synod, more people might have studied it in the agenda for Synod and more questions might have been raised.

Synod 2009 accepted the change after the fact, but wanted to know how the BOT would handle significant structural change in the future. The board’s response was based on its opinion that the change was not significant (*Banner*, May 2010).

We respectfully disagree with that response. As we have already observed, the change removed the checks and balances that Synod 2004 specifically put in place.

### Who Has Time for Due Diligence?

In the meantime, something else happened to amplify the effects of all this restructuring.

In 1997, synod went from being two weeks long to one week, primarily to allow for a younger and more varied delegation of elders than was possible with a two-week synod.

In the decade and a half since, many delegates have complained that synod is now too rushed and that they don’t have sufficient time to provide due diligence for many items on synod’s agenda.

High profile topics such as women’s ordination and the church’s position on various ethical issues tend to occupy synod’s time. With the shortened schedule, synod depends more and more on the Board of Trustees to run the shop. A phrase now heard often at synod is “We just have to trust our leaders.”

While synod has defaulted increasingly to top denominational leadership, so has the BOT. Because the BOT consists of volunteers, it has cut the number of its between-synod meetings to only three. And board members are no longer divided into committees for program and polity, which allowed them to focus on at least part of their pages-long agendas. »

All board members now need to cover the entire agenda, which is a Herculean task. More often than not it exceeds what volunteers, however capable and willing, can process. Nor do the time constraints of the meetings allow board members sufficient time for careful deliberation.

In summary, without the former Ministry Council there are no longer the checks and balances envisioned by Synod 2004. And the BOT, entrusted by synod to exercise due diligence, grows even more distant from the ministries of the church because its executive director no longer has a formal point of contact with those ministries. And, finally, the BOT itself is swamped with an unmanageable agenda.

### The Result

We offer a few recent examples to show how such factors conspire to further distance agencies from the decision-making process:

Last year the budget process became problematic when, after two years of remaining flat, the amount of ministry share contributed by the churches was increased by 3 percent by the BOT's finance committee—after the Ministries Leadership Team had signed off on a budget that had no increase. That additional 3 percent went not to the agencies but to the denominational office's budget, which meant that senior staff would recommend to the board how to spend it, rather than synod allocating it, and so far, only 23 percent has been allocated to a ministry.

Because the rather significant change was never sent back to MLT, to the agency directors, or to their respective boards, they had no opportunity to weigh in on it or to act as a check and balance to the process. When agency directors were queried by *The Banner* at synod, none of those we interviewed knew of the increase.

The denominational office now controls nearly 28 percent of the ministry share dollars contributed by the churches, as compared to 18 percent 10 years ago. Ministry initiatives like The Network (valuable though it may be in connecting people and churches) are given funding even though they originate with staff and have not been identified as ministry needs in or by the churches. At the same time, synodical directives are not being completed for lack of funding, funding which should have been allocated by the denominational office, such as the increased tasks given to the Safe Church Ministry in 2010 (*Banner*, April 2011).

We wonder if, in effect, the office of the executive director is becoming burdened with the task of serving as the de facto interim committee of synod. Again, there is no longer the check and balance of a Ministry Council. With that point of access to the executive director removed, the line of accountability between the denominational agencies and the people in the pew grows

ever longer. And with the BOT overburdened by huge agendas, it too can do little else than rely, in most cases, on the guidance of the very person whose work they are to guide.

More than 10 years ago, Greenway warned, "If it ain't broke, we'll fix it till it is." We fear that is what is happening.

### What Can Be Done?

It is neither possible nor desirable to turn back the clock to pre-1980. And those who agree that the current structure is showing too many stress fractures don't know or can't agree on what would fix it.

Some suggest going back to the two-headed model, with one person in charge of ecclesiastical matters and another in charge of administrative matters. Some say agencies should be free to do what they have the passion and expertise to do, and that the authority of the senior staff and BOT should be no more than what is needed to ensure there is no overlap or duplication of services. Still others think the current structure is fine, as long as enough people working within it have enough institutional memory to understand how we evolved into what we are now.

We believe a more fundamental study should be made, one that more globally addresses the concerns raised in this extended editorial. The changes made to make our denomination more efficient have caused more problems than they have solved.

Somehow all this just doesn't feel like church anymore. We need to find creative new ways of getting back to what has worked very well for more than 500 years: a Presbyterian/Reformed way of doing church that keeps us all praying, planning, and participating.

That can only happen if we, as churches, make it happen. It will require our best minds and some solid study on all our parts—even though it will force us to wade yet again through all that dull-as-dust structural stuff. And we believe the time is now, before another person takes up residence in an executive director's office that is heavily overloaded.

That's a sacrifice we'll need to make because, truly, how we do church together matters a whole lot.

\* The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has never received ministry share funds, only donations and government grants. ■



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

## Loss and a Lavender Orchid



**OUR YEARS AGO**, shortly after our church moved into its new ministry center, a member of the congregation sent three plants in celebration—one for each pastor and one for me, the church administrator.

Mine was a lavender-colored orchid, splendid with its graceful arching stems, burgeoning branches, and promise of more blooms. I never dreamed it would become my teacher.

Having never possessed an orchid before, I wondered anxiously how to care for it. Much to my relief and amazement, on closer examination I discovered the plant was plastic. Nonetheless enamored by this stunning structure, I placed it on the front counter to share its beauty with everyone who came in.

To this day no one walks by—from parishioners to UPS drivers to ESL students—without commenting on its splendor. Many of its admirers credit me for its apparent good health; some even ask for advice on the care and keeping of orchids. Once in a while it seems appropriate to point out that the plant isn't real.

Several months ago someone borrowed my orchid to use as a decoration. I felt a certain measure of dismay about allowing it out of my presence. After all, it had long provided me with company and amusement.

Sadly, it came back with a bloom missing. I actually felt a sense of loss over the absent plastic petals.

A few days ago I found another of its blooms lying on the counter. Distressed, I tried in vain to snap it back onto its plastic stem. After many attempts I resigned myself to the fact that it just wasn't going to stay. The broken blossom lies in my pencil box now, with the paper clips, rubber bands, and other common office provisions.

That blossom reminds me of Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers and the flowers fall. . . ." While that's certainly true of a real orchid, more surprising is that even a tough synthetic plant eventually succumbs to "death."

Everything and everyone wears out. One of my best friends passed away a couple of years ago. I thought she would live forever. Both my parents died shortly after that, leading me to the jarring realization that my generation is the next to fade away.

My own health has deteriorated in the past few years. I have battled cancer, heart

disease, and most lately the daunting devastation of the aging process. Having previously felt pretty tough, I'm now acutely aware that my days on earth are numbered.

Mercifully, my lavender orchid has taught me to live this earthly life to the fullest. The truth is that the orchid is still magnificent—even with a few blossoms missing. It still brings beauty, conversation, company, and great amusement to me. Similarly, I know that even with health and aging issues I can still work and play and be a blessing to others.

The priceless comfort from Isaiah 40 is this: despite the fact that I'm like the flowers that fall at the end of the day, my hope is in the Word of the Lord, which stands forever. Loving God above all and my neighbor as myself, I have faith that when my present body grows faint and dies, my new body will be perfectly suited to live on the new earth—and durable enough to last for eternity! ■



**Kristin L. Ellens**, a freelance writer, retired from her role as church administrator for Woodlawn CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is now worship coordinator for the church.



If you receive a gift,  
you keep it alive  
not by clinging to it  
but by passing it along.

— PARKER PALMER

# Loving Muslims into the Kingdom

OPINION

Our task is not to denounce the errors of Islam. Our task is to introduce people to Jesus.

**TERRORISM, UNREST** in the Middle East, spiking oil prices, and Qur'an burnings. With this constant barrage, it's no wonder we're afraid and agitated. But our fear has caused us to become muddled about what our responsibility is to Muslims.

After clearing away the clutter, it's still our task to share the good news of the love of Jesus Christ with Muslims. Having served with Christian Reformed World Missions in a country that is 96 percent Muslim, I bear witness that the vast majority of Muslims I've met are friendly, warm people. They've shared from their meager resources to embrace us with hospitality. After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Muslims came to our home to offer their sincere condolences for the evil that was perpetrated in the name of their religion.

Yes, there are extremists. But is it not our task to pray for them as Jesus asks us to (Matt. 5:44)? God does something in our hearts when we're on our knees, praying for perceived enemies. None of us works well when fear controls us. But the perfect love of Christ casts out our fears (1 John 4:18).

I've had the great joy of seeing Muslims come to know Jesus. And in every

situation it was the love of Christ demonstrated in the life of a Christian that drew him or her to Jesus. For example, a dear friend of mine who was a Muslim was dying of AIDs and shunned by his family. He decided to follow Jesus after Christian Reformed World Relief Committee staff and other Christians nursed him back to health.

Of the Muslims I know, an interest in Jesus never came about by a persuasive argument for the Trinity or by criticizing the prophet Mohammed.

Our task is not to denounce the errors of Islam. Our task is to introduce people to Jesus by our life and the words of the gospel. Then, as Muslims study God's Word, the Holy Spirit will show them the errors as they turn all of their life over to Christ.

Every day Muslims pray the *Fatiha*, the first chapter of the Qur'an. Verse six of the *Fatiha* reads, "Lord, show us the straight way." You and I are God's answer to that prayer. We know the One who is the Straight Way to God the Father (John 14:6)! In sharing the gospel with Muslims and refusing to be controlled by disturbing headlines, we become the messengers who introduce people to Jesus, the Straight Way to God.

The Advancing Ministry Among Muslims Team (AMAM) in the Christian Reformed Church is preparing training for congregations who want to know more about Islam and share the Good News with Muslims. If you are interested in learning more, please contact AMAM by emailing [hpersenaire-hogeterp@crcna.org](mailto:hpersenaire-hogeterp@crcna.org). ■



Rev. Henry Persenaire-Hogeterp serves with Christian Reformed World Missions in West Africa.



## True Dialogue

Thanks for your excellent editorial "True Dialogue" (May 2011). It reminded me a bit of an April 9 Charles Honey column in *The Grand Rapids Press*, which he began by saying, "Essay question: Should a religion be judged by its most hateful actors?" Then he talked about the hateful actions of Florida pastor Terry Jones. He ended his column by saying, "Back to the essay question, then. My answer is unequivocal: No. People do great harm in the name of religion, and also great good. That human capacity for good and evil is one of the central concerns of religion itself.

"Maybe Jones is in fact teaching us something here. Let me attach two further questions:

1. Do you judge all Christianity by his actions? If no, then
2. Do you judge all Islam by the actions of the Afghan murderers, the Taliban and Osama bin Laden?"

Excellent advice from both Charles Honey and you.

—Gerrit W. Sheeres  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## Meatless Mondays

We were disturbed by the article "Building Community While Using Less Energy" (April 2011), which mentioned a "Meat-

# LETTERS

less Monday” challenge offered to Calvin College students to raise awareness of the environmental effects of meat production and to encourage a new lifestyle habit by going without meat, among other things. It was discouraging for us as meat producers. Many farmers and ranchers across the United States and Canada depend on the income from meat production to support their families as well as denominational causes. Are we being led to believe that meat production is more of a detriment to our environment than other forms of industrialization?

—Willis and Leon Groenendyk  
Oskaloosa, Iowa

## Global Warming

There were four aspects of “Get Off the Global Warming Bandwagon” (IMHO, April 2011) that Reformed Christians should find discomfiting. First, it represents a distrust of science and a disregard for the conclusions of virtually all the major reputable scientific societies of the world, which overwhelmingly agree that mean global temperatures have been rising and that human activity is a significant contributing factor. Second, ignoring the threat of global climate disruption is to ignore the plight of the poor around the world who stand to suffer most from the effects of climate disruption, such as flooding due to rising sea levels. Third, the recommended DVD series *Resisting the Green Dragon* is an embarrassment to most thinking Christians. All *Banner* readers should see at least the three-minute summary of this film on YouTube and read the reactions of its viewers, many of whom think Christians are uncaring and wacky. Finally, the article minimizes the importance of proper Christian stewardship for the creation God loves and declared good. Although the evidence is overwhelming for global warming and anthropogenic

reasons for it, even if there were no such evidence, Christians ought to be examples for the world for other reasons, including the conservation of earth’s resources and global justice.

—Lou Sytsma  
Professor and Chair of Chemistry  
Trinity Christian College  
Palos Heights, Ill.

I had concerns over your April IMHO and editorial (“Christ Has Risen Indeed!”). I felt both tended to categorize people with somewhat different opinions as not having true faith in Jesus. Many faithful Christians are doing kingdom work in the mainstream churches. Likewise, many of those on the other side of the environmental debate affirm their faith daily.

I hope my friends in the CRC can keep their minds open to those of us who disagree on the side issues but strongly affirm that Jesus is risen indeed!

—Dr. Cherie Trembath (M.D.)  
South Lyon, Mich.

Allowing for many viewpoints is a good idea, but why choose such an extreme position that is so far from the truth? Would you print an opinion piece denying the Holocaust just because someone in the CRC wrote it?

—David Hoekman  
Madison, Wis.

Regardless of our opinion on climate change, all Christians should be challenged to be much better caretakers of God’s creation and its resources than we have been.

—John Franken  
Smithers, British Columbia

Global warming and cooling are part of nature’s system. There is nothing “bandwagon” about the natural issue of global warming. What may be questioned is the influence of human beings on the process.

Both sides of the issue have their own agendas; even scientists have admitted to the subjectivity of science. For a Christian approach to the subjectivity of science (and its influence on law), I suggest reading the recent issue of *Dordt College’s Pro Rege* on this topic.

—Bert den Boggende  
Brooks, Alberta

Instead of being warned against alarmism, maybe we should consider Genesis 1-11 as the ultimate of alarmist texts. In it we read a witness both to the interconnectedness and stability of the earth as well as to the genuinely destructive potential in human beings to harm that world (and ourselves).

—Wilma and Kevin van der Leek  
Surrey, British Columbia

## Corrections

Last month, in correcting the church membership of Susan Collins, we accidentally ordained her husband, Tim, who is a member but *not* the pastor of Rochester (N.Y.) CRC. And if you want to get really technical, the *Christus Rex* statue at Valparaiso University, which appeared on the April cover, is properly translated “Christ the King.”

Finally, we mixed up May letter writer Harry Vriend of Grand Rapids, Mich., with Harry Vriend of Edmonton, Alberta. Sorry, Harrys.

Please accept *The Banner’s* humble apologies for the errors. (But if we mess up these corrections, we’ll be too embarrassed to want to know about it.)

# NEWS

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## Director of Denominational Ministries Resigns

**S**andy Johnson submitted her resignation as director of denominational ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, effective immediately.

Johnson submitted her resignation to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, who received it with surprise, much regret, and a tremendous amount of appreciation for the leadership she gave to the ministries of the CRC.

Johnson's resignation comes exactly one month after the resignation of former executive director Rev. Jerry Dykstra.

In her letter, Johnson said her resignation would allow the Board of Trustees to consider multiple options as it addresses the leadership needs of the church.

Acting interim executive director Rev. Bruce Adema expressed his gratitude for Johnson's four years of service.

—Gayla R. Postma



Sandy Johnson

## Where U At? 2011

**M**ore than 200 teens attended this year's Where U At? conference, the annual youth gathering for urban teens put on by Youth Unlimited.

Held in Ewart, Mich., this year's conference focused on leaving a legacy. "We learned about leaving a legacy for Christ," said London Johnson, 17. "We're not too young, and there's no excuse." Johnson, from Grand Rapids, Mich., was

attending as part of a leadership-in-training program.

Dutcher Snedeker, 18, was attending for his fourth time, this year as part of the worship team. "The transforming night is Saturday night," he said. "God just comes in." Snedeker, a member of Madison Square Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, said this year's high-quality drama made things very real for kids.

For Joel De Jong, 15, this was his first Where U At? event. "I love it," he said. "The best thing was the altar call." De Jong attends Madison at Ford, a church plant from Madison Square. "I'd definitely come again."

Teens from Oakdale Park CRC and Roosevelt Park Community CRC, Grand Rapids, also attended. Where U At? also draws teens from a number of other denominations.

—Gayla R. Postma



GAYLA R. POSTMA



**Anthony Bennett, 17, had a great time, despite having dislocated his knee during the weekend. "This is one of the best things our church goes to," he said.**



Rev. George Saylor stands in front of the ruins of Connections CRC's ministry center.

## London Church's Ministry Center Burns

The ministry center of Connections Christian Reformed Church in London, Ontario, burned down March 27, just a week after finishing touches were put on renovations.

The church, which meets for worship in a local movie theater, renovated a large warehouse into a ministry center with offices, meeting rooms, a kitchen, and other space that could be used to help the church grow, said Rev. George Saylor, pastor of the church.

"We moved in late in January. We had just finished decorating and furnishing the week before," he said.

No one was hurt in the fire, which appears to have been started by a block heater in a vehicle parked near the building.

—Anita Brinkman

## GEMS, Cadet Counselors Swap Roles

Counselors for the GEMS (girls' ministry) and Cadets (boys' ministry) swapped roles for an evening at Fruitport (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church.

While the Cadet counselors helped girls build Pinewood Derby cars for the church's annual race, GEMS counselors took the boys to the kitchen, where they earned a baking badge while making cookies and muffins for the whole group.

"The girls learned what boys can do, and the boys learned what the girls can do," said Cadet counselor Dennis Kuiper.



Fruitport GEMS display their cars, made with the assistance of Cadet counselors.

The switch was also a hit with the kids. "I have never built anything, but now I want to do it again," said Carly Sumerix, 11.

From the kitchen, Davis Gilbert, 7, reported, "We made different types of muffins, surprise muffins with jelly and applesauce inside them."

—Amy Rycenga

## Board of Trustees to Review Structure

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church decided to assemble a short term taskforce to review the structure and culture of the denomination's ministries and leadership.

The decision comes as a response to a recent organizational assessment done by an outside consultant, and in the wake of the resignations of both the executive director and the director of denominational ministries.

Consultant Peter Meerveld, who wrote the report, found that while there is a strong commitment to the CRC's ministries and a desire for a unified vision, there are fundamental unanswered questions around the authority, relationship, and representation of agencies and ministries within the organization.

"The 'top down' governance of synod and the BOT and the 'bottom up' authority of agencies contribute to unclear roles and responsibilities," Meerveld wrote, noting that the executive director's role as it responds to those challenges is unique.

Meerveld also observed that while the structure and influence of the ministry agency boards provides for greater oversight, those factors contribute to:

- a challenge to the role and authority of administrative leadership

- complex decision making and approval systems that are reducing productivity; and
- tensions among the executive director's advisory team, the agencies and the BOT.

Meerveld said the relationship of the [executive director] with agencies and specialized ministries has been delegated to the director of denominational ministries—contributing to issues with access, conflict management, and communication. That delegation was a result of the 2008 structure change.

The board's review of structure and culture is intended to evaluate possible adjustments to the current structure, not to consider a whole scale remodel of the structure. While one board member asked whether such a review should be mandated and driven by synod, the consensus of the board was that the intent of the taskforce should be "to look at improving what we have," rather than attempting a larger structure review.

The board plans to have the taskforce's membership and mandate defined prior to Synod 2011, which convenes on June 10.

—Gayla R. Postma



JULIE VANDERLAAN

Tyce Vanderlaan, 11, took 21st place in the American Bouldering Series national competition.

## 11-year-old Rock Climber Competes Nationally

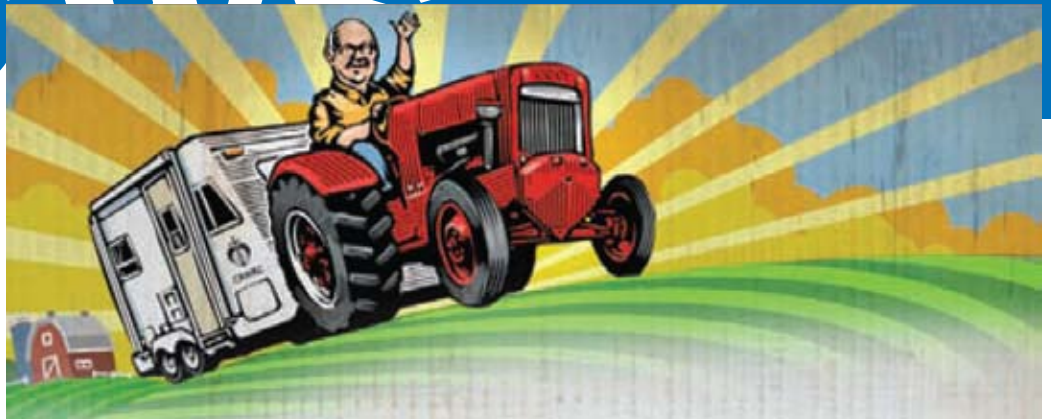
After engaging in the sport of climbing for less than a year, Tyce VanderLaan, 11, has earned second place in a four-state climbing competition and 21st in a U.S. national competition.

Tyce, a member of Caledonia (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church, started climbing with his Cadets group. Cadets is a boys' ministry offered in most Christian Reformed churches.

"You can go [to the competition] and have fun with other people. You can use God's strength," he said.

After being eliminated at the national competition, he went rock climbing in the Rocky Mountains.

—Ryan Struyk



## Forget Waldo – Where's Tractor Dave?

Tractor Dave, otherwise known as Dave Wolfsen, will drive his 1937 Co-op tractor 10,000 miles (16,000 km) this summer, raising money for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and the Foods Resource Bank.

Leaving Michigan June 1, Wolfsen will head east and drive a big circle around the U.S., entering each of the contiguous 48 states.

Wolfsen, a 66-year-old retired International Harvester dealer who is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Fremont, Mich., will travel alone, pulling a camper behind his tractor.

Asked what his wife, Deborah, and his three grown children think of his planned adventure, he replied, "My wife and kids have put up with my crazy maneuvers before."

Averaging 120 miles (193 km) or five hours of travel every day at a stately pace of 30 miles (48 km) per hour, Wolfsen plans to be home around mid-August.

But that could change. Already more than 20 events have been planned around his route, and Wolfsen says he's willing to change his route to accommodate more.

Wolfsen set a fund-raising goal of \$200,000. To learn more, see [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

The Banner will follow Tractor Dave every mile, posting photos and updates on our website every week of Wolfsen's journey.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Redeemer University Students Enter Faith and Science Debate

Redeemer University College students recently competed for \$13,000 in scholarship funds by writing essays about faith and science.

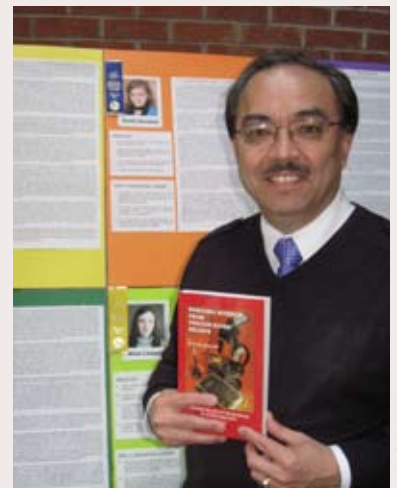
To enter the competition, students had to write an essay on any issue or topic raised in the book *Rescuing Science from Preconceived Beliefs* by Gary Chiang, a biology professor at Redeemer and self-described young-earth creationist.

Chiang said the book shows that "both evolution and creationism are theories, not facts, placing them on the same level," and that "our worldviews and religious beliefs have an effect on the interpretation of scientific information."

The scholarship competition, offering a top prize of \$5,000, was initiated in response to recent articles written by Calvin College professors John Schneider and Daniel Harlow about the early chapters of Genesis (see *Banner* February 2011). Calvin College is owned by the Christian Reformed Church. Redeemer is a sister school.

Chiang said that while the essay competition was for Redeemer students, the college has not stated an official position regarding the debate.

—Monica deRegt



Redeemer biology professor Gary Chiang

MONICA DEREGT



MARGARET KUNST



## Helping Kids Integrate Through Sport

A new sport has come to Langley, British Columbia, thanks to Karen young people who were refugees from Burma.

*Sepak takraw* or “cane ball” is a cross between soccer and volleyball. Players may use any part of their bodies, except their hands, to hit a ball over a net.

Margaret Kunst, a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Langley, is helping Karen kids from Burma introduce the sport to Langley.

Kunst is director of PuCKS (Promoting Community through Kids in Sport), a local organization.

“It was apparent that the [Karen] children were, and would be, at risk—coming with minimal life skills, having lived their entire lives within the confines of refugee camps in Thailand,” said Kunst.

The Karen youths have formed their own teams, intro-

**Micky Meh and K’Paw Doh meet up with their feet above the net in a game of *sepak takraw*, or cane ball.**

duced the sport to local schools and groups, and participated in a national tournament that reunited them with fellow Karen students from other parts of Canada.

“It is so rewarding to see the kids have the opportunity to be the teachers and have people ask them how to do something and to be impressed by their playing skill and what they have to offer,” said Kunst.

“It has been really hard to connect the kids to youths in the church community because of language and cultural differences.”

—Jenny deGroot



**Nearly 2,000 people gathered for united prayer for the city of Grand Rapids.**

## Grand Rapids Prayer Rally Draws 2,000

Nearly 2,000 Christians representing more than a dozen denominations gathered on a cold, wet Saturday evening in April to pray for the city of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Many local Christian Reformed congregations participated in the event, called “Gathering Grand Rapids,” and had a hand in planning for it.

Prayers for government, family, young people, and the body of Christ were delivered from the stage followed by an invitation to pray in small groups.

Ministry associate Stedford Sims of Step of Faith, a church plant of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, said he was impressed by the intergenerational nature of the gathered crowd.

—Noah J.K. Kruis

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Hendrik De Bruyn

1935-2011

Rev. Hendrik (Henk) De Bruyn, 76, a visionary, warm, and gentle pastor who pursued causes of justice, died Feb. 21 from cancer.

De Bruyn grew up in the Netherlands and served in the Dutch Royal Air Force before immigrating to Canada.

After attending Calvin Theological Seminary, De Bruyn served CRC congregations in New Brunswick, Ontario, and Michigan.

In 1974 he was appointed executive director of the Indian Family Centre, a ministry of the CRC in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He served there until his retirement in 2000.

De Bruyn worked to express the Savior’s healing grace and new life within the context of native peoples’ cultural traditions. His ministry was marked by a deep understanding and appreciation of aboriginal people, who honored him as an elder.

De Bruyn is survived by his wife, Fran; three children; their spouses; and three 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*.

For more news, see pages 38-40 »

BY CHELSEY MUNNEKE

# A CALL FROM THE CRC'S YOUNG ADULTS

DIAGNOSING THE DISCONNECT THEY FEEL WITH THE DENOMINATION

**T**HE CARPET of the old church floor chafed my knees. I knelt before the congregation, humbled, as the same body of believers who witnessed my baptism and vowed to love and pray for me received me as a full member. I offered my life back to Christ, within the context of the Christian Reformed Church. That was five years ago.

After leaving my quaint hometown of New Holland, South Dakota, I realized for the first time that church, and my personal faith, was now my responsibility. Transitioning to college, I was eager to share my gifts by becoming involved in another Christian Reformed congregation. The CRC had baptized me, trained me in GEMS (girls' club), Sunday school, and catechism, and recognized me as a member, and I was eager to see what was next.

Within the first few weeks I began to feel a disconnect between the promises I had made in my home church and my new life. There were no more catechism classes to attend or a version of GEMS for college-age women. The worship bulletins of the churches I visited listed children's ministries and youth group events, then jumped straight to marriage seminars. My peers and I seemed overlooked and forgotten.

Since finding a church did not happen as naturally as I had hoped, I began exploring congregations from different denominations, including Evangelical Free and Reformed Church in America, even nondenominational (and, I regret to admit, I was often a member of the "Bedside Baptists").

I was curious whether this disconnect came from me and my unwillingness to commit, or whether the CRC was struggling to connect with my generation. Nearly ready to give up finding my place in the church, I saw a note on Facebook about a CRC initiative to gather some Gen-Y-ers (18- to 30-year-olds) together to discuss this very matter, in search of a solution. Ecstatic to discover others who felt they, too, had fallen into the gap between catechism and marriage, I agreed to join in.

Last August more than 30 young adults (Generation Ys, Millennials—call us what you want) from all over North America met in Grand Rapids, Mich., to discuss why we felt our generation was being overlooked, forgotten, and disconnected from the denomination.

Ideas buzzed around the room as young leaders committed to doing all we can to bring our generation back into the denomination whose doctrine we believe in, back to a worldwide congregation of believers we want to support and need support from, and ultimately back to a central place of belief and understanding we desperately cling to.

The following paragraphs summarize our discussion. We pray and hope this will be the start of a dialogue that will fuse all the CRC churches together as one committed and whole body of Christ.

### What We Love About the CRC

We began our conversation by asking *What do we love about the CRC? What is it doing right to enfold multiple generations?*

We appreciate the denomination's steadfastness; we cling to its strong and unwavering doctrine. We are an indecisive generation, so it's essential to have a rock-solid foundation that we can lean on and that we trust will never waver on the "big stuff" in life.

We do not find ourselves discouraged in church because the PowerPoints are not colorful enough or because the drums (if any) are not loud enough; nor do we have a burning wish to throw out the gray *Psalter Hymnal*.

Our concerns and desires have more to do with deeper relationships, passionate commitment, and convicting biblical messages.

The CRC is doing many things right, and even though we might not show it, we are extremely grateful for all that our church has invested in us. Last year young adults were given the ability to speak to the church on a denominational level through a youth advisory panel at synod, the CRC's annual leadership meeting. That has been an amazing step in the right direction, but we would also like to be involved with leadership in our local congregations.

Such involvement requires that we hear and understand each other—bringing generations together.

Many of us are in transitional phases of life, and because of this we are looking for a church *family*. We desire church to be more than a place we visit on Sunday. We urgently seek a home in which we're needed, a family who gives us responsibilities and holds us accountable to them. »

**THE CHURCH HAS NOT OFTEN USED OR ENCOURAGED OUR GIFTS DURING THE TIME OF OUR LIVES WHEN WE ARE THE MOST PASSIONATE, ENERGETIC, AND AVAILABLE.**

Becoming a church member is a big commitment; it should be followed up with continued training, education, and decision-making roles.

### What We Need from the CRC

Our generation embraces intense creativity and has different passions and ideas for worship. We desire to be one body—to learn, grow, and worship together—but at times we're unsure how we can contribute to that. Sometimes we're afraid of rejection or being misunderstood, but we'd love to begin respectful dialogues with all age groups on how we can approach new gifts and ideas in considerate, active ways.

## WILL YOU MAKE ROOM FOR US AT THE TABLE?

Beyond that, we need involvement in intergenerational Bible studies and mentoring relationships. We want desperately to be discipled—strengthened, equipped, and empowered—by those who are more spiritually mature than we are and who have traveled the road ahead.

Unfortunately, while the church does a great job of caring for families with young children, it has not often used or encouraged young people's gifts during the time of our lives when we are the most passionate, energetic, and available.

We have hearts that yearn for ministry but sometimes see it in unconventional ways that the church does not understand. We envision ministry as every Christian's calling, whatever his or her life stage. We want to engage in conversations about this as disciples eager to reach out to a hurting world that needs a Savior, whether overseas or across the street. And we believe doing so will require us all to push beyond what is comfortable and known—for comfortable faith too easily becomes stagnant faith.

My generation calls out to the church, "Will you make room for us at the table?" We need what the church has to offer. We want to serve you and serve with you. We deeply desire to learn from you and want the opportunity to teach you. Will you help us bridge the gap? ■

### Our Vision

What would the church look like if all of the problems were resolved?

#### Intergenerational

Our church should be a place where all generations are valued and respected for what they bring to the family of God's people. All generations have something unique to offer and yet much to learn. In this life, we never truly arrive at the destination of our faith journey. Our strength as a church consists of our relationships with one another and the strength of our love in action. After all, what would our church be without the praxis and zest of the young, or without the experience and wisdom of the old? We are weak when we divide ourselves, and strong when we experience all of life together.

#### Intercultural

Our denomination is becoming increasingly diverse. As this beautiful diversity continues to grow, so must our awareness and appreciation for the differences between our various cultures and heritage. Likewise, we must discern which parts of our heritage might stand in the way of the advancement of the kingdom and sacrifice them for the cause of the gospel. Adaptation and accommodation is necessary for all cultures to preserve the unity of the church and the success of its mission. We must look to heaven and be inspired by the vision of a multi-ethnic congregation of believers, embracing cultural diversity not for its own sake, but because it reflects God's boundless love for his people.

*Excerpted from the "Young Adult Manifesto" for the CRC, p. 12 (see [tinyurl.com/YAmanifesto](http://tinyurl.com/YAmanifesto))*



Chelsey Munneke graduated this spring from Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, where she studied public relations and journalism. She is an original member of the young adult initiative of the Leadership Exchange ([www.crcna.org/leadership](http://www.crcna.org/leadership)) and currently blogs for Focus on the Family. To see who else is involved with the "Young Adult Manifesto," see [tinyurl.com/YAmanifesto](http://tinyurl.com/YAmanifesto).

# FAQs

## Church

**Q In Genesis 4:14 Cain says, “I will be a restless wanderer on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me.” Who were the people Cain was worried about?**

**A** Your question raises the much broader question of how we are to understand the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Because we’ve taught that these chapters report historically factual events, we explain this story as follows: Even though Genesis 4 mentions only three of Adam and Eve’s children—Cain, Abel, and Seth—Genesis 5:4 tells us that Adam “had other sons and daughters.” When Genesis 4:17 mentions Cain’s wife, we assert that he married one of his sisters. Cain, the person who killed his own brother, is now afraid that his extended family will retaliate by killing him.

Another possible interpretation is that the stories in the early chapters of Genesis teach us truths about our relationship to God, others, and ourselves even though, like the story Jesus told of a Good Samaritan, the events described did not historically take place. Then, asking for the identification of the people Cain feared is like asking for the names of the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Recent discussions of creation raise the same issue (see the Feb. 2011 *Banner*, pp. 10-11). Scripture reports that God formed a man and every animal and bird from dust (Gen. 2:7, 19). Typically we’ve said that those words tell us how God created. Principles of biblical interpretation and recent scientific discoveries about the formation of the world and its inhabitants indicate that the words of Genesis can be interpreted in another way. To people who believed in many gods, the writer is proclaiming that God is the Creator of everything and that human beings have a relationship to

**The early chapters of Genesis teach us truths about our relationship with God, others, and ourselves.**

this God different from all the rest of creation because they are created in God’s “own image” (Gen. 1:27). Such an interpretation does not deny the words of Scripture or the Confessions (see Belgic Confession Article 14) but understands those words in ways we have not traditionally explained them.

—George Vander Weit

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

## Christian Morality

**Q When I express frustration with my husband, he frequently says that I am scapegoating him—blaming him for something that is the fault of others—and points out that scapegoating is a sin. Can you help me better understand scapegoating?**

**A** I believe your husband is confusing a scapegoat with a different biblical metaphor—that of a sacrificial lamb.

The term “scapegoat” derives from an Old Testament practice in which the high priest lays his hands on a goat that is chosen by lot and, under the belief that the guilt of the people has been transferred to the goat, he turns the goat loose in the wilderness (Lev. 16:8-10).

Modern usage of the term does not presuppose that a transference of guilt takes place. Nor does it connote the complete lack of complicity characteristic of the goat. Modern usage involves the idea that one person is exaggerating the degree to which another is morally blameworthy for a state of affairs, thus understating the extent to which others contributed to it. The scapegoat bears some

degree of moral blame for the state of affairs, but he or she is being blamed out of proportion to what is deserved.

When a perfectly innocent person is selected to bear the blame for what happens, the term “sacrificial lamb” is appropriate. When someone is described as a sacrificial lamb there is no presumption that the person bears any blame for the situation in question.

Suppose several children leave their Popsicle wrappers and sticks lying on the grass. If an angry adult points out the litter, the one child who is still present receives an inordinate amount of the blame. The child is a scapegoat because he is being blamed for what others did in addition to what he did. But he qualifies as a sacrificial lamb if he had no Popsicle in the first place.

If you are truly making a scapegoat of your husband, he cannot rightly claim that what happened is completely the fault of others. Because the Bible is so important to us we need to have healthy discussions about these matters, discussions in which we acknowledge each other as fellow believers who respect God’s Word.

—Gregory Mellema

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

Saturday-night worship at Marily and Santos's place



## House Churches Multiply in Mexico

by Sarah Van Stempvoort

**E**ight years ago, worship began in a most unlikely location: in front of the Guadalajara, Mexico, central market, a bustling place with 3,000 vendors.

Wayne and Sandy DeYoung, missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions, began holding services in an attempt to build relationships and interest in the gospel. Little did they expect how relationships begun there would grow into small house-church groups throughout the city.

One evening the DeYongs met Julio and Mary Moreno. The Morenos had spent 20 years on the streets, begging, borrowing, and stealing to support alcohol addictions. After the last of their eight

children was removed from their care, the Morenos decided to enter a Christian rehabilitation center. Three months later they arrived at the Wednesday-night service as new Christians and recovering alcoholics.

Wayne's relationship with the Morenos grew over the next year, and the DeYongs began holding worship services in the Moreno home. At first it was just family in attendance. Then others joined. Soon the group was big enough to begin another house church. As that house church grew, it in turn led to the establishment of new ones.

Marilyn joined one of the new house churches. She had become a Christian several years earlier, but had not been

welcomed by several churches. At the house church she found a home. She started bringing her sons, then her husband. All were gripped by the messages they heard. Last June, the whole family was baptized.

Marilyn and Santos began sharing their faith with others. Marilyn talked to people while she sold vegetables in the farmers' market; Santos discussed his faith with customers on his water-bottle delivery route. Soon several of their friends had become Christians and started meeting in their homes.

"[House churches] all start differently," says Wayne. "There is almost nothing set as a model. The Holy Spirit does his work in many different ways. It could be as

## “Marilyn talked to people while she sold vegetables in the farmers’ market.”

simple as a coffee break with the ladies in the neighborhood for the start.”

### Designed for Growth

By their very nature, house churches are designed for spontaneous growth. Each begins with the purpose of reproducing itself. Each begins person by person, home by home, drawing people into an intimate community of fellowship focused on discovering God.

Worldwide, house churches are growing as a way of “doing evangelism and church.” The house-church movement emphasizes flexibility and participatory worship. Members gather in someone’s home to pray and study the Bible. Often, no one person serves as the house church’s pastor. Instead, members fill leadership roles according to their particular gifts.

In the Guadalajara house churches, World Missions mainly has pastors or

evangelists lead the weekly teachings. These leaders receive training for their roles. Pastors go through the Bible League’s two-year church-planting course; evangelists through the four-month evangelism-and-discipleship course. The training provides them with practical tools for their ministries.

Wayne sees himself, pastors, and evangelists as being more “overseers” than anything else. They teach during worship services, help new groups take off, and either offer or point group leaders to training opportunities. Instead of filling the traditional pastor role, they keep an eye on what’s happening within the churches and offer advice.

### Gaining Momentum

This house-church-planting strategy is gaining momentum in Guadalajara. Wayne estimates that over the past seven

years, 130 people have become new believers through World Missions’ related house groups. The DeYoungs and their colleagues are connected with about 35 church plants, but hundreds more from other denominations dot the city.

Exciting times lie ahead. In the past few months, new groups have formed without any direct missionary encouragement. Although the model is still being



**Julio and Mary Moreno and their three youngest children in front of their home, the first house church in their neighborhood.**



One of the house church groups in Guadalajara

tested, Wayne says, “We are learning a lot through the process.”

Planting churches is never easy. Leaders stumble, believers fall away, and the results don’t always meet human expectations. But God is faithful. God works through ordinary people and situations to make himself known. And in Guadalajara, a growing number of house churches are spreading God’s name across the city. ■



**Sarah Van Stempvoort is church relations assistant for Christian Reformed World Missions.**

## Improving Christian Education in West Africa



A teacher helps a student with her work.

Interest in Christian education has increased in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, alongside rising interest in Christianity.

But in many areas Christian teachers and administrators have had little training on what it means to practice their faith in the classroom. That's where

Christian Reformed World Missions steps in.

As missionary Sheila Dykstra travels throughout West Africa—holding teacher-training workshops, meeting with Christian school associations, and mentoring teachers and school administrators—she sees the challenges that teachers and schools face.

“There’s a low value placed on teaching and teachers, so very few people want to be teachers,” says Dykstra. “Those who do end up teaching are often people who couldn’t do anything else or are doing it until they have something else to do.”

Many teachers in West Africa still use teaching methods begun under British colonial rule: their students learn by rote, and physical discipline is not uncommon. And although teachers may work in a Christian school, they have not always thought about how their faith impacts their classrooms. World Missions’ new teacher-training curriculum,

Educational Care, addresses those challenges.

The six-part curriculum leads teachers through topics such as biblical worldview, learning styles, and discipline. Teachers reflect on the material together, study applicable Scripture, and create action plans for what they’re going to do differently.

One of the biggest focuses of the training is on people’s value in Christ. “If you believe that your children are image-bearers of Christ, then that affects how you treat them,” Dykstra says.

The first four Educational Care modules are complete and ready to be used. The final ones are scheduled to be written, tested, and ready for distribution by the end of 2012. CRWM and Worldwide Christian Schools USA (WWCS USA) have entered an agreement for WWCS USA to distribute the curriculum worldwide.

For more on the program, see [www.crwm.org/educationalcare](http://www.crwm.org/educationalcare).

—Sarah Van Stempvoort

## Japan Churches Zealous for Coffee Break

“Small-group ministry is a brand-new concept to many Japanese churches,” says Jeong Gho, who works for Christian Reformed World Missions in Japan. Yet it’s a concept that’s gaining traction as leaders learn how they can use small groups to reach out to their communities.

Last winter Jeong, his wife, Misook, and two area leaders spent several months organizing a Coffee Break training workshop for churches in Fukuoka City on Kyushu Island. They hoped the event would open people’s



Workshop participants practice a Coffee Break session.

eyes to Coffee Break’s outreach possibilities. But the enthusiastic response to the event shocked them.

A week before the May event, 60 people had signed up. By the time the conference began, a total of 98 people were registered. Participants came from 14 local churches and represented several denominations,

including the Reformed Church in Japan, the Church of Jesus Christ, and the Japan Baptist Association.

“Cooperation between denominations and missions organizations is not a common thing [in Japan],” says Jeong. “We hoped that the Coffee Break workshop would leave a great impression on everyone that we could work together for the glory of God.”

Less than 1 percent of Japan’s population is Christian. But many Japanese are open to new religions, and Coffee Break groups offer a way to introduce people to Jesus. Since the workshop, churches in Fukuoka City have started more than 10 Coffee Break groups. And those groups are not just for women, the traditional Coffee Break audience. Separate Coffee Break groups for men and youths are also forming.

—Sarah Van Stempvoort



# Building ‘Gospel Ecosystems’ to Transform Society

In 1993, Cambodia opened its doors to mission organizations and development agencies. While outside help was needed after the horrific years under Khmer Rouge rule, no one realized how the agencies would splinter the Cambodian church.

Agencies began funding different groups of leaders, churches, and programs. Mission organizations started up denominations. The church that had once been united fractured.

Rev. Heng Cheng has made it his mission to reunite Cambodian Christians. Today he is general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC), an alliance of about 70 percent of Cambodia’s Christian churches and organizations. The divide still exists, but it’s closing.

Cambodia’s situation is not unique. Other countries have seen similar divisions in their churches and communities. But a movement is starting to bridge the separation. It is a movement to empower local Christians to work together to restore God’s kingdom.



Christian leaders in Abuja, Nigeria, meet to learn and grow together.

Joel Huyser, a missionary with Christian Reformed World Missions, compares the movement to an ecosystem in which each part contributes to the overall health.

“We have done many good things both through our denominational agencies and as individual congregations and Christians,” Huyser says. But he says that maybe we could do even better by working alongside others to cultivate “gospel ecosystems”

in neighborhoods, cities, and nations.

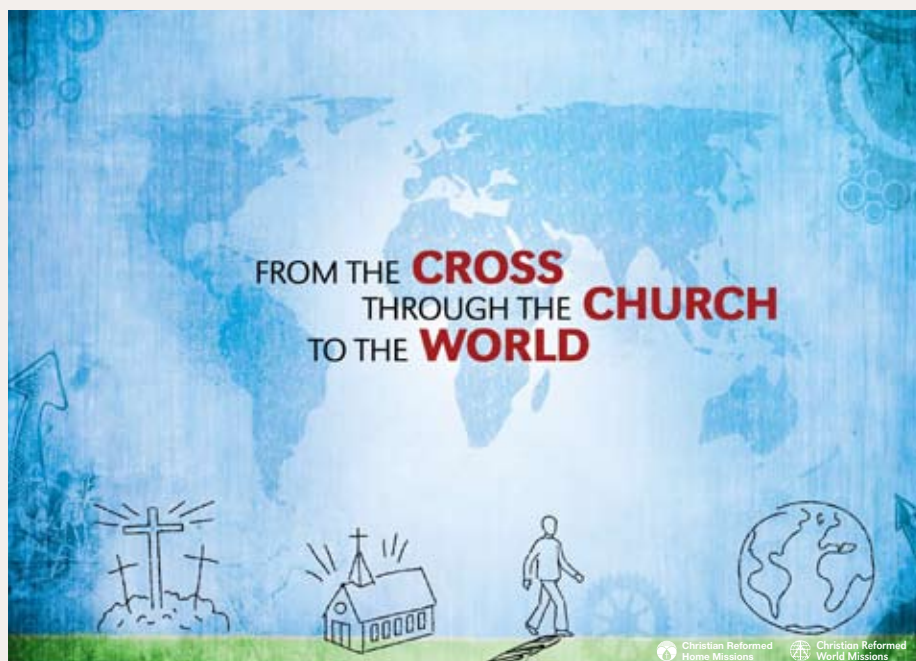
This idea has sparked a new ministry strategy: transformation networks. Transformation networks focus on city- and nationwide transformation, beginning with individuals and spreading to their families, churches, workplaces, and elsewhere until change takes root in every sector of society.

Christian Reformed World Missions, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Back to God Ministries International, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Partners Worldwide, and the Timothy Leadership Institute have been identifying countries in which they, along with others, can build on foundations that have already been laid. Some of these countries are Bangladesh, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Cambodia.

The goal is that transformation networks will spur deep-rooted and visible changes. Some of the hoped-for results include churches that teach and demonstrate the whole gospel, people practicing biblical values in their spheres of influence, mutual trust-filled relationships, justice for the poor and marginalized, and mutual learning and encouragement between local and global transformation networks.

Such deep-seated change is not something that happens overnight. It takes time, prayer, and people committed to working to make a difference. As Huyser says, “It takes a ‘gospel ecosystem’ in a village, a city, or nation to produce a movement that can bring real change. It demands everyday people walking hand in hand with their neighbors and contributing their own gifts and talents.”

—Sarah Van Stempvoort



## Thank God for Synod

One summer in the mid-1980s, while I was a student at Calvin College, I enrolled in summer classes. That was so I could graduate in three years. I was anxious to get on to seminary and reduce the time of sacrifice for my wife, Joanne, and our kids.

One benefit of being at Calvin during the summer that I didn't anticipate was synod, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

For two wonderful weeks I would get out of class and head for the Fine Arts Center, where synod was in session. Taking a seat in the balcony with my lunch and my philosophy textbook, I watched synod in action in all its warts and glory.

In all honesty, sometimes I fell asleep. Listening to people talk about pensions or the minutiae of budgets will do that to me. But sometimes I was on the edge of my seat, enthralled by eloquent speeches or captivated by the passionate debates.

It got really interesting when synod delegates discussed hot-button issues. Since this was more than 25 years ago, I can't remember precisely what they were, but I imagined myself seated at a table on that cramped stage, and inside my head I voted along with the delegates. Sometimes I agreed with the majority; other times I didn't, but I saw how the process worked and came away with a greater appreciation for the wisdom and commitment of those who made the decisions.

Not everyone would enjoy such weeks. Some find these kinds of meetings tedious. Some are frustrated by the process of deliberation and discernment. That's OK, because God has wired each one of us in different ways. God has assigned each of us unique gifts and proclivities.

“As a student I watched synod in all its warts and glory.”

Whether or not we'd enjoy being at synod, we can all thank the Lord for what synod is. It's the coming together of leaders (elders and ministers) from the width, breadth, and depth of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It's a powerful expression of our unity in Christ—a unity that transcends race, age, education, gender, and geography. It's the way we set priorities for denominational ministries. It's the place where hard and complex decisions have to be made.



Synod is also the place and time when we, as the CRC, celebrate our unity with people and churches outside our denomination. Representatives of churches and ecumenical organizations from around the globe come to extend us the hand of fellowship as we encourage each other in faith and ministry.

All that unity, that fellowship, that discernment, that vision of future possibilities

is a gift of the Holy Spirit. God sees to it that the ministry of his church moves ahead.

Maybe you'll be able to join me and the delegates and denominational staff people as Synod 2011 meets at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., June 10-16. Maybe you'll watch the live webcast and be part of synod that way. Maybe you're grateful that synod happens, but you have no intention of watching it. Or maybe you don't think much about such things at all.

No matter who you are or what you'll be doing in mid-June, I have a favor to ask: please keep synod in your prayers. Pray for safe travel for all those converging on Calvin's campus. Pray for God's great wisdom on the part of delegates as they make decisions both mundane and exciting, both routine and controversial.

Pray that the result will be a blessing on the Christian Reformed Church and on the world and the society of which we are a part.

Thank you. ■



Rev. Bruce Adema is director of Canadian Ministries and acting interim executive director for the Christian Reformed Church.

## Moving Day in West Africa

For the past seven years, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has been deeply involved with the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account's endeavor to expand the amount of irrigated land here in our adopted country in West Africa.

With your prayers and pleas to Congress, we were able to bring to light corrupt individuals who were trying to hijack this project for their own benefit to the detriment of our friends and neighbors. Had those greedy persons succeeded, our neighbors would have been pushed off their land without compensation. Praise God that justice prevailed instead.

### Unintended Consequences

One unintended consequence was that the village where we have lived for the past 23 years was slated for destruction. It was leveled and made into irrigated fields. As a result, all the inhabitants had to be resettled.

A core value of our ministry is that we emulate Jesus Christ, who became incarnate so that God could reach humankind. We too "move in" and live closely with our neighbors. As a result, when the village census was taken, we were included, and the number "26" was painted on our front door to identify us. Once the new village was constructed, our family would have a new home and be resettled just like everyone else. We were going



A donkey pulls a cart full of a family's belongings.

to have an insider's view of what it's like to be subsistence farmers experiencing forced resettlement.

### Moving Day

Moving day arrived on a pleasant, clear February morning after literally years of meetings, planning, and preparation. The U.S. government went to extraordinary lengths to make this resettlement as smooth as possible. The village was visited by anthropologists, agriculture experts, cattle experts, literacy teachers, and many others.

The young men of the village were hired to be the movers. A few days before the move, a team came through and tagged every family's possessions with their I.D. number. We had "26" tags on everything we owned. Then a locally hired truck arrived, and the young men jumped out and started loading possessions for the one-mile trip to the new village.

Several women were hired to help with meal preparation. The planners, alert to the smallest details, were concerned that in all the upheaval the families would become separated from their grain, their cooking pots,

or their firewood. To avoid this, meals were prepared at a location in the new village and delivered right to the recipients' doors. It reminded us of Meals on Wheels!

Several rams were provided, so each meal could include fresh mutton. I don't think our neighbors have ever experienced fresh meat twice a day for three days in a row.

### The Outcome

Despite this major disruption to their lives, our neighbors were cheerful and joyful during the move. Nearly all of them had lived their entire lives in the former village. While they were sad at being forced to someplace new, they knew that they would be getting irrigated fields and that their standard of living was going to take a huge leap forward.

Through this whole process they were treated with dignity and respect. If you are a U.S. taxpayer, you funded this project. As someone personally affected by *your* project, I can say, "Well done!"

Many of our neighbors have expressed the same sentiment. They have stopped by

to thank us for this huge blessing in their lives. The Holy Spirit is at work here. Some who previously opposed our message and ridiculed those who are interested have come to thank us. They have even asked if there is something they can do to show their gratitude for the advocacy that resulted in this.

It is difficult to explain the scope of what has happened here. For the first time our village will have a school and teachers. A clinic and warehouses have been built. Ditches have been dug along the new streets to move rainwater away. And our friends will soon have income from their fields to pay for medicine, to purchase what foodstuffs they can't grow, and to pay school fees.

CRWRC, even in the best of financial times, would never have enough resources to bring about this level of impact in economic change in such a short time. But, thanks to your support of us, CRWRC has been present and our Lord has been active. Rejoice with us, and may we see God's kingdom ever expanding here. ■

— Scott Crickmore,  
CRWRC-West Africa



Steve Griffith and Becky Kim show the countries where they helped.

## Calvin College Concert Benefits Kenya, Honduras

Calvin College sophomore Becky Kim organized a concert this spring to raise money for a replacement water pump for an orphanage in Kenya and to purchase supplies for a medical center in Honduras.

Kim, who is also a student senator at Calvin, was inspired to organize the concert after going on Calvin's interim trip "Kenya: Leadership in Africa."

During the trip, her class visited the House of Hope orphanage, which is run by a Grand Rapids, Mich., couple. "I was moved by their ministry," Kim said.

She learned about the lack of clean water in the area and how the couple was trying to raise money to replace a broken water pump. The money raised from the concert is helping the orphanage buy the

replacement pump to supply clean water.

The idea to raise money for the medical center in the rural city of Cusuna, Honduras, came from Calvin junior Steve Griffith, who plays bass guitar for one of the 10 student and faculty bands that performed at the concert.

Last summer, Griffith volunteered at the Honduran medical center after being

referred there by one of his professors. Due to an inefficient universal-health-care system, the medical center doesn't get enough supplies from the government to treat even the simplest problems. "The vitamins that I brought were all gone in a week," Griffith said.

During the concert, student senators organized a silent auction of photographs, paintings, purses, duffel bags, and other items made by students and alumni and donated to the same causes as the concert. In total, the students raised about \$1,200. ■

—Theo Voss is a junior at Calvin College

## Hip-Hop Ministry Impacts Holland Church

Every Saturday night hip-hop music rumbles rhythmically from the building of Imagine Fellowship Church in Holland, Mich. Inside, young men play video games, dance, eat, and listen to the gospel.

This vibrant ministry—EK-HO: Revive, Reflect, Respond—is bringing the gospel to young, unchurched men in an area where gang violence is on the rise.

Meaning "echoing the gospel through hip-hop," EK-HO was launched in October 2010. Already, 25 to 30 neighborhood youths from a mix of cultures and economic backgrounds attend the Saturday-night celebration. It's a safe



place where they can hang out and just be themselves, where they can have fun while building positive relationships.

Rev. Wayne Coleman, who planted Imagine Fellowship several years ago, started EK-HO. "They need people to identify with them and their music," he says of the urban youths. "If Jesus can be the Messiah for everyone, why can't he be the Messiah for the post-modern hip-hop culture?"

To keep the EK-HO ministry safe, the church set a few guidelines. "We make sure people understand the rules and understand what lyrics are permissible," Coleman says. "The kids know this is a church, and they respect that and respond accordingly."

Coleman sees EK-HO as an opportunity to befriend the youths and eventually share the gospel with them. "We want to share life skills with

the youths and talk with them," he says.

So far, EK-HO is making an impact. One brother and sister who have been attending EK-HO since opening day recently became followers of Jesus. Their mother, an atheist, is becoming curious about church. Additionally, several gang members have volunteered to become part of the EK-HO planning team, and some have visited the church's worship services on Sunday.

To learn more about the ministry, see [www.crcna.org/pages/crhm\\_greatlakes\\_imagine.cfm#9339](http://www.crcna.org/pages/crhm_greatlakes_imagine.cfm#9339). ■

—Laura Posthumus, Christian Reformed Home Missions



The six Naputenga children (in white shirts) were baptized Dec. 31, 2010, which led to their parents' decision to follow Christ.

## Faith Takes Hold for Indonesian Family

As a member of the Sumbanese people on the West Sumba island of Indonesia, Mr. Kabula Naputenga practiced the Merapu ancestor religion. At 70 years old, neither he nor his wife had ever attended school, and they were unable to read or write.

But Kabula Naputenga wanted more for his six children, so he worked hard as a rice farmer to send his three sons and three daughters to a local Christian school that had a reputation for quality education.

"Many times they asked me for permission to leave the Merapu faith and be baptized as Christians," Naputenga told Hesron Kentju Limu, the listener-community coordinator for Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) in West Sumba. "But in the past I always forbid them."

However, a few years ago Limu gave Naputenga a specialized radio so he could listen to BTGMI's Indonesian programs.

"Little by little I learned about Jesus," says Naputenga. "So last year when my children asked me permission again, telling me they really wanted to be baptized, I said yes."

All six of the Naputenga children were baptized late last year. "When I witnessed their baptism, I felt that Jesus was asking me and my wife to follow him also," said Naputenga.

He and his wife then met with the pastor and elders of the church. Not long afterward the Naputenga children joyfully witnessed their parents being baptized together.

"Praise the Lord," says Kabula Naputenga. "Now we are a Christian family. Thank you for the radio ministry; it really helps us to know more about the Christian faith." ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, staff writer for *Back to God Ministries International*

## Calvin Seminary and Japan Remain Close

Connections run deep between Calvin Theological Seminary and Japan.

Several Japanese students have studied at the school, and two are currently enrolled. Former students are now pastors in the region of Japan hit by the devastating earthquake and tsunami in mid-March.

"It is hard to imagine what the people, both the earthquake victims and relief workers from organizations such as the Reformed Church in Japan, face every day," says Richard Sytsma, dean of students at CTS and a former missionary to Japan.

Sytsma grew up in Japan as the son of Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries, then returned after his seminary studies, along with his wife.

Starting in 1952, his father, also Richard, was one of the first Christian Reformed missionaries in Japan. At that time it was not too many years after World War II, and the country was economically poor.

The Sytsma family worked closely with pastors from the Reformed Church in Japan to start new churches. The example of his father and mother inspired their son Richard to missions, he says. "They endeared themselves to the Japanese. God used my parents to build up the church in Japan."

By the time he returned to work in Japan, overlapping with his father for 15 years, the country had come roaring back economically. But it was still hard to make inroads into the predominantly Buddhist and Shinto society.

Curiously, although Japan remains largely non-Christian, the Bible is one of the best-selling books in the country.

Sytsma says all of the damage and uncertainty created by the largest recorded earthquake in Japan's history is an opportunity for Christian witness.

"Japanese Christians and missionaries report sincere gratitude on the part of suf-



From left: Andy Sytsma with son Caleb, Richard E. Sytsma, and his father Richard D. Sytsma

fering people for the efforts of the Christian churches to distribute food, water, and needed resources. They also report an increased interest in the gospel," he says. ■

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*

# What's the Scoop?

Sometimes the most wonderful sound in the heat of summer can be the music of an ice cream truck. When I was little, the truck selling ice cream in my neighborhood used to play the song "If You're Happy and You Know It." My friends and I were always happy when we heard the truck coming down our street! Whether you're a fan of creamy vanilla ice cream or fruity popsicles, you probably enjoy

a cool treat on a hot day. But have you ever heard the "scoop" on where ice cream comes from and how it's made? Read on! And the next time you enjoy this cool treat in the summer sun, think of the biggest thing we can be happy about: the warmth of God's deep love for us, which God has shown us especially through his Son, Jesus!



## History of Ice Cream

Historians have traced frozen desserts to the ancient Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The Roman emperor Nero sometimes sent slaves to collect snow from mountaintops to be mixed with honey and fruit. Ancient Arabs mixed milk and sugar to create a creamy delight we know today as ice cream.

The famous explorer Marco Polo is often credited with introducing ice cream or "frozen snow" to European countries. Many people believe he brought ice cream to Italy from one of his long voyages to China. Ice cream was later introduced to other countries like France and England.

Some legends say that King Charles I of England loved ice cream so much that he paid his personal chef a large sum of money (500 pounds) a year to keep the recipe a secret.

We may never know exactly how ice cream spread throughout the world, but one thing is certain: ice cream is here to stay!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Quick, Easy Ice Cream

Try this fast ice cream recipe—don't forget to ask an adult to help! (If you do not like ice cream or are allergic to dairy products, leave out the cream to make a tasty smoothie instead!)

### What you'll need:

- A blender
- 1 package frozen fruit
- ½ cup sugar
- ⅔ cup heavy cream

### What to do:

Carefully mix the fruit and sugar together in the blender. While the blender is still running, slowly pour the cream over the fruit mixture. Continue blending until mixture is smooth. Serve immediately and enjoy!



## Science of Ice Cream

Have you ever wondered how ice cream is made? Try this science experiment at home to find out!

### What you'll need:

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream or half-and-half (ask your parents to help you find this)
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup rock salt
- Ice cubes (enough to fill a gallon-size bag about half full)
- 1 pint-size zippered plastic bag
- 1 gallon-size zippered plastic bag

### What to do:

Carefully pour the sugar, cream, and vanilla into a bowl and stir together until the sugar dissolves. Then pour the cream and sugar mixture into the pint-size plastic bag and seal the bag tightly. Add ice and salt to the gallon-size bag. Put the smaller bag of cream and sugar into the larger bag with ice and salt and seal tightly. Shake the bag for 5 to 10 minutes. (If you get tired, take turns shaking the bag with a friend or sibling.) Then take the small bag out of the larger bag and scoop out the ice cream. Enjoy!

### How Does It Work?

The cold temperature of the ice slows down the cream and sugar molecules, allowing the mixture to slowly thicken. Shaking the bag allows the liquid to mix with air as it freezes, giving the ice cream a smooth and soft texture. (If you just put the mixture in the freezer without shaking it, it will turn rock-solid.) The salt makes the ice even colder. Did you know that salt can lower the temperature of ice to below 0 degrees Fahrenheit (-18 Celsius)? The colder the ice, the quicker the mixture will turn into ice cream!



## Screamin' Ice Cream Games

Need something fun to do this summer? Host an ice cream party! Invite friends, family, and neighbors to your house to make homemade ice cream using one of the recipes on these pages, or ask each person to bring a carton of his or her favorite ice cream to share. Then try playing one of these games.

### No Hands!

Scoop three to four equal globs of ice cream onto separate plates or bowls, one for each person playing the game. Do not give them spoons! When you say "Go!" have everyone race to eat as much ice cream as they can—without using their hands! The person who finishes the ice cream first wins.

### Guess the Flavor

Scoop three to five different flavors of ice cream into small cups, then place the cups in a row on a table. (Make sure the cups are not clear so that no one can see which type of ice cream is inside each cup.) Place a spoon in front of each cup of ice cream. Blindfold each player and let him or her taste the ice cream inside each cup and guess what flavor it is. Have a scorekeeper give a point for each flavor the player guesses correctly. Replace the spoons with clean ones after each player's turn. The person with the most points wins!



**Christin Baker** is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She and her family live in Grand Rapids, Mich.





# The Gospel **Amid** Yanks and **Canucks**

CONSIDERING THE CHALLENGES OF OUR CULTURAL CONTEXTS

“**S**O WHICH DO YOU PREFER, living in Canada or the United States?”

As a dual citizen and a pastor whose 20 years of ministry have been split evenly in each of the two countries, I’ve been asked that question many times by people on both sides of the border. Call me a coward, but I usually take the easy—yet true!—way out and say there are good and bad aspects of life in either place.

Since July is when Canadians and Americans celebrate their national birthdays, Canada Day and Independence Day, it’s fitting that we reflect on the unique challenges we face in bringing a clear witness to the gospel in both contexts.

I see many similarities between Canadian and American culture, but I see differences too. I recall a conversation I had with someone shortly after moving to the United States in 1998. He asked me how living in the U.S. was different from living in Canada, and as soon as I began describing the different understanding of the relationship between church and state, he responded with, “Yes, here in America we prefer the more idolatrous arrangement.”

Wow. He wasn’t totally serious, of course, but his comment still surprised me. My understanding of his words became clearer as the years went by, especially after 9-11. I began to see how strong and seductive the tendency toward civil religion—an alignment of political and spiritual devotion—is in America.

## **Patriotic Overkill?**

In 2005 the National Day of Prayer in the United States fell on the same day as Ascension Day—May 5. That morning I went to a chapel service at the Christian elementary school my children attended at the time. It was all very good—lots of praying and lots of singing, especially of patriotic songs. But one thing struck me as odd and quite out of character for a Christian school: not one reference to Ascension Day was ever made. I realize that Ascension Day is often a forgotten feast in the Christian calendar, but to have so much patriotic fervor on display without any specific reference to our ascended Lord, who sits enthroned above all the nations of the earth, struck me as representing a confusion of allegiances.

Sometimes the tendency toward civil religion in America is evident on a much larger scale. In his State of the Union address in 2003, President George W. Bush noted that “there’s power,



# “We prefer the more idolatrous arrangement.”

wonder-working power, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people.” While that’s true, substituting a well-known Christian hymn’s reference to “the precious blood of the Lamb” with traditional American values is misguided.

Something similar occurred in 2005, in Bush’s second inaugural address. Here the president spoke of how “Americans move forward in every generation by reaffirming all that is good and true that came before—ideals of justice and conduct that are the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Again, there is no denying the truth of that statement, but the revision of Hebrews 13:8, where we read that *Jesus Christ* “is the same yesterday and today and forever,” is unmistakable.

And then there was the president’s speech given on Ellis Island on the first anniversary of 9-11. With the Statue of Liberty’s illumination in New York Harbor as his backdrop, President Bush said that the “ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.” Here was civil religion in America displayed in one of its most immodest moments.

That America is a good nation whose influence on the rest of the world has been enormously beneficial is beyond dispute. But as brightly as it shines, does the light of American influence really warrant the usurping of the image the gospel of John uses in reference to Jesus—the Light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness will not overcome (John 1:5)?

## Trouble North of the Border

Though civil religion poses a serious threat in America, one has to wonder whether the situation in Canada is any better. Here an opposite but equally corrosive influence on the gospel is present: secularism.

The assumption in secular Canada is that all religions are equal and none is essential, so no evidence of religious influence on public life is permitted. To borrow my friend’s comment, an observer of Canadian political and religious practice could legitimately say, “Here in Canada we prefer the more heretical arrangement.” That’s because Canadian culture tends to regard Christianity as a strictly personal matter.

Occasionally, Christian faith may be affirmed for its sentimental value. Increasingly, it is characterized as illogical and obsolete. So, while the tendency to identify Christian devotion with patriotism may be not nearly as strong in Canada as it is in the United States, cultural receptiveness to Christianity in Canada is both weak and waning.

Last December an article in the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s national newspaper, reported the structural demise of church buildings in Quebec. Not that long ago, Quebec was patently Catholic. Today it is undoubtedly the most secular environment in North America. Years of dwindling church attendance and rising maintenance costs have taken a toll on church buildings, rendering many of them unusable.

The *Globe and Mail* article quoted an urban-studies researcher who predicted that 60 percent of the churches in Quebec today would close within 15 years. What’s happening to Catholic churches in Quebec is occurring elsewhere. The United Church of Canada is the largest Protestant denomination here, and it closes one church a week.

This is not to suggest that Canada is a spiritual wasteland. Most United churches that are closing are small, rural congregations that have been affected by drastic changes in the agricultural industry, resulting in fewer family farms than in previous years. There are even encouraging signs of spiritual renewal in Canada, particularly in urban centers. But the force of secularism in Canada, like that of civil religion in America, is strong.

Rev. Michael Wagenman, who was born and raised in the United States and currently serves as the CRC chaplain at the University of Western Ontario in London, believes that the different cultural forces in Canada and the United States bring the same result: a watering down of the gospel. He said: “In the U.S., we forget the gospel’s prophetic call against consumerism, militarism, and nationalism, and in Canada we are hesitant to declare boldly the distinctiveness of the Good News that’s only found in Jesus because we don’t want to be accused of upsetting anyone. In both cases, Jesus is turned into a one-dimensional character: all love, help, and compassion, but with no judgment on sin or radical calls to discipleship that’s distinctive from the culture.”

The good news is that, despite their flaws, Canada and the United States provide abundant opportunities for genuine Christian witness. The kingdom of heaven, praise God, is present and active in both countries—indeed, in every nation. I smile when border officials from both countries welcome me home when I travel from one country into the next. Perhaps that’s as good an indication of what the kingdom of heaven is like as any. ■



Rev. Peter Hoytema is pastor of Westmount Christian Reformed Church in Strathroy, Ontario.



## Eight Ways to Beat Summer Boredom

**IF YOUR FAMILY IS LIKE MINE**, you won't make it through the first week of summer vacation without hearing the "b" word: "bored." But with a whole cyber-universe of activities and instructions at your fingertips, there's no excuse. Here are ten fantastically fun things to do this summer, along with links for learning more:

**1. Serve up some stop-motion movies.** With a digital camera, a bit of patience, and some free software, you can make Lego minifigures, clay shapes, or paper cutouts move like magic. Find easy-to-understand instructions at <http://tinyurl.com/stopmotionfilms>. Kids younger than 12 will probably need help, but once they get the hang of it you'll be amazed by the results.

**2. Hold a neighborhood film festival.** Using your garage door or a white sheet for a screen, show your favorite family

There is a whole cyber-universe of activities and instructions at your fingertips.

movies outdoors! Add a community concessions stand, bug spray, and lawn chairs for a cheap and unforgettable night out. Get great ideas at <http://tinyurl.com/garagemovie>.

**3. Sharpen your word skills.** On the occasional rainy day, make your own word searches, crossword puzzles, and more at [www.discoveryeducation.com/puzzlemaker](http://www.discoveryeducation.com/puzzlemaker). Then swap with a friend and solve.

**4. Seek hidden treasure.** Geocaching is a worldwide phenomenon. Using a GPS device or a GPS-enabled cell phone or PDA, search for "treasure" someone else has hidden near your home or vacation site. To learn how, visit [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).

**5. Chronicle your adventures.** Turn one piece of paper into a mini-journal with instructions from <http://tinyurl.com/foldedbook>. Or learn how to turn an empty CD case and some fun paper into a mini scrapbook at <http://tinyurl.com/cdscrapbook> (simplify the process for younger kids—just decorate the inside of the CD case with scrapbook paper, then glue in a long accordion-folded piece of paper for the scrapbook pages).

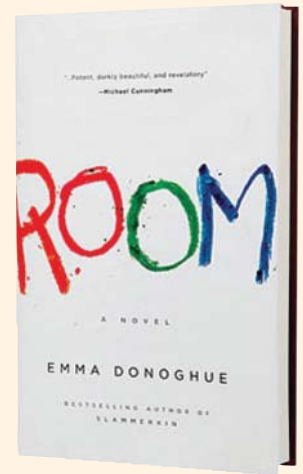
**6. Read up a storm.** Challenge your kids to read one Caldecott or Newbery award book for each year of their age. Find lists of all past winners at [www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.cfm](http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.cfm) or [www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.cfm](http://www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.cfm).

**7. Make stuff.** Visit standby site [www.familyfun.go.com](http://www.familyfun.go.com) for great kids' crafts, recipes, and more. Another site, [www.BusyBeeKidsCrafts.com](http://www.BusyBeeKidsCrafts.com), offers fun, non-threatening crafts for the younger set. And whatever you think of the woman herself, Martha Stewart's kids crafts are sophisticated, stylish, and relatively simple ([www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com)).

**8. Let the games begin!** Hold your own summer Olympics with games even non-athletes will love. Visit [www.pbskids.org/zoom/activities/games](http://www.pbskids.org/zoom/activities/games) for the longest list of relay races, chase games, and physical challenges you've ever seen. ■



**Sandy Swartzentruber** works for Faith Alive and is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.



## Room

by **Emma Donoghue**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Five-year-old Jack has lived his entire life in Room—an 11-by-11-foot space—with Ma, who has been imprisoned there for seven years since her abduction at age 19. Ma has done everything within her creative powers to nurture and protect Jack from Old Nick, their captor. Told from Jack's unique perspective, the novel *Room* insightfully and at times chillingly explores the opposing themes of freedom and bondage, reality and fantasy, and death and resurrection. (Little, Brown)





## Harvesting Fog

by **Luci Shaw**  
reviewed by **Allison Backous**

Luci Shaw's latest book of poetry, *Harvesting Fog*, marks her 30th book of poems. Shaw's words are both simple and lyrical, drawing us into trees, campfires, beetles, and psalms. This collection speaks to Shaw's wonder at the mystery of creation, honesty about struggle, and joy over a redeemed world: "No words are bright enough," she writes, "to catch those fingerprints of radiance that flicker on my wall." For poetry lovers and beginning readers, *Harvesting Fog* is a must-read. (Pinyon)



## Okay for Now

by **Gary D. Schmidt**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

"When you find something that's whole, you do what you can to keep it that way. And when you find something that isn't, then maybe it's not a bad idea to try to make it whole again."

These words from Gary Schmidt's latest young adult novel, *Okay for Now*, refer to an Audubon folio that is being sold off, page by page. But many things in the book are not whole, including the family of Doug Swieteck. Doug's life is shadowed by darkness, but he's holding onto what hope he can find. Along with a strong story and great characters, you'll find art, Vietnam, *Jane Eyre*, baseball, and more. Ages 12 and up. (Clarion)



## Praying for Strangers

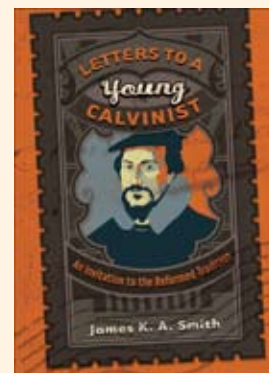
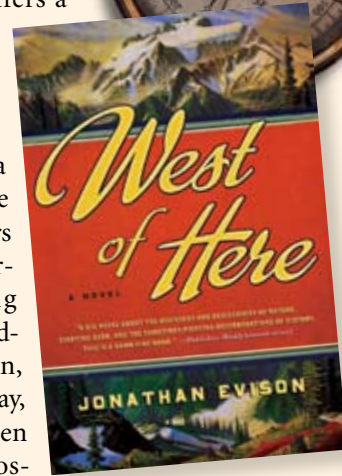
by **River Jordan**  
reviewed by **Kate Padilla**

Author River Jordan approached her New Year's resolution with the idea that she would pray for a different stranger each day. And, over the course of that year, she experienced a personal growth that she had never achieved in any previous resolution. By focusing on others, Jordan learned that "It's easier to pray for a stranger when we possess that place where we can walk on the waters that trouble us most, the tides of our emotions rising and rolling inside." (Penguin)

## West of Here

by **Jonathan Evison**  
reviewed by **Otto Selles**

This epic novel offers a tale of two frontiers. First, there is the final frontier of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula in 1889, where explorers and settlers seek fame and fortune by climbing mountains and building dams. And then, in the same area today, the frontier has been reduced to the prospects of dead-end jobs, abusive partners, drugs, and heartless love, set within a crumbling economy and a ravaged environment. Evison does an excellent job of switching between the two periods and juggling a host of engaging characters, all lost souls in search of themselves. (Algonquin)



## Letters to a Young Calvinist

by **James K.A. Smith**  
reviewed by **Brian Bork**

Calvinism is currently the unwitting hot topic among a subset of young, ardent evangelical Christians. Smith's engaging epistles are a welcome contribution to the conversation, especially in the way they shift the focus from rather loveless debates about predestination and election to a "wide-angle" perspective on the matter. His letters trace the contours of the tradition with kindness, patience, and generosity, and each one offers encouragement to sound the depths of the grand tradition we inhabit. (Brazos Press)

## One Crazy Summer

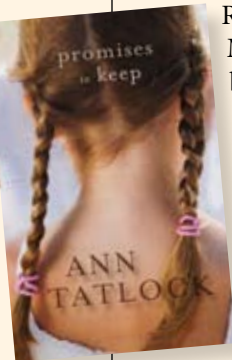
by **Rita Williams-Garcia**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In 1968, 11-year-old Delphine and her younger sisters visit Cecile, their derelict mother. When Cecile sends them to a summer day camp sponsored by the Black Panthers, a revolutionary organization, Delphine struggles to care for her sisters in their new politically-charged environment. Upon Cecile's arrest and subsequent release, she shares her life story with Delphine, who finally learns why Cecile deserted her children. This poignant young adult novel successfully tackles challenging themes: racism, oppression, poverty, and dysfunctional families. Ages 9-12. (Amistad)

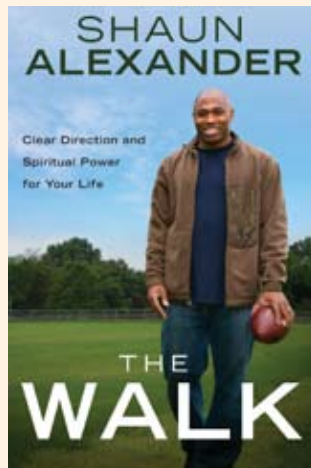


## Promises to Keep

by **Ann Tatlock**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**



Rosalind Anthony and Mara Nightingale are best friends with a common bond: they are both separated from their fathers. Roz's family has escaped from her abusive father, while Mara is still waiting to meet her own father. Fans of inspirational fiction will enjoy Tatlock's coming-of-age novel, in which she explores family issues, racism, and the human desire for safety and love. (Bethany House)



## The Walk

by **Shaun Alexander**  
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Former professional and college football star Shaun Alexander outlines five steps of spiritual

growth that he believes the Lord wants to guide people through. Alexander says that God is a God of order and will take as much time as necessary to move people from unbeliever to believer, to example, to teacher, and to imparter. The book is filled with examples of how everyday people walk in faith and also includes biblical characters such as the apostle Peter. (WaterBrook)

## The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam

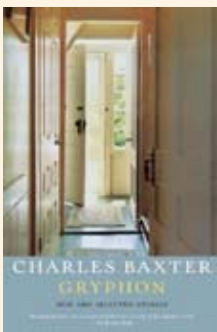
by **Eliza Griswold**  
reviewed by **Adele Konyndyk**



For seven years, poet and journalist Eliza Griswold met with Muslims and Christians throughout Asia and Africa to explore the various issues that are firing clashes between and within these faiths. She presents her findings with objectivity, compassion, and vivid sensory detail in *The Tenth Parallel*. A richly observed encounter with people on both sides of the divide, Griswold's book is an excellent journey into the space "where the horizontal, secular axis of the everyday intersect[s] with the vertical, sacred world of God." (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

## Gryphon: New and Selected Stories

by **Charles Baxter**  
reviewed by **Phil Christman, Jr**



A substitute teacher wanders into an elementary-school classroom, tells a series of dazzling, illuminating, heartbreaking falsehoods, and disappears. This is the plot of Charles Baxter's classic short story "Gryphon," and it's a serviceable metaphor for what Baxter does in this deeply satisfying collection. Through his made-up protagonists (a pair of disappointed musicians who almost fall in love; a guilt-ridden professor who horrifies his family by inviting homeless people into the guestroom), Baxter captures the hidden lives of bottled-up Midwesterners. (Pantheon)

## Can We Save the Tiger?

by **Martin Jenkins**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



Conservationist Martin Jenkins introduces children to the sad reality of extinct animals, but he doesn't end there. His hopeful, compelling narrative conveys the urgency of supporting efforts to save animals on the brink of extinction and relates how that has been accomplished. Additional notes throughout the book explain where animals have been or are currently found and when they were last seen or what problems they face at present. Vicky White's intricate, stunning pencil and oil illustrations are a feast for the eyes and a celebration of God's marvelous creation. Ages 5-7. (Candlewick)



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

## Why the Belhar Should Not Be a Confession

**IN THE NOVEMBER 2010 BANNER**, Rev. Peter Borgdorff stated why the Christian Reformed Church in North America should adopt the Belhar as a confession. I agree that we should endorse it in some way. But I find decisive reasons why we should not make it one of our doctrinal standards:

1. *Insufficient Content.* Compared to our three “Forms of Unity” (as well as to our Contemporary Testimony), the Belhar Confession is much too brief and narrow to be a confession. It neither summarizes the Christian faith (as do the Heidelberg Catechism and Belgic Confession) nor elaborates God’s plan of redemption (Canons of Dort). Moreover, its prologue states that it was not meant to be a doctrinal standard.

2. *Social Gospel/Liberation Theology.* The Belhar focuses on God’s concern for the poor, racial reconciliation, and social justice. But it does not first make clear the basic gospel truths that all humans are sinners, that salvation is God’s gracious gift of eternal life extended without regard to social status, and that salvation comes only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Read as a confession—a summary of the Christian faith or the gospel—the Belhar does look like the social gospel or liberation theology. It seems to equate the gospel with social well-being and to conflate human reconciliation with reconciliation to God. It does not sufficiently distinguish salvation from providence, eternal life from earthly welfare, or unity in Christ from human solidarity.

Indeed, the Belhar has been promoted as liberation theology by prominent leaders of denominations in the former World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, which includes the CRC). Allan Boesak, an original sponsor of the Belhar and former president of WARC, is a famous example. The Belhar has been widely used to advocate progressive economic and political policies and gay marriage as gospel mandates.

3. *Theological Ambiguity.* The authors of the Belhar probably did not intend it as liberation theology. (They were more influenced by Karl Barth.) But that reputation has stuck. The Belhar’s wording is not sufficient to rule out progressive theologies or to make its intended meaning clear. This ambiguity disqualifies it as a confession, because confessions are supposed to clarify doctrine.

4. *Confessional Integrity.* Adopting the Belhar as a confession despite the deficiencies mentioned above will undermine our confessional integrity. If we give it the status of the Three

I find decisive reasons why we should not make it one of our **doctrinal standards**.

Forms of Unity, then either we pretend that they are equal in doctrinal authority, or we have a double standard for confessions, or we inflate the Belhar, or we deflate the other Forms to its level. None of those options has integrity. (Neither does ranking the Belhar above our Contemporary Testimony.)

5. *Redundancy.* The Belhar adds little to what the CRC already affirms. Our Contemporary Testimony repeatedly addresses ethnic diversity, unity in Christ, and social justice. Synod condemned *apartheid* in 1988(9). And our report *God’s Diverse and Unified Family* (1996) is much more extensive than the Belhar.

6. *Precedent-setting.* If it is necessary for the church to make biblical mandates into confessions in order to take them seriously, then we should also add confessions about worship, evangelism, lifestyle, and more. But isn’t Scripture sufficient?

7. *Potential Divisiveness.* The Belhar is supposed to promote unity. If it becomes a confession, then all officebearers must subscribe to it (unlike the ordination of women). Will those who cannot conscientiously do so have to leave office? Will they stay in the CRC?

What will we do with the Belhar? The World Communion of Reformed Churches is watching us, and so are other Reformed, Presbyterian, and evangelical friends. Let’s not undermine our confessional integrity and unity by adopting the Belhar for the sake of symbolic relevance and a few ecumenical relationships. Instead, let’s retain integrity, unity, relevance, and broad ecumenical respect by endorsing it as a *testimony*, *affirmation*, or *declaration* subject to our Three Forms of Unity. ■ **WEB Q’S**



**Dr. John Cooper** is professor of philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Rev. Gilbert Varela leads young people from the neighborhood in a weekly game of soccer.



RYAN STRUYK

## Illinois Church a Safe Place for Tears

At church, it's okay not to be okay.

Jessica Groen wanted people to know that, so she came up with the idea for services of lament at Peace Christian Reformed Church in South Holland, Ill.

"I noticed in my church that people leave the sanctuary if they are crying," said Groen, who has struggled with depression in the past. "It's weird that we feel we have to take our tears to the library."

To help her plan, the church's director of music ministry, Jane Bolkema, referred Groen to *Reformed Worship* magazine, which had a feature on using psalms of lament in worship.

"When you dig into the Bible more, it's amazing to find out how much is in there having to do with lament," Groen said. "Lament is a way of grabbing onto God, a faithful way of interacting with God."

The church has held three evening lament services so far: one on work, one called "Blue Christmas," and one on love for Valentine's Day. A fourth service, lamenting environmental damage, is planned for Earth Day.

"Part of our goal was to let the South Holland community know that we care about their suffering," said Bolkema.

The services focus on lament, but end in words of comfort from God as spoken in the Bible.

Groen said the church is considering having a morning worship service of lament in the fall, possibly in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Michigan Church Offers Soccer with a Curve

Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich., got the ball rolling in reaching out to its neighborhood with its "Soccer with a Curve" ministry.

Every week young people who live near the church get together for a game of soccer and a Bible study. The players hail from many countries, including Burundi, Costa Rica, El Salvador, England, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Russia.

Rev. Gilbert Varela, the teaching and diversity pastor of Kelloggsville, plays along with the young people in the soccer games and leads the short Bible study afterward.

Varela said that his Costa Rican background has helped him reach out to those in the neighborhood with international roots.

"Most of [them] are immigrants without people in the States. They are looking for friendship and a place to belong," explained Varela.

Through the ministry, the church has seen many of the players attend worship on Sundays. "It's hard to bring them to worship, but when you invite them to play soccer, [they] are more open," said Varela.

—Ryan Struyk

## Is Colorado Church Too Small or Still Growing?

Can a church be small and yet still healthy? That's a question that concerns Jewel Christian Reformed Church in Denver, after a recent church visitors' report to Classis Rocky Mountain (the congregation's regional group of churches).

Church visitors are officebearers from a neighboring church who visit churches on behalf of the classis.

"When we saw their books, they were taking in from the congregation one-third of their total budget. Two-thirds was coming from savings," said Rev. Rick Ebbers, one of the church visitors.

"If they continue on the same trajectory, they will be out of reserves in two years. Our recommendation was . . . that classis send us back in six months to see if any improvements were being made. If not, to begin discussion for succession."

Rev. Gerald Vander Hoek, minister of Jewel, disagrees with the



SARAH BOONSTRA

A few young attendees gather for the children's message.

assessment. "Worst-case scenario," he said, "[if] no offerings were done for two years, we could still make it with all of our ministries in place for the next two years."

Vander Hoek says the church's biggest concern is growth.

The church recently changed their name and vision. "We're in the process of putting together goals for growth," said Ron Pickens, president of Jewel's council. "It would be really great if we filled the pews, but that's not our prime

objective. Our goal is to reach other people and bring them into the kingdom of God."

Vander Hoek feels that Jewel meets all the criteria of a healthy church set forth by synod, the CRC's annual leadership meeting.

Classis Rocky Mountain did not make a decision on the matter. The church visitors' report, along with Jewel's response, was received for information.

—Sarah Boonstra

## CRC's Former Executive Director Speaks Out on Resignation

**R**ev. Jerry Dykstra, former executive director of the Christian Reformed Church, told *The Banner* that he was not “forced out,” referring to his April 5 resignation.

“The Board [of Trustees] and I came to a mutual agreement that it was best that I leave,” he said. Nonetheless, he was surprised by his April 5 meeting with the BOT. “I was not expecting to resign,” he said.

Dykstra held the position of executive director for five years. “The establishment of The Network and the shift in focus

toward creating and sustaining local congregations has been both exciting and rewarding,” he said.

Rev. Mark Vermaire, chair of the Board of Trustees, said the mutual decision for Dykstra to resign had nothing to do with the way he lived his personal life or with his doctrine, and that the reasons are properly confidential between Dykstra and the board.

“At times in every congregation, the council with elders, deacons, and pastors makes a decision that the members of the congregation don’t understand or might even think they disagree with,” Vermaire said. “Yet the servant leaders of God’s church make



Rev. Jerry Dykstra

a decision together—albeit at times with differences among them—based on what they know and are called to do. The BOT, of which the executive director is a member, does its best with the calling given by the church.”

—Gayla R. Postma

## Zero Percent Ministry Share Increase Proposed

**T**he Christian Reformed Church’s Board of Trustees (BOT) is proposing that ministry shares be held at \$316.76 per member for the 2012 budget year, for a projected total of \$26.2 million.

Ministry shares are the monies collected from congregations to support the joint ministries carried out at the denominational level.

The total projected denominational revenue from all sources is \$200 million, but about half of that is the operating budget for Calvin College. The ministry share portion for Calvin College is approximately \$2.7 million, which is used for tuition grants for Christian Reformed students.

Excluding Calvin College, ministry share income amounts to approximately \$23.5 million, about 31 percent of the income received by the denominational agencies.

Another 45 percent is received from gifts and offerings other than ministry shares.

The remaining 24 percent comes primarily from grants and Faith Alive sales.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Synod Asked Not to Endorse Diversity Report

**T**he Diversity in Leadership report adopted by the Christian Reformed Church’s Board of Trustees in February (see *Banner*, April 2011) is continuing to generate discussion by individuals, groups, and ministry agencies of the CRC.

The board of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has asked Synod 2011 not to endorse the diversity report. BTGMI is the broadcast media ministry of the CRC.

At its April 28 meeting the BTGMI board expressed appreciation for the goal of the report, to increase multiethnic leadership within the denomination’s senior ranks, but requests that instead of endorsing the report Synod 2011 refer the report to churches and agency boards for discussion and then bring the report back to Synod 2012 for a decision.

“There is a lack of clarity that . . . will cause confusion in its implementation,” the BTGMI report stated. “This includes but is not limited to the question of whether the report is establishing ‘quotas’ with regard to minority leadership and expectations on senior leadership as to the hiring of ethnic minorities.”

The report also notes that the diversity report recommendations intersect significantly with the work of agency boards, yet those boards had no opportunity to provide feedback before the BOT adopted them. “Among issues of concern are the

control of agency boards over job descriptions of senior staff, nominations for agency boards, hiring of senior staff, and evaluation of senior staff,” BTGMI said.

The report adopted by the BOT in February states 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.

Rev. John Bolt, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, sent a widely circulated e-mail calling for the report to be challenged, saying it is a violation of Reformed polity and the gospel. Bolt has also publicly declared his opposition to adopting the Belhar Confession.

In response, 38 attendees at the biennial Black and Reformed Conference wrote a formal letter to the Board of Trustees, calling the e-mail partisan, offensive, disrespectful, and inappropriate.

The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group and synod’s Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee both planned to send representatives to the seminary to discuss the matter with Bolt.

And finally, the CRC’s Committee for Disability Concerns expressed in its minutes a desire to see the definition of diversity broadened to include more than just racial diversity.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Synod 2011: What to Watch For

It is never easy to predict what topics will prompt vigorous debate during the Christian Reformed Church's weeklong annual synod (leadership meeting). There are plenty of choices this year:

- Proposed revisions to the translations of the Reformed confessions
- Allowing baptized children to take communion without making profession of faith
- The revised Form of Subscription
- Writings of Calvin College professors
- Homosexuality
- Recent high-profile resignations
- The plan to achieve ethnic diversity in the denomination's senior management

Synod 2011 will convene in Grand Rapids, Mich., June 10-16. The *Agenda for Synod 2011* is 695 pages, almost as thick as last year's *Agenda*. That's because both

agendas contain all three of the CRC's Reformed confessional standards (Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism) in their proposed revised translations.

While it is often lamented that the Reformed confessions don't get enough attention, at Synod 2011 they will get plenty.

First there are the proposed revisions of the translations to bring them in line with the translations used by the Reformed Church in America.

Those proposed revisions have a sizable number of detractors, as evidenced by eight overtures (requests) asking synod not to adopt the revisions, primarily because of the reduced number of masculine pronouns referring to God.

Then there is the proposed Covenant for Officebearers, formerly the Form of Subscription, which officebearers sign to signal their agreement with doctrines



KAREN HUTTENKA

officially held by the CRC—keeping us on the same confessional page, so to speak.

There's also the question of whether articles written by two professors at Calvin College, which is owned by the CRC, have stayed within the bounds of those Reformed confessions.

And, finally, though adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional standard for the CRC is not up for decision until 2012, the Belhar is sure to get mentioned this year as well.

In addition, Synod 2011 will decide whether baptized members, including children, can take communion before making a formal public profession of faith. First proposed by Synod 2006, it will be up to this year's delegates to adopt changes to our Church Order to allow it.

The work of the denomination's Board of Trustees will likely receive plenty of attention as well, in light of the resignations of executive director Rev. Jerry Dykstra, director of denominational ministries Sandy Johnson, and the earlier resignation of Safe Church director Beth Swagman.

Synod 2011 is also being asked to endorse the board's diversity-in-leadership plan. Adopted in

February, the plan calls for increasing the racial and ethnic diversity in the denomination's senior management, including setting a goal for future hires to be in line with a goal of 25 percent diversity in senior management.

In other matters, Synod 2011 has been asked to appoint a study committee to review the biblical teachings regarding homosexual orientation and practice, always a hot-button issue.

And the church's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee is proposing that Synod 2011 adopt an agreement with the Roman Catholic Church to recognize each other's baptisms as valid.

*The Banner* and the denomination's communications staff will be there to cover it all. *The Banner* will post daily articles at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) throughout synod. Webcast, Twitter, and Facebook links for Synod 2011 can be found at [www.crcna.org/synod](http://www.crcna.org/synod).

The July print *Banner* will deliver coverage as well. Please note that the July issue will arrive in your mailbox a little later than usual so we can report on synod right up to the closing doxology.

—Gayla R. Postma

### CRC and RCA Synods Hold Combined Session

When Synod 2011 (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church) meets mid-June, it will hold a combined session for one afternoon with the synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

The RCA synod will convene just hours after the CRC synod ends, using the same building and floor setup on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. To take advantage of the proximity of dates, delegates to both synods will lunch together on the final day of the CRC synod, followed by a joint session celebrating the ways the two denominations do ministry together.

The combined session will end with a worship service that includes communion.

—Gayla R. Postma



## Advertising Information

**Deadlines:** July issue is 6/6/11; August issue is 7/4/11. Visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org) for complete details.

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## Denominational and Classical Announcements

### Call to Synod 2011

The council of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2011 to meet in the Van Noord Arena at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Friday, June 10, at 9:00 a.m. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday morning, June 12, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. at Madison Square CRC, 1434 Madison Square Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. David H. Beelen will deliver the message. All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 5, and on Sunday, June 12. Council of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

### Eligible for Call

Grace CRC of Cobourg heartily recommends its former pastor, Rev. Jack VanderVeer, to the churches for call. He has recently completed an MA in counselling. Email [jpckv@telus.net](mailto:jpckv@telus.net) or phone 403-457-5001.

### Meeting of Classis

Classis Illiana will meet on Wednesday, September 14 at Trinity Christian College beginning at 8:30 am. Laryn Zoerhof is the new stated clerk. Please email all items for the agenda by August 3 to [firstcrc@netnitco.net](mailto:firstcrc@netnitco.net).

## Congregational Announcements

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**Everett CRC** will be celebrating 100 years of God's unfailing faithfulness on July 23 and 24. Special events are planned for both days with a Sunday Celebratory worship service followed by a time of fellowship. All former members and friends are cordially invited to attend. For further info. call the church office at 425-252-7317 or go to our blog @ [www.everettcrc.org](http://www.everettcrc.org).

### 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).

**Hope CRC of Hull, IA** is celebrating "50 Years of Hope" on September 14-18, 2011. We invite all friends and former members to celebrate God's faithfulness with us. Visit [www.hullhopecrc.org](http://www.hullhopecrc.org) for more information.

**PIONEER CRC** of Cedar Springs, MI will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on June 12, 2001, at 10 am. We invite friends and past members to join us for this special worship service with a luncheon to follow.

## Announcements

**100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** Central Minnesota Christian School of Prinsburg, Minnesota is celebrating its 100th Anniversary with a variety of activities on July 1, 2 & 3. Alumni & former staff are invited. For details call 320-978-8700 or check our website [www.cmcscchool.org](http://www.cmcscchool.org)



**WWII Memoir** *One Soldier's War: A WW II Chronicle*, by Ralph J. Koll. Ralph enables the reader to understand the dilemma of balancing Christian faith and hostility toward an enemy, and provides vivid insight into the life of a WW II American Infantryman. Mail \$23.00 to: Carol Vandesteeg, 5100 John Ryan Blvd, Apt 618, San Antonio, TX, 78245; for PayPal or credit card sales send an email with the number of books you want to order to [onesoldierswar@gmail.com](mailto:onesoldierswar@gmail.com); you will receive an Email invoice with a secure payment link. Visit [www.onesoldierswar.com](http://www.onesoldierswar.com)

## Birthdays

### 90th Birthday

**Harold Boonstra**, July 1, 1924 S. Catalina Dr., Unit 2, Orland Park, IL, 60462. His wife Ann and children Richard and Trena, Jackie Archer, and Donald and Janet Kosmal, along with 9 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren wish him a happy day and God's blessings. We love you Dad!

**Gertrude Donkersloot**, 1414 Elm Ct., 258W, Sheldon, IA 51201, celebrated her 90th birthday on May 26, with family and friends. Congratulations! We love and honor you.

**ELSIE FRIESEMA**, 1600 Ohio St., Racine, WI 53405, celebrates her 90th birthday on June 4. Mom, you've been blessed to be a blessing, Happy Birthday! Love, Your family

**George Hoekstra** 10501 Emilie Lane, Orland Park, IL 60467 will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 1. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are thankful for his God-centered example and God's faithfulness. Happy Birthday.

**Howard Sieplinga** 1485 Eastwood Dr., Muskegon, MI 49442, will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 27. His children and grandchildren praise God for his life and witness.

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**SYTSMA** Richard and Dorothy (Baar) of 2772 Pfeiffer Woods Dr. #6013, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on June 20, 2011. With thanks to God for your love through the years from your children: Rich and Sandy Sytsma, Carolyn and Dale Poel, Phil and Ginger Sytsma, Ken and Jackie Sytsma, Jim and Joy Sytsma, 20 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

**VANDERMEY** Herman & Frieda, 224 Pyramid Ln. Lynden, WA 98264, plan to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary with their family & friends at the Mt. View CRC on Sunday, June 5, 2011. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.

# Join the Conversation

Should the Belhar Confession be adopted as the CRC's fourth confession? Use these resources to join the denomination-wide discussion before consideration by Synod 2012.

### Study Guide

Five interactive sessions for small groups or adult ed.  
#155270 \$3.99 US/CAN

### DVD

CRC people talk about the Belhar in these video intros to the study sessions.  
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### Devotional

Thirty days of brief readings for use at home.  
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All materials are also available in Spanish and Korean.



To order, visit [www.FaithAliveResources.org/Belhar](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org/Belhar) or call 1-800-333-8300.

## 65th Anniversary

**BISHOP**, Pete and Dee (Hoeksema), 1383 Rambling Creek, Muskegon 49441, will celebrate 65 years of marriage on June 7. Their family has been blessed by their example of love for each other and the Lord. Children: Dave and Joanne, Greg (deceased), Gayla and John (deceased) Batts, 8 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

**BULTMAN** Roy & Tena (Bouwer) 2121 Raybrook SE Grand Rapids, MI. They will celebrate their 67th Wedding Anniversary with an Open House on June 25 in Raybrook Manor's Friendship Room, 1PM-4PM

**Edema**, George and Margaret (Postma) 8209 Stoney Lane, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate 65 years of marriage on May 29, 2011. Their children, Pete and Mary, Dave and Linda, Mary and Daniel Sytsma, Ruth and Ken Frederick, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, thank God for His faithfulness. Ps. 103

**Stravers**, Joe & Pearl (Booy) 885 Clarewood Ct., Holland, MI 49423-7616 will celebrate 65 years of marriage on May 10. Thanking God for His faithfulness for all of these years. Children: David & Janet Stravers, Dan & Ruth Dorn, Roger & Betty Stravers. Nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

**VANDEN HEUVEL** Dennis and Angie, 121 Parkside Dr., Zeeland, MI 49464 joyfully celebrate 65 years of marriage on June 27. Their children (Rev. Jack and Karen Vanden Heuvel, Doug and Dawn Terpstra, and Rev. Doug and Nancy Einfeld), 11 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren rejoice with them in God's love and faithfulness in their

covenant of marriage. Their example of faith, love, and commitment to God and each other has blessed their family and all those whose paths have crossed theirs.

## 60th Anniversary



15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.



15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

**BAKKER** Rev. Paul and Marge, 310 Juneau SE, Orange City, IA 51041, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on June 21. Thanking God with them are their children, Kurt & Arloa Harthoorn, Dirk & Kathy Kroeze, Harlan & Jan Dirksen, Leon & Beth Wassenaar, Doug & Lynne Bakker, their 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

**Brower**, Luke and Jeanette, 425 Grandview Village, Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4P1 Thankful for God's blessings in 60 years of marriage May 7. Congratulations from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. What a blessing you are to us all.

**HOOKER, Marv & Gerry (Swart)** 5330 Highland Ct, Crestwood, IL 60445, June 8, 60 years. Rejoicing in God's faithfulness: Vicki & Steve (deceased) Jager, Sandi & Tom Post, Gary & Kim, Jim & Lisa, Mary & Peter Boonstra, Carol & Dave Decker, Bob & Christy, 20 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren

## Church Positions Announcements

**Pastor:** Maple Ridge CRC is seeking a pastor to eagerly join our staff and lay team with passion and vision for our congregation. We wish to step into the future together with our new pastor to serve one another and the community. We are a multigenerational congregation located in a rapidly growing suburb near Vancouver, BC, just an hour from Regent College. We seek strong Godly relational leadership through Biblical preaching, teaching, and modelling. Proposals from a pastoral team are welcome. Information available at <http://www.mapleridgecrc.com/pastorsearch.cfm>

**Pastor of Youth and Outreach** First CRC of DeMotte, IN is seeking a full time Pastor of Youth and Outreach. Both ordained and non-ordained applicants will be considered. Job descriptions can be found at [www.1stcrrdemotte.org](http://www.1stcrrdemotte.org). E-mail resume and letter of interest to [firstcrrc@netnitco.net](mailto:firstcrrc@netnitco.net)

**San Diego Ca CRC** is seeking a pastor. We are looking to grow through community outreach and missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical teaching, faithfully leading us according to God's will. Sermons will be delivered with enthusiasm and sincerity and will be relevant to all age groups. Loving God & our neighbors and joining God in His mission is central to all we do. Check us out at [sdccrc.org](http://sdccrc.org). For information contact [sdccrc.pastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:sdccrc.pastorsearch@gmail.com)

**Pastor:** Cedar Hill Christian Reformed Church, located in Northern NJ, is seeking a full-time pastor who is committed to biblical preaching and teaching that can be applied to everyday life. Cedar Hill CRC is active in outreach to the professional community we serve through programs for all members of the family and desires a pastor to lead us in growing this ministry. Candidates should possess exceptional relationship, communication, and leadership skills and desire to be visible in both the church and the community. Interested applicants should send resume with letter of interest to [cedarhillcrrc@optonline.net](mailto:cedarhillcrrc@optonline.net).

**FULL TIME PASTOR** Phoenix CRC in Phoenix, AZ is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small congregation located in the central Phoenix area. We desire a pastor who is committed to sound biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth as well as the neighboring community. If interested, or would like to send a resume contact Andy Keizer, [search@phoenixcrrc.org](mailto:search@phoenixcrrc.org), 623-875-5871, website: [www.phoenixcrrc.org](http://www.phoenixcrrc.org)

**Worship Coordinator** Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, AB is seeking a half-time worship coordinator who will provide leadership and inspiration to worship teams operating within a blended contemporary yet liturgical format, in cooperation with pastoral staff. Please forward resumes to [EmmanuelCRCWorship@gmail.com](mailto:EmmanuelCRCWorship@gmail.com) or visit [www.emmanuelcrrc.org](http://www.emmanuelcrrc.org) for more details

**Community CRC** in Dixon's Corners, Ontario is seeking a Youth Director to work with our Pastor and Youth Leaders to lead & develop our active Youth Ministry. We are looking for someone who can develop meaningful relationships with youth, who demonstrates a desire to see young people become mature disciples of Jesus Christ, and who possesses strong teamwork, initiative, and organizational skills. For more information contact [communitycrrc@ripnet.ca](mailto:communitycrrc@ripnet.ca) or visit [www.communitycrrc.ca](http://www.communitycrrc.ca).

**Youth Director** Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Listowel, ON. Is seeking a full time YD. We have a strong and vibrant youth program that needs a director beginning Sept 1. To obtain a complete job description or submit a resume please contact Ray Heeres: [rayheeres@hotmail.com](mailto:rayheeres@hotmail.com), 519-291-2040, or Karen Stolte: 519-291-9739, [stoltesfarm@gmail.com](mailto:stoltesfarm@gmail.com)

**Youth Pastor** Are you ready to reach young people for Jesus and help them to develop a strong relationship with Him? Lindsay CRC, Ont. is looking for a part-time candidate with training in Youth Ministry. For more information please contact Rob Hoogsteen at 1-705-799-3223 or [rmhoogsteen@i-zoom.net](mailto:rmhoogsteen@i-zoom.net)

**Full-time Pastor of Worship** River Rock Church is a culturally relevant, engaging CRC of 500-600 average attendance which is committed to prayerfully connecting as many people as possible to Jesus and His church. The Pastor of Worship will oversee and execute relevant, engaging worship in partnership with the Senior Pastor and with the church's other ministries. Present worship includes worship bands, video, drama, other creative worship elements, and sound/lighting/projection led by volunteer teams recruited and resourced by the Pastor of Worship. River Rock is located in Rockford, Michigan. For a detailed job description or to submit a resume please contact Jeanne Maher at [jeannem@riverrockcommunity.com](mailto:jeannem@riverrockcommunity.com). All candidates are asked to submit a live worship video or audio recording or link with your resume. Deadline to submit resumes is midnight June 12, 2011.

**Leuwen**, Raymond and Clara, 293 Rich's Dugway Rd, Rochester, NY 14625. We are thankful to the Lord for giving us the extended gift of love.

**Lubben**, Vern and Wilvina of Grand Rapids, MI will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 12, 2011. Children: Verna, Beverly (Ken), Donald-deceased (Zenida), John (Helene). 8 grandchildren. To God be the glory.

## 50th Anniversary

**BOOMSMA** Martin and Helen (Hoekman), 42 Byron St, Georgetown, ON L7G 3W7, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 9. Praise God for His faithfulness! Children: Rob & Betty Boomsma (Ryan, Darren), Leo & Anita Woudstra (Adam, Brienne, Jillian), Pete & Janine Bergsma (Elliot, Gavin).

**Fisher** The Children and Grandchildren invite you to join us in celebrating the 50th Anniversary Of Rev. Ron & Gerry Fisher (nee Vanderhill) Strathroy, 1961 June 15 Waterloo, 2011 We will be holding an Open House at Waterloo Christian Reformed Church 209 Bearinger Road Waterloo, ON N2L 5W3, Canada (519) 746-5727 On Saturday, June 11, 2011 From 1:00-3:00pm "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5 Cards may be sent to their home at: 628 Spinnaker Crescent, Waterloo, ON N2K 4A5

**Groenendyk** Willis & Eleanor (Graves), 2779 265th St. Oskaloosa, IA 52577. Celebrating 50 years 6/13/11. Children: Carla & Calvin Hoogenboom, Norma & Kraig Roozeboom, Marcia & Norman Visser, Leon, Donna & Ethan Brue, Brenda & Doug Wichhart, 15 grandchildren. Open house 6/25/11, 2-4 pm, CRC of Cedar, IA. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

**Harms** Gerry & Marilyn (Visser), 405 Union St., Pella, IA 50219, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 29. We celebrate God's love and faithfulness to our parents - Andrea & Dan (Corey, Bethany, Megan, Ryan), Dennis & Brenda (Kirsten, Kyle, Michael, Alyssa), Doug & Grace, Lane & Renae (Jaymeson, Mattie, Annalyn). We love you!

**Sol** Ralph & Joanne (VanMarrum) 540 Spitfire St., Unit 28, Woodstock, ON N4T 0C2, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 7, 2011 DV. Thanking God for His faithfulness are their children: Lynn & Glenn Reinders, Randy & Brenda Sol & Jeff and Michelle Sol and 14 grandchildren. Open house to be held on June 11, 2011 from 2-4pm at Covenant CRC in Woodstock. We are grateful for God's rich blessings in our lives!

**VerBeek**, Harley & Arlene (VandenBosch) 8821 Buckridge Trail, Cedar Lake, IN 46303 celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary June 7. Thanking God for His faithfulness to them are their children: Kurt & Joann, Keith & Jayne, Kathy & Bryan, Karen & Dennis, Kevin & Kristin & 15 grandchildren. Open House is planned for Sunday, July 10, 2-4 pm at Potters' House Chr. High School, 2500 Newport St. SW, Wyoming, MI

## Obituaries

**BALL** Lorraine, nee Timmer, 91, on April 1, 2011 at Covenant Village of the Great Lakes in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Preceded in death by her husband Casey in 2009 and survived by children Barbara and Mark Gelderloos and Richard D. and Diane Ball, 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

**BRATT** Bertha, 91, 706-D 19th St., Lynden, WA 98264 on March 25, 2011. Survived by her husband, Daniel; children Bob (Gloria) Bovenkamp, Glen (Melissa) Bovenkamp, Mary (Lloyd) Elenbaas, Joan (Roger) Roosendaal, daughter-in-law Ginger Bovenkamp; sister Helen (Earl) Barrent, brother-in-law Bill Bierlink and sister-in-law Marguerite Geleynse; step-children Ruth (Jim) Buteyn, Dan (Kathy) Bratt, Connie (Vance) Hays, Calvin (Melinda) Bratt, Phil (Landi) Bratt, Mark (Carol) Bratt, Jim (Cheryl) Bratt, Tim (Carol) Bratt; many grand- and great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by first husband Arie Bovenkamp in 1973, son Dale in 2001, sister Dena Bierlink, brother John Geleynse and great-granddaughter Esther Jade Zylstra.

**Icenhower**, Rosalie, 81 April 28, 2011. 7611 43rd Ave SE, Lacey WA 98503. Survived by her husband Paul, children - Deborah, Jonathan, David and Rebecca. 7 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

# 111 HELPS

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**Ipema**, Henry E., age 82, of Palos Heights, IL, went to be with the Lord on April 17, 2011. Beloved husband of Annamae, nee Bulthuis, for 62 yrs. Loving father of Donald (Judi), Shirley (George) Castor, LuAnn (Ken) Dekker, Betty (Art) Byland, Joyce (Richard) Vrba, Henry Jr. (Lisa) and the late baby girl Ipema. Cherished grandfather of 16 and great-grandfather of 25. Fond brother of Annette Kamp, Bernice Schaver, Charlotte Sol, Edward, Kenneth, Alvin, and the late Evelyn and Harry. Dear uncle of many nieces and nephews. Former owner and operator of H & R Refuse Disposal Service. Member of First United Ref. Church of Oak Lawn, IL.

**Miedema**, Thomas Jr. (Bud), 78, of Middletown, NY has gone to God's Beautiful Garden on April 2, 2011. Survived by his wife Janet (Oosting) of 57 years, 4 sons and 2 daughters and their spouses, 33 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren all of NY & NJ. Psalm 84:10



## FREE WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES

All lectures will be at 7:30 p.m. in the Calvin College Gezon Auditorium.

June 22, 2011

Scott Hoezee

God Sends His Love:

The Mystery and Gift of Preaching

June 29, 2011

David Smith

How We Learn in Church

July 6, 2011

Gerardo Marti

Have You Seen Our Gospel Choir?

July 13, 2011

Alvin Plantinga

Religion and Science:

Where the Conflict Really Lies

July 20, 2011

Frederick Dale Bruner

The Adventure of Biblical Interpretation

July 27, 2011

Eleonore Stump

The Problem of Suffering

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**PIERSMA** Lillian J. (nee Boonstra) of Lansing, IL on April 22, 2011. She is predeceased by her husband, Harry. She is survived by her children, Harry L. (Kalliope) Piersma, Jr., John M. (Candace) Piersma, Jennifer L. (Michael) D'Auria, Lorraine B. (Charles - deceased) Ahrendt, 9 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. Memorials to Highland Christian School or Illiana Christian High School.

**Rupke** Dian Jean, age 75; March 23, 2011; 2230 E. Shiawassee Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by brothers-in-law: Louis Buckendorf and Raymond Rupke. She will be lovingly remember by her husband of 45 years: Loren Rupke; son: John (Deborah) Hoover; step-daughter: Tamera (John) Lundeen; granddaughters: Jennifer (David) Williams and Christina (Daniel) Gage; sister: Judy Buckendorf; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: John (Esther) Rupke, Nelia Rupke and Arnold (Debbie) Rupke.

**Triezenberg** Theodore (Ted), age 83, of Seattle, WA went to be with our Lord on March 29, 2011. Beloved husband of Wilma; loving father of Patricia and William Bond, Donald and Bonnie Triezenberg, Theodore and Rhonda Triezenberg and Ruth and Kenneth Peterson, as well as 10 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Also survived by brother Melvin (Arlene) Triezenberg and sister Jeannette (Elmer) Decker and numerous nieces and nephews.

**UITERDYK** Henry, 96, of Manhattan, MT, April 11, 2011. Preceded in death by his wife Ida and daughter Marlys. Survived by children: Howard Uiterdyk, Joyce (Winson) Elgersma, Millie (Ken) Vos, Leonard (Holly) Uiterdyk; 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren; sister Irene Kimm, sisters-in-law Willemina Van Egmond and Dee Price; brothers-in-law Gordon and Norman Dykstra.

**Veltkamp** Elizabeth (Kamps), 94, passed away April 3, 2011. She is preceded in death by her husband Neal Veltkamp, and a son, Burton. She is survived by children: Harold (Judy) Veltkamp, Stan (Marty) Veltkamp, Irene DeFrance, Norma (Craig) White; 10 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren, 23 great-great grandchildren, brothers Bert and George and one sister-in-law, Bernie Veltkamp.

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**VOGEL** Andrew H. ("Bud"), age 86, was taken by the Lord in his sleep Thursday, February 24, 2011. Loving husband of Evelyn (Van Druenen) Vogel. Preceded in death by his parents, Dick and Minnie (Pals) Vogel, and four sisters: Dena Schepel, Minnie Paarlberg, Anne De Graff and Carol

Tazelaar. Cherished uncle of many special nieces and nephews, fond teacher of music students, and choir director. Organist for 73 consecutive years at First CRC, South Holland; dedicated many pipe organs; was organ consultant to various churches. Played for 50 annual weeklong CRC Bible conferences at Cedar Lake, Indiana; played for over 50 graduations from Calvin Christian School. DVDs and CDs are available N/C of Bud and Evelyn's 50th anniversary Celebration Concert on June 17, 1994; also available is a DVD of Bud's funeral on March 4, 2011. Call or write Evelyn W. Vogel, 655 East 161st St., South Holland, IL 60473. Phone (708) 331-0667.

## Employment

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

**Chief Financial Officer** Calvin Theological Seminary is seeking qualified candidate for this key management position. Bachelor's degree in accounting or finance with MBA and/or CPA highly desirable. The CFO will manage the Controller, Human Resources Manager, Facilities Director, IT Manager and Director of Financial Aid. If interested, or to recommend someone, please reply in confidence to: W. L. Waanders, ExecuQuest, Inc., PO Box 6405, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6405; or email to: [ExecuQuest@aol.com](mailto:ExecuQuest@aol.com)

**Director of Student Ministries** Crossroads Church in Schererville, IN seeks a gifted speaker, proven team builder, and effective Director of Student Ministries to teach both church and unchurched teens about the life changing grace of God. Read more about this full time position at [www.aboutccc.com](http://www.aboutccc.com).

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**Toronto District Christian** High School, serving 400+ students in Grades 9-12 in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada, seeks an innovative, seasoned Principal. He or she will be a practising Christian, lifelong learner, collaborative mentor, and astute administrator and communicator who loves young people and appreciates diversity. A master's degree in Educational Administration (or equivalent) is expected, along with experience in both teaching and administration at the secondary school level. Please visit [www.tdchristian.ca/](http://www.tdchristian.ca/) search for more detailed information.

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**Anna Maria Island, FL Condos** pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. [redekercondos.com](http://redekercondos.com)

**Beautiful Long Boat** Key, Florida near Sarasota, Bradenton. 2 BR 2 BA condo directly on white sandy beach. Newly decorated. \$1,000 and up depending on season. 630-655-2888.

**Condo for Rent** Naples, FL, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths and pool, avail. Jan-Mar, 2011. Email pinkhippo2@yahoo.com or call 708-836-1130.

**Oceanfront condo rentals**, 2BR/2BA New Smyrna Beach, FL, Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates. Reference Banner ad for 10% discount. 800-874-1931 or OBCRENTALS.COM.

**Kissimmee home for rent** New, 6 bedroom, 4 bath, fully furnished home with private pool, 3 miles from Disney. www.floridavacahome.com. 708-372-2586

**Weekly Rental:** Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba--comfortably sleeps up to 14. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.

**Holland, mi** Nice 1 bedroom guest house located across the street from the South shore of Lake Macatawa., \$375 wk \$80 nt www.hollandplace.com 616.335.8766

**Pentwater MI, summer cottage** Views of Lake MI and channel. A few minutes walk to beach. Bike or walk everywhere. pentwatercottage.com 616-550-4900

**Cottage** 4 rent. 4 bed, 3 bath, updated. Sleeps 12, Hess Lake, MI. \$1,200/week. Call Lonnie 616-942-0048.

**LAKE MICHIGAN 6 BDRM** View: www.greatlakehouse.net Call: 231.981.8883; Email: rental@greatlakehouse.net

**Female Roommate Needed** Three bedroom condo to be shared with two other Christian females. Zeeland, MI. annisekoops@hotmail.com for pictures and details.

**Traverse City Cottage for Rent** Cottage on 2500 acre Duck Lake for rent. 4 bedroom 2 bathroom (sleeps 12). Large deck and right on the lake. Call 231-709-0511

**WEEKLY RENTAL:** Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Newly built Lake Michigan family guest house, 2br, loft w/ 2.5ba - sleeps 8-10. Lake MI view & private beach. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.



**Lake Mich Waterfront Cottage** Montague-Whitehall, Lost Valley 4bd/3bth sleeps 8-10 2500sqft, 2 large decks, just a few steps from the beach. Direct TV, wi-fi, Late June to Sept \$2500/wk/\$300 dpt. Just Wonderful, will email pictures, contact lklich@aol.com

**Big Star Lake, Baldwin, MI** It's not too early to book the best weeks for 2011. Sleeps 8, newly remodeled. A/C, large decks, great view, incl. rowboat. 5/28-6/4, 6/4-6/11, 6/11-6/18, 7/2-7/9, 8/27-9/3, 9/3-9/10. Discount for 2 or 3 wk rentals. 616-656-8818.

**FOR RENT** Lakefront cottage Big Star Lake, Baldwin, MI. 4BR, sleeps 10, fully equipped, sandy beach on great fishing & watersports lake. \$800/wk. 231-798-8755 p.m.

**Gun Lake Cottage for sale** Shady Shores lake front with great view. 269-344-7920

**Cottage For Sale** Big Star Lake, Baldwin, MI. 1,100 sq. ft, 4 bedroom, sleeps 10. Large family/dining room, fireplace, deck, dock, sandy beach. Call Ken Machiela @ 616-836-2182.

**BEAUFORT, NC:** 1 br furnished cottages for rent in historic coastal town, near beaches, w/d, TV, internet, grill, bikes. www.theshellcottage.com ;252-504-6262

**Kiawah Island, Charleston, SC** 3 Bedroom, 2 two bath cottage. 5 minute walk to beach. Fully furnished including linens. Golf, Tennis, Biking, Fishing, pool complex. Visit: gembisinletcove.blogspot.com. or cgembis@gmail.com. 989-274-1201



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**Join Eilof and Harriet Rusticus** for a wonderful 12-day adventure in Europe Sep. 27 to Oct. 8. Our amazing journey begins in the glittering French capital, Paris. We'll also visit Normandy's peace museum and the D-Day beaches. Then it's off to majestic Switzerland for a relaxing stay in Basel. Next on our agenda is a drive into Germany where we'll enjoy the storybook city of Heidelberg, a cruise on the legendary River Rhine, and a visit to Cologne. Our tour concludes with a great overview of the most interesting Dutch provinces. Please plan to come along! Contact Eilof and Harriet at 616-942-1704 or herr572@yahoo.com or Witte Travel at 800-469-4883 or groups@wittetravel.com

**Join Trinity Christian College** on tour in New York City Nov. 17 to 20 where we'll delve into the city's Dutch roots. From the time it was called New Amsterdam and was part of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, this city has welcomed immigrants from all parts of the world, allowing for freedom of religious expression. We'll worship at Marble Collegiate Church, established by the Dutch to serve the spiritual needs of the colonists in New Amsterdam. We'll also attend a Broadway production and a Lincoln Center performance, visit the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Ground Zero, St. Paul's Chapel, the Tenement Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art, and tour Tribeca, Harlem, and some of Brooklyn's great neighborhoods. Contact Ruth DeBruyn at 708-239-4827 or ruth.debruyn@trntry.edu or Witte Travel at 800-469-4883 or groups@wittetravel.com.

## Products and Services

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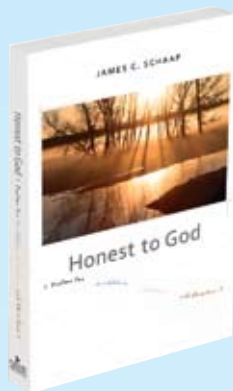
  
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# Punch Lines

It's your turn! Have you got a joke or a funny story you'd like to share with us? Send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or e-mail it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thank you!

**W**hen my son was younger, we were working on the sounds that different letters make. At one point we worked on days of the week:

"What does T-T-Tuesday start with?" I asked, exaggerating the first letter.

"T!" Josh answered proudly.

"What does F-F-F-Friday start with?"

"F!" said Josh.

"What does S-S-S-Sunday start with?" I continued, convinced I had a child prodigy.

He didn't hesitate for a moment: "Church!"

—*Jim and Rhonda Doll*

**M**y 2-year-old granddaughter Zora was concerned about death. She knew her Aunt Wendy's dog was "not here anymore," but was convinced he would "come back soon." She was also learning that I was the mommy of her daddy, and she asked me, "Where's your mommy?" Hoping to clear up

her misconception of death, I told her, "My mommy's in heaven with Jesus. She's living in Jesus' house."

After a dramatic pause, her face lit up and she exclaimed, "That's a GREAT idea!"

I agreed.

—*Dianne Wolf*

**L**ooking over the Order of Worship at a church we were visiting in Florida, we noticed that it said, "Offertory—All to Us." My husband leaned over and whispered to me, "At least they're honest."

We discovered later it was the song played during the offertory.

—*Joyce Steen*

**A**t a wedding everything went smoothly until it came time for the flower girl and her young escort to walk down the aisle.

The boy stopped at every pew, growling at the guests.

When asked about his behavior afterward, he explained, "I was just trying to be a good ring bear."

—*John Veltkamp*

**I**f you make the toast and coffee, "Sweetheart," said the newlywed bride, "breakfast will be ready."

"Great! What are we having for breakfast?" asked the new husband.

"Toast and coffee," she replied.

—*John Veltkamp*

## How do you decide whom to marry? (Written by kids.)

"You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming." (Alan, age 10)

"No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with." (Kristen, age 10)

## What is the right age to get married?

"Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then." (Camille, age 10)

## What do most people do on a date?

"Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have

something to say if you listen long enough." (Lynnette, age 8)

"On the first date they just tell each other lies, and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date." (Martin, age 10)

## When is it OK to kiss someone?

"When they're rich." (Pam, age 7)

"The law says you have to be 18, so I wouldn't want to mess with that." (Curt, age 7)

"The rule goes like this: if you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right thing to do." (Howard, age 8)

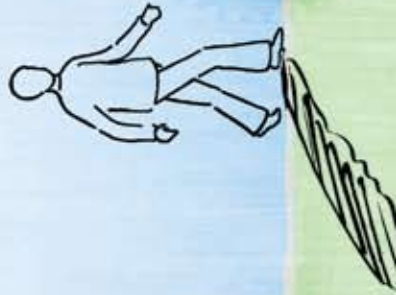
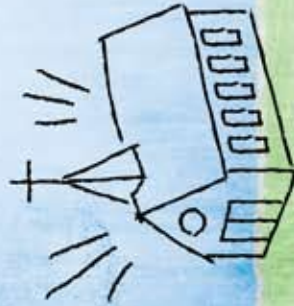
## Is it better to be single or married?

"It's better for girls to be single, but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them." (Anita, age 9)

—*Herman G. Kelderman*



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