

BANNER

March 2011 | www.thebanner.org

- 06 Go Calvin!
- 20 A Sacred Circle

- 07 Spirituality for Life in the Trenches



- 18 Lent for Today

**Faith Alive - Dwell
(Dean)**

Faith Alive - Dwell Preview

God created **all things**,
and they were good.

All things have fallen
from that original goodness.

Christ, who has redeemed **all things**,
eventually will restore them.

We aid the Spirit's work of restoration
by seeking to make **all things** better.

all. things



All things encompasses the richness of Calvin's Reformed theology; it's also a good way of describing how Calvin equips students for the future. Calvin students explore the academic spectrum—always analyzing, always considering how they can make the world a better place. Calvin people believe God's words: "See, I am making all things new."

In our minds, that's a promise—and a call.

www.calvin.edu

3201 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 526-6106 or 1-800-688-0122

Calvin does not discriminate with regard to age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability in any of its educational programs or opportunities, employment or other activities.

CALVIN
MINDS IN THE MAKING

BANNER

Volume 146 | Number 03 | 2011



FEATURES

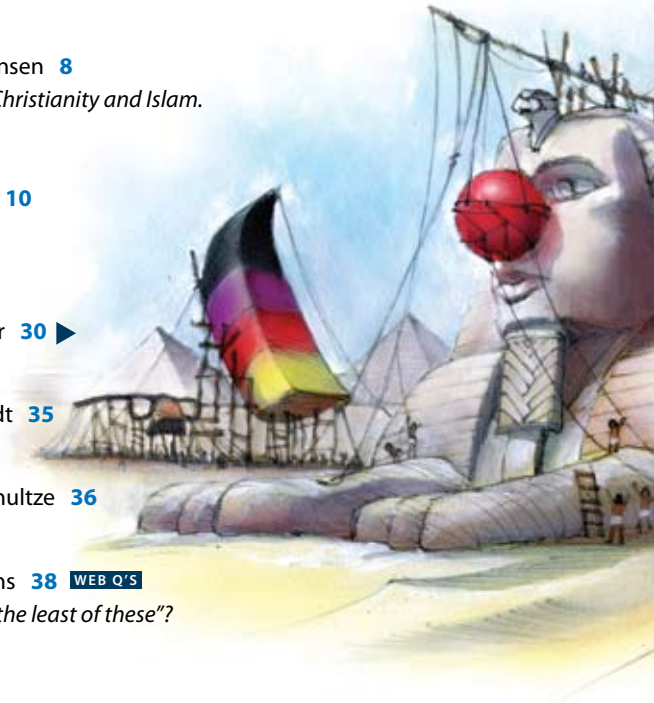
- 18** **Yes and No: Lent and the Reformed Faith Today**
Discerning best practices for Lent in our own time and place **WEB Q'S**
by John D. Witvliet
- 20** **A Sacred Circle**
The sad chapter in Canada's history of the Indian residential schools leads to a meaningful conversation about reconciliation.
by Rebecca Warren with Roy Berkenbosch, Travis Enright, and Maggie Hodgson
- 32** **Talking Biblically about Homosexuality**
One church's conversation leads to a request to synod.
by David Kromminga

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial: Go Calvin!** by Bob De Moor **6**
Exploring the links between creation and the confessions is part of faithful Christian scholarship.
- Catch Your Breath: Parque Central** by Joel Van Dyke **7**
Spirituality for life in the trenches
- IMHO: The Muslim-Christian Chasm** by Paul Hansen **8**
Let's not gloss over the serious differences between Christianity and Islam.
- Letters to the Editor** **8**
- News: Canadian government cuts CRWRC funding** **10**
- Frequently Asked Questions** **17**
Serving the community on Sunday?
- Just for Kids: Journey to Egypt** by Christin Baker **30** ▶
A spring break trip for everyone!
- Parenting: Speaking to Souls** by Gary D. Schmidt **35**
The great gift of good books
- Tuned In: Connected or Cut Off?** by Quentin Schultze **36**
The pros and cons of viewing media alone
- Reformed Matters: The Least of Us** by Tim Collins **38** **WEB Q'S**
Who is Jesus really talking about when he refers to "the least of these"?
- Punch Lines** **47**

CHURCH@WORK

- Called to Be Sent** by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg **22**
CRWRC's international relief managers go where they're needed.
- Dear Reader: In Praise of Volunteers** by Jerry Dykstra **26**



Go Calvin!

IN LAST MONTH'S BANNER we reported on a bit of a dustup at Calvin College, our denominationally owned liberal arts school. Two profs in Calvin's religion department recently published articles in a scholarly journal questioning whether we should take the Genesis creation accounts as historical and whether we need to reframe the doctrine of the Fall to better square with current biblical interpretation and scientific findings. Let's be clear: unlike classic liberalism, these profs do not question biblical authority, God's creation of everything, humanity's bondage to sin, our need for salvation in Christ, or the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. What they question is how our confessions formulate the doctrines of creation and how sin and sadness came to be.

I don't regret that we reported on this. You have a right to know what's happening at *your* college. But I regret that the matter turned a bit ugly even before we reported on it. It has created tension between Calvin professors and administrators. That's understandable and not so serious. With a wise board, solid leadership, and an excellent committee process, Calvin will sort that out. Worse is that this has needlessly sown distrust in Calvin's support community: prospective students, parents, and donors.

Sorting out how Scripture intends to be read and interpreted in the light of creation revelation is a complex, ongoing task. I am delighted that the community of scholars and students at Calvin College take on this challenge with a deep commitment to Scripture and the confessions. If their careful investigation turns up something we need to consider or reconsider, let's hear them out without resorting to snap judgments and blanket condemnations.

When believers inquire carefully into the relationship of fossils and faith, it opens them up to lots of questions. The mysteries of God and God's interaction with the creation are much more complex than we ever imagined. That should lead us to greater humility about our own position and greater shared wonder at the glory and majesty of God. It should *not* lead us to scratch each others' eyes out.

Let's not spoil what can be a healthy investigation appropriately carried out in a biblically obedient, Reformed, academic community. By overreacting now, we damage an institution that continues to serve us so well. Calvin does *not* deserve that.

I know many Calvin profs and administrators. I respect them highly and trust them. I know many Calvin grads. They received excellent preparation for their life's callings and have matured in their faith. They were mentored to explore the jagged edges of truth, to question, to grow in understanding—and to do so always fully committed to the Truth who is Person, not proposition.

As a pastor I speak with many covenant youth who experienced a crisis of faith trying to square what they learned in Sunday school with what they learn in biology class. They deserve far better answers than I can give them. The help of Calvin scholarship in this has been a godsend.

I am grateful for Calvin and schools like it where there is no disconnect between knowledge and faith but where faith seeks after knowledge.

Calvin needs and deserves our generous and sustained support. Go Calvin! ■

Sorting out how Scripture intends to be read in light of creation revelation is a complex task.



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

BANNER

The Magazine of the
Christian Reformed Church

www.thebanner.org

Bob De Moor Editor

Henry Hess Editor, *Church@Work*

Dean R. Heetderks Art Director

Joyce Kane Managing Editor

Jena Vander Ploeg Features Editor

Gayla R. Postma News Editor

Kristy Quist Tuned In Editor

Sandy Swartzentruber Copy Editor

Pete Euwema Graphic Design

Frank Gutbrod Graphic Design

Shelli Lokers-Calanchi Marketing
Manager

Contact Us

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560

Address Changes and Subscriptions

800-777-7270 or visit our website at
www.thebanner.org

Classified Advertising

616-224-0725 classifieds@thebanner.org

Display Advertising

616-224-0729 ads@crcna.org

Editorial

616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News

613-543-3603 news@thebanner.org

Published monthly (12 issues per year). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: The Banner, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: The Banner, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8.

Copyright 2011, Faith Alive Christian Resources, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 146, No. 03, 2011.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

Parque Central

I AM TIRED. Really, really tired.

Lately, in my ministry with Christian Reformed World Missions, I've been thinking about what spiritual formation looks like in really hard places.

I've talked with others about what the Jesuits meant by exploring a "spirituality on the run." I have read that Ignation spirituality required only 15 minutes a day for reflection so the Jesuits would remain deeply engaged in the world.

As I sat down this morning to do some journaling, my mind raced back to the leadership summit I just attended in San José, Costa Rica, with my colleagues. What an incredible blessing my wife, Marilyn, and I have to rub shoulders with such amazing people who are engaged so deeply with the world in Central America.

Today I'm relaxing on a bench in Parque Central in Antigua, Guatemala, on a two-day break for writing and reflection. It's one of the loveliest central parks in all of Latin America. I became quickly attentive to the restlessness of my soul against this backdrop of beauty and sweetness.

A majestic fountain lies at the center, and around it revolves all activity in the park. European and U.S. tourists mingle with indigenous women selling their *cosas típicas* (typical things). Shoe-shine boys offer their services with a smile. Lovers peer into each other's eyes. Children run

and jump while the breeze glistens their faces with mist from the fountain. Teenagers in colorful uniforms pass through on their way to school. This morning, at this moment, all is well with the world in Parque Central.

Why do I seldom find these kinds of sweet, sacred centering times in my life? Why is it that I have figured out so intricately the "running" part of Jesuit spirituality but have so poorly lived out the "spirituality" part?

The key here, of course, is not found in momentary escape from the noisy world. Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274) wrote that God is "within all things, but not enclosed; outside all things, but not excluded; above all things, but not aloof; below all things, but not debased." He spoke of God as one "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." He declared that "the origin, magnitude, multitude, beauty, fullness, activity, and order of all created things" are the very "footprints and fingerprints" of God.

Bonaventure saw the whole world as the Parque Central I find myself sitting in right now!

What would it look like if I could learn to live out the implications of that theological premise? What would it mean for leaders in missional communities around the world who need a spirituality that can sustain them amid seemingly insurmountable pain and hardship?

W.H. Auden animates our work with his words: "I know nothing, except what everyone knows—if there when Grace dances, I should dance." The truth, of course, is that grace is always dancing, oftentimes most artfully in the very places my friends currently find themselves.

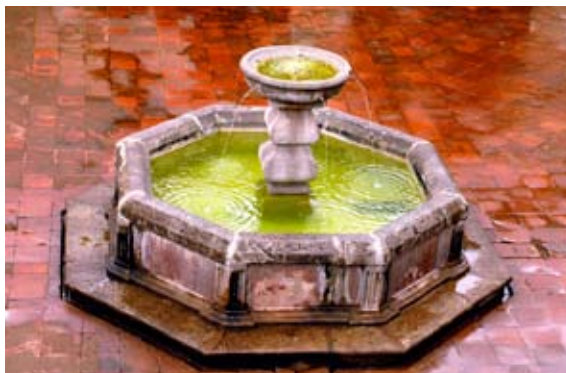
The late missiologist and theologian Orlando Costas wrote, "With Jesus there came a fundamental shift in the location of salvation: the center was moved to the periphery. . . . The fact that Jesus wrought salvation outside the Holy City does not mean that we have now a new salvific center but, rather, a permanent, moving center in the periphery of life."

Maybe that's what "spirituality on the run" looks like: a beautiful fountain in a parque central that moves wherever I go if only I can cultivate the awareness to live into it.

For now, at least, I am content to sit here on this bench in this particular parque central and pray for my friends in the hard places—that they too might dance today, that they too might experience the life-giving fountain of God's presence in all places at all times. ■



Rev. Joel Van Dyke serves in Guatemala City with Christian Reformed World Missions. He currently directs the Estrategia de Transformación, which nurtures missional communities of grassroots leaders in Central America and the Caribbean.



There is nothing in our lives
that is not part of our spiritual lives.

—JAMES MARTIN, SJ

The Muslim-Christian Chasm

Let's not gloss over the serious differences between Christianity and Islam.



SEVERAL ISSUES AGO *Banner* Editor Bob De Moor wrote about his church's positive encounter with two devout Muslims ("In All Honesty," November 2010). That experience stands in sharp contrast to how others who practice Islam have treated Christians and their worship spaces—for a recent example, note the violence in Nigeria.

Let's not gloss over our serious historical, scriptural, theological, and philosophical differences.

Historically, little has been mentioned about the hundreds of thousands of Christians who were massacred, forced to convert to Islam, placed in an economically and culturally enslaved condition, or had their church buildings destroyed or taken over. Most of the Crusades were efforts to throw back the Islamic empire and secure the church in the Middle East.

Scripturally, we hold that all truth is God's truth. John 14:6 tells us that Jesus is the truth. And Jesus challenges us to "teach the way of God in accordance with the truth" (Matt. 22:16). Do we? Scripture also teaches that there will be those who, "by their wickedness will suppress the truth" (Rom. 1:18). Does Islam fall under that heading? One of the principle teach-

ings of Islam is to NOT have to tell the truth to nonbelievers! If the truth shall set us free, perhaps it would be wise to consider Islam not as it is taught to groups of Christians by Muslims, but rather how it has been forced on Christians and others of all spiritual backgrounds.

Theologically a wide gulf exists between Reformed Christianity and Islam, a chasm that only Jesus Christ can bridge. No amount of theological gymnastics can diminish the differences between the doctrines of Islam and the Christian doctrines of God's grace, assurance of salvation, forgiveness, mercy, and love.

Then there are our philosophical differences. Because Sharia is Islam's rule of law and because Islam was founded as an empire state, there are fundamental differences between what Muslims and Christians believe. The all-encompassing influence of Sharia involves all of culture. Nothing within Islam commends that foundation for our learning and growth as God's children. We would do well to look to our own Calvinist roots to begin to better understand the world within which we live.

For those who desire a more in-depth discussion of Islam, I recommend Rev. Marvin Heyboer, who offers an excellent two-day seminar on the topic (drmarvin@yahoo.com). ■



Rev. Paul Hansen is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Hull, Iowa.



Justice and Mercy

The two features "Illegal" and "Lopsided Mercy" (February 2011) really hit home, since they are so appropriate with what's going on here in the state of Arizona. I am ashamed of the politicians in power who show little or no compassion and love for certain individuals and the poor and sick. Crazy laws are being passed that discriminate and tend to play God with people's lives. Two citizens have died since the state has denied funding for transplants for the poor. Recently 280,000 poor people have been taken off health care. This is not pro-life but passing death sentences on the poor and sick, which is not in accordance with God's will. And now they are moving to deny citizenship to babies born here if at least one parent cannot prove citizenship. This goes against the 14th amendment. I am also disturbed by the silence of the religious community on these issues. By contrast, the people of Arizona have shown much love and compassion to the victims. If only our politicians could do the same. Other than that, Arizona is a great place to live.

—Herman Klap
Sahuarita, Ariz.

Science and Faith

After reading "Calvin Profs Say Evolution Evidence Conflicts with Reformed Creeds"

LETTERS

(News, February 2011), I consider professors Daniel Harlow and John Schneider to be heroes of the Reformed faith for taking “ecclesia reformata semper reformandum est” (“the Reformed church is always reforming”) seriously. This has regularly meant asking uncomfortable questions, and the age of modern evolutionary science is no different. The Reformation was born out of uncomfortable but intellectually honest questions, and I’m sure our favorite theologian would recognize the importance of this principle, even if his namesake college does not.

—Steve Roels and Sarah Bodbyl Roels
University of Kansas
Department of Ecology and
Evolutionary Biology
Lawrence, Kan.

Since when have we stated in our Reformed confessions that we must subscribe to a literal understanding of the Bible and its teachings? Even though we all agree that the question “How did all this happen?” is crucial (most often resulting in a literal understanding of Scripture), the matter does not rest with that question alone, which developed in large part since the scientific age. We must always ask the all-important question of the Hebrew/Old Testament mind: “What does this story or event mean?”

In our academic settings we need to encourage asking questions in order to harmonize our understanding of Scripture with science and vice versa. I cannot accept the Calvin professors’ own assertions in this case that the evidence creates conflicts with our historic creeds. Our Reformed confessions are in full harmony when we go beyond the mere literal approach to understanding the Bible.

—Rev. Henry Numan*
Vancouver, British Columbia

It is supercilious to place human thinking above the Word of God. No science is infallible. It continues to change. Science at best is speculative on many levels.

—Peter J. Sluys Sr.
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The recent scholarly articles on human origins published by Calvin professors Harlow and Schneider challenge some core doctrines of the college and church. The articles join the current larger international conversation about faith-science issues. Although the college did not approve or endorse the ideas in the published articles, it does endorse the importance of asking questions and prayerfully and humbly seeking answers. Much like new ideas or diagrams on a whiteboard, these articles are attempts to engage new scientific, historical, and hermeneutical understandings and their connection to core doctrines.

In retrospect, it would have been advisable for Drs. Harlow and Schneider to more strongly emphasize the provisional nature of their work and to raise the direct confessional issues differently. (The Form of Subscription describes a process for raising confessional issues.) In retrospect, the internal review processes used by the authors and the college should have been tighter. Professors Harlow and Schneider have expressed regret and think the articles read more definitively than they intended.

All Calvin faculty members, including Drs. Harlow and Schneider, are committed to upholding the Reformed creeds and confessions in the classroom even while new discoveries bring difficult questions.

We appreciate your support, prayers, and patience. More information can be found at www.calvin.edu/provost/origins-discussion/

—Gaylen Byker, President
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Mich.

For the Unborn

I have worked at a crisis pregnancy center for 15 years and have seen firsthand the devastating effects of abortion on women. Also, I am one of those “hard cases.” I became pregnant with my third child 10 years after the birth of our other children and was very reluctant to start over with the “baby stage.” My doctor offered me several opportunities during my pregnancy for an amniocentesis test. I decided against it since I wouldn’t abort regardless of what it showed. Several months later our third daughter was born. She has a rare genetic condition that has required serious surgeries, therapies, and specialists. Now almost 16 years old, she is nonverbal, severely autistic, functions at the cognitive level of a 2 year old, and needs 24/7 supervision and care. And she is the love of our life!

Our daughter has brought so much joy to those around her. She teaches us much more about grace than we could ever have learned any other way. How does one rationalize the right to end a pregnancy because of “hard circumstances”? Who are we to say she doesn’t have a purpose to fill in this world? Should I have been granted the moral right to abort her to promote sensitivity and Christian grace?

—Shelly Boeve*
Holland, Mich.

*More Online!

See longer versions of these letters plus more responses on our new website at www.thebanner.org/

NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

For correspondents' e-mail addresses, see www.thebanner.org

Gayla R. Postma News Editor
E-mail: gpostma@crca.org

Sarah Boonstra
Classes Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone
303-247-0697

Anita Brinkman
Classes Huron, Chatham
519-354-9126

Jenny deGroot
Classes BC North-West, BC South-East
604-888-5505

Larry Edsall
Classes Arizona, Red Mesa
602-300-4518

Doug Evenhouse
Classes Northern Illinois, Wisconsin
630-241-0735

Karen Gorter
Classes Holland, Zeeland,
616-399-6123

Melissa Holtrop
Classes Central Plains, Chicago South
708-217-7197

Henry Huisjen
Classes Kalamazoo, Lake Erie
517-694-0273

Calvin Hulstein
Classes Atlantic NE, Hackensack, Hudson
860-644-8512

Jonathan J. Kim
Classis Pacific Hammi
626-616-0411

Rachel deKoning Kraay
Classes Alberta North,
Alberta South & Saskatchewan
403-782-9917

Noah Kruis
Classes Grand Rapids East,
Grand Rapids North
616-558-8166

Amy Rycenga
Classes Muskegon, Northern Michigan
616-402-8881

Ryan Struyk
Classes Grand Rapids South,
Thornapple Valley
616-550-6723

Amy Toornstra
Classes Columbia, Pacific Northwest
503-399-9165

Roxanne Van Farowe
Classis Southeast U.S.
919-477-2084

Brenda Visser
Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte
613-924-1792

Heidi Wicker
Classes California South,
Central California, Greater L.A.,
209-599-3799

Carolyn Koster Yost
Classes Georgetown, Grandville
616-516-9175

Louis Tamminga
In Memoriam articles
616-949-4539

If your region is not listed here, please contact the news editor.

Flood Aid for New Brunswick

Dozens of members of Fredericton (New Brunswick) Christian Reformed Church joined relief efforts when severe weather caused flooding in numerous New Brunswick homes just before Christmas.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's Disaster Response Services mobilized to help people in the community tear out wet and damaged building materials and prepare for reconstruction.

Church members Dick and Margaret VanOord are area managers for CRWRC-DRS and so were able to quickly assess the situation.

One recipient of the cleanup help said that the workers wit-



PHOTOS BY MARGARET VAN OORD

Debbie Boonstoppel of Fredericton CRC and Debbie VanOord, visiting from Providence CRC in Beamsville, Ontario, helped cart out debris from flooded homes.

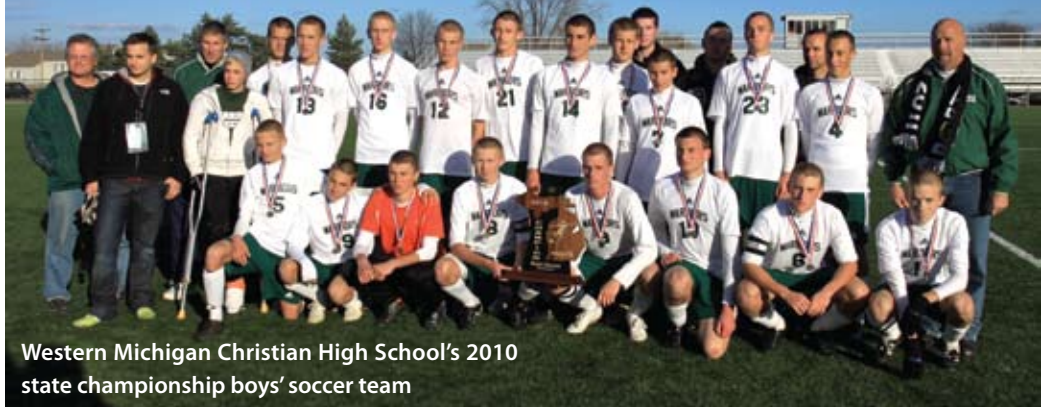
between CRWRC-DRS, Samaritan's Purse, and other Christian congregations has been inspirational."

CRWRC-DRS and Samaritan's Purse also collaborated in Newfoundland in the aftermath of Hurricane Igor in November 2010. Volunteers came from all the Maritime CRC churches to help out.

As Dick VanOord said, "If the Lord calls, you gotta go!"

—Brenda Visser

Western Michigan Christian Wins State Soccer Championship



JOHN MULDER

Western Michigan Christian High School's 2010 state championship boys' soccer team

Western Michigan Christian High School's boys' soccer team won the 2010 state championship. For the school, located in Muskegon, Mich., the win was thrilling, as the team was not anticipating a victory.

"No one expected us to win. This year's team had nine new starters. Even when we were at the state finals, we were not expected to win," said Coach David Hulings.

The 2010 team finished the season with a record of 22-2-1. Several players received statewide recognition for their contribution, including Colin Breit, Matt DeKryger, Chaise Schuiteman, Matt Wisen, Tim Schuitema, Jacob Baren, and Jason Prince.

Hulings was named Coach of the Year by two separate high school soccer associations.

—Amy Rycenga

CRWRC Loses Funding from Canadian Government

In late December 2010, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee-Canada received notice that its funding from the Canadian government's Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) would not be renewed.

The loss of \$1.1 million is about 10 percent of the community development program funding, which does not include disaster response funding or other special grants CRWRC receives.

This decision does not mean that CRWRC's programs are not up to CIDA's standards. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S., explained: "Instead, CRWRC—like many other Canadian charities—was caught in the murky space between old and new priorities and changes in proposal application procedures and expectations at CIDA."

Even though the funding cut is on the Canadian side, it affects the entire organization. CRWRC is appealing for transitional funding until they can submit another proposal in March, with a response not expected until September 2011.

"CRWRC was not alone in being denied CIDA funding. Many other organizations found themselves in the same situation in between the two funding frameworks," explained Ryskamp. He said that unless the gap in funding is met, CRWRC will have to cut some of its programs.

"This is where the greatest discouragement and devastation happens. . . . CIDA's decision will impact most significantly the communities trying to get out of poverty," explained Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada.

CRWRC is hoping that people will step up and make a special donation. It will also tap into reserves and cut costs.

"We now have to switch the way we think about CIDA's money. It has to be looked at now as more flexible funding, and we will have to adjust the core program budgeting accordingly," said Kaastra-Mutoigo.

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

 Check *thebanner.org* for the expanded story.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Anthony De Jager

1922-2010

Rev. Anthony De Jager, all-around pastor and serious Bible student, equally kind as a minister and a father, as serious in his prayers as in his pulpit work, passed away on September 25 in Brampton, Ontario.

De Jager emigrated to Canada in 1951 and graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1952. He served Christian Reformed congregations in Alberta, Ontario, and California. He retired in 1987.

De Jager was as liked as a person as he was respected as a pastor, and was equally devoted to his family as to his congregations.

He was a frequent delegate to synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC). He wrote often for *The Banner* and *Christian Courier*. When the latter was still *Calvinist Contact*, De Jager wrote a popular series about Dutch immigrant life in Canada under the pen-name "Arie Doff."

De Jager is survived by his wife, Jane, seven children and their spouses, 13 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the *Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook*. More information can also be found at www.thebanner.org.

Ontario Church Librarian Wins Award

Church librarian Cathy Goring won an award for publicity and promotion of the library at Hebron Christian Reformed Church in Whitby, Ontario.

The award was given by the Church Library Association of Ontario.

Goring heads up the church's library committee. When she first started, the library only offered children's videos, but after Hebron CRC moved to a new building, the library grew to include both fiction and non-fiction titles, periodicals, DVDs, and more. It now contains more than 1,500 titles.

The library is publicized through weekly bulletin announcements and creative displays. Goring also hosts annual fundraisers. —Brenda Visser



Cathy Goring, church librarian at Hebron CRC in Whitby, Ontario.

SHARLENE BEERMAN, BLACK SWANN STUDIOS

Pastors Intercede for School Rocked by Violence

After two sixth-grade students at Roseland Christian School died violent deaths this school year, local pastors were invited by principal Jim Van Zyl to pray at the Chicago school at the beginning of 2011.

"We just want to bring some peace to this place," said Van Zyl, a member of Crossroads Community Christian Reformed Church in Schererville, Ind.

Student Michael Pierce was accidentally shot and killed on September 12. Joi Cochran was stabbed to death, along with her older sister and mother, on November 29. Their photographs hang on a wall near the school's entrance.

Revs. Calvin Aardsma, Marjorie Kooy, Heino Blaauw, and Kris Vos joined Van Zyl and other Roseland staff for prayer on January 13.

Roseland Christian School was founded by members of the Christian Reformed Church in 1884. Van Zyl said it represents stability in a community that is struggling.

—Melissa Holtrop



Prayer walkers gather where photos hang of two students who died violently this school year.

MELISSA HOLTROP

GINGER PRIMUS



Lori Dykstra with one of her sculptures

Celebrating Creativity in Washington, D.C.

Recently at the Christian Reformed Church of Washington, D.C., three artists celebrated God's gifts of creativity and imagination.

Rod Jellema, a poet, read from his recently published book *Incarnality: The Collected Poems*.

Lori Dykstra, a visual artist, explained several of her paintings and sculptures.

Jazz musician David Jellema (son of Rod), who grew up in the church, played improvised musical responses.

Marjorie Gray appreciated the event and wrote in her blog that the artists "reopened our eyes to the tangible Creation which beckons us to respond; the Creator's signature talent blossoms in human creativity throughout every life everywhere."

The event raised almost \$800 for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, to be used for flood relief in Pakistan.

—Calvin Hulstein

Washington Church Creates Community with a Winter Carnival

"If we wanted to reach the community, we needed to reach out to kids," said Rev. Brad Vos of CrossWay Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver, Wash.

In January, the church welcomed 36 kids and 20 of their parents to jump in a bounce house, toss beanbags, and earn prizes.

Many were once involved in a church, but stopped attending for



MEGAN VANDENHEUVEL

various reasons. "They are willing to give us a shot because they engaged with us in a nonthreatening way. It is cool because it gives us the ability to build credibility with them," said Vos.

The church also ran a craft tent at a summer farmer's market, a fall school supply drive, a barbecue, a Harry Potter party, and a Christmas gathering.

A beanbag toss game gave kids a chance to win fun prizes at a Vancouver, Wash., winter carnival.

"[Reaching families] takes a ton of relational energy. You need to find natural ways to connect with people," Vos said.

—Amy Toornstra

Mixing Art and Ministry in Ontario

An art ministry in Kingston, Ontario, called "The Mess" is providing a new avenue for relational ministry for Mechele TeBrake of First Christian Reformed Church and her friend, Sandi Dodds.

Up to 10 people come each week, with art supplies provided for free. "I come to The Mess because something great is happening here, and I want to be part of it. Art is a big part of who I am," said Bob, a regular participant.

TeBrake is very clear that the ministry doesn't try to change people. "We just love them and let God change them," she said.

—Brenda Visser

Sherry enjoys painting at The Mess, an art ministry in Kingston, Ontario.



West Michigan Christians Stay on the Same (Bible) Page



ANNIE DEYOUNG

Every day in West Michigan, people from 15 Byron Center area churches, including five Christian Reformed congregations and two Christian schools, all open their Bibles to the same chapter.

It's part of an interdenominational and intergenerational Bible-reading program called One Book One Body.

Jim Heethuis, a ministry associate at Pathway Christian Reformed Church, said, "The goal is to help people who have Bibles read them and to unify the community around the texts."

Everyone involved reads the same designated passage, and

Susan Bordewyk (left) and Kelly Bordewyk discuss a Bible passage.

many post observations on Facebook.

Pastors from seven of the participating churches belong to a peer learning group that meets weekly. They collaborate on the background of the passages, surprises, main ideas, and sermon applications.

Heethuis said that, although many Bible-reading plans exist, this one aims for consistency. "By the time they get to Leviticus and Numbers, many people fall off the wagon. We're trying to keep people in the program."

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Michigan Church Moves for Fresh Start

After more than 75 years in the Flint, Mich., area, Good Shepherd Christian Reformed Church is seeking a fresh start in a different town. The small congregation left its location in Flushing, west of Flint, to start afresh in Burton, a larger community east of Flint.

The old location, chosen in the 1960s, was quite rural and not conducive to growth, said Rev. Adrian Eising. "We were kind of isolated and not reaching out where we were."

The church's membership dropped from 176 in the mid-1990s to 46 by 2002. First the congregation sold off some land to avoid closing but later it had to put its building up for sale as well.

A surprising offer in a weak real estate market left the church with replenished financial coffers but no home.

Then they found a former United Methodist church for sale in Burton. Though it meant a longer drive for many, the congregation decided to make the move and are praying that the church will grow.

"We view this as a chance to start anew," Eising said, "to reach out to people and minister Christ's love to them." —Henry Huisjen

HENRY HUISJEN



The congregation at Good Shepherd CRC in its new community

Michigan Church Hosts Officers and Ex-Offenders

Every Thursday, you'll find police officers and recently released inmates breaking bread together at First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The lunches are part of a reentry initiative for ex-offenders called CLEAR (Coalition Leadership Education And Rehabilitation). They provide time for interaction between released inmates (now called returning citizens) and the professionals who make it their goal to lower recidivism rates.

Officer Terry Dixon serves as a co-facilitator for the gathering. He described the traditional role of police officer as "find the bad guy and lock him up; not 'help him get back out.'"

But in his role as co-facilitator, Dixon testified to his reliance on God: "I don't have all the answers, but through Christ I do."

Luiz Timmer met Dixon at Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

"When you see 'the law' you think, 'here it goes again,'" said Timmer. But he noticed that Dixon had a different vibe and worked to build relationships. Whenever they met, Dixon

would always ask when Timmer was coming for the weekly CLEAR lunch.

During the meetings, participants share stories of success as well as frustration with the challenges of reentry from the previous week.

Will Horrice is a participant who was a member of Celebration Fellowship CRC (a congregation that operates inside the prison). He said, "We are sitting with law enforcement, the warden, a pastor. There is hope. You have to be in the right space with yourself."

Of the returning citizens that have participated in the program, only 18 percent have returned to prison and only one of the 10 or so core members of the group has reoffended.

The lunches are hosted by Bates Place, a ministry of First CRC.

—Noah Kruis



ANITA BRINKMAN

Ian and Matthew get gooey during "Fridays at Grace."

Ontario Church Kicks Off Weekends with Grace

For the third year, Grace Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario, opens its doors on Friday nights with programs for all ages. Many of the 80-90 children who come to "Fridays at Grace" live in a large housing complex next door to the church.

Activities include games, crafts and lessons for children, a youth group for young teens, and men's and women's Bible studies.

"We wanted to have something for everyone," says Elaine Wolting, a coordinator of the ministry. "An effective ministry has to involve the whole family."

Mackenzie, 12, said, she likes coming to "Fridays at Grace" and has also started coming to church on Sunday mornings. "I get to play and learn about God," she said. —Anita Brinkman

Officer Terry Dixon congratulates Kenneth Clark on receiving his official release from being on parole.



JASON REIFER



BRENDA VISSER

From left, Heather Halliday, Jonathan VanOostveen, Amos Cohoe, and Jason Adema enjoy a soup supper made by members of First and Westside CRCs in Kingston, Ontario.

Soup's on for Ontario Students

Geneva Fellowship, the Christian Reformed campus ministry at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, offers weekly homemade soup suppers all school-year long, with the help of soup-makers from Westside Fellowship and First CRCs in Kingston.

Candace Adema, who grew up in the Philippines, especially likes the soup suppers because "... it is easy to invite people, and it is not intimidating." Up to 50 students attend the free supper.

—Brenda Visser

Making Church Delicious in South Carolina



A South Carolina church plant is getting rave reviews for its food.

The food at Live on the Rock Christian Reformed Church in Columbia, S.C., is so good that its pimiento cheeseburger was featured among the state's top five in a special insert of *Southern Living* magazine last winter. In 2009 local television station WLTX

recognized the church with a "golden spatula" award.

That's because the church also happens to be Desserts & More, a 4-year-old restaurant managed by Rev. Cary Holbert, his wife Sharon, and their two daughters. "We're here to make Jesus known," said Holbert.

To Holbert, being a restaurant owner and pastor puts

From left, Melanie, Monica, Sharon, and Rev. Cary Holbert stand in front of their church, which also happens to be an award-winning restaurant.

him in the same place as other churchgoers who must balance work and ministry. He encourages his congregation to bring their faith into their work situations, while doing so himself.

Live on the Rock CRC strives to share an intelligent Reformed message, said Holbrook. The church hosts musicians and comedians on Friday evenings and has a weekly teen ministry.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Some members of The Crucible CRC in Denver: seated, Anne Varallo, Marites Peterson; standing, Janella Casem, Ruby Preece, Eloida Wagner, Annie Matillano, Vickylyn Yambao, Myrna dela Cruz, Amy Serrano, Guy Boquiren

Filipino Church in Colorado Helps Churches in the Philippines

A Christian Reformed ministry for Filipino immigrants in Denver, Colo., is helping support seven Christian ministries in the Philippines.

The Crucible started as a house church, partnered with Eastern Hills Community Christian Reformed Church in Aurora, Colo., and Christian Reformed Home Missions.

It has since grown to more than 50 people who gather for worship and meals together. The group is served by three pastors: Rev. Henry Serrano of the CRC, and two other pastors, one from the Baptist General Conference and one from the Southern Baptist church.

"[By] opening the ministry to other pastors who are looking for

ministry opportunities, it will be easier for everyone because the responsibility is shared," Serrano said.

Serrano credits his partnership with other pastors with making the church self-sustaining. None of the pastors take a salary, and by meeting in other church buildings they do not need a budget.

Instead, the offerings that are collected each Sunday are sent back to the Philippines to help seven different pastors in their ministries there.

Serrano said as long as there is a need in the Philippines, "there is help coming from the Lord's hand in Colorado."

—Sarah Boonstra

MIKE VANDERVEEN



Chris Swoverland removes the oil drain pan from under a neighbor's car as his father, Pete Swoverland, prepares to back the car off the ramps.

Reaching the Neighbors with Oil Changes

Regular car maintenance can be an expensive proposition for people who are elderly and living on a fixed income. So three times a year, Parklane Christian Reformed Church in Portland, Ore., helps out by offering free oil changes.

Volunteers serviced 57 cars at the church's most recent event. Rev. Vance Hays, pastor of Parklane, said that each oil change costs the church only about \$20. "But for a lot of people, 20 bucks is a lot of money," he said. "We keep doing it because it is fun and it reaches people."

The church has been offering the service since 2006.

—Amy Toornstra

Caring for Children in Washington

Sonlight Community Christian Reformed Church in Lynden, Wash., is serious about obeying God's mandate to care for orphans. Six Sonlight families have adopted seven children in the past two years.

Carleen Polinder and Jacquee Larsen, members of the congregation, lead an adoption support group called Hope 1.27 (after James 1:27, which exhorts Christians to care for orphans).

Larsen, an adoptive mom herself, teaches a class called "If You Were Mine" that helps families who are considering adop-



tion by covering topics such as evaluating adoption agencies, submitting paperwork, and welcoming children home.

Hope 1.27 also encourages church members to get involved in foster care. "We don't realize how many foster kids are in our own country," Larsen says.

Rev. Peter Byrna, pastor of Sonlight CRC, said, "Adoptions and families

(l-r) Jazmyn, Alexa, and Sadie were all recently adopted by families at Sonlight Community CRC in Lynden, Washington.

giving foster care have helped Sonlight be a little reflection of heaven. Children of every color and tribe and country are accepted and welcomed as part of our family through grace and love."

—Amy Toornstra

Michigan Family's Special Formula Is Love

In what Sandy Roelofs said is God's plan for her family of six, another place has been added at the table for Gabe Mateo, a friend and soccer teammate of her son Trent.

Sandy and husband Doug's four children all attend The Potter's House Christian School in Grand Rapids, Mich., a school that is deliberately inclusive of students from all ethnic backgrounds and income levels. That is where Trent met Gabe.

Gabe's mom, Minerva Mateo, supported Gabe joining the Roelofs family so he'll have more structure and make better school



KAREN GORTER

Back row (l-r): Trent and Sierra Roelofs, Gabe Mateo
Front row (l-r): Levi, Sandy, Doug, and Noah Roelofs

decisions. "They are a good family," she said "I want him to be a good person, help people, have a better life."

"I'm happy and proud of myself, and my mom is proud of me," said Gabe. "She says to take this as a gift—I'm so thankful."

Gabe has many hopes for the future, including playing soccer at Michigan State University and becoming a cardiologist. "My mom's [family] have really bad heart problems," he said. "The Roelofs have this special formula for me. It's hard to put into words. They offer me a lot of help."

"This whole thing is just love," said Doug Roelofs, "Christ's love for us. Gabe is a son."

The Roelofs are members of EverGreen Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich.

—Karen Gorter

NEWS

Loving the Neighborhood One House at a Time

As poverty and violence threatened his neighborhood, Leroy Werkhoven, a member of Sunnyside (Wash.)

Christian Reformed Church, knew that complaining about the problem would not help.

Instead, Werkhoven and a small group of church members started an initiative called "Loving Sunnyside" to demonstrate their love for the neighborhood.

Volunteers paint home exteriors, clean up yards, and mow lawns for neighbors who are elderly, have disabilities, or struggle with finances. They've painted 29 homes in the Sunnyside neighborhood so far. Their most recent work day brought out 200 volunteers.

A follow-up team will assist homeowners for a year and seek to bring them into the fellowship of a Christian organization. "Simply painting a house is not reaching as far as we need to," Werkhoven said.

"If you ignore poverty, the problems multiply. We are going to reach out and help."

—Amy Toornstra



DOUG LAVERMAN

Volunteers scrape, prime, and paint the houses of individuals in need.

Writer Needed

The Banner is seeking news correspondents in regions that include Iowa, South Dakota, and southern Ontario's Toronto/Niagara region to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. If you live in one of these states or provinces and you like to write, we'd like to hear from you. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. All expressions of interest should be addressed via email to Gayla Postma, News Editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a resume or letter outlining your news-writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

The fall kick-off service at The Well in Aurora, Colo.



Keeping Kids Coming Back to The Well

On any given Tuesday night, you'll find upwards of 125 high school students gathered in the Eastern Hills Community Christian Reformed Church in Aurora, Colo.

They are there to worship at The Well, but they're finding much more than worship. The Well is a youth church service that is run in part by the young people to reach out to youths in the Aurora area. Over the course of a year, more than 300 teens come into contact with the church.

Kendal Hommes, the senior high youth pastor, said many of the teens "don't go to church somewhere else. Their families are unchurched. They've ended up at The Well either through a friend, Young Life, or Campus Life."

Hommes says the strength of The Well is its leadership. "Our adult leaders are constantly in contact with students, checking in with them, making sure things are going well," he said. Youth leaders use social networking to maintain that contact.

—Sarah Boonstra

California Ministry Meets God in the Wilderness

"God put me here to be an advocate for the outdoors and to share this love for God's creation with others," said Hal Holland, member of The Gathering Christian Reformed Church in Sacramento, Calif.

Hal and his wife, Kelly, both biologists, are co-leaders of a new Adventure ministry that brings together their passion for creation and their love of hiking and backpacking.

The Adventure ministry helps individuals and families to put their faith in God as they participate in outdoor adventures,

experience a connection with God in new ways, and leave the busyness of life behind, said Kelly.

Hal and Kelly Holland from The Gathering CRC love to experience the wilderness with their family and share it with others.



Kristine Galindo participated in the ministry's first overnight camping and backpacking adventure in the mountains. She said, "This is a great 'inviting' opportunity. I can think of several unchurched families that are in the same situation we are. They have young kids, they love the outdoors, but don't have the equipment or the experience to venture out on their own. This is a non-threatening way to introduce friends to their need for God while giving them an adventure they could not create on their own."

—Heidi Wicker

FAQs

Church

Q Some churches are showing compassion and generosity to their community by serving meals, washing cars, and cleaning up the neighborhood during the week. I'm very upset that our church has encouraged our members to do these things on Sunday. How do I respond?

A Some of us grew up in an era when the rule for Sunday activities—other than going to church, preparing our catechism lesson, taking a nap, and reading *The Banner*—was “Thou shalt not.” Thankfully, that has changed. Not only is the Lord’s Day a wonderful day to show compassion and generosity to others, but it’s also a day when many people have time in their schedules to participate in these “deeds of love and mercy through which the heavenly kingdom comes” (*Psalter Hymnal* 555:2).

If your convictions won’t allow you to participate in these activities on Sunday, consider praying that the ministry of your fellow church members will help draw the recipients of such generosity to the Savior in whose name these deeds are being done.

—George Vander Weit

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

Calling

Q What new jobs do you see being created in our changing world? I'd like to know so I can acquire the cutting-edge skills or education that is essential for preparing for the future.

Some of us grew up in an era when the rule for Sunday activities was “Thou shalt not.”

A Staying on top of emerging career trends is an art unto itself, as careers wax and wane to meet changing circumstances and keep pace with emerging technologies. At this particular point in time, the healthiest broad hiring sectors are engineering (except for civil), accounting, information technology, health care, and, supposedly, education. However, you could expand that list of general fields by adding technology to specific careers, resulting in job titles such as social media marketing specialist, health informatics specialist, or transportation geography researcher.

That said, I do not typically encourage people I see to pursue any of the top 10 careers just because they appear on a list of “hot” careers. Why is that? The reason is twofold. First, a career that is viable one day may be outmoded in the future. The second reason is because of individual gifts and calling. If you have a true passion for and gifts in an area where you feel God is calling you, then by faith it’s wise to pursue that direction. God is not bound by statistical probabilities and is able to creatively make a way where none is apparent.

—Bonnie Speyers

Bonnie Speyers is a career counselor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Christian Morality

Q A man I know divorced his wife of 27 years to marry another woman. His son, a junior in high school, chose to live with his father and his new stepmother. The friends and relatives of his mother were outraged and told the son that he was condoning his father’s despicable behavior by making this choice. Is condoning another’s bad behavior a sin? Is condoning a type of facilitating or enabling?

A Condoning another’s wrongful behavior is frequently a sin. A person condones such behavior when the person is aware that the other’s actions produce harm, the person does not denounce the other’s actions or attempt to make the harm less likely to occur, and the person suspects that such inaction is morally blameworthy. Thus, for example, a woman condones the bad behavior of her boyfriend if she allows him to use illegal drugs in the presence of her children, and her inaction qualifies as a sin of omission.

The boy you describe does not appear to fit this characterization of condoning behavior. He probably realizes that his father’s actions have harmed his family, that there is nothing he could have done to alter this course of events, and that his own inaction is therefore not blameworthy.

Condoning harm is less serious, morally speaking, than facilitating harm. A person facilitates the harm produced by another’s wrongdoing when the person acts to increase the likelihood that the other’s actions produce the harm.

Facilitating harm, in turn, is less serious than enabling harm. A person enables the harm produced by another’s wrongdoing when the other’s actions would not produce the harm were it not for this person’s own actions, and the person is aware that his or her own actions may contribute to the harm.

Finally, even if a person unintentionally condones, facilitates, or enables the harm produced by another, it can still qualify as sinful (*Lev. 5:15*).

—Gregory Mellema

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



YES AND NO LENT AND THE REFORMED FAITH TODAY

LIVING AS FAITHFUL DISCIPLES of Jesus requires making a lot of judgment calls. We are called to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5:21), to “discern what is best” (Phil. 1:10). To see this process of discernment at work, consider the history of Lent—the traditional 40-day season (not counting Sundays) of preparation for Easter.

Our Recent Practice

Many congregations in the Christian Reformed Church today observe Lent—but in a way that seems unusual to most Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and Anglicans. It is an approach already reflected in a 1933 editorial in *The Banner*, where longtime editor H.J. Kuiper

described both an increase of interest in and opposition to observing Lent, then firmly concluded, “We believe both views are one-sided.”

Kuiper said no to the ancient idea that Lent should feature a lot of spiritual disciplines, like fasting. As Kuiper argued, if we strengthen our piety during Lent, aren’t we likely to become lax afterward? Aren’t we supposed to be “*always* excelling in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58)? Don’t Lenten obligations lead us to legalism?

At the same time, Kuiper said yes to the importance of a season of preparation for Easter, citing a longstanding Reformed practice of sermons on Jesus’ sufferings as a fitting approach.

For the past three generations, Christian Reformed congregations have typi-

cally been warm to sermon series on Jesus’ suffering and death, rather cool to too much emphasis on spiritual disciplines including fasting and prayer, and downright cold to other traditions that grew up around Lent: Mardi Gras parties, fish on Fridays, and setting aside the word “Alleluia” during Lenten worship (until Easter morning). This is why, for example, the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal’s* section on Lent focuses almost exclusively on Jesus’ suffering and death.

LENT WAS A PASTORAL INNOVATION FOR A TIME A LOT LIKE OUR OWN.

Fourth-Century Innovation

In part because of the limited historical information available to him, Kuiper gave no attention to another dimension of Lent: the link between Lent and baptism. As recent historical studies have shown, Lent came about as early church leaders were also saying yes and no to possible ministry practices in light of contemporary cultural challenges.

In A.D. 313 the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, and made it legal—even preferable—for Roman citizens to become Christian. Suddenly the church had a lot of adult baptisms to celebrate!

But that created a challenge: How was the church supposed to ensure that people who wanted to be baptized were serious about Jesus? And what did the church need to do to shape these new Christian lives? Baptism alone was not enough. More was needed to form these new Christians as disciples of Jesus.

So the church developed a 40-day course of preparation for baptism—a time of Bible study, catechism study (that's right—catechism study 1,200 years before John Calvin), and spiritual disciplines including prayer and fasting. This was a super-charged “40-day spiritual adventure” or “40 days of purpose” (both are modern riffs on an ancient idea). The idea was that during those 40 days believers should be either preparing for their own baptism or encouraging someone who was preparing for baptism.

Instead of a time for focusing only on the suffering and death of Jesus, Lent became about focusing on our union with Christ's death and resurrection in baptism. Romans 6:3-4 served as a theme text: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

In terms of doctrine, this put the emphasis not only on God's gift of forgiveness (justification), but also on the

gift of new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit (sanctification). Lent was a time for new and veteran Christians to live into—to “practice”—the basic moves of the Christian life: to deny oneself, to turn to Jesus, to put off gossip and bitterness, and to put on patience and compassion. Just as athletes need to drill key skills and musicians need to practice scales, so too Christians need to practice self-denial and self-giving love.

In other words, Lent was developed in what we now call a “missional context.” It was a pastoral innovation for a time much like our own, where vast numbers of people do not grow up in the church. Lent was the church's way of saying yes to the free offer of salvation and no to cheap grace—baptism without discipleship.

16th-Century Reform

By the time John Calvin came along, the memory of Lent as a season for shaping new Christians had long faded. Adult baptisms were rare. Just about everyone was baptized as an infant. The Lenten disciplines were still practiced, but they were often imposed by the church in a distorted way as a means of currying favor with God.

So Calvin said yes to the practice he felt his people needed—teaching built around the catechism. But he said no to the season of Lent as too hopelessly superstitious to be of help to his people.

What's Best Today?

So how should we celebrate Lent today?

We need to join fourth-century pastors, John Calvin, H.J. Kuiper, and a lot of thoughtful contemporary Roman Catholic leaders who are studying the same history, in making wise choices that promote faithful discipleship. We, too, need to say both yes and no in response

to particular challenges we face in our own ministry contexts.

In places where Lent is associated almost exclusively with legalism or superstition, Reformed Christians would be wise to follow Calvin's lead and say no to Lent. Instead, perhaps pastors should lead congregations through reflections on the theme of “freedom in Christ.”

In other contexts there may be great wisdom in adopting Lent as an identifiable season of preparation for Easter. All of us need to sanctify our calendars and make clear that nothing in the winter and springtime of the year—not Valentine's Day, not spring break, not March Madness, not even the hockey playoffs—is as important to our identity as Jesus' death and resurrection.

In missional places, where we long for a lot of adult baptisms at Easter, there is a lot of wisdom in recovering the idea that Lent is not just about Jesus' suffering and death, but also about our union with Christ in baptism. There may be great wisdom in intentionally practicing our new life in Christ with disciplines of prayer, fasting, and repentance—disciplines that are so life-giving that we plan on keeping them going long after Lent ends. After all, many of us live in cultures with too few—not too many—of these disciplines.

Sometimes we inherit from our spiritual ancestors settled answers to key questions. But often we inherit instead models for asking unsettling questions. How can we put Jesus at the center of how we mark time? How can we convey the beauty of baptismal identity to seekers and strengthen it for veteran believers? How can we practice disciplines in the Christian life without coming to trust in or be overly proud of those practices?

May God's Spirit equip us with all “love and spiritual knowledge to discern what is best” (Phil. 1:10). ■



Dr. John D. Witvliet teaches theology, worship, and music at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and directs the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (www.calvin.edu/worship).



The “sad chapter” in Canada’s history of the Indian residential schools leads to a meaningful conversation about reconciliation.

RECONCILIATION BEGINS WITH TRUTH. Before there can be handshaking or coming together in a moment of forgiveness, truth must be told. In June 2008, prime minister Stephen Harper acknowledged the truth of a “sad chapter” in Canada’s history with a statement of apology for the government’s role in the operation of Indian residential schools. More than 150,000 First Nations, Metis, and Indian children were taken against their parents’ wishes and placed in the care of the schools—often run by churches—where they were forced to abandon their language and their culture and assimilate to white ways. There were more than 130 residential schools in Canada from the 1870s until the last one closed in 1996 (source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, www.trc.ca).

The prime minister’s apology offered an opportunity for all Canadians to join in a process of reconciliation with aboriginal neighbors—a process that requires much listening and learning.

Since listening and learning is what Christian education is about, the King’s University College responded by focusing its January 2009 Interdisciplinary Studies conference on the theme “Truth and Reconciliation: Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools.” That event was developed by a committee that included aboriginal leaders, church leaders from the Remembering the Children initiative, and members of King’s staff and faculty.

Participants from Blue Quills First Nations College in St. Paul, Alberta, also attended the conference and met at a special dinner with King’s students that featured bannock and stew.

In addition to many conversations and informal meetings, the students and members of the public who attended the conference were honored to listen to the stories of residential schools as shared by the survivors themselves. A culminating event at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre allowed all participants to see reconciliation in action. The ceremony included traditional aboriginal elements such as smudging and drumming, as well as Christian symbols like candles. The evening allowed for heartfelt words offered on the part of both elders and church leaders, including sincere words of apology and forgiveness.

As participants sat in a circle, all were drawn into the power of that moment. As Edmonton writer Cheryl Mahaffy noted, “In a circle, no one can merely observe” (*Edmonton Journal*, Jan. 24, 2009). And that, perhaps, is exactly where the church must begin any conversation about reconciliation: none of us can merely observe the process; it demands action.

The conference began a friendship between members of the organizing committee that has continued, pushing us to explore ways to continue our learning and engagement in reconciliation. Recently four members of the organizing committee—Maggie Hodgson, Rev. Canon Travis Enright, Roy Berkenbosch, and Rebecca Warren—sat down again for lunch to continue talking about the work of reconciliation.

“In a circle, no one can merely observe.”

Continuing the Conversation

Maggie Hodgson began the conversation, saying, “The ownership of reconciliation rests with oneself.” No matter whether the other person is able to acknowledge the wrong done, you can take ownership of your own healing. Still, there is hope that there will be some kind of change in behavior. As Maggie noted, “If your actions don’t follow your words, then that doesn’t mean it’s going to be all right. Reconciliation is sometimes trust that behaviors will change.”

“People can understand reconciliation on an intellectual and theological level,” noted Travis Enright, “but not a day-to-day practical level.” For example, when he’s looking for church communities to participate in a walk commemorating violence against aboriginal women, “they don’t see the walk as an act of reconciliation or education. They may still have a charity model: I’ll give you something, then you’re reconciled.”

Maggie Hodgson spoke about the call for involvement in terms of asking others (including readers of this article) to act as spiritual witnesses. “If I come to your wedding,” she explained, “I don’t just come to see you in a pretty gown. Being a witness means phoning you up when things are hard, saying, ‘What can we do to support and help; how can we be as much part of *this* as we [were] in your wedding?’ Being a spiritual witness means listening, learning, developing a relationship . . . then taking the next step of reaching out and learning more. Reconciliation is about building understanding.”

In order for understanding to occur, it’s important that *everyone’s* truth is spoken: in this case, not just survivors of the residential schools, but also staff members and church leaders.

And those who hear these stories have a responsibility to do something with what they have learned. “I don’t think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is being as successful as it could because people are not taking their responsibilities seriously,” observed Maggie. “The ministers, the post-secondary institutions, even those in my community aren’t taking their responsibility seriously. If every Indian there brought a non-native friend, that would really be something because it would include Metis, Inuit, black, brown, pink, and whatever color they bring with them!”

The education of *all* Canadians is one primary goal of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Roy Berkenbosch suggested, “Maybe we need to think of treaty as covenant. Just as we accept the rights of citizenship, we accept the obligations of citizenship too. No doubt I am as obligated [to participate in reconciliation] as a member of the United Church back in the 1800s.” (The United Church was the primary founder of the residential schools.)

This means that all Canadians bear some responsibility, whether their relatives were directly involved in the residential schools or not. As the Belhar Confession notes, “Christ’s work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another (Eph. 2:11-22).” Just how is it made manifest? Through our acceptance of responsibility and our willingness to demonstrate that in our actions and behavior.

“What scares me about the TRC is how easy it is to turn it off, change the channel, don’t think about it,” Travis commented.

“We need to build a shared understanding,” agreed Maggie. “It’s about being willing to have our stereotypes changed. Before I had anything to do with Dutch Reformed people I had my stereotypes, but through your willingness to listen to our recommendations for the conference and implement them, you built trust and respect.”

Maggie told the story of Len Blumenthal, a Dutch immigrant whose family was kept alive by blood Indians when they first came to Canada. “I think his truth about that being spoken about by his grandfather and his father down to him is part of building shared understanding. When Len went to work in addictions, he treated us the whole time like we were the ‘First Peoples,’ the ones who saved his family’s life.”

At the end of the conference, Roy bought a pair of Dutch wooden shoes and a pair of moccasins to present to Maggie Hodgson in appreciation of the key role she played in helping to shape the conference. “We walked in each other’s shoes for a while,” Roy noted with appreciation. “Now we have a shared mission,” said Maggie.

Whatever reconciliation looks like, it also looks like this: four friends sitting around a table over lunch, asking the hard questions, committed to meeting together over the long haul. Because where reconciliation begins, action and changed behavior also begin. As Elder Abe Burnstick says, “It is up to you!” ■

To Find Out More . . .

The following websites can tell you more about the history of the Indian residential schools:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
www.trc.ca

Remembering the Children Initiative
rememberingthechildren.ca

Stolen Children: Truth and Reconciliation (from the CBC news)
www.cbc.ca/news/background/truth-reconciliation

U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html

King’s University College Truth and Reconciliation Conference
www.kingsu.ca/IS-conference/2009/january.html

Rebecca Warren worked on the Truth and Reconciliation conference at King’s University College. She is assistant director of the Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life at the University of Alberta.

Roy Berkenbosch is director of the Micah Centre and Interdisciplinary Studies at The King’s University College, Edmonton, Alberta.

The Rev. Canon Travis Enright is Canon Missioner for Indigenous Ministry in the Chair of St. John de Brebeuf at All Saints’ Anglican Cathedral in Edmonton.

Maggie Hodgson is founder of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation and a leader in the aboriginal community.

Called to Be Sent

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Elly Dalmaijer says she and her husband, Jack, “never plan anything . . . we just live life as it goes.”

It’s a formula that in the past 10 years has taken the St. Albert, Alberta, couple to 11 countries as international relief managers—volunteers working with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) to bring aid when and where disaster strikes.

Like the 20 other international relief managers on CRWRC’s roster, they are accustomed to being called on at a moment’s notice.

Their involvement with CRWRC’s International Disaster Response started in 2000, shortly after Jack and his partners sold their construction-related business. With more time on their hands, the couple began to look for opportunities to serve God in a new way.

“We had to decide, ‘Is this enough?’” recalls Elly. “We could chase money the rest of our lives, or we could decide that we had enough and use what we had and our lifetime of skills in a different context.”

She and Jack had already been involved in their local church, St. Albert Christian Reformed Church, as well as with the board of The King’s University College in Edmonton, Alberta, and various other activities. “We now wanted to serve the worldwide church of God,” Elly says.



PHOTO BY ELLY DALMAIJER

Elly Dalmaijer with flood survivors in Pakistan.

An opportunity arose that summer while the Dalmaijers were on vacation.

“There was a flood in Mozambique,” recalls Elly. “Jack and I were on holidays visiting friends in the States. We got an e-mail from our pastor who said that CRWRC was looking for an accountant to go to Mozambique.”

Jack called CRWRC and was told that the position had already been filled. Three weeks later, the couple returned home and decided to go on a camping trip.

“Jack went to pick up the camper and the phone rang,” Elly remembers. “It turns out that the man who was going to go to Mozambique could no longer go. They wanted to know if we could go, and if we could leave the next week.

“I put the phone down, went outside, and there came Jack with the camper. I said, ‘You’d better take it back; we’re going to Mozambique.’”

After consulting an atlas to find out where Mozambique is, the couple prepared for their first volunteer service abroad. Jack’s assignment for the next four months was to train staff at the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique to manage the accounting for a large CRWRC-funded disaster response project. The church did not have a computer or software, so Jack brought those with him.

“I went as ‘the wife,’” Elly says. “I had to cook and clean.”

“After consulting an atlas to find out where Mozambique is, the couple prepared for their first volunteer service abroad.”

Then CRWRC received a note from a remote community whose village had washed away. “They said they could work really hard, but had no access to basic tools and materials.”

Janet Janz, CRWRC’s Disaster Response program manager in Eastern Africa at the time, suggested that Elly manage that project. She taught Elly how to write a proposal for a \$15,000 grant and set her to work.

“I started meeting with the community,” Elly recalls. “I slept on the floor with snakes and chickens and the women all huddled around me.”

The project was very successful. Of the 66 planned houses, 64 were built by the community members themselves. By the time that project wrapped up, Jack’s was also finishing, so the couple went home to Alberta.

Two weeks later, the phone rang again. CRWRC wanted to follow up their relief programs in southern Mozambique with an animal distribution to replace livestock that had drowned in the flood. Because of Elly’s success at managing the house-building project, they wanted the Dalmaijsers to manage this \$400,000 program.

Jack Dalmaijer meets with farmers in Pakistan to get their input on the need for seed to replant crops destroyed by floods.



Jack and Elly Dalmaijer

So Jack and Elly repacked their bags, said goodbye to their family, and CRWRC’s international relief manager program was born.

“That was the beginning, and we’ve never really looked back,” said Elly.

Since that original trip to Mozambique, the Dalmaijsers have managed projects in Mozambique, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, the Philippines, Mexico, Haiti, Guatemala, Mali, and Sudan. In December 2010 they returned from their most recent project: managing part of the flood response in Pakistan.

“Most of the time we spend four to six months away,” Elly says. “We come home for a while and then go again.”

Their time overseas is no vacation. International relief managers work hard, managing the logistics of projects with budgets ranging from \$500,000 to \$2 million. They also have to deal with the

physical and cultural realities of living in different countries.

“For us, the hardest project physically was the five months that we were in Darfur, Sudan,” Elly says. “The living conditions were very primitive. We lived on a compound and were under United Nations rule. We had to follow all kinds of security guidelines and were not allowed to leave the compound.” She recalls that it was very hot and there was no running water in the house. “Water was delivered to us by donkey.” »

Volunteering by the Numbers

Between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010, more than 3,600 volunteers participated in CRWRC programs. This includes:

- 20 international relief managers serving a total of 1,259 days responding to emergencies around the world.
- 1,449 Disaster Response Services volunteers who donned green shirts and responded to disasters within North America.
- 1,858 people who were part of a church, school, or youth work group that responded to disasters in North America.
- 20 people who volunteered or interned in CRWRC’s home offices.
- 49 people who were part of international work teams.
- 5 people who were part of a work team within the United States.
- 12 people who completed an international internship.
- 5 people who went on a Discovery Tour.
- 244 volunteers who performed short- or long-term assignments with CRWRC staff and partners around the world.

In total, volunteers donated 350,742 hours of their time to CRWRC’s ministry. That’s roughly the equivalent of 168 full-time employees for one year.

PHOTO BY ELLY DALMAIJER



CHURCH

In order to carry out orderly aid distribution, recipients are registered in advance. Here a woman signs in and receives her ticket for food rations.



PHOTO BY JACK DALMAIJER

ServiceLink Is the Link

ServiceLink is a volunteer program of the Christian Reformed Church in North America that provides a one-stop resource center to link volunteers with national or international ministries. Staff work in partnership with the various CRC agencies and programs as well as with partner ministries and organizations.

Prospective volunteers don't need to know exactly where they want to go or what they want to do when they contact one of the ServiceLink offices.

"ServiceLink can match you with a ministry around the world or in your own backyard that uses your skills and interests. You can volunteer for a few hours, days, weeks, months, or even years," says Carol Sybenga, ServiceLink program manager.

With offices in Burlington, Ontario, and Grand Rapids, Mich., ServiceLink helps prepare individuals to serve in many ways, such as teaching HIV/AIDS prevention in Latin America, working as teachers in Asia, or serving as accountants in Africa.

Closer to home, volunteers can be regional advocates for the CRC's Disability Concerns office, or church groups can serve for a week in rural Appalachia or with aboriginal ministries in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

All volunteers are required to go through orientation prior to arriving on the field and are debriefed upon their return. Additional orientation and training takes place upon arrival in the field and is specific to the country and the volunteer's assignment.

Above all, ServiceLink helps people become comfortable with the idea of volunteering.

"A mission trip is a big undertaking and can, in fact, be very overwhelming if you have never done it before," says Lisa Sochacki, volunteer coordinator in the United States. "Rest assured. We have been involved in this work for years and have many resources available and experts to walk alongside you to help make your trip a success."

To learn more about ServiceLink, visit its website at www.crcna.org/servicelink. To speak with someone about ServiceLink, call the Canadian office at 1-800-730-3490 or the U.S. office at 1-877-279-9994.

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



PHOTO BY ILA DIEPERSLOOT

Walking together: Elly Dalmaijer and a Rwandan woman.

She jokes that "the highlight of our day was at 7:30 p.m. We'd sit outside the gate and watch the cows come home."

The work also takes an emotional toll.

"Emotionally, the hardest project that we've worked on was in Uganda after the Lord's Resistance Army had been there. The women kept coming to me and wanting to tell their stories of children being abducted.

"In one [aid] distribution, there was a whole group of girls who were about 12, and they were all pregnant from being raped. Then we never heard from them again.

"The fact that that war was so focused on children was really hard to cope with."

But the opportunity to serve others makes it all worthwhile, she adds.

Wayne deJong, CRWRC's director of Disaster Response & Rehabilitation, says that volunteers such as the Dalmaijers provide vital support to CRWRC's efforts.

"Having international relief managers is a crucial component of our disaster response ministry," deJong said. "When disasters strike, we have trained, qualified people who can go and manage the details for us.

"We would not have been able to respond as quickly and effectively to recent disasters such as the South Asia tsunami or the Haiti earthquake without our IRMs."

These days, Elly spends part of her time recruiting new IRMs. She has led information workshops at churches across the United States and Canada and has developed modules to help prepare prospective volunteers for what they will experience.

Through it all, the Dalmaijers remain modest about their contribution to ministry.

"When I was 10 there was a big flood in Holland and the whole world was sending money and supplies," Elly says. "I remember it so vividly—all these countries I barely knew or ever thought about were helping Holland.

"That always stuck with me. Now in my own way I'm paying back a little bit."

For more information about CRWRC's international relief manager program, visit www.crwrc.org/volunteer. ■



Kristen deRoo VanderBerg is communications project manager for CRWRC.

Rev. Paul Mpindi (left) meets with students and volunteer mentors in Bangui, Central African Republic.



Back to God Volunteers Make Ministry Happen

Every week, an average of 2,500 people walk through the doors of the Back to God Ministries center in Kinshasa, Congo, in response to messages they heard through the media.

It's an astonishing response, requiring a huge commitment by ministry staff. "We



Bible study students in Central African Republic wait to review lessons with their volunteer mentors.

cannot do discipleship without our volunteers," notes Rev. Paul Mpindi, BTGMI's French-language ministry leader.

A network of 225 trained volunteers—pastors and church leaders—in several places throughout Africa serve as mentors to new believers and seekers enrolled in Bible study correspondence courses.

On average, more than 5,000 students enroll in the Bible study course each month. The volunteers provide ongoing supervision as students work through the lessons.

Volunteers also deliver study materials to people who live too far away to come to the ministry centers. Others provide spiritual counseling for those who come with deep needs.

"We set up appointments, and several pastors come every week to provide individual counseling," Rev. Mpindi explains.

"This also creates an important partnership between local churches and Back to God Ministries International," he adds. "We connect with these church leaders through our training conferences.

"We serve them first by providing biblical teaching, and in return they volunteer to serve with our ministry. Most of these volunteers do not have money to give in support of our ministry, but they joyfully give of their time.

"We could not do this part of our ministry without our volunteers."

More than 750 volunteers serve with Back to God Ministries International around the



BTGMI volunteer Matty Viana celebrates "graduation" with one of her Bible study students in Kinshasa, Congo.

world. The ways these volunteers offer assistance are varied, but they're essential for providing effective media outreach for each of BTGMI's 10 language ministries.

- Volunteers assist the Chinese and Japanese ministries by providing the voices for audio broadcasts. Fifty volunteers assist the Chinese ministry with distributing discipleship materials.

- More than 200 partner churches throughout Brazil provide volunteer staff to follow up with people who request prayer or spiritual counseling in response to the *DisquePaz* (*Dial Peace*) ministry.
- At least 170 volunteers throughout the Middle East quietly disciple seekers who want to know more about the Christian faith.
- Since the 1980s, volunteers in West Michigan and Iowa have faithfully delivered *Today* devotionals to area churches and businesses, providing God's Word for people in many communities.
- A volunteer team in Nigeria helps distribute 5,000 *Today* devotionals throughout villages there. And people in China and Cuba, on their own initiative, have been sharing BTGMI devotional booklets with people hungry for biblical instruction.

Rev. Bob Heerspink, director of Back to God Ministries International, says, "Because of the nature of media ministry, volunteer staff in many places throughout the world are crucial for carrying out discipleship ministries with those who contact us with questions about faith and Christian resources."

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with BTGMI, visit BackToGod.net/get-involved/for-you. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer is a staff writer for Back to God Ministries International.

“ We could not do this part of our ministry without our volunteers. ”

In Praise of Volunteers

My local church is on a journey through the book of Proverbs—a chapter a day for 31 days. Each day I receive an email from my pastor that offers thoughts and insights into that day’s readings. It has been an interesting and excellent exercise in spiritual discipline.

As I wander through this wisdom literature, I occasionally stop and notice how wonderfully God provides a window into his heart and mind. While I know that none of us will ever understand God fully, it is delightful to catch glimpses of God’s desire for our lives.

I am struck by how often Proverbs makes reference to our words. “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver. . . . The lips of the righteous nourish many” (Prov. 10:20-21).

We all acknowledge the power of words in our daily lives. Words can raise our spirits or cut deeper than a knife.

Words, once spoken, cannot be withdrawn. Sometimes they leave an indelible mark. Words can build trust, but words misspoken can destroy trust in a heartbeat; the resulting damage can take a lifetime to repair.

Proverbs reminds us that the right words spoken at the right time are precious. As I reflect on words that have had the most impact on my life, I note that two of the richest words in the world are “thank you.” As a child, my parents insisted that I express thanks whenever appropriate. Even today I often hear my mother’s voice: “What do you say?”

This month’s Church at Work pages include stories about volunteers—women and men who give selflessly of their time, talents, and resources to advance the kingdom of God. Their work is done not out of selfish ambition but out of a deep love for Christ and his church. Rather than hoarding the resources God provides, they happily use those gifts by giving to others.



To these folks, I want to say thank you! Thank you for your service. Thank you for your unselfish attitudes. Thank you for what you do for God’s church and kingdom.

As we celebrate these diligent servants, we are reminded that they are not alone. The church is filled with a multitude of volunteers. Those who give freely of their time and energy form the backbone of the church. Without them, the church would cease to exist.

I have the opportunity to visit many churches, and I have observed that vibrant, healthy churches are filled with volunteers. These churches are not relying on paid staff to do the work; they are staffed by volunteers who keep the ministries and programs alive and well. People in those churches are actively engaged in outreach, congregational care, discipleship, and prayer. They respect and support their leaders, but they do not expect them to do most of the work of ministry.

These churches reflect the beautiful image of the body of Christ described by Paul in Romans 12. Together, all the different members form one body. But this only happens when all the members of the body are using the gifts that God has provided.

You might think that your work in Christ’s body is unimportant or inconsequential, but it is not. Paul himself acknowledged the importance of all the gifts when he reminded us that “those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor” (1 Cor. 12:22-23).

So today, I want to thank all those who serve as volunteers in Christ’s church. May God bless you and your ministry. May he fill you with his grace and give you strength to continue your mission. May you know and feel his presence in your life.

And again, thank you. ■

“ Proverbs reminds us that the right words spoken at the right time are precious. ”



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



Troops in Afghanistan gather for prayer around an Advent candle.

HERE AND THERE

Lighting the Freedom Candle

Every evening for 28 nights, Special Operations soldiers and others squeezed into the office of CRC army chaplain Capt. Peter Hofman in Afghanistan.

Battles went on outside in Afghan towns and villages, but in the office warfare was set aside for a time. Voices were hushed. Those gathered there turned out the lights and took turns lighting the specially designed Advent of Freedom candle.

“The Advent of Freedom candle was a simple reminder of the Advent wreaths many of us may be familiar with during Christmas celebrations of the past,” says Hofman. This candle was decorated in ways that reflected aspects of the mission and approach of Special Operations personnel. First, there was the Special Forces shield emblem in the foreground of the candle, says Hofman.

From there, a star was placed in the background, serving as a reminder of the star of Bethlehem “that pointed the way to the Christ-child, symbolizing the hope, expectation, and celebration we feel in our hearts as we reflect on the birth of Jesus,” says Hofman.

Framing the star was the shape of the cross.

The candle itself was a symbol of God’s Spirit, shining through the Special Operations shield, illuminating the cross and star “and reminding us of the Spirit that lives in and shines through each one of us,” says Hofman.

Nicholas V. Kroeze, Hofman’s father-in-law, designed

and created this Advent piece and included this dedication: “To the many men and women whom we honor, encourage, and support in their service to our country. . . .”

“The candlelight and the Spirit it represents thus unite the foreground and background symbols, affirming the common cause of bringing freedom where there is captivity and bringing light where there is darkness,” says Kroeze,

Kroeze also prepared devotionals for the Advent gatherings. After lighting the Advent of Freedom candle, someone

would read a passage of Scripture followed by one of Kroeze’s devotionals.

“It was a wonderful time of reflection. They reflected not only on Christ’s mission on earth to bring liberty to those held captive by sin but on our own [mission] to liberate the Afghan people from the oppression of the Taliban,” says Hofman. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

The Network at One Year

The Network is accomplishing one of the most important things that it set out to do: connect people and churches to enhance ministry.

While many people visit the CRC’s networking site to read blogs and articles of interest to them, an increasing number are comparing notes with each other. “It’s nice to get 10,000 page views per week,” says Tim Postuma, web manager for the CRCNA. “But the real goal is for people to connect and help each other do ministry.”

In The Network’s first year, CRC members posted over 3,000 comments and discussion topics. “This is the most connected the CRC has ever been online,” says Postuma.

We emailed some Network users to find out what they most appreciated about the site.

Grace Hirte of Delavan CRC in Delavan, Wis., says she appreciates “the discussion that is going on regarding music for worship.”

Miranda Vande Kuyt, a member of Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, says she has appreciated reading articles about Safe Church Ministry Teams. “I find that reading the comments which describe the struggles and victories in educating our church members is a most powerful tool to ‘recommit’ myself to the work of the Safe Church Team,” she says.

Church staff also benefit from The Network. “As a youth ministries coordinator who only works 12 hours per week, I often feel as though I don’t have enough time to explore what is out there,” says Rachel Bush of Ann Arbor (Mich.) CRC. “However, I do take the time to read all of the blog posts and check out the links provided by The Network. It’s just the right amount of input that doesn’t ‘monopolize’ too much of my time.”

Kory Plockmeyer, a first-year college chaplain, also uses The Network to help him in his work. He enjoys the blog posts that offer a “refreshing take on hot-button issues.”

The Network has also helped him to connect with veteran college chaplains so he can ask questions “and learn from the wisdom and experience of a whole host of other people who bring a different set of ideas to the table,” says Plockmeyer, who works on the campus of Michigan State University.

To explore and participate in The Network, visit www.crcna.org/network. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Pastors Take 'Deeper Journey'

Despite their best intentions, pastors don't always practice what they preach when it comes to spending meaningful time in Scripture reading, prayer, and solitude.

"Like the rest of humanity we get caught up in busy schedules and pressing commitments," says Rev. Paul DeVries, pastor of Brookside Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"The spiritual disciplines fall by the wayside, and we do not practice them. Or, if we do practice them (like Bible read-



ing and prayer), it is almost always in a 'professional' pastoral or preaching/teaching setting."

To remedy this, DeVries joined 24 other CRC pastors and other ministry leaders in a series of retreats called "The Deeper Journey."

Through this program, which begins again this March, pastors and others have found renewal, refreshment, and a new commitment to ministry.

Offered through the Great Lakes Region of Christian Reformed Home Missions, the program is a two-year "journey into greater intimacy with God," said Rev. Douglas Kamstra, who is part of the leadership team with six other pastors. "We're just facilitating the opportunity for the Spirit to work."

Other regions in CRHM have shown interest in the program, said Rev. Ben Becksvoort, Great Lakes regional leader for CRHM.

Rev. David Kromminga, pastor of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, recommends the program. He appreciates the focus on spiritual development and connection to fellow pastors and others. "In my experience, this kind of fellowship has been all too rare, which makes finding it in the 'Deeper Journey' very sweet indeed," he said.

More information, a brochure, and applications for the next "Deeper Journey" can be obtained by contacting Home Missions' Great Lakes Regional Office at 616-224-0753 or bbecksvoort@crcna.org. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Freed from Addiction and Ready to Serve

After becoming addicted to drugs at the age of 15, Carlos Vazquez quickly grew angry and aggressive. Many people turned away from him, but not his neighbor.

Instead, the neighbor continually reached out to Carlos, telling him that only Jesus Christ could free him from drugs.

Carlos tried to ignore him, but his neighbor's comments intrigued him. He eventually started to study the Bible, came

face to face with Jesus Christ, and began to change.

As the years passed, Carlos felt God leading him to help others ensnared by drugs. In 2006, Carlos and two others began a Christian men's drug and alcohol rehab center in Tijuana, Mexico. Fifty men are now enrolled there, and Carlos is the director.

"Through prayer, he sensed that he needed to be fully equipped in the Word of God," says James Lee, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary in Tijuana. Carlos received a scholarship from one of the Lees' supporters and enrolled in the Reformed Bible Institute of Tijuana.

"In the past, the ministry in Tijuana had relied on ordained pastors coming out of the seminary in Mexico City to help establish new missions and churches in Tijuana," says Scott Geurink, another CRWM missionary in Tijuana.

Since Mexico City and Tijuana are 1,800 miles apart, a leadership training program was needed in Tijuana itself. To

meet the need, CRWM missionaries and pastors of the Reformed Presbyterian Church established the Bible institute to train local church leaders.

On December 12, Carlos and eight other men and women became the institute's third graduating class.

Having completed the program, Carlos believes more strongly than ever "that God has given him a purpose in this life: to serve faithfully at the rehab center and preach at different churches and evangelist events," says Lee.

Other graduates are serving as elders, deacons, and Sunday school teachers, or are preaching in churches without a current pastor. Some are considering going for further seminary training to become ordained pastors. All of the graduates, however, look forward to seeing how God will use them to impact others and, in the process, be changed themselves. ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, Christian Reformed World Missions



New graduates of Reformed Bible Institute in Tijuana, Mexico

Creating 'A Shared Space'

Brian Fuller, a Calvin College communication arts and sciences professor, was intrigued by what he had heard about Mustard Seed School in Hoboken, N.J.

When someone told him that the school's curriculum is anchored in the arts, he wondered if that were really true. He visited the school in 2009, prepared to be disappointed. "But I wasn't," said Fuller. "They really did integrate art into everything."

Fuller was also impressed by the school's student demographic: "They were somehow attracting a really diverse student body." The school, headed



Brian Fuller has completed a documentary on a faith-based art school in New Jersey.

by 1989 Calvin graduate Christine Metzger, draws students from a range of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Deciding to make a documentary about the school, Fuller scouted locations and returned with three Calvin students to Hoboken during

the January interim of 2010 to film it. The project was funded by the Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning.

For three weeks the film crew worked long hours. They captured students learning Spanish through sculpture, mathematics through calis-

thenics, and the history of western migration through building covered wagons. The Calvin students also taught the rudiments of filmmaking to the Mustard Seed students.

This past summer, three more Calvin students were hired to sift through the 131 hours of raw footage and to find a story to be told in a short documentary. The completed work, titled *A Shared Space: Learning from the Mustard Seed School*, shows urban Christian education that runs counter to existing stereotypes. The film premiered at Calvin in February. ■

—Myrna Anderson,
Calvin College
communications

Update of NIV Released Digitally First

Bible publisher Zondervan ventured into new territory late last year by releasing what is said to be the first digital e-Book version of the Bible that launched before the print version.

Zondervan plans to release the print version of the 2010 update of the bestselling New International Version in March, although the e-Book has now been available for months.

The latest update maintains about 95 percent of the original NIV as translators strived for "the ideal blend of transparency to the original text and ease of understanding . . . in every verse of the Bible," said Douglas Moo, a



Michael Williams and Doris Ridders

Wheaton College professor and chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation.

Since the conception of the NIV in the early 1960s, Calvin Theological Seminary has been part of the development of this contemporary translation. Professors John Stek and Marten Woudstra served on the original Committee on Bible Translation through its

development and beyond the release of the first NIV in 1978. David Engelhard served as translator on one of the subcommittees.

Current CTS leadership on the project came

through Old Testament professor Michael Williams, who serves on the Committee on Bible Translation, and Board of Trustees member Doris Ridders, who served as editor with Stek and Woudstra and remains as an editor today.

For years the NIV has ranked as the bestselling and most-read version of the Bible. More than 400 million

copies have been sold since it was first introduced in 1978.

For more information about the new NIV, go to www.theNIVBible.com. To learn about the members and translation philosophy of the Committee on Bible Translation (with videos of some members, including Professor Williams), go to www.niv-cbt.org.

To find the entire 2010 update of the NIV available for viewing at no cost, go to www.biblegateway.com. ■

—Kathy Smith, director
of continuing education at
Calvin Theological
Seminary

Journey to Egypt

Have you ever traveled to a faraway place? If you haven't sailed to a tropical island or hiked through the jungles of the Amazon lately, try the next best thing. Reading lets you travel to distant places without ever leaving your living

room! All you need is a good book or magazine to take you to amazing places around the world. I hope you've packed your suitcase. We're headed on a round-trip journey to one of the most ancient countries on the planet!



Sizzling Sands, Lush Lands

Much of Egypt is made up of hot, sandy deserts that can reach temperatures as high as 109 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius) in the summer. People living in this climate often wear loose clothing that can shade them from the scorching sun. Egypt also contains lush

green land near the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and the Nile River. The rich soil around these bodies of water produces many different crops, such as cotton, rice, beans, oranges, and tomatoes.

Powerful Pyramids

In certain parts of Egypt, if you stroll through the sandy desert you'll see massive pyramids towering on the horizon. These pyramids are some of the remaining traces of ancient Egyptian civilizations that existed more than 5,000 years ago. The pyramids were mostly large tombs for pharaohs, the rulers of Egypt. Most of these tombs took decades to build—sometimes the entire reign of a pharaoh! The pyramids were often filled with items like gold, food, and water. The Egyptians believed that each pharaoh would need these things in the afterlife.

Super Sculpture

Another cool sight you don't want to miss is the Great Sphinx of Giza. A sphinx is a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of an Egyptian pharaoh. The human head represents wisdom, and the lion's body symbolizes strength.

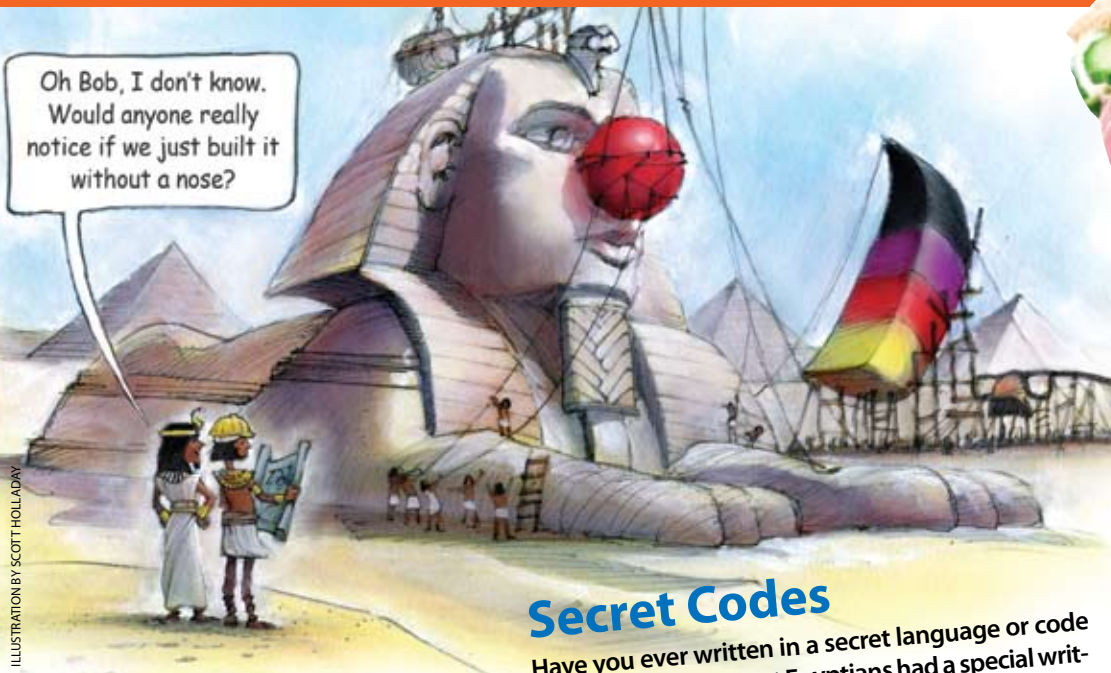
This huge figure is the oldest and largest known statue in the world, standing about 65 feet high and 240 feet long (about 20 meters by 73 meters!).

Take a look at the photograph. Does the Sphinx look like it's missing something? Some historians say the nose was pried off by vandals sometime in the Middle Ages.



Oh Bob, I don't know. Would anyone really notice if we just built it without a nose?

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



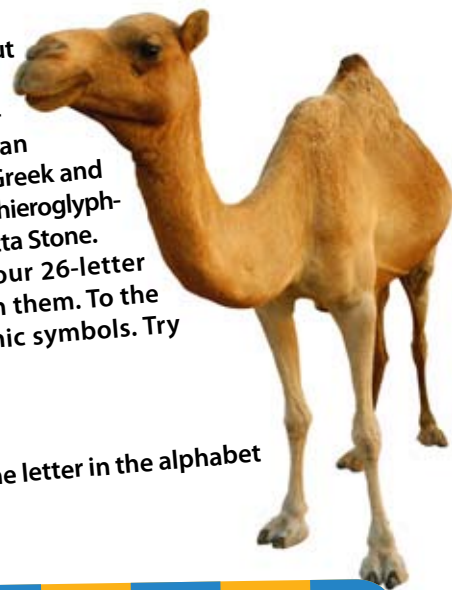
Falafel Burgers

A popular dish throughout Egypt and the Middle East is a tasty food called falafel (fah-LAH-full). It is made from crushed chickpeas or fava beans mixed together with different spices and then deep fried. Falafel patties or balls are usually placed inside pita bread and eaten with vegetables like cucumbers, turnips, and onions. Falafel is such a popular food that McDonald's restaurants throughout Egypt offer "McFalafel" burgers!

Secret Codes

Have you ever written in a secret language or code to a friend? The ancient Egyptians had a special written language made up of pictures and symbols called hieroglyphics (say it "high-row-GLIFF-icks"), which in Greek means "sacred writings." These beautiful writings have been found carved on pyramid walls and written on special paper called *parchment*, made from animal skins. For thousands of years, no one could figure out what the symbols meant. But about 200 years ago, archeologists discovered a large stone on which were carved words written in hieroglyphics and two other languages: Greek and Egyptian Demotic. Because historians could read ancient Greek and Demotic, they were finally able to crack the code to hieroglyphics! This special stone became known as the Rosetta Stone.

Hieroglyphics don't function exactly like our 26-letter alphabet, but you can still have some fun with them. To the left are some of the most popular hieroglyphic symbols. Try writing your name in hieroglyphics!



Crack the Code

Match the correct hieroglyphic symbol with the letter in the alphabet to crack the hieroglyphic phrase to the left.



Egypt in the Bible

The Bible mentions Egypt many times. Draw a line to match the following Bible stories about Egypt with the correct Bible passages. Use your Bible if you need help!

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Exodus 1:1-14 | Joseph is sold into slavery to Egypt by his brothers. |
| Genesis 37:25-28 | The Israelites become slaves in Egypt. |
| Matthew 2:13-15 | Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt to escape from King Herod. |
| Genesis 12:10 | Joseph becomes a ruler in Egypt. |
| Genesis 41:41-43 | Abram and Sarai go to Egypt to live because of a famine in their land. |



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.

BY DAVID KROMMINGA

Talking Biblically About Homosexuality

A request for help

I was proud of our congregation. For four consecutive Sundays about a year and a half ago we looked at the issue of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. And it didn't blow up the church. In fact, I think it made us healthier.

We planned for it carefully. For our general consideration of the subject, I preached in the morning on sex as a gift, sex as an idol, and sex and the life of discipleship. In the evening we examined first the biblical underpinnings of the Christian Reformed Church's position

on homosexual orientation and practice, then the scientific evidence regarding sexual identity, and then finally heard a panel discussion regarding the experience of homosexual Christians in the church. After each presentation we held facilitated discussions in small groups. As a result of those meetings, our elders felt led to add a final session to evaluate the series as a whole and to talk about next steps.

Nearly 100 people attended each evening. Even though they held diverse convictions, especially regarding homosexuality, they learned together and listened to one another with respect and without nastiness. As a pastor, that made me proud.

To be honest, I had dreaded the conversation. Civil discussion has become almost a lost art in a culture that loves to rant. Homosexuality is certainly one of those "hot-button" issues in the church and society that can encourage such ranting. And unlike other controversial matters—taxes, for example—sexuality lies very close to our personal identity. It is inevitably an intimate subject. The potential for someone to be deeply, personally hurt in such a discussion is enormous. I had always considered an open conversation on homosexuality in the church too dangerous.

Our church learned, however, that *not* talking about the issue carries its own set of risks and that silence on the subject also inflicts pain. When at a council meeting we became aware that the denomination's stance regarding homosexual orientation and practice was not well understood by many of our elders and deacons, we resolved to do something about the ignorance that our silence had produced. As a council we resolved to read the 1973 and 2002 study reports on the issue. We also formed a task force to come up with a plan to help our congregation consider the subject. Our four-week series was the result of their planning.

Our Discovery

In their evaluation afterward, the elders judged the series a success. Some good learning happened. People were challenged to think deeply and Christianly about sexuality. They discovered that we can and should talk together in the church about such matters.

The elders noted something else, however, about our conversation—particularly in the small group sessions but also in

our questions and comments after the presentations: we were weakest in speaking about homosexuality *biblically*.

To some extent we could appreciate the scientific complexities surrounding sexual orientation. And we were certainly able to tell stories, many extremely sad and heartbreaking, of the experiences of homosexual men and women in the church and in families. But when we turned to what the Bible has to say about homosexuality, we were all over the map.

It wasn't so much that participants were ill-informed, although in some cases that may have been true. It was more that they had heard all sorts of biblical interpretations across the whole theological and ideological spectrum. Also, as a group we lacked the Reformed interpretive skills necessary to evaluate those interpretations critically and confessionally.

Familiarity with more recent interpretations also led some to regard the CRC's "middle-aged" position as automatically obsolete or superseded by the newer models. Even middle-aged study reports, however, deserve to be evaluated according to their merits rather than dismissed primarily because they are old.

Do we even want to bother with interpreting Scripture? I sometimes detect hints of a kind of postmodern cynicism

that says people can make the Bible say pretty much what they want it to say—making biblical interpretation largely irrelevant. I certainly believe that our long, painful consideration of women in church office has made us extremely skittish about entering into such biblical conversations about controversial matters.

While understandable, that fear is also lamentable because central to the work and calling of church is to speak *biblically* to the issues of our times.

After our experience in considering one of those issues, our church council decided that our congregation as well as the wider church needs help in interpreting what the Bible has to say in regard to homosexuality. We noted that our denomination's most recent biblical work on the issue stems from 1973's report. Since that time a multitude of books and articles and study reports have commented on the subject, and other churches have been discussing it at great length. How can we expect our 38-year-old report to respond adequately to all the biblical and theological discussions of nearly four decades?

In addition, our cultural landscape is vastly different today. Although the 1973 report uncannily anticipates committed homosexual unions (p. 600), we now live in an age in which Canadian law and the laws of a growing number of U.S. »

If there was ever a time for up-to-date biblical teaching on the subject, it is now.

states regard it a right for homosexual persons to marry. In 1973 commercial TV regarded homosexuality largely as a taboo subject for its viewers; it's now a major theme in many sitcoms. Since 1973 the American Psychiatric Association has removed homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, now regarding it as a sexual variant. Regardless of how we view these changes, no one can doubt they represent an enormous cultural shift. The point is simply this: if there was ever a time for up-to-date biblical teaching on the subject, it is now.

This need was already recognized about a decade ago. A CRC study committee on Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members suggested in its report to Synod 2002 that the church could benefit from more current biblical and theological work on this matter.

Even though the committee judged it outside of its mandate "to re-examine Scriptural texts that deal explicitly or implicitly with homosexuality," the committee did say "there may be wisdom, both pastorally and theologically, for the church to address these concerns at some time in the future" (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 315). Synod 2002 agreed, saying that "there may be wisdom in developing a current response to the many recent treatments of the biblical passages pertaining to this issue" (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p.483). That was basically an open invitation for an overture from some church or classis (regional group of churches), an invitation that has sat on the church's desk for nearly a decade.

Our Request

After our series, the elders asked what God was calling us to do in light of what we'd learned, observed, and experienced. We solicited feedback from the congregation. We found great consensus that we need to promote better biblical understanding of this issue. We also decided that this is an area of concern for all the churches, not simply our congregation. So we did something that seems so stereotypically Christian Reformed: we wrote an overture. In it, we asked our classis to request synod "to appoint a study committee to review the biblical teachings regarding homosexual orientation and practice in light of current biblical and theological study of these issues."

Classis Grand Rapids East approved the overture in its meeting last May. Because it was too late for Synod 2010's printed agenda, it's included in the business for this year's synod.

As overtures go, it's extremely modest. It does *not* ask for a re-examination of the denomination's position on homosexual orientation and practice, although some may suspect that is its goal.

What the overture asks for is a review of our biblical teachings with an eye to the biblical and theological work that has been done on this issue in the past 38 years. We didn't even want to use the word "reexamine" because we thought it sounded prejudicial, assuming in advance that there's something wrong with the denomination's biblical teachings on homosexuality.

In Official Language

The council of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church overtures Classis Grand Rapids East to overture Synod [2011] to appoint a study committee to review the biblical teachings regarding homosexual orientation and practice in light of current biblical and theological study of these issues.

Grounds:

1. Our latest official statement regarding biblical teachings on this issue is [38] years old.
2. There has been significant biblical and theological consideration of these issues since then, both in the Reformed tradition and in the wider Christian church.
3. Both the 2002 Study Committee report on Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members and the advisory committee assigned the report at Synod 2002 recognized the possible usefulness of such a review:
 - a) After discussing the responses of churches and individuals to the 1973 report, the 2002 Study Committee stated that "... given the thoughtful challenges posed by individuals and churches within the denomination, there may be wisdom, both pastorally and theologically, for the church to address these concerns at some time in the future" (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 315).
 - b) Noting this statement from the report, the advisory committee observed "... there may be wisdom in developing a current response to the many recent treatments of the biblical passages pertaining to this issue" (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p.483)
4. In this time of social, legal, and cultural change in regard to homosexuality, our congregations need such a study in order to address pastorally and theologically individuals and the wider culture in a biblically informed manner.

Some may of course think so, but that was certainly not the consensus of our council or classis.

Our goal is to begin talking again about the issue *biblically*. For that purpose, we ask for this review.

Talking biblically is not necessarily easy or safe. It can be painful and unsettling. To be honest, I'm still scared of the conversation. It will hurt. But talking biblically is the work of the church, and not doing that work is even more dangerous—perhaps deadly.

Doing that work, on the other hand, is ultimately life-giving and life-changing for the church. After all, it is by listening to God's Word and following God's Spirit that we are reformed. ■



Rev. David Kromminga is pastor of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Speaking to Souls

BEGIN HERE: A book is a story told by one soul to another soul. This means that the writer for young readers has the opportunity—a stunning opportunity, when you think of it—to bring something of delight and beauty, and perhaps of meaning and wisdom, to a child. It means the writer can speak to the young reader of things deeply important, in ways deeply engaging. “Go little book,” wrote Chaucer, and he sent his art out into the world to tell entertaining stories that talk about love, mercy, justice, and understanding.

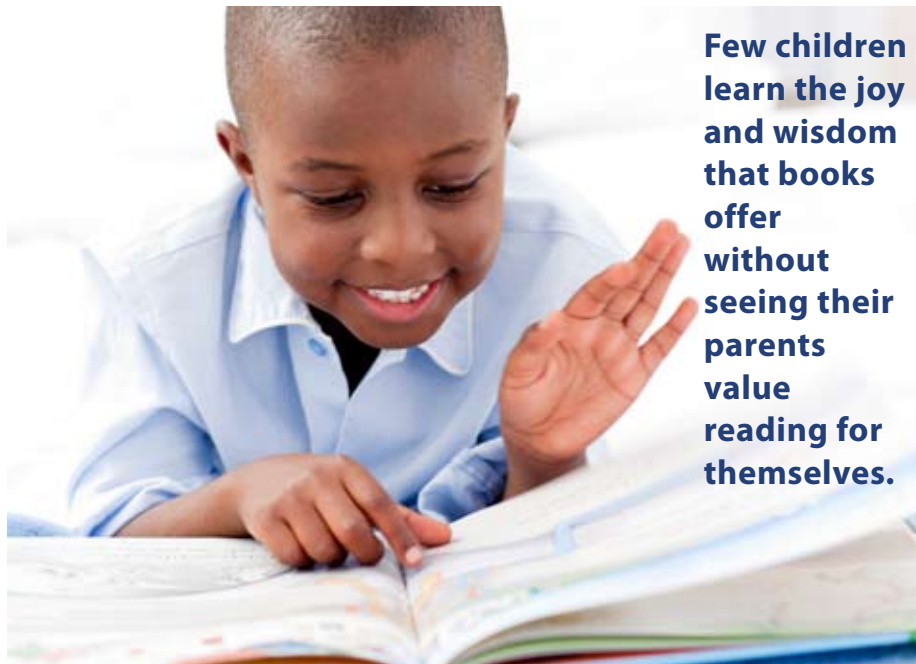
“The world is dark, and light is precious. Come closer, dear reader,” whispers the narrator of Kate DiCamillo’s *The Tale of Despereaux* (Candlewick, 2003); “I am telling you a story.”

“Wish that there was something I could gift you,” says Cal in Heather Henson’s *That Book Woman* (Atheneum, 2008), but the librarian who has ridden her horse deep into hollers knows he already has gifted her: he has learned to read, and now he sees “what’s truly there.”

And as Jack in *Love That Dog* (HarperCollins, 2001) listens to a poet read, he discovers “the blood in my veins was bubbling.”

That is what good stories can do: give light, truth, and bubbling.

Consider the bravado required to address questions of light and truth to a young audience. Remember the final line of Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat?* Look it up and confront the enormous moral question it poses. Consider Eve Bunting’s *We Were There* (Clarion, 2001), which asks the reader who the Christ-child came to—and presents an answer through the snake, the rat, the spider, and the scorpion who were also at the stable. Or Matt Phelan’s graphic novel *The Storm in the Barn* (Candlewick, 2009), which asks how we can love the unlovable. Or Karen



Few children learn the joy and wisdom that books offer without seeing their parents value reading for themselves.

Cushman’s *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Clarion, 1994), which asks whether obedience in a good cause must lead to the denial of one’s true self.

Light, truth, and bubbling.

Stories for young readers ask questions that point to new perspectives and experiences. Barbara McClintock’s *The Fantastic Drawings of Danielle* (Houghton Mifflin, 1996) affirms a young girl’s imagination that has been despised by others. Katherine Applegate’s *Home of the Brave* (Feiwel, 2007) tells of young Kek, whose journey from Africa to the winter of Minnesota is softened by a cow whose name means “family” in his own language. In Francisco Stork’s *Marcelo in the Real World* (Scholastic, 2009), Marcelo braves the difficulties of autism to make his way in a threatening world.

But books are a silent medium; they compete for young readers against the loud and bright technologies of this world. They could use allies, and here parents may play the decisive role. For a

child to be a reader, she must see books in the home. We all know this. Parents need to read to their children, of course. But also, books must be taken seriously; parents need to pick them up and read them for themselves. And they need to talk about what they are reading, and how the story works, and what the story might mean on the deepest levels.

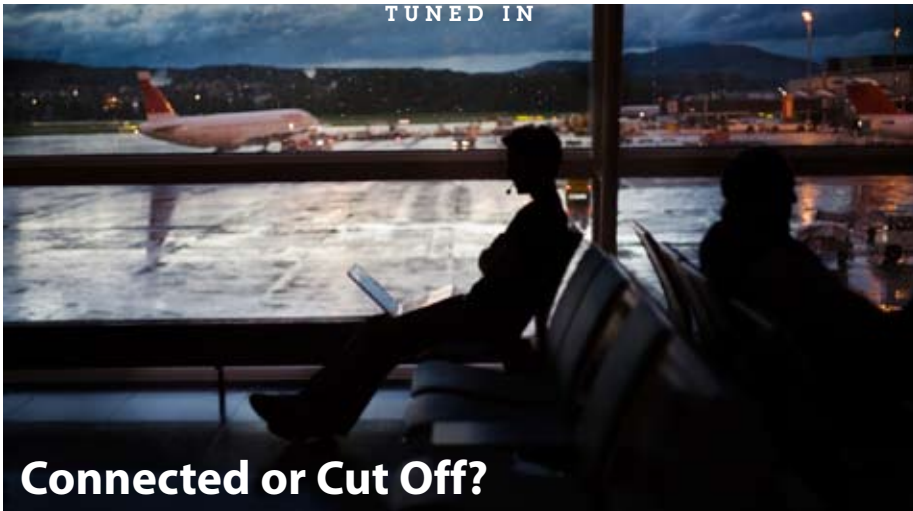
Few children learn the joy and wisdom that books offer without seeing their parents value reading for themselves. We take time to do the things we believe are important.

For many young readers a book will represent their first encounter with difference or justice or moral choice or issues of faith. Thus the book delights and entertains and speaks to deepest needs. A parent can give few better things. ■



Gary D. Schmidt is a professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has won several awards, including two Newbery Honors, for

his books for children and young adults.



Connected or Cut Off?

IN BOWLING ALONE (Touchstone), Robert D. Putnam says that adults are spending less time with friends and neighbors and more time alone with media. Why go to a noisy and perhaps expensive bowling alley when you can bowl on your Wii—even without a partner? Why talk with your kids in the car when you can keep them quiet with a portable DVD player in the back seat?

Using media privately is age-old. Since the fourth century, most Western adults have read books silently. Drama remained public, but reading became primarily personal and private except in religious services.

The first person I saw reading on a Kindle was a 75-ish man eating lunch alone at a busy restaurant. Soon the Kindle, iPad, and similar devices will offer e-book readers one-click access to video interviews with authors, movie versions of the book, blogs about the book, and more. Would that reader care?

Seeing a movie was once a public activity. So was early television—like today's sports bars. Then TV became a

Adults are spending less time with friends and neighbors and more time alone with media.

home entertainment device for private family viewing. By the 1980s, most homes had multiple sets so family members could watch individually. A recent Dutch survey found that adults prefer viewing television either alone or with someone who does not comment on the program. Dutch men said they prefer watching sports programs alone.

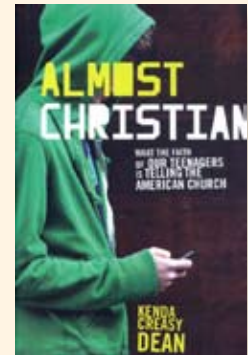
Nevertheless, the growth of “home theaters” is reviving communal viewing by families and friends. Early adopters proudly invite others to their homes for special TV and movie showings. Video gaming also gets people together.

The real news today is pocket devices that promote personal viewing. At a doctor's office I saw a teenager wearing earbuds and watching YouTube videos on his phone. I listened to his chuckles. Airline travelers commonly watch movies on their iPods, computers, or DVD players. Who cares about the airline-scheduled movie when you have your own portable movie theater?

Will we all end up wired to media centers, happily oblivious to others in the same room? Hardly. God made us social creatures with strong desires to share our lives with friends and family. Yet we have to use new media intentionally for our shared lives or we might discover that we are becoming media rich and relationally poor. ■



Quentin J. Schultze is the Arthur H. DeKruyter Chair of Faith & Communication at Calvin College and a member at Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Almost Christian

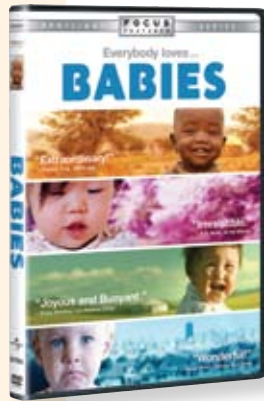
by **Kenda Creasy Dean**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

Based on the National Study of Youth and Religion—the same survey as Christian Smith's *Soul Searching*—this fascinating new book examines why American teens are so positive about Christianity yet so apathetic about genuine religious practice. Popularizing the dense research on the American teen creed, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, *Almost Christian* explains that teens are not the problem—the church is. Dean calls the church to offer a “consequential faith,” a plea that all serious parents and Christian educators should read and heed. (Oxford)



Babies

reviewed by **Sandy Swartzentruber**



Babies are endlessly fascinating, and so is this documentary now out on DVD. The filmmakers follow four babies during the first year of their lives in Japan, Namibia, Mongolia, and the U.S. The beautiful cinematography and absence of narration give viewers time and space to make their own observations, cultural comparisons, and discover-

ies. Parents: *Babies* contains a fair amount of partial nudity (breastfeeding in particular), but you shouldn't hesitate to see this enlightening film with your kids. (Focus Features)

Starting from Scratch

by **Susan Gilbert-Collins**
reviewed by **Kate Padilla**



Olivia Tschetter leaves her doctoral defense to learn that her mother has died. In one swift moment, her certainties are gone, and she is left to figure out what comes next. Cooking offers immediate satisfaction for the hunger, and as she dives further into her mother's cookbooks—so intimately recorded they might have been diaries—she learns more about the bitter secrets simmering quietly in the back of a family she thought she knew. *Starting from Scratch*, eloquent and clever, is the debut novel of author Gilbert-Collins, who is a member of Webster CRC in Webster, N.Y. (Touchstone)

Grammar Girl

reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**



Can you end a sentence with a preposition? Is it proper to say “different from” or “different than”?

Grammar Girl Mignon Fogarty answers these questions and more on her website dedicated to language usage, including sections about grammar and punctuation. Grammar Girl's instruction is succinct, and she often shares mnemonic devices to help readers remember the correct use of a word. The website is a valuable tool for writers of all ages. To find Grammar Girl, go to grammar.quickanddirtytips.com.

THE LOWDOWN



Mission Minded: James C. Schaap offers stories and photos from the rich history of Rehoboth Christian School in the new book *Rehoboth: A Place for Us*. (Faith Alive)



Here Oar There: Looking for a nearby launch site for your kayak or canoe? Check out the launch map at www.paddling.net/launches.



Goth Girl: If you're in need of a dose of brooding men and misty moors, the newest film version of *Jane Eyre* is due in theaters this month. (Focus Features)



BookTube? Publishers looking for buzz for their titles are putting out book trailers. Now readers have joined the movement. Check on YouTube for creative “fanmade” trailers for popular novels, including *The Book Thief*, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.



Word After Word After Word

by **Patricia MacLachlan**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

When Patricia MacLachlan was asked to write a book about her life as an author, she responded with a fictional account of a visiting author who teaches fourth-grade students that their lives are filled with stories worth writing about: a dog's death, a parent suffering from cancer, the adoption of a sibling, stress between parents, and more. This winsome juvenile chapter book introduces children to the transforming power of writing “word after word after word.” Ages 9-12. (Katherine Tegen Books)



Flickr/BTP_A_H

Band of Joy

by **Robert Plant**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

Forty years after the birth of the band Led Zeppelin, former lead singer Robert Plant has been reborn as an interpreter of Americana roots music. Plant, once known for songs with occult/mythic influences, is now singing gospel-tinged works like “Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down.” The follow-up to his platinum collaboration with Alison Krauss finds Plant in the capable hands of another Christian, co-producer Buddy Miller, exploring and interpreting a diverse American songbook where romantic and religious language often merge. The results are deep and brooding. (Rounder)

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

The Least of Us

ONE OF THE BEST-KEPT SECRETS OF NEW TESTAMENT exegesis concerns the interpretation of the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

Here Jesus says that “the nations”—everybody—will be gathered before him, and he will separate them based on their treatment of “the least of these” (v. 40). Jesus’ dramatic and poignant identification with “the least” has stirred countless hearts for social justice. As the *New Jerome Commentary* puts it, “This much-loved text presents a practical religion of deeds of loving-kindness.”

So far, so good. The problem, however, is that commentators throughout history have recognized that “the least of these” refers not to the needy in general, but to needy followers of Jesus in particular.

The evidence for that interpretation is strong: When Jesus speaks of his family, as he does here, he’s *always* referring to his disciples, those who do God’s will (Matt. 12:46-50; 23:8-9; 28:10). Commentators also point out that “the least of these” in verses 40 and 45 of Matthew 25 is similar to “little ones” in Matthew 10:42; 18:6, 10, 14, where Jesus also refers to his disciples. Finally, we see a parallel to Matthew 10:40-42:

He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward (NIV, 1985).

This interpretation is the one chosen historically by no less than John Calvin and John Chrysostom, and more recently by evangelical academic authorities Don Carson, Michael Green, Craig Keener, and others. In fact, the only sources I ran across who support the more familiar interpretation—the one that Jesus is referring to the needy in general, and the one you’ve probably heard in sermons—were Jerome and Ron Sider, the latter in his book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

If you think about that even a little, you’ll find it unsettling. After all, as Christians we’ve been taught, from the prophets to the Good Samaritan, to reach out to *all* the needy. We’re not

Jesus will not forget
how you are treated,
especially when you
are one of
his brothers and sisters.

to show partiality, and we’re to see all people as our brothers and sisters. How strange, then, that Jesus would judge us specifically on our treatment of disciples. Doesn’t Jesus care about everyone—from Christians to Muslims to atheists?

To understand what Jesus is saying here, we need to put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples. Jesus’ statement comes at the end of his “Olivet discourse” in Matthew, delivered to his disciples from the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. This discourse is filled with warnings about the importance of being ready for “the Day of the Lord,” and these are among Jesus’ final words to those who have followed him nearly to the end of his earthly ministry.

His disciples don’t yet know it, but soon they will be scattered following Jesus’ arrest and execution. And not long thereafter they will be sent out into the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry Jesus’ good news to the nations. These same humble brothers and sisters will be Jesus’ ambassadors to the world.

When Jesus says that his disciples—those who remain true to him and pour out their lives in his service—are a litmus test for judgment, he’s saying that they don’t just *carry* his gospel. In first-century Rome, a world that knew nothing about the gospel, Jesus’ brothers and sisters *were* the gospel. How natural that those who respond to Jesus would help the poor and vulnerable community of faith.

To become a Christian wasn’t just to intellectually assent to a proposition. It wasn’t merely to embark on a personal

spiritual journey. It was to embrace the community of faith, the only one in the world that carries Jesus' message of hope and freedom.

Who are those clothing, feeding, visiting, and caring for the needy of the church? Surely they are the same ones who have heard and accepted the gospel.

Jesus knows the travail that awaits his brothers and sisters, and he identifies with them in the deepest way possible. Imagine sending your own sibling into a world that will hate and reject him or her. What gratitude you would feel to those who offered protection and support!

In the same way, Jesus' heart is with all of those in the church who are needy, and his gratitude is for all who care for them in their time of need.

Of course we are to show God's love to *all* people—that is deeply embedded in our gospel. But as Calvin says of this passage, "though there is a common tie that binds all the children

of Adam, there is a still more sacred union among the children of God."

Jesus cares very much how you are received when you step out in faith and make yourself vulnerable for the sake of his kingdom. He will not forget how you are treated, especially when you are one of "the least" of his brothers and sisters.

Similarly, let Jesus' compassion and concern move you to special concern for those who give their lives for him, yet are needy—even thirsty, naked, hungry, or in prison. As Galatians 6:10 tells us, "So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith." ■ **WEB Q'S**





Tim Collins is a freelance writer and a member of Rochester (N.Y.) Christian Reformed Church.

The Preachers' Oasis
Developing Gifts, Refining Skills
July 25–29, 2011
On the campus of Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan

All preachers benefit from having some time away from the pressures of sermon preparation and delivery. *The Preachers' Oasis* workshop is designed to give pastors just such a break. But the *Oasis* will also provide participants an opportunity to reflect on the preaching task, deepening the gifts they already have and refining all their preaching skills by which they proclaim the wonder and the grace of God's Word.

For more information please visit <http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/events/preachersOasis>
To apply please email preaching@calvinseminary.edu

Sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary

 CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY 
A community of faith. A center of learning. A life of ministry.

Did you know . . .

you can place your own classified ad online?

It's . . .

- simple
- convenient
- priced up-front

Try it out at
[www.thebanner.org!](http://www.thebanner.org)

Advertising Information

Deadlines: April issue is 3/7/11; May issue is 4/4/11. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

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

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

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

Denominational and Classical Announcements

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2011 Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda:

- a. Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15.
- b. Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1.
- c. Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15.
- d. Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15.

Materials will not be included in the printed Agenda if received after the synodically established deadlines.

Gerard L. Dykstra Executive Director

ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER Synod has designated Wednesday, March 9, 2011, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, for crops and industry, and for the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U. S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U. S.) is May 5, 2011. Gerard L. Dykstra Executive Director

NEW! The Synodical Faith Formation Committee encourages churches to check out its website (www.crcna.org/faithformation) for ongoing updates intended to help engage congregations in study and conversation. The latest addition—podcast interviews with committee members about sacramental practices and faith formation issues—provides a great way to initiate small group discussion.

Announcement of Candidacy

WE ARE PLEASED to announce that Lucas R. Lockard has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.
Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Financial Aid

CLASSIS HOLLAND Students from our Classis who are studying for the ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid from Classis for the 2011-2012 academic year. For information or an application contact Dave Altena at altena@sbcglobal.net or 616-3356258 Applications must be received before April 1, 2011

STUDENTS FROM ZEELAND Classis preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2011-2012 school year. For information, contact Judi Steenwyk, 1623 High Pointe Drive, Zeeland, MI, 49464 (616) 772-1772. All requests to be received by April 1, 2011

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HOLLAND WILL meet in regular session May 19, 2011 at Noordeeloos CRC, Holland, MI. Agenda items are due by April 7, 2011 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk, Fax: 616-494-6054, email: louwerse@macatawa.org.

CORRECTION: Classis Illiana will meet in session beginning at 9:00 AM on March 1, 2011 at the First Christian Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. Please disregard previous announcement.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 100th Anniversary

FIRST CRC OF EVERETT, WA will celebrate 100 years of God's blessings on July 23 and 24, 2011. We invite all friends and past members to attend. Memories and pictures would be appreciated, Please contact the church office—425-252-7317 or send an email to everett1stcrc@frontier.com.

Church's 50th Anniversary

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

PRAIRIE LANE CRC in Omaha, NE is celebrating its 50th anniversary on April 9-10. Our theme is "only by grace". Friends and former members are encouraged to visit www.omahacc.org or contact us for more information/other special events.

Announcements

LOOKING TO ESCAPE the northern cold winter? Consider warm, sunny paradise on the S. W. coast of Florida at Venice. Enjoy warm, friendly welcome at the Reformed Church, 1600 Banyan Dr. (US Highway 41 and Center Rd.) Sunday morning worship, 10:30, 941-493-3075.

Birthdays

95th Birthday

JOHN VANDERPOL, 403 Cardinal Dr, Prinsburg, MN 56281 will celebrate his 95th birthday on March 12. His children, Shirley, Alden, Jeryl and Mary, Gary, Duaine and Marlene, Debra and Randy, 12 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren thank God for his love and long life. "Great is Thy faithfulness."

90th Birthday

HENRIETTA BYKER, 725 Baldwin St., B-26, Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate her 90th birthday on March 12, 2011. Widow of the late Gary Byker. Her children and grandchildren give thanks to God for her life. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

CORINNE ELDREKAMP (VIS) 10333 S Mayfield, Oak Lawn, IL 60453 celebrates her 90th birthday on March 16. Wife of the late Clarence Eldrenkamp. Children: Judy, Paul & Nancy Zylstra (Roger, Corie). We give thanks to God for her faith and the blessing she is to our family. Psalm 121

JANET (JONKER) HIETBRINK will celebrate her 90th birthday with an open house, 2-4 PM, March 5th at the Warm Friend, 5 East 8th Street, Holland, Michigan. Her daughters and their families thank God for her - we love you Mom!

MAE KRUIS, 23 Tumbleweed, Gamerco, NM 87317 celebrates her 90th birthday on March 8. We honor our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother at this special time!

EDNA VOS 3213 Mack Rd, Everson, WA 98247 celebrates her 90th birthday on March 6. God bless you Mom. Congratulations from your family.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

COLE, Walter and Nellie (Feddes) 5850 Stagecoach Trail, Manhattan, Mt. 59741 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on February 5, 2011. Children: Harv & Marlene TeSlaa, Stuart, Gary & Norma Bekker, 6 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren. We thank God for you.



DORDT COLLEGE

Director of Music Ministry/Instructor of Music

Dordt College is seeking an energetic professional to serve as the Director of Music Ministry/Instructor of Music beginning June 2011. This individual will be responsible for directing/coordinating the music for campus worship events, teaching courses in the music department, and developing the new "worship arts" program.

A Master's Degree in music or equivalent educational background is required; along with the desire and ability to teach two or more music curriculum areas. Qualifications include teaching excellence and demonstrated experience as a music worship leader; including a working knowledge of the breadth and depth of traditional and contemporary Christian worship music.

Application reviews will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250
Phone: (712) 722-6011
Fax: (712) 722-6035
E-mail: hr@dordt.edu
Web: www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/staff/

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

50th Anniversary

DEBOER John and Nell (Wilms) will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on March 25, 2011 DV. Congratulations and love from your children Anthony (Linda), Margo Murley (Scott), John David (Nyla Jean), Suanne Miedema (Adrian), Tim (Michelle) and grandchildren. May God continue to watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore (Psalm 121).



RISPENS, Sidney & Grace, please join friends and family in celebration of Sid and Grace Rispens' 50th Wedding Anniversary on April 16, 2011 in Helena, MT. Visit www.rispens.us for details.

Obituaries

BOES, Mrs. Marie D. (nee, DeKruyter); aged 93; January 17, 2011; She was predeceased by her husband Donald in 2002, one sister and two brothers, Carol Hybels, Jack DeKruyter, and Rev. Dr. Arthur DeKruyter.

She is survived by her children: Edward and Marilyn Boes, Patricia Boes; grandchildren: Justin and Stephanie Boes, Matthew and Tiffany Boes, Rebekah and Gary Nicklas, Michael and Kelly Clough; great grandchildren: Gabriella, Alexis, and Ethan Boes, Brent and Janae Nicklas, Noah Clough.

DEBRUYN, Otto John, aged 94; January 4, 2011; 3553 Whispering Brook Dr. SE, Kentwood, MI 49508; Otto is survived by his wife of 27 years, Marilyn DeBruyn (Dolfin); his children, Marlene DeBruyn Zwier (Paul), Karen DeBruyn (Rick Chilcutt), Bob DeBruyn (Karyl); six grandchildren; sisters: Nancy Bloem (Gerald) and Bette Bosma (John). He was preceded in death by his wife of 24 years, Kathryn (Mersman); brothers, Cornelius (Jo) and Walter; sister, Frances Tinklenberg (Richard), Marian Petersen (Herm), and Adeline DeBruyn. Otto will be lovingly remembered by Marilyn's children, Tom Dolfin (Linda), Debra Deacon, Linda Karbowski (Dean), Mary Dolfin, Dan Dolfin; five step grandchildren; one step great grandchild.

GRITTER George E., of Kentwood MI, went to his heavenly home on Jan 10, 2011 at the age of 86. George will be missed by his beloved wife of 64 years, Gladys (nee Kooi), and by their four children and their spouses: Robert (Ruth), Kenneth (Marianne), Cynthia (Vincent) Gargagliano and Judith (James) Kleinwolverink; and by their 11 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. He will be lovingly remembered by his brother William Gritter, and his sisters Jeanne Welde, Marilyn

Waanders and Carole Gaiser; by his many brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and nephews and nieces. His love of God and of his family leaves us with an enduring example of a life lived well. 1 Cor. 13

GROENBOOM John Calvin, 72, passed away January 12th after a short illness. N 1525 Oak Shores Lane, Fontana, WE 53125. Husband of Doris, nee Rozema for 52 years. Father of Cathy (Tom) Arnold, Diana (Bob) Beckus and Julie Groenboom. Grandfather of John (Jennifer), Bradley and Christopher Arnold, Jason, Nicole and Brooke Beckus. Brother of Joanne (Art) Vos; brother-in-law of Ann (Bob and the late Ed Bilthouse) Havel, Stuart (Marge and the late Alice) Rozema, Ronald (Joanne) Rozema and the late Agnes (the late Claude) Klein; also survived by many loving nieces, nephews and friends. Memorials to Bethshan or Elim Christian Services, which have lovingly cared for his precious daughter Julie, are appreciated. Bethshan, 12927 S. Monitor Ave., Palos Heights, IL 60463 or Elim Christian Services, 13020 S. Central Ave., Palos Heights, IL 60463.

Church Positions Announcements

PASTOR OF PASTORAL CARE Prairie Edge CRC seeking part-time Pastor of Visitation (40 hours/month). Full job description at peccr.org. Interested men may contact Tom Vandenberg at 269-207-4024 or tvandenberg@mallcitycontainers.com

OUTREACH DIRECTOR Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, AB is seeking a part-time Outreach Director. Interested candidates should visit www.inglewoodcrc.org for details.

FULL TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR Parklane Christian Reformed Church in Portland, OR, welcomes applications for its full-time Youth Director position. We offer programs for children, junior high, high school and young adults. Salary and benefits commensurate with experience. For more information contact Pastor Vance Hays at (503) 253-4728, or email vancehays@juno.com. Website: parklanechurch.org.

ENON BAPTIST CHURCH of Chester Virginia is currently seeking a part-time Music Director to lead the worship portions of our services and the choir. Please forward resumes to Michelle Harris pmharris2004@comcast.net. 804-530-1229

REFORMATIONAL WORLDVIEW Small, reformationally minded church seeks pastor. Liturgical worship guided by the lectionary with emphasis in the arts. trinitypastoralsearch@gmail.com for information.

PUT YOUR SKILLS TO WORK! Lead us in developing relationships with 6 to 14 year-old children and their families in our multi-ethnic community. This involves the creation of extra-curricular school and church programs. Your passion and creativity is required for up to 20 flexible hours per week. For information contact Orangewood CRC, Phoenix, AZ info@orangewoodcrc.com or Pastor Larry 602-574-7759

FIRST CRC GRAND RAPIDS, MI is seeking a Senior Pastor with a passion for preaching, teamwork, and building Christ-centered relationships. Please direct inquiries by March 31 to Dave Jacobs, search committee chair, at searchfirstcrg@gmail.com.

SENIOR PASTOR, NEW LIFE CRC After 14 years of faithful service, our founding pastor, the Rev. Jul Medenblik, has been appointed the next President of Calvin Theological Seminary to begin July 1, 2011. New Life is a multi-generational, seeker-sensitive, outreach and community focused church with an experienced staff and a wide array of established ministries in a quickly expanding community with 700+ weekly attendees. New Life is located in New Lenox, a south suburb of Chicago. We are currently engaged in a season of discernment but will soon initiate a process of prayerfully-seeking a dynamic and experienced pastor with strong preaching and leadership skills. To check out New Life Church go to [\[newlenox.org\]\(http://newlenox.org\). If you feel the "tug of the Spirit" and would like to contact the search committee, you can reach them at \[pastorsearchteam@newlifewlenox.org\]\(mailto:pastorsearchteam@newlifewlenox.org\).](http://www.newlife</p></div><div data-bbox=)

PASTOR: Blythe field CRC, Rockford, MI is seeking candidates for the position of Pastor in preparation for the planned retirement of our beloved pastor Rev. John L Witvliet. The gifts we are seeking include a servant leader with a passion for the Word of God demonstrated through preaching, teaching, congregational care, and sharing of the gospel message. Send resume and letter of interest to; Search Committee, Blythe field CRC, 6350 Kuttshill NE, Rockford, MI 49341 or blytheoffice@comcast.net.

PASTOR: Ellsworth CRC located in scenic Northwest Lower Michigan is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small town congregation with numerous outreach possibilities. We desire a pastor who is committed to sound Biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth and the community. If interested, please contact Carl Veenstra at (231) 599-2392 or email secretary@ellsworthcrc.org.

BETHEL CRC Saskatoon, SK, is actively seeking a full-time pastor (m). We are a growing congregation of about 200 people, located just outside the city. We hope and pray that God will send maybe YOU as the right person to lead and nurture our congregation. As a church we strive for a continuance and an improvement to all activities that promote unity, caring, fellowship and spiritual growth in a positive, uplifting and loving manner. We truly thank God for our previous pastors. Please let us know if you are interested to hear more about us. Contact Art Rekmann, ineke@shaw.ca or call 1-306-384-5198.

NEW JERSEY: Covenant CRC is looking for God's new beginning and seeking a pastor to lead us in this next chapter. We are located in suburban North Jersey and are situated in a largely un-churched area. We are evangelistic and have an influential youth ministry in our community. We are blended in worship style and desire strong preaching and teaching. We are experiencing numerical growth despite losing our beloved pastor and shepherd. Please contact Dan Steenstra at dan@scnorthjersey.com and check out our website at www.covcra.org if you are interested in this unique opportunity.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Trinity CRC in Edmonton, AB is seeking a full-time Youth Director who is passionate about working with youth and helping them experience God's love and be equipped for Christian service. Relevant experience desired. For more information, or to submit your resume, email Clint Schenk @ candjschenk@gmail.com.

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



S U S T A I N I N G Congregational E X C E L L E N C E

Is there a new project your church is excited about? One that will foster health?

We'd love to hear about it!

Have you considered applying for an SCE Health & Renewal Grant?

It's not hard. Why not look into it?

We'll even help you complete the application.

Application deadline is June 1.

For more information contact us by phone toll free at 877-279-9994 x0805

by email sce@crna.org

or visit www.crcna.org/sce

SCE grants are for churches with 150 active, professing members or less.

SCE is a program to support and strengthen CRC congregations—so they can be used by God to transform lives and communities.

HENGEVELD William "Bill", 84, of Sheldon, IA, died 1/23/11. Those left to cherish his memories are his children: Katha (Ron) Petroelje of Holland, MI, Ken (Kim) Hengeveld of Sheldon, IA, Laurie (Scott) Vanden Bosch of Sioux Falls, SD, Joel (Julie) Hengeveld of Sheldon, IA; 13 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; one sister: Minnie De Hoogh of Sheldon, IA. Preceded in death by his wife: Catherine. Online Expressions of Sympathy can be sent to www.andringafuneralhome.com

KNOPER, Alice, age 85, of Alpine, TX, died December 30, 2010. Her husband, Forest, had died in June. Formerly of Wheaton, IL, and before that Cicero, IL, she graduated from Chicago Christian High School in 1943 and from Calvin College in 1948. She taught at Timothy Christian School in Cicero and later, for 17 years, at Winfield Public Middle School, in Winfield, IL. She raised her four children in Wheaton and was a member of the Wheaton CRC for 21 years. She is sorely missed by her two sons, Mark Knoper of Alpine, TX and Randall Knoper of Amherst,

MA; two daughters, Elissa Knoper of Portland, OR and Carla Kelly of Vancouver, WA; and grandchildren Martin, Franny, and Liam.

VANDERARK, MinaJune, age 91 of Ellsworth, MI died on Dec. 19. She was preceded in death by her husband Willard. She is survived by Dan (Judy) VanderArk, Ron (Alison) VanderArk, Diane (Dale) McKenzie, Mary (Fred) Taylor; 14 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren.

Volunteers

MISSISSIPPI CHRISTIAN Family Services, Rolling Fork, MS needs volunteers to operate thrift store and/or light maintenance activity. On site A/C apartments. Desire 2 week commitment. Call or e-mail Larry Faber 616-257-4489 lfaber@att.net. More info on Facebook.

Real Estate: Sales and Rental

FOR SALE 2 bdrm patio home in 55+ CRC strata. 1165 sq ft 1.5 bath, near shopping, churches, green space. Duncan BC (250)732-8853 <http://tiny.cc/bmfmm>

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

FLORIDA RENTAL Fort Myers 2 Bed, 2 Bath condo \$1,500 per month May-Nov includes Golf, Pool, Tennis. Near airport, shopping, beaches. Tammy 479-586-7997.

VENICE FL 3/2/2 pool home Built 2004; 1780 sq ft Quiet neighborhood near Gulf \$219k Call Bob 941-416-6881 or email rlviands11@yahoo.com for photos

BONITA SPRINGS, FL CONDO for rent. 2 bd, 2 bath. Pool, tennis courts, more. Openings for April. Call 239-325-3510 or email vickandruth@comcast.net.

COTTAGE FOR RENT LAKE MICHIGAN-Lakefront, Whitehall area; beautiful sandy beach, 3BR/2BA, private setting, great lake views. Close to golfing, canoeing, horseback riding, hiking, biking, dunes, Mich's Adventure. No pets please. \$1450/wk. 248-344-0996 or sji2003@comcast.net

CONDO FOR SALE NEAR CALVIN 2 BR end unit for \$39,900! Condo fee incl. cable TV and total gas bill. Private balcony. Carport has storage rm for bikes, etc. Call Sam at Starner Realty 616-446-1309

LAKEFRONT COTTAGE on peaceful Winfield Lake - 45 min. North of G. R. MI. Completely remodeled! Deck/Rowboat. 2 bedrooms. Sleeps 6. Great fishing. 2 blocks from 18 hole golf course. \$650/wk. OR \$400/Mon thru Fri special rate. Call 616-455-5318 or 616-669-2714 or kim@schepersbrothers.com.

HOLLAND WEEKLY RENTAL- Lake Michigan home w lakefront veiw & private beach. Sleeps 12 w 3 1/2 baths. Features WI-FI, kayaks, bikes & more. PH 269-375-7874

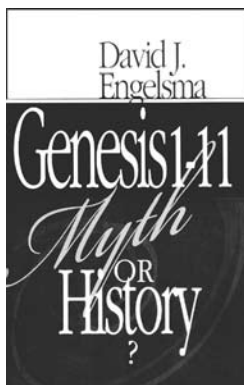
LAKEFRONT LOG HOME 2+ bed. Sleeps 6-8. 30 min N of GR on Englewright Lk. Sandy bottom. Incl. fishing boat, kayak, swim raft. \$695/wk. Call 616-583-0407

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

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

BIG STAR LAKE Cottage for rent in North Bay Shores. 2 bedroom, sleeps 8. \$800 wkly in June and \$850 wkly in July & August. veltema1@sbcglobal.net or call Amy 616-662-9659

BURT LAKE COTTAGE Northern MI Rental- Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boating, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Weeks in July still available. BLCottage@comcast.net



“Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?”

In this hard-hitting, 36-page booklet, Calvin College graduate and Reformed theologian David J. Engelsma responds to the contention by evangelical and Reformed scholars that Genesis 1-11 is “myth.” Written for evangelical and Reformed believers and their children, the booklet lays bare the great issues at stake for the whole of the Christian faith and life in the controversy, whether Genesis 1-11 is myth or

history. The booklet demonstrates that the fundamental issue is the (historical) reality of Jesus Christ. “Out of a mythical Genesis 1-11 comes a mythical Christ.” Before the Reformed churches, schools, and people commit themselves to a mythical Genesis 1-11, they should read this booklet.

For a free copy please e-mail: bcprcevangelism@gmail.com



Netherlands

Dordt College Alumni and Friends

Exploring Dutch culture and the history of the churches of the Reformation
Led by Leendert van Beek and James C. Schaap

May 17-28, 2011



For more information contact Dianne De Wit at 712.722.6029 or ddewit@dordt.edu

STONY LAKE COTTAGE New Era, MI, new 4BR/3BA, sleeps 13, all sports lake, close to Lake Michigan, golf, no smoking/no pets, \$1500/week, 616-293-4539 616-293-4539

PHI ALPHA KAPPA CHR FRATERNITY Do you know of any young men considering attending the University of Michigan and looking for living options consistent with their faith? Phi Alpha Kappa Christian Fraternity (also known as the "Dutch House") is a centrally located affordable housing option at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor campus. Live in a place with like-minded individuals seeking to uphold Christian values as they pursue a world-class university education. For further information please contact vp@phialphakappa.com and/or call (734) 761-5491

COZY 1 BED APARTMENT FOR RENT in private country setting north of Toronto, incl heat/hydro/internet, no laundry/cable, no smoking/pets \$1,000 per month, suits single/young couple 905-859-0190 Nobleton

Travel

TULIP TOURS: See The Netherlands next Fall by bus, bike or boat! All information for this and other 2011 Tours is available at www.gotuliptours.com or call 269-429-8637 for help in making your plans.

Products and Services

CHURCH PEWS FOR SALE Grace Valley CRC has (10) 12 foot solid oak pews with padded seats with attached hymnal racks. All are in good condition. 815-362-6601



DORDT COLLEGE Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2011:

- Computer Science
- Construction Management
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Physics
- Political Studies
- Psychology (non-clinical)

Organic Chemistry (August 2012 or earlier)

Application reviews will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Erik Hoekstra, Provost
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
Fax: (712) 722-6035
E-mail: provost@dordt.edu
Web: www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

Miscellaneous

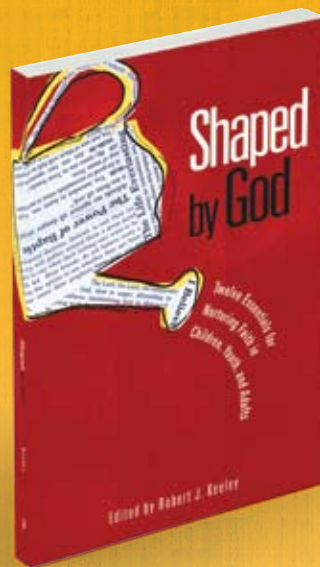
2011 MEXICO START PROGRAM sponsored by IDEA Ministries July 6-27 in the Yucatan Peninsula (not on the border). Mayan Culture, Mexican History & Missions. Host family lodging, daily team Bible study; basic construction and Vacation Bible School; closing conference. Based in Merida, Mexico's safest city. Email info@ideaministries.org or call 616.446.5051 by April 1.

FREE TO A CHURCH NURSERY (Kalamazoo area)—1970 Simmons white crib. Very good condition. 269-345-8467.

HERITAGE REUNION CELEBRATION Pine Rest is celebrating 100 Years of providing the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. All retired and former staff are invited to a special event on May 5, 2011. For more information, please contact us at 616-281-6390 / 1-800-248-3485 or marcia.timmerman@pinerest.org

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

Because faith formation doesn't just happen



What is faith nurture? How does it happen? In *Shaped by God*, twelve experts share their insights on faith formation at home, in worship, in education, in intergenerational settings, and more. A valuable resource for pastors, church leaders, parents, and teachers.

"Shaped by God blends 21st-century thinking in faith formation with effective practices to enhance every congregation's faith formation efforts."

—John Roberto,
Lifelong Faith Associates

\$14.99^{US}/\$^{CDN}*

FAITH
ALIVE®
Christian Resources

1-800-333-8300
www.FaithAliveResources.org

*CDN price set at current exchange rate

View a sample online!

Staying safe at home with HomeCare of Holland Home



As the home health division of Holland Home, HomeCare of Holland Home understands the health complexities of older adults. We're a nationally-certified home health agency that supplies health professionals to the doorsteps of those wanting to maintain an independent lifestyle at home.

The trusted excellence of
Holland Home . . . to your home.

Call today (616) 235-5113

www.homecareofhollandhome.org



Help Feed Families in Ukraine

Years of Communist oppression have left many families destitute in Ukraine. Millions live on less than \$2.00 per day.

Help us keep these families together through a gift of sponsorship.

Family sponsorship begins at \$29.00 per month.

Help us bring hope, God's love and a future to these needy people.

For more information please call our toll free number or visit our website TODAY.



Authentic. Life-Changing.
Biblical. Contextual.

At Calvin Theological Seminary we are deeply invested in the personal and spiritual formation of every student. Rooted in Reformed theology, our program is designed for developing pastors and nurtures the individual growth and development essential to this important calling.

We like to think of the Master of Divinity program as the thread that brings all the pieces of a biblical, authentic, contextual, and life-changing ministry together. Our new M.Div. curriculum integrates these dimensions through innovative learning and teaching methods and can be customized to ensure a formative and meaningful experience.

mdiv.calvinseminary.edu



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A community of faith. A center of learning. A life of ministry.

The Banner 2010/2011 Ad Schedule

Space is limited. Ads are inserted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Issue date	Ad deadline	Ship date
April	03/07/11	03/25/11
May	04/04/11	04/21/11
June	05/02/11	05/20/11
July	06/06/11	06/24/11
August	07/05/11	07/22/11
September	08/01/11	08/19/11
October	09/06/11	09/23/11
November	10/03/11	10/21/11
December	10/31/11	11/18/11
January	12/05/11	12/23/11

See thebanner.org

Dordt College and Conductor Bradley Miedema present the

Concert Band & Chamber Orchestra

2011 Spring Tour



Thursday, March 10

Des Moines Christian High School
7:00 p.m., Des Moines, IA

Friday, March 11

Covenant Christian High School
7:30 p.m., DeMotte, IN

Saturday, March 12

Chatham Christian School
7:30 p.m., Chatham, ON

Sunday, March 13

Smithville District Christian High
7:00 p.m., Smithville, ON

Monday, March 14

Rochester CRC
7:00 p.m., Penfield, NY

Tuesday, March 15

Mechanics Hall
7:30 p.m., Worcester, MA

Thursday, March 17

Eastern Christian High School
7:00 p.m., North Haledon, NJ

Saturday, March 19

Holland Christian High School
7:30 p.m., Holland, MI

Sunday, March 20

Faith CRC
6:00 p.m. Service, Elmhurst, IL



TRINITY
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
Palos Heights, Illinois

Christ-centered Classes
Chicago Opportunities
Financial Aid

Schedule a visit to our campus just
30 minutes from downtown Chicago.
START BUILDING MOMENTUM TODAY.

Visit www.trnty.edu
or Call 866.TRIN.4.ME



M O M E N T U M F O R L I F E

Go beyond an ordinary faith. It comes *In the Works*.

If you like a comfortable Christianity that only matters on Sunday, this series isn't for you.



\$9.99
each
US/CDN*

***What Do I Do
With My Life?***
Serving God Through Work

Where Do I Come In?
Joining God's Mission

What Do I Owe?
*Managing the Gifts
God Gives You*

How Do I Make It Right?
*Doing Justice in
a Broken World*

How Do I Begin?
Sharing God's Story

If, on the other hand, you're not afraid to be challenged and you desire a deep faith experience, the *In the Works* series was designed with you in mind.

Discover what it means to join God in his mission in the world.
Go beyond an ordinary faith.
It comes *In the Works*.

*CDN price at current exchange rate

**ORDER TODAY and
VIEW SAMPLES ONLINE at**
FaithAliveResources.org/ITW
or call 800-333-8300


**FAITH
ALIVE**[®]
Christian Resources

Punch Lines

Share in the fun and send us your funny story or joke. Got a photo of something humorous related to the Reformed Christian life? We'll take that too! Please send your contributions to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email them to editorial@thebanner.org.

A minister was approached by a congregant who said he was worried about the strange dreams he was having. Concerned, the pastor asked what type of dreams they were.

The man explained that, the night before, he had dreamed he was in the Old West. He was riding his horse out of town when he met a Wells Fargo coach. He flagged down the coach, got off his horse, opened the door, and climbed in. Inside, he slid across the seat, opened the other door, exited, remounted his horse, and rode away.

The minister pondered this for several minutes, then told the man, "Don't worry! It's just a stage you're going through."

—Dave Hollander

My mother, who is in her 103rd year and lives independently, has slowly lost some of her vision and hearing. After being urged for many years to acquire and use a hearing aid, she finally relented. On the phone recently, she proudly told me that she was able to insert that "tiny little battery" in place and insert the hearing aid correctly into her ear, even though her hands shake a bit. And then she announced,

"Chuck . . . that toilet sure does make a lot of noise!"

—Chuck Lindemulder

Billy: "I can be sick for nothing because my dad is a doctor."
Jimmy: "Oh yeah? Well, I can be good for nothing because my dad is a preacher."

—Dick Bylsma

A Christian school teacher asked her class to draw a picture of something in the Bible. One little boy drew a picture of a couple sitting in the back seat of a car and a man driving the car.

The teacher was puzzled and said, "What is this supposed to be?"

The boy answered, "Don't you know? This is God driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden!"

—Lois Gort

As a Children and Worship leader, I was telling the story of Jesus going to the temple as a

boy. After celebrating the Passover, Mary and Joseph leave for home, while Jesus returns to the temple. We wondered together how Mary and Joseph must have felt when they couldn't find Jesus, why they were so anxious and worried. A child replied, "It wouldn't have been a problem if Jesus had a cell phone."

—Alice Apol

The light turned yellow just in front of her. She did the right thing, stopping at the crosswalk even though she could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating man was furious and honked his horn, knocking over his coffee and dropping his cell phone as he screamed in frustration that he had missed his chance to get through the intersection.

As he was still in mid-rant, he heard a tap on his window and looked up into the face of a very

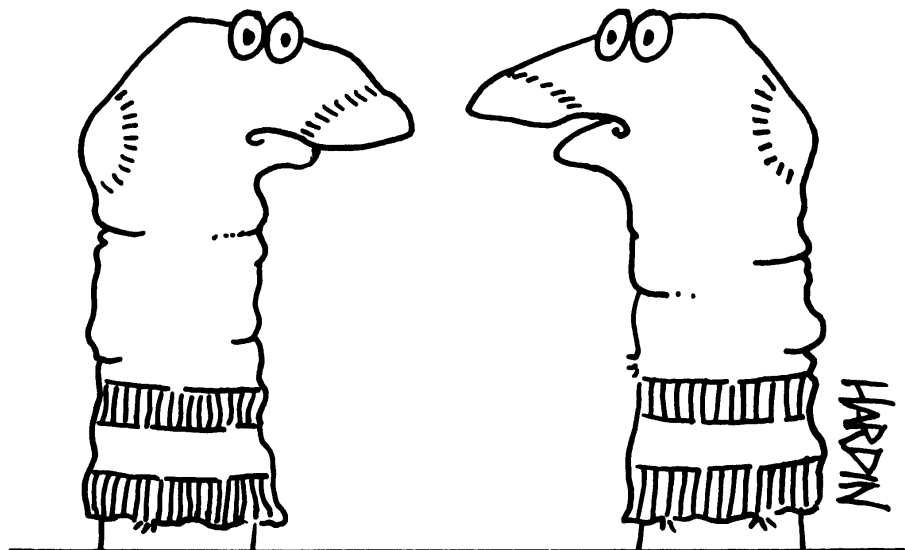
serious police officer. The officer ordered him to exit the car with his hands up.

He was taken to the police station, where he was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a holding cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and escorted the man back to the booking desk, where the arresting officer was waiting with his personal effects.

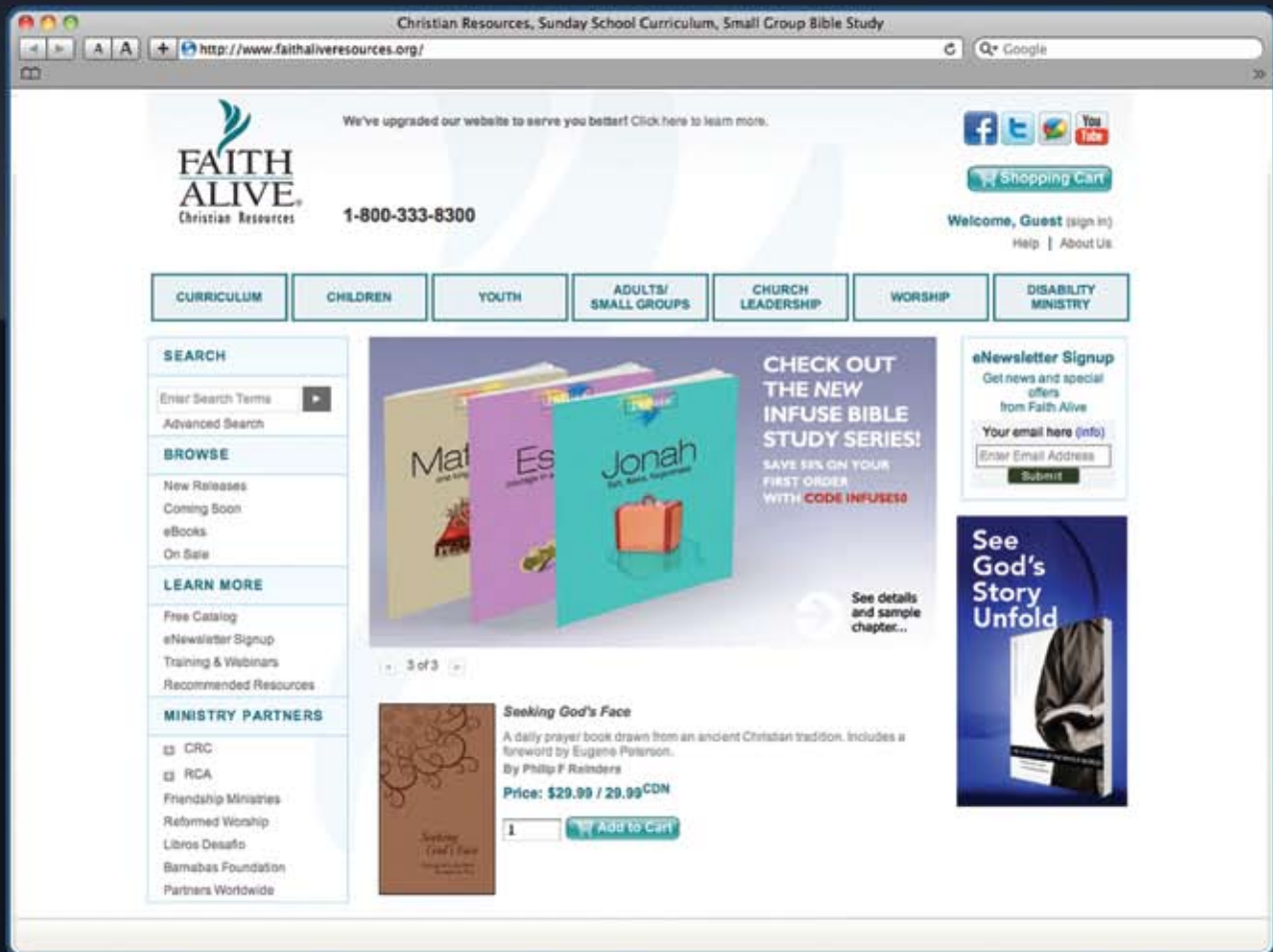
"I'm very sorry for this mistake," began the officer. "You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn and cussing a blue streak at the woman ahead of you. I noticed the "What Would Jesus Do?" license plate holder and the "Follow Me to Sunday School" bumper sticker, along with the chrome-plated fish emblem on the trunk . . . so naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

—Earl Clements



"I believe there's an unseen hand behind everything we do."

Online ordering from Faith Alive is **NOW EASIER THAN EVER!**



We've upgraded our website to give you

- easier navigation and sortable product view
- quick order forms (great for curriculum customers)
- prices displayed in both U.S. and Canadian dollars
- money-saving offers and coupon codes
- social media share features and much more!

Check us out at www.FaithAliveResources.org

While you're online, be sure to sign up for the *Faith Alive News* to get monthly updates about our ministry and up-to-the-minute announcements of new releases and special offers.



1-800-333-8300

Facebook.com/FaithAlive
Twitter.com/FaithAlive