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Cover: After 10 years of fighting fires, Brian Fryling, a member of inSpirit Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich., has won an award named after his father.

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN STRUYK

How Do We Show That God Matters?

THIS SUMMER my wife, Margo, and I attended our son's doctoral promotion at the Free University in Amsterdam. We couldn't resist mugging for a group photo with the stern, imposing bust of Abraham Kuyper, renowned Reformed theologian, statesman, writer, and co-founder of "The Free."

Kuyper inspired generations of Reformed Christians to let our belief in Christ's sovereignty fill every nook and cranny of our lives, both private and public.

That challenge stayed with us as we subsequently did some sightseeing in Delft, Brugge, and the towns of Normandy. We explored many cathedrals—there wasn't a town that didn't have a stately old church at its core.

Sadly, tourists outnumber worshipers by an overwhelming ratio. The towering monuments to the glory of God (and to those who commissioned them) portray the past, not the present. They were erected more for social, political, and personal purposes. But visually they give elegant witness that, for a long time, God mattered.

We saw architecture harking back to the Roman Empire—round arches, fat columns, massive walls with small, deep-set windows that speak of the solidity, strength, and gravitas of God.

We saw more of the later Gothic style, often built right on top of, and around, the remains of the Romanesque structures: thin ("church window") arches and skeletal walls soaring to incredible heights with columns branching off at the top into a myriad of graceful arches

No cathedral can outshine living, confessing Christians.

stretching in all directions to support a vaulted roof.

The thinner walls allowed for massive windows through which light streams, reflecting the sheer brilliance, magnificence, and majesty of our God.

In our culture church buildings no longer provide the central focus of our communities. High-rise towers and sports domes do. And shopping malls and factory complexes compete with the downtown to woo us away from the center to the periphery. The unavoidable message: God doesn't matter anymore, commerce does.

One Norman cathedral we toured was started a millennium ago. A team project, it took all the genius, innovation, technology, and resources of seven centuries. In our day our best minds invest their efforts in gadgets that will be obsolete within a decade. And those no longer speak of God.

That's a sobering thought when pondering Abraham Kuyper's famous challenge: "There is not a square inch ["duim breedte"] in all creation of which Jesus does not say 'Mine.'"

We can no longer rely on our society, culture, or architecture to proclaim that message. We Christ-followers have to do it ourselves.

That's really not so bad; it's how it was when the Spirit was first poured out. Believers spoke and lived their faith. They met where they could, in homes, public places, synagogues—wherever. They didn't rely on stone and mortar to speak for them. They knew *they* were the temple of God.

No cathedral can outshine living, confessing Christians in demonstrating how God matters—if we will just throw open the windows of our hearts and lives to let the light of Jesus shine on our society of "spiritual tourists."

Listen, Jesus tells us, "*You* are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). ■



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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. 09, 2011.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

Happy Exhaustion

I'M 42 YEARS OLD and back in school. My son, age 4, leaps eagerly out of his bunk in the morning, dons a knapsack that dwarfs him, and I swing him onto the yellow bus for junior kindergarten. Then I, too, put on my knapsack and head out the door; only I go to the “big school.”

School comes with mixed feelings. It's a rich privilege, a grace that opens new worlds. But it's also a load of hard work, a trek through dense brush. You could say it's a grand adventure that requires scaling some rough but lofty mountains. As I write, I'm thinking about my key comprehensive exam coming up in 12 days. Few things have rattled my confidence as much as this exam.

The home front is equally intense with my wife, Joy, back at work after a maternity leave, and our three children under age 5. If one child is not peeing on the couch, the other has tripped and landed on her face, decided to scribble with black marker on the white carpet, or accidentally smashed our glass coffee table while trying to lift a wooden stool.

“We have to lower our standards for cleanliness, meal plans, and sleep,” Joy and I tell each other, “and increase our tolerance for chaos.”

I have an older friend who laughs heartily when I recall the latest of our little family dramas. One Sunday in the fellowship hall he said something poignant: “Ah, I remember those intense days when the kids were young. I thought they were so hard. But I glanced back at some photographs the other day, and I was surprised. In all the photos I look quite happy.”

That reminds me of another friend whose home was a raging sea of plastic toys, cartoon videos, and children's books. He put on considerable weight when his kids were small and demanding. Patting his rounded stomach, he looked at me with glad, bleary eyes and sighed: “It's all happiness, Peter. This is all happiness.”

Today my son comes home from school in a state of blissful exhaustion. He crumples onto the stairs and begs for a drink. Beside his knapsack lies a large plastic bag. It's full of construction-paper flowers, finger-painted trees, and an orange stick-man that has “Daddy” scrawled underneath.

Maybe his smaller life is a picture of ours. A work that is also a grace, one that comes with a happy fatigue and, though we can't see it yet, will bring forth something beautiful for God's kingdom. That is our prayer: we entrust our energies to its promise. ■



Peter Schuurman, who is laboring toward a Ph.D. in religious studies, passed his comprehensive exam. He's on the preaching team

of New Life Christian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario. His youngest child, Grace, was born last Reformation Day.



All the good
that you will do
will not come from you
but from the fact
that you have allowed
yourself, in the obedience
of faith, to be used
by God's love. . . .
The real hope then
is not in something
we think we can do,
but in God
who is making something
good out of it
in some way
we cannot see.

—THOMAS MERTON

A Defining Issue for the 21st Century Church

LGBT persons, and the questions surrounding how the church interacts with them, are not going away.

IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, issues surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons and the church have been at the forefront of my mind.

The topic is important to me because my sister, who is not a Christian, is openly gay. My wife and I have spent a lot of time with her and her partner, Kate, over the past year, and we've had several really good conversations about their lives, their relationship, and their experiences at the hands of Christians and the church.

So it pained me to learn that at Synod 2011 several weeks ago, the Christian Reformed Church decided *not* to “appoint a study committee to consider new biblical and theological resources that have been published since the denomination’s official stance was decided” (“No New Study of Homosexuality,” *The Banner*, July 2011).

The more I think, read about, and discuss the subject, the more I am convinced that homosexuality will be a, if not *the* defining theological issue for Christians my age (in their 20s) and younger.

Many young Christians are deeply passionate about their convictions regarding how the church should or should not respond to LGBT people. The recent New York State vote to allow same-sex marriages, for example, filled Facebook and Twitter with strong emotional statements of both support and concern by young adults.

That’s because our beliefs about the nature of homosexuality are drawn from how we see and interpret Scripture and what we believe about the nature of God, sin, justice, and creation itself—many of the core elements of our life of faith.

I believe, therefore, that synod missed an opportunity by not allowing a committee to examine LGBT issues in light of new research. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if synod is not willing to do so soon, it may jeopardize the very future of the CRC. Because LGBT persons, and the questions surrounding how the church interacts with them, are not going away.

The perception by many young adults is that Christians believe God does not love LGBT people. If our denomination cannot say that it continues to remain open to God and has a teachable spirit about how we interact with LGBT people, we’re going to risk alienating many of our young adults—gay and straight alike.

I am not suggesting that synod’s 1973 report on homosexuality is wrong, in part or in whole. I don’t believe I am well

Continued on p. 42 »



A.J. Gretz is a student at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He and his wife, Anna, attend Oakdale Park CRC in Grand Rapids.



CRC-RCA Reunion

I did miss some important substance in the reports of the “historic” joint meeting of CRC and RCA synods (“RCA and CRC Synods Meet in Historic Joint Session” and “The More We Get Together,” July 2011). Your editorial lists several quaint disputes that contributed to the separation of the two denominations in 1857, but does not mention the substantial issue of Masonic Lodge membership. Both before and after 1857 there was extensive Scripture study, soul searching, and prayer regarding Lodge membership. Many of the congregations and individuals who joined the CRC did so because of a profound belief that Lodge membership can severely compromise our mutual accountability as disciples of Christ. This has not changed.

—Rev. Jack VanderVeer
Calgary, Alberta

In 1989 I was an elder delegate to the RCA assembly, which met in the gymnasium of Calvin College the same week the CRC held their synod in Calvin’s FAC (now called the Covenant Fine Arts Center). We held joint worship services in the morning sessions, shared the dining hall for meals, and met for social hours. One evening we worshiped together at LaGrave CRC. I understood *that* joint synod to be the “first ever” to meet and discuss reunification since 1857. . . .

TTERS

I pray our recent reunification dialogue can continue, but I fear it, too, will lose steam and fade away.

We are quite far apart, and I doubt we can be one family. But with God all things are possible.

—Raymond Leerar
Orland Park, Ill.

In your editorial you list four reasons the CRC separated from the RCA, but not two other reasons that seemed important to the CRC at the time. One was that the RCA allowed her members to also join lodges, while the CRC taught that allegiance should be given to God and not to a secret society. The other reason was a no-excuse dedication to Christian education on the part of CRC members, while many RCA members sent their children to public schools. This conviction was so dearly held that a gentleman in our church who (gasp) was a teacher in a public school was not allowed to become an officer in the church. Even in grade school I thought that was just wrong! In this day and age, it's time for us to get back to doing God's work together. I'm happy to see signs of that possibility.

—Jean Brayman
Fremont, Mich.

The CRC holds such a strong position against Lodge membership that *Acts of Synod 1900* (pp. 96-101) documents this issue, and it was confirmed by synods in 1958, 1974, 1975, and 1977.

—Allan A. Stonehouse Jr.
Englewood, Fla.

Online Comments

I have been engaged in a discussion regarding the news story you published online June 14 concerning Synod 2011's decision not to re-examine the CRC's policy regarding its gay and lesbian members ("No New Study of Homosexuality," July 2011). This discussion took place via

the comment box following the online article. I am writing to thank you for making this forum available. The discussion was at times angry, and it seemed hopeless that any good would ever come of the effort. However, over the past two days, at least some of the participants achieved a level of respectful dialogue that seemed impossible just a few days earlier. I was moved by this experience. Thank you again for hosting such discussions. I just wish there were a way to include a broader audience.

—John Slagter
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Storybook Characters?

This time it's retired pastor George Vander Weit who looks at brothers Cain and Abel as storybook characters who "teach us truths about our relationship to God, others, and ourselves" (FAQs, June 2011).

Hebrews 11 speaks of Cain and Abel as real people, not mythological characters. John further confirms the historicity of the brothers (1 John 3:12).

We must be careful when nullifying Scripture. Jesus told Nicodemus, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

On the other hand, it was refreshing to read of Redeemer biology professor Gary Chiang, who is a young-earth creationist ("Redeemer University Students Enter Faith and Science Debate," p. 16).

—Russ Hoekman
Lakewood, Calif.

What did Jesus mean when he said "... so that on you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (Matt. 23:35)? What does it mean in Hebrews 12:24 that "[We] have come to ... Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of

Abel"? By questioning the historicity of Abel's blood shed by Cain, we are dealing with much more than the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

—Margaret Fraser
Lethbridge, Alberta

Love Wins?

I was utterly disappointed by "Love Wins?" (Tuned In, May 2011). Though he at first seems to defend the classic view of hell, nevertheless John Van Sloten speaks of "the Bible's ambiguity" on the issue of hell.

There *is* coming a "day of wrath" (Rom. 2), and that wrath remains (even now) on all those who are not in Christ Jesus through faith in him (John 3:36). That is what Jesus refers to as hell.

I have a background in both evangelicalism and mainline churches, and what I have seen in both has been a shallowness in and apathy to theological, doctrinal truth.

Why not pray that Truth wins?

—Eric Roessing
Holland, Mich.

I'm always grateful for *The Banner's* book reviews. However, the review of Rob Bell's book *Love Wins* really missed the point. To me Bell's thesis is that we have so narrowly construed the discussion concerning the saved and the damned that we have forgotten the radical nature of grace.

Is our tradition so afraid of the term "universal salvation" that we have shut the doors to those who need to hear the gospel? I assume everyone is saved and treat everyone like brothers and sisters, never giving up hope, and assuring "non-believers" that they don't have to wait until they die to know the love of God; they can experience that love now. So let us open the doors wide and press everyone to come in to celebrate the Great Feast.

—Henry Venema
Brandon, Manitoba

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Michigan Firefighter Wins Award Named After His Father




RYAN STRUYK

Brian Fryling won the Fryling-Yonkers Firefighter of the Year Award in Wyoming, Mich. The award is named after his father and another firefighter who died in the line of duty 30 years ago.

"This is an absolutely huge honor for me," said Fryling. "I think that [my father] would be immensely proud that I followed after what he did in the fire service and then to get this award."

Fryling, a member of inSpirit Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., has been a firefighter for 10 years. His father died while fighting a restaurant fire when Fryling was 9 years old.

Fryling won the award for saving a man's life last year. 

—Ryan Struyk

Brian Fryling, Firefighter of the Year

Letters from the Seven Churches to British Columbia

Despite a postal strike in Canada, members of Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia, still got mail.

Their letters, written 2,000 years ago, were originally addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor, in the book of Revelation. Rev. Albert Westerhuis, Fleetwood's pastor, read each letter from the ruins of the original church to which it was written.

"This idea was on my mind for a long time," said Westerhuis, "to visit the churches of Asia Minor and preach a series on it when I returned."


Westerhuis traveled to Turkey this past spring with his wife and videographer, Luanne.



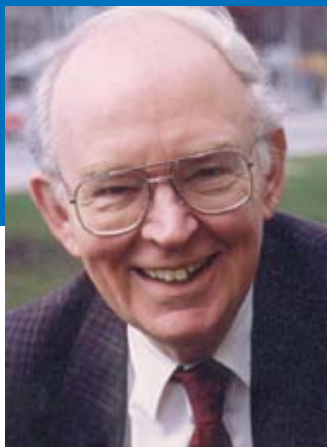
LUANNE WESTERHUIS

Rev. Albert Westerhuis reads a letter to his congregation from the ruins of the Church of Smyrna.

"As we studied the passage in its setting and context and tried to find connections with our church today, I noticed that all the different issues raised are relevant [today] in one way or another," Rev. Westerhuis said.

"How much better can it be when you can combine your interests with your work as a pastor?" 

—Jenny de Groot



Gerald Vandezande

Canada Loses Social Justice Leader

Canadians lost a social justice leader with the death of Gerald Vandezande on July 16, at the age of 77.

Vandezande, a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Scarborough, Ontario, grew up in Nazi-occupied Holland and was influenced deeply by the risks taken by ordinary citizens and by the power of the gospel message.

Gerry, as he liked to be called, spent his career as a public policy analyst and social justice advocate. He was the executive secretary and first employee of the Christian Labour Association of Canada and also cofounded the Committee for Justice and Liberty, now known as Citizens for Public Justice.

In 2001, Vandezande received the Order of Canada, one of Canada's highest civilian honors. His order citation described him as a "powerful and respected voice for social justice."

Harry Kits, former CPJ executive director, wrote, "... Gerald's vision for justice for the marginalized, his belief that one's faith mattered and always shaped political decision-making, and his commitment to engage even those with whom he strongly disagreed, were and remain an inspiration and an example for me."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

Pastors, Start Your Engines!

Sixty-five pastors from several denominations, including seven Christian Reformed pastors, raced in the third annual

Faster Pastor Challenge at Berlin Raceway in Marne, Mich.

Rev. Steve Dozeman, from Calvary CRC in Holland, Mich., advanced to the championship heat and

was leading the race when another pastor clipped him from behind. He went into a spinout that knocked him from the race with just two laps to go. The pastor who knocked Dozeman out of the race was disqualified.

Despite a disappointing finish, Dozeman still enjoyed the night. "It was a really neat time of fellowship for pastors and for churches out in the stands," he said.

Rev. Mark Quist from Park CRC in Holland, Mich., said, "We

had a lot of fun. The most fun for me was talking with the racers. It was just a great night hanging out with them."



(L-R) Revs. Chris Cassis, Steve Dozeman, Mark Quist, Steven Rusticus, and Randal Meyers raced in the Faster Pastor Challenge.

"Some pastors are pretty competitive people," Quist remarked. "They aren't even afraid to wreck a car on their way to the finish line!"

For more, including video, please visit www.thebanner.org.



—Ryan Struyk

Bed Building Bonanza in West Michigan

What began as a group of retired men meeting for Bible study at Covenant Life Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich., has turned into a workshop and trailer full of tools to build beds for people in their community.

The men call themselves SWAT (Servants With Appropriate Tools).

When the local Rescue Mission in nearby Muskegon heard about their ministry and said beds were needed, volunteers from the mission and other churches helped out. In two weeks, 68 beds were delivered and assembled at the mission.

"There was a real sense of joy," said Bob Parker of the project. "As the lumber disappeared and sawdust built up, it was very clear that God's Spirit was with us."



(L-R) Clare Robison, Bob Parker, and Bob Schuman set a headboard drilling template.

—Daina Kraai

Check thebanner.org for the expanded story.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Bernard A. Van Someren

1921–2011

Rev. Bernard A. Van Someren, a humble, sympathetic, approachable person and pastor, friend of the suffering and those on the fringes of society, peacemaker in church and society, and preacher of the Word, died in Holland, Mich.

Van Someren served in the U.S. Army during World War II prior to entering the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in 1952.

He served churches in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and New Jersey. He retired in 1985.

Those who were privileged to benefit from Van Someren's ministry remember him fondly. While he loved the church, his ministry reached beyond the local congregation. He cared deeply for those who were poor or lonely, immigrants, and refugees.

Van Someren loved music, gardening, camping, and it was said that he could fix any mechanical problem.

Van Someren is survived by his wife, Gertrude, four children and their spouses, and five 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.

NEWS

Gail Rice holds a photo of her brother, Bruce VanderJagt, who was murdered in 1997.

Advocating Against Death Penalty in Illinois

When Gail Rice's brother was murdered in 1997, she had no idea her journey would lead her to become an advocate against the death penalty. This past spring, Rice witnessed the abolishment of the death penalty in Illinois.

On Nov. 12, 1997, Rice's brother Bruce VanderJagt, a police officer, was shot during a botched burglary attempt in Denver. The gunman then took VanderJagt's service revolver and killed himself.

At the time of VanderJagt's murder, Rice had already spent 18 years working with inmates, tutor-

ing and ministering weekly in Chicago's Cook County Jail.

"My experience in correctional institutions initially made me oppose the death penalty," said Rice, "because I saw a very different standard of justice for the rich and for the poor, and I believed the death penalty would always be applied unfairly to the poor and minorities."

After VanderJagt's death, Rice became an outspoken voice, on behalf of murder victims, against the death penalty, speaking in Illinois' state capitol to a commission on the death penalty.

"I don't experience any contradiction at all," Rice said. "It has to



MELISSA HOLTROP

do with the idea that we're all loved by God and valued by God and created in the image of God."

Rice, a member of Hope Christian Reformed Church, Oak Forest, Ill., continues to speak on restorative justice and advocate against the death penalty.

—Melissa Holtrop

Dying and Rising Again in Napa Valley

There was a funeral at Valley Community Christian Reformed Church in Napa, Calif., not for a person but for the congregation.

In 2009, the church faced a tough decision: close the doors of the church permanently or look for other options. The option they chose was to partner with The Gathering, a Christian Reformed Church plant in Sacramento, to close and restart as a church plant.

"We had a very moving 'memorial service' where we celebrated the 24 years of the church's history, and then disbanded," said Rev. Ron Vanderwell, pastor of The Gathering.

During the months following, members met in homes, "fasting" from the church's building and immersing ourselves in the book of Acts, which we were studying in our home worship times," Vanderwell said.

"During the restart process we referred to the church as 'The Church of Whatever God's Up To,' which is still featured on the sign in front," said Vanderwell. However, the group decided to keep the name Valley Community Church.

Now the church is experiencing the joy of rebirth. Ministry Associate Dave Buurma will lead the church as a part-time, bi-vocational pastor. Membership has more than tripled and its finances are solid.

"It is God in action," said Buurma.

—Heidi Wicker

Ministry Associate Dave Buurma at "The Church of Whatever God's Up To."



Former CRC Man Executed in Georgia

Steve Fridsma fumbled over her words, struggling to deliver one final message to her nephew, Andrew De Young, before he was executed by the state of Georgia.

She did her best to put her feelings into words, and as the hours passed and appeals were exhausted, Fridsma made peace with the moment's finality.

"I knew there was nothing more I could say," Fridsma said. "There was nothing more I could do."

De Young died at 8:04 p.m. on July 21.

De Young was executed for the 1993 murder of his parents, Gary and Kathy, and his 14-year-old sister Sarah, over a \$480,000 inheritance he hoped to use for a business venture. His younger brother, Nathan, escaped unharmed. The family had belonged to New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Dunwoody, Ga.

Fridsma, a member of Willard (Ohio) CRC, is Kathy De Young's sister.

The day before Andrew De Young was executed, he handed Fridsma a letter, apologizing for the pain he had caused. He pledged to spend the final hours of his life in prayer, although he wondered if God would hear him.

For Fridsma, De Young's execution brought 18 years to an emotional close. "It was all over, but it was sad," she said.

De Young's maternal grandparents visited for 15 years until they were no longer able to travel. Both Fridsma and her mother communicated with De Young through weekly letters.

Fridsma has sensed God's presence throughout her journey with her sister's killer.

"God has been over this the entire time," she said. "I just hoped that every time we spoke to him or visited Andy that the love of Jesus Christ would come through.

"That's all we ever wanted."

—Jeff Arnold

Classis Red Mesa Uses Land Sale Funds for Pension Plan

With pension plan contributions and health insurance costs rising, many Christian Reformed churches, especially smaller congregations with limited resources, may find it difficult to fulfill their financial commitment to their pastors.

Anticipating such a scenario, Classis Red Mesa is focusing its financial grant program on pension and health insurance assistance. It funds the grant program with interest earned from money invested after the sale of a large real-estate holding.

Classis Red Mesa comprises more than a dozen congregations, primarily in Navajo and Zuni communities in northwestern New Mexico and northeastern Arizona, served by a mix of Anglo and Native American leaders.

In the past, "we've had pastors who fell through the cracks" in the denominational pension program, noted classis treasurer Dan McLaughlin.

To make sure that doesn't happen again, and to encourage potential pastoral candidates, the classis is making sure salaries, pensions, and health insurance programs are fully funded, especially in light of recent increases in pension and insurance costs. —Larry Edsall



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. George R. Spee

1929-2011

Rev. George R. Spee, passionate about missions and devout friend of new believers, passed away in Twin Falls, Idaho.

Spee entered the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in 1956 and spent the next 27 years as a missionary in Nigeria, West Africa, among the Tiv people.

Spee felt a heavy burden for unreached people. He would trek for days into remote mountainous areas to share the Good News with isolated people.

The years in Nigeria, however, took a toll on Spee's health. In 1983, the Spees returned to the United States. However, in 1984 Spee agreed to be "loaned" to the Gospel Missionary Union of the Bahamas.

Though Spee retired officially in 1992, he and his wife remained active in the Bahamas until 2010.

Spee is survived by his wife, Jean, four children and their spouses, and eight grandchildren.



—Louis M. Tamminga

Borgdorff Appointed Deputy Executive Director

Rev. Joel Boot, new executive director of the Christian Reformed Church, recently appointed Rev. Peter Borgdorff as his deputy.

Borgdorff was the CRC's executive director of ministries for many years, and executive director for two years before he retired.



Rev. Peter Borgdorff

Boot has been appointed executive director for the next two years. His appointment follows the resignations of both the previous executive director and the director of denominational ministries (DDM).

"We decided early on not to replace the DDM until synod's task force on structure has reported," Boot said. "To appoint someone to that position in the interim would make it seem that [retaining that position] is a foregone conclusion."

Boot made the decision in consultation with the Board of Trustees' executive members.

Borgdorff was already working for the denomination, traveling throughout it to facilitate discussions about the Belhar Confession. Between that and his new duties, he will be working full time. He said he will serve "as long as I am needed and am able."

—Gayla R. Postma

Washington Pastor 'Buried' Alive

Pastors sometimes get buried in their work, but Rev. Joseph Kamphuis of Faith Community Christian Reformed Church in Zillah, Wash., took that to a new level.

Kamphuis told the 82 children attending this year's vacation Bible school that if they brought in \$950 in offerings, they could bury him in a large sandbox. The kids raised \$1,554.

The money was split between a ministry that puts the New Testament on MP3 players for people in the military and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Kamphuis, clad in scuba gear, was buried in a makeshift box built that same day.

—Amy Toornstra



Rev. Joseph Kamphuis was buried by VBS children.

NEWS

Youth Unlimited Hosts First *Live It!*

A About 500 teens and 200 leaders attended the first biennial Youth Unlimited *Live It!* event, held in Marion, Ind., in July.

The new event replaces YU's annual youth convention and is designed to be more hands-on and interactive for teens.

Teens and leaders chose to participate in one of six tracks based on their interests and



Teens enjoy worship at the first *Live It!* event.

The most popular track was Play It, with about 200 participants, said Millie Hoekstra, event coordinator, adding that there was a good distribution between all the tracks.

Play It participants planned and implemented a Saturday sports event for local children, which paired each child with two teens. "It helped me play for God rather than for people," said Corey Bulthuis, 16, of Orland Park (Ill.) CRC.

Some of the Do It track members built a Habitat for Humanity house, despite 100 degree (F) weather. "It really helped me to open up to the family that would receive the

house and help them as I would want someone to help me," said Rebekah Owens, 18, of Brookfield (Wis.) CRC.

Create It track members created songs, dramas, and videos.

The new format allowed teens to get to know others who share their interests, said Hoekstra, who called the event a "huge success."

"Everyone was very pleased with the results," she said. "There was great variety and great teachers. The kids enjoyed it immensely."

The 2013 event is planned for the Pittsburgh, Pa., area.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Members of the Grow It track enjoy a team-building exercise.

gifts, some of which included sports, discipleship, arts, and service.

Teens spent most of each day with members of their track, and in the evenings everyone came together for keynote speakers, entertainment, and worship.

Alaska Church Delivers Kicks for Kids

With 20 hours of daylight, young people in Alaska have a lot of extra time on their hands in the summer, which for some means getting into trouble.

As an alternative, Rev. James Kim, pastor of youth and outreach for Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Anchorage, provided a free soccer camp this summer that included two practices and one game a week for 36 children.

Kim also shares Bible passages with his soccer players. "I tell [them] a short story about God's love. It's like a little tiny worship service with these boys and girls," he said.

Church members have donated shin guards, goalposts, and soccer balls. Some have helped with coaching, and many attend the games as spectators.

—Amy Toornstra



Participants in Trinity CRC's soccer camp

JENNY KIM



Terrarium class at Lamont's art camp

Michigan Church Replaces VBS with Art Camp

Lamont Christian Reformed Church in Coopersville, Mich., tripled its usual VBS attendance of 40 when 120 children from age 7 through 14 came to create art and meet in small groups at the church's art camp.

Jill Meyer directed the art camp and said the church wanted to "give kids an opportunity to express themselves through the arts with their creative ability, connecting that to God's creation and his creativeness."

Classes included marker art, building Lego™ towns and robots, studying the poetry of Shel Silverstein, Shrinky Dinks™, decoupage, cooking, drama, woodworking, and more.

"Kids love the arts and crafts," said Meyer. "Our first applicants were eight eighth-grade boys."

—Karen Gorter

VBS Includes Service Project



Ashley Tremain helps clean the playground at a local shelter as part of VBS.

The kids spent an afternoon cleaning the dining hall and playground. They also collected \$150, new games for the day room, and 831 rolls of toilet paper to meet needs indicated by shelter staff.

The youths enjoyed the learning experience. Ashley Tremain, 10, said, "I thought it was jail, but it wasn't. It was really nice and peaceful."

—Sarah Boonstra

Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church in Salem, Ore., added a unique spin to their vacation Bible school curriculum this year. The older students participated in a service project at a local women's shelter.

"Our 5th- and 6th-graders want to get out there and do things," said Amy Toornstra, VBS mission coordinator.

They also collected \$150, new games for the day room, and 831 rolls of toilet paper to meet needs indicated by shelter staff.

The youths enjoyed the learning experience. Ashley Tremain, 10, said, "I thought it was jail, but it wasn't. It was really nice and peaceful."

—Sarah Boonstra

Michigan Church Hosts Teens for 22nd Year

More than 90 high school students and leaders took part in weeklong service projects this year through LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

LaGrave is the longest running site for Youth Unlimited, an organization that runs SERVE projects across North America.

The students and leaders came from Canada, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. "You get to meet different people from everywhere in North America, which is really cool," said Nicole Veldhoen, 17, from Brampton, Ontario.

Students partnered with agencies in the Grand Rapids area—serving food, washing cars, and working with children and with people who are homeless.

—Ryan Struyk

Check thebanner.org for the expanded story.



(L-R) Nicole Veldhoen, 17, from Brampton, Ontario, and Benton Vargason, 16, from Orange City, Iowa, work on a skit for children.

Michigan VBS Kids Feed Neighborhood



Vacation Bible school kids raised money to help feed the neighborhood of Community Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich.

Wanting the kids to see their financial offerings used in a tangible way, the church parked a truck filled with 5,000 pounds of free

food in its parking lot for distribution to neighbors.

"I think it teaches the kids about giving to the church and being unselfish with their money," said VBS volunteer Cory McCallum, 17.

Community CRC member Linda Howe said, "We're trying to get out into the

Almost 120 kids raised funds for 5,000 pounds of free food for neighbors of their church.

neighborhood, to let them know that in these bad times there is a support system—and it's their local church."

—Ryan Struyk

Michigan Church Helps Suspended Students

Antonia, 13, and Mario, 14, attended school each day last term. But their school was part of Harderwyk Ministries, a Christian Reformed church in Holland, Mich.

in the Alternative Suspension Program.

The program is for suspended students in grades six to nine. It is run by Neighbors Plus, a community development program that is part of Harderwyk Ministries.

Director Karen DeMaagd said the need for the program became apparent four years ago. "We wanted to intervene and work on schoolwork, behavior, and have students see the world beyond their own," she said.

DeMaagd said the school includes core subjects, physical activities, and community service.

Mario liked the program. "I don't get into as much trouble here, and I get my work done. I learned that if I try hard enough, I can do it."

Antonia said she misses her friends, but added, "There are better things to do than getting in trouble."

—Karen Gorter



KAREN GORTER

Staff member Mark Haskin helps Mario with his math.

Both students had received long-term suspensions from the local public middle school due to fighting so they finished their year

Christian School in Colorado Wins Award

Two Christian Reformed women in Longmont, Colo., received the Mayor's Positive Impact Award for their efforts in faith-based education.

Barb Bulthuis and Connie Nourse, both members of The Journey CRC, received the award for their work in opening a faith-based school for students in grades 6-8 who have experienced academic and/or behavioral struggles in traditional schools. Crossroads School just finished its first year with eight students.

"There was nothing for the kids who don't fit the mold," Nourse said.

Bulthuis feels called to provide this type of school in her community. "I realize that [the local Christian school] meets a particular need and can't serve every child and every family," she said. "If Christian education has value, then I believe it has even more value for those children who struggle or are at risk for one reason or another."

The school has been heavily supported by the local Christian Reformed church.

—Sarah Boonstra



From left, Konni Keuter, Joanna Topham, Connie Nourse, and Barb Bulthuis at Crossroads' ribbon cutting.



Filled backpacks help kids succeed in school.

ALYSON STEIGERWALT

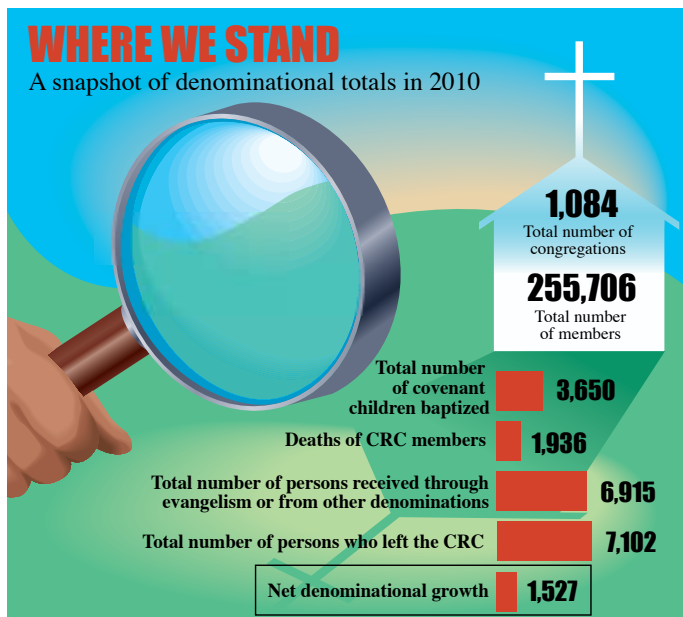
New Jersey Churches Provide Back-to-School Supplies

Buying a long list of school supplies for the start of the school year can be a financial challenge for many families. New Hope Ministries, a diaconal outreach of several Christian Reformed churches in northern New Jersey, is helping by giving away more than 120 backpacks filled with school supplies through a program they call Backpack Buddies.

Church and community members and a local bank donate the backpacks and supplies, often taking their own children along to shop for supplies for a Backpack Buddy of similar age.

Cassie Vander Eems, 9, enjoyed the experience. "I think putting the backpack together is fun, but seeing the smiles on the kids' faces when they receive the backpack is cool too."

—Calvin Hulstein



World Communion of Reformed Churches Sets Priorities

The executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) announced that its strategic plan for the next seven years will focus on youth leadership development, increased collaboration with regional church groups, and making a visible connection between Reformed theology and justice concerns.

The Christian Reformed Church is a founding member of WCRC, an organization created a year ago with the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the

Reformed Ecumenical Council. WCRC has members in 108 countries and 230 denominations, representing a population of over 80 million.

Rev. William Koopmans, pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario, and chair of the denomination's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, is on the executive committee of WCRC.

"We are very pleased that this organization is prioritizing not just humanitarian goals, but we are determined to do it from a clearly Reformed

perspective," Koopmans said.

He said the CRC has much to gain from participation in WCRC, including inspiration of joyful, faithful following of Christ in hard circumstances and practical Christian living in adverse circumstances.

He also sees ways the CRC can contribute. "I could imagine 'twin congregations,' a CRC in North America and a Presbyterian church in Africa with limited staff and resources. The goal is to network people."

—Gayla R. Postma

California Student Wins Congressional Gold Medal



Christine Langford, a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Ripon, Calif., traveled to Washington, D.C., to receive a gold medal through the United States' Congressional Award program.

Langford, now a college student in Virginia, received her medal for volunteerism, personal development, physical fitness, and expedition/exploration.

"The Congressional Award program is more than just a program where you receive a material object and a pat on the back in the end," she said. "It's a program full of once-in-a-lifetime experiences, adventures, challenges, opportunities, and service that will shape you into a person that you never knew you could be."

—Heidi Wicker

Christine Langford with Congressman Gerald "Jerry" McNERNEY in front of the U.S. Capitol.

Stories exclusively at www.thebanner.org:

University Students Enjoy Hospitality of Prince Edward Island Church Charlottetown CRC formed its own campus ministry on an informal basis.

Ontario Café Features Encouragement on the Menu A St. Catharines congregation reaches out.

Montana Man Uses Wrestling for Ministry Shannon Prete considers his physical limitations a gift from God.

California Church Distributes Food to People in Need Modesto CRC turns its social hall into a grocery store once a month.

Burmese Refugees Find Homes in West Michigan Several CRCs are helping refugees find a new life after years in refugee camps.

Members of First CRC release balloons for their 125th anniversary.



Illinois Church Celebrates 125 Years

In celebration of God's faithfulness, First Christian Reformed Church in Fulton, Ill., released 125 balloons to commemorate their 125-year anniversary.

That kicked off a week of festivities, including a potluck, midweek coffee, and special combined worship services with their daughter churches, Morrison (Ill.) CRC and Bethel CRC, Fulton, Ill.

Psalms 145:13 served as the church's theme verse. Anniversary booklets were distributed to church members, and historical displays remain on exhibit.

—Melissa Holtrop

evangelism for **everyone**



He came to the service to see his niece get baptized, but God had other plans. Ironically, the message was on marriage and his had just fallen to pieces. He was broken and crushed and ready for Jesus.

Over the next few weeks we tried to connect, then one night we started chatting via the computer. We had never talked face to face. God had something he wanted to show me. Through a 45-minute online chat, I heard about a man who grew up in the church but somewhere along the road, as he experienced hardships, he left God.

At the end of our conversation/chat I prayed. He then indicated that he would like to pray as well, and went on to type the following:

Dear Lord Jesus. I wish to accept you into my heart today. I will need your strength and the strength of your servants to help me, but I'm seeing that there are more people out there who can help me. Open my eyes and let me see the true happiness that a life with you can bring. Bring this happiness to my children as well—they need it as much as I do. Thank you for bringing brother John into my life. I feel the tears slowing down as I pray to you. Thank you, Jesus, and thank you, John. Amen.

We had never seen each other or even talked on a phone. The experience showed me once again that it is God who brings people into relationship with himself, and we are called simply to love the people around us.

In the rest of this article, I'd like to look at how we as a church have viewed evangelism historically, present to you an understanding of the relationship between the Great Commandment to love and the Great Commission to tell the good news, then share what I believe this means for the church today.

My ultimate goal is to empower every person reading this to understand that we are simply called to love others. When we love others as we have been loved, God—through the power of the Holy Spirit—will move and draw people closer to himself.

I must also state a presupposition I have going into this: I believe that many members in our churches are afraid of evangelism because they misunderstand it, and that while many would like to lead someone else to Christ, they have resigned themselves to believing they never will. Perhaps this is where the first difficulty lies: we have lost faith that God might use us to lead others to himself.

Three Movements

In the past 40 years we have seen three major movements in understanding how the church should relate to unchurched people:

Evangelism Explosion: This model of evangelism came on the scene in the 1970s and was developed by Rev. D. James Kennedy. Evangelism Explosion centered on four questions that “evangelists” asked as they went door to door:

1. If you died today, do you know for certain that you would go to be with Jesus in heaven?
2. Suppose you were to die today and stand before Jesus and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” What would you say?
3. [After a brief explanation of creation, fall, and redemption] Does this make sense to you?

4. Would you like to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

This movement was very “in your face,” and only the boldest people were comfortable participating in it. It did little to connect with the needs of people. Connecting people with faith communities also proved difficult, as there was little relationship established beforehand and little intentional follow-up afterward.

Willow Creek and the Seeker-Sensitive Movement: Started in the 1970s, the suburban Chicago church Willow Creek had by the mid-'90s become one of the largest and most influential churches in North America. Senior Pastor Bill Hybels felt that many church practices were irrelevant and meaningless to those “outside,” and if the church didn't change, unchurched people would never be attracted to join.

Willow Creek reoriented itself to intentionally target people coming to church for the first time. This intentionality gave birth to the “seeker-sensitive” movement.

Today very few, if any, congregations in the Christian Reformed Church have not in one way or another been affected by Willow Creek—whether they have clear signs pointing to the nursery or services completely designed with the unchurched in mind.

Willow Creek and the seeker-sensitive movement woke churches up to the fact that other people might actually *want* to become part of their communities. »

**One of the greatest gifts
the church can offer to
the world of the 21st century
is a listening ear.**

It is God who brings people into relationship with himself. We are called simply to love.

For the CRC, having been founded by Dutch immigrants, this was an especially difficult transition. Immigrant churches tend toward exclusion and preservation of an ethnic heritage and language. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, but it made for a difficult transition with which many CRC churches are still wrestling. We all like to think of our churches as welcoming and inviting, so when guests or visitors tell us otherwise, we're often shocked.

Missional Renaissance: The movement that we find ourselves in the midst of today is perhaps best coined the “Missional Renaissance,” which is the title of a book by Reggie McNeal. This movement points out a flaw in the seeker-sensitive movement and invites the church to a new opportunity.

The seeker-sensitive movement was based on an attraction model: the goal was to get people to come to church. But many people are not at all interested in coming to church.

The Missional Renaissance invites people to see their local community as their church and to develop an intentionality in showing love to people, especially through acts of service. It invites churches to get involved in things that don't necessarily increase the number of people walking through their front doors. Rather, churches engage with their communities and help create justice and mercy within communities and within the world, showing the kind of selfless love and service that the world needs. Even hardened skeptics can't argue with that.

Biblical Understanding

I believe a critical difficulty has come from misunderstanding the relationship between the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37) and the Great Commission (Matt.

28:18-20). I believe we have understood these two to have a relationship that I don't think is correct or helpful.

We have understood the Great Commandment as a means to accomplish the Great Commission. We have loved people as Christ has loved us SO THAT they might become disciples of Christ. We have made our love conditional on whether or not the unchurched people we are building a relationship with seem likely to come to church.

I do not believe the Great Commandment and the Great Commission relate in this way, and I believe this misunderstanding has disempowered many people in our churches. It has led us to believe that even before establishing a relationship with people, before finding out basic things about their lives, we must try to figure out how to get them to Alpha or our Christmas service. This stops us from truly listening and understanding and getting to know them.

Moreover, we've been disempowered by thinking that our personal lives must be exemplary for us to convince someone of the intrinsic worth of belonging to the church and having a relationship with Jesus Christ. We shut down evangelism because we believe that it is our own life and witness that will bring someone into relationship with Jesus.

While I don't want to say those things don't matter, I believe Satan uses them as a trap to minimize our effectiveness for Jesus. I also believe that God can use our hurt and brokenness to draw others to himself.

So I would like to invite every member in every church to get to know someone—with no strings attached. Ask questions; let the person speak. I find that people are so starved for someone to truly listen to

them that they feel loved simply by your questions and active listening to their answers. For many people, I believe, the difference between being listened to and being loved is almost indistinguishable.

One of the greatest gifts the church can offer to the world of the 21st century is a listening ear. A listening ear that does not try to change people's situations or assume that it can fix someone else. A listening ear that will love unconditionally, without judgment. A listening ear that will react in compassion and not disgust.

It amazes me how quickly and how much strangers will share when they sense there is a “safe person” listening. What if our churches could be filled with those safe people? What if we allowed ourselves to stop worrying about how others come to faith in Christ—and about what we might say or not say—and simply listened?

As a community we have been given the mandate to go and make disciples of all nations. This starts first and always with Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, drawing others into relationship with himself. I am often surprised at who God draws and how God chooses to do that. The story of my online chat illustrates this perfectly. The fact that God allowed me to be involved in leading someone into relationship with him by simply listening and praying over MSN once again shows me that our God is an awesome God.

So this week, go out. When the Spirit prompts you to start that conversation, do not quench him by acting in fear. Say hello to the person, ask how his or her day is going. Listen carefully to the response, and you will know what to ask next. ■



John Wildeboer is a youth pastor for ClearView Christian Reformed Church in Oakville, Ontario.

Would Jesus Use Facebook?

WOULD JESUS USE FACEBOOK?

I don't think I'll be selling "WJUF" bracelets anytime soon, but that's a valid question. In an age when everything is lightning-fast and millions of people use social networking sites, what is the church called to do? How can individual churches reach people in the "Facebook generation"?

At age 5, I played youth soccer. My team didn't exactly understand the idea of working together. A clump of over-enthusiastic kindergartners surrounded the ball, every kid for himself. As we grew older, however, the clump began to spread out. We realized the importance of our relationship as a team.

Speaking as a college student, my generation strives to work as a team. We value relationships with other people. We look for fast and efficient connections. But we don't stop there: we use our relationships and connections to collaborate and share ideas.

I know firsthand how engrossing social networking is—just ask me how I spend most of my time on the night before a final exam. Most of my generation can relate. In our world the Internet has not simply existed but has been a way of life. We've learned with it, worked with it, and socialized with it.

Social networking sites build and sustain relationships among people. Through sites such as Facebook or Twitter, I can talk just as easily with my cousin in Alaska as with my friend across campus. I can check out my friends' pictures from the weekend, read my local news, catch up on a TV show, or see if the Detroit Lions are winning . . . or losing. The question begs to be asked: shouldn't I be able to catch up on my church's ministry too?

It's no secret that churches have a difficult time connecting with people in my generation. In a world in which young adults look for instant connections and information, the church is being left behind. E-mail addresses, once considered "cool" for churches, are now standard—as are websites.

Yet checking a church website for updates is often inconvenient and time-consuming. If our churches want to connect with young adults, it's time for them to embrace the potential of social networking.

Social networking isn't only for young people: 50- to 64-year-olds are the fastest-growing age group on Facebook. Social networking appeals to young adults, but it can connect people of any age.

The beauty of social networking is not only its speed or functionality, but that it's *two-way* communication. My generation doesn't simply want fast information; we want to respond to it. We want to engage it. Unfortunately, no matter how hard you try, you can't have two-way communication with a bulletin announcement.

Social networking holds untapped potential for members to share prayer requests, photos, small group information, and events. Not only can churches deliver this information, but members also can respond to it and then respond to each other.

Yes, as some people point out, social networking can foster relationships that are insincere or superficial. But we must recognize that relationships, like all of society, are fallen. In this world we should not dismiss a concept because it isn't perfect; we should engage the medium and strive to use it for God's kingdom.

Social networking opens doors of communication for the church to explore. Jesus calls us to be of one body, and social networking promotes that kind of unity and constant communication.

In order to unite with my relational generation, social networking is an imperative first step. If Jesus used Facebook, would he "like" your church? ■

Ryan Struyk is a *Banner* news correspondent and a sophomore at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He is a member of Community CRC in Wyoming, Mich.

NEXT



My generation doesn't simply want fast information; we want to respond to it.



CALLED TO SERVE

By Learning Where You Are

By Jul Medenblik, Ronald Feenstra, and Lyle Bierma

As it celebrates 135 years of God's faithfulness, Calvin Theological Seminary is finding new ways to bring Reformed theological training to our changing world.

CTS is preparing to launch the key initiative of a five-year, distance-education Master of Divinity degree, plus several other degree and certificate programs.

The CTS faculty and board recently approved a distance-education proposal that it will submit to the Association for Theological Schools (ATS) for formal approval. The following statement comes from the introduction of that proposal:

According to the CTS mission statement, "CTS exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church and wider constituencies by preparing persons for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel." Through distance education, CTS can prepare more people for ministry by delivering that training to a far wider audience. Currently, our education reaches around 275 students. There are certainly more people who would love to receive a CTS education, not only in North America but around the globe.

CTS wants to reach students where they are in their career, ministry, and family contexts—especially those who would find it difficult, if not impossible, to uproot and relocate to receive training.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, William Karshima, who is from Nigeria and has been in the United States since 2008, hopes to be among the first group of such students. He serves currently as a ministry associate for Oasis Community Christian Reformed Church in the Orlando, Fla., area.

"I have taken a summer class at CTS, and I am so grateful that I can continue my training while still ministering at Oasis," Karshima says.

CTS's distance-education program will combine some face-to-face instruction with online learning. As U.S. Department of Education findings affirmed recently, such "hybrid learning" generally produces the best outcomes.

Nathan Bierma, education technologist at CTS, states, "Pastors and church leaders are already using Web and social-media technology in all aspects of their

ministry. It's a logical step to use and integrate technology into the education that prepares them for ministry."

Ronald Feenstra, dean of academic programs for CTS, notes that the faculty overwhelmingly approved this endeavor. "This program will provide excellent Reformed theological education to a wide variety of students who otherwise would not have access to it," he said. "We believe that the program will enhance teaching and learning in all programs at Calvin Seminary, because it will force all of us to rethink how to teach well."

An anonymous donor committed \$1.5 million to see the initiative through the first students beginning and completing the program.

For more information about distance-education at CTS, see www.calvinseminary.edu/onlineCourses. You can submit

your e-mail address to receive updates regarding the program. Additionally, the director of admissions, Matthew Cooke, can help you discern whether this program is right for you. He can be reached at semadmit@calvinseminary.edu or 1.616.957.6076.

CTS will also offer certificates and diplomas that do not require an undergraduate degree. These offer people opportunities to deepen their current biblical training or explore whether they would like to pursue further theological training.

Your Reformed theological training is just one click away! ■

Jul Medenblik is president of Calvin Theological Seminary, **Ronald Feenstra** is dean of academic programs, and **Lyle Bierma** is dean of the faculty.

Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal

Professor Carl Bosma's 2010 convocation address, "Are We Training Church Planters or Undertakers?" led to many discussions—and to the board and faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) approving the organization of an Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal.

As a first step in this ongoing conversation, Rev. Scott Vander Ploeg from St. Lucie, Fla., conducted a seminar titled "Preaching the Bad News/Good News" for the January Worship Symposium in Grand Rapids, Mich. The seminar was co-sponsored by the new institute and the worship symposium.

Additionally, Rev. Kevin Adams in the Sacramento, Calif., area, hosted and led a Gospel



Rev. Kevin Adams (far right) with CTS students who participated in the Gospel Preaching course in Sacramento, Calif.

Preaching CTS class during the J-Term (January).

Professor Mary Vanden Berg accompanied students as a student herself. In a review of the course, she wrote, "This course

was an excellent introduction for students to the issues facing not only church planters, but those who wish to revitalize dying congregations. It brought to life the issue of context that is such

a large part of our curriculum. We need to be training students who can exegete the culture as well as they can exegete the Bible."

Adams, who has served his California church plant since 1991, said, "It's been my experience that Reformed theology 'sings' in places where the vast majority of folks have not heard it. The Institute for Global Church Planting and the distance-learning initiative will give us new ways to 'learn to sing the song of grace' so that folks significantly unconnected to God can optimally hear." ■

—Jul Medenblik

Rev. Medenblik's inauguration as the 7th President of CTS will take place October 15. For details, visit www.calvinseminary.edu.

Called to Serve . . . Young Leaders

In July, 34 high school students from across North America participated in the 13th year of Facing Your Future (FYF), a program run by Calvin Theological Seminary's admissions team and supported by the Lilly Foundation and the Christian Reformed Church.

In FYF, high school students who have been nominated by their pastors get challenged and stretched to make sense of who God has created them to be and what God may be calling them to do in this world.

Seminarians serve as leaders and assist in directing and guiding the students as they confront questions about identity, vocation, and ministry.

FYF sent participants to Oregon, Texas, and Ontario, where the students saw firsthand how ministry takes shape in context. Through these experiences, students were encouraged to put into practice the things they learned in FYF courses, while growing in their understanding of the church.

FYF 2011 participants joined a growing group of more than 400 alumni, many of whom have been significantly shaped by their time in FYF.

Recent CTS graduate Jillian Burden reflected on her time in the program: "Before I attended the FYF program in 2003, I had a vague sense that I should pursue vocational ministry, but it wasn't until I attended the program that I understood the special and unique nature of my calling."

While recalling her FYF experience she said, "When feelings of uncertainty or insecurity threaten me, I remember the many wonderful lessons, conversations, and experiences I had at FYF, and I am blessedly assured, all over again, of God's special call on my life." What a blessing for young leaders! ■

—CTS Admissions Office

FYF Live-in Leaders: (back row, from left) Mark VanderWerf, Rich Visser, Mike Nanninga, Katie Proctor, Jana Postma; (front row) Jessica Driesenga, Matt Postma, Matt Cooke



CALLED TO SERVE . . .

Preachers

The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) is entering its seventh year of full-time operation at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). Offering continuing education opportunities for pastors remains a key way the center fulfills its calling to serve pastors in the vital task of proclaiming God's Word.

In May, 18 pastors from Seattle came together for two days of conversation and learning led by CEP Director Scott Hoezee.

The seminar was spearheaded by Rev. Karen Breck-

enridge, a Presbyterian pastor who attended a June 2010 CEP seminar at Snow Mountain Ranch, near Winter Park, Colo. She so benefitted from the experience that she wanted to share something similar with her colleagues. Participants enjoyed two days thinking about sermon illustrations, sermon structure, clarity in presentation, and more.

In early June Rev. Mary Hulst led 15 pastors of smaller churches in a five-day seminar that focused on proper, intelligent use of technology in worship and in preaching. This seminar was co-sponsored by

Called to Serve . . . Students

Calvin Theological Seminary is called to serve its students. Therefore, financial aid remains a priority.

In 2001, then-president Neal Plantinga resolved to increase financial aid to keep CTS viable as it competes with other seminaries in recruiting the best and brightest students.

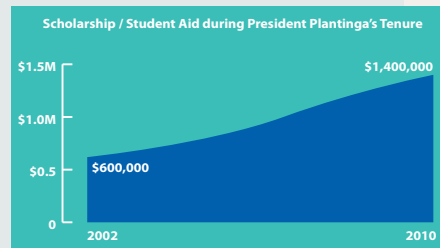
In 2001, financial aid to students totaled \$502,000; in the past year it rose to more than \$1.4 million.

In addition, available scholarships have more than doubled. In 2001 students could apply for only 69 scholarships. In 2011 they could choose from 166.

Incoming CTS president Jul Medenblik said he hopes to build on that success and continue growing the amount of funds and scholarships available. "A way you can show seminarians how much we care for them and desire to support them as a community is by offering them a substantial financial package," Medenblik noted.

To learn more about financial assistance for CTS students, please email Bob Knorr, director of development, at rknoor@calvinseminary.edu. ■

—CTS Development Office





Preachers' Oasis participants enjoy lunch together.

the Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining Congregational Excellence program. It represents one of the many fruitful collaborations the seminary has with the wider denomination in delivering top-flight education to pastors.

In July the center hosted its fifth "Preachers' Oasis" event as 15 pastors from nine denominations gathered for five days of reflection led by Hoezee and by Hulst, Rev. John Rottman, and Randy Bytwerk.

Plenary sessions focused on preaching-related topics, while each participant also had an intensive one-on-one session with one of the Oasis leaders to discuss specific issues in his or her own preaching.

Also in July, Hoezee teamed up with renowned Bible commentator Frederick Dale Bruner for the seminar "Engaging the Text, Preaching the Word." Bruner is well-known for his intelligent, witty, but profoundly practical Bible study presentations. Each morning the 15 seminar participants dived deeply into a key text from Matthew or John, absorbing Bruner's insights on the meaning of the passages.

Finally, in July, outgoing CTS President Neal Plantinga teamed up with Hulitt Gloer of Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary to present

the perennially popular "Imaginative Reading for Creative Preaching" seminar.

Through exposure to a wide range of literature, participants saw how a robust program of general reading feeds the preaching life. Although Plantinga is leaving CTS, the seminary will continue to offer some form of the seminar in the future.

The Center for Excellence in Preaching encourages pastors and their congregations to remember—and apply for—the seminars offered by CTS. Upcoming opportunities include the Fall Preaching Conference, led by Paul Scott Wilson (Oct. 27, 2011); the annual Symposium on Worship, which will feature N.T. Wright, John Bell, Thomas G. Long, and Walter Brueggemann (Jan. 26-28, 2012); and the Festival of Faith & Writing (April 19-21, 2012).

November 1, 2011, is the application deadline for the next "Imaginative Reading for Creative Preaching" seminar at Snow Mountain Ranch in the splendid Colorado Rockies (June 18-22, 2012).

For details, visit the CEP website: www.cep.calvinseminary.edu. ■

—Scott Hoezee, Director of
the Center of Excellence in Preaching

Called to Serve ... A Personal Story



Photo: Rev. Kevin Adams

In these features on CTS, there is mention of a course taught by Rev. Kevin Adams, pastor of Granite Springs CRC in Lincoln, Calif., and a partner in ministry with the CTS Global Institute for Church Planting and Renewal.

It's a good story, but I wanted to add my own since I recently took a course in church planting from Kevin. It was amazing.

Part of the pleasure came from other class members and their ministry visions. On the last day of class, we gathered around, laid hands on, and prayed for one of those students who was leaving soon to start a church in a country where Christianity is shunned.

Then there was Adams, who started class by reciting from memory a psalm and brought in church planters who spoke about how they were starting creative churches all over the U.S. These guests—and the lectures by Adams—spoke of a CRC in transition, the gentle strength of the Reformed message, and how it is being shared more widely than ever before. I was encouraged, challenged, and equipped in my own "Call to Serve."

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

CALLED TO SERVE . . .

Everywhere!

Calvin Theological Seminary's call to serve the church extends far beyond the greater West Michigan area. Thanks to websites, a multiplicity of student internships, and the willingness of faculty members to travel worldwide, CTS offers a local presence no matter where you live.

The seminary's main website, www.calvinseminary.edu, provides a variety of resources for prospective students interested in learning more about CTS, and for current students, faculty, and alumni who want to stay connected, keep up on CTS news, or find out about upcoming class reunions.

The Center for Excellence in Preaching's website, <http://cep.calvinseminary.edu>, gets updated every Monday with fresh sermon starter ideas for upcoming texts in the Common Lectionary. The site also features regularly updated audio and podcast sermons and a wealth of other resources.

The CEP site continues to grow as more and more pastors visit the site on a weekly basis. Recent months have seen upward of 10,000 pastors coming to the site each month, with almost 18,000 total visits per month.

The seminary also recently launched the Ministry Theorem website, <http://ministrytheorem.calvinseminary.edu>, designed to provide resources and ideas for pastors and other church leaders interested in learning more about what



Students from Calvin Seminary on a study tour in front of the Apollo temple in Delphi, Greece.

is being discovered about God's creation through the sciences, as well as ideas for how to integrate this knowledge into preaching, teaching, and other ministry skills.

These websites make CTS accessible to anyone with a computer anywhere in the world. But travel by students and faculty spreads the influence of the seminary as well. This summer nearly 70 CTS students served in locations worldwide for 10 to 12 weeks.

In North America, students served in congregations and hospitals from Texas to Alberta, Ontario to California, and points inbetween. Internationally, students also served in Russia, Egypt, Palestine, Africa, and elsewhere.

Although such internships are times of learning for the students, they also become times of significant pastoral ministry provided by the students as they reach out with Christ's love to people they have been called to serve.

Finally, faculty members routinely teach around the world. For example, New Testament professor Jeffrey Weima frequently holds seminars for pastors and other church leaders. In the past year, Weima has traveled to California, the

Pacific Northwest, New Mexico, Colorado, and Florida, presenting seminars on "Revelation's Letters to the Seven Churches," and on "Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians."

Professor Carl Bosma has been frequently on the road in Iowa and other Midwest locations to teach pastors the power of the new Logos Bible program that quite literally provides an entire library's worth of resources on a laptop computer, even as it provides pastors with the opportunity to do in-depth studies of God's Word in the original Hebrew and Greek languages.

In the 2010-2011 academic year, CTS professors traveled to Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom to present lectures, hold seminars, and participate in worship with sisters and brothers in Christ from cultures worldwide.

By God's grace and the gifts of technology and other resources provided by donors and the wider church, CTS is privileged to serve the church at home and even to the ends of the earth. ■

—Scott Hoezee



Jeff Weima teaches in front of the Apollo temple in ancient Corinth, Greece, as part of a biblical study tour.

On Wings of Prayer

I was probably 17 years old when I was invited into my high school guidance counselor's office one day. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about preparation for college. He asked the question I was expecting: "What career do you have in mind for yourself?"

What I was not planning on was my own response. I had avoided it up to that point, though several relatives had more than once suggested it to me. I was planning on becoming a teacher. But what came out of my mouth were the words, "I'm going to seminary."

It was more a revelation to me than to my guidance counselor, I believe. And since that day, despite momentary doubts about that decision, I have not wavered from the conclusion that pastoral ministry is what God put me on this earth to do.

Since that day I have been prayed for more than I will ever know. I was prayed (I now believe) into seminary. I was prayed through seminary. I was prayed through oral comps (the gauntlet of tests and interviews you must pass to exit seminary as a candidate for ministry of the Word). I was prayed through the initial calling process. I was prayed through the classical exam (which in my day took all of six or more hours!). And I have been prayed through 39 years of parish ministry and up to this very day.

A host of prayer warriors have offered those prayers, only some of whom I even know or know about. Many surfaced recently, indicating their prayers for me as I take on this new role as interim executive director for the Christian Reformed Church.

All of the above prompted me to "enlist," if I can, even more in the army of pray-ers. Today, I ask you to join with me in prayer for the many facets of seminary life, some of which this issue of *The Banner* highlights.

Although those for whom you pray may never know it, and though you may never know the results of your prayers, trust

me—more will be accomplished through your prayers than you can even imagine.

I ask you to pray first for the Spirit of God to work in the hearts and lives of people throughout our denomination to enter into ministry. Ask that in still, small ways, the Spirit will blow when and as the Spirit wills, to enter hearts and lives and move individuals toward the ministry of the Word.

And then pray for the staff and administration of our seminary. Ask that God will grant them strength and health and insight into issues facing today's ministers, along with the opportunity and ability to impart helpful guidance to tomorrow's pastors. While you may not know for whom you pray, God does. And God answers.

Pray also for the curriculum of the seminary. Ask that God will guide the staff and board to establish a curriculum (and constantly review and maybe even revise it) that will help students become the servants of God to today's people, addressing today's needs and pointing today's world toward its only hope.

Pray for the students of the seminary. There are those for whom seminary is an enormous financial and personal challenge. There are those trying to balance study, work, and family responsibilities. There are those for whom course work is more difficult than for others. There are those struggling with physical issues, emotional issues, and spiritual issues. Pray that God will lead unmistakably, even when the path is obscure and the way clouded.

And while you are praying, pray also for the candidates who are available right now to the churches. Pray for calls and for confirmation of God's leading. Pray for churches seeking candidates and for churches awaiting word. Pray for all who "wait on the Lord" in these and other ways.

We have a legion of warriors whose knees and hearts can be available to God on behalf of the entire ministry enterprise. I know: I was prayed into ministry, and I am being prayed through it. Please join me in praying for all involved in ministry throughout the future God grants us. ■



More will be accomplished through your prayers than you can even imagine.



Rev. Joel Boot is interim executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.



Barbara Newsome (third from left) helps build a new community with a diverse group of immigrants.

A New Community

Each week 40 immigrants meet with a *Spotlight* English Club (SEC) ministry team from the London City Mission to practice English, developing relationships that could lead them to discover spiritual truths of God’s Word.

Supported by a partnership of ministries, including Back to God Ministries International, the London SEC is one of 49 clubs begun in more than 21 countries.

Working in partnership with ReFrame Media (the English outreach of BTGMI), Words of Hope, and HCJB Global, *Spotlight* ministry teams prepare simplified programs and SEC materials for international learning English.

Volunteer Barbara Newsome helped develop the London SEC that serves immigrants from 28 countries, including a large group of Pakistani Muslim women and an intergenerational family from Mongolia.

“The northwest area of London is a high-immigrant area,” notes Newsome. She and her team of nine volunteers meet in small groups to help these immigrants read and practice learning English through

the *Spotlight* audio recordings and printed transcripts. The club combines English classes for beginners along with listening and discussion for intermediate and advanced speakers.

“Through this, we build warm relationships with the participants, including offering to pray for specific needs as requested,” Newsome says.

Each month participants bring food for a potluck that reflects the range of cultures from which they come.

“The *Spotlight* English Clubs affirm the unique but thoroughly holistic approach of our ministry,” explains Robin Basselin, ReFrame Media’s senior *Spotlight* producer.

Spotlight team members have produced a new promotional video highlighting two SECs: the London club and one in Michigan.

If you would like information about how you might start a *Spotlight* English Club to serve the needs of immigrants in your community, contact Robin at rbasselin@crcna.org and ask for a copy of the SEC video. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries
International

Researching Cuba and the CRC

Calvin Spanish professor Marilyn Bierling is researching Cuban refugees who came to the United States after 1959 when Fidel Castro took control of the Cuban government. With the help of Calvin College student Elena Brubaker, Bierling is also studying the Christian Reformed Church workers who welcomed them.

“During the ’60s and ’70s, two large waves of Cuban immigrants entered the United States,” said Bierling. Workers at the CRC-sponsored Good Samaritan Center in Miami distributed free food, clothing, and medicine to the refugees. They also helped them to relocate to cities in Michigan, New Jersey, and Iowa.

Bierling spent her spring 2011 sabbatical videotaping 40 interviews with ’60s- and ’70s-era Cuban refugees and CRC workers, both in Miami and Michigan. Now she and Brubaker are screening the videos, transcribing and editing the interviews, and subtitling them in English and Spanish.

Through the videos, the refugees share their struggles at transitioning to another culture. One theme that recurs is their gratitude: “Most of the people talk about the people they first met that introduced them to the CRC and (how) that person was so welcoming and so kind,” Brubaker said.

CRC workers also shared their experiences working with the refugees and answered why the denomination was willing to open its doors to refugees of that era.

Many of the workers said the refugee effort was an outgrowth of the denomination’s early diaconal work, including the founding of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

“It was the ethos of the ’60s,” Bierling said. Many of the immigrants helped by the CRC remain members of the church today. “They’ve served in many different aspects of church life.”

—Myrna Anderson, Calvin College

Connecting Campus Pastors and Church Planters

What happens when you mix a group of new Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) campus pastors and church planters in the same room and ask them about their ministry vision? Excited and passionate voices erupt as men and women share their hearts with each other.

That was the scene recently during CRHM's orientation for new church planters and campus pastors. The annual three-day event, held at the Christian Reformed Church offices in Grand Rapids, Mich., introduces church planters and campus ministers to Home Missions, the Christian Reformed Church, and other CRC agencies, and helps encourage networking and resource sharing.

This year, CRHM brought 11 church planters and four campus ministers together for the orientation.

Carl and Jan Van Voorst, planters of Hope for Life Community Church in Watertown, S.D., found the orientation helpful in connecting them with others and offering insights and information they can use in their work.

"It truly was a wonderful and very helpful time for us. We now have many more friends that we can journey with as we bring the gospel to communities through new churches and on university campuses," said Carl Voorst.



"It was good to be introduced to many folks from the denomination who are praying for us, instructing us, and providing resources. Jan and

I have identified about a dozen things we want to do differently or start doing. May our gracious God be glorified and blessed by our joint efforts."

"Attendees displayed an outward passion for the specific context and ministry God has called them to," said orientation planner Janice Buist. "What lingers after attendees depart for home is deep gratitude and a vibrant picture of the work God is doing through Home Missions."

Another highlight this year was a presentation from CRHM Advancement Director Nate VanderStelt on raising resources for kingdom causes. ■

—Laura Posthumus,
Christian Reformed
Home Missions

Church's Care Draws Community to Christ

Pastor Joseph Ngugi, who leads a church just outside Nairobi, Kenya, has always believed that God called him to "shepherd the flock." But he didn't realize how that call extended to his wider community until he began Timothy Leadership Training (TLT).

Ngugi joined a TLT group last September. Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionaries Mwaya and Munyvia Wa Kitavi facilitated the training on pastoral care, the first of seven training manuals. Ngugi and other participants studied biblical principles for pastoral care, and then created action plans for putting them into practice. The group has gathered every few months since then to share ministry results and study the next training manual.

"After the TLT training, I learned how to visit with Jesus, showing compassion to the needy, suffering, and the sick in our community," Ngugi said. He trained 10 members of his church to visit people in the community, whether or not they are part of the church. The more people experience that care, the more they want to know about the God behind it.

Eunice, part of that community, became so sick it seemed she would die. She had never been to church, but when church members stopped to visit, she welcomed them. They shared the gospel with her and prayed for her. Eunice decided that day to follow Jesus. She recovered from her illness and has faithfully attended church since then.

"Timothy Leadership Training's impact is being felt in all the countries we work in eastern and southern Africa," says Mwaya Wa Kitavi, CRWM's regional director for Eastern and Southern Africa. "We hear comments like, 'This is the program we have been waiting for, and it has come at the right time.'" ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, Christian Reformed World Missions



Pastor Joseph Ngugi, fourth from left, meets with church members.

Looking at Leaves

How many leaves have you seen in your lifetime? Probably billions or trillions, right? But have you ever really *looked* at a leaf?

God created many different shapes and sizes and colors of

leaves. They're like pieces of art, and they're all around us! But sometimes when something is so common we forget to appreciate it.

So take some time to look at leaves. Go outside and listen to leaves rustling in the breeze. Pick a leaf and examine it under a

magnifying glass or microscope. Feel it—is it smooth, hairy, prickly? Smell it. Now take a trip to your refrigerator. Can you find any leaves in there that are good to eat? Try some!

The Amazing Color Show

Every year in the fall, a miracle happens in many different parts of the world. Plain green leaves start turning all the colors of the rainbow! But how do they know when it's time to do that?

In the summer, leaves are filled up with chlorophyll (say it KLOR-oh-fill). The chlorophyll, which is green,

absorbs sunlight to help make food for the tree.

But in the fall, the days get shorter and there's less sunlight. The chlorophyll begins to disappear from the leaves, and then it's time for the Amazing Color Show.

Some leaves turn yellow or orange—colors that were there all along but were

hidden by the chlorophyll. In some trees, sugar trapped in the tree's sap turns the sap red or purple, and that turns the leaves those colors too. In other trees, the leaves just start to die when the chlorophyll production slows down. Those leaves turn brown.

Can you predict which trees will turn which color? Try it this fall!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Brew Some Leaf Tea

Did you know that most tea is made from leaves? Fall is a great time to sip a cup of tea you make yourself from fresh leaves.

Here's how to do it:

- First, you need one cup of fresh mint leaves on their stems (you can buy these in a grocery store or pick them in a garden). Crush them with your hands in a little bit, then put them in a glass pitcher.
- Add 4 cups of boiling water.
- Let the mixture sit for a few minutes—the longer you let the tea sit or “steep,” the mintier it will be.
- Pour your tea into a teacup and enjoy! (See the tea's green color? That's from the chlorophyll in the leaves!)



Make a Leaf Press

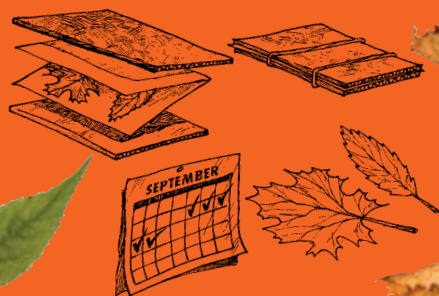
What you need:

- One piece of white copy paper
- One piece of cardboard, the same size as the copy paper
- Two large rubber bands
- Leaves to press

What you do:

- Fold the copy paper in half so that the short ends meet.
- Cut the cardboard in half so each half is the same size as the folded copy paper.
- Open the copy paper, and on one half of it arrange one or two leaves.
- Fold the paper again.
- Make a “sandwich” in this order: cardboard, folded copy paper with leaves, cardboard.
- Put rubber bands around the sandwich to hold it together.
- Leave the leaves in the press for several days until they are nice and flat.

If you want to press lots of leaves, make more presses and stack them on top of each other before putting on the rubber bands.



Wild and Crazy Leaf Awards

Largest leaf: The leaves of the raffia palm can grow up to 80 feet (more than 24 meters) long. That's longer than two school buses end to end!

Leaf you'd most like to sleep on: The leaves of the giant Amazonian water lily, which grows in Brazil, can grow up to 8 feet (2.4 meters) wide. These plate-shaped leaves can hold the weight of a small child.

Bug that looks most like a leaf: The leaf-mimic katydid is an amazing creature with incredible camouflage. God made this bug's body to look just like a leaf! Sometimes it's green and sometimes it has brown patches, but it's always hard to see—and that helps it stay alive.



Leaf Animals



Tim Walker is a photographer who uses PhotoShop and pictures of leaves to create amazing animal portraits. Take a look at his work at timwalkermedia.com/updates/leaf_project/. Want to give it a try? Check out the book *Look What I Did with a Leaf* at your local library or bookstore.



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

Trees are one of her favorite things.

Ministry Through Social Media

THERE ARE more than 750 million active users on Facebook. As of January 2010, the United States alone had almost 95 million active users (about 31% of the total population), half of whom are over the age of 35 (www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics). Facebook is not just “for the kids.”

Twitter users number more than 100 million, with people signing up at a rate of about 300,000 per day (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/14/twitter-user-statistics-r_n_537992.html). New apps that allow people to share their locations and photos with others are also on the rise. Social media allow people to communicate with, and follow the details of, friends, family, organizations, celebrities, and almost anything else you can possibly think of.

For the most part the church in North America has been slow to use social media. This apprehension makes sense. Describing the early church, Acts 2:46 says, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” Given this picture of the early church, a natural fear would be that social media would replace face-to-face interactions and destroy the community that is essential to the church.

And that’s not unfounded. Think about the effort you put into a relationship depending on what medium you’re using. What’s easier, texting someone to ask how he is doing, or calling him? E-mailing someone to ask for help, or inviting her out for coffee? We like our personal space. But by relying too much on the newer forms of media, we can also trap ourselves in our own comfort zones, limiting our ability to minister to others.

On the other hand, people in 1885 probably expressed similar concerns when

the American Telephone and Telegraph Company established the long-distance network, connecting people all across America.

Times change. Everything changes, and some people resist that. It’s a natural part of life. Only one thing does not change: the truth that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross and rise again so that we may have life.

Sure, the gospel message’s audiences change, its locations change, its languages change, even the ways the message gets presented change. But *the message* does not change, and we are called to make that message known to the ends of the earth.

So instead of avoiding social media, let’s ask another question: how can social media aid our efforts to disciple believers and introduce people to Christ—because isn’t that what we’re all about?

If You Build It . . .

In the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*, Kevin Costner’s character hears a voice telling him, “If you build it, they will come.” He interprets that to mean he should build a baseball diamond. And once he does so, Shoeless Joe Jackson and seven other deceased players from the 1919 White Sox show up.

We’re familiar with the story. Unfortunately, we’ve employed similar tactics for implementing new ideas in the church. But the church is a complex entity with different age groups, socio-economic groups, cultural groups, and more.

In order for changes to stick, notes church consultant Bob Whitesel, we need to agree on exactly why we are implementing something new, carefully plan for how the changes will fill that need, and use measures to evaluate the new practices (*Preparing for Change Reation: How to Introduce Change in Your Church*, Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008).

There is no replacement for the community described in Acts 2 or the benefits that go along with it, and I wouldn’t dare

tamper with the model created for us. What we do need to explore is how we can use social media to enhance current practices.

So if social media can’t take the place of community, how can they enhance that community? There are plenty of ways, starting with something that all church members share: the worship service.

The typical message from the pulpit is 20-30 minutes in length, which is just not enough time to dive deep into the Scriptures and application of the lessons. A Facebook page could be a great place to host resources such as devotions based on the message or study guides for group discussion. Eastview Christian Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, recently began posting weekly video discussions between the pastors that address questions from people and also dig deeper into topics the pastors felt they could not address thoroughly from the pulpit.

A Facebook group could also be a great place to start a prayer board. Using a group page could help alleviate people’s privacy concerns, as group members must be approved and could be limited to church members. Third-party developers have also come up with unique apps that run through Facebook, including those that allow people to post prayer requests, decide who sees them, update people on answers to prayer, and more. This is modern technology’s version of the “prayer chain,” in which one person calls another, who then calls another. Using a medium to which most people have access can alert a massive number of people in a short amount of time.

Of Water-Skiing Squirrels and Outreach

Social media are not only relevant to people in the church, but also to those outside it. Before people visit a church, there’s a good chance they will check it out online. It’s important that your church’s vision permeates your online presence, so

How can social media aid our efforts to disciple believers and introduce people to Christ?



people can get a clear understanding of what your church is all about.

Think also about the way things spread virally over the Internet. Did you know that more than 1.6 million people have tuned into YouTube to watch a squirrel water ski? Almost 400,000 people have watched Francis Chan's famous "Balance Beam" message. Your church may not have a speaker as gifted as Chan (or a squirrel as talented as Twiggy), but posting on YouTube does put something out there for people to see. Try posting videos of community events, worship services, or youth events to generate interest. Indiana Wesleyan University recently hosted the *Outreach in an eWorld* conference, dealing with these same topics.

Podcasting is also a great way to reach people who can't always be there on Sun-

days or who prefer to check you out from a distance first. Consider posting audio of weekly sermons online. (Note that podcasts are different from simply posting sermon files on a website.) A podcast is more user-friendly because it uses a program like iTunes that allows people to automatically download new podcasts.

Taking things a step further, Joel Hunter, a church planter and senior pastor of Northland Church in Longwood, Fla., describes how instead of writing a letter to the congregation, he addresses everyone directly in the form of a webcast (Pulliam, S. "The Art of Cyber Church," *Christianity Today*, September 2009, pp. 50-53).

Getting It Right

From speaking with fellow students and friends in ministry, I find that people accept the use of social media by churches

when it's done well. When we fail it is because we didn't plan for and execute exactly what we wanted to accomplish.

The churches most successful with social media seem to have a small number of people in charge of updating the content. In addition, leaders of such churches are comfortable with posting content of their own preference. For example, a local outreach pastor may post thoughts on a recent article on engaging postmodern culture, while a worship pastor may post a video of a new song the church is going to try. Whatever the material, it should be relevant to the poster and to the audience.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 the apostle Paul writes,

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

As Christians, we need to examine the elements of culture and continually adapt our strategies so the good news of Christ can be heard by all. ■



Eric Oppenhuizen is a graduate student in the ministerial leadership program at Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University. He attends Kentwood Community Church in Kentwood, Mich.

Rise of the Mom-Blogger

WITH THE WEB AT THEIR DISPOSAL and wireless notebooks in hand, modern moms are finding new outlets for their writing. And they've created one of the most influential creative communities on the web.

Behold, the mom-blogger.

Today, there are 3.9 million mom-bloggers writing in the U.S. By 2014 it's projected that there will be 4.4 million.

One of these women is Leanne Shirliffe of Calgary, Alberta. Her blog, *IronicMom.com*, is visited by thousands of college-educated women between the ages of 33 and 44. As the name suggests, she takes a lighthearted approach to motherhood, but her motives are serious.

"In 2009," Leanne says, "I attended the Surrey International Writers' Conference. More than one agent told me that if I wanted to write humour, I needed a presence and a platform. I was very anti-blog for about 48 hours. Then I read everything and jumped in headfirst two weeks later."

The mom-blogger community is increasingly being populated by Christian moms.

Leanne has since gone on to write a regular column for the *Calgary Herald*, and her site attracts so much traffic that advertisers have begun to approach her.

"What keeps me blogging isn't just the writing," Leanne says. "It lets me stop time and capture moments that would otherwise be lost. There are also many friends

I've met through blogging. It really is a community."

Increasingly, that community is being populated by Christian moms. While Leanne doesn't consciously put her faith front and center, she's found that many of the people who are attracted to her writing are, like her, people of faith.

"The ultimate irony," she says, "is that while I'd been craving such a

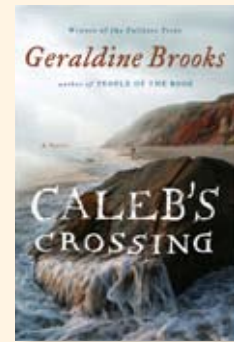
community, I didn't expect to find it online."

One of Leanne's fellow bloggers, Elizabeth Schillings-McLennan, notes: "Many of my newest readers are Christian bloggers, which both amazes and humbles me. As my confidence in my faith grows, so too does my confidence in mentioning God and his gifts in my life."

Together, people like Leanne and Elizabeth are writing a new chapter in the old story of moms who balance parenting and writing. And as these moms use new media to express themselves, there's clearly also an appetite out there for expressions of faith. ■



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



Caleb's Crossing

by Geraldine Brooks

reviewed by Sonya

VanderVeen Feddema

In 1660, Bethia and Caleb meet clandestinely on their native island, Martha's Vineyard, and become friends. Bethia, the 12-year-old daughter of a Calvinist minister, and Caleb, the son of a Wampanoag chieftain, are both irrevocably changed as each sees the world and their places in it through different eyes. Inspired by the true story of Caleb Cheeshah-teaumauk, who in 1665 was the first Native American graduate of Harvard College, this work of fiction highlights the racism that destroyed native cultures. At the same time, it celebrates the common bonds of all humanity. (Viking)





Hymnary.org

reviewed by **Ron VandenBurg**

Linking old and new, *Hymnary.org* offers over a million published hymns, scores, PowerPoints, recordings, and media files. One great feature is “Name That Tune” created by Nat Burns, a Calvin College student—play a tune on the site’s virtual keyboard to do a melodic search. *Hymnary.org*’s wiki pages encourage lots of participation. Worship planners can search by Scripture text or season of the church year. This site can enhance your search as it lists hymns by author, by hymnal, and by topic.

You Don’t Look Like Anyone I Know

by **Heather Sellers**
reviewed by **Allison Backous**

Heather Sellers recounts a life twisted by prosopagnosia, a neurological disorder that keeps her from recognizing people’s faces. Her childhood primed her for such a disorder: a mother who nailed blankets to the windows to keep the government from “spying” and a father’s drinking and cross-country drifting created a world of instability and fear, one that followed Sellers as she tried to live a life that felt “normal.” Throughout this difficult, compelling memoir, Sellers looks to find how “in all that darkness, there had been love.” (Riverhead)



Helplessness Blues

by **Fleet Foxes**
reviewed by **Allison Backous**

Helplessness Blues, Fleet Foxes’ sophomore album, swells with folk harmonies and wistful lyrics. The band can be described as a mix between Iron and Wine and Crosby, Stills and Nash—quiet and melodic, then suddenly bursting into raw, bluegrass vocal lines that hang in your ears and heart long after the first listen. The album catches a certain ache, which can only be described as a spiritual longing. “If I know only one thing,” the band sings on the title track, “it’s that everything I see / of the world outside is so inconceivable / that often, I barely can speak.” (Sub Pop)



Waste Land

reviewed by **Josh Larsen**

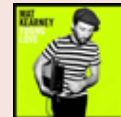
There is a beautiful metaphor at work amongst the ugly garbage in the documentary *Waste Land*. Artist Vik Muniz travels to his native Brazil to lead an art project using materials pulled from the world’s largest landfill. As Muniz encourages the involvement of destitute people there who scavenge for recyclable materials, *Waste Land* touches on something transcendent: Muniz’s insistence on the worth of damaged and discarded people echoes God’s willingness to restore us all. (New Video Group)



THE LOWDOWN



Groupies: Mike Nappa’s book *Instant Small Group* offers 52 no-planning-necessary small group sessions; worth keeping on hand in case of emergency! (Baker)



Taxi! The latest album from mainstream and Christian radio artist Mat Kearney, titled *Young Love*, was inspired by the people he met while driving a cab. (Universal Republic)



Bookworm: *Library Lily*, a picture book from Gillian Shields, follows

the new friendship of book-loving Lily and book-hating Milly. (Eerdmans)



9/11: See *thebanner.org* for a list of books and movies that explore the events of

September 11, 2001.

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

Separated

WELL, IT HAPPENED. Mom and Dad are now separated. There were no harsh words, no cops, no neighbors looking on. Just a separation. Mom has the same address and phone number. Dad has a new address, no phone.

It started on Monday, when Dad showed signs of pneumonia. Mom, who noticed his difficulty breathing, called the doctor. She was told to take Dad to the emergency room, where he was admitted and put on some strong antibiotics to cure the disease.

But his weak heart showed signs of stress. Mom was told that if there were no funeral preparations made, maybe now would be a good time. She called in the children.

* * *

Dad lay in a stupor for two days. In his mind he was getting ready for work. There were blueberries to pick, and where in the world was the wheelbarrow?

He had to get out to the shed and to work in the garden. He wondered who people were and where others had gone. The Alzheimer's sent him back to places he hadn't been for 70 years.

However, Dad rallied, got his legs back, and indicated he wanted to go home.

But with his weak mind and body, a decision had to be made. Could Mom still look after him at home? After 65 years of life together, was it time to let go and let her beloved be taken care of by someone else?

The pair had had their times of joy with the birth of their own children, their children's children, and even their grandchildren's children. They'd both had heart attacks and cancer. Now, with Dad's "time of mixed up brains," how much longer could Mom care for Dad? Not simply the physical care it took to help him when he fell out of bed, but watching him 24/7 without either of them suffering physically or emotionally.

So a decision had to be made. Only one of them could make it, but they would both have to live with that choice.

* * *

Mom decided it was time. They would have to separate, leave each other, in order to survive.

* * *

Dad was practicing his walking in the hospital hallway when Mom broke the news.

"You know, Tom, it's very hard for me, an 87-year-old lady, to take care of you, my 91-year-old hubby—can you see that?"

"Yeah, I guess so," Dad replied. He didn't look up.

"So do you think you could go to another hospital where they can give you physical therapy and get you back on your feet again?"

"Yeah, I guess so." He still didn't look up.

"Well then, would you like to go to the Plains? They have good P.T. there. Remember we talked about that some time back?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

* * *

After 65 years of love, laughter, caring, and crying, they were separated—not in spirit, but in body.

As Dad put on his coat for transfer, he again asked Mom, "Now are we going home?"

"No, Tom, remember, we're going to a new place where they can give you P.T., and as soon as you're better and not so mixed up anymore, you might be able to come home again. Is that OK?"

"Yeah, I guess so," came the usual reply.

"You like P.T., Tom. You remember going to P.T. before?"

"Yeah, I guess so. I go on the treadmill."

* * *

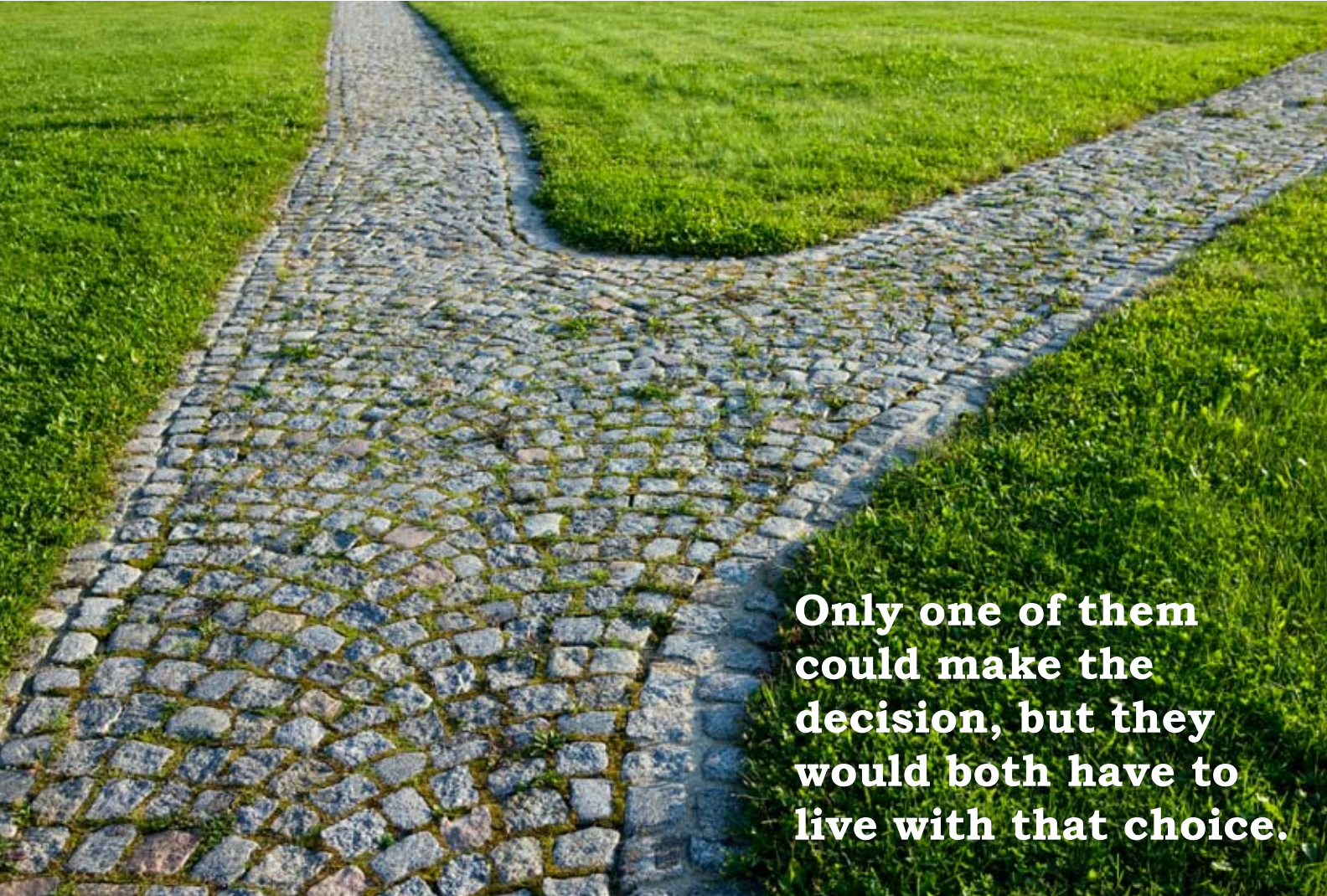
Dad took a ride, and Mom got him comfortable in his new room. She introduced him to his new roommate and went through the usual questions and answers with the admitting staff.

"How many children do you have, Tom?" the resource person asked.

"Six," Dad said.

"No, Tom, not six," Mom corrected.

"Well then, Tom, how many children *do* you have?"



Only one of them could make the decision, but they would both have to live with that choice.

“Six,” Dad said again, “three of our own and three in-laws whom I love just as much as my own. Now I’m right, huh, Susan?”

The blank stare was gone and a part of Dad was back. The part with the little grin showing us that not all of him has disappeared into that awful place called Alzheimer’s.

* * *

It was time to leave. Mom and I gave our usual farewells, good-bye kisses, and promises that we’d return.

“I want to go home,” Dad said, reaching for Mom’s hand, tugging at her heart strings.

“I know, Tom, and as soon as you can walk around again and you’re not so mixed up, then you might be able to come home again.”

“No, Susan,” Dad said, looking up, “I just want to go Home.” He put his head up, closed his eyes, and squeezed her hand. “I’m even a burden to myself. I just want to go Home.”

Mom had to turn around and walk away.

Separation is difficult. ■

Author’s name withheld.

What John Calvin and Osama Bin Laden Had in Common

I ENTER THE 19TH-CENTURY CASTLE that houses France's largest Protestant Christian school. Immediately, I see a large student-made map of France and its surroundings with more than 2,000 dots scattered across it. Intrigued, I read that they represent the Christian schools and eight universities that John Calvin's followers founded in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The schools closed during the persecutions that followed. But recently several dozen have started up again.

I had accepted an invitation to speak at the annual Mathurin Cordier Seminars for French-speaking Christian school teachers. But who was Mathurin Cordier? Why would a program to promote a Christian view of education be named after him? I found out that, 450 years after his death, Switzerland still honors Cordier for providing the basis of its present-day schools.

But I learned something more significant: Cordier was John Calvin's instructor at the Collège de la Marche in Paris.

Cordier had left the priesthood to follow God's calling to teach. He and Calvin soon formed a close relationship. They spent many evenings together, exploring the richness of God's creation in history, ethics, theology, and astronomy.

One evening Cordier and Calvin, scanning the constellations, met a hermit. He told them that his wealth consisted not in the merits of good works but in the salvation of Jesus Christ as a free gift of grace. As dutiful Catholics, Cordier and Calvin said that was a heretical attack on the church. However, a seed had been planted. Gradually Cordier and Calvin began considering Martin Luther's ideas, which had spread even to Paris.

Several years later both Calvin and Cordier joined the Protestants. Just when Calvin wrote his first *Institutes*, Cordier fled Paris to escape execution for his beliefs. Soon Calvin asked Cordier to teach with him in Geneva. Calvin wrote, "O Master Mathurin, O man of gifted learning and great fear of God! It was God's will that I should have you as a teacher, in order that I might be directed in the true path and right mode of learning, so that I can now in some way profit the Church of God."

Cordiers' Christian Schools

Calvin believed the church would flourish only with supportive schools. So when Calvin returned to Geneva a second time,

Christian teachers
and professors
have a crucial
God-given calling.

Cordier became his right-hand man to found schools and develop their programs. Cordier was an innovative educator whose programs and ways of teaching were far ahead of his time.

A gentle pedagogy replaced the then-common severe discipline and beating. Learning began with the simple and moved to the more advanced. Bible reading and study took place every day. But both boys and girls had a broad education that included languages, the sciences, and music. Some of the textbooks Cordier wrote were still used 300 years after his death, including in North America.

A well-known historian has written that Calvinist schools led to "an astonishing familiarity of Scripture, even among the lowest classes, a readiness to sacrifice for education, and a progressive spirit of inquiry and investigation." That, in no small measure, was due to Cordier mentoring Calvin and later guiding his views about education.

Bin Laden's Education

Now flip forward to today. Osama bin Laden, like John Calvin, was a shy, respectful student, brought up in the traditional faith of his family. Like John Calvin, as a teenager he had a charismatic and brilliant instructor, Abdallah Azzam, who influenced his life's direction and passion.

Just as Calvin studied the Bible, bin Laden read and interpreted the Quran. His faith deepened, and he became an outcast in his own community. His relationship with his radical Islam professor led him to conclude that Islam needed to launch jihad against those hostile to his Islamic views.

And just as Calvin's faith and emphasis on biblically based education for all helped shape Western civilization, so bin Laden was instrumental in altering our world, as became clear after Sept. 11, 2001.

Calvin and bin Laden radically differ, of course. Calvin became rooted in God's grace in Jesus Christ. Bin Laden's starting point became a god who sought vengeance. But Calvin and bin Laden have two things in common. First, masterful and passionate instructors shaped the direction of their lives. Second, as a result they both affected the course of history.

Teachers and professors make a difference. They may not teach students who will significantly alter culture or history.

An Extraordinary Mission Movement

The International Institute for Christian Studies and its Canadian affiliate, Christian Studies International, aim to bring Christ's presence and truth into university classrooms worldwide. Together the two organizations place about 45 professors in secular universities around the world. Most professors raise financial support to supplement meager or non-existent salaries. Christian Reformed World Missions has provided financial support for several individual professors.

Christian Reformed professors include Adrian and Wendy Helleman, who have taught in Russia and Africa. Roberta Greenwood teaches biology in China and also leads Bible studies and trains students to be small-group leaders. Presbyterian Tom Johnson is working to develop a modern Czech translation of the Heidelberg Catechism and make it widely available to enable the Czech people, perhaps the most secular in the world, to read about the only comfort we enjoy in life and in death.

Christian leaders like John Stott and Ravi Zacharias back IICS/CSI. Os Guinness says, "The IICS/CSI work is one of the most extraordinary mission movements in the world today. . . . It is a rare, far-sighted and remarkable work that is sowing the seeds of unimaginable significance."

—Harro Van Brummelen

Yet Christian instructors can and do help students become a faithful presence in the world for God, and to contribute to society and culture in positive—even if small—ways.

James Davison Hunter in his book *To Change the World* (Oxford University Press, 2010), questions whether today's Christians, individually or communally, can change the direction of culture. Yet, he says, we can be faithfully present to others through sacrificial love. We can be faithfully present in our tasks as parents, workers, and volunteers. We can be faithfully present in our spheres of influence. We can encourage harmony, beauty, joy, security, and well-being while resisting oppression, injustice, and corruption.

In *Culture Making* (IVP Books, 2008), Andy Crouch goes a step further. He shows that as Christians we often copy or consume culture around us: music, advertising, iPad technology, and so on. At other times we justly critique and even withdraw from culture. But, he adds, God also calls us to be artists and gardeners who make culture, people who think and do things that make the world more welcoming, more beautiful, more thrilling.

That means, I believe, that Christian instructors have a crucial role in making students more discerning about how culture shapes us and how we respond to culture. Teachers and professors can nurture students to be a faithful and loving presence wherever God places them. They can also help them make something of their world: preparing wholesome meals within a context of positive family life or understanding the roots of poverty and helping people address it in their local communities.

Like Cordier, passionate teachers and professors can help students use the richness of God's world to enable human life to flourish, even in a society marred by sin.

Christian schools and universities can do this explicitly based on a biblical framework. Last year I was involved in interviewing 75 grade-12 Christian school students and their teachers in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. We asked about their views of and involvement in culture, and how their school had shaped their attitudes and dreams. »

In many of the schools I said to myself, “I hope my grandchildren will attend a school like this!” Why? Because many students deeply cared about the issues facing our world and our communities. Many had linked their classroom learning with hands-on experiences in shelters for the homeless or support for single teenage mothers. Many realized that their overseas mission trips benefited mainly themselves, teaching them appreciation for other cultures and how people with few material goods live with more gratitude than North Americans.

Their Christian schools, the students said, helped them identify with cultural needs and issues. In the future they intended to make constructive and significant differences.

Many planned to enter vocations where they can make a difference for God, for instance, developing more wholesome marketing approaches in advertising or fighting child labor and human trafficking in the developing world.

Their Christian schools, the students said, helped them identify with cultural needs and issues. In the future they intended to make constructive and significant differences.

I am thankful for Christian schools and universities that develop a mind-set for Christian service in business, in medicine, and in political life, even if the ideals surpass eventual outcomes. But the many Christian teachers and professors teaching in public institutions can also help students ask basic

questions about life and culture. And at times they may be the only Christian influence on their students.

I work for an organization that places Christian professors in secular settings with little or no Christian influence. A professor in China teaches the history and philosophy of science within the framework of a Christian worldview. Professors in Cambodia teach ethical medical practices and sustainable ecological practices. A professor in the Czech Republic teaches courses on popular culture and how that relates to a biblical worldview. Professors in Nigeria have published a widely used handbook for teaching about HIV and AIDS, as well as student textbooks about Christian faith.

God uses these professors to lead some of their students to Christ. “My life has been totally changed,” said one Chinese student. “I have completely changed the way I think,” said a Russian student in the Czech Republic. This happens through work in classrooms, in discussions in professors’ homes, and in personal mentoring. It happens by teaching and demonstrating the implications of the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commandment, and by teaching students what Christ commanded us, both explicitly and implicitly.

Christian teachers and professors have a crucial God-given calling, no matter where they teach. Their influence makes a difference for students in classrooms throughout North America and the world. They may even be teaching the next John Calvin or turn around the life of a potential Osama bin Laden. As another school year begins, let’s give them the support they need. ■ **WEB Q’S**



Dr. Harro Van Brummelen is executive director of Christian Studies International and professor emeritus of education at Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia.

FAQs

Calling

Q I'm taking over my parents' business but am still thinking about going to college, even though I won't need a college degree to run the business. Is going to school a waste of time and money?

A This sounds like a happy situation, and I sense eager anticipation on your part as you look forward to the transition of taking over your parents' business.

Saving time and money by starting in the business right away sounds like an efficient way to go. You probably already know a lot about how things are run.

However, what it took for them to build the business may not look the same in the future. Marketing, to cite just one example, has migrated to the web and social networking sites from strictly print media. Dealing with the rapid and insistent rate of change is where college comes in. By attending college first, you will be equipping yourself with critical thinking skills as well as foundational business knowledge—essentials for remaining facile in the midst of unexpected challenges. Add in mastering effective communication skills, increasing your network of friends and acquaintances, plus learning to think across disciplines, you have a powerful case for education before work. That said, you might consider a range of options, from two- to four-year colleges and even certification programs.

Though the specifics are not clear, we can plan on a future where learning as a lifestyle will be the norm.

—Bonnie Speyers

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

We can plan on a future where learning as a lifestyle will be the norm.

Christian Morality

Q Where I work there is an unwritten rule that managers are better off if decisions are made by groups rather than by individuals. If a decision by an individual leads to unfortunate consequences, the individual bears a full share of responsibility. If a decision by a group leads to unfortunate consequences, the individual members bear smaller shares of responsibility. Is this unwritten rule in conformity with the principles of ethics?

A The view you are describing is called "ethical dilutionism": the greater the number of participants in wrongdoing, the smaller the degree of each participant's moral responsibility for the results of the wrongdoing. It is an unwritten rule in many organizations. Unfortunately, I know of no scriptural support for this principle, and I am aware of no professional ethicists who endorse it.

In some situations this view is plainly counterintuitive. For example, say that two assassins acting independently fire at a public figure from opposite sides of a crowd. The bullets strike her simultaneously, and either bullet would have killed her. Claiming that the responsibility of each assassin is reduced by the fortuitous presence of the other is not plausible.

Even in situations where people are acting cooperatively, the principle appears false. Two boys are attempting to vandalize church property. Each throws a rock at a window, and the rocks strike the window simultaneously. Can one reasonably argue that their responsibility is diluted because they acted together? That seems dubious.

Sometimes the decision is made to split the burden of making restitution among the

participants. The two boys might each pay half the cost of replacing the window, and that might seem a fair way to resolve the problem. But we would be mistaken to conclude that each boy is less responsible for the broken window than if he had broken it single-handedly.

The same is true of managers. A manager is responsible for what he or she does, and this is true (other things being equal) irrespective of whether others are acting in like manner. One can attempt to make excuses by an appeal to ethical dilutionism, whether to friends or while standing before the pearly gates, but that will probably be an exercise in futility.

—Greg Mellema

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

educated enough on the topic to make that kind of decision.

But I am suggesting that we as a church need to be openminded. We need to come together as a community and, with humility and much prayer, examine the fresh scholarship, stories, and perspectives that God has made available to us. That way we can be certain our teaching, preaching, and care regarding LGBT persons is in line with God's will as best as we understand it.

I know that an honest examination of homosexuality requires time, patience, and a willingness to risk altering beliefs and ideas we have grown up with.

I have found myself on a journey as I know and love my sister and her partner. I feel less sure of my convictions and find myself wrestling deeply with what I believe about God. It has been a beautiful and wonderful experience, and I

believe my faith is much better off because of it.

I know I am not the only member of the CRC walking through this. Some are themselves LGBT, while many others care deeply for someone who is. We need wisdom and guidance from a church that we know is leading us with an open mind and an open heart.

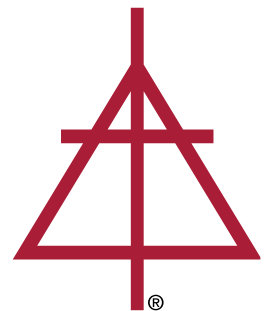
It may very well be that after a fresh examination, the church decides nothing needs to change. But denying the CRC an opportunity to study, think, and pray about such a crucial issue as a community denies all of us the chance to continue reforming. And in the end, that will only hamper our witness as we speak to the world, and especially young adults, about homosexuality. ■

Associate *Banner* Editor

The Banner, the monthly magazine of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), is seeking an **Associate Editor**. Under the direction of the *Banner* editor, the associate editor will assume responsibility for planning, scheduling, and doing substantive editing of all *Banner* articles in both web and print formats and providing support for and oversight of day-to-day *Banner* functions.

The successful candidate will have an understanding of the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions, and knowledge of the CRC and its membership. Excellent editing skills and the ability to plan for, solicit, and evaluate articles are essential to this position. A bachelor's degree in a related field and four years editing experience are required.

For a detailed job description or to apply, visit www.crcna.org, then *About the CRC* and *Career Opportunities*. For consideration, complete an online application with resume and a cover letter by **September 16, 2011**.



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Denominational and Classical Announcements

AVAILABLE FOR CALL

Gateway Community CRC is pleased to announce that **REV. RANDY MEYERS** is available for call. He may be reached at randyandlynae@yahoo.com

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **MARK VAN DRUNEN** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS AB SOUTH & SASK. will meet in regular session on Friday Oct. 28, 2011 at Bethel CRC in Saskatoon. All agenda items should be sent to Stated Clerk, Al Brander at clerkabss@gmail.com or to 1203 High View Point, High River, AB. T1V 1N9.

CLASSIS GEORGETOWN will hold its September 2011 meeting at the Ridgewood Christian Reformed Church, located at 1571 Baldwin Street, Jenison, Michigan. The meeting will begin at 8:30 am.

Meetings of Classis CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, September 22 at Drenthe CRC at 2:00 pm. Agenda deadline is August 11.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 50th Anniversary

CALVARY CRC OF EDINA, MN will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on October 9, 2011 with a day long celebration including a church service led by Pastor John Bylsma, catered lunch with program and a Festival of Music directed by Pastor Randy Engle at our former site in Bloomington. All friends and former members are encouraged to attend and RSVP. For more information visit www.calvarycrc.net or call the church office at 952-831-6264.

Church's 25th Anniversary

COMMUNITY CRC, in Wyoming, MI is joyfully celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Dave Struyk. We invite all friends and former members to join us for an open house Oct 8 from 1-4pm and a worship service Oct 9 @ 10 am."

Announcements

Retirement

REV. RICK'S RETIRING! Join us at Pullman CRC on Sept 25 at 3pm for a worship service praising God for Rev. Richard Williams' 30+ years of ministry. info.at.pullmanrc.org

Birthdays

100th Birthday

PETER BUTEYN of 280 40th St, Rm 39, Holland MI 49423 will celebrate his 100th birthday on Sept 19. His family praises God for his life and the blessing he has been to us.

96th BIRTHDAY

BERT HOVENKAMP 300 White Oak Apt. 64, Lawton, MI 49065, formerly of Decatur, MI celebrates his 96th Birthday on Sept 26. "Great is they Faithfulness"

95th Birthday

MELVIN BOONSTRA will celebrate his 95th birthday on Sunday, September 25. There will be an Open House from 1 to 4 PM at the Third CRC of Zeeland (corner of State and Central). He and his children invite his many friends to join in honoring him on that day.

HERMAN SCHRIPEMA 979 Andover Ct. SE, Kentwood, MI 49508, Sept. 28. Your wife Frances, children Herm & Nancy, Linda & Henry Visscher, Faye Walburg, 2 grandchildren & 5 great-grandchildren wish you a Blessed 95th Birthday!

90th Birthday

ELLA (HUIZENGA) TAYLOR 145 Columbia Ave. Room 1580A, Holland, MI 49423. Long time member of 1st CRC of Cicero, celebrates 90 years of love, laughter and family on September 18. Happy Birthday from your brothers and sisters, 14 nieces and nephews, 33 great nieces and nephews and 18 great-great nieces and nephews.

85th Birthday

TENA WULFSEN 3411 Brookview Ct, Hudsonville, MI 49426 celebrates her 85th birthday on September 6. We thank God for you. We all love you, your family.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

VERHOEVEN Hank and Lorraine (Brouwer) of 9909 Belfair St in Bellflower, CA will celebrate their anniversary at home on September 10, with their children (5), grandchildren (10) and great grandchildren (5). To God be the glory!

65th Anniversary


SLAGTER John and Eleanor (Wiersma), will celebrate their 65th anniversary Sept. 12 and John's 89th birthday Sept. 9. Celebrating God's faithfulness to our parents are children: Rick Slagter, Jerry and Barb Andreas, 5 grandchildren & 6 great-grandchildren. Send cards to their new address; 2000 32nd. St. SE, Box 407, GR, MI 49508

60th Anniversary

ROOY Rev. Sidney and Mae celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 15, 2011. Children and grandchildren: Dianne and Duane Zandstra (Anita, Daniel, Carla, and Laura); David (in heaven); Paul and Mary (David and Michelle); Gayle and Ken Ritsema (Jeanette, Andrew, Audrey, and Esther); one great-grandchild, Samuel Enriquez. We give thanks for your many years of love and faithful service; you have been a great blessing to many.

PLAN FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK


NOVEMBER 13-19



In response to Synod 2005 recommendations regarding restorative justice, Crossroad Bible Institute offers a **free restorative justice tool kit** for your church at www.cbi.fm.

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VAN WINKLE, Don & Darlene (Nelson) 17725 Canehill Ave. Bellflower, CA 90706 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 14th. Children: Allen & Vickie (Van Winkle) Fien, Larry & Karen (Van Winkle) Milner, Rick & Linda (Van Winkle) Milner, 8 grandchildren & 7 great grand-children. We are so grateful for the Lords Blessings.

50th Anniversary

UITERMARKT Dorell and Elizabeth (Steenhoek) 511 Madison St. Pella, Iowa 50219 September 14. Children David and Marylynn (Kyle & Kelsey) Wheaton, IL. James, North Halden, NJ. Mark and Terri, Ann Arbor, MI

ZYLSTRA Gerrit & Alida (Wynbelt) Caledonia, MI will celebrate their 50th anniversary Sept 1 with their children Sandra & Tony Vroon (Hanna, Anthony, Josh, Emily, Will), David & Liesl (Jack, Sarah), Jim & Vickie (Nate, Sam, Drew).

Obituaries

ACHTERHOF, Kenneth J, age 65, passed away peacefully at his home in South Riding, Virginia on May 31, 2011 after a long battle with emphysema. He was born on October 27, 1945 in Chicago, Illinois. He is survived by his wife of 43 years Donna (Ryckbost), children Kristy Achterhof, Shari (Craig) Dobyns, Cindy (Chad) Nykamp, six grandchildren, and his brother James Achterhof.

BOTTS Norene (Kuiper) Age 88, lived a life of praise to God. She is survived by her children: Jim & Judy Botts, Bill & Catherine Botts, Suki & Jim Brassler, Ruthie & Henry Eising, Kathy (Katch) Walcott, 13 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren. We are thankful for her example of Christian love and servanthood.

JORDAN, Doris M. (Deur) age 84, of Fremont, MI, went to her eternal home on June 9, 2011. She is survived by her husband, Maxwell L. Jordan and children: Carol (David) Jonkman, Bob (Susanne) Jordan, Janice (Rick) Pezoldt, 10 grandchildren & 3 great-grandchildren.

KAMSTRA, Charlotte 90, on June 27, 2011, in Phoenix, Arizona. Survived by loving husband, Peter, children Bill, Peter J., and Charlotte Ann (Tom) Bakker. Grandchildren Sarah (Jon) Madderom and Jonathan (Katie) Bakker; great-grandchildren Samantha and Joshua Madderom, and Tommy Bakker.

KORTLEVER, Jane (nee Texer); age 83 of Holland, MI; went to be with her Lord on June 1, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband Case in 2009; her parents and several siblings. She will be missed by her children, Donna (John) Van Noord of San Francisco, CA; Mary (Dean) Duistermars of Holland, MI; and Judy (Rob) Wilson of Zeeland, MI, nine grandchildren, and 18 great grandchildren. She is also survived by her siblings Henry (Marion) Texer, Alice Texer, Bertha Feltenbarger, Thessa Zylstra, Fran (Al) Dekker of the Grand Rapids area, and John (Virginia) Texer of Colorado. She will also be missed by several nieces and nephews. Thanks be to God for giving us a wonderful Christian mother.

NAGELKIRK, Hazel aged 83; July 15, 2011; Zeeland, MI; She will be missed by Gord, her husband of 64 years; children, Karen (Gord) Van Haitisma, Cal (Beth) Nagelkirk, and Rick (Beth) Nagelkirk; 7 grandchildren; 5 great grandchildren.

SYTSMA, JACOB age 94; May 29, 2011; Friendship, WI, formerly of Evergreen Park, IL. Dear husband of the late Martha (Calloway) and the late Jeanette (Voss). Survived by sons: David (Vivian) Sytsma and Russel (Karla) Sytsma, step-children: George (the late Patricia) Voss, Carol (Jerry) DeHoog and Nancy (Rick) Hollingsworth, 16 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, and other family and friends.

Church Positions Announcements

WORSHIP COORDINATOR The Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church is searching for an innovative, creative Worship Coordinator for our 11:15 Contemporary service. A position description and desired qualifications for the applicant along with contact information can be found at our website at aacrc.org. Please check it out. 734-665-0105

PASTOR: Covenant CRC, Barrie, ON is seeking a full time pastor who is committed to sound Biblical preaching and has a servant's heart. We are a traditional and conservative church seeking to grow spiritually and to reach out to our community. Prospective ministers should contact the search committee at barcovcrrc@gmail.com

PASTOR: First CRC in Hanford is a multigenerational church in the Central Valley of California seeking a full time pastor as Director of Congregational life. Candidate will serve as Co-Pastor alongside currently filled position, Director of Public Ministry. Candidates must be ordained and committed to biblical teaching and preaching. He should possess exceptional relationship, communication, and leadership abilities and a love for training and mentoring volunteer leaders and youth. For more info or to submit resumes with letter of interest, please email: callingcommittee@groups.live.com

LAKESIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH, located near southeast Grand Rapids, is seeking a pastor to lead and help grow our congregation. Please send inquiries to jr23@calvin.edu. Website: www.lakesidecommunity.org

PASTOR: Champlain Valley CRC is seeking a full time Pastor to lead our congregation. We are a congregation of 40 families located in beautiful Vermont, seeking to share Christ's love and salvation with each other and our neighbors. For more information, or to submit a resume contact Ron Telgen at 802-388-2701, ttelgen@myfairpoint.net or Eric Visser at 802-475-3026, elvisser@gmavt.net



CALVIN College

PRESIDENT CALVIN COLLEGE Grand Rapids, MI

The Board of Trustees of Calvin College invites nominations and expressions of interest for the position of president.

Our vision:

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Calvin College is an academically excellent, distinctively Christian comprehensive liberal arts college located in Grand Rapids, Mich. The college, which began in 1876 with just seven students, now serves a population of more than 3,900 students, representing every U.S. state, many Canadian provinces and more than 50 countries worldwide. The college offers more than 100 majors and programs and is internationally recognized as a center for faith-centered teaching and scholarship. Calvin faculty hold teaching as their top priority and engage students in cutting-edge research and scholarship. Calvin also has a vital role in the production and evaluation of knowledge, in doing research for the church and the broader community, and in influencing the world of ideas and practices through the intellectual work of the college. The college maintains a strong connection to both the local and global community and has been honored as a national leader for its work both inside and outside the classroom.

Desired qualifications:

The ideal candidate for the ninth president of Calvin College should be prepared to provide academic, spiritual and institutional leadership. As the college's leader, the president must be committed to intellectual excellence and rigor, have appropriate academic credentials, and a significant track record of visionary and collaborative leadership. The president must demonstrate a deep and apparent faith in Jesus Christ, an embrace of Reformed theology and a commitment to the church. The president must provide leadership that sustains the health of the college, including an ability to strategically allocate financial resources and develop relationships and partnerships that support the work of the college.

For a full position description and application info or to nominate someone, visit:

www.calvin.edu/president/search

VANANDEL, Angeline (Huisingh); age 92; July 1, 2011; Lynden, WA. Preceded in death by her husband, Jim; granddaughter, Joan; great granddaughter, Quincie; survived by her children: Florine (Gord) Buys, Glen (Gloria), Dennis (Ruth), Doug (Norene); 12 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; in-laws: Caroline Huisingh, Betty Meenk, Gerrit (Marie) Van Anandel.

VAN DUYN, Helen age 95; formerly of Colton SD went peacefully to her heavenly home on July 7, 2011. She is survived by her children: Loren (Judi), Keith (Shirley), Ivan (Bonnie) and Lois (Roger), 13 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren, brother Alvin Meyer, sister Adeline Kallemyn, sisters-in-law Dena Meyer, Kathryn Meyer, Esther Anderson, brother-in-law Adolph Van Duyn. Preceded in death by her husband Clarence, her parents, brothers George, William, Henry, Peter and sisters Gladys, Wilhelmina.

WORDHOUSE, Franklin Jay, Age 68; July 13, 2011; 2393 Deer Trail Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505; He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Irene; sons, John (Deb) and David (Jon); 13 grandchildren.

ZYLSTRA Irvin Jay; age 76, July 14, 2011; 3016 Kay Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Joan (Johnson) Zylstra; children: Tom Zylstra, Jane Scharps, Joel (Linda) Zylstra, Sue (Chris) Huettig; grandchildren: Ryan (Mary Beth) Scharps, Kyle Scharps, Travis Scharps, Elyn Zylstra, Leah Zylstra, Jack Zylstra, Tyler Huettig, Trevor Huettig; sister-in-law: Esther Zylstra; sister-in-law and brother-in-law: Margy and Richard Ribbens.

Employment

BETHEL CRC (Lansing, IL) seeks an ordained part-time Minister of Pastoral Care and a full-time ordained Associate Pastor with a heart and passion to grow and disciple the segment of the congregation and community often referred to as the "Millennial Generation." For more info on these exciting positions email Pastorcandidates@gmail.com.

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HELP WANTED A Christian-based home for moderate developmentally disabled adults is looking for a live-in caretaker. Must be dedicated, reliable and mature. Experience required. Serious applicants only. Send resume to 423 Stimson St., Cadillac, MI 49601.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH LEADER Lakeside Community Church is seeking an energetic and experienced Youth Leader for developing, promoting, and operating our high school youth ministry programs. www.lakesidecommunity.org 616-868-6402

NURSING HOME ADMINISTRATOR Christian Skilled Nursing Home Company searching for an experienced licensed Skilled Nursing Home Administrator in Southern Illinois and Springfield, IL. Send resume in confidence to skaggsitc@embarqmail.com

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SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR Faith-based non-profit seeks coordinator to manage the sponsorship programs of Worldwide Christian Schools. Four-year degree or equivalent required, five years of experience managing program communications and objectives preferred. Learn more at wwcs.org/employment.

TORONTO DISTRICT CHRISTIAN High School, serving 400+ students in Grades 9-12 in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada, seeks

an innovative, seasoned Principal. He or she will be a practising Christian, lifelong learner, collaborative mentor, and astute administrator and communicator who loves young people and appreciates diversity. A master's degree in Educational Administration (or equivalent) is expected, along with experience in both teaching and administration at the secondary school level. Please visit www.tdchristian.ca/ search for more detailed information.

UNITY CHRISTIAN (MI) High School, with the announced retirement of current Principal Jack Postma effective June 2012, is searching for Principal to lead its dynamic high school community beginning July 2012. She or he will be a passionate follower of Jesus Christ, a leader, and a communicator who loves young people and seeks to develop them as followers of Jesus through their Christian education. A Masters Degree in Educational Leadership (or equivalent) is expected along with experience in teaching and administration. Unity serves 700 students in grades 9-12 in central western Michigan. Confidentially email unity@unitychristian.org for more information or confidentially call Dave Baatenburg, Search Committee Chair at work (616)454-4401 x222, or cell (616) 485-6196. School number is 616-669-1820.

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CONDO FOR RENT Naples, FL, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths and pool, avail. Jan-Mar, 2012. Email pinkhippo2@yahoo.com or call 708-836-1130.

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

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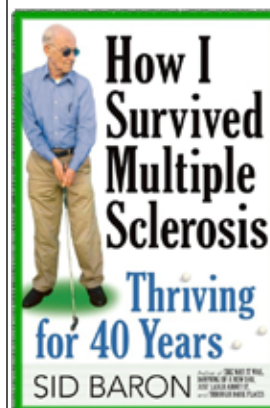
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Punch Lines

What has made you smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to editorial@thebanner.org. Thanks!

This past spring our 3-year-old son, Benjamin, planted flowers for the first time. We gave him marigolds, since they are fool-proof. He loved to see how "his" garden was growing and would often check on the marigolds. One day, as he was showing his cousins the flowers, I overheard him exclaim, "Look at my miracles!"

—Kathy DeKoter

We have a "swap shed" just outside of town, where people can donate or find good clothing and other items, often like new. One Sunday I saw my little 5-year-old friend sitting in church, wearing the most beautiful dress. Afterward I said to her, "Oh, I do like your pretty dress!"

She piped up, "Me too. My mom got it at the dump!"

—Tina Maris

I was visiting my grandchild Sam in Chicago, who is 7 years old. We were having a conversation when he came up with a rather profound statement. I looked at him and said, "Sam, you're no dummy!"

He retorted, "Who said I was?!"

—Robert Alles

On a spring break trip to Williamsburg, Va., we enjoyed a ride in a carriage pulled by two horses. Our 7-year-old, who loves horses, was curious when she learned the horses' names were Matthew and Mark. After the ride she approached the horses and asked them, "Do you have any brothers named Luke and John?"

—Thad and Sarah Roelofs

I was taking my 6-year-old daughter to GEMS one Wednesday evening. As we entered the church my daughter (who reads everything she sees) noticed a sign on a table: "Reserved for Seniors."

She turned to me with a surprised look and whispered, "Dad, that table is reserved for SINNERS!"

—Shawn Meeuwenberg

A cop pulls over a car full of nuns. The cop says, "Sister, the speed limit on this highway is 55 mph. Why are you going so slow?"

The sister replies, "I saw a lot of signs that said 41, not 55."

"Sister, that's the name of the highway, not the speed limit."

"Silly me," the embarrassed nun says. "Thanks for letting me know. I'll be more careful."

But then the cop glances in the backseat, where the other nuns are quaking with fear. He asks, "Excuse me, Sister, what's wrong with your friends?"

"Oh," she says, "We just got off Highway 101."

—Angela Taylor Perry

Two elderly men who hadn't seen each other for some time met at the receptionist's desk in a doctor's office. One asked his friend, "Are you coming or going?"

The other replied, "If I knew that, I wouldn't be here."

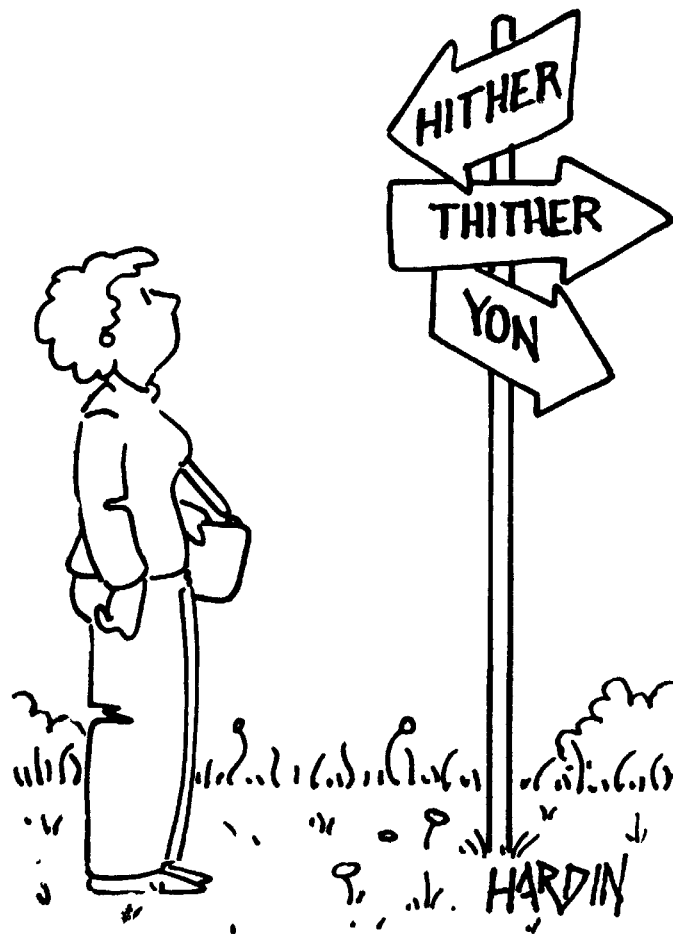
—George Hoeksema

A young man hired by a large department store reported to work. The manager greeted him with a smile, handed him a broom, and said, "Your first job will be to sweep out the store."

"But," the young man said, "I'm a college graduate."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know that," said the manager. "Give me the broom, and I'll show you how it's done."

—Dick Bylsma



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