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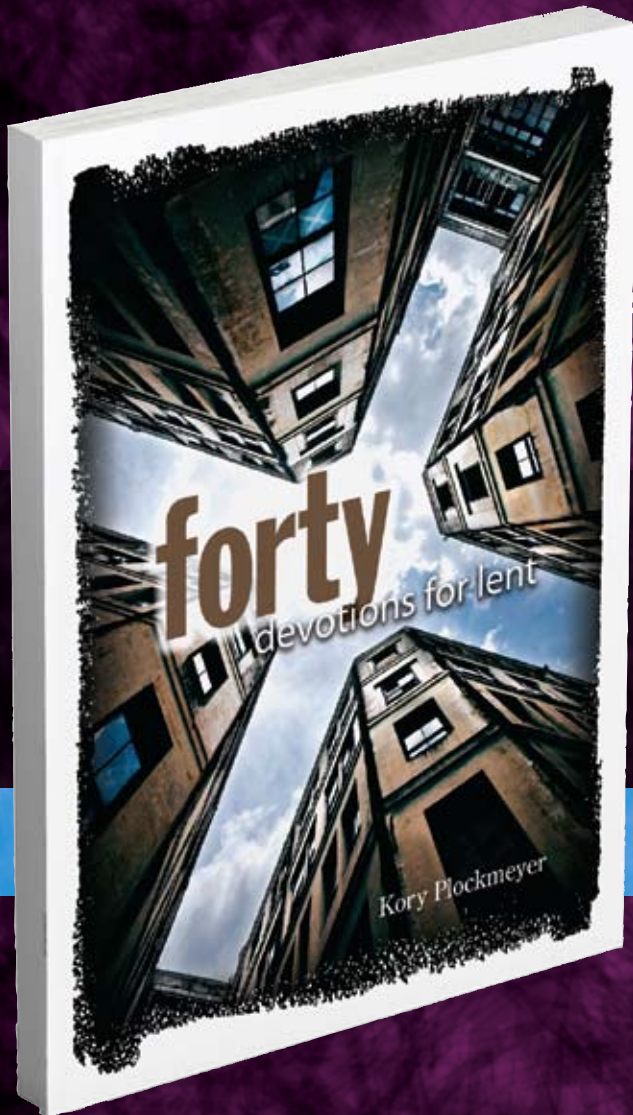
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Nothing to Write About

FOR DECADES THE DE MOORS, SPREAD OVERTWO, SOMETIMES THREE, CONTINENTS, have kept in touch by a monthly newsletter. My sister, Doris, serves as its “mother hen.” This newsletter is a wonderful thing. Because of it we have a concise record of all the important family happenings over all those years. We are able to preserve the voice of a generation now departed, as well as to welcome new ones.

It's easier to read what others wrote than to contribute to the newsletter myself. I'm blessed with an understanding spouse who does her share without complaint but needs to put my feet to the fire every other month so I'll do mine. It's hard for me, because I find it a snore to write up what has already been. That's my only excuse—short of falling back on the doctrine of total depravity.

When there's good grist for the mill it's easier to crawl behind the keyboard than when there really isn't anything to report. Yet it's those gaps in the record that I've come to view as a great blessing: months when there is nothing to write about.

Maybe we need to discipline ourselves to take a video or two of perfectly normal, ordinary days because those are so very hard to remember. For example, I can still recite all the grisly details of how I crash-dived off the springboard and broke my collarbone in grade 11. What I cannot

And that's where
we spend most
of our time—in
the blessedly
ordinary time
that never sticks
in memory.

for the life of me remember is what everyday life was like in the weeks and months around that event. And that's where we spend most of our time—in the blessedly ordinary time that never sticks in memory.

Jesus' life on earth was no different. The edges—his birth, his few years of public ministry—are recorded extensively in living multidimensional color (four gospel accounts plus a bunch of epistles). But about the bulk of his life on this planet there's nary a word, except for one story of getting lost as a “tweener.” The longest stretch, from ages 12 to 30, gets exactly one single verse in one gospel (Luke 2:52).

What that one verse does tell us is that during all that time, Jesus grew in body, mind, and relationships. Good growth is slow and steady. It's remarkably unremarkable, and therefore unmemorable.

When I conducted family visits in my first congregation, my favorite lead question was: So is it true in your life what the old hymn says, that “every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before”?

The honest congregants said that it was more like a roller coaster: better some days, worse others. I liked that honesty. But when I asked, “How about over the last ten or twenty years—has your relationship with the Lord improved?” I'd invariably get a positive response. Spiritual growth takes a long time. Usually it is so slow that we don't really notice. One does not report in a monthly family newsletter that one grew. Yet it may be much more important than the fact that Aunt Martha took a tumble and hurt her knee.

Jesus told a wonderful parable about growth: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matt. 13:33). The growth of God's kingdom in this world and in our hearts and lives may be invisible. But that makes it no less real and significant.

In a society where we crave thrills like we crave chocolate, it's good to know that what really, really counts in our lives may, in fact, be nothing to write home about. ■



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A Theology of Transition

TRANSITIONS are a fact of life in the church of Jesus. There's the transition from one pastor to another, from Sunday worship to the workaday world, from the printed page to projection on a screen, from whatever was to whatever will be.

Helping churches and pastors negotiate their transitions makes up a great deal of our work in Pastor-Church Relations. One of our most hopeful efforts is the work of specialized transition ministers who assist churches as they navigate the transition between one pastor's tenure and the next. These specialized ministers can help a church own the past, be clear about the present, and think intentionally about the future.

What if we considered times of transition as more than merely "in between" times? What if we recognized transitions as especially strategic and noteworthy occasions when God chooses to make

himself known? How might this impact a pastor in transition, a congregation in transition, a denominational leadership cluster in transition?

The story of Jacob offers a lovely paradigm. The most memorable and powerful moments of God intruding into Jacob's life occur when Jacob is on the move, experiencing major upheavals in his life. Jacob's dream, in which he sees that stairway to heaven with angels ascending and descending and the Lord God speaking to him, occurs when he is fleeing the land of promise and heading toward his Uncle Laban's home for refuge. Utterly alone, Jacob is at an "in between" place. And God there makes himself known powerfully and gracefully.

During another pivotal moment in Jacob's life, he is confronted by a stranger in the night, with whom he wrestles. Once again, he experiences the power and grace of God and his own frailty when he is in transition—this time he's fleeing Laban and is about to come face

to face with Esau. But in his fear, Jacob is surprised to come face to face (Peniel) with God first!

Transition times encourage us to keep our eyes open to what God is doing here and now, as well as what God has done before and what God will do next. "Making all things new" is the transitional context that informs, anchors, and enriches every transitional season. Transitions call for testimony: "Surely, the Lord is in this place!" ■



Rev. Cecil van Niejenhuis is pastor-congregation consultant with the Pastor-Church Relations office of the CRCNA.



Our worst
upheavals can
yield a treasure
we could never
have imagined.

— MARGARET SILF

Playing by the Rules

OPINION



Petitions have no place in the church of Christ.

IN 2009 our denomination's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee recommended to synod that we adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession. To give the churches adequate time to respond to this recommendation and to study and discuss the confession, the committee also recommended that synod make a final decision by 2012. In response to this recommendation, for the past three years individuals, church councils, and classes have discussed the Belhar Confession, and articles have been written about it in various publications.

Recently I received an email stating that all CRC officebearers could sign an online petition informing Synod 2012 that they could not “formally subscribe to the Belhar Confession as a rule for life and doctrine.” The email also encouraged all recipients to “pass the word on to others. Each one reach two or more.” The organizers of this effort hope to secure 200 signatures by June 1, 2012, and will present the petition to the synodical advisory committee “that is assigned the responsibility of making the recommendation to synod itself.”

This is not the first petition directed to synod. Another was circulated before

Synod 2007 in response to an overture on undocumented workers—an overture considered by the advisory committee of which I was a member.

Though petitions are fairly common in the secular world, they have no place in the church of Christ as we seek to make decisions on a variety of matters. Instead, individuals, church councils, and classes have agreed to express their perspectives through overtures and communications to synod. It's disturbing that some resort to petitions instead of honoring these church-orderly processes.

Even more disturbing is the role that denominational leaders play in these efforts. The 2007 petition was written, signed, and circulated by a Calvin Seminary professor and also signed by the head of one of our denominational agencies. The email I recently received was sent by a Calvin Seminary professor, and he and an emeritus seminary professor signed the petition.

Some encouraged the 2007 synodical advisory committee to meet with the author of the petition. It didn't, and its officers did not distribute the petition to its members or to the synodical delegates. Hopefully the 2012 advisory committee that formulates a recommendation on the Belhar Confession will do the same with this current petition. ■



George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church and a regular contributor to *The Banner's* “Frequently Asked Questions” column.

LE



Is Santa Real?

Regarding “Why I Believe in Santa Claus” (December 2011): We told our sons the truth from the beginning: God is real; Santa is a stranger in a costume. When he was five years old our oldest said, “I’m sure glad Santa’s not real. Nobody would get any presents.”

“Why not?”

“Mom, everybody sins.”

Thank you, Jesus, for giving us what we could never deserve!

—*Betsy VanZytveld*
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Together Doing More

Thank you for your detailed ministry shares report this year (December 2011). I was moved to tears by the story of Maimuna's restaurant (“Where to Eat in Kwikuba”), as I often am by regular *Banner* reporting on CRWRC and BGTMI throughout the year. I am proud to be part of a church that collects and uses ministry share the way we do, and humbled to see how God multiplies our efforts throughout the world.

—*Elizabeth Knighton*
Seattle, Wash.

LETTERS

Young Adult Exodus

I was saddened to read that the Roels feel that there is in the CRC an unofficial anti-intellectualism driving out educated young people (“Evolution and the Young Adult Exodus,” December 2011). They cite the evolution issue as a microcosm of this problem.

At least as often I hear the opposite—that we are *too* intellectual. So we need diluted doctrine, lite worship, and emotional entertainment to soothe our young people into staying with us.

Here’s my plea to the Roels: Don’t give up on us. We make mistakes, but we are not anti-intellectual. We are not hostile to scholarship. Use your educated gifts faithfully, patiently, and gently to exegete for us the universe—that beautiful book which our Belgic Confession says is the first means by which we know God.

—*Syl Gerritsma*
St. Catharines, Ontario

I have sat in church classrooms with youth leaders leading Bible studies who misinterpret and misquote to make the Bible more comfortable. Well-meaning volunteers who need guidance themselves should not have to be accountable to giving youth guidance by themselves.

Perhaps to keep young adults in our churches we should give them a better foundation and more discipleship before we send them off to secular universities and colleges. Maybe then they will be able to resist temptations and attacks on their faith and beliefs by professors and peers, and thus return to the CRC as young adults.

—*Erin Couperus*
Brighton, Ontario

I believe that young people are not moving away from the CRC because of fundamentalist views of Scripture but because we are not demonstrating to our children a belief in an all-powerful God. Jesus calls his followers to leave everything behind, including our god of learning and intellect (this does not mean to cease learning, but to embrace it within the context of God’s call on our life). When we show our children a life of commitment first to Christ, then to whatever follows, God will breathe life into his church.

—*Tim Van Hoffen*
Fenwick, Ontario

Climate Change

I am heartened that my church’s publication takes this global concern seriously (“Global Warning(s), November 2011). Scientific facts aside, can we honestly say that we don’t see the piles of garbage and dirty air our excessive living have produced? When glacial change is noticeable in one lifetime, we as Christians should be alarmed. If the result of all this *getting* is making our planet sick, is that not an indication of where our hearts lie?

I want to discuss these things in church. I don’t want to talk so much of heaven that I am of no earthly good.

—*Carmen Los*
Edmonton, Alberta

Kudos to Brian Martin for his thoughtful article on our environment. There is nothing wrong with trying to better our environment and protect creation, whether you believe in global warming or not. I, along with my solar panels and Chevy Volt, stand behind him!

—*Barbara Kamps*
Placitas, New Mexico

Why Play Favorites?

Thanks for your editorial (“Why Play Favorites?” November 2011). Colossians 1 says that we have been brought into the kingdom of the beloved Son. Dare we acknowledge that in the kingdom we are all called to a certain kind of politics that flows directly from the character of our King? Our King calls us to follow him out of the politics of self-interest and entitlement that are corrupting democracies in Canada, the United States, and around the world.

—*John Luth*
St. Albert, Alberta

Biblical Interpretation

The problem with the proposition for biblical interpretation forwarded by Rev. Vos and others (“How Should We Read the Bible,” November 2011) is not the Genome Project. It is not geology or the fossil record. It is not biochemistry, physics, biology, or anything else in God’s natural revelation. The problem lies in interpreting special revelation (the Bible) via natural revelation as though it can supersede the special revelation. The Bible must always trump a human interpretation of natural revelation, since the Bible is the very Word of God and human interpretations are simply human interpretations.

—*Ross van Bostelen*
Edson, Alberta



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Daughter of Slain Officer Becomes Police Chaplain

When Sue Kuipers became a police chaplain with the Hayward (Calif.) Police Department, she knew firsthand the crises that face officers.

Kuipers's father, a 20-year retiree from the Navy, was a community service officer with the Hayward Police Department in the 1970s.

"Two days after my 17th birthday, June 29, 1974, he was attacked and killed by a prisoner attempting to escape," said Kuipers.

Kuipers, who is director of youth and education at Christ's Community Christian Reformed Church in Hayward, found out



Chaplain Sue Kuipers serves officers like Lt. Larry Vargas, who is retiring after 30 years with the department.

by a car, sit beside a woman whose boyfriend had just died from an overdose, and more.

While police departments are often considered "closed communities," that has not been Kuipers's experience.

"On the day I became 'official' my supervising lieutenant said, 'Normally I welcome people to the HPD family,' but for you I'm saying 'Welcome home,'" said Kuipers.



—Heidi Wicker

after her ordination as a ministry associate that Hayward's police department didn't have a chaplain.

Nearly a year into the job, she has had the opportunity to pray with an officer through the challenges of his job, hold a child who witnessed her brother being hit

Iowa Campus Ministry Joins Skunk River Cleanup

Justin Struik, leader of the Christian Reformed campus ministry Areopagus at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, has joined biology professor Jim Colbert in cleaning up Skunk River.

"We wanted to do something, a service activity, that would communicate that God is at work restoring creation," Struik said.

For two weekends last fall, five members of the Areopagus campus ministry joined Colbert and his team as they waded through the river, two-and-a-half miles at a time.

"I got really excited about the project," Struik said. "I feel it fits well into our mission and into our theology."

—Kate Padilla



Members of Areopagus, the CRC campus ministry at Iowa State, help clean up Skunk River.

ERIN MAGNUSON-STRUJK

BARB VANDER HAAK



A sampling of the many hand-knit items donated to the Mitten-Plus Drive in 2011.

Michigan Mitten Drive Makes Milestone

During the 28th annual Mitten-Plus Drive in Holland, Mich., more than a dozen participating Christian Reformed churches collected 2,374 handmade and store-bought winter items—from pairs of mittens to hats and sweaters—easily beating the previous record by over 300 items.

Barb Vander Haak, from Graafschap (Mich.) CRC, coordinates the drive each year and has knitted for the cause since its inception.

As the donations came in, “I was totally amazed,” she said. “We don’t ask why. We just say thank you.”

Many of the items were handmade by the church’s weekly knitting group.

Vander Haak and 10 other volunteers enjoyed counting, sorting, and packing the winter wear while admiring the array of patterns and designs.

The items were then distributed to twelve charities in West Michigan, as well as Roseland Ministries in Chicago. 

—Susan Vanden Berg

British Columbia Church Art Inspired by 15th-Century Pulpit

Flleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia, has two new murals that remind worshippers of God’s constancy and faithfulness.

The two sections, each more than 50 feet long, form a circular continuum around the worship space. They show the passing seasons, representing on one side the natural landscape; the other, cultivated land with green fields, fruit orchards, and buildings.

The murals are the result of two years of work by five visual artists, all members of the congregation: Laurel Vlieg, Chris



Gerry Dykstra adds final touches to the mural.

Kasteel, Pam DeJong, Gerry Dykstra, and Rev. Albert Westerhuis, one of the church’s pastors.

Once they established the overall theme, the artists chose their sections to work on. “Amazingly, in the almost two years of the project we never had any arguments,” says Dykstra.

A 15th-century church pulpit in Bolsward, Friesland, the Netherlands, with four wooden panels representing the seasons, inspired the artwork. Dykstra visited the church many years ago and dreamed of bringing those images together in a work of art for a present generation.

—Jenny deGroot

‘You Add. God Multiplies.’

While most members of the Christian Reformed Church have heard the term “ministry shares,” a 2010 survey showed that 70 percent of 2,500 respondents said they did not really understand it.


So the CRC has launched a campaign titled “You Add. God Multiplies.” Synod 2009 (the CRC’s annual leadership meeting) asked the denomination “to put some effort into really telling the story of ministry that takes place as a result of these gifts,” said Peter Harkema, until recently the director of denominational advancement. Synod approved spending of up to 1 percent of ministry share to do that. For fiscal year 2011, that was \$257,000.

The result is a packet for churches that includes a bulletin insert, posters, and a video.

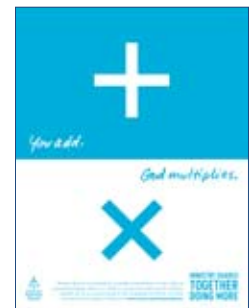
The complete cost of the campaign, which also includes a website of resources and tools, came to right around \$250,000, said John Bolt, the denomination’s director of finance and administration.

The current ministry-share recommendation is \$316.76 per year for each confessing member age 18 and older. If each church paid their full ministry shares, revenue would likely total just over \$41 million, Bolt said.

For calendar year 2010, 63 percent was collected, about \$25 million.

“While we give them a suggested amount, we really want them to be excited about contributing in support of ministry,” Bolt said. “Ministry shares enable everybody to participate.” 

—Melissa Holtrop





Truckloads of goods get moved from Sheldon, Iowa, to Pharr, Texas.

Iowa Town Broadens Community to Include Texas Town

In the past five years, Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon, Iowa, has redefined the boundaries of their community to include not only their whole town but also the town of Pharr, Texas.

Each February a work group travels to Pharr to build a home. In addition, the church hosts a furniture donation drive and the group brings all of these items with them.

The entire town of Sheldon gets involved, packing the trailer full of furniture.

Mark Dykstra, who works very closely with this project, said, "You see the hopelessness of the situation these people are in. You see the hope that being present makes."

—Kate Padilla

ReNewing Church in Oregon

On Sunday, December 4, about 70 people worshiped together for the first of four monthly "preview gatherings" of ReNew, a Christian Reformed Church plant in Corvallis, Oregon.

ReNew CRC will officially launch regular Sunday morning worship services beginning Easter Sunday 2012.

Leading the church is Rev. Josh Van Til, who said that he was called "to plant a new church where an old church once was."

Two years ago Knollbrook CRC closed its doors, but a group from the former congregation desired



Rev. Josh VanTil talks about the mission of ReNew at the first of four preview services.

a church that could reach people in their community who are not connected to Jesus and his church.

Last summer and fall, volunteers renovated the original Knollbrook building. "The building was not only in disrepair but was culturally irrelevant," explained Van Til. The building is located next door to an elementary school and only one mile from Oregon State University, "[but] the space would have been working against us as we try to reach young families and college students."

Peter Carlson, former member of Knollbrook, said that he is "really excited to see changes [and the] impact on community."

—Amy Toornstra

Michigan Women Support Indonesian Coffeekick

A women's ministry at Ada (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church helped support training for 140 small group leaders in Indonesia.

"It was just wonderful to hear what the Lord was doing, and we thought it would be wonderful to partner with them," said Marcia Nobel, director of Coffee Break at Ada.

The ministry is a small group Bible study for women that focuses on outreach and spiritual growth. It started in North America, but has recently branched out around the world. (See p. 22.)

The church first heard about this opportunity last year, when a church member explained that



Back to God Ministries International was partnering with groups in Indonesia to train Coffee Break leaders.

The Coffee Break group at Ada—about 75 women and children—raised funds through its annual soup supper in March.

Ada has also formed a prayer partner relationship with the Indonesian groups. "We really feel the prayer connection is an important part of any Coffee Break program," said Nobel.


—Ryan Struyk

California Nurse Recognized for Excellence

Carla Mensonides, a member of Modesto (Calif.) Christian Reformed Church, was recently recognized by the 2011 California Nursing Excellence Awards for her work in mentoring nurses.

Mensonides has been a nurse for more than 20 years but has spent the past 10 mentoring young people and adults interested in the health-care field. She reaches 750 to 1,000 students annually.

By getting into schools and reaching out to at-risk teens, Mensonides has offered a vision of a brighter future to struggling students. The program provides employment, scholarships, and support for students entering the health-care profession.

"I tell students that in this career they can make a difference in people's lives every day," said Mensonides. 

—Heidi Wicker




Carla Mensonides received a Nursing Excellence Award for her mentoring program.

British Columbia Triples University Chaplaincies

In September students at three British Columbia universities were welcomed by Christian Reformed chaplains. Two of the chaplaincies are newly established.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Richmond established a partnership with The Tapestry CRC following conversations between Rev. Albert Chu and university staff. Sam Lee, a Vancouver native and second-generation Korean, will work half time on the campus, which has a large number of Asian students, many of whom come from overseas.

The University of British Columbia-Okanagan welcomed Sam Gutierrez as its first Christian Reformed chaplain. The Well Campus Ministry hopes to build a shared ministry with the CRC of the same name.

The two new ministries join the CRC campus ministry at University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. 

—Jenny de Groot

KW Glee Concert Supports Ontario Food Bank



STEVE LEHMANN

Members of Kitchener-Waterloo Glee perform.

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, hosted the Kitchener-Waterloo Glee Team for a concert in early December, raising almost \$2,000 and 1,234 pounds of food donations for the local food bank.

"But the intangibles," said Rev. John Vanderstoep, "the unmeasurables were just as important."

KW Glee, a group of young singers popular in their region, is not a Christian group, and their songs were not modified for the performance in church. While there were concerns about that, Vanderstoep noted that the 76 singers and large crew "are precisely the kind of people we are

looking to connect to God through our church."

Church volunteers provided promotion, setup, cleanup, and backstage help for scene changes.

After the concert, Glee cast, crew, and parents were treated to a dinner and party by church volunteers.

Rev. Darrell Bierman of River City CRC in Cambridge, whose church partnered with Maranatha in ticket sales, promotion, and volunteering backstage, said, "This event has advanced the image of Maranatha in the City of Cambridge by 10 years."

—Anita Brinkman

Salt Lake Pastor Talks Ministry to Mormons

Rev. Brian Tebben of Salt Lake City, Utah, is familiar with criticism of the Mormon Church. "Talking to people I sometimes hear, 'As soon as I drove into the valley I felt this spiritual darkness,'" Tebben said.

However, he and parishioners of First Christian Reformed Church of Salt Lake don't feel that spiritual darkness. "We see them as a people; we don't just write them off as a cult," he said.

Tebben sees Mormonism as a culture more than anything else. "There are striking major theological differences [between Mormonism and Christianity]," Tebben admits. "We're a Christian Reformed church with a Reformed worldview, but understanding that many of the new people who are coming—they just want a Christian church to be at," he said.

"We preach a lot of grace. Mormons aren't grace centered. To be able to enter a temple, a Mormon must have a temple recommendation, which is based on if they are deemed worthy or not. The best thing to talk about with a Mormon is God's grace, especially the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

—Sarah Boonstra

NEWS

Ontario Small Business Supports African Small Business

Alicia Looyenga believes there is a lot of “stuff” in this world, and she is on a mission to use it to benefit others. Through her new business, Little Wooly Mama, and a mentorship program

with Partners Worldwide, she is accomplishing exactly that.

Looyenga, a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, makes and sells children’s clothing and accessories from “upcycled” woolen sweaters, donating the proceeds to a revolving loan program that supports women entrepreneurs in West Africa. Essentially, her recycled products produce recyclable money.

Renita Reed, West Africa regional facilitator for Partners Worldwide, explained, “These relationships have shown over time to help businesses grow economically, through accountability and encouragement, but also relationally, as the worldview for each person is enlarged.”

—Monica deRegt



MONICA DEREGT

Alicia Looyenga with daughter Anneke, 5, wearing an upcycled woolen hat.



Giving the Church a Voice in a Michigan Community

The people in Comstock, Mich., face economic hardships and schools fighting to survive on limited resources. And a large portion of the city is unchurched.

When Rev. Ben Hulst discovered that churches in his community weren’t seeking to be part

A community worship service at the local high school drew more than 350 Christians from eight different congregations in Comstock, Mich.

of the solution, he did the only thing that made sense. He brought his fellow pastors together.

Over the past year, Hulst, pastor of Comstock Christian Reformed Church, and other local pastors have gathered a day each month for prayer, encouraging one another.

Since then the pastors’ efforts have gotten a full-time Youth for Christ worker into the public schools and have organized a community worship service, drawing 350-400 Christians from the community.

With a support base built between eight churches ranging from the Reformed tradition to the Pentecostal, Hulst is eager to discover what’s next.

“We’re excited to see what God is going to do in this movement,” Hulst says. “Now that we have this excitement, we don’t want to allow it to be lost.”

—Jeff Arnold

Church Leaders Discuss How to Welcome Children to the Lord’s Table

Church leaders from congregations around Grand Rapids, Mich., gathered recently to discuss best practices for welcoming children to the sacrament of communion following Synod 2011’s decision to allow children to participate in the Lord’s Supper before making a formal profession of faith. (Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.)

Rev. Howard Vanderwell and Pat Nederveld, both members of the synodical Faith Formation Committee, addressed the gathering.

Participants discussed questions such as how to deal with children who have not been baptized or with adults who have not made a commitment to Christianity, or how to work with families within the congregation who hold differing views regarding children taking part in communion.

All participants were encouraged to engage in learning opportunities for parents and for children, a conversation with elders, and a liturgical ceremony of welcome.

Mary VanWingerden, an elder of Plymouth Heights CRC, said her church was ready to implement the new policy. She attributed this, in part, to the congregation’s active Friendship Ministry that already welcomes adults with disabilities to the Lord’s Table.

Others raised questions about profession of faith. “Now what?” asked Nancy Spoolstra, a former elder of Eastern Avenue CRC. “This was once the ritual in order to take communion.”

“We prefer to think in terms of milestones,” said Vanderwell, “rather than simply thinking of people as children before profession of faith and adults after.”

—Noah J.K. Kruis



Stephanie and Rev. Brad Vos founded Club Hope, a ministry that supports people who struggle with infertility.

Club Hope Supports Those Struggling with Infertility

Rev. Brad and Stephanie Vos of CrossWay Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver, Wash., understand that people who wrestle with infertility need support.

Stephanie understands the painful journey of infertility. She launched Club Hope with a few female friends in October 2009.

"Infertility is a complex issue in that it is very prevalent, yet it is a subject that doesn't get talked about," she explained.

Club Hope participants meet once a month to share about fertility treatments, adoption journeys, and decision-making processes.

"Sometimes the infertile person can feel like they aren't being a good wife or husband because they can't give their spouse a biological child. It is like any loss or traumatic experience," said Brad.

A month after starting Club Hope, Brad and Stephanie welcomed home their daughter through a domestic infant adoption program.

—Amy Toornstra



HEIDI WICKER

Rev. Martin Sisneroz speaks to high schoolers after their Thursday lunch.

Reaching Teens' Hearts through Their Stomachs

Food and teenagers seem to go hand-in-hand, so youth leaders from First Christian Reformed Church, Immanuel CRC, Almond Valley CRC, and other local churches in Ripon, Calif., decided to reach out to local public high schoolers with a meal.

For more than five years, youth leaders have provided a free hot lunch for students from Ripon High School every Thursday at a nearby church.

"We are meeting a felt need by providing lunch for them and a spiritual need by sharing Jesus with them," said Rev. Martin Sisneroz, church planter and youth director for Almond Valley CRC.

Several students call it "Thursday Church." Each week, the pastors serve between 130-140 students, about 50 percent of whom are Christians.

—Heidi Wicker

Unofficial British Columbia Campus Ministry Thrives

New Westminster Christian Reformed Church offers ongoing hospitality to a growing number of international students.

Students appreciate the weekly meals but return to the Burnaby, British Columbia, church for conversations centered on faith and discipleship.

The students come from nearby Simon Fraser University and Douglas College.

Church members got involved after being invited to a seminar on welcoming international students and becoming friendship partners.

"I am deeply grateful for how a number of our members, especially some of our senior ones, went out of their way to meet and welcome our new guests," said Rev. Andrew Beunk. "The Asian culture has great respect for their elders, and this contact with our members has a significant impact."

—Jenny de Groot



International students from Simon Fraser University gather for lunch at New Westminster CRC.

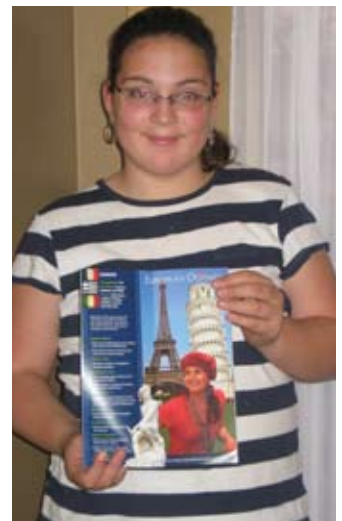
Iowa Girl Appointed Student Ambassador

Hanah Roelfs, a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church and a student at Rock Valley Christian School, is headed to Europe at the end of her seventh grade year.

She was selected for a 21-day educational trip as part of the People to People Student Ambassador program, after being nominated by her teachers.

Hanah will take classes and write papers about each of the countries she visits. At this point, she knows she will see Austria, Switzerland, France, and Italy.

What is she most looking forward to? "Meeting new friends," she says eagerly. "One of the girls



who went on the trip before still sends letters back."

—Kate Padilla

NEWS

Leadership Development Networks Shape Hearts and Careers

For the past ten years, eager learners from various Christian Reformed congregations in British Columbia have gathered once a month for Leadership Development Network (LDN) training.


This scenario repeats itself across the denomination and beyond.

Homemakers and farmers, teachers and nurses, business owners and retirees sign on for a three-year lay training curriculum that leads to a variety of places and positions.

Rev. Ed Top, who was a journalist before going into ordained ministry in the CRC, graduated in 2001. LDN training led to his current position, sharing a pastorate with his wife, Rev. Michelle Gritter, in the inner city Lantern Community CRC in Calgary, Alberta.

For Liz Tolkamp, LDN was the path to being ordained as a ministry associate in the role of children's pastor at her home church, Willoughby CRC, Langley, British Columbia.

"Participation in LDN helped to solidify a calling," said Tolkamp, who completed her third year of training in 2007 and was ordained a year later.

Perry Dacuik, a member of Immanuel CRC in Langley, said, "[LDN] is one of the CRC's best-kept secrets." 


—Jenny de Groot

Collecting 60 for 60 in British Columbia

When Alberni Valley Christian Reformed Church was looking for a way to celebrate an anniversary, it decided to collect farm implements for Sierra Leone—one for each year the small church in Port Alberni, British Columbia, has existed.

It launched "60 for 60" in support of the Family Farm program, raising funds for 60 hoes, 60 watering cans, 60 machetes, and 60 shovels for the Koinadugu district.

The church far exceeded its goals, so extra funds will support other pieces of the Family Farm budget.

"\$5,000 is a big deal in a blue-collar congregation like Port Alberni. It is so exciting to see how we could meet both global and local mission initiatives with one project," said the church's pastor, Rev. Sid Ypma. 

—Jenny deGroot



SID YPMA

Anna, Eben, and Abram Ypma hold the garden tools that inspired giving to the "60 for 60" campaign.

Churches Provide Shelter in Michigan

"I didn't have time to plan my next move; I didn't have anywhere to go," recalled Patricia Lofton as she ate dinner at Princeton Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich.

Lofton and her son were staying at Princeton CRC as part of the Family Promise program, an organization that works with families to find housing and jobs. Struggling families rotate among various host congregations, staying at each church for one week.

Each Sunday, a large truck delivers beds and mattresses to that week's host church. Princeton thus transforms its classrooms into bedrooms and its lobby into a dining room when it hosts families once every three months.

During the day, families go to work or continue searching for jobs or housing. At night, they can ride bikes in the



RYAN STRUYK

(L-R) Ayden Jackson, Sarah Jackson, and Brianna Jackson spend time at Princeton CRC.

church parking lot, play board games, watch movies, or do homework.

Lofton has since signed a lease to a new house—just down the street from Princeton. "I plan to visit this church; I'm definitely

looking for a church home," she said.

Several other area CRCs are host congregations as well.

—Ryan Struyk

FAQs

Church

Q A woman who attended our church very regularly for many years recently died. When visiting her in the hospital, a member asked if he could pray with her. She eagerly responded yes. He also asked if she believed in the Lord Jesus and that her sins were forgiven. Again she replied yes. Our pastor and some elders thought the member should not have asked these questions because they were none of his business. Please comment on this.

A If a person has been attending your congregation for many years, it is thoughtful for a member to visit and also to ask if he/she may pray, read a passage of Scripture, or discuss spiritual matters with that person. The visitor should always ask permission and should not do this without the patient's consent. People who are hospitalized are very vulnerable, and sometimes visitors have abused such situations by not respecting the patient's wishes, perhaps offering an inappropriate prayer or presenting the gospel insensitively. If this was the concern of your pastor and elders, it is a legitimate concern.

We should be willing to carry out promises others make on our behalf when they help those in need.

It also true that a person in crisis is frequently open to spiritual conversation. When visiting a fellow Christian who is hospitalized or homebound, offering a prayer, the comfort and strength of God's Word, and the experiences of your own walk with God can be helpful to that person. A social visit is good; a uniquely Christian visit is better.

—George Vander Weit

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

Christian Morality

Q Recently a man who badly needed to travel from Grand Rapids to Chicago stopped at the church office while I happened to be there. In front of my pastor I promised him that my husband would drive him there (the man has had bad experiences with public transportation). My husband was angry that I offered his services and refused to do so. He maintains that when one person makes a promise that another person will do something, the second person is not morally bound to do it. I feel humiliated and believe that my husband is subscribing to a principle that is extremely self-centered. Am I correct?

A Your husband is mistaken to think that someone is never bound by a promise that another has made on his or her behalf. The manager of a retail store might promise a customer that a certain employee will come to her assistance, and that employee would then appear bound to carry out the promise.

A married couple might form a covenant that each one is bound by the promises made

by the other. This would be a promise to keep promises, and if you and your husband had formed such a covenant, he would be bound to drive the man to Chicago.

In the absence of having made such a covenant with your husband, I am not convinced that he has a moral obligation to do so. You would have been wise to check with him about his willingness to provide transportation. It is true that a married couple forms "one flesh" (Matt. 19:5), but that does not entail that promises made by one automatically bind the other. Your husband, on the other hand, would have been wise to approach the issue in a kinder, gentler manner less likely to cause you humiliation.

Scripture does not directly address this issue, but certainly we should make an effort to be charitable, generous, and compassionate. We should be willing to carry out promises others make on our behalf when they help those in need and involve modest amounts of our time and resources. For example, if you had promised an elderly neighbor that your husband would help push her car out of a snowbank, it would appear unnecessary to check with him first, and it would be unseemly for him to refuse.

—Gregory Mellema

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

BY JAMES K. A. SMITH

Redeeming Ritual



AS FULL-BODIED IMAGEBEARERS OF GOD,
OUR CENTER OF GRAVITY IS LOCATED
AS MUCH IN OUR BODIES AS IN OUR MINDS.

PROTESTANTS tend to brace themselves at the mention of the R-word: *ritual*. The word is a trigger evoking a Reformation history that has sunk into our bones. We associate ritual with dead orthodoxy, “vain repetition,” the denial of grace, trying to earn salvation, scoring points with God, “going through the motions,” and various other forms of spiritual insincerity.

And yet we affirm, even celebrate, ritual in other spheres. We recognize that the pursuit of excellence often requires devotion to a regime of routines and disciplines that are formative precisely because they are repetitive. Anyone who has mastered a golf swing or a Bach fugue is a ritual animal: one simply doesn't

achieve such excellence otherwise. In both cases, ritual is marked by *embodied repetition*. Ritual recruits our will through our body: the cellist's fingers become habituated by moving through scale after scale; the golfer's whole body is trained by a million practice swings.

Because we are embodied creatures of habit—God *created* us that way—we are profoundly shaped by ritual. That's why ritual can *de-form* us, too: we know firsthand the destructive power of routines and rhythms that can hold us captive and make us someone we don't want to be.

In all of these cases we intuit that rituals are not just something that we do; they do something to us. And their formative power works on the *body*, not just the mind. So why should we be allergic to ritual when it comes to our spiritual life? Could we redeem ritual?

Habitations of the Spirit

Our negative evaluation of ritual stems from a couple of bad assumptions. First, when it comes to religious devotion we tend to see ritual observance as mere obedience to duty, a way of scoring points with God and earning spiritual credit. We see ritual as a bottom-up effort—and “effort” starts to sound like “work.” It doesn't take long before this all seems part of an elaborate system of “salvation by works.”

Let's grant that some religious folk undoubtedly observe ritual with such misguided intent. We join Luther and Calvin and the Reformers in rejecting such superstitious attempts to curry God's favor. But why should we settle for simply *identifying* ritual with “works righteousness?”

We have a more nuanced take on ritual in other spheres of our life. We can tell when someone is “just going through the motions,” but we don’t see the motions themselves as the problem. We know the difference between the piano student practicing scales because she “has to” and the student who does so in pursuit of excellence.

If I commit myself to the “ritual” of playing scales for an hour a day for years on end, it’s because I know this is a way for me to become something I *want* to be. It’s not just a bottom-up exercise on my part; it’s also a kind of top-down force that makes me and molds me and transforms me. It’s a way for me to be caught up in the music—a way for my fingers and hands and mind and imagination to be recruited into the symphony that I want to play.

If that is true on a “natural” level, why shouldn’t it also be true for our spiritual life? Historic Christian devotion bequeaths

empowers us to be his imagebearers. They are ways for the Spirit to meet us where we are—as embodied creatures.

Worship Is for Bodies

A second reason we Reformed folks devalue ritual is because we tend to reduce Christian faith to a set of beliefs and believers to primarily thinking beings.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor would describe this intellectualism as one of those Frankensteinish outcomes of the Protestant Reformation—a sort of unintended monster that outruns the good intentions of the Reformers themselves. Rightly criticizing superstition and “magical” views of ritual, the Reformers unleashed an impetus toward what Taylor calls “exarnation”—a *dis*-embodiment of spiritual life that reduced “true religion” to “right belief.”

The eventual result was a complete reconfiguration of worship and devotion. Christian worship was no longer a full-

the rich history of spiritual disciplines and liturgical formation.

Some of this incarnational intuition already shapes what we do. Congregations that celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly (as they did in John Calvin’s Geneva) have a deep appreciation for the tactile nature of the practice. Here is a ritual that pictures the gospel and that activates every one of our senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight. It is a ritual whose repetition is a gift, not a bore. Through our immersion in it, the gospel sinks into our bones. We absorb the story of God’s grace in ways we don’t even realize.

Or consider the value of a simple ritual of confession that involves both repetition and the body, one that might be especially appropriate for Lent. By adopting a standard prayer of confession, worship constantly puts a prayer on our lips that seeps into our hearts and comes forth from our hearts throughout the week. When we *kneel* to confess, our

Anyone who has mastered a golf swing or a Bach fugue is a ritual animal.

to us rituals and rhythms and routines that are what Craig Dykstra calls “habitations of the Spirit”—concrete practices that are conduits of the power of the Spirit and the transformative grace of God.

Think of some “ho-hum” rituals in Reformed worship. Week after week some congregations are asked to stand to hear the Word of God. Why? That shift in bodily posture sends a little unconscious signal: Listen up—something important is coming. After speaking the Word, the preacher announces: “This is the Word of the Lord.” To which the people reply, “Thanks be to God.” You might say it without thinking about it. But that doesn’t mean it’s not *doing* something. That little ritual trains your body to learn something about the authority of God’s Word, and to respond in gratitude.

Spirit-charged rituals are tangible ways that God gets hold of us, reorients us, and

orbed exercise that recruited the body and touched all of the senses. Instead, Protestants designed worship as if believers were little more than brains-on-a-stick. The primary target was the mind; the primary means was a lecture-like sermon; and the primary goal was to deposit the right doctrines and beliefs into our heads so that we could then go out into the world to carry out the mission of God.

The problem with that, however, is that we are not created as brains-on-a-stick; we are created as embodied, tactile, visceral creatures who are more than cognitive processors or belief machines. As full-bodied imagebearers of God, our center of gravity is located as much in our bodies as in our minds. This is precisely why the body is the way to our heart, and this “incarnational” intuition has long informed

physical posture both expresses and encourages humility before God. We know God’s grace differently because it is inscribed in our bodies.

We need not be afraid of ritual. If we appreciate that God created us as incarnate, embodied creatures, then we will recognize his grace lovingly extended to us in ways that meet us where we are: in the tangible, embodied practice of Spirit-charged rituals. Reframed in this way, we might be able to redeem rituals as gifts of God for the people of God. ■



James K. A. Smith teaches philosophy and congregational and ministry studies at Calvin College. He is the author of

Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition and is a member of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

BY PHIL REINDERS

Caring for Our Scientists

Some postures and practices
of science-friendly churches

THE PERCEIVED CONFLICT between faith and science is so commonplace that it's a given in popular culture. Caught up in this false choice, churches are sometimes inhospitable places for people trained in the sciences.

So how can congregations create a welcoming space where people celebrate God's scientific truth, and where all those involved in the sciences (including engineers, teachers, lab technicians, researchers, health care professionals, and others) can grow as disciples and embrace their work as a holy vocation?

Although some might think of a hospitable attitude toward science and faith as an option package, it is an essential facet of the church's witness. It is vital to the spiritual formation of those who are engaged in the sciences. It is critical for a compelling Christian witness in a culture where the dogma of the scientific worldview mostly goes unchallenged. And

it is integral to developing a robust faith centered on the God who reveals his glory within the created world.

A Science-Friendly Church

Becoming a science-friendly church is not so far out of reach—it doesn't require a conference or a shiny new program. Most congregations and pastors can draw on Christ-centered practices and postures cultivated over centuries, mindfully extending them toward the sciences. Following are a few of those practices and postures that might be helpful.

Repent. Humble repentance is a good place to start. For many, fear and suspicion lurk beneath the faith-science conversation. This posture never allows us to extend love to others, to experience candor in our conversations, or to express gratitude for the wisdom in God's two books of revelation. Those in the sciences can repent of the idolatry of the scientific worldview;

others can repent of a suspicious attitude toward the sciences. All of us can ask God for a heart ready to celebrate the goodness of the scientific endeavor and to affirm the priestly work done by those in the sciences as they give voice to the Word of God inherent in creation.

Cultivate wonder, delight, and play.

Christians worship God. Our worship emerges from a deep sense of wonder in God and delight in God's creating and saving work. All week long, science-friendly congregations bring that posture of wonder to the created world and to the discoveries of the sciences.

This practice is pivotal because conversations on faith and science often turn to the issue of origins. No doubt this is an important issue—but there is so much more to delight in! Before discussing the question of origins, perhaps we should first spend time leisurely gawking at photos from the Hubble space telescope,

closely observing an ant colony at work, enjoying a visit to the zoo, or finding out what goes on inside our digestive systems. Let a deep sense of worshipful wonder properly set the table for important theological conversations.

And don't forget to play! Simply enjoying the world through our bodies and senses is an important worship practice. The careers of many scientists began by hovering over a tide pool, staring up at a star-filled night sky, or curiously observing a scab form. Undoubtedly the "re-faithing" of science for many Christians will begin in similar places.

Encourage curiosity. Part of the goodness of human life is our immense hunger to know God and the universe God created. Curiosity is a homing device implanted in the human soul, calling us back to our Creator. Every time we encourage curiosity, questions, and learning (whether pursued through God's book of creation or Scripture), we practice humility and steer people toward a larger understanding of God.

Resources

One of the best expressions of Christian hospitality to those in the sciences is to get informed. Here are a few resources to begin with:

- *Real Scientists, Real Faith*, ed. R.J. Berry (Monarch Books, 2009). Seventeen scientists tell of the impact of their Christian faith.
- *Ministry Theorem website*. Calvin Theological Seminary hosts a fine website with good resources, particularly the "What I wish my pastor knew" series of articles. ministrytheorem.calvinseminary.edu/essays/wiwmpk/.
- *Cosmos: Refaithing Science website*. Regent College's Pastoral Science project hosts a site rich with resources to further the faith-science conversation. cosmos.regent-college.edu/
- *The Colossian Forum*. Dedicated to cultivating the needed Christian character to engage the faith-science conversations. colossianforum.org/.

Healthy churches are learning communities. We ask questions about God; we teach the story of God in Scripture; we expand our knowledge through Bible studies and adult education; we discourage ignorance. It's no stretch to extend that learning posture toward God's created world, humbly learning all we can from sound science, even embracing the common grace of a learned scientist who doesn't believe what we believe.

Practice hospitality. Churches are supposed to be welcoming places of grace for all people. The practice of hospitality creates a spacious place for others to know the embrace of Christ, and it opens wide our world to the views of others. Simply taking an interest in the world and work of scientists by asking them questions about what they do is a generous act of hospitality.

Admittedly, science can be intimidating; for many, scientific knowledge can seem overly complex and out of reach. Yet scientists are not that scary—likely they would love the chance to tell you about their work. Ask where they see God in their research, or how their work encourages or hinders their spiritual formation.

To make all feel welcome, many churches include diverse expressions and perspectives in their common life and worship: perhaps inviting a dancer to embody the congregation's prayers, banner-makers and graphic artists to add beauty to worship spaces, and visual artists and photographers to create media. Why not include a scientist on the worship team or as part of the sermon planning process? Every day, Christian scientists note the grandeur of God in molecular genetics, chemical reactions, or particle physics. They are perfect allies for giving voice to God's Word within creation through the church's ministry.

Pray. Churches are communities of prayer. Together we lift prayers to God for our world and its hot spots, for government leaders, natural disasters, personal needs, and for people as they pursue their vocations. Why not pray specifically for those serving in the sci-

ences in our congregations and beyond—praising God for recent scientific discoveries in the news, and praying for the faithful witness of Christians in the world of science?

Community. Churches are communities where we encourage, care for, and support each other, where we bear one another's burdens. Christians who are active in the sciences regularly wade through complex ethical issues, and many are involved in

Curiosity is a homing device implanted in the human soul, calling us back to our Creator.

high-level discussions that impact public policy. These followers of Jesus feel the weight of demanding careers and of where their work and research may lead. The burden can be heavy. Like busy single parents, partners in a struggling marriage, or lonely seniors, people in the sciences sometimes experience matters beyond their capacity to carry. Can we compassionately come alongside these fellow disciples, providing supportive Christian community and a safe place to explore how the gospel shapes these important issues?

The way beyond the perceived conflict of science versus faith is the way of Jesus, the way of living Jesus' generosity, patience, humility, and love. Why not make an experiment of it in your church and see what surprising new discoveries emerge? ■



Phil Reinders is a member of the Regent College Pastoral Science Cohort. He blogs at squinch.net and recently accepted a call as senior minister at Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Ontario.



Christian businessman Jung bin Lim opened a Coffee Break Café in Seoul specifically to provide a place for people to come together for Bible study and Coffee Break leadership training.

Coffee Break Goes Global

by Nancy Vander Meer

Members of a small immigrant church in New England had a vision for sharing the gospel with people in their homeland, Indonesia.

Working together, and following the Lord's leading, their dream became part of something bigger than they ever could have imagined: a Global Coffee Break movement.

"God is on the move," says Joel Hogan, director of international ministries for Christian Reformed World Missions

(CRWM). "Global Coffee Break is growing exponentially all around this world.

"What began as a women's evangelistic Bible study [in North America] has become an international mission movement—a movement that's about collaborating with local partners and igniting a passion for the lost."

Michael and Deibi Lopian share the passion for evangelism. In 2003, they left Indonesia to serve the immigrant population in New Hampshire. Many members of their congregation, the Indonesian Christian Reformed Fellowship in Dover,

N.H., are from the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Some came for education or work opportunities; others received asylum visas to escape from persecution.

The Lopians became friends with Brent and Diane Averill, church planters with Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) at New Covenant CRC in North Hampton, N.H.

The two congregations encouraged each other, worshiped together, and experienced each other's cultures.

Diane, who has been part of the Coffee Break ministry since 1970, introduced

You add.
God multiplies.

MINISTRY SHARES
TOGETHER
DOING MORE

the Indonesian church to the inductive method of studying the Bible. “We all began to see a greater vision of what God could do through Coffee Break,” she says.

Immigrants with a Vision

Members of the Indonesian Christian Reformed Fellowship began praying that God would open doors to bring Bible study and other Christian resources to their homeland. They supported the vision by raising funds to send the Averills and Deibi to Indonesia.

Ilze Budhi, a member of the Dover church, and her husband, Jimmy, a businessman in Jakarta, helped spearhead the project. In May 2010, the Averills and Deibi traveled to Indonesia to meet with leaders of Indonesian churches, to learn about the culture, and to discover what resources the churches needed.

The Dover group also met with Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya, Indonesian media missions leader with Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). They learned about listener communities throughout Indonesia and the need for Bible study resources for these new believers.

Untung and other leaders from several Christian churches throughout Indonesia saw the potential for using Coffee Break materials for evangelism and discipleship.

A report written by the Averills about their work in Indonesia was shared with leaders from CRC mission agencies and Faith Alive, the publishing ministry of the CRC that produces and distributes Coffee Break Bible study materials.

The report confirmed the growth of a global Coffee Break movement and set in motion a collaborative effort to bring the Coffee Break ministry to Indonesia.

“It is nothing short of a miracle that in less than a year and a half, God’s Spirit



Ivany Ongkowidjaya (seated) helped translate Coffee Break materials into the trade language of Indonesia.



More than 140 people attended Global Coffee Break leadership training in Indonesia.

moved us from the idea, to the translating and production of the materials, to actual training of leaders in Indonesia,” Averill observed.

“God’s Spirit is moving. The wind is in the sail and we’re just trying to hold on to the boat! There is so much interest in what is happening with this incredibly exciting ministry!”

Bringing Global Coffee Break to Indonesia

Last fall, Deibi Lopian, Diane Averill, and Ilza Budhi—all Coffee Break trainers with CRHM—returned to Indonesia, joining Untung and his wife, Ivany, to train 140 eager church leaders. The Global Coffee Break (GCB) workshops took place in five Indonesian cities.

Participants gave evidence of the vibrant Christian community in Indonesia. “But many expressed the urgent need for Christian resources,” said Averill.

The Christian community in Indonesia is very concerned with education and Bible study, but very few Bible study materials are available. Many Indonesians, especially the younger generation, have no deep religious beliefs. They are open to the gospel. GCB’s *Discover Your Bible* method is a valuable resource for teaching people to read and study the Bible.

Pastor Timotius Dawir from Papua had been praying for three years for this kind of resource. When he learned about the

GCB training in Manado, Indonesia, he traveled 26 hours by bus, boat, and plane but, because of flight delays, arrived 10 minutes after the workshop concluded.

Appreciating his efforts, three members of the training team met with Dawir that evening to provide a kind of mini-training. Convinced that GCB is an effective method of outreach, Dawir invited the team to come to Papua to train leaders there.

“I am sure I can arrange for training in three locations with thirty participants in each place,” he promised. Plans are in place for an April 2012 training on Biak Island in Papua.

A second spontaneous training session took place in Jakarta just before the North American trainers were scheduled to return home. Indonesian Pastor Bigman Sirait learned about the *Discover Your Bible* method over a lunch meeting and invited the trainers to introduce GCB to members of his church. Sixteen participants gathered on very short notice.

Leaders from more than 16 denominations attended the five training events. »

“It was very tiring, but very rewarding to meet with people who have the same vision and want to work together for the glory of God,” commented Untung.

“Please continue to pray for and support our ministry in Indonesia, because we know that many people in Indonesia are thirsty to know more about the truth in Christ.”

The Bigger Story

The events in Indonesia served as an important catalyst that pulled together several mission agencies under the new “Global Coffee Break” initiative. However, the story really began more than 40 years ago when Coffee Break was first intro-



Thousands of men and women in South Korea participate in Coffee Break ministries.

expand the ministry in Korean and Spanish. In 1990, Myung Lee became the first Korean trainer.

After materials were translated into Korean, men’s and women’s study groups were launched in Southern California. Pastors in South Korea learned about the Coffee Break ministry and invited Myung Lee to offer leadership training in Korea. Since then, Lee and Grace Paek, who joined the ministry in 1998, have led more than 100 training events in South Korea for thousands of participants.

Global Outreach Under the Radar

In 1999, South Korean missionaries to China brought *Discover Your Bible* materials with them, translating the materials into Chinese and later Mongolian. Thousands of underground Bible study groups in 13 provinces grew out of this initial outreach.

Korean missionaries also took Coffee Break into Colombia, Taiwan, Malaysia, and East India. Inquiries from contacts

around the world are coming from Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, and even Dubai, about the possibility of starting Coffee Break outreach in these areas.

Much of this amazing global growth has happened “under the radar” through the initiative of individuals and local churches committed to bringing the gospel to people around the world.

Working with CRWM, Jeong and Misook Gho have also used Coffee Break as an outreach strategy in Japan since 1996.

Catching Up to the Holy Spirit’s Work

Sam Huizenga has worked with CRHM as a Coffee Break leadership trainer for 11 years. At a Korean Coffee Break conference in 2009 coordinated by Paek, Huizenga discovered the extensive global outreach already happening, especially in Korea and China, through *Discover Your Bible* resources.

Excited about the stories they were hearing, she asked, “What’s next?” This sparked a plan between Paek and Huizenga to develop an intentional global



Global Coffee Break codirector Grace Paek (right), with Myung Lee, the CRC’s first Korean Coffee Break trainer. Paek and Lee have led workshops in several countries.

duced to the CRC (see also “The View From Here”).

As churches in Canada and the United States became more intentional about reaching out to international neighbors in their communities, Home Missions hired ethnic leaders and trainers to

“ We’re taking another look at Coffee Break and asking God what his plans are for us in a global context. ”

You add.
God multiplies.

MINISTRY SHARES
TOGETHER
DOING MORE

strategy for outreach under the officially adopted title “Global Coffee Break.”

“God is already at work,” notes Huizenga, who, with Paek, is codirector of the Global Coffee Break ministry. “There is a fresh wind blowing through this ministry. We’re taking another look at Coffee Break and asking God what his plans are for us in a global context.”

Encouraged by the initial contacts with key leaders in Indonesia, Huizenga and



Sam Huizenga and Hilda Vander Klip (center) led Global Coffee Break workshops in four cities of Colombia, South America.



Pastors and church leaders in southern Bogota, Colombia, received training to take Global Coffee Break to people who are poor and marginalized on the outskirts of the city.

Paek approached leaders of Christian Reformed Home Missions, World Missions, Back to God Ministries, and Faith Alive about a collaborative Global Coffee Break partnership.

“Each agency brings its unique gifts and strengths to the partnership,” says Huizenga. “Home Missions knows the heart of the Coffee Break ministry; they

developed the strategy and offer expertise in leadership development. Faith Alive publishes the materials, providing content, printing, and distribution of the study materials. World Missions offers a network of relationships and expertise for leadership training in the global setting. Back to God Ministries International offers similar expertise in global ministry with its international networks.”

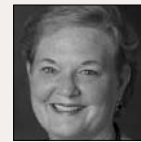
In Indonesia, for example, BTGMI staff translated, printed, and distributed the Bible study materials and the leadership training manual. Untung and Ivany are heading the GCB ministry in Indonesia, including organizing ongoing leadership training and development.

“It’s exciting to see how God has brought us all together, working with global partners all around the world,” says

Huizenga. “The hope and vision for Global Coffee Break is that as many people as possible have direct access to the Word of God. We want to see many people come to Christ through the power of his Word.”

“God is leading this movement,” she adds. “We’re responding to what the Holy Spirit is doing.”

“Through God’s Word and safe relationships in small group studies, people around the world are coming to know Christ and accepting Jesus as their Savior. We’re excited to play a part in seeing God’s kingdom grow.” ■



Nancy Vander Meer is a staff writer with Back to God Ministries International

A Conversation with GCB Codirectors Sam Huizenga and Grace Paek

Why is Coffee Break an effective global outreach ministry?

Huizenga: “It is a simple tool for friends to invite friends to discover God’s Word together in small groups. As they study the Bible, the Word does the work of evangelism.”

What needs to be done in order to adapt Coffee Break as a global outreach?

Paek: “The curriculum is a simple skeleton of Bible-focused questions. Leaders shape the questions to fit the group so that it fits the unique needs of people of various ages, genders, and faith journeys. Since the materials are not culturally specific, they can be easily translated into other languages. Then we offer basic leadership training in how to use the *Discover Your Bible* method. The small group leaders will adapt the experience into their own local context, leading their groups in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.”

Where has Global Coffee Break training taken place?

Huizenga: “In addition to the training in Indonesia and [the training] by Grace and Myung (Lee) in Korea, Hilda Vander Klip and I led workshops in Bogota, Colombia, last May (2011). Working with the Colombian Bible Society we trained a total of 455 leaders in four locations.

“In August 2011 a group of us participated in the TEA [Theological Education in Africa] conference in East Africa, where we taught pastors and church leaders how to use the *Discover Your Bible* method. Others have led week-long training for pastors in China.”

People are also requesting training in Tanzania, Taiwan, Honduras/Guatemala, and Germany.

A Break Today

I am a coffee snob. I am not ashamed to admit it. I love coffee and cannot imagine getting up in the morning without having several cups of it. I also want to make sure that I have good coffee—expertly roasted, freshly ground, and brewed in a quality machine.

I thought about that as I contemplated writing about what we have come to know as “Coffee Break.” There seems to be a growing thirst for what comes with such a Coffee Break all around the world. I praise God for that.

Some 40 years ago, Rev. Alvin Vander Griend and Neva Evenhouse launched Coffee Break to help people connect both with their neighbors and with the Word of God. It has developed into a hunger for the Word that puts my thirst for good coffee to shame. It includes coffee, but on the side. Central on the table and to the conversation—and in people’s hearts—is the Word of God. And now it has gone global. What a thrilling development!

The secret of the success of this movement can be traced all the way back to a town in southwestern Macedonia called Berea. You might even think of this as something akin to Global Coffee Break.

When the Word made its way to Berea through Paul and Silas, the Bereans gathered, like so many in North America and throughout the world, around the Word. The Bereans proved, Dr. Luke writes, to be “of more noble character than the Thessalonians,” who ended up basically chasing them out of town. Those Bereans “received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).

While it might sound like Dr. Luke was nearly as snobbish in his attitude toward Bible study as I am toward my coffee—calling these Bible-studiers “of more noble character”—actually he declares them “good-birthed” in so doing.

There seems to be a growing thirst for such a Coffee Break.



Think about it. Those who gathered to examine the Word enthusiastically and carefully, ultimately receiving it as the truth of God, proved to have been well-born. Might I suggest hearing that as “well-born *again*”? Might I suggest that what originally inspired the Berean Bible study, what kept it not only going but growing, was the fact that they found life in it, new life, full life, good life?

And might I say it is still happening today—around tables and beside coffee cups from Anacortes to Atlanta, from Halifax to Vancouver, from Seoul to Sulawesi. The coffee is optional, maybe absent altogether. What is common to all these tables all around the globe is the Word that made such a difference in Berea, and makes such a difference to us, and is making such a difference worldwide to this very day. It is the Word that brought life to Berea. The Bereans’ “more noble character” was actually their new birth—of the Spirit, through the Word.

That is how it still works. Around tables in rooms at your own local church. Around tables in a host of places dotting the globe. And right in the chair where you sit each morning, holding your fresh-brewed coffee in one hand, the Word of God in your other hand, and its truth in your heart.

I am going to pray for Coffee Break—at my own church and in others in my community and throughout this continent and all over the world. I am going to pray for the ongoing preparation of good materials and eager leaders. I am going to pray that the Word that changed lives in Berea will continue to make its way into countless hearts “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

And I am going to pray that my prayers for the success of Coffee Break everywhere will be the opportunity for God to break even further into my very own heart, making sure that my thirst for good coffee is exceeded by my thirst for the Good News. ■



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

*You add.
Christian Ministries.*

HERE AND THERE

'99 Questions from Atheists'

Both Christians and those who identify themselves as atheists are having lively conversations about the Christian faith on "99 Questions from Atheists," a live online talk-radio program in Russia.

"There are so many different religious views, and every one of them claims to be true.



Rev. Sergei Sosedkin (left) addresses questions over live online talk radio.

How does one figure out which religion is right?" asked Anzhela, a listener.

Another web listener, who did not want to identify himself, asked, "Is it possible to be

a good person without believing in God?"

The questions allow Back to God Ministries International's Russian staff to offer biblical insights on life. This is the first time many listeners have heard the Christian perspective.

"Web ministry is an effective way to reach out to urban audiences, especially younger professionals," explains Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Russian ministry leader.

"Many of them grew up in an atheistic culture and know very little about the Christian faith. At the same time, their lives are left empty and void, full of questions."

Some questions aren't easy. "Why do bad people get whatever they want and good people have to suffer all the time?" Anna asked in the online forum. Another anonymous listener wanted to know, "Why do I have to be responsible for the sin of Adam and Eve?"

Other questions encourage sharing the simple gospel of hope: "What is God's grace? Is it possible for a non-believer to get saved?"

Produced in cooperation with a local radio network that covers major Russian cities, the program reaches a large audience.

Ministry Share gifts help support this online radio outreach to atheists in Russia who are searching for truth. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer,
BTGMI Communications

10 Years of Jubilee

One of Calvin College's Jubilee Fellows hopes to serve as a youth minister. Others want to work with women, with people who are developmentally disabled, and in social justice, overseas missions, and other ministries.

"I hope to learn more of the church, Christ's body, because at times I feel like I have a naive view of how the church is run," said Eunsub Cho, 20, a secondary education

major from Seoul, South Korea.

Joella Ranai-voson, an international relations and writing major from Nairobi, Kenya, feels called to overseas missions. She believes the Jubilee Fellows program at the college in Grand Rapids, Mich., is the next step.

Founded 10

years ago through a grant from Calvin's Lilly Vocation Project, the program mentors and sends 12 fellows a year to intern at churches all over North America.

Many have gone on to seminary or the ministry, and others fill lay leadership roles in their congregations.

Throughout the winter and spring, the fellows—all juniors—take a weekly seminar on church history, discernment, gifts people possess, and positions in the church.

"We don't hold anything back on a lot of levels," said Todd Cioffi, a former pastor and the assistant professor of congregational and ministry studies who runs the program. ■

—Myrna Anderson, Calvin College Communications



The 2012 Jubilee Fellows

TOGETHER

Embracing Drought Survivors in Ethiopia

Crippling drought followed by flash floods and a life of poverty complicated by HIV can lead people to despair.

But Elly Dalmaijer, from St. Albert, Alberta, discovered that women in Tore, Ethiopia, were finding reasons for praise even in the face of hardship. She also discovered that sometimes being a friend can be a great ministry.

Located south of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, Tore sits in the mountains above the Great Rift Valley. It is surrounded by trees that shelter coffee plants.

Some of the trees that make the area look so lush have survived for centuries, resisting drought and flood. But not so the soil and crops.

“People told me they call it the ‘Green Hunger,’” says Dalmaijer, International Relief Manager in Ethiopia with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

After bad weather destroyed the fall 2010 harvest and the spring harvest in 2011, people needed help. Through a local partner, the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, CRWRC provided food supplies as part



Elly Dalmaijer (center) with two women from Tore, Ethiopia.

of its response to drought throughout the area.

With access to food, the residents planted their crops again, hoping for a plentiful fall harvest. But the drought-baked soil could not absorb late-season rains.

“The rain ran down the mountainside, beating down the soft stalks of teff—a local plant

that is used to make a bread-like staple,” said Dalmaijer.

Following this disaster, Dalmaijer came to Tore to assess needs. Many people thanked her for the gift of food.

One group was especially enthusiastic. Five women embraced Dalmaijer in a group hug, touching her hands and shoulders, speaking excitedly.

Through a translator, they said that all of them have AIDS. One woman recounted giving the little food she had to her six children, and then sleeping to quell the hunger. Others survived by selling or eating their few animals. The CRWRC food rations came just in time.

“They were so very thankful for the rations and for the special food blend that they qualify for because of their HIV status,” says Dalmaijer.

Despite losing their most recent harvest and the damage to their homes because of flooding, the women had hope, trusting they could rebuild their lives now that they had food aid.

“I felt so proud and honored that these women trusted me with their stories and with their hugs and kisses,” said Dalmaijer.

“Then, as I thought about that group hug and our conversation, I realized that that’s really what it means to ‘embrace AIDS.’ To be present with them and help them feel loved.” ■

—Kristen VanderBerg,
CRWRC Communications

Being a College Chaplain on the Sidelines



Mike Wissink’s campus ministry for Christian Reformed Home Missions happens in locker rooms, on the sidelines of football fields and basketball courts, and on buses taking Ferris State University teams to games.

While Wissink also has a traditional campus ministry involving devotions, meetings, services, and mission trips, he also serves the men’s and women’s basketball teams, the volleyball and soccer teams, and the foot-

Mike Wissink on the sidelines at a Ferris football game.

ball team at Ferris State in Big Rapids, Mich.

“I see God at work on the fields and in the locker rooms, and I believe this is where I need to be,” he says.

In all he does, he makes sure his ministry is based on Scripture.

“I always ask ‘How does God’s Word speak to us in every situation?’” he says. “I have found students on the sports teams to be open to looking at the biblical perspec-

tive and how it speaks to all of their lives.”

When necessary, he remains sensitive to a team’s record. If they are going through a losing streak, he sticks close but keeps a low profile.

He works with athletes who are struggling with challenges in their relationships or performance on the field, on the court, or in the classroom. When needed, he is called in to help handle crisis situations such as a death in the family or some other difficult situation.

He attends team meetings and prays with the players for the Michigan college before every competition.

Although he is with students for only a few short years, Wissink maintains ties with many of them, sometimes interacting with them on Facebook or officiating at their weddings. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC
Communications

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God multiplies.

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Record Year for Preaching Center

Last year, website traffic was at an all-time high for the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

November 2011 alone set a new record, as more than 14,000 pastors visited the site, accessing 47,000 pages of materials related to sermon-starter ideas and more.

Meanwhile, the center sponsored a number of initiatives, including a Fall Preaching Conference with Paul Scott Wilson, a professor of homiletics and ordained minister of the United Church of Canada.



Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of CTS, speaks at a seminary gathering with philosopher James K.A. Smith.

The center also hosted the fall “Book of the Semester” program, featuring *Letters to*

a Young Calvinist by Calvin College philosopher James K.A. Smith, who had a wide-ranging conversation at CTS about his book with a crowd of students, staff, faculty, and members of community reading groups.

The center, in addition, encouraged people to attend the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s annual symposium on worship in late January to hear well-known speakers discuss preaching and worship.

As always, the center offered—and continues to offer—its “This Week in Preaching” page (<https://www.calvinseminary.edu/index.php>) that posts fresh ideas and resources for preaching every week. ■

—Scott Hoezee, Center for Excellence in Preaching

Discipleship Spurs Church Growth

Pastor Francisco Limón was convinced that churches can’t grow without discipleship programs.

So he began training nearly 40 members of his church in Veracruz, Mexico, to disciple others.

Last summer, he used resources from a Multiplication Network Ministries (MNM) church-planting conference to revise and strengthen his discipleship program.

“Our hope was that we could start eight new small groups to provide pastoral care to the church,” says Limón.

But the people in the first discipleship group started leading other groups. Within three months, 110 people—many of whom were new to the church—had joined 18 groups, causing Limón’s church to consider starting another church.

To help create “More Churches, Stronger Churches” across Latin America, MNM provides church planters with resources and training. Church planters learn about discipleship, evangelism, church ministries, spiritual disciplines, accountability, inductive Bible studies, and more.

MNM recently signed agreements with the Church of God and the National Presbyterian Church, two of Mexico’s large denominations, to support church-planter trainings.

“The focus is always on training others who then can train others, so there is a huge ripple effect,” says Ben Meyer, a



Pastor Limón (in orange shirt) with others interested in church planting.

Christian Reformed World Missions missionary and MNM’s Mexico coordinator.

Years ago, people told Pastor Limón that only new churches could expand. Old churches were full of problems. But he’s seen God renew the vision of older churches for evangelism.

Quoting a church planter, he comments, “Church multiplication can be done with low costs and high impacts . . . because it’s God who is allowing us to fulfill the work that he has commissioned us to do.” ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort,
Christian Reformed World Missions

It's About Time

Have you ever said, "Give me more time!" or "I don't have enough time!" Sometimes we feel like time belongs to us. But here's what the writer of Psalm 31 says: "I trust in you, Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands."

Every second, every minute, every hour, and every day of your life belongs to God. That's a comforting truth. But it also makes you think, doesn't it?

God gives every person on earth 24 hours to use each day. How will you use yours?

Clocks That Don't Tick

Through the centuries, people have used lots of interesting things to mark the passing of time. Here are just a few:

- **Sundial:** Invented by the Egyptians, sundials create a shadow that points to the hour of the day. But they don't work when it is dark or cloudy outside!
- **Water clock:** In ancient Egypt and China, some people used water clocks. Water dripped through a small hole in one bowl into another bowl. By measuring the water, people could tell how much time had passed.
- **Candle clock:** In ancient China and later in other countries, people marked candles or candleholders to tell time. They could tell what time it was by how far down the candle had burned.
- **Hourglass:** In medieval times, people used hourglasses to tell time. When all the sand from the upper part of the hourglass had trickled into the lower part, an hour was up.

I'm telling you, Han, you must either go with the water clock or the candle... you can't do both!

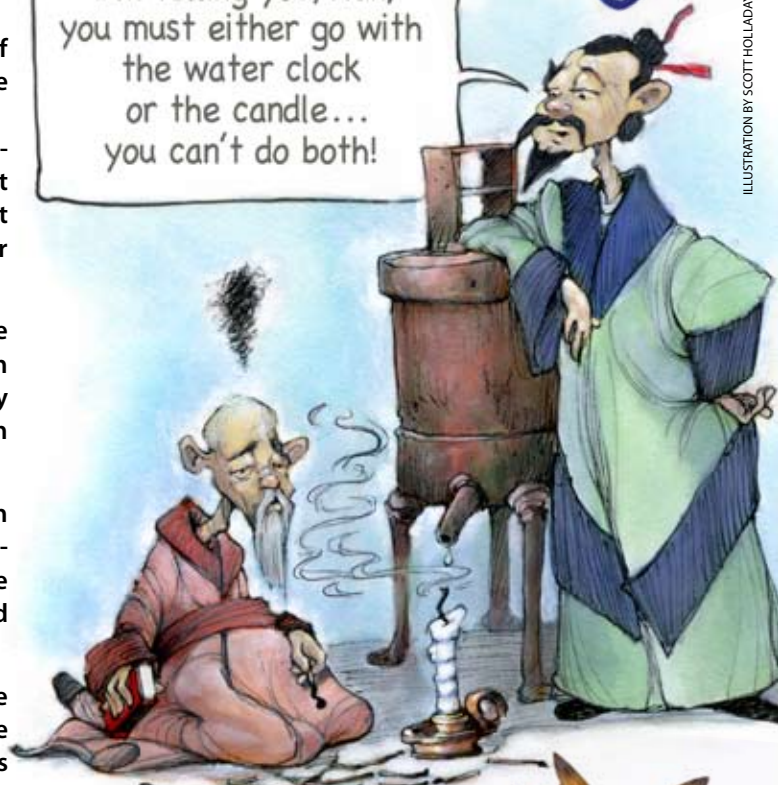
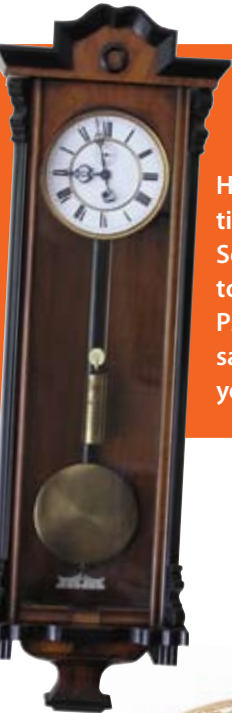


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Bigger Than Big Ben

The world's biggest clock is on a brand-new tower in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Its face is 151 feet across—that's longer than four school buses end to end! The tower the clock is on is now the world's second-tallest building.





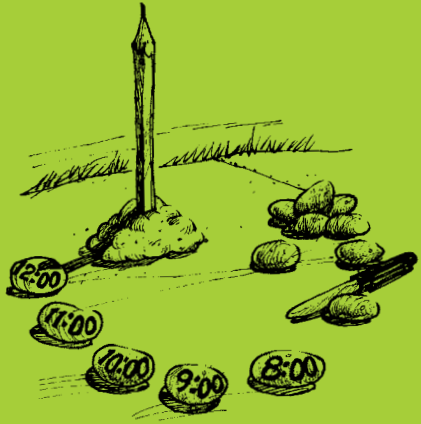
Take the Time Challenge

To find out how you use the time God gives you, track yourself for 24 hours! On a normal weekday, use this chart to write down how much time you spend on the following activities. Start from the time you wake up, and keep track of everything you do until you wake up the next morning.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing outside |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking with a friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Riding in the car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing online games or video games | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning at school or at home | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing chores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing homework | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a book |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

When you're done, look at your results. What would you like to spend more time on? What could you spend less time on? How do you feel about the way you used your day?

Make Your Own Sundial



For thousands of years, people have used sundials to tell time. Here's how you can make one.

What you need:

- a pencil
- 13 small stones
- a two-inch ball of modeling clay
- a permanent black marker
- a flat surface outdoors where there's no shade

What you do:

- Start on a sunny day a little before 8:00 a.m. Press the modeling clay onto the ground. Then push the pencil, eraser first, into the clay so it stands straight up.
- At exactly 8:00 a.m., put a stone on the ground right at the end of the pencil shadow that's farthest from the clay. Write the time on the stone with the permanent marker. Do this every hour until 8:00 p.m.
- The next time you have a sunny day, see if you can tell what time it is by where the pencil's shadow points!



Just a Second

Do you know how far the moon travels in one minute? Or how much the world's population increases in one hour?

You'll find out when you read this fun picture book by Steve Jenkins. If numbers are your thing (or even if they're not) you'll enjoy these fascinating facts. But before you read this book, test yourself! Match these numbers—4, 20, 100, and 200—to Steve Jenkins's facts below:

In one second

- a bumblebee's wings can beat _____ times.
- a woodpecker's beak can hammer a tree _____ times.
- a running cheetah can travel _____ feet.
- somewhere in the world, _____ babies are born.

Think you know the answers? Check yourself at the side of this page.



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Alive and is a member of Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Mich. She is not always on time.



Answers: a: 200 b: 20 c: 100 d: 4

2011 in Rewind



AS THE ACADEMY CONSIDERS which movies are Oscar-worthy, we look back at what our reviewers (and a couple of our online readers) thought of some of the films of 2011.* For full reviews of many of these movies, visit thebanner.org.

The Adventures of Tintin: “The movie is true to the series’ sense of rapid adventure and comic fun and offers an excellent family film. . . young viewers might find the action and violence too intense.” —Otto Selles

The Artist: “Dujardin balances broad physical comedy and subtle facial expressions to give depth to his portrayal of George Valentin.” —Otto Selles

What Banner reviewers thought of some of the films of 2011.

Courageous: “A visual treatise on Christian fatherhood . . . this preachy film could have more effectively told its story in less time and far fewer words.” —Kristy Quist

“This movie has given our ministry to and through men some great talking points. Like men stepping up and taking responsibility and men not accepting doing just enough as fathers.” —online comment from Todd Wessels

The Help: “Detailed vintage sets and superb acting provide an unforgettable visual and emotional treat.” —Jennifer Meyer

“It is a great example of what social justice means when it claims to give voice to the voiceless.” —online comment from Herman Keizer, Jr.

Hugo: “Full of loss, wonder, and mystery, *Hugo* is a visual feast.” —Kristy Quist

The Interruptions: “The year’s most moving moment of cinematic grace was a real-life one.” —Josh Larsen

Jane Eyre: “[Director] Fukunaga’s *Jane Eyre* is dark and moody, just as fans would hope, and Mia Wasikowska . . . gives a lovely, nuanced performance as Jane.” —Kristy Quist

Midnight in Paris: “Allen skillfully blends social satire and wistfulness in his most amusing and approachable film in many years.” —Otto Selles

Moneyball: “A sports movie that is also about how a man measures himself, his life, and success.” —Kristy Quist

The Muppets: “Kermit, Miss Piggy, and friends eschew sterile family values in favor of a holy sort of nonsense.” —Josh Larsen

Soul Surfer: “Melodramatic at times . . . both entertaining and encouraging to young people to look to the plans God has for them.” —Kristy Quist

The Tree of Life: “Full of intoxicating imagery and shattering truths, *The Tree of Life* makes the reality of sin both personal and profound.” —Josh Larsen

War Horse: “Think *Saving Private Ryan* meets *Black Beauty*, and you might start to see the problem—a war movie for horse-loving tweens.” —Kristy Quist

The Way: “Takes the viewer down the ancient pilgrimage path of El Camino de Santiago. . . The strength of the movie is that, shot on location, the film leads the viewer authentically along the trail past all the well-known landmarks.” —Jenny deGroot

*Note: Several highly-anticipated films were not widely released in time for this article. ■



Kristy Quist is Tuned In editor for *The Banner* and a member of Neland Ave. CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Q & A with Keith Getty

Songwriter Keith Getty spent a little time talking with *Banner* news correspondent Melissa Holtrop. You can read the full interview online at thebanner.org.



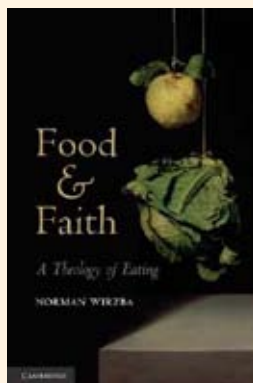
Q. Several of your songs are slated for inclusion in the new hymnal being published by Faith Alive (*Lift Up Your Hearts*). How do you feel about the use of hymnals today?

A. There are benefits to every medium. When using an overhead projector or a computer, you can get a song ready in five minutes. It means people's hands and bodies are free for creative expression, and you can add a visual dimension if you find that useful. All of those things are good. The hymnbook puts an emphasis on quality. In other words, you have to pick a song that's going to last for a number of years. Similarly, people then get to know those hymns over a period of time and make them a part of their lives. A hymnbook has multiple uses. I personally am a big believer in them and think they have been on the rise again in the past few years.

Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

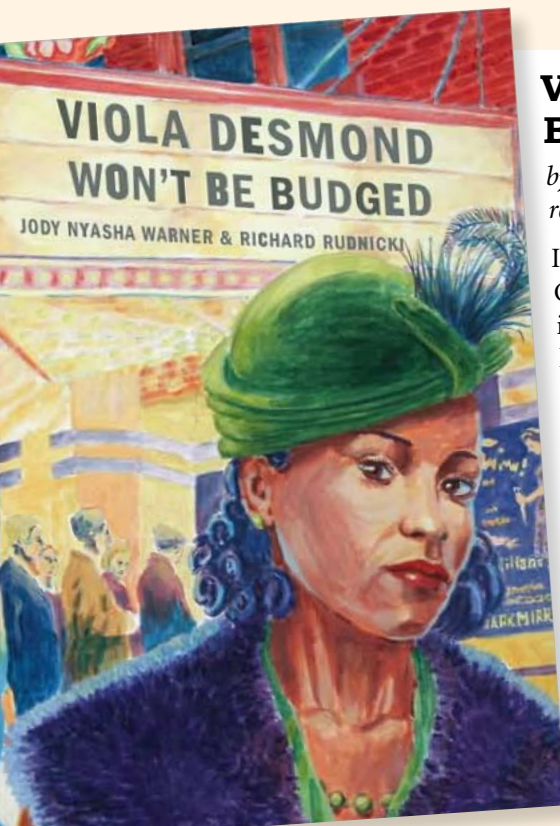
by Norman Wirzba

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack



How shall we then eat? This imaginative book offers a substantive meditation on thoughtful eating. Arguing that food is "a gift of love," Wirzba employs a

sophisticated trinitarian theological lens to evaluate today's food production and consumption practices, and to show how their destructive effects can impact our souls. With Wendell Berry in the footnotes, agrarian Wirzba is radically committed to a sustainable, localized economy. Rich reflections on the Eucharist orient our understanding and practice of sacramental eating. Once you consume this literary feast, you'll never eat without thinking again. (Cambridge)



Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged!

by Jody Nyasha Warner

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1946, Viola Desmond was jailed in Nova Scotia, Canada, when she sat in the front of a theater instead of in the segregated "colored" section. At her hearing, the judge refused to acknowledge that Viola had been discriminated against. Though Viola's African Canadian community rallied around her, justice was denied again when she appealed the trumped-up charges. Historically accurate and beautifully illustrated, this picture book introduces children to a relatively unknown Canadian hero who stood up for her rights just as, almost a decade later, Rosa Parks did in the United States. (Groundwood Books)

THE LOWDOWN

Birds and Bees:



As Valentine's Day approaches, the book *Bringing Sex into Focus* by

Caroline J. Simon might help put our culture of sex into perspective. (InterVarsity)

Lenten Learning:



Spend some time with *Forty*, a Lenten devotional by Kory Plock-

meyer, available in single copies or in bulk orders. (Faith Alive)

Fab Four:



Here We Are Again, the latest album from gospel

quartet Ernie Haase & Signature Sound, is due this month. (StowTown Records)



Good Words:

Faith Comes by Hearing is a website dedicated to

providing downloadable audio Bibles in languages from all around the world. (faithcomesbyhearing.com)

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





**Academic
Freedom and
Confessional
Integrity:
A Delicate
Dance**

A WELL-EXECUTED DANCE is beautiful. Both partners carry out their own steps while providing space for their partner's steps. All the while, they cling to each other in an embrace just strong enough to keep them from flying apart.

That is what academic freedom in a Reformed Christian college should look like. The college and the church community that supports it are partners in a dance. Both must give the other enough space, yet they need to cling together in a healthy tension that keeps them from breaking apart.

On paper it can seem pretty clear-cut. But sometimes research by scholars in pursuit of truth can bump up against the boundaries of Scripture and the Reformed

doctrines that both the school and the church community embrace.

When that happens, how do academics, college administrators, and the church communities that support them balance the desire for academic freedom with the desire to remain faithful to Scripture and our Reformed confessions?

How do they stay together in that beautiful dance?

What Is Academic Freedom?

Anthony Diekema, former president of Calvin College, wrote the book on academic freedom and Christian higher education—literally. Many consider his book *Academic Freedom & Christian Scholarship* to be the authoritative work on the topic.

Diekema defines academic freedom as a sacred trust, one that is granted only to scholars and members of an academic community.

Gaylen Byker, current president of Calvin College, defines academic freedom as “the freedom of both the institution and faculty members to pursue truth without undue restraint,” freedom that is not understood as the absence of constraints but rather freedom to do what is right.

Some would say that the boundaries of the Bible and the Reformed confessions put constraints on professors in our church-related colleges that fly contrary to the whole notion of academic freedom.

But academics and administrators in colleges related to the Christian Reformed Church beg to differ, saying that there are

just as many, if not more, constraints on their colleagues in state-owned secular schools. In fact, they feel that they have *more* freedom even while they are bound to Scripture and the confessions.

James K.A. Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, said, “Most of us did our graduate training at a secular public university and it was clear all the things you were not allowed to think, implicit rules and boundaries and limits to what you could think and say. At Calvin, there are parameters, but they are on the table and everyone knows what they are, and they [don’t] sway with the winds of political ideology.”

What Role Do the Confessions Play?

Calvin College, which is owned by the CRC, requires professors to sign the Form of Subscription that officebearers in the church also sign, indicating faithfulness to Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

Other CRC-related colleges are supported by the CRC community but are independent in governance. In some form or another, all of them require professors to sign on to the mission of the institution, which finds its roots in the Scriptures and in the Reformed confessions.

Byker said the confessional commitments serve both a centering and a boundary function. “Within this confessional context, faculty members are free to engage in intellectual, moral, and spiritual inquiry, to discern the shape of a faithful Christian way of life and understanding of God’s world.”

Steven Timmermans, president of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., compares the confessions to a great cloud of witnesses. “The Holy Spirit has guided Christians over the centuries to agree upon biblical interpretation,” he said. That gives the confessionally based college the added dimension of all those Christians over the centuries serving as a “great cloud of witnesses” observing scholars as they pursue their work.

Loren Haarsma, a physics professor at Calvin College, said the confessions provide a central starting point, but sometimes give competing theological concerns. “For example,” he said, “in the last century, debates about card playing and theater attendance pitted good theological concerns against each other: on the one hand, concerns about practicing piety and avoiding worldliness; on the other hand, concerns about the primacy of God’s grace and avoiding legalism.”

Sometimes it is the confessions themselves that come under scrutiny. Lee Hardy, a professor of philosophy at Calvin College who has written about aca-

“You can’t
just trot out
confessions
when you
want to put up
a fence.”

demic freedom, said, “We can speak of conducting research and reflection within the boundaries set by the confessions; but we can also speak of research and reflection on those boundaries themselves. The first thing we should note is that the confessions are not infallible; the second thing we should note is that they (plus their interpretation) nonetheless represent our tradition’s best understanding to date of what is taught in the Word of God. So the confessions should not be immune from critical reflection; but neither should such reflection be undertaken lightly.”

Because these are deeply held and deeply loved theological concerns, the debate can become very emotional and threatening.

And there’s the rub.

When the Dance Gets Intricate

When one partner starts dancing outside the accepted pattern, how much room does the other partner give to accommodate those steps?

When emotions run high and tradition runs deep, how much room should the church, and college administrators, give to research that they feel may be straying beyond the bounds of the confessions and thus the commonly-accepted interpretation of Scripture?

Harry Fernhout, president of The King’s University College in Edmonton, Alberta, said that, first and foremost, faculty members need to demonstrate that the motivations come out of the heart of the institution’s confessional stance and mission. Also, the research being put forward should fall into that scholar’s area of expertise.

Hardy said a church-owned college should bend over backwards to defend and protect scholars who are working in good faith on controversial issues. “A college is where the church can do its thinking. This is not to say that scholars can do no wrong. But a college should always start with protection,” he said.

Haarsma concurs that such research is one of the ways colleges serve the church. “Whenever scholars have the expertise and feel led by God to study one of these controversial areas, church-affiliated colleges should encourage these scholars to do so,” he said.

“If a scholar’s work is sound and raises good questions, even if the work is controversial, and even if it doesn’t have all the answers neatly tied together, colleges should help communicate the scholar’s work to the church as a whole. In fact, the college might do more than merely »

communicate that work, but even celebrate it,” he added.

Haarsma has communicated some of that controversial research himself. He and his wife, Deborah Haarsma, also a physics professor at Calvin, cowrote *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Faith Alive Christian Resources), a book that explores many theories of the origins of human life that are held by Christians, many of which are in conflict with each other.

Share the New Steps with the Church

Rev. Peter Jonker is pastor of Woodlawn CRC, a church that meets on the campus of Calvin College.

He said it is important that faculty at a Christian college keep in mind the faith community in which scholarship takes place. “As [professors] do scholarship and offer conclusions, it isn’t with just the academic community in mind,” he said. “There are also the plumbers and carpenters and lawyers who are part of this community.”

He said that humility and respect for that community is important. “You present what you found in a way sensitive to them, because you’re part of this community.”

Rev. John Gorter agrees. He is pastor of Peoria (Iowa) CRC, where some members are sometimes deeply distrustful of what they hear coming out of the denominational college.

One way to ameliorate that distrust, he said, is to keep the people in the pew informed of the questions and struggles the professor is facing. “I know some don’t involve the constituency because they don’t sense the need for it, or are too busy, but some don’t do it because there is a fear that there are these wild-eyed non-thinking fundamentalists ready to lynch [them.] This is hurtful and almost insulting, basically saying ‘you’re out of it, you’re backwards.’” That is how deep distrust develops, Gorter said.

“I really appreciate the book by the Haarsmas. That was wonderful,” he said. “What that did was give us respect and dignity, saying, ‘We’re going to tell you our struggles and invite you to join us in our struggle so we can do this together.’”

Gorter said that when the church isn’t engaged, then new ideas get dumped in the lap of pewsitters, leaving them wondering where in the world those ideas have come from.

Smith acknowledges that how a scholar engages with the faith community can make a big difference.

“We have the luxury to think through hard questions that our brothers and sisters in Pella don’t have the time or luxury for,” he said. “But [we have] a responsibility to do it in a way sensitive to and charitable toward where our wider community is at. If we can’t conduct our work with that dynamic, we abuse the freedom that is given.”

Does the Church Know Its Steps?

Jonker and Gorter both acknowledged, however, that the respect must go both ways. “When a scholar finds something that seems to challenge what my community believes, we need to have respect for and trust in our scholars,” said Jonker. “We send them out on the frontiers to scout on the edge of things we have trouble seeing. This is how the process works. We’re arguing about ideas, but the process breaks down at the level of trust.”

Gorter said pastors have a special responsibility to help congregants listen. “Let’s not demonize each other, not assume the worst. Assume the best, really listen, try to understand where [scholars] are coming from” he said. “Ask how we can be faithful to the Lord and his Word together.”

Smith said the church also has to do its homework. “I do believe that the things we are wrestling with show that we take the confessions more seriously than a lot of CRC congregations that have been

hijacked by a generic mega-church evangelical mentality where the confessions are not a living document,” he said. “You can’t just trot out confessions when you want to put up a fence.”

In the Dance Together

Fernhout points out that the CRC has undertaken the responsibility of supporting vibrant Christian higher education, so it has to accept what goes with the territory: creative engagement with issues. At the same time, it can serve as a corrective for ideas that are moving in the wrong direction or that are moving too quickly.

“In a healthy situation you have a back and forth movement between the academic endeavor and the church,” he said.

Just like a beautiful dance. ■



Gayla Postma is news editor for *The Banner* and a member of Williamsburg (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church.

Why We Should Adopt the Belhar

EVERY COMMUNITY IS SHAPED BY THE STORIES IT TELLS.

This is as true of the Navajo people centuries ago as it is of the people of Russia today. The stories we tell can either help or hinder us in finding our way forward. A story has the power to inspire and challenge us like nothing else.

Consider the way stories have shaped the Christian Reformed Church. Our confessions speak to us with passion and power because they were birthed in times of struggle and difficulty. Their stories continue to shape the church today—as long as we tell them and remember.

The Heidelberg Catechism was forged in the fire of the Reformation as the church sought to provide sound biblical teaching to a fledgling new church. That story has inspired our church to value solid education and biblical teaching. The catechism's themes of comfort, sin, salvation, and gratitude continue to shape our life in the church.

The Belgic Confession was birthed in blood and fire. Under threat from the Spanish Empire, the church was willing to bend the knee to a Catholic king but unwilling to bend on the beliefs summarized in that confession. In the ensuing conflict, many died for their faith. But out of that struggle, the Dutch Reformed community came to cherish and defend religious freedom. [Early on, the Netherlands became a sanctuary for persecuted communities.] To this day, our church intentionally works to pursue a healthy relationship with government.

The Canons of Dort too was born in conflict—this one within the church. As heated debate grew around the perplexing dance between grace and faith in the work of salvation, participants hammered out some strong doctrinal truths. The story of our faith, as we tell it now, has less to do with our own belief and more to do with God's grace and power at work in us.

Today our Reformed brothers and sisters in South Africa have a terrible story of apartheid to share with us. The church misused its power and privilege and now extends to us an urgent invitation: "Take our hand in this pledge. We cannot make these mistakes again. Take our story with you, and tell it to your children."

Do we need to remember this story? No one would deny that we need to remember and to learn its lessons. But do we

Making the Belhar
one of our confessions
will encode
the lessons we learn
from it in the DNA
of our church.

make it a confession? I offer a firm yes! All stories fade with time unless they are retold. Their lessons fade as well. Making the Belhar one of our confessions will ensure that our memory of this story will not grow dim. It will encode the lessons we learn from it in the DNA of our church. And as we take ownership, this confession will give us fuel with which to battle the growing darkness of our age.

From the Belhar, we receive three distinct biblical challenges: Pursue unity. Practice reconciliation. Fight for justice. Driven restlessly forward by the story of apartheid, these challenges are filled with fire and power.

Let's claim this story for ourselves. Let's allow it to push us to grapple with Scripture and to live out God's Word and God's call with passion and courage.

This is a story we cannot afford to forget. ■ **WEB Q'S**

For the complete text of the Belhar Confession, visit crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm.



Rev. Mike Van Boom is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

Mom, We're Living Together

SHE STIRRED HER COFFEE *nervously and announced in a low voice, "My mother has moved in with a friend she met in her retirement community. I like him. Really. I think he's good for her. But they'll screw up their finances if they get married, so they didn't really consider it. I don't know what to say to my kids."*

"I miss church," said the young woman who dropped into the university chaplaincy where I work. "I miss the singing. God matters to me. I want to hear someone explain the Bible to me. But I'm living with my boyfriend. He's not a Christian, but he wants me to be happy and encourages me to go to church and even offered to go with me. I don't want to go because I'm afraid they'd only condemn us."

"Dear Mom," wrote a university student, "I wanted to let you know that John and I are planning to move in together next semester. I know this will be disappointing to you, and want to reassure you that I value the principles you gave me, but we have been dating for a long time and we really love and respect each other. Sharing a single apartment would also save a lot of money. I still expect us to get married sometime, and I hope this makes sense to you. We're not turning our backs on God, but we think this will be best for us."

Perhaps you know of a situation like one of these. Cohabiting—living together as a sexual couple without being married—has become common in North America. Recent census data in the U.S. and Canada shows that the number of unmarried couples living together has exponentially increased in the last 20 years. And if George Barna's research is to be believed, there is little difference between the attitudes and behavior of



People don't expect relevant advice for their sexual lives from their church and can't imagine finding grace.

young adults raised in the church and their unchurched peers (to view this research, visit tinyurl.com/BarnaStudy). Moreover, Barna names "church experiences related to sexuality" as one of the top six reasons young Christians leave the church.

This should concern us. The gap between what has become cultural practice and what is taught in churches has become so vast that people don't expect relevant advice for their sexual lives from their church and can't imagine finding grace from the church in the midst of

their choices. Even though families increasingly muddle through in a loving way in spite of disappointment—utterly casting off a daughter or son over “shacking up” with someone is largely the drama of a previous generation—few can imagine finding a church that could also lovingly muddle through.

We dream of faithful, loving, and committed partnerships—marriage—for our daughters and sons. For our friends. For ourselves. We recognize God’s blessing in and for such relationships. To an older generation of Christians, cohabitation appears as a challenge to this dream, a distorted second-best. But when I said that to a cluster of students—Christians and nonbelievers—at my university, they were all surprised.

“My parents really don’t want me to think of getting married until I’ve graduated and found a job,” explained a Christian student. “And that’s probably going to be years away. It would be weird to wait until I was 30 to have sex. But I guess I’m not likely to actually live with someone until we’re married.”

“I think my parents would be upset if I *didn’t* live with my boyfriend before we got married!” stated a non-Christian, somewhat bewildered by my assertion. “They’d think were just crazily throwing a party and weren’t taking the relationship and our commitments seriously.”

While Christians participate in our culture’s enthusiasm for living as we wish when it comes to money, fashion, career choices, cars, and entertainment, surely it should be no surprise that young people assume sex is part of the smorgasbord of things that they can grab as they desire. Hedging sexuality with rules—going this far is OK; that touch is too much; looking at pornography is bad but Victoria Secret’s “angels” are OK—only creates a new kind of legalism. We need to grab hold of the idea of offering

up our bodies as living sacrifices in a fresh way. But cohabiting couples should not necessarily be the first people to face this challenge.

So how should we respond?

1. Remember the law of Christ—the rule of love. That rule is more important than drawing a line in the sand. Unmarried couples live together for varied reasons: seniors in a retirement community, new Christians who are in an established relationship with an unbelieving partner, a pair of recent university grads who plan to get married eventually. To respond lovingly, you need to know a person’s story. Galatians 6:2 calls for gentleness and patience as our response and goes on to talk about restoration, not condemnation, for Christians.

2. Be forthright as well as gentle. Explain your concerns. God *does* want his people to live within married covenants rather than merely cohabit. You can respectfully refuse to let your 20-something son share the guest room with his partner when they visit, but you should do your best to gently explain your thinking and make their visit possible.

3. Advocate for faithfulness and commitment—within cohabitation if that is the starting point. Support loving, exclusive sexual partnership—even if it lacks the legal status of marriage. This does not mean you consider marriage insignificant; it does mean you are willing to love people as they are.

4. Hold off on your judgment. What would your judgment accomplish? Ask questions: Why are you living together without getting married? What can I do to support you and love you without giving you the impression that I think this is right? In a youth culture in which hook-ups are unremarkable, cohabitation is a kind of commitment

toward faithfulness, sexual exclusivity, and responsible shared life.

5. Drop the old arguments and scare tactics against cohabitation. They’ve lost credibility. Cohabitation may once have made long-term marital success less likely (a claim you can find on many Christian websites), but that is not based on reliable data. It is the casualness of the relationships rather than cohabitation itself that predicts future trouble.

6. Avoid biblical proof texts about the “abomination of fornication.” In both the Old and New Testaments, God affirms marriage as a picture of his relationship with his people, and so it is right to honor marriage and to aim for it. But consider Jesus’ response when the woman who was caught in adultery was brought to him (John 8:11).

7. Challenge people to delve into Scripture and to grow in God. Other parts of our lives fall into order when first things really are first. A friend in a large student church in Oxford, England, caught our attention when she said, “We used to have a sermon on sexual morality each term. Then we noticed that hearing a clear sermon on sexual morality was less successful in teaching sexual purity than getting the students to dig into the Bible themselves. A year of consciously trying to apply Scripture reshaped people’s lives—including their sexual lives—in ways the old sermons never did.” God himself became the center and everything else fell into place. ■



Virginia Miller Lettinga shared the position of Christian Reformed campus minister at the University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George) with her husband, Neil Lettinga, from August 2003 to December 2011.



TWO WOMEN, members of the same church, were magnetic opposites socially. People glommed onto the first, surrounding her with chatty enthusiasm.

The other stood on the sidelines, accompanied only by glum and silent family members. As their pastor, I wondered what made these women of similar temperament, age, interests, and social status so different conversationally.

I recalled psychologist Elias Porter's grid for analyzing conversations. He outlines five basic responses we can give to anyone who addresses us:

Evaluate: We can assess and offer judgment.

Instruct: We can tell the person what she should have done or could do.

Support: We can express affirmation and care.

Probe: We can ask questions and draw out other information or feelings.

Understand: We can repeat and summarize things said, showing how we have caught what was said, and encourage the person to share more.

We understand these responses practically, even if we don't think of them theoretically. Suppose you say to me, "I'm really tired today." I can respond to you in one of these five ways:

"Well, if you didn't stay out so late at night . . ." (*Evaluate*)

"You should take better care of yourself." (*Instruct*)

"It's tough to get going when your energy level is down, isn't it?" (*Support*)

"Oh? What's going on? Have you had trouble sleeping?" (*Probe*)

"Hmm . . . You do look like you are dragging a bit today." (*Understand*)

We like to think of ourselves as great listeners and conversationalists, eager and engaging. But most of us, according to researchers, instinctively fall back on "evaluative" and "instructional" responses. Unfortunately those are dialogue killers. Such expressions place us in moral superiority over another, setting that person on the defense.

with new insights about what strengthens and nurtures intimacy—and what language choices drive wedges between people.

We learn our communication skills from our parents and cultural systems. These learned patterns can be harsh and abrasive, like those of the lonely woman in my congregation. Or they can be loving

Christ has come as the healing Word of God.

Less than 20 percent of our responses fall into the last three categories—responses that draw people out and fertilize conversation. The two women in my congregation proved it. Invariably the first sprinkled conversations with, "Wow! That must be tough!" (*Support*), "Really?! What did you do then?" (*Probe*), or "I'm with you there . . ." (*Understand*). The other mostly judged and told.

Which of these two women would you be drawn to if you were having a hard time? More important, how do others find *you* as a conversationalist? Can you hear yourself?

Test It

I've assigned this analysis as an exercise during pre-marriage counseling: "Listen to other married couples you know. Discreetly record their responses to one another on paper. Get five to 10 summaries, then connect your findings to what you observe of each couple's relational health."

Of course, many factors contribute to the strength of a marriage. But invariably, the couples I was counseling came back

and tender, engaging and encouraging, nurturing spiritual wholesomeness.

The bad news is that we are all prone to sinful isolation and the use of evaluation and instruction as conversational weapons of self-preservation. The good news is that Christ has come as the healing Word of God, opening us to worlds of community and care and shared joy. Good pastoral care by wise elders and patient friends opened the horizon for the second woman in my early congregational experience. Today, although a few prickly conversational thorns remain, she has blossomed into a supportive, probing, and understanding person of grace. ■



Rev. Wayne Brouwer teaches at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: March issue is 1/30/2012. April issue is 3/5/2012.
Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

Available for Call

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN REF CHURCH Burbank, Illinois, recommends its former Pastor, Rev. Gerry Van Dam, to the churches for call. Contact Pastor Gerry at gvandam@comcast.net.

PASTOR AVAILABLE for Interim/Transitional Ministry. Dr. James C. Busscher has been serving congregations within the CRC as a Transitional Pastor for the past 8 years. His transitional ministry at the Lafayette CRC of Indiana will soon be completed. If you are looking for pastoral leadership during your time of vacancy then feel free to contact Pastor Busscher at 616-460-1811 or e-mail him at jcbusscher@gmail.com. References available.

Calls Accepted

PASTOR DAVID LOEW of the Kenosha CRC has accepted the call extended to him by the Lakeside Chapel of Ludington, MI. He will be leaving Kenosha in mid January 2012.

John Bylsma Stated Clerk, Classis WI



DORDT COLLEGE Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2012:

- Construction Management / Engineering
- Agriculture (one year position)
- History
- Music
- Spanish
- Accounting
- Marketing
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Social Work / Criminal Justice
- Theatre Arts - Directing & Teaching
- Theatre Arts - Technical & Lighting

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

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

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

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND is scheduled to meet in regular session on Saturday, March 3, 2012, at the First Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa. Rev. David Heilman, Stated Clerk

Financial Aid

CLASSIS KALAMAZOO, MI invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial aid for the academic year 2012-2013 to apply no later than March 31, 2012 by contacting Paul Vander Kamp, 2221 Ridgefield Rd., Portage, MI 49024, phone 269-321-0709, or e-mail vdrkmp@juno.com. Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2012-2013. Students presently receiving aid must reapply.

STUDENTS CLASSIS ZEELAND preparing for ordained/nonordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2012-2013 school year. For information, contact Judi Steenwyk, (616) 772-1772. All requests need to be received by April 1, 2012.

General

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2012 Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the office of the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda: a) Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15. b) Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1. c) Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15. d) Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15. Joel R. Boot Executive Director

ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER Synod has designated Wednesday, March 14, 2012, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, crops and industry, and the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U.S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U.S.) is May 3, 2012. Joel R. Boot Executive Director

Congregational Announcements

Church's 125th Anniversary

LAGRAVE AVENUE CRC of Grand Rapids MI will observe 125 years of God's grace on Sundays, Feb. 19 and 26. Former members and friends are invited to attend. See our website, www.lagravecrc.org, or call the office, 616.454.7204, for more information.

Church's 50th Anniversary

ORANGEWOOD CRC Phoenix, Az will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness March 17-18, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to fellowship with us March 17 @ 7pm and worship service March 18 @ 10am.

Announcements

LK. ALFRED MINISTRY-CRC/RCA winter ministry-join us in worship! Every Sunday, 10:30 AM, 5:50 PM thru April 22. Located on Rt. 17/92 in Lk. Alfred, FL, close to Winter Haven & Route 27. Phone 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442. cf. www.lakealfredministry.org.

WINTER CHURCH SERVICES in Mesa, AZ. Please join us for our Sunday Worship Service at Maranatha Comm. CRC in Mesa, AZ. We are a winter church and our services start the 1st Sunday in December through the 2nd Sunday in April. For more information contact, Rev. Gary Hutt @ 509-499-4561.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

ADOLPH VAN DUYN born on Jan 27, 1912. Residing at Bethany Home, 930 W. Main St., Ripon, CA 95366. Adolph's sons and their wives, Harold & Helen, Lloyd & Anna, Lawrence & Joan and Ralph & Sherri. 14 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and 13 great-great grandchildren thank God for his many years. Love from your family.

ELLA (VROOM) VAN PROOYEN of 16300 Wausau Ave. South Holland, IL 60473 will celebrate her 100th birthday on March 1. We, her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren, are thankful for her life and her influence in their lives.

FRANK VANDE WERFORST of Oak Harbor, Washington will celebrate his 100th birthday on Feb. 6. His children, grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren thank God for the long life he has been given. To God be the glory.

95th Birthday

MARGARET BRAAKSMA celebrated her 95th birthday on December 7, 2011, in Grand Rapids, MI. Children: Bill Braaksma and Barbara (Brian) Hire. Grandchildren: Will, Andy and Caroline Braaksma and Maggie Hire.

NELLIE (BEUKEMA) BRUNIUS celebrated 95 yrs. of God's blessings on Jan. 24. Residing at 15304 Wilshire, Orland Pk. IL. 60462. Children: Butch & Dot, 8 grandchildren & spouses (2 deceased), 16 great-grandchildren & 2 great-great grandchildren.

80th Birthday

CHESTER VANDERZEE 816 Samara Ave, Volga, SD 57071, celebrates 80 years on Feb. 2. His wife Betty, 4 children and spouses, and 11 grandchildren thank God for the blessing he is in their lives.

Obituaries

ADEMA Grietje, age 102, Dec 4, 2011, Brampton, Ont. She was preceded in death by her husband, Broer Gerrit Adema on Dec 11, 1999. Lovingly remembered by their children: Henny Koekoek (Jack predeceased), Pat Adema, Allan (Akkie), Martin (Trudy), Andy (Diana), Jenny Hurst (Dan), Henry (Jane), Ria Roosien (Gary). Many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and 8 great-great grandchildren. Psalm 103.



ASSINK Dean A. age 56, went to be with his Lord on December 12, 2011. Beloved husband for 33 years to Kimberly, nee Tibstra. Loving father of Brian (Tara), Tara (Al) Ipema, Mark and Robert. Proud papa of Payton, Levi, and Dakota Ipema; Austin, Hunter and Alexis Assink. Devoted son of

Paul and Dorothy Assink. Cherished brother of Linda Oostema and Steve (Sue) Assink. Dear "brother" of Steve Sluis. Dearest brother-in-law of Joyce (Tony) Macino, Larry (Sally) Tibstra, Bev (Ken) VanderWerf, and the late Tom (Susan) Tibstra. Dear uncle of many nieces and nephews.

BUTEYN Peter, age 100, of Holland, MI, on November 21, 2011. He was preceded in death by his wife, Jennie, and daughter, Beverly Bierma. He is survived by daughters: Marilyn (Wayne) Rietberg, Barbara Camping, Lori (Jim) LeFebre, Marge (Dave) Petroelje, Jan (Roger) Boyd, Carol (Ron) Bosch, Donna (Malcolm) DeKryger; son-in-law Merle (Marge) Bierma; 30 grandchildren; 40 great-grandchildren; sister Alice Schaaf; many nieces and nephews.



CLOUSING Rena, nee Leffring, age 87, went to her eternal home on December 16, 2011. Beloved wife of the late Louis. Loving mother of Wayne (Greta), Gary (the late Judith), and James (Tina). Dear grandmother of five and great-grandmother of five. Fond sister of Sophie

Leffring and the late Louise Schutt, Reynold, and Harry.

DEBLAEY Paul, age 76, December 2, 2011, Midland Park, NJ. Predeceased by wife Alberta in 2010. Survived by children Sharon (Mark) Vander Weit, Pam (Jay) Goemaat, Tim (Heather) DeBlaey. 8 grandchildren & 2 great-grandchildren.

HULSTEIN Helen, age 105 of Denver, CO, passed to her eternal home on December 1, 2011. She is survived by her son, Calvin and his wife, Anne, of South Windsor, CT, and her daughter, Joyce Vroon, of Atlanta, GA. Her husband, Neal, passed away in 1971. She is predeceased by her son Robert and his wife Janet and her son-in-law, Dr. David Vroon. She is survived by eight grandchildren, their spouses and nineteen

great-grandchildren. She graduated from Calvin College in 1924 and was the oldest alumnus at her death.

KULA Robert Joseph, 73, passed away on November 19, 2011. Survived by his wife of twenty years (Deborah Vander Weele-Kula) and family members.

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Church Position Announcements

FULL TIME PASTOR Phoenix CRC, Phoenix, AZ. We are a growing congregation located in a central Phoenix neighborhood. We desire an experienced pastor who is committed to passionate preaching and able to work with all age groups as well as the neighborhood community. If interested, contact Andy Keizer, search@phoenixcrc.org, 623-875-5871, website: www.phoenixcrc.org

PASTOR: KINGSTON, Ontario's Westside Fellowship CRC is a small church with a big heart in an historic university city of 117,000 on the shores of Lake Ontario. We are seeking a pastor who relates well to all ages, and will help us grow as a church through using his or her gifts of empowering leadership, engaging preaching, and effective worship planning. The new pastor will help renew our educational ministry and will support our efforts to reach out to our community. For further information, or to submit a pastoral profile please email admin@wfcrc.ca

CO-PASTOR: First CRC DeMotte IN is seeking a Pastor of Worship and Discipleship to partner in ministry with our Pastor of Worship and Pastoral Care. We seek an individual who will be able to help us implement our vision to grow our faith and share the good news of Jesus Christ with our neighbors. Please check our website for a job description at www.1stcrdemotte.org and direct your inquiry to the executive committee at firstcrrc@netnitco.net.

CONG. CARE COORDINATOR Fellowship CRC in Brighton, ON, a growing and dynamic church of 500+, is seeking a Congregational Care Coordinator. This p/t position would be filled by someone who can guide our Congregational Care Team and our Small Group leaders, encourage formation of new Small Groups, inspire inter-generational ministry, coordinate with our pastors to improve member care and may be asked to participate in some worship services. Please contact Roxanne Ewing drgmewing@live.com.

PASTOR POSITION AVAILABLE San Diego, CA CRC is seeking a pastor. We are looking to grow through community outreach and missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical

teaching, faithfully leading us according to God's will. Sermons will be delivered with enthusiasm and sincerity and will be relevant to all age groups. Loving God & our neighbors and joining God in His mission is central to all we do. Check us out at sdrc.org. For information contact sdrc.pastorsearch@gmail.com. Please respond by end of February 2012.

SENIOR PASTOR River Terrace Church is an energetic, multi-generational, spiritually diverse Christian Reformed church, located on the edge of the Michigan State University campus. As a congregation we seek to cultivate hearts and minds to flourish in Christ. Responsibilities of the Senior Pastor include preaching, worship, and leadership as pastor of the congregation and head of staff. More info at www.riverterrace.org Send resumes and letters of interest by March 1, 2012 to: Search Committee, River Terrace Church, 1509 River Terrace Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823 or search@riverterrace.org.

PASTOR: Lafayette, IN CRC is looking for an experienced church-planter type of pastor to lead us in our plan to relocate our ministry to a new site in our growing community. If you have the gifts to lead in this exciting ministry venture while serving as senior pastor of a loving, caring congregation, please respond by sending your ministry profile to: Lafayette Christian Reformed Church, 1200 Tippecanoe St., Lafayette, IN 47904 or mail to: secretary@lafayettecrrc.org Our Search Team Chairman is Norbert Fisher at (765)447-4659.

MINISTER OF FAITH FORMATION Church of the Servant CRC of Grand Rapids, MI is seeking a full-time person to provide leadership and oversight of faith formation ministries for children, youth and adults. This position requires spiritual maturity, commitment to the Reformed faith, strong pedagogical gifts, ability to recruit and guide volunteers, and capacity to work well with other ministerial staff and teams. Interested persons are encouraged to consult the church profile and full job description (www.churchoftheservantcrrc.org) and send cover letters and resumes to Lois De Vries at MFFSearch@coscrrc.org by February 15, 2012.

WORSHIP COORDINATOR Fellowship CRC in Brighton, a growing and dynamic church of 500+ is seeking a Worship Coordinator. The successful applicant of this part time position would help organize our talented musicians and praise teams, provide leadership and meet with the pastors and worship committee to plan blended worship services and occasionally lead in the ministry of music. Ideal candidate would be able to play piano, guitar or organ. Please contact Tony Jeronimus 613-475-4455 or tonyj@peakltd.ca.

YOUTH MINISTER: South Bend CRC (IN) is taking applications now for a position opening in June. For an application or information on our sustainable youth ministry, email office@sbcrc.org

LADNER CRC, a mid-size church located in a small bedroom community, 20 km south of Vancouver BC, is seeking a Senior pastor. A vision statement, church profile and job description can be made available to interested applicants. Contact Darrell Renkema at upside@eastlink.ca or 778 855 7365.

WASHINGTON, DC CRC: Our small, diverse, urban congregation is seeking a full-time pastor. For information, please contact search@dccrc.org

SENIOR PASTOR Calvary Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan is seeking a senior pastor to lead our vibrant and active congregation. We are looking for a passionate leader who will actively engage in the life of our congregation and the diversity of our community. We aren't afraid to get to know our neighbors, and we're looking for a pastor who is willing to do the same! To learn more about the church, visit our web site at www.calvaryreformedholland.org. If you feel a nudging in your spirit...be bold! Contact the Search Team at calvaryon8th@gmail.com.

FIRST CUTLERVILLE CRC in Byron Center, MI is seeking a full-time Pastor. Please direct all inquires and communications to: Mark Was-sink, Search Team, 6617 Crossing Dr., SE Ste. 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49508 or phone @ (616) 455-0868.

SCHOLTE Ann Rosien, 76, went home on Dec. 3, 2011. Survived by her beloved husband of 55 years, Harry. Devoted mother of Marianne Scholte (husband, Peter Palesch), Gordon Scholte, Brian Scholte (wife, Margie) and Anita Griffie. Adored and much loved by nine grandchildren

NUMAN Aileen-Aja-Gunneman, September 22, 1941 - December 6, 2011, Vancouver, BC. Sur1 nee Venhuizen; loving father of Susan (Joseph) Folkerts, Edwin (Sherry) Tameling, Gary (Sandra) Tameling, Kimberly (Kevin) Vlietstra; devoted grandfather of Jason Folkerts, Laura (Christopher) Benning, Lynda Sue (Matthew) Behnke, Robert Folkerts, Kevin (Janey), Kerry, Richard (Jenna), and Nathan Tameling, Melissa, Peter, Ashley, and Dillon Tameling, Kyle, Katelyn, Kaleb, and Kadin Vlietstra; great-grandfather of Mason, Talen and Landon; fond brother of Henry (Betty) Tameling, and the late Sadie Stob, the late Stephen (Joan) Tameling, and the late Gertrude Mallek; uncle of many nieces and nephews.

VAN DALFSEN Rev. Cecil N., 76, 13030 Linden Ave, N. 405E, Seattle 98133, a child of the King, went gently home to his palace on high on Dec 13. He

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COMPUTER SCIENCE FACULTY POSITION – Tenure track position starts August 16, 2012. Ph.D. preferred; Master's degree in Computer Science considered; Expertise in applied mathematics or information technology desirable.

HALF TIME MATH INSTRUCTOR PRACTITIONER POSITION – Renewable term position starts August 16, 2012. Master's degree in mathematics or mathematics education AND successful K-12 teaching experience required.

PSYCHOLOGY FACULTY POSITION – Renewable term position, which could become tenure track starts August 16, 2012. Ph.D. preferred, ABD considered; Expertise in clinical or counseling psychology required.

REFERENCE LIBRARIAN – Starts in Summer 2012. Master's degree in Library Sciences required. Previous experience in a college/university library preferred.

For additional job openings and application instructions, please visit www.trnty.edu/jobopenings.

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is survived by his wife of 54 years, Patricia, 3 children. Pam (Wayne Duncan) Terri Hesse, and Shawn (Heather) 4 grandchildren. 206-417-1890

VAN REKEN Henry Everett, MD. went to be with Our Lord on November 28th, 2011. 3460 Saratoga Blvd, apt 153, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Cherished husband of Rozena "Rose", nee Poortenga; devoted father of David (Ruth) Van Reken, Marjorie (Jim) Bogdalek, Calvin (Rosella) Van Reken, Rosemary (John) Strodtman, and Philip (Kandace) Van Reken; precious grandfather of 16 and great grandfather of 23; dear brother of the late Don (the late Elsa and the late Mildred), Stanley Robert (Harriet), and Jean Jensma. Memorials to CRC Mission Fund or M. A. P., PO box 215000, Brunswick, GA 31521. He was dearly loved by his family and will be greatly missed.

VEENSTRA Nella (Rickers) precious child of God, was welcomed into greater fullness of His presence on December 9, 2011. She was the beloved wife of the late Rev. Rolf Veenstra with whom she was a partner in every sense of the word. Together they served as missionaries in Nigeria and in Rehoboth, NM. Siblings preceding her in death are: Henrietta (John) Vogelzang, Peter Rickers, Henry Rickers, and sister-in-law, Ruth Rickers. Remembering her life with joy are her children: Charlotte Veenstra, Sharon (George) Visser, Harry (Barbara) Veenstra, Christian (Robin) Veenstra, Timothy (Stephanie) Veenstra; 10 grandchildren; 7 great-grandchildren; and numerous spiritual children whose lives she touched in her 87 years; siblings: Neal Rickers, John (Millie) Rickers, Helen (Roger) VanderVelde; and sisters-in-law: Norma Rickers, Donna Rickers, and Jackie Vogelzang.

VERVER James, 86, of Ripon, Ca was called home on Dec 3, 2011. He will be greatly missed by his wife of 63 yrs, Cornelia Eggink Verver, his daughters, Lynette (Bill) Marble, Charlotte (Joe) Holland, Judy (Dennis) Vander Plaats, Lori (Bob) Van Nieuwenhuyzen, Valerie (Manuel) Tavares, 13 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his great-grandson, Luke Barnes. Jim will always be remembered for his faith, family, and service to others.

ZONDERVAN Betty Ann (nee Wevers), age 56, passed away of cancer in Taber, Alberta on November 27, 2011. Betty is survived by her husband of over thirty five years and ministry partner for more than thirty-one



face
to face

Choir Tour 2012
March 22-30

Events:

- 3/23 Pella, IA
- 3/25 Lutheran Church of Hope
Des Moines, IA • All Morning
Services & Evening Concert at 7:00 pm
- 3/27 Calvin College Chapel
Grand Rapids, MI • 7:30 pm
(Sponsored by the Calvin Institute of
Christian Worship)
- 3/28 Trinity College Ozinga Chapel
Palos Heights, IL • 7:30 pm
- 3/30 Joplin, Missouri

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<http://www.rcsnm.org/upcomingevents.cfm>

years, Rev. Jim Zondervan; her children Sarah (Bindert) De Jong of Lacombe, Alberta, Samuel Zondervan of Lethbridge, Alberta, Anna Zondervan of Lethbridge, David (Amanda) Zondervan of Taber, Alberta, and Joseph Zondervan of Taber; grandson Gavin David Zondervan of Taber. Also mourning her passing are her father Rev. Theodore Wevers of Hudsonville, Michigan; brother Rev. Frank (Sally) Wevers of Holland, Michigan; sister Thea (Arnold) Toonstra of Wyoming, Michigan; mother-in-law Harriet Zondervan of Willmar, Minnesota; brother-in-law Weldon (Charlotte) Zondervan of Renville, Minnesota; sister-in-law Linda Slagter of Willmar, Minnesota. Betty faithfully served her Savior, and will be sadly missed and fondly remembered for her loving, compassionate spirit and Christian commitment. Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Employment

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

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

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DUCK LAKE COTTAGE for rent yr. around in Traverse City area. Sleeps up to 17 and located on 10 acres of privacy. 4 bedrooms/3 baths. 231-709-0511

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

LAKE MICH COTTAGE Lakefront, Whitehall area; clean, 3BR/2BA; private setting, sandy beach. Nearby: golf, canoe, hike, ride horses, bike, dunes, Mich's Adv. No pets please. \$1500/wk. 248-344-0996 or sjj2003@comcast.net

SUMMER COTTAGES Four side-by-side, 2- and 3-bedroom lakefront cottages on 800-acre Fremont Lake near Grand Rapids, MI. Each sleeps 4-6. Rates are in \$650/\$750 range. Includes boats, grills, firewood, 165 feet of sandy lakefront. Email rogerwingelaar@yahoo.com

COTTAGE RENTAL South Haven cottage 4 miles north of South Haven, ck out our add on Homeaway.com listing # 388246 616-340-6038

COTTAGE FOR RENT: 1 hour N of Grand Rapids. 6 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths, good swimming, fishing, boating. 2 kayaks and fishing boat. \$1800/week. 269-998-2991

BURT LAKE COTTAGE Northern MI Rental- Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boating, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Summer weeks available. BLCottage@comcast.net 734-904-2660

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

HOLLAND, MI Nice 1 bedroom guest house located across the street from the south shore of Lake Macatawa., \$400 wk \$85 nt www.hollandplace.com 616.335.8766

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

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HERITAGE TOUR Peter Borgdorff and Bill Sweetman are planning a fall 2012 (September 8-22) Heritage Tour through the Maritime Provinces and New England. The tour is designed around sites of scenic, historical and denominational interests. The tour will originate in Grand Rapids, MI and selected locations in Ontario. For a brochure with itinerary and cost, contact: heritagetours12@gmail.com or phone (616) 460-2092 (Bill) or (616) 560-2092 (Peter).

TOURS FOR 2012: #1 - May 14-17 World Premiere of "Jonah". Witness this production as only the Sight & Sound Theatre in Lancaster can present it. Also a "Behind the scenes tour", 1st night in Laurel Highlands area. \$595.00. #2 - June 19 - "Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village" must see museum exhibits including Titanic. All day ride pass in Greenfield Village. L&D inc. \$149.00 #3-Tiger game. No date yet. #4-Aug 21-23-Great Mystery of 2012! Unbeatable!\$449.00- #5-Sept 28-Oct 4 "CircleLakeSuperior" SooLocks Dinner Cruise, water falls, lighthouses, Pictured Rocks Cruise, and much more. Fall foliage at its peak. ThunderBay, Duluth, Marquette, Munising. Must see itinerary. \$1179.00 #6 - Oct 16, "MichiganPrincess". Beautiful luncheon cruise out of Lansing on the Grand. Beautiful fall foliage along the river. \$89.00 #7-"Ladies Only Shopping"- no date set. #8 Nov 5-16 "Tanzania Discovery Safari and the Mysteries of Zanzibar" Visit the heart and soul of Africa. The National Parks and Reserves are renowned for some of the finest game viewing in the world. Witness migration from Kenya to Tanzania. Call or write for details. #9 -Dec 13&14 - "Fireside Christmas" - The Fireside is a favorite. Enjoy the Christmas show, Scrooge,

the Musical. Feast on the Signature Buffet. Christmas concert by the Unkalung Choir. Visit Taste of Home and Harmony Inn for lunch. \$309.00 #10 - New Year's Eve- plans not completed. All prices based on double occupancy. Single prices available. Call, write, or email for detailed itineraries. Alpine Pleasure Tours-Cliff & Helengene Doornbos 3074 Richmond St NW Grand Rapids, MI 49534 Phone 616-791-4334 or 888-922-4334(toll free) or huddyd@gmail.com.

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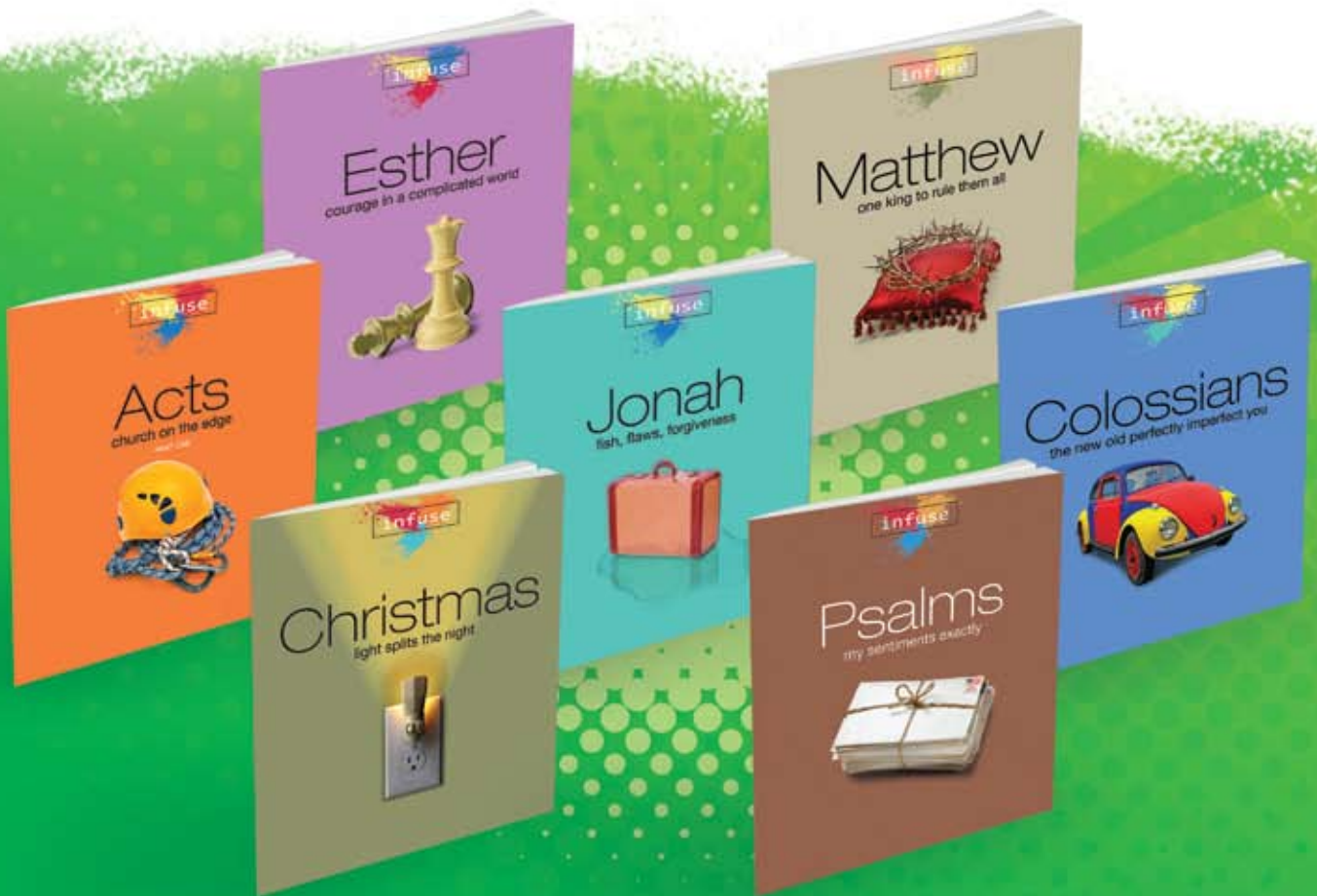
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Infuse Bible studies aim to help people discover where faith and life meet. The power of truth is often in the details... and Infuse is full of them. Packed with information and additional resources about the context and background of biblical stories, you'll discover the power of realizing that God works in the lives of real people at real places in real ways.



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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!

Our daughter tried to explain to her 2-year-old son what baptism meant before his baby sister was baptized. She told him that Jesus had given baby Brooke to them, and now they were going to give her back to Jesus. After a thoughtful moment, he said, "I'm going to miss her."

—Karen Slager

Coming home from work, I was greeted at the door by my wife and 4-year-old grandson. My wife asked me if I knew who was going to be Joseph in the preschool program. My grandson just beamed.

Wanting to see how much he knew about his part, I said, "Joseph! Who is Joseph?"

My grandson seemed disappointed in me.

"I am, Opa."

—Dan Brucken

As my 6-year-old granddaughter and I were leaving church, she commented, "Gram, they always say 'Amen' but they never say 'Awomen'!"

—Muriel Robertson

Little Tommy was in trouble again. His mother made him sit in the corner to eat his supper alone.

"Don't forget to pray," she reminded him.

So Tommy prayed, "Lord, bless this food in the presence of my enemies."

—Laurence Kiel

Our 7-year-old was learning about original sin in Sunday school. His grandparents asked, "What is original sin, anyway?"

He thought for a minute, and then said, "Oh, it's that Adam and Even thing. . . ."

—Kristen Hintz

My second-grader came home from school with her head hanging low. "I got in trouble at school today and had to write my name on the board."

After telling me the whole story, she was having trouble letting go of the guilt.

Here was my chance to explain to her the story of grace in practical terms. "I want you to pretend that what you did at school today is a ball. Then I want you to throw the ball to the other side of the world. Throw it to China."

"God says he removes our sins as far as the east is from the west," I continued. "Now that it's so far away, you don't need to be upset anymore, OK?"

She began to smile.

"There must be a lot of sins in China!" she replied.

—Emily Dykstra

An airliner flew into a violent thunderstorm and was soon swaying and bumping around the sky.

One very nervous woman happened to be sitting next to a

clergyman. "Can't you do something?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," the reverend said gently. "I'm in sales, not management."

—Clarence Wildeboer

While looking over the latest CRWRC gift catalog, I mentioned to my wife that I wanted to make a donation this year. "Are you gonna buy me a pig?" she asked.

"Yes."

"That's the ugliest pig ever," she replied, looking at the photo of a haggard-looking sow. "Baptists would have used a prettier-looking pig!"

—Darryl Darwent

When we moved out to the country, we were thrilled that our new house had a clothesline so we could hang our sheets out to dry in the fresh air and sunshine. After laundry day, I tucked our 8-year-old daughter into bed. She snuggled into her fresh, line-dried sheets and exclaimed, "Mmmmm. Mommy, these sheets smell like GOD!"

—Julie Van Eek



"Just a trim, or the usual three bags full?"



You add.

God multiplies.



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