

# BANNER

March 2012 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

<sup>36</sup> Music and Memory

<sup>38</sup> Beyond Belhar

<sup>22</sup> A Heart for the World

<sup>18</sup> Changing the World—  
One Creative Act at a Time





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# BANNER

Volume 147 | Number 03 | 2012



## FEATURES

**18** **Changing the World—One Creative Act at a Time** [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)  
*God can use us to redeem the world, one creative act at a time.*  
by Don Perini

◀ **36** **Music and Memory: Experiencing the Restorative Power of Music**  
*Music can make a powerful difference in the lives of people with dementia.*  
by Marc DeRuiter

**40** **The Jesus Questions**  
*The ancient and probing questions of Jesus invite us to embark on our own spiritual journey.*  
by Sam Gutierrez

## DEPARTMENTS

**Editorial: Can Good Stewards Grow the Economy?** by Bob De Moor **6**  
*Doing what's good for our neighbor—and our planet.*

**Catch Your Breath: God the Parent** by Joan De Vries **7**  
*I thought I knew a lot about God... and then I became a mother.*

**IMHO: The Belhar: Social Gospel or Confession?** by Julian Ross Hudson **8**  
*There's a vast difference between the factors that led to the creation of the Belhar and those that gave rise to the church's historic confessions.*

**Letters to the Editor** **8**

**News: Michigan Group Responds to Synod's Decision on Homosexuality** **10**

**Frequently Asked Questions** **20**  
*How do we invite children to the table?*

**On the Journey: Celebrating Our Baptism** by Dale Melenberg **21**  
*Witnessing the baptism of a baby reminds one church visitor what his own baptism means.*

**Just for Kids: Creation Art** by Christin Baker **30** ▶  
*Put on your artist hat to tell the story of creation.*

**Leadership: The Scarlet Number** by Cecil Van Niejenhuis **32**  
*Article 17 invites us into a process designed to achieve clarity and sometimes healing.*

**Tuned In: Sharing Spiritual Wisdom** by Carol J. Rottman **34**  
*Leave a legacy for the ones you love.*

**Reformed Matters: Beyond Belhar** by Marc Neelson **38** [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)  
*The real question is, "How can we put the Belhar into practice?"*

**Punch Lines** **47**

## TOGETHER DOING MORE

**A Heart for the World** by Kristen deRoo Vander Berg **22**  
*CRWRC works to foster a sense of Christian love and community outreach in local congregations and around the world.*

**The View from Here: A Golden Year** by Joel Boot **26**



# Can Good Stewards Grow the Economy?

**BEFORE THE WAR**, a fellow brings some shoes to the repair shop to be resoled. The cobbler takes the shoes, writes him a claim ticket, and the man leaves, only to be called up for duty the next day.

The soldier forgets all about the shoes until he happens across the claim check several decades later. On a whim he takes it back to the repair shop. Sure enough, the aged cobbler is still at it. The fellow hands him the ticket. The cobbler peers at it and then rummages in the back of the shop for a bit. When he returns, he tells the guy, “Found ’em. They’ll be ready Tuesday.”

## Globally, how do we resolve this?

I don’t tell that joke anymore. It’s too hard to explain:

“What’s a cobbler?”

“Why didn’t the soldier just go to WalMart to buy new shoes?”

“What’s a claim check?”

Forget it. I give up.

I know we can’t return to the days when it made economic sense to keep people working to fix stuff. Or can we?

That’s the dilemma, isn’t it? We should consume a whole lot less so that the environment won’t go to pot. But if we stop buying more stuff, then the economy goes south and tons of breadwinners are out of work. That’s not very loving.

So globally, how do we resolve this? I’ve heard these suggestions:

- get used stuff repaired instead of buying new all the time; make “retro” stylish.
- become big-time consumers of art, concerts, cultural events, and services, instead of “toys” and bling.
- take the money we save by not buying stuff and use it (through taxes and higher utility prices?) to create employment by building renewable energy resources, upgrading infrastructure, and swapping out energy-intensive stuff for more eco-friendly goods.
- have folks cut back on hours spent in the workplace and pay them to invest more time and energy in their kids, friends, churches, and communities.
- reduce freeway speed limits and vehicle sizes and ban cars from city centers.

Hare-brained? Maybe. Most of us have enough trouble balancing our checkbooks, let alone devising ways of balancing the wellbeing of the whole creation with the needs of humans.

So help us out, here: how can we live up to the awesome responsibility of being good stewards of God’s good earth, and do so in a way that doesn’t pitch other imagebearers into unemployment and poverty? How can we point the way to an economy that thrives when we conserve rather than when we consume? If we’ll ever be able to put wheels under the creation care report that’s coming to this year’s synod, we’ll need some very savvy economic advice to help us noodle out how that goes.

I extend this invitation to the economists among us: teach us how to get out of this bind and how we can help others do so too. We’ve reserved some prime real estate in this magazine so you can advise us non-economists how to do what’s good for our neighbor *and* for our planet.

Tell us how good stewardship can realistically grow our economy. We’re all ears. ■



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

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

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Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

## God the Parent

**I** **THOUGHT I KNEW** a lot about God . . . and then I became a mother.

Becoming a parent expanded my understanding of God exponentially. First, marveling at a child being knit together in my womb, the holy privilege of tending God's mysterious miracle. Then the joy of actually (finally!) meeting and holding this little being, a unique combination of my husband and me and generations before us.

But along with the joy came a great sense of responsibility: the weight of care. This tiny baby now depended on me for nourishment and protection. I still remember her screams when I accidentally nicked her finger while attempting to trim her tiny nails. Help! I needed so much wisdom and skill to do this child-raising properly.

That need for expertise only grew as our family expanded. Our second daughter arrived with an astonishingly different temperament than her sister. To my chagrin, I could not coast on my previous parenting "success"—now exposed as mainly myth. Instead, I had to find fresh resources to navigate these new challenges.

I realized that, as hard as I might try to be Supermom—all-seeing, all-powerful, all-knowing—I could not guarantee the safety or eternal wellbeing of our children. Even while I slept, anything could happen to them, let alone when they would leave the nest as fledgling kindergartners! And here is exactly where I learned more about God—who *is* all-seeing, all-powerful, all-knowing. Over time I learned to entrust our children

more fully to God, the loving parent who is not limited in any way by time, place, or circumstances.

I also realized that I too had a deep need to be parented by God on this journey of nurturing children. Day by day I required so much more wisdom than I had—and only God could provide the wisdom I needed. Because God promises to be a generous dispenser of wisdom to those who seek and ask, my seeking and asking increased.

And I read with new wonder the scriptural images of God as a tender parent. One who gathers and shelters offspring like a mother hen, covering them with feathers (Ps. 91:4). One who is familiar with the intimacy of nursing young ones until they are satisfied (Isa. 66:11). One who teaches toddlers to walk by holding their hands and bends down to feed them (Hos. 11:3-4). One who does the hard work of discipline. Who knows the pain not only of rebellion and rejection, but also of profound loss. A parent who is working to make all things well again.

All of us—those who are parents and those who feel keenly our own need to be parented—have much to learn from God, the parent who never leaves us. ■



Rev. Joan VanderBeek DeVries is interim pastor at Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario. She is also a Ph.D. candidate

at McMaster Divinity College. She lives with her family in Burlington, Ontario.



My own life as a  
wife and mother,  
daughter and friend,  
has taught me to see God  
hidden in the ordinary,  
to watch for God  
under the surface of things  
as a fisherman  
watches for fish.

— DEBORAH SMITH DOUGLAS

# The Belhar: Social Gospel or Confession?

**In the New Testament we encounter a Jesus who has no desire to overthrow the Roman rulers.**

**IS THE BELHAR** a confession or a political polemic under the guise of religion? One way to decide is to contrast the origins of the Belhar with the issues that gave rise to the church's historic confessions.

From this perspective it is clear that there is a vast difference between the factors that led to the creation of the Belhar and those that gave rise to the church's historic confessions.

The Belhar arose not out of concern for the gospel but as a response to apartheid, which was a civil policy designed for a specific social end. This is in complete contrast to the historical creeds and confessions of the church, whose authors did not choose to address social inequity.

Why didn't they address social ills? Certainly not because there were no societal inequities at the time of their writing—in fact, societal inequities were pervasive in the cultures that gave birth to the confessions. Instead, these confessions and creeds focused on a few central biblical themes: the nature of God and humanity, the way of salvation, the

church, and the biblical role of civil government.

The reason why none of these confessions was written with an eye to social inequities is that the authors followed the confessional examples set for us in God's Word.

In the New Testament we encounter a Jesus who has no desire to overthrow the Roman rulers; who, when confronted about the issue of Roman rule, replies, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." Paul tells Philemon, a runaway slave, that he must return to his master. And he instructs people who are married at the time of their conversion to remain married to their unconverted spouses rather than dissolve their holy union.

When it comes to making a confession, we follow the example of Jesus Christ in his testimony before Pilate (John 18:33-38). In contrast, the Belhar has as its ultimate goal the reforming of secular society. To do this it combines a civil social gospel with our one and only confession—Romans 10:8-11. ■



**Julian R. Hudson** attends Sonrise Christian Reformed Church in Ponoka, Alberta.



## Living Together

I appreciated the article "Mom, We're Living Together" (February 2012). Being in my twenties and married, having not lived with a significant other before marriage, I do see points on both sides of the argument. I have witnessed both positive and negative outcomes from various "living together" situations but agree that the most important thing is to show our love of Christ to others without condemnation. Thank you for printing articles that apply to many people's lives, both young and old.

—Amy Wigger  
Jenison, Mich.

Although the writer approaches the subject of cohabitation with grace and love, she has left out a dose of truth to go along with it. One of my close friends lived with his long-time girlfriend. In love and with truth I confronted him, and we sat and wrestled with 1 Corinthians 5. The conversation we shared was not easy. But it seemed to be the biblical response (paired with Matthew 18). My concern is that [the article] is devoid of Scripture passages that are commands about what the church's obligation is to those who are living in sexual sin.

—Nicolas Underwood  
Grand Rapids, Mich.



# LETTERS

## **New Year**

In this new year let us remember that we are Christian Reformed according to the Word of God, not according to the ideas of people. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever . . .” (Deut. 29:29). Let us not add or take away from what God has so graciously given us.

—*Anne Tameling  
Hudsonville, Mich.*

## **Growing Old Graciously**

Lately I had been wondering, at the age of 69, What should I really be doing to challenge myself to be a better Christian? Jim Kok’s article “Growing Old Graciously” (January 2012) jumped out at me. I cannot be a lot of things, but I can be an encourager! I try to say thank you to people, but that article inspired me to make that my daily goal. What a wonderful feeling to go to bed at night and know that I have made many people feel good about themselves that day. Thank you for that article, Mr. Kok!

—*Sharon L. Bakker  
Whitinsville, Mass.*

## **Belonging**

I enjoyed Rev. Hiemstra’s story “The Beauty of Belonging” (January 2012) for the marvelous irony it contained: a staunch elderly churchman, in the middle of an unceasing rant, is silenced by his “demure wife.” She simply reached up and gave his coat two brisk tugs, and he sat down.

And she had 1 Corinthians 14:35 on her side. Rev. Hiemstra wonders who changed the staunch churchman’s mind. I think we know. . . . The divine epiphany came in the form of a woman.

—*Lippe C. de Haan  
Exeter, Ontario*

## **The CRC on TV**

My husband and I were surprised to read Rev. Joel Boot’s negative reaction to the fact that the CRC was mentioned on the program “The Good Wife” (News, January 2012).

In a trial scene in the program, the Christian Reformed character said she was a Christian and believed that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. A passage from Leviticus that condemns homosexual acts was read. The court acknowledged that she had a right to her views because they were a result of her religious beliefs. How is that different from the CRC’s official position?

—*Candy and John Steen  
Franklin Lakes, N. J.*

## **More on the Belhar**

Rev. Nick Monsma brought up some very good points (“Over the Line: Why We Need to Say No to the Belhar,” December 2011). It brings up a question in my mind: How many church members have read the Belhar? I have, and I feel that every church member should read it also.

—*Michael Cassidy  
Holland, Mich.*

As a catechism teacher, I am learning more about the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism every day. I daresay that two-thirds or three-fourths of the CRC could not answer to me one article of the Belgic Confession or one Q&A of the catechism except for the first. The church of Jesus Christ does not need another confession. Pray, read, and study the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—*Mark Palsma  
Orange City, Iowa*

It is apparent that [the Belhar] was written very much for and by a church that has struggled with issues of apartheid

and racial and social discrimination. However, I must agree with Rev. Monsma that the adoption of this confession by the CRC as a “full confessional subscription” would be a mistake. We can certainly agree with the main theme of the confession without binding our denomination to it in teaching and preaching biblical truth and unity in Christ

—*Wilma VanSoelen  
Burford, Ontario*

The Belhar meets the four criteria of a confession offered by Dr. Lyle Bierma—by serving as identity papers for the church; as a teaching tool for the church; as a standard of orthodoxy to live by; and as a form of unity that all who are part of the church recognize. I encourage all who do not understand why the CRC needs to adopt the Belhar as its fourth confession to take another look at the document in light of the Scriptures.

—*Shannon Jammal-Hollemans  
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## **Creation Theology Needed**

I trust that [Dr. Gordon] Spykman and [Rev. Clarence] Vos’s disciples and many other Christian scientists, whether theologians, biologists, economists, or historians, can carefully uncover the underlying false faith or half-truth/faith presuppositions of various evolutionary theories. We as Christians need to retell God’s story . . . challenging others who build grand cosmic conclusions from the latest genetics research.

The cosmos is much greater than we can ever imagine. May the research praise of Christian scientists resonate with the worship of Christian churches.

—*Joe Reitsma  
Cobourg, Ontario*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

# NEWS

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## Michigan Group Responds to Synod's Decision on Homosexuality

A group of members and pastors from several West Michigan Christian Reformed churches have organized to provide educational opportunities for congregations about the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals in their churches.

The action was prompted by the decision of Synod 2011, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church, not to appoint a study committee to review the biblical teachings

regarding homosexual orientation and practice.

"Initially I was surprised at the synod decision, and angry," said Sheryl Mulder, 51, an elder at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids. "I have seen my children wrestle with the current CRC stance, and I know that if our denomination fails to address this, they may leave."

So Mulder began to network with representatives from other churches around the region. They have been meeting monthly since

last September, calling the group All One Body.

They have been providing presentations at adult Sunday school classes in the region, including both personal testimony and scriptural analysis. The group also plans to develop resources for pastors on providing pastoral care for individuals with a same-sex orientation as well as for congregation members who may express opposition. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis

## Detroit Church Helps People Gain Employment

In 2009, Michigan ranked first among U.S. states hit hardest by unemployment, with 14.1 of its population out of work.

When Rev. Ben Van Arragon of First Christian Reformed Church of Detroit wanted to reach out to those around him hit hardest by the economic times, his small congregation partnered with five other area churches to provide free assistance and support to those seeking work.

"With the economy being what it is, people have a really difficult time feeling hopeful that there's a job out there for them," Van Arragon said. "A lot of people place their hope in something that turns out to be somewhat transient or fleeting."

Most, he finds, have placed their faith in a paycheck. But with that gone, they're searching for answers. Van Arragon points them to Jesus—a source of hope, he explains, that cannot be taken away.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Jeff Arnold



Rev. Ben Van Arragon (back right) is one of six coordinators of a group that has been helping people who are unemployed in the Detroit area.

## Toronto Woman Appointed to Order of Canada

Margaret Spoelstra, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ontario, is being recognized for her ongoing work and advocacy for individuals with autism.

Spoelstra and 36 others are the newest members appointed to the Order of Canada, one of the country's highest civilian honors.

Spoelstra is executive director of Autism Ontario. The appointment came as a complete surprise. "I am simultaneously honored and humbled," she said. "The people who do the hardest work are the families of people with ASD. They are the ones deserving this recognition, and it is an honor to represent them."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Monica deRegt

SUSAN VANDEN BERG



Issues of *Today* at Russ's Restaurant in Holland, Mich.

## Volunteers Distribute *Today*

Roughly two dozen volunteers, many of them elderly, distribute 38,000 *Today* devotional booklets to churches and businesses in West Michigan.

*Today* is produced by Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), the CRC's media ministry.



LANCY VANDER MIEER

Volunteers Paul Breuker and Norm VanderZwaag unload boxes of *Today*.

The volunteer delivery began in 1979. In some locations the booklets go so fast that volunteers

need to replenish supplies two or three times a week, according to Jim Jonker, who delivers copies of *Today* as well as the Spanish-language version, *Cada Dia*.

"Our distribution volunteers are valuable ministry partners," said Rev. Steven Koster, director of ReFrame Media, the English-language ministry of BTGMI. "Not only do they distribute *Today* in places we couldn't reach through the mail, they often develop their own visiting ministry as a chaplain would. We hear many stories of storekeepers, clerks, shut-ins, prisoners, and the like appreciating regular pastoral visits from our volunteers and hearing God's Word in the booklets themselves."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Susan Vanden Berg

## Football's Grey Cup Brightens a Winter Day in B.C.



Chuck McMann shares Grey Cup victory with Langley Christian Elementary students.

Chuck McMann, a member at Wiloughby Christian Reformed Church in Langley, British Columbia, brightened a dull winter day with some grey—the Grey Cup, that is.

McMann is a defensive coach for the B.C. Lions football team, which won the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup in 2011.

McMann brought the Grey Cup to the school's two campuses. High school students gathered in the gym to hold it, middle schoolers passed the cup through their classrooms, and primary students

lined the halls as McMann paraded it through. "There was such excitement," said McMann, "especially at the elementary where the children just wanted to see what was inside the cup."

But for McMann, coaching is more than just the game. "I try to make a difference in players' lives in how I relate to them. They know that I will do anything I can to help them, whether it is football-wise or in any personal matters. I am honest, respectful, and try to love them as Jesus would."

—Jenny deGroot

## Retired Ontario Teacher Uses Photography to Help East Africa

Judy Lunshof is fascinated by the intricate wonders of creation. This past fall, she felt God nudging her to use her eye for beauty to bring hope to the desperate famine situation in East Africa.

Lunshof, a member of Smithville (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church, recently took up photography and combined the new hobby with her love of card making.

"Immediately I thought of my cards," she said, "and wondered if I could sell a few to raise some money."

With the overwhelming support of her congregation and friends, Lunshof raised more than \$1,000 to donate to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee for famine response. A matching grant program through the Canadian government doubled her donation.

"It just shows that everybody can do something," she said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Monica deRegt

MONICA DEREGT



Judy Lunshof with her cards and photos.

## CRWRC-Canada Awarded \$7 Million

**C**hristian Reformed World Relief Committee-Canada (CRWRC) has been awarded more than \$7 million dollars by the Canadian federal government through its Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

But there is a catch. Canadian donors will have to raise about half a million dollars each year to collect the full amount promised by CIDA. That's because CIDA contributes three dollars for each dollar raised by CRWRC.

The funding comes just a year after CRWRC was informed that it was losing CIDA funding of approximately \$1.1 million because of changes in CIDA priorities and application procedures.

CRWRC launched a denomination-wide fund appeal called

Harvest Hope to make up the shortfall and raised nearly \$700,000.

"We are so grateful to the people and the government of Canada for this support," said Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

# 25,000

The number of children who die each day from hunger and preventable diseases.

Sunday, March 4, is designated for CRWRC offerings.

## Michigan Church Holds Right to Life Memorial Service

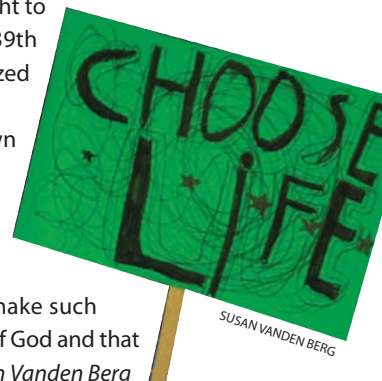
Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., hosted a Right to Life memorial service in honor of Value Human Life Week, marking the 39th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion.

Roughly 300 people participated in the "March for Life" in downtown Holland, and about 400 attended the service that followed.

The service included a short drama entitled "The Decision," which highlighted a young couple's difficult time facing an unplanned pregnancy.

"I thought it important to bring my family," said Central Avenue's copastor, Rev. Chad Steenwyk, "to learn compassion for those struggling to make such decisions in life. But I also want them to see that they are special creations of God and that their lives are precious—as is every life that is given." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Susan Vanden Berg



## Korean Churches Hosting Denomination-Wide Prayer Summit

Korean-American Christian Reformed churches are inviting the entire denomination to a three-day prayer summit to be held April 16-18 in Lake View Terrace, Calif., near Los Angeles.

"The goal of the summit will be praising and praying to God with three purposes: personal and denominational renewal; sharing of Korean-American spirituality; and involvement of as many members of the denomination as possible to join together to pray for the CRC, its members, its ministries, and even our nations," said Rev. Tong Park, the CRC's Korean ministry director.

Rev. Moses Chung, director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, is helping promote the summit. "The plan is that this will be a catalytic event, a grassroots prayer movement in the CRC. We see the summit as a way for the CRC to become an even more intensely praying denomination," he said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Jonathan Kim

## Texas Church Partners with Nepalese Church

Five years ago, a partnership began between New Life Christian Reformed Church in Spring, Texas, and Feet Ministry in Nepal. The churches continue to encourage one another and provide financial and prayer support.

"It's not a project," said Rev. Andy Sytsma. "We're sister churches. We pray for each other, we support each other, and we visit each other as we're able to."

Sytsma recently traveled to Nepal with elder Randy Wester. "We rolled into one village, broke out the generator, showed a Jesus film to three or four hundred people with a Hindu background who had never heard the gospel. About 30 of them came up for prayer," Wester said. "[We learned] you don't need a big budget to go out and share the gospel. Make connections,

invite people, and let the Holy Spirit work." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra



Rev. Andy Sytsma (left) and Pastor Krishna Pariyar of Feet Ministry in Nepal.



A Sacred Suds client teaches one of the managers how to crochet.

## Sacred Suds More Than Just Laundry

Residents of the downtown McLaughlin neighborhood in Muskegon, Mich., can enjoy a hot shower and a meal as they wait for their laundry at Sacred Suds community center.

Sacred Suds, started in 2004, is part of Community enCompass, a Christian community development organization supported by several Christian Reformed churches, including Bethany Christian Reformed Church.

Apart from two comanagers, Sacred Suds continues to be run by volunteers from Bethany CRC as well as other local churches and community members. Volunteers bring in hot and cold meals daily. During tax season, volunteers come in three days a week to help residents prepare their taxes.

Along with laundry and showers, residents also have access to haircuts every other week and computers with Internet access and printers at Sacred Suds.

“The highlight for me is providing a much-needed service to the community and treating people with dignity, no matter their race, religion, or income,” said comanager Charlotte Johnson.

Other churches that support Community enCompass include Elmhurst (Ill.) CRC, Bradenton (Fla.) CRC, and Redeemer CRC in Sarnia, Ontario; Christian Reformed World Relief Committee also supports the ministry. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Daina Kraai

## Michigan Furniture Ministry Makes Connections

Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Cutlerville, Mich., has distributed 13,000 pieces of furniture and other household items over the last 10 years—and they’re still counting.

Libere Dusabe, a refugee from Burundi, received furniture after he arrived in the United States. “They helped me a lot with the new furniture—a dinner table and chairs—because I didn’t have one.” Dusabe has since become a member at Covenant.

Volunteer Bob Theule said, “The furniture is just a vehicle to meet the people. We give them a Bible when we give them the furniture. We ask if they belong to a church, and if not, we’ll contact one of the local churches in their neighborhood.”

The church has thirty to forty volunteers—many of them retirees like Theule—who either



BOB THEULE

(L-r) Jamie Anderson receives new furniture from Covenant volunteers Gord De Boer and Dave Scheltema.

use the church’s three trailers or their own pickup trucks to distribute the furniture.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk

## Reaching California Muslims through Friendship, Fellowship, and Faith

Orange County, Calif., might be best known for desperate housewives and plastic surgeons, but it is also home to a large population of Muslims.

For Rev. Maged Dakdouk and Bridge of Hope, a Christian Reformed Church ministry, it is an opportunity for outreach.

Bridge of Hope uses a three-fold strategy to reach Muslims: friendship, fellowship, and faith.

Dakdouk came to Pasadena, Calif., to get his Master’s degree at Fuller Theological Seminary.

“The week of my graduation, Israel entered Lebanon and destroyed the airport, and there were no flights for many months. We stayed in Orange County, California, to serve



Building relationships is a vital part of Rev. Dakdouk’s ministry to Muslims.

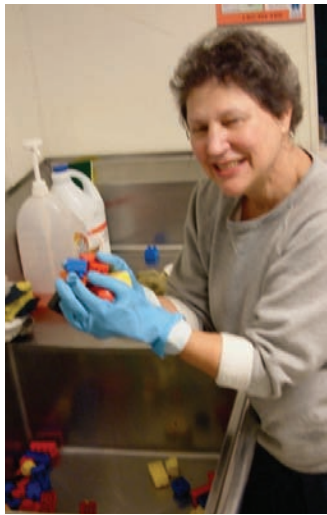
among Arabs and Muslims,” he said.

He started by offering Muslim families services such as ESL classes, Bible study, and fellowship nights through Fountain of Life (Calif.) Fellowship CRC.

“Though we built a strong bridge with the Muslim com-

munity, we found that the church building is not the best place to run our program,” said Dakdouk. They now rent another facility for their ministry, which has become a learning, resource, and spiritual center with 12 Arab and American volunteers.

—Heidi Wicker



**Suellen Yerger cleans Legos™ at New Horizons ministry in Seattle on Groundworks Sunday.**

## Sunday Morning Service Includes Community Service

Eric Likkel, a ministry associate who is pastor of Emmaus Road Christian Reformed Church in Seattle, Wash., understands that the task of reaching out to neighbors must go beyond Sunday mornings.

So he joined 23 other church members in community service instead of holding Sunday morning worship on October 30.

Each fifth Sunday of the month at Emmaus Road is called "Groundworks Sunday." Church members serve with various ministries located in the same neighborhood as the church.

"We believe serving helps lay the groundwork for cultivating relationships and planting seeds of friendship among neighbors. Our hope is to find common ground, where kingdom values converge with the wants and needs of neighbors," said Likkel.

—Amy Toornstra



## Florida School Wins State Volleyball Title

After several runs at a state championship, the Lake Worth Christian School Defenders took home their first volleyball state title on November 16, 2011.

Coach Terri Kaiser knew the season would be a challenge after losing five starters, and having lost at the state level the year before.

"We had more losses than in the past," said Kaiser, "but we said all season long that we wanted to be the best at the end of the sea-

**Lake Worth Christian School's volleyball team, led by Coach Terri Kaiser, celebrates its first state title.**

son. Everyone contributed in some way to the title."

Early in the season, Kaiser, a member of Lake Worth (Fla.) Christian Reformed Church, recorded her 500th career-coaching win. "To reach 500 wins at Lake Worth Christian was very special," she said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Melissa Holtrop

## Michigan Church Highlights Persecuted Christians

Members at Harvest Community Christian Reformed Church in Lake Odessa, Mich., focused on praying for persecuted Christians by bringing those countries and cultures to their church.

The front of the sanctuary was covered with flags from countries where Christians are persecuted. The church highlighted ten of those countries by having people wear that country's native dress.

After the service, the church hosted a dinner with dishes from



EVELYN DAVID

**Harvest Community CRC prays for persecuted Christians in Somalia, Yemen, Maldives, and Laos.**

several of the persecuted countries.

Audrey Mason made Russian bean soup for the dinner. "I

## Board Restructures Leadership Exchange

The Leadership Exchange of the Christian Reformed Church is being restructured, and all staff positions have been eliminated after its governing board and the executive of the denomination's Board of Trustees determined that it is not achieving what it was set up for—to identify and train new leaders for the CRC.

In a memo to staff, CRC executive director Rev. Joel Boot wrote, "We have decided that it is necessary to completely reassess and reconfigure the CRC's approach to leadership development."

Perhaps the most prominent activity of the Exchange is organizing the Young Adult Summit that will take place in conjunction with Synod 2012 in Ancaster, Ontario.

Boot wrote that planning for the summit will proceed, but all other Leadership Exchange programs are suspended. The Leadership Exchange is funded through designated gifts and receives no ministry share funding.

—Gayla R. Postma

became aware of what these different countries were going through and how thankful I am that we can come to church and just worship freely," she said.

"The greatest thing is for those who are doing the persecuting to turn to Christ, because that's when the persecution will really stop," added Jason Flohr. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk



## Why Being a Binational Church Is So Important

**M**ost Christian Reformed Church members know the denomination is binational—that is, it has congregations in both the United States and Canada. Numerically speaking, about 28 percent of the church's members live north of the 49th parallel, making up the Canadian portion of the CRC.

Ask a few random Canadian pew-sitters about what makes up Canadian ministry, and they usually name the ministries with aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Edmonton, Alberta; and Regina, Saskatchewan. Some can also tell you that north of the border the CRC has a special committee to talk to the government. That would be the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, formerly known as the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG).

But for some, Canadian ministry is so much more than that. It's much richer, much more complex, and they believe that the current denominational setup is not allowing ministry in Canada to flourish, that it is, in fact, detrimental.

The CRC's executive director, Rev. Joel Boot, acknowledges the complexity of the issue. "Binationality is a singularly significant issue for many Canadians, and a singularly confusing one to many Americans," he said. He noted that much of Canadian law is different from U.S. law and that Canadian politics are significantly different. "And the relationship of the Canadian CRC to the government is different than it is in the U.S.," he added.

He said that CRC leadership is addressing both the advantages and difficulties of those

realities at the level of the Board of Trustees and through the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture.

### **The Effect on Canadian Ministry**

Kathy Vandergrift is president of the Canadian half of the denomination's Board of Trustees, known as Christian Reformed Church in North America—Canada Corporation.

She, for one, is concerned about how the binationality of the CRC is lived out, and what the implications are for ministry in Canada.

"The catchphrase for this is 'one church in two countries,' with the emphasis on the 'one church,'" she said. "This has the most negative implications for Canadian ministry because it is smaller and staff are required to assimilate into the dominant U.S. culture."

She noted that the only exceptions are ministries that have no U.S. counterpart, such as the Centre for Public Dialogue. “[Canadian ministry] is more than a few small programs that are not run in the U.S. That cheapens the perception of what the CRC is in Canada,” she continued. “Why pretend we are all the same except for a few small bits?”

In Vandergrift’s view, Canadian ministry is about ministry that takes the Canadian context seriously.

“Our culture is different; our foreign policy is different; our charitable laws are different; our faith and culture in Canada and witnessing to that culture are different. Our health care systems work differently; our social systems work differently. Our military is different,” she said.

### **Unique CRC History, Unique CRC Culture**

Rev. Bruce Adema, the CRC’s director of Canadian ministries, said that even as the history and geography of the two countries is different, so are the experiences that shape the CRC members on either side of the border. Even though the first CRCs in Canada were established only 50 years after the U.S. churches, huge growth came after World War II.

“We have different stories coming out of our histories,” he said. “The experience of enduring Nazi occupation and immigrating to Canada is a legacy that continues to shape us. Knowing poverty and injustice has made the CRC in Canada place a high priority on diaconal ministries and social justice.”

Indeed, diaconal ministry is one area where the differences in the two countries show up quite starkly. Diaconal Ministries Canada is an organization with roots going back more than 50 years. Attempts to construct parallels in the U.S. have failed.

Rev. Martin Contant has been the regional leader for Christian Reformed Home Missions in Western Canada for the past 17 years. He noted that support for diaconal ministries, and particularly for Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), is disproportionately stronger in Canada, perhaps due to an immigrant history as displaced people.

“The office of deacon seems more holistically developed in Canadian churches,” he said. “The Canadian Food Grains Bank is another diaconal initiative that is uniquely partnered with a federal government agency that has captured the hearts and wallets of our constituency.”

Even ministries with U.S. parallels have a unique “fittingness” to Canadian culture that makes them different, according to Vandergrift. “One big example is the network of campus ministries on the Canadian side,” she said. “They ‘get’ Canadian university life and are highly

“Canadian ministry is about ministry that takes the Canadian context seriously.”

respected by Canadian universities. They add great value to Canadian university life and to the entire CRC.” She also notes Home Missions’ efforts in British Columbia and a burgeoning youth movement as further examples.

### **It Wasn’t Always This Way**

The uniqueness of Canadian ministry has been recognized by some for decades. The wave of post-World War II immigrants brought with them the influence of theologian and former Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper and his emphasis in Reformed thought on transforming all of life, including governments and social institutions.

In Canada, that soon led to the establishment of a Christian labor union, a Christian graduate school, and a Christian political advocacy organization, none of which had successful counterparts among American CRC folks.

By the mid-1960s, Canadian CRC churches sought a forum in which to discuss uniquely Canadian issues, and the Council for Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) was born. Under its auspices the CCG and the aboriginal ministries were created, along with a plethora of ecumenical involvements.

The CRC in Canada continues today to have a strong voice on the Canadian ecumenical scene among both mainline and evangelical circles. Adema is president of the Canadian Council of Churches. The CRC needs a distinct voice in Canada because most churches it relates to are not binational.

But while the Canadian council flourished, it was generally ignored by the rest of the CRC, including synods, where the council’s executive secretary was generally granted about 15 minutes to give a report.

When Canadian churches started agitating for their own regional synod in the 1990s, there was a growing recognition that the CRC needed a national voice in the Canadian context.

Synod 1997 approved a structure change that saw the CCRCC replaced by a Canadian Ministries Board. But that didn’t create space for it to be integrated into the denominational structure. That was supposed to happen when a proposed parallel structure for U.S. ministry would be adopted in 1999.

But Synod 1999 rejected the U.S. proposals, leaving the Canadian ministries in a kind of structural limbo and angering many Canadians.

So in 2000, the fledgling Canadian board was folded into the denomination’s Board of Trustees. The new board was half American and half Canadian.

### **A Decade of Waning Influence**

At board meetings, the Canadian directors met for two to three hours separately to discuss Canadian ministries. Then the entire board would meet to discuss matters related to the whole denomination.

However, in 2006 the U.S. directors were invited to sit in on the Canadian directors’ meeting. In 2008, the directors agreed that the Canadian ministry items would be rolled into the full board agenda.



Within a year, the Canadian matters of business were reduced to a yearly election of officers, approval of the binational minutes for legal purposes, and receiving a brief report from the director of Canadian ministries—an agenda that was usually accomplished in about ten minutes or less.

In February 2010, the director of Canadian ministries, in an attempt to find some space to discuss Canadian ministry, requested to be allowed to give a regular report to the whole board. That request was denied. The board said that all questions regarding ministry, including Canadian matters, would be deferred to the executive director.

The changes and their results have not gone unnoticed. “We have lost something in the last ten years,” said Vandergrift. “There is less of a sense that we have a mission for Canada as a whole that adds value to being Christian Reformed in Canada.”

She points to the loss of a Canadian office for chaplaincy, and the loss of a fledgling electronic ministry. She also points to the Canadian Ministry Forum, held in 2002. “Canadian churches participated in local, regional, and national ministry forums to identify priorities for ministry within the Canadian context,” she said. The resulting recommendations were absorbed into the denominational ministry plan, she said, with no Canadian specificity left. “Members in Canadian churches ask now what happened, and there is no way to provide accountable feedback on what they identified as important.”

More important, she said, is the loss of any forum for dialogue among Canadians about priorities and strategies for a CRC collective witness within Canadian culture.

Bill Van Geest is vice president of the Board of Trustees of CRWRC-Canada. He agreed that the structures are problematic. “If we were truly a binational church, we would have a Canadian director of ministries with a similar role to an American director of ministries. Having two directors works for CRWRC—why not for the whole CRC?” he asked.

Andrew Ryskamp is one of those CRWRC codirectors, as director of CRWRC-U.S. “For us, the codirectorate model allows us to bring the



## “The BOT Canada must and can become the direction- setting agency of synod for Canada.”

strengths of the two countries together,” he said. He said that at a denominational level, a strong executive for the Canadian context and a strong executive for the U.S. context, represented at the Board of Trustees and at synod, would represent well the two nations functioning as one denomination. “We are missing the strength of the Canadian context and what it has to offer the whole.”

No one is advocating for a separate CRC in Canada. “At some points in Canadian CRC history there may have been a feeling of adolescent rebellion against a mother church,” said Vandergrift, “but it is time to be grown up about the relationship and figure out how we

can be the best partners and do the most effective ministry in both national contexts.”

She said it should start with, at a minimum, greater clarity about the meaning and use of the term *binational* in CRC policy documents, and with a space for dialogue “where Canadians together can deliberate about our witness to Canada as a whole, in addition to our local churches. What opportunities do we have to contribute to the development of Canadian culture, society, and public life, and how can we best do it?”

She would like to see a denominational ministry plan that has a U.S. and a Canadian section.

Rev. Arie Van Eek knows the journey of the Canadian CRC intimately. He was a delegate to the first meeting of the original CCRC and went on to become its executive secretary until it was disbanded.

Van Eek would like to see a reintroduction of a triennial conference for study and reflection, and he would like to see the CRCNA—Canada Corporation strengthened and revitalized.

“The BOT Canada must and can become the direction-setting agency of synod for Canada, with the [director of Canadian ministries] as CEO, involving the 12 classes and congregations,” he said.

Contant agreed that the voice of the CRC in Canada needs to be expanded. “I have found that our voice is welcomed and sought after by other denominations,” he said. “They see us as having a rich theological heritage, with something biblical to say to the cultural, social, economic, and political issues that face our country.”

Vandergrift noted that this is about more than just the Canadian churches. “The real threat is that the CRC in Canada disappears, at least in identity if not in form, in a wave of congregationalism. If we just focus on healthy congregations, then congregations look to and replicate large, more generic evangelical churches close by. Then there is little reason to be part of the denomination. So the whole denomination needs to be concerned about this, not just Canada.”

—Gayla R. Postma

# CHANGING THE WORLD— ONE CREATIVE ACT AT A TIME



**F**rom the wheel to sliced bread to the Internet, ideas have changed the landscape of our world. Creative ideas were the driving force behind the pyramids, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, and the discovery of penicillin. And ideas continue to be humankind’s means of changing the world.

As a professor who teaches creativity, I have developed one simple rule for every class: “No one is allowed to say ‘I’m not creative.’” My goal is to refute the lie that some people are born creative while others are not. I want people to discover the gifts God has given each of them and move them toward living a creative life, pursuing endeavors that can redeem the world, one creative act at a time.

Just as God’s creative work continues to sustain and redeem our world, each of us can use our creativity to bless the world—by running a business, writing a novel, tending a garden, or creating a brand-new invention that makes people’s lives a little easier.

## **Idea-Friendly Times**

So what great ideas have you had lately? More important, where were you and what were you doing when you generated those ideas?

When I first heard of “idea-friendly times,” I thought the concept was a bit crazy. These are moments when our brain goes into an alpha state, creating space where ideas can germinate. The point is that certain places or activities allow us

to be intentional about generating ideas. Thomas Edison and Salvador Dali, for example, used to put themselves into an alpha state by holding objects in their hands before falling asleep. When sleep was about to overtake them, these objects would fall to the floor, making a loud noise and waking them up—allowing them to consciously make space for dreaming up new ideas.

Similar idea-friendly times include activities like mowing the lawn, waking up in the middle of the night, listening to a sermon, exercising, driving, reading, daydreaming, or taking a shower.

I began to experiment with each one of those idea-friendly times for several weeks at a time. I soon discovered that some of them applied to me, while others did not.

# NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO SAY “I’M NOT CREATIVE.”

For example, when I wake up in the morning, I allow my mind five to 10 minutes to think about a specific creative endeavor I am pursuing—a game design, a screenplay, or a class I am developing. While not every morning produces earthshattering ideas, many do arise that are captivating or useful. In experimenting with these idea-friendly times, I soon learned that I had to be *intentional* about them in order for ideas to come more easily.

## Capture Your Ideas

The other day I was eating dinner with my family when an idea popped into my head. Without saying a word, I rushed to my computer and typed the words “Time Vampires—things that steal your time.” This idea would become a chapter in a book I was writing about the creative life. Later that evening I came up with another idea, but unfortunately I didn’t write it down. I thought it was a great idea—but now I can’t remember what it was.

Creative people make a habit of capturing *all* their ideas. Albert Einstein and Leonardo da Vinci knew the value of this and were well known for their meticulous scribbling. I know of individuals whose idea-friendly time is while taking a shower. They use tub crayons to jot their ideas on the wall and copy them down later on paper. Others whose idea-friendly times are driving or right before falling asleep keep a stash of 3x5 cards handy to scribble notes. Some of my students carry blank booklets in their pockets for capturing ideas that come up in conversation. Another created a system for capturing ideas on the wall above the bed that consists of four symmetrical squares: a whiteboard, a corkboard, a chalkboard, and a fabric board.

## Overcome Resistance

Unfortunately, many of our ideas never see the light of day, even if we capture them in a notebook. That’s because of something

called resistance. In his book *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield discusses how resistance, which includes such factors as perfectionism, self-doubt, procrastination, materialism, and fear, can keep us from accomplishing our goals and dreams.

We can look at the habits of other creative people to learn how to overcome resistance. Many writers, for example, observe a strict schedule in order to meet their predetermined daily word count. Artists create rough drafts without trying to make these early drafts presentable. Entrepreneurs surround themselves with individuals who can provide the mental and emotional support they need.

As I tell my students, hoping or wishing for an idea to become a reality won’t make it happen. It takes determination and effort to overcome whatever forms of resistance come from within, to refuse to let resistance defeat your creative endeavors.

## Make It Happen

But what kind of creative endeavors should we pursue?

A letter to the church in Laodicea, written over two thousand years ago, describes the Laodicean Christians as spiritually useless. Our creative endeavors can be spiritually useless too. If our purpose is to seek fame and fortune, then we have lost sight of our role as participants in the ongoing story of God’s redemption of the world. On the other hand, discovering that we have a role to play in that story is a powerful experience that provides a sense of meaning and purpose for our lives and helps us to prioritize what is important.

Here are just a few examples of individuals whose creative work is redeeming the world. Notice that we are not talking here about creating a masterpiece or writing the great American novel. We’re talking about everyday creative activities that can make a difference:

- An entrepreneur starts a business, treating employees and customers with respect and affirming each person’s contributions.
- An urban gardener plants and tends a garden in an empty lot in the neighborhood, then shares the produce with neighbors.
- A father creates bedtime stories for his children that affirm the values and ethics he wants to pass on to them.
- An artist creates a painting as a way of describing the human condition.
- A teenage boy begins collecting coins to help free people from slavery, resulting in an organization called Loose Change for Loose Chains.
- A young girl throws a birthday party and invites the people who attend the party to carry water for a couple of miles in order to raise money for people who need clean water.

Grab any newspaper or turn on the news and you’ll see the devastating impact on our world of humanity’s fall into sin: war, famine, suffering, disease, heartache, and pain.

Fortunately, we also have a loving God who pursues us. It is only by God’s creative action through his Son’s shed blood and the work of the Holy Spirit who lives in us that we are redeemed. And what’s truly amazing is that God wants to use us—broken, sinful people, new creations in Christ—to bless the world with our creative energy. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Don Perini** is a professor of ministry and creativity at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Mich. He travels the nation speaking to educators, writers, entrepreneurs, pastors, and film producers on the subject of creativity and design thinking.

# FAQs

## Calling

**Q** Why is it that sometimes God gives us several talents but then doesn't give us much opportunity to use them vocationally and/or in a volunteer capacity? At the most we are given menial labor and a poor wage.

**A** It sounds as if you see only darkness around you and are in despair. Perhaps you need to speak to a trained counselor who can assist you in addressing particular issues in your life and career.

I frequently discuss 1 Corinthians 10:13 with people going through difficult times. It assures us that God will "provide a way out" so that we will be able to endure any trial that enters our lives. Though not written for that purpose, this passage can also encourage you to use your talents. The God who gifted you will surely provide a way for you to use those gifts.

If you have the time to volunteer, check out local government or community organizations for information, and then select the opportunities that best fit your gifts. Serve well for the sake of your Savior, others, and yourself.

—George Vander Weit

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

## Faith Formation

**Q** Last month our congregation discussed the synodical decision to separate a formal profession of faith from admission to the communion table. We understand why it's a wise decision, but still find ourselves confused. How do we invite children to the table? And how might we strengthen the practice of profession of faith?

**Too many younger members perceived the Lord's table as something that required an "entrance ticket."**

**A** Synod's decision is based on the following convictions: (1) The Lord's table is a means of grace, a gift for God's people. Too many younger members perceived it as something that required an "entrance ticket"—a formal public profession of faith. (2) Scripture does not mandate a formal profession as required for admission to the table. (3) Scripture does teach that it is good for believers to publicly declare their faith.

So the decision seeks to do three things: (1) strengthen the welcome to the table, especially for younger members; (2) strengthen formal public profession of faith; and (3) call on each individual congregation to work out the details concerning how this might be done.

Formal profession of faith involves three dimensions: receiving the grace of Jesus Christ, accepting Scripture and its reflection in the confessions, and committing to participating in the life of the church. We will continue to discuss the details of just what is a requirement for coming to the table, but certainly it does *not* require more than the first of these dimensions: receiving the grace of Jesus (which can be done in different ways at almost any age).

Churches can extend the welcome to the table in many different ways involving parents, Sunday school classes, officebearers, and/or worship leaders. Similarly, the three dimensions of a formal public profession of faith can also be strengthened in many different ways.

Dozens of CRC congregations are developing resources related to these questions; these are being compiled at the website [crcna.org/faithformation](http://crcna.org/faithformation).

—Syd Hielema

*Dr. Syd Hielema is a professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and a member of the CRC's Synodical Faith Formation Study Committee.*

## Church

**Q** It is my understanding that Mormonism is a cult, but well-known Mormons like the Osmonds and Mitt Romney don't seem very cult-like, and in fact seem pretty normal. What about this group makes them a cult? And is Mormonism the same as Latter Day Saints?

**A** Very normal, moral, and mission-minded people belong to cults. The word *cult* indicates that a group has departed in some ways from historic Christianity and its confessions.

For example, the ultimate source of authority for Mormonism is found not in the Bible but in three sacred books compiled mainly by its founder, Joseph Smith: *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*. *Book of Mormon* is the best-known and is subtitled "another testament of Jesus Christ." It is said to have been translated from gold plates on which the prophet Mormon recorded God's dealings with people who lived in the Americas between approximately 600 B.C. and A.D. 400. Smith claimed that he found the buried plates in New York with the assistance of the angel Moroni.

*Stuff to Know when Cults Come Knocking* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org)) says, "Followers of the Mormon Church usually prefer the name *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* or simply *Latter-day Saints*. Since the days of founder Joseph Smith, there have been more than a hundred Mormon splinter groups. Until 2000, the largest of these groups called themselves the Reorganized Church of Latter-day Saints. Now they refer to themselves as the Community of Christ."

—George Vander Weit

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

# Celebrating Our Baptism



## AFTER THE OPENING

praise songs, the pastor announced that we would celebrate baptism. *Celebrate baptism!*

I thought, *I'm just a visitor. I don't think there will be any celebrating by me.* The baptism proceeded without further ado—first some teaching on the significance and meaning of baptism, with a PowerPoint presentation to keep my mind from drifting. Next came the vows, the parents responding with, “We do, God helping us,” followed by the congregation’s similar response. We all sat down again as the parents, infant in tow, stepped up to the baptismal font.

Instead of cradling the infant close to his chest, I noticed that this father held the child in two hands stretched out toward the font, as if offering his child to God. Hmmm—this was unusual! The pastor baptized the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, adding some significant details about each person in the godhead in relation to the child. Then came the prayer, signaling that the baptism was almost done.

After his “Amen,” the pastor asked the parents if he could have their child. Kind of unusual phrasing, but I’d seen this done before: the pastor carries the child around the sanctuary, introducing the congregation’s newest member. Many faces lit up as they saw their newest sibling squirming in the pastor’s embrace.

But there was also something different in the air. Sure, there were smiling granies and proud relatives, but there was also a heightened sense of awareness, of anticipation, that seemed to settle over the congregation.

The pastor, by this time halfway to the back of the sanctuary, turned to a member of the congregation, handing her the child and asking her to take the child back to its



**A heightened sense of anticipation seemed to settle over the congregation.**

parents. As this worshiper, holding the child, walked toward the waiting parents, the pastor continued to speak. He explained that the person carrying the child back to its parents was symbolic of what the congregation had just vowed to do. As a congregation, we had just promised to help raise that child. Some members would be that child’s Sunday school teachers. Others would be the child’s GEMS or Cadets leaders. Some would be catechism teachers. One or two of the members might even be there for that child later on during the

turbulent teen years when so many questions arise, or perhaps even when that child has run away from home, to help bring him or her back.

That day I was reminded of how often I had stood up and joined in speaking the congregational vows, “God helping me.” I thought of all the children I knew in my own congregation who were wandering like sheep gone astray. I remembered all the children I had taught in church school. That day I was struck by the significance of our baptismal vows.

Through it all, I was reminded of my own baptism. I was reminded that God chose me to be engaged in the church family. God chose me. In the same way that pastor chose a member to carry the child back to its parents, God has chosen me! That day, I celebrated baptism. ■



**Rev. Dale Melenberg** is pastor of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta.

# A Heart for the World

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg



**S**usan Ducu is the mother of four and a member of Aber Anglican Church in Uganda.

In 2002, the young woman lost her husband to AIDS. Soon afterward, she also tested positive for HIV.

Since then, thanks to a program supported by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), Ducu has dedicated her life to providing physical, emotional, and spiritual support to more than 157 people living with AIDS.

“When I tested HIV-positive, I made up my mind to help those who were going through a difficult time like me,” she said.

Ducu is just one of many Christians with a heart for those in need who make up the core of CRWRC’s ministry.

## **A Diaconal Agency for the CRC**

It was members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America who initiated the relief projects that led to the creation of CRWRC. And support primarily from individual Christians, Christian schools, and congregations has made possible CRWRC’s ministry for the past 50 years.

The principle of being a “caring church” has always been a key part of the CRC’s identity.

“The commitment to serve and a compassion for the needy has its roots in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands,” says Peter Zwart, former diaconal ministries coordinator for CRWRC.

“They have been known for their diaconal ministry and outreach. As emigrants, members of those churches found a new home in Canada and the United States and took that love with them.”

After World War II, advances in travel and communication brought the critical

**Building relationships and trust with those in the community has been a key part of CRWRC’s success. Here Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo befriends children in Uganda in the 1980s.**



In the 1980s, CRWRC's Bill Haverkamp visited Christian Reformed churches with CRWRC's mascot, KWIRK, to teach children about the importance of caring for people in need.

needs of the world's people to the attention of North Americans. In the face of those needs, CRC deacons in North America began to look for ways the church could respond.

In 1953 horrific floods struck the Netherlands. Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States worked together to raise more than \$100,000, as well as clothing and food, for flood survivors. Churches responded in a similar way to tornadoes in Michigan and floods in Ontario.

"Feelings that we should do more and that it should be done on a planned basis began to surface from our deacons and other church leaders," wrote Louis VanEss,

CRWRC director from 1964-1977, in a reflection about the organization's birth.

These feelings led the deacons to request a formal way of doing outreach together. The CRC synod appointed a study committee to look into the request. In 1961 that committee made a recommendation that led to the formation of CRWRC in 1962.

CRWRC's task, mandated by synod, was to receive the offerings and contributions of the church and to "minister in the name of our Lord to man distressed by reason of the violence of nature, the carnage of war or other calamities of life, and to relieve the suffering of the needy in the world."

To carry out this task, churches appointed one representative (usually a deacon) from each classis to serve on CRWRC's board. In addition, there were six "members at large": a doctor, a businessperson, a sociologist, a lawyer, an accountant, and a minister.

These appointees formed the "committee" of CRWRC. They hired one part-time staff member, Dr. Edward Postma, to lead their efforts and coordinate the work.

#### An Outreach of Christ's Love

CRWRC developed its first programs in response to Korean War victims and the needs of Cuban refugees. The committee organized clothing centers in Chicago



Some of CRWRC's first trained Disaster Response volunteers respond in Xenia, Ohio, after a tornado.

and Ontario to accept donations that could be sent to Korea. They also ran the Good Samaritan Center in Miami to help Cuban families.

In November of CRWRC's first year, Typhoon Karen ravaged Guam, and CRC deacons raised \$33,199 for CRWRC to »

#### Key Moments in CRWRC History

- 1962: CRWRC is born
- 1963: Chicago Clothing Center opens
- 1965: First agriculture "self-help" program in Korea
- 1966: Clothing depot opens in Ontario
- 1969: CRWRC incorporates in Canada
- 1972: Disaster Response Services program begins
- 1973: Following an earthquake response, CRWRC forms first "development" partnership with Evangelical Committee for Aid and Development (CEPAD) in Nicaragua
- 1978: World Hunger Campaign begins
- 1980: CRWM/CRWRC begin joint project in Sierra Leone
- 1983: CRWRC is one of seven partners who establish the Canadian Foodgrains Bank
- 1991: Free A Family program begins as alternative to child sponsorship
- 1995: Peter Fish banks are introduced
- 2004: CRWRC joins global alliances and launches multimillion-dollar response to tsunami in Asia
- 2005: Disaster Response "groups" program begins in response to Hurricane Katrina
- 2007: Embrace AIDS campaign launches, raising \$3 million over three years
- 2010: A year of disasters, including a large earthquake in Haiti, flooding in Pakistan, and an earthquake in Chile
- 2011: CRWRC's ministry reaches 1,663,815 people ■

use for food and other emergency aid.

CRWRC's outreach soon grew in size and scope. VanEss explained a shift in ministry that happened in 1965 by saying, "While mass distribution of food and clothing is provided in cases of emergency and disaster, it is far more effective and proper to provide help in a personal way and in a manner whereby those helped can be trained in self-help endeavors."

Soon afterward, CRWRC sent its first agriculturalist to Korea to help families learn to grow more food. By 1977, CRWRC had similar agriculture programs in Nigeria, Mexico, the Philippines, Ban-



The Good Samaritan Center in Miami was one of CRWRC's first programs. Rev. Clarence Nyenhuis (left) receives six tons of clothing shipped by the Eastern Diaconate to the Good Samaritan Center by way of the U.S. Navy's "Operation Handclasp" in 1963.

November, these promotions helped deacons in Christian Reformed churches to educate their congregations about global needs and commit to a response.

In 2000, CRWRC started a program called "Communities First." Building on the successful "Assets-Based Community Development" approach that was working for CRWRC around the world, Communities First encouraged churches in the U.S. to reach out to their own communities and use local resources to address local needs.

Over time, diaconal conferences took greater responsibility for the training and support of deacons and church leaders to meet congregational and local community needs. Communities First spun off to become an independent organization called Communities First Association.

**Ministry Around the World**

While CRWRC began as an agency that provided physical aid following disasters and then added a component of sending North American staff overseas to train people in self-help projects, it shifted again in the 1970s and 1980s to focus on development.

"Most problems faced by the world's poor—inadequate housing, lack of jobs or job skills, no clean water, inadequate agricultural production—are not problems that individuals or families can solve by themselves," explained a CRWRC report in 1983. "They are problems that demand a group effort.

"Christian development doesn't stop with helping people help themselves. It includes helping people see themselves as God's people in God's world and helping them commit themselves to following

response program. This ministry sent trained volunteers to clean up debris, repair and rebuild homes, and restore hope following disasters in North America.

As the ministry grew, so did CRWRC's staff. While CRWRC remained accountable to a board composed of representatives from each classis, it became less of a "committee" and more of a full-scale, professional, nonprofit organization.

**Ministry with and for Churches**

Because CRWRC started out of diaconal efforts to help those in poverty and disaster, part of its ministry included training and supporting deacons in local churches. As CRWRC grew, it added staff to better equip churches and regional diaconal conferences for service.

"CRWRC is an extension of the deacons within the Christian Reformed Church," said Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, CRWRC Canada director.

"It has been CRWRC's strategy to work with these deacons as vital partners in ministry. This includes sharing training resources and promising practices to build their capacity to serve with local communities, as well as sharing opportunities for congregations to engage in advocacy and support disaster response, refugee resettlement, and international community development."

For example, starting in 1979 CRWRC encouraged deacons to hold special days of prayer and fasting for global hunger. Eventually dubbed "World Hunger Sunday" and held on the first Sunday in



Programs to improve agricultural production have been an important part of CRWRC's ministry since the late 1960s. CRWRC's Andrew Ryskamp helps a farmer in Bangladesh inspect his crop.

gladesh, Niger, Haiti, and several Latin American countries.

In the 1970s, CRWRC also added more domestic programs, including day care for children with disabilities in Mississippi, a program to resettle Vietnamese refugees, and a resource program for families living in poverty in Appalachia.

At this time CRWRC started Disaster Response Services, a domestic disaster





In 1979 the CRC adopted Sierra Leone as a special “target” country for CRWRC and Christian Reformed World Missions. In 1985, Barry Meyer (CRWRC community developer) and Ray Prins (a volunteer from Lacombe, Alberta) installed a new water system as part of this program.

Christ. It goes on to teach that we help others because God loves us and saved us through Christ.”

With this in mind, CRWRC began to establish partnerships with Christian churches in the countries where it served. In these partnerships, CRWRC worked with church leaders to teach that the church’s mission is not only to preach the gospel but also to live it.

These partnerships were maximized through additional alliances. CRWRC worked alongside Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, Calvin College, The Kings University College, and other ministries

**Susan Ducu, left, meets with HIV-affected people in her community in Uganda.**



to achieve greater impact. It also became a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Foods Resource Bank, the Micah Network, the Global Relief Alliance,

ACT Alliance, Canadian Churches in Action, the Integral Alliance, and other global networks to leverage fundraising and multiply ministry.

#### **A Ministry with Impact**

Today, in addition to multimillion-dollar responses to disasters around the world, CRWRC partners with 84 local churches and community organizations in 4,522 communities to provide programs in literacy, agriculture, health, microfinance, civic education, peace building, AIDS prevention, and more.

This includes CRWRC’s partnership with the Church of Uganda, which trained Susan Ducu and 54 others as home-based care providers to people living with HIV and AIDS. Through this partnership, Susan received a bicycle, a home-based care kit, and training in AIDS intervention. She now rides more than 120 kilometers on village paths every week to visit, counsel, and support people who are living with AIDS, especially those who are unable to leave their homes.

*You add.  
God multiplies.*

“When I see positive changes like these, I am greatly motivated in doing my work with CRWRC,” said staff member Edward Okiror.

“I know that these changes have come about because of all the brothers and sisters who pray for CRWRC and all those who give resources for the ministry. May the name of the Lord be praised!” ■



**Kristen deRoo VanderBerg** is communications project manager for CRWRC.

#### **Join the Celebration**

CRWRC will host a variety of anniversary celebrations throughout 2012. Here are a few ways to participate in celebrating all that God has done through CRWRC in the last 50 years:

- **See the difference:** Read 50 stories from CRWRC’s history on our special anniversary website ([www.crwrc.org/50](http://www.crwrc.org/50))—a new story will be posted each week.
- **Email:** your photos, stories, videos, and memories to [50@crwrc.org](mailto:50@crwrc.org)
- **Sing a song:** Watch CRWRC’s anniversary video and download sheet music so you can sing the theme song at your own church or event.
- **Attend an event:** Throughout the year, several churches will be hosting anniversary celebrations. Visit [www.crwrc.org/50](http://www.crwrc.org/50) for information on an event near you.
- **Experience DRS:** In addition to celebrating CRWRC’s 50th anniversary, Disaster Response Services is celebrating its 40th anniversary in August 2012. Join the celebration by volunteering this year.
- **Free A Family:** As part of the celebration, commit to regular gifts and ongoing prayer through CRWRC’s Free A Family program. Find out more at [www.freefamily.org](http://www.freefamily.org). ■

## A Golden Year

**W**hen our children were first married, my wife, Karen, and I gave them anniversary gifts inspired by the list of traditional anniversary gifts: year 1, paper; year 2, cotton; year 3, leather; and so on. Somewhere along the line we lost interest. I do not think we ever got to iron, copper, bronze, tin, or steel.

Karen and I are currently enjoying year 44, so we are inching closer and closer to the big 5-0: gold! I can think of some things made of gold that might interest me, if for no other reason than the price of gold today! While we, as a family, have let go of the list, we still celebrate each anniversary. We have realized that neither the substance nor the value of the gift is as important as the giving.

This is the year of the big 5-0 for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). It's their 50th anniversary in 2012. Think about it. Six hundred months ago, 2,600 weeks ago, 18,250 days ago, we began denominationally organized efforts to bring relief to the world in God's name. That's quite a milestone! And while this anniversary has come during each of the past 49 years, this year is special. How shall we celebrate? What "gold" shall we bring?

My anniversary gift list suggests that gold jewelry, cufflinks, watches, or even gold CD collections are appropriate gifts for a 50th anniversary. But it would be very difficult to give any such gift to an agency such as CRWRC. What would they do with a gold watch?

How, for that matter, does an agency celebrate an anniversary? Does this 50th anniversary have anything at all to do with a wedding?

I suggest that it does. The efforts that began some 438,000 hours or so ago were a result of the marriage of God's love with

ours. The actions of CRWRC for the last 26,280,000 or so minutes have been the union of God's concern and ours. And that love, that compassion, is something not to be only celebrated and commemorated but perpetuated.

A gift is in order—not *for* us but *from* us. A gift of gratitude to the main agent in the partnership.

A gift that continues and deepens and strengthens the relationship. A gift of "gold" would be quite appropriate.

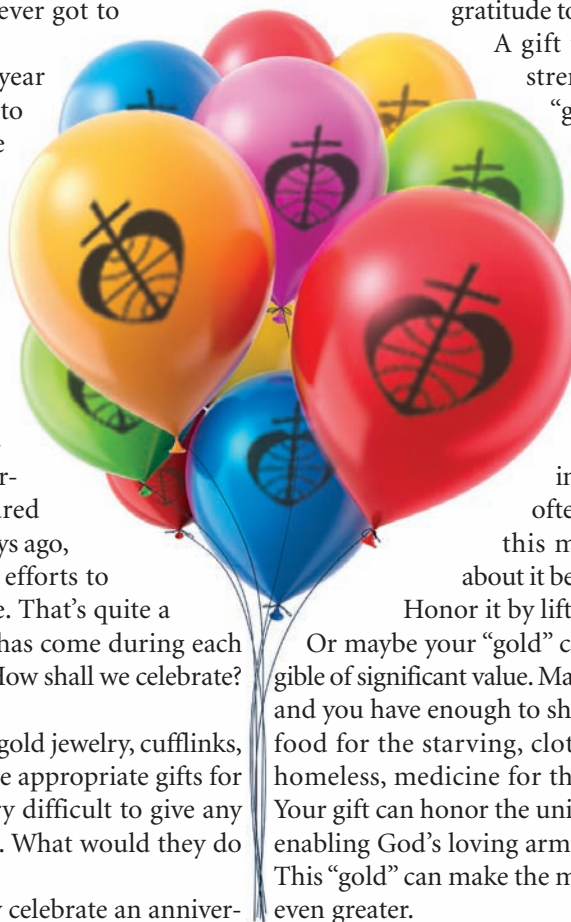
Suppose you consider the "gold" of your time and ability and do some volunteer work through CRWRC this year. Suppose you give of yourself to celebrate the continuation of this union.

Or maybe your "gold" is the gift of ongoing prayer. Uphold and honor this partnership by regularly thanking God for initiating it and sustaining it. Speak to God often about how thankful you are for this ministry and how much you care about it because you know he cares even more.

Honor it by lifting it up to God.

Or maybe your "gold" could be just that—something tangible of significant value. Maybe God has blessed you abundantly and you have enough to share. Your financial gift can provide food for the starving, clothes for the naked, shelter for the homeless, medicine for the sick, advocacy for the voiceless. Your gift can honor the union of God's love and our efforts by enabling God's loving arms to reach farther and touch more. This "gold" can make the marriage of God's concern and ours even greater.

As my wife and I approach our golden anniversary, we look forward not to an object made of gold but to a celebration that demonstrates to our children and grandchildren and others our recognition that our relationship is valuable, most of all because it reflects and reveals the love of God. Let's make this year that kind of celebration, not just *for* but *with* the CRWRC. ■



🔷🔷 The actions of CRWRC for the last 26,280,000 or so minutes have been the union of God's concern and ours. 🔷🔷



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

## One Year after the Earthquake

**W**hen a devastating earthquake and tsunami hit northern Japan in March 2011, 46-year-old Nobuhiro Watanabe and many of his neighbors lost so much. “Some of my friends from childhood were killed by the tsunami,” he recalls. “My house was located in Natori, a city by the coast, and we were evacuated with every aftershock. Sometimes we had to spend time in our car. It was very hard, but thankfully, my family was all safe.”

The emotional toll on Nobuhiro and the people of northern Japan was almost overwhelming. Six months after the earthquake, Nobuhiro, who is working for a temporary employment agency, visited the nearby town where he had grown up. “Everything was destroyed and gone. Most of the people who survived moved out. They lost jobs and don’t know what to do now. Someone told me it will take 20 to 30 years for that town to be completely restored.”

It was about this time that Nobuhiro discovered the radio program *Words of Hope*, produced by Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) in response to an appeal from the Reformed Church of Japan. The program is designed to bring words of hope to people devastated by their losses.

In a letter to Japanese ministry leader Rev. Masao Yamashita last September, Nobuhiro wrote, “I listen to the radio program every week. It gives peace and



One year after the earthquake, many people are still trying to put their lives back together.

refreshes my heart. . . . Please pray for quick restoration for the victims of the earthquake. And please don’t forget that there are people like me who gain peace and comfort from the radio program.”

Nobuhiro continued to listen, and not long ago BTGMI received another letter from him. “We could see that the Holy Spirit was working in his heart,” notes Yamashita.

This time Nobuhiro wrote, “The other day I visited a church. It was my third time. I want to be close to God.”

v add.  
God multiplies.

“It is encouraging to see God working through our ministry to bring people into closer relationship with him,” says Yamashita. “Pray that Nobuhiro will remain in God’s grace and may accept our Lord as his Savior.”

Yamashita adds, “Thank you for helping us share God’s good news with the people in Japan. We could not carry on this ministry without your prayers and support.” ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, *Back to God Ministries International*

## CTS Launches New Programs

**P**eople of various ages and backgrounds come to Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) to attend courses in the seminary’s new certificate programs in such areas as pastoral care, theology, church planting, youth ministry, and missions, or to participate in the new Diploma in Ministry Program.

These are not degree programs but courses of study intended for ministry and personal enrichment. The graduate level courses offered in the certificate programs are also offered as part of other degree programs at CTS.

“We have had a mixed bag of students. This is not ‘seminary lite,’” says Prof. Darwin Glassford, who directs the master’s degree programs and also oversees the certificate and diploma programs at CTS.

“These programs are beneficial for several groups of people,” says Joan Beelen, registrar for CTS. “[They] provide an opportunity for volunteer or paid ministry staff to gain a strong theological underpinning for the ministry in which they’re already engaged.”

In addition, she says, the programs provide “a good stepping stone for those who are considering a master’s degree but aren’t sure of their plans. It gives them a taste of seminary.”

The certificate and diploma programs emerged out of an overall evaluation CTS did of its curriculum in 2008 and 2009.

“We wanted to make our programs accessible to those who would not otherwise access them,” says Glassford, a professor of church education at CTS.

Students are required to take a few core courses, including one on Reformed doctrine



Students attending class at CTS

and a Bible survey course. They then can branch out and take classes in inner-city ministry, overseas missions, world religions from a Christian perspective, or how to provide pastoral care to people facing difficult circumstances. ■

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*

## Annual Service Auctions Benefit Nonprofits

Residents of Calvin College's Kalsbeek-Huizenga-van Reken residence hall gathered late last year as part of the school's annual service auction to bid on a host of offerings, including baked cookies, knitwear, and singing lessons.

The proceeds were dedicated to Supper House, a restaurant-style food assistance program at a church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Calvin students gather for annual Service Auction.

All of Calvin's residence halls team up with an organization in Grand Rapids to give students an oppor-

tunity to learn from and serve community members they might not otherwise encounter.

## Faith Alive Promotes Psalm Singing

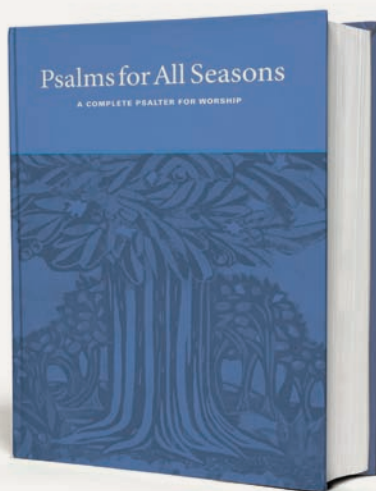
Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, is actively helping to promote and integrate "the faithful and fruitful use of the biblical psalms" into the life of worshiping communities.

Faith Alive's newest psalms resource is *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, copublished by Faith Alive; the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship; and Brazos Press, a division of the Baker Publishing Group.

"This resource crosses boundaries," says Martin Tel, one of the collaborators on the book, in an interview with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Tel is the C. F. Seabrook Director of Music at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.

The book chronicles the history of how Christians have used the psalms in the past. It also provides, says Tel, a look at current uses of, and musical settings for, the psalms.

Collaborating on the book with Tel were Rev. Joyce Berger, worship and music editor for Faith Alive Christian Resources, and John Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.



"People in any particular psalm-singing tradition will find hundreds of examples of their own material," says Tel.

This volume "draws freely from a wide variety of approaches and styles, providing multiple options and making it possible to easily compare the strengths of each."

Psalm fests that gather people for congregational singing of psalms from the new book are being held as well.

Also in the works, and separate from the new psalms book, is *Lift Up Your Hearts*—a joint hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America set to be released in 2013.

Some of the psalm settings from *Psalms for All Seasons* will be featured in the new hymnal. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

"I think it's a really good experience for people to get out of this little Calvin bubble," said Katharine Raybaud, a sophomore community partnership coordinator in Kalsbeek-Huizenga-van Reken.

"A lot of people at Supper House have very different lives than we have at Calvin."

Raybaud and fellow coordinator sophomore Ellen Hoeksema bring four to eight Calvin students to Supper House on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the semester.

Dorm partnerships like this one have become an institution of campus life.

The partnerships are intended to forge more invested relationships, and the service auctions provide a way for students to show their appreciation for those relationships.

"Right now, especially in times when government funding for programs and services provided in our communities is being cut back, there's a need that's greater than it has been in the past, so there's a need to give back in creative ways; there's a need for people to be generous," says Noah Kruis, associate director of the Calvin Service-Learning Center.

In total, Calvin's seven residence halls raised \$13,516 for their partnerships with ministries and organizations. ■

—Andrew Steiner, 2011 Calvin graduate

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Ontario CRC Reaches Out with Random Acts of Kindness

Once each month, members of The Village Church target a park, home, or business in Thorold, Ontario, and take it over—with kindness.

The Home Missions-supported church plant uses “Random Acts of Kindness Everywhere” (RAKE) to renew the community by encouraging people to act kindly and pass that kindness on to others.

“The residents of Thorold are getting to know the Village Church as the ‘community-involved’ church that offers different groups and services to Thorold and its residents,” says Pastor Mike Collins. “It has proven to be a great way to get to know our own church members and our city.”

RAKE is based on Collins’s love for the Thorold community, which has inspired him to use small gestures to show God’s love for the city and its people. So far, a team of Village volunteers has completed 30 projects, including raking leaves at residents’ homes, shoveling snow, handing out water at a local park, cleaning up parks, and passing out flowers door-to-door.

The projects have also led to the development of the church’s “Love Thorold” team, a small group of church members seeking to provide more formal community assistance.

The Thorold community is taking notice. The principal of Thorold Secondary School appreciated the church cleaning up garbage on the school’s property. A local community group was grateful for work done at a community center.

“We have received many letters of appreciation and donations from residents of Thorold,” Collins says. ■

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*



Members of the Village Church participate in random acts of kindness.

## Ministry Relationship Grows in Japan

Ken Lee never forgot Rev. Takayuki Ashida’s words urging him to return to Japan.

“Ken, please come back. I want to work with you,” the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) pastor had said.

An evangelist at the Korean American of Orange County CRC in California at the time, Lee had taken some of the church’s young people to Japan for a mission trip.

Ashida was so impressed by the team’s ministry focus—to bring people to Christ and nurture them as leaders to share the gospel—that he wanted Lee to help him do something similar.

A few years later, Lee became a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary and began working with Ashida.

In 2006, Ashida became the pastor of Shin-Urayasu Church—a 12-year-old church plant in the Tokyo Bay area—with a weekly attendance of only about 20 people. With Lee’s help, Ashida started a process of transformation by establishing close relationships with the members and helping them to discover God in new ways.

Ashida also encouraged the church to add some contemporary touches to traditional RCJ worship, which used a style that was more than 60 years old.

Ashida and Lee then turned to building leaders. They

trained small group leaders and began men’s and women’s Bible studies, youth and adult Bible studies, and a breakfast Bible study. The groups provided a comfortable setting for



Ken Lee and Rev. Takayuki Ashida planning together.

church members, new believers, and seekers to ask questions and gain fresh insight on what it means to follow God.

The church grew to over 60 worshipers as its discipleship and outreach ministries expanded. By June 2010, it had matured enough to become an organized church—18 months ahead of schedule.

With Shin-Urayasu’s outreach efforts taking off, Lee started helping two other churches in evangelism outreach. “Like a parent who marries off a child, I have mixed feelings [on leaving Shin-Urayasu],” says Lee. “At the same time, I am looking forward to seeing how God is going to use them to expand his kingdom.” ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort,  
*Christian Reformed World Missions*

# Creation Art

God is a masterful artist, and we have the awesome opportunity to soak in the wonders of creation whenever we watch a breathtaking sunset, take a stroll along the beach, or admire a deer drinking from a cool stream. You've probably heard the creation

story a hundred times, but let's take a look at the marvelous beginning of our world with a different lens—through the eyes of an artist!

Each day this week, put on your artist hat and tell the story of creation by making your own works of art.

## Day 3: Land, Seas, Plants, and Trees

Follow the salt dough recipe below to make a sculpture of land and water. Add toothpicks and colored construction paper to make plants, trees, and flowers in your "land." When you're finished with your sculpture, let the dough air-dry.

**Cool Creation Fact:** The highest mountain in the world is Mount Everest in Nepal, reaching almost 30,000 feet (9,144 meters) above sea level!



## Day 1: Light

Make a candleholder to shine the wonderful light God made on the first day of creation. Find an empty glass jar and cut out shapes—circles, hearts, squares, or whatever you like—out of aluminum foil. Glue these foil shapes to the jar and let the glue dry. Then place a small candle inside the jar and ask an adult to light the candle. Watch the light from the fire reflect and sparkle through the glass!

**Cool Creation Fact:** Light can travel as fast as 186,000 miles (299,337 kilometers) per second!

## Day 2: The Sky

Peek through your window and look at the sky. Do you see any clouds? Is there a sunset? Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Take out a sheet of white construction paper, watercolor paints, and a paintbrush, and paint a picture of what the sky looks like today. If you don't have watercolor paints, shake a few drops of blue food coloring into a small paper cup. Add a little water to the cup, and use a cotton ball or Q-tip to paint your picture.

**Cool Creation Fact:** The sky—earth's atmosphere—is made up of many different gases (air molecules) like nitrogen and oxygen.

## Salt Dough Recipe

Combine 1 cup of salt, 2 cups of flour, and 1 cup of warm water in a bowl. (If you'd like to color the dough, add food coloring to the water.) Mix together to make a soft dough. To make the dough look more like dirt for the land, add a few teaspoons of cinnamon.

## Day 4: Sun, Moon, and Stars

Tear or cut small pieces of white or yellow paper. Arrange them on a sheet of black construction paper to create a paper mosaic of a sun, moon, and stars. Then carefully glue the paper pieces to the construction paper.

**Cool Creation Fact:** Scientists do not know exactly how many stars are in the universe—but they're sure there are trillions!

## Day 6 (Part 1): Wild Animals

Use colored pencils (or regular pencils) to draw sketches of your favorite wild animals. If you'd like, find pictures of animals in magazines and place a sheet of white paper over the pictures to trace the animals. Then color them in with colored pencils or markers.

**Cool Creation Fact:** The world's largest animal on land is the African bush elephant. These massive beasts have been known to weigh up to 20,000 pounds (9,000 kilograms)!

## Day 7: Take a Break!

Just as God rested from creating the world on the seventh day, enjoy the beauty of God's creation by doing something you love—take a bike ride, go for a hike, or watch tonight's sunset! Thank God for all he has made, and honor the great Artist by living your life with joy and thankfulness.

## Day 5: Birds and Sea Creatures

Take two dry sponges and use a marker to draw a simple outline of a fish on one sponge and a bird on the other. Cut the outline of each animal out, and dip the sponges into paint to make animal stamps. (If you don't have paint, use food coloring and water). Press the stamps on a sheet of construction paper to make fun designs.

**Cool Creation Facts:** The world's largest bird is the ostrich. An ostrich can grow up to nine feet tall and weigh nearly 350 pounds (158 kilograms)! The world's largest sea mammal is a blue whale. Some blue whales have been known to grow almost 100 feet (30 meters) long!

## Day 6 (Part 2): People

God saved the best part of creation for last when he created human beings in his image. Take a look in the mirror and you'll see one of God's most prized creations—you! Psalm 139:13-14 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Draw a picture of yourself (also called a portrait) by carefully tracing over a recent photograph or by looking in the mirror while you draw.



Christin Baker is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# The Scarlet Number

**PEOPLE TEND TO ASSOCIATE** certain numbers with specific meanings. Three, for example, reminds us of the Trinity. Seven, corresponding to the days of creation, represents fullness; and 40 suggests testing.

And then there is the number 17. Mathematicians will recognize it as a *prime* number, divisible only by itself and the number 1. In many cases, identifying something as “prime” has a very positive connotation—as in “prime rib” or even “prime minister.”

But in the Christian Reformed Church, the number 17 is usually uttered with a mixture of fear and distaste by church councils and pastors—that is, whenever it refers to Article 17 of the Church Order, “Release from Ministry in a Congregation.” Article 17 seems to be particularly meaning-full.

## Article 17: Release from Ministry in a Congregation

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from active ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 17-a

(You can find the full text of Article 17 at [crcna.org/site\\_uploads/uploads/resources/2010\\_churchorder.pdf](http://crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/resources/2010_churchorder.pdf).)

Councils and pastors often look for alternate routes through a parting of ways. Perhaps the pastor could seek out a call to ministry elsewhere. Or the congregation could offer the pastor a time of sabbatical with the understanding that this



would be terminal, allowing both to quietly close the chapter. Or perhaps the pastor could simply take a time-out from ministry. Anything to avoid the daunting stigma attached to Article 17!

Pastors fear that the number 17 will hang around their neck like a scarlet letter identifying them as flawed or

quasi-qualified for ministry. And councils worry that using Article 17 will give them a reputation as a “difficult” congregation—a treacherous place for any minister who follows.

But is that perception accurate? Is the stigma real? Is there a way through the conundrum that, in many cases, the only



## It should come as no surprise that things sometimes go badly in the church.

route to release available in the Church Order is the route we want to avoid?

### Challenging the Perception

In fact, the stigma is unwarranted. Article 17 applies to a whole range of situations, and its meaning can vary widely. For example, a pastor who intends to pursue further education would do so under Article 17. The same is true for a denominational agency or a congregation that downsizes and eliminates a position, or a pastor who chooses to step away from parish ministry for a time of discerning his or her calling.

Beyond these occasions, there are more challenging circumstances. Reasons for change in the fit between congregation and pastor are many and varied. After a length of time, a congregation may require a leader with a different gift mix. Years ago, pastors served congregations for relatively short stretches—three to seven years. When that was the norm, difficult situations would “resolve” themselves in a matter of time. Over the last 20 years, the pendulum has swung toward longer pastorates and encouragement for pastors and congregations to work through challenges rather than simply move on.

But this trend has a downside: the new reality of pastors staying in a congregation longer than is advisable. When that happens, the pastor and congregation may become enmeshed in increasingly unhealthy systems of formal and informal expectations. Sometimes congregations are unkind to their pastors, and pastors are unkind to their congregations. Other times, pastors are unkind to themselves, affecting their ability to function as leaders.

Whatever the cause, when it becomes clear that “fit” is a concern, congregations can no longer presume that a timely call will be forthcoming. While the general proportion of “vacant” churches—churches without a pastor—within the

CRC has remained fairly steady, the calling system moves more slowly and deliberately, with an increasing focus on the right “fit.” Churches take longer to move through the search process, and pastors are less inclined to move quickly. This may seem just fine—until you are the pastor looking to move, or the congregation seeking a pastor! Then the pace can become a source of impatience and frustration. The current sluggishness of our calling system contributes to the need for Article 17 separations.

### Opportunities for Healing and Growth

Someone once commented, “When you’ve seen one Article 17, you’ve seen one Article 17.” It’s true that no two situations are precisely alike. The range of situations covered by this single article in the Church Order is immense: from painful and lamentable to simply circumstantial or purely personal.

In each situation, it’s necessary to establish the basic circumstances and dynamics leading up to a release. But it is far more important to look at how the parties respond. There are times of brokenness and wrongdoing in each of our lives, and in our life together. For a community that confesses the need for daily repentance and forgiveness, it should come as no surprise that things sometimes go badly in the church. Through this brokenness, did the pastor and congregation demonstrate enough humility to engage in a process of healing? Were mistakes acknowledged? Are both pastor and congregation in a better position to engage in significant new relationships? Does the congregation have a fresh commitment and ability, by the grace of God and the presence of the Spirit, to be a more hospitable and mature community, and the pastor to be a more able and mature leader?

Over the years, the Church Order has included significant revisions to Article 17. In 2003 a supplement was added to provide processes of healing for pastors and congregations. There are provisions for counsel and assessment for pastors, and specialized transition ministers to assist congregations and allow pastors and congregations to flourish.

The fact that there is a stigma attached to a process for dealing with our brokenness is troubling. It suggests that the church of Jesus continues to be a place where it is not safe to be weak. Wouldn’t it be grand if our starting point with each other were not the shine of our veneer but rather our shared conviction that in our weakness the grace of God is our strength? Wouldn’t it be grander still if a trend emerged of pastors and congregations becoming more hospitable toward each other, and this trend led to fewer painful separations?

The reality of Article 17 is that it includes both tinges of scarlet and shades of healing. Sometimes an Article 17 release may point to ongoing concerns about a community or a person. Other times it may point to a community or a person radically changed for the better! Often Article 17 points to challenging times of brokenness that cry out for hope. These are opportunities for healing, for growth, and for renewal. They are occasions for persons and for communities to learn anew what it means to live by the grace of God. One thing is sure: Article 17 invites us into conversation with each other in a process designed to achieve clarity and, sometimes, healing. ■



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

## Sharing Spiritual Wisdom



**"ONLY BE CAREFUL, AND WATCH YOURSELVES** closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deut. 4:9).

"Life is not *like* a story; it *is* a story," says Daniel Taylor in his new book *Creating a Spiritual Legacy: How to Share Your Stories, Values and Wisdom* (Brazos). A spiritual legacy is the passing of wisdom from one person to another—the most valuable gift you can give to those you love. Young or older, everyone creates spiritual legacies every day by actions and by spoken words.

Writing down your stories is the best way to preserve your legacy over time. Others can do it for you if writing terrifies you. We all have "mini-stories" that highlight one meaningful event—a chunk of memory, a memoir. We also have "master stories," a summary of a life lived—much like a testimony.

Frederick Buechner (*Telling Secrets*, HarperOne), a master storyteller now in his 80s, insists, "... it is precisely through

these stories in all their particularity, as I have long believed and often said, that God makes himself known to each of us more powerfully and personally." Another contemporary voice, Richard Rohr of the Franciscan tradition (*Falling Upward*, Jossey-Bass), talks of a certain spiritual maturity that allows for sharing both the struggles and the glories of a life faithfully lived.

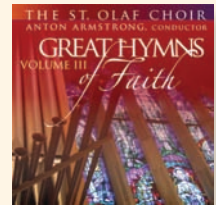
Dan Taylor concludes his helpful book by saying that passing on your spiritual legacy is not optional; you are responsible to testify to the work of God in your life. You must pass on that hard-won wisdom.

So get started. Envision someone you love sitting beside you on the sofa, eager to listen. Are you ready to pass along wisdom? Perhaps your loved one is far away—bless her with a letter that contains your spiritual insights as they relate to her life. Share your stories with others as spiritual legacies. Don't let the things your eyes have seen fade from your heart ■

## Passing on your spiritual legacy is not optional.



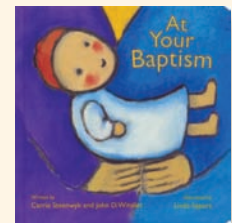
**Carol J. Rottman** teaches memoir writing in Calvin College's C.A.L.L. program. A member of Eastern Ave. CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., her latest book is *All Nature Sings* (Credo).



## Great Hymns of Faith, Volume III

by **The St. Olaf Choir**  
reviewed by **Randall Engle**

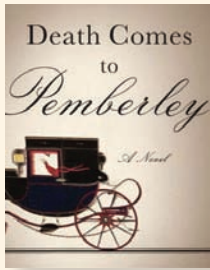
Volumes I and II of this series soared to the top of sales charts, and this latest edition is destined to do the same. Conductor Anton Armstrong, the St. Olaf Choir, a brass quartet, and organist John Ferguson serve up a musical feast in the renovated chapel of St. Olaf with its new pipe organ. But in the end it is the hymns, simply and sincerely sung in four-part harmony, and the St. Olaf Choir that are a match made in heaven. ([www.stolafrecords.com](http://www.stolafrecords.com))



## At Your Baptism

by **Carrie Steenwyk and John D. Witvliet**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

*At Your Baptism* is a lovely board book that explains the meaning and promises of baptism in a clear and succinct way. Authors Steenwyk and Witvliet serve at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Linda Saport's simple and colorful illustrations will draw children into the words. A celebration and affirmation of God's love expressed through the sacrament, this would be a great gift to commemorate a baptism. Ages 4-8. (Eerdmans)



## Death Comes to Pemberley

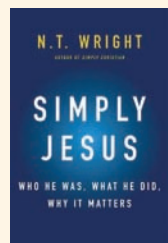
by P.D. James  
reviewed by Kathryn Hoffman

What happens when an Austen favorite meets a modern master storyteller? A classic whodunit is born. Mystery replaces romance in P.D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley*. When an inexplicable murder occurs on Pemberley's grounds, Elizabeth, Darcy, and the scoundrel Wickham are forced together again. James creates an oppressive atmosphere that is not relieved until the mystery is resolved. She does not attempt a precise imitation of Austen's tone, but careful readers will hear echoes of Austen's 19<sup>th</sup>-century voice and recognize a little of James's detective Dalgliesh in Mr. Darcy. (Knopf)

## The Interrupters

reviewed by Josh Larsen

The year's most moving moment of cinematic grace was a real-life one. The documentary *The Interrupters* follows a handful of "violence interrupters" who intervene in disputes in crime-ridden Chicago neighborhoods largely through caring conversation, in which they tell the "offenders" that they're worthy of respect and care. When one of them confronts a teen girl who has been in and out of delinquent centers, it's not with condemnation but with this message: "Do you want to be loved? Absolutely. Do you deserve to be loved? Absolutely." Grace indeed. On disc now. (PBS)



## Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters

by N.T. Wright  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Written for a general audience as well as for Christians, this successor to Wright's earlier book *Simply Christian* "is written in the belief that the question of Jesus—who he really was, what he really did, what it means, and why it matters—remains hugely important in every area, not only in personal life." Reminding readers that Jesus taught his followers to love God with their whole beings, including their minds, Wright challenges them to explore the gospels and to discover the radical implications of Jesus' kingship on earth and in heaven. (HarperOne)

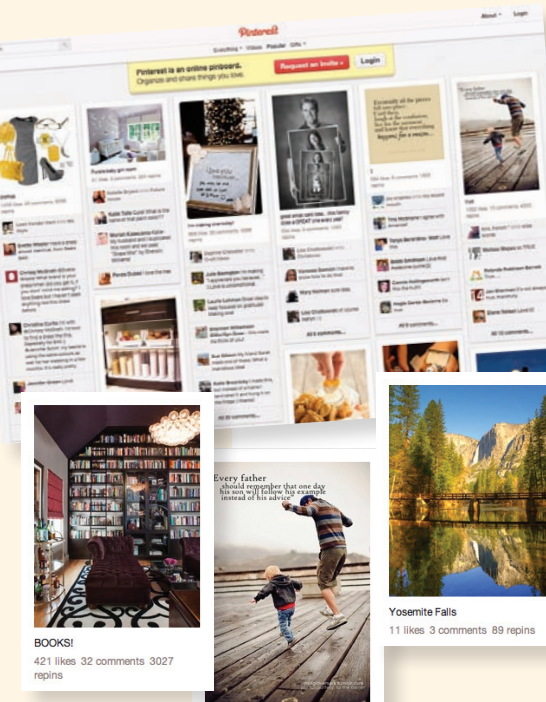
## THE LOWDOWN

### 7 Cool Things from ReFrame Media

- *Today* devotional iPhone app (in iTunes AppStore)
- *Today* on Kindle (in Amazon Kindle store)
- "Today" radio podcast/broadcast (on iTunes)
- *Walk The Way* daily video challenge ([facebook.com/walktheway](http://facebook.com/walktheway))
- *Kids Corner* radio drama and website for kids (on iTunes and [kidscorner.net](http://kidscorner.net))
- *Under the Radar*, gourmet Christian music ([radarradio.net](http://radarradio.net)).
- *Think Christian*, a blog about faith and culture ([thinkchristian.net](http://thinkchristian.net))

ReFrame Media is the English-language arm of Back to God Ministries International. Check it out at [reframemedia.com](http://reframemedia.com).

Compiled by Ron VandenBurg with the help of ReFrame's director, Steven Koster.



## Pinterest

reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber

Listmakers will love Pinterest—an online bulletin board that puts a creative new spin on organizing your favorite things. After you join, you create virtual "boards" where you "pin" items of interest to you: travel or meal plans; favorite places and things; craft ideas; books to read. You can also follow the boards of friends and other pinners in the community. The membership waiting list is long, so ask a current member to send you an invitation.



Yosemite Falls  
11 likes 3 comments 89 repins



Oven baked "fried" pickles  
249 likes 6 comments 1928 repins





# Music and Memory

EXPERIENCING THE RESTORATIVE POWER OF MUSIC

**I**t's hard to imagine the residents of a dementia care facility coming together to form a choir, each singing different parts in harmony. But that's exactly what happens on Tuesday nights at Holland Home's Verblauw Center in Grand Rapids, Mich., when we lead weekly live music sessions with the residents. Sometimes we silence our instruments and sing a cappella because those harmonies are so beautiful.

Music has healing and restorative powers, and it brings joy and hope to people who are living in the fog of dementia—even those who are in the advanced stages. It helps them to reconnect with their life in three crucial areas: mind, body, and soul.

## **Mind**

One night when we sang the old hymn "In the Garden," a dear friend in her 80s sang all the words with us from memory.

She said, "My mother used to sing that song with me when I was a little girl!" Although she suffers from severe memory loss, that familiar old song triggered memories that had been filed away in her brain some 75 years ago.

People who are generally incommunicative often begin to smile and sing or clap their hands when they participate in a sing-along. The daughter of one resident came up to me after one session with a big smile on her face and tears in her eyes.

She said, “Mom hasn’t spoken in a long time, but when you started playing and singing ‘Amazing Grace,’ she sang along and remembered all the words!”

And it’s not just the lyrics people remember. The majority of these residents remember the melodies and rhythms to all the old songs they love—and even the harmonies. In a group sing-along setting, they will sing parts and harmonize with each other. Most of the great old hymns of the Christian faith were composed with soprano, alto, tenor, and bass lines, and that’s exactly how people remember them.

Recently I observed one resident who sat in her wheelchair, head down and motionless for the first few songs we sang. Then we started playing a hard-charging bluegrass version of “Power in the Blood.” The sudden change in her demeanor was amazing—she lifted up her head and smiled, sang along, and clapped her hands in tempo! From that point forward she was engaged in the music.

We’ve all experienced how memories somehow seem to get “stuck” to certain songs. Listening to a song from our high school or college days on an “oldies” station—even years later—brings back memories of what we were doing and who we were with when that song was playing on the hit parade.

Brain research helps us understand why. Scientists have found that the part of the brain that processes and tracks music (the rostromedial prefrontal cortex) is also

### Rewiring the Brain with Music

In January 2011, Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords survived a shooting spree that killed six people and injured 12. Her well-documented and continuing story of recovery from a gunshot wound to the left hemisphere of her brain shows the miraculous power of music to create new pathways in the brain.

Working with music therapists and rehab specialists, Giffords has been able to recover her voice.

Music has also been linked to the areas of the brain that control memory and emotions.

## “Your music doesn’t cure me, but it sure makes me feel better!”

active during memory retrieval. Research shows that the prefrontal lobe is one of the last areas of the brain to atrophy in people with Alzheimer’s, which helps to explain why even those in the advanced stages of the disease are able to recall song lyrics and music from their past when most other memories have faded away.

### Body

“Singing is a very physical process; when you’re making music your body responds as if you were giving it a physical workout,” says Eric Roter, a physician and Juilliard-trained musician. So in addition to singing, we hand out percussion instruments and encourage people to help keep the beat. Our group sessions last one hour, and we sing pretty much nonstop for the whole time. The simple act of singing stimulates breathing and benefits the lungs and the circulatory system.

Even the most uncommunicative patients will clap their hands, smile, and sway to the rhythm, often with eyes closed; they simply can’t help but move with the music. In their mind’s eye they’re somewhere familiar.

After one of our music sessions, Jay commented, “Your music doesn’t cure me, but it sure makes me feel better!” Although he is in the advanced stages of Alzheimer’s, the music stimulated him to make this observation with great clarity.

### Soul

Simply put, making music brings joy to the spirit. Spiritual songs also provide a vital connection to people’s deeply held faith. For those whose only way of communicating is through music, singing the familiar hymns of faith allows them to commune with God. Singing words of healing, resto-

ration, and grace has the effect of encouraging believers who otherwise may have no way to communicate their faith.

A glance around the room provides evidence that music lifts our hearts. When the music starts, people “come alive.” Even if they are unable to talk or sing, their faces brighten as they begin moving their hands or feet or rocking to the beat of the music.

I believe that music is a special gift God has given us to draw us closer to him. When we sing spiritual songs—songs of joyful worship, of quiet prayer, of praise, of reflection or confession—we feel a special connection with God. The right music can help lift us up or quiet our souls, because God truly inhabits the praises of his people.

After we sang a song she particularly enjoyed, one woman in the group clapped her hands together and exclaimed, “I just don’t know how anyone could live without music!” She was expressing a feeling deep within herself, awakened by singing, that music enriched her life and the lives of others.

As our group—most of them elderly and frail—makes music together every week, I’m reminded of the words of Psalm 146:1-2: “Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.”

Making music is good for the soul! ■



Marc DeRuiter is part of a musical group called “Mere Image” that visits dementia facilities and other homes for the elderly.

He is a member of Sunshine Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Beyond Belhar

**THE FIRST TIME** I encountered the Belhar Confession was on one of those stray Sundays pastors sometimes have when we try to sit anonymously in the pews of another congregation. This was a Reformed Church in America (RCA) church, and the people were clearly familiar with the condensed version of the Belhar that they recited in unison. I was impressed by the content of the confession. While I had no knowledge of where those words had come from, I knew and trusted the pastors, and I knew the reputation of the congregation well.

For years, this congregation had taken risks to engage the heart of their community. As their ministry led them into deeper conversations about the life and needs of their community, they began to see challenges and ministry possibilities they had not seen before. They found themselves advocating for women and children in need, they saw the challenges faced by sexual minorities, and they began promoting nonviolence.

Like many congregations, they had suffered an exodus of long-standing members. Many of these fled quietly to large churches in the suburbs with diverse staffing and programming. There they could disappear into the crowds and listen to sermons they deemed to be more practical and relevant and that addressed their personal salvation. Others exited and accused the congregation of becoming liberal or practicing a “social gospel.”

Those who remained—as well as those who would come later—did not take offense. Instead, they claimed their identity as a community working for justice, reconciliation, and unity. To this day the congregation endeavors to live out a “pioneering Reformed faith.”

As I reflect on the discussion now swirling in the Christian Reformed Church around the Belhar, I find myself disenchanted with the conversation. Much of it focuses on whether the Belhar is going to be designated a confession or a testimony. Yet I wonder how many of our congregations are engaging the ministry themes of the Belhar: justice, reconciliation, and unity.

If we reduce our discussion of the Belhar to merely “Is it a confession or a testimony?” we domesticate it in a way that empties it of its power. We might as well say that the Belgic

Whether we decide  
to call it a testimony  
or a confession,  
the Belhar calls the church  
back to our **best work**.

Confession is merely a nice, neat, orderly summary of Reformation teachings. This characterization may be true, in part, but it fails miserably to faithfully reflect the character, voice, and circumstances from which the confession emerged.

The Belhar and our confessions are the poetic articulation of the church in times of conflict and oppression. As such, they are neither complete nor infallible, but they bear the residue of particular circumstances and the blood of martyrs. These faithful Christians paid high costs in the face of regimes and empires that lack the ability to listen to an opposing side, to heed uncomfortable truths, and to practice self-criticism.

When the church and its officebearers affirm these documents, we can too easily forget their cost. We are also prone to forget that these documents are not divinely inspired, not factually accurate in all details of scholarship, and not the complete articulation of the church’s witness. Whether in the form of confessions or testimonies, the church needs to keep articulating and expressing the gospel in its new circumstances, in its own voice, relevant to its time and place.

Confessions have always been written in a contested context. The Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were written in light of (and against) the abuses of power of the state and the Roman Church. They stress doctrine and formation, and they carry the energy of Reformation. In this setting,

the issues they addressed demanded great courage even though they did not focus explicitly on the ministry and task of the church. Our confessions do not speak in our context with the same power they brought to the struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries.

We—North Americans at least—find ourselves in a decidedly different context. The issue of our time is not the oppression of a powerful and centralized church. We live in a context in which we actually have significant power. Particularly in North America, we have a profound influence in the world through our entertainment, our technology, our military, and, most significant, through the influence of our economy and wealth. If confessions ought to be written in times of stress, oppression, and disproportionate power, is it any wonder that the Belhar makes some of us uneasy? It may be addressing *us*!

If we North Americans take the Belhar literally, we might too easily dismiss it as irrelevant—after all, apartheid is not institutionalized on our continent. If, however, we hear the Belhar poetically and prophetically, it has the power to address the less obvious injustices in which we too play a part. Hearing the Belhar in this way may help us to see afresh our own participation in the systemic and economic injustices of our own countries, as well as in our world. When we reduce our conversation about confessions and testimonies to one of classification, aren't we really trying to avoid the crisis out of which these statements were born?

I respect that RCA congregation whose worshipers recited the Belhar. I respect them not because they had come to any final conclusion about whether the Belhar was a testimony or a confession but because they had discovered in it a way of giving voice to what they were living out in their practice. For them, the Belhar was a living text that reminded them to keep asking themselves hard and relevant questions. For them, the Belhar voiced some of the ministry risks with whose costs they were all too familiar.

There are few places today where the church will risk sticking out its neck. Our tradition has wanted to do things right and in the right way, in an orderly, systematized fashion. We

steer clear of conflict, controversy, and risk, presumably to preserve our safety and unity. Our discussions about the Belhar remind us that our best expressions of faith are birthed in times of deep risk and bitter conflict.

If our confessions and testimonies are not lived out in the real world with the risk and edginess of faith, we empty them of their power. It is time for us as the CRC to either draft new ones or rediscover the freight of what we have sometimes oversimplified. It is unlikely that Belhar will ever have the power for formation that our current confessions have. But the Belhar carries the energy for reformation and transformation that our confessions carried centuries ago.

Whether we decide to call it a testimony or a confession, the Belhar calls the church back to our best work. We are a people called to *unity*: to bring together the separated in ways that find common ground. We are a people called to practice *reconciliation*: to bring together those who hurt with those who have done damage. We are a people who practice *justice*: who empower those who have no voice. Irrespective of how strongly we may feel about how to classify the Belhar, all of us should be asking ourselves, “How can we put the Belhar into practice?” ■ [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)

For the complete text of the Belhar Confession, visit [crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm).



Rev. Marc Neelson is pastor of Georgetown Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich.



## THE JESUS QUESTIONS

**S**OME PEOPLE THINK that the main task of Christianity is to give people answers to life's questions. But that's not entirely the way of Jesus. In fact, Jesus often seems to do the exact opposite: asking difficult questions about life's purpose, end, and meaning.

The gospels contain many important teaching moments—Matthew, for example, presents Jesus as a teacher and records five large sections of his instruction, including the familiar Sermon on the Mount. But we easily overlook the curious fact that Jesus asked questions in the gospels—lots lots of them.

Some years ago I came across the book *The Questions of Jesus* by John Dear (Image, 2004). I was astonished by the book's assertion that in the gospels Jesus asked more than 300 questions of people. It seemed that for every situation, Jesus had a specific and probing question. Dear writes, "Jesus has a question for everyone he meets, for every occasion, for every experience, for every potential disciple. From his first encounter with his future disciples to his last words before his ascension, Jesus looks at his friends and invites them deeper into the mystery of God by means of a probing question."

I work with public university students on a campus in Canada. A number of

years ago, I created a ministry called "Tea Time." Students gather twice a week to drink tea and discuss current issues, world news, and ideas. Over the course of a few months, I began to notice something that seemed a bit "off." Every time an issue would come up, the majority of students around the table would quickly state with certainty what they thought the "correct" answer was, especially with issues and ideas having to do with religion. It seemed to me that many of these students were nurtured in a religious culture that encouraged *answer-giving* rather than *question-asking*.

In an attempt to challenge this behavior and encourage humility, honesty, and



# WITH HOLY CURIOSITY AND ANTICIPATION MIXED WITH A DASH OF FEAR, EACH PERSON REACHED INTO THE HAT.

## Tea Time Prayer

Father,  
Son, and  
Holy Spirit,

direct my  
hand.

Guide my  
fingers.

As I choose a question  
I ask that you choose one for me!

Speak to me, Lord,  
and ask me a question  
that will challenge  
unnerve  
transform  
realign  
encourage.

Make me a seeker, and  
send me on a journey to discover  
my authentic answer to your probing  
question.

May your Spirit  
illumine my mind,  
open my heart, and  
ready my body

to hear  
see  
pray  
reflect  
seek  
wrestle  
ponder . . .

answer.

I pray this  
in the name  
of Jesus,

Amen.

open-mindedness, I began to work with the leadership team of students in a way that would free them to become curious fellow seekers on a journey.

Taking John Dear's book off the shelf, I began paging through it again. Maybe the questions of Jesus would be a good place to start! I wrote down 25 questions I thought would speak to university students, cut the individual questions into strips, and put them into a hat. Our leadership team prayed over the hat, asking God to give each of us a question of Jesus that would speak into our lives.

With holy curiosity and anticipation, mixed with a dash of fear, each person reached into the hat and pulled out a question. Each person reverently opened the creased paper and read the question out loud.

Ancient and probing questions began to ring in that small room: "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29). "What is it you want?" (Matt. 20:21). "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). "If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?" (John 8:46). "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). "Will you really lay down your life for me?" (John 13:38). "Do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15).

I challenged the students to read their question in its original context and to reflect on it by wondering what that particular question might have to say to them.

Spontaneous conversations erupted in doorways and hallways that week as students wrestled with the questions of Jesus.

The important thing, I assured them, was that they begin wrestling toward an

authentic response to Jesus rather than having a watertight or "correct" answer.

The next time we gathered together again, students began pulling out their strips of crinkled and worn paper from wallets, pockets, purses, journals, and Bibles. They reminded the group which question they had received and began sharing how the question had led them on a journey of discovery, confusion, questioning, probing, seeking, and prayer. Most of the students could express how the question intersected with their particular life circumstances, indicating how they felt the question was "meant" for them.

One student in particular had a breakthrough moment that week and spent significant time in her room crying because she was so humbled by the way God was speaking into her life through the question she had pulled out of the hat: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (John 13:12). This question was one more confirmation among many over the past few months that God was speaking to her and doing something in her life.

The "Jesus questions" are now a regular part of my ministry with students, who eagerly look forward to it every semester. Each time we begin with the same prayer (see sidebar) before choosing a question. Perhaps we all need that kind of invitation to be seekers on a journey of discovery.

May God grant all those who embark on that journey the courage and grace to discover authentic answers to the probing and difficult questions of Jesus. ■



**Sam Gutierrez** is pastor of Wellspring Christian Fellowship, a student club on the campus of the University of British Columbia-Okanagan.

# ADS

**Deadlines:** April issue is 3/5/2012; May issue is 4/2/2012. Details online.

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

**To Advertise:** Place your classified ad online at [www.thebanner.org/classifieds](http://www.thebanner.org/classifieds) or email it to [classifieds@thebanner.org](mailto:classifieds@thebanner.org) or fax it to 616-224-0834. Questions? Call 616-224-0725.

## Denominational and Classical

### Admitted into the Ministry

**OAKDALE PARK CRC** (961 Temple SE, Grand Rapids, Mich.), with joy and thanks to God installed Pastor Emmett Harrison on January 29th, 2012 and welcomed Pastor Harrison, Emily and the Harrison household.  
Oakdale Park Church Council

### Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **Caleb Walcott** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **Eric Schlukebir** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director

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

Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

### Financial Aid

**CLASSIS HOLLAND STUDENTS** The Classis Leadership Development Team invites students from Classis Holland who intend or are studying for ordained ministry in the CRC to apply for financial aid. Applications will be accepted until April 15 for the 2012-2013 academic year. For information and application forms contact Dave Altena at 616-335-6258 or email [altenad@sbcglobal.net](mailto:altenad@sbcglobal.net).

**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](mailto:vdrkmp@juno.com). Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2012-2013. Students presently receiving aid must reapply.

**CLASSIS ROCKY MOUNTAIN** students preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classical Ministry Leadership Team for the 2012-2013 academic year. For information contact Bob Westenbroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303) 400-6723 or [robertwestenbroek@comcast.net](mailto:robertwestenbroek@comcast.net). All requests are to be received by May 31, 2012.

**FINANCIAL AID** Classis Grand Rapids North students preparing for ministry in the CRC may apply for aid and encouragement to assist them in their studies for 2012-2013. Contact our Ministerial Leadership Team - [DRodenhouse@gmail.com](mailto:DRodenhouse@gmail.com) or Dave Rodenhouse 616-866-4842

### Meetings of Classis

**CLASSIS AB SOUTH & SASK:** will meet in regular session on Friday, Mar. 9, 2012 at New Hope CRC in Calgary. All agenda items should be forwarded to the Stated Clerk, Al Brander at [clerkabss@gmail.com](mailto:clerkabss@gmail.com) or to 1203 High View Point, High River, AB T1V 1N9.

**CLASSIS HOLLAND** will meet in regular session Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 6:00 PM at Maple Avenue CRC, Holland, MI. Agenda items are due by March 29, 2012 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk Email: [louwerse@macatawa.org](mailto:louwerse@macatawa.org), FAX: 616-494-6054.

**CLASSIS ZEELAND** will meet on Thursday, May 10, 2012, 3PM, on the campus of Kuyper College in Grand Rapids. Agenda deadline is March 29.

### 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 100th Anniversary

**FIRST CHRISTIAN REF CHURCH** of Hanford, CA will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness on June 3, 2012. We invite all friends, former staff, and past members to attend. Please contact the church office 559-582-4423 or [hanfordcrrc@comcast.net](mailto:hanfordcrrc@comcast.net)

**IMMANUEL CRC** of Fort Collins, CO invites all friends, former staff, and past members to attend a banquet on Saturday evening, March 24 and our 100th Anniversary Worship Celebration on Sunday Morning, March 25. Please contact the church office at (970) 484-3583 or email: [immanuel.church@comcast.net](mailto:immanuel.church@comcast.net) for further information.

**INWOOD CRC** of Inwood, Iowa will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness on April 21 - 22, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to join us for fellowship on April 21 at 6:30 p.m. and a worship service on April 22 at 9:30 a.m. Please contact the church office at 712-753-4467 or [inwdcrrc@alliancecom.net](mailto:inwdcrrc@alliancecom.net)

### Church's 40th Anniversary

**PEACE CRC** of Cedar Rapids, IA will be celebrating 40 years of God's faithfulness on Aug. 4-5. We invite all friends and former members to join us. For more information visit [www.peacechurch-cr.org](http://www.peacechurch-cr.org).

## Announcements



**RE:KINDLE SUMMIT SPONSORSHIP** Marketing partnerships are now available for re:kindle, the inaugural CRCNA young adult summit. In addition to an opportunity to be a Title Sponsor, a variety of sponsorship opportunities

are available at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze levels. Please email [ya@crcna.org](mailto:ya@crcna.org) or call Mark at (512) 673-2825 for more sponsorship information. For event information, see <http://rekindle.crcna.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.

### Thank You

Rose Van Haitsma & family would like to thank everyone for the prayers, flowers, cards, money gifts, visits, words of comfort & especially for thinking of us during our time of bereavement of my husband, Chet Van Haitsma, who died on January 6th, 2012.

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday

**BERNIE KOOPS** will celebrate his 100th birthday this April. Friends, former students & colleagues are invited to join Bernie and his family for an open house on Sunday, April 22 from 2-5 PM at Appledorn Village Dining Room (630 Hastings Ave, Holland, MI, 49423) or send greetings to him at the same address. We, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, give glory and thanks to God for Bernie's steadfast model of love for God and service to others across his century of grace.

**MARTHA SMITH** 3400 Wilson Ave, Grandville, MI 49418, will celebrate her 100th birthday on April 25 2012 with an open house in her honor, from 2-4 PM on April 21 at Brookcrest. Love and congratulations from her friends and family - daughters Ann (Don) Herring, Kathy (Bernie) De Young, 4 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness in her life.

### 95th Birthday

**BERT JOLING** of 920 21st Ave S, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495, celebrated his 95th birthday Feb 24, 2012. His family thanks God that he has reached this age with a good mind, strong faith and grateful spirit.

**ROBERT LERCHE**, 3737 Highland Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60151 will be 95 on March 31, 2012. Husband of Martha (Rusthoven). Praise God for His Amazing Grace. We love you Dad, Grand-pa, and Great-Grandpa.

### 94th Birthday

**CLARA LUINENBURG HOFSTEE** celebrated her 94th birthday on Feb. 10, 2012. Greetings can be sent to 1727 Viking Road, Worthington, MN 56187.

### 90th Birthday



**JOHN GABRIELSE** 816 E Maberry, Lynden, WA 98264 will celebrate his 90th birthday on March 20. His wife Ella, together with their 4 children, 12 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren are thankful for God's faithfulness in his life.

**WENDLENA GROEN** 368 South Wilma #12, Ripon, CA 95366 will celebrate her 90th birthday on March 25. We thank God for her many years. Love from your children and grandchildren. Happy Birthday!

**PIETER SMITS (PAKE)** 320 Heitman Rd, Bridport, VT, USA 05734: 90 yrs. old on March 1st, 2012. We greatly thank the Lord for Gods blessing of his life and his great faithfulness to God. His wife, Alice (Artje Renzema) Smits passed 2004. All of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are requesting you send a birthday card.

**NELL VAN DELLEN**, 1600 NW Crista Shores Ln, #127, Silverdale, WA, 98383, 360-204-5518, will celebrate her 90th birthday on 4/10/12. Her husband Roger, and children, Joyce, Rog Jr. (celebrating in Glory), Carolyn Cartwright, and Dr. Al Van Dellen and their families are thankful for her faithful witness to God's blessings in her life, and her love for her family, ministry and friends. "Great is Thy faithfulness".



**GERTRUDE VAN HAITSMSA**, will celebrate her 90th birthday Mar. 10 with an open house at Bethel CRC, 515 E. Main, Zeeland, 2-4 pm. Friends and relatives invited.

**ENA (GOEDKNEGT) WITTE** celebrated her 90th birthday on Feb. 8, 2012. We thank God for her many years and what she has meant to all of us. Happy Birthday and lots of love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

#### 80th Birthday

**FRANCES BURGHGRAEF KOK** of Lynden, WA, will be 80 on March 15. Happy birthday from your husband, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Prov. 31:28.

**JETSKA VANDERDEEN**, wife of belated George Vander Deen, of Smithers, BC, celebrates her 80th birthday on March 21st, 2012. Her children thank God for her health and many years of love and service: Joanne (Bruce), Jeannette (Steve), Shirlene (Gerry), Willette (Dan), John+, Fred, Arlene, Iona (Brett), Hilda (Doug) and Edward, 20 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

**DAVID GORDON ZANDEE**, Grand Rapids, MI. His children invite you to join them in celebration on Sunday, March 4 at Brookside CRC, 3600 Kalamazoo SE Grand Rapids, MI. from 2-4 PM. No gifts please. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**MEYER** Ben and Gertrude of Volga, SD celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary Jan. 27. 7 children, 40 grandchildren, 41 great-grandchildren. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for being faithful to God and family.

### 65th Anniversary

**DYK** Henry & Louise 6151 Shadyrest St. #17 Manhattan, MT 59741 celebrated 65 years of marriage on February 11 with their children. We thank God for his blessings.

**GEERS** Harold and Elaine of Jenison, MI will celebrate 65 years of marriage on 2/28/2012. They with their family (5 children, 16 grandchildren, 1 deceased, 19 great-grandchildren, 2 deceased) are praising God for His love and faithfulness.

**GUNNINK** Abram & Margaret of 679 Andover, Kentwood, MI 49548. Family and friends will gather to celebrate this momentous occasion on March 24.

### 50th Anniversary

**VEDDERS**, Fred & Marge (Bode) Children: Scott & Deb, Jeff & Maggie, Anita & Tim, Allen & Sherri. 11 Grandchildren. Open House is March 31, 2012 @ First Allendale CRC, Allendale, MI. 2-4 P. M.

## Obituaries

**BLOEM** Harry J. age 83; January 13, 2012; 2105 Raybrook St. SE, Unit 5042, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; Harry is survived by his wife of 62 years,

Rose M. Bloem; children: James H. (Diane) Bloem, Nancy E. Bloem, David R. Bloem, Michael S. Bloem; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; brother: Henry G. (Ada) Bloem; sisters: Hilda (John) DeVries, Barbara (Ted) Sjoerdsma, and Lillian (Henry) Entingh. He was predeceased by his sister June (Claire) Bolt and brother, Henry (Harriett) DeZeeuw.

**BUIKEMA**, Anne L. nee DeVries, age 90, beloved wife of the late Robert C. Buikema, Sr. Loving mother of Robert Jr. (Linda), Kathleen (Gary) Ritsema, David (Ruth) and Howard (Sharon). Dear grandmother of 12. Dearest great-grandmother of eight. Fond sister of John K. (late Ruth) DeVries and Janet (Harold) Wierenga. Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews.

**DE BOER**, Sidney age 80. 18609 Villa Ct. Lansing, IL 60438. He is survived by his wife Betty (nee Cooper) daughters Judy (Mark) Drenth, Jane (late Ron) Van Der Bilt, Karen (Jeff) Althuis, seven grandchildren, and a brother John (Stella)

**DENOVOY**, John William (Jack) age 87, on Oct 25, 2011. 1915 S. Madison, Denver, CO 80210. Survived by wife Wanda (Walcott) of 62 years. Children: Jack, Doug (Connie) Rick, Dave (Julie) Mark (Nancy). 13 grandchildren & 4 great-grandchildren.

**DIELEMAN** Frank, age 90; Wednesday, January 4, 2012; Holland, Michigan and most recently Raybrook, Holland Home; 2105 Raybrook Dr. SE, Apt. 104, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; Frank is survived by his loving wife of sixty-eight extraordinary years: Cris (Clarissa Tiddens); sons and daughters-in-law: Dale and Sarah, Steve and Connie, and Joe and Marcia of Miami, Florida; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

**GRAVENHOF** Catherine (TeBrake) 89, of Worthington, MN went to her heavenly home on Dec 8, 2011. Preceded in death by husband, Neal. Survived by son, Norman (Bev), and daughter, Glenda (Jim) Loveless, 5 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

## 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:** 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@lafayettecrc.org Our Search Team Chairman is Norbert Fisher at (765)447-4659.

**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.

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

**YOUTH PASTOR** Moline CRC in Moline, MI. is seeking a part-time Youth Ministries Director to organize and conduct meaningful spiritual/relational programs for our youth starting August 2012. For more info visit www.molinecrc.org, call Pastor Ouwinga at 616-877-4218, or email us at molinecrc@gmail.com. The deadline for applications is April 13, 2012.

**PASTOR** Maitland River Community Church in Wingham ON is seeking an inspiring, visionary leader who is committed to developing and empowering others. The successful candidate would be an effective, creative communicator of God's Word, who models compassionate love for the community and equips the congregation for outreach. Full job description at mrcc.ca. Direct inquiries and/or resumes to searchcommittee@mrcc.ca

**WORSHIP DIRECTOR** Pursue your musical talents and worship gifts in a job with flexible, part-time hours. Covenant CRC (Edmonton, AB) is seeking a Director of Music and Worship Coordinator. Check out the position at www.covenantcrcedmonton.org.

**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 sdccrc.org. For information contact sdccrc.pastorsearch@gmail.com.

**PASTOR** Bethel Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta, a diverse church family committed to being a healing presence in our community, is seeking a pastor with leadership gifts who will equip and encourage us to fully develop our missional potential; someone with a strong personal relationship with Christ who is led by the Holy Spirit and showing evidence of living and leading missionally. The position includes leadership within a team (multiple staff) environment, shared preaching, teaching and some pastoral duties. For information about Bethel Church and a position description please check our website at www.discoverbethel.com, contact Ivan Mast at 780.449.6278 or direct your inquiry to the callingteam@discoverbethel.com. Will you pray about this, as we are here at Bethel?

**YOUTH DIRECTOR OPENING:** Shalom CRC, Sioux Falls, SD. A growing Youth Ministry program is seeking a dynamic full time Youth

Director. This person must display a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ to nurture this passion in each young person. The Youth Director needs to exhibit a vibrant leadership in the church that enhances the worship, outreach, and fellowship of each young person attending and will provide accessible authentic support for families with youth. Qualifications: A four year college degree in Youth Ministry or related field. Three or more years of experience working with youth in some capacity. Required to believe in and teach the doctrines and core values of the Reformed theology. If interested please submit your resume to: adminassistant@shalomcrc.org.

**LISTOWEL CRC** has a vacancy for a full time Youth Director/Youth Pastor. If you have a passion for youth, and a love for the Lord, we encourage you to apply to lead our Youth Ministry Team. For a complete job description, please contact Ray Heeres at rayheeres@hotmail.com or 519.291.2040.

**CADILLAC CRC** in Cadillac, MI is seeking a full-time Youth Pastor. Interested applicants should visit our website, www.cadcrc.org for the ministry description and application process.

**CHURCH OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR** Ebenezer CRC in Trenton, ON is actively seeking a p/t Church Office Admin. The ideal candidate should possess excellent organizational and interpersonal skills. Proficient knowledge of computer programs/skills is essential. For salary & job duties contact Jacqueline Vink @ jhvinc@hotmail.com

**LEAD PASTOR:** Faith Reformed Church, a well-established congregation in beautiful Traverse City, MI. is seeking an experienced lead pastor. FRC is in prayer for a pastor who is committed to strong Biblical preaching, possesses a humble servant's heart and who will champion FRC's mission: "To Know Christ and to Make Him Known". The successful candidate will be dedicated to discipleship and the spiritual growth of new believers as well as existing members of our congregation. For more information, please contact the search committee at patr@faithreformedchurchct.org.

**KOOLSTRA** Alice (terWisscha) age 93 of Campbell, CA on December 3, 2011. Predeceased by her husband Bill of 55 years in 1992. Survived by children Gert (Vern), Aggie (Bud), Willie (Kathy), Len (Lavienna), Alvin (Becky); 54 grand, great-grand and great-great grandchildren.

**LANING** Marge, nee Smith of 508 Summerset Ct, Naperville, IL 60565. Wife of the late Adrian "Murphy" Laning; mother of Peter (Gwen) Laning, Audrey (William) Serritella, Robert Laning, and the late Edith Laning; devoted grandmother of 4; great-grandmother of 10; sister of Stella (the late John) Van Tholen, Gerry (Bud) Doorn, the late Jacob (the late Florence) Smith, the late John (Gwynn Morford) Smith; aunt of many nieces and nephews.

**LUBBEN** Ralph went to be with our Lord on January 17th, 2012. 4250 Saratoga Avenue, Unit 312, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Beloved husband of Gladys Lubben, nee Wierenga; loving father of Dale Lubben, Debbie (Jeff) Jensen, Kathy (Tony) Milazzo, Daniel (Laura) Lubben, and the late David Lubben; devoted grandfather of Vance Lubben, Aimee

(Richard) Weinert, Anna, Matthew, and Meghan Jensen, Nicholas, Michael, and Brianne Milazzo, Rachel and Paige Lubben; great-grandfather of Kaitlyn and Jonah; fond brother of George (Goldie) Lubben, Fred (Joyce) Lubben, and Hennie (Ron) Driesenga; preceded by one brother and five sisters; uncle of many nieces and nephews.

**NUMAN** Aileen-Aja-Gunneman, September 22, 1941 - December 6, 2011, Vancouver, BC. Survived by her husband, Henry, married for 47 wonderful years. Loving and Caring Mother to: Children & Grandchildren: Michele & Kim (Angie); Nicole & Glen (Ethan & Elyse); Yvonne & Mike (Geoffrey & Bradley). Many relatives & friends. She loved people and lived our motto: 'to be Christ-like with a servant heart.' #209-3038 S. E. Kent Ave., Vancouver, BC V5V 4v8

**POEL** Clarence ("Tad") 91, of Grand Haven, MI went to be with our Lord November 20, 2011. He is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years Doris (nee Welling) Poel. He is also survived by his 7 children: Barb (Dan) Hoekema of Grand Rapids, MI. Marilyn (Paul) Milkamp of

Grandville, MI. Bill (Kathy) Poel of Grand Rapids, MI. Chris (Andy) Maddox of Grand Rapids, MI. Linda (Scott) Wesselydyke of Hudsonville, MI. Randy (Lisa) Poel of Grand Haven, MI. Marie (John) Wiersma of Spring Lake, MI, as well as 18 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren; sister Gladys Brook of Jenison, MI. He was preceded in death by sister Mary Ellen DeWitt. You may visit [www.klaassenfuneralhome.com](http://www.klaassenfuneralhome.com) to view complete obituary or sign the guestbook.

**SANDERSON** Frances L. Sanderson (Lyman); aged 89, January 04, 2012 of Grand Rapids. She was preceded in death by her husband: William A. Sanderson in 2011. Frances leaves behind her loving children: Collyn and Michael Hawn of Dallas, TX, Sylvia and Gary Hawisher of Newbury Park, CA, Pam and Jim Van Lopik of Grand Rapids, and Bill and Betty (Huizinga) Sanderson of Rockford; She had the joy of 10 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren; siblings: Edith and Jimmy (deceased) Greene of Colorado, Howard and Janice Lyman (deceased), Marjorie and Gene Hovda of Kansas, Wilma Hovda of Illinois; many other relatives and friends.

**SHAARDA** Betty age 89, of McBain, MI. went to be with our Lord on November 17, 2011. Betty was preceded in death by her husband Robert, 1 great-grandchild. Survived by her children: Don (Joyce), Ed (Norm), Paul (Carole), Mark (Mary), Lil (Doug), Rose (John) VanDyke. 12 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren.


**SYTSMA** Marten, passed away peacefully on November 22, 2011 in his 98th year. Predeceased by his loving wife Julia (Jeltje) Sytsma (nee Swart) on September 18, 2011 in her 95th year. Lovingly remembered by their children, Ria & Al Zong, Syd & Joanne Sytsma, Thea & Clarence Smit, Tina & Lloyd Dekkema, Ann & (Ed) deceased VanHamburg, Emily & David Johnston, Suzanne Sytsma (deceased) Julia Pearl & Scott Urquhart, Andy & Conny Sytsma and JoAnn & Henry VanMeggelen. 30 grandchildren, 62 great-grandchildren and 7 great-great grandchildren. Correspondence: Ria Zong 1494 St. John's Rd. Innisfil, ON Can. L9S 4N6

**TAMELING** Peter John went to be with our Lord on December 28th, 2011. 15W700 75th St, Burr Ridge, IL 60527. Beloved husband of June Tameling, 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.

**TOLSMA**, Bess; February 4, 1905 - January 20, 2012. Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her husband, Richard Tolsma, and her daughter, Betty J. Schurman. Surviving are her daughter: Mary (Roger) Boerema; son-in-law: John R. Schurman; grandchildren: Dr. John (Mary Lou) Schurman II, Mary (Richard) Mencarelli, Elizabeth (Todd) Kingma, Janet (Scott) Spoelhof, Richard (Wende) Boerema, and Mary Jill (Dr. Robert) Morren; great grandchildren: Jennifer (Barry) Leslie; John III (Sarah Wolcott), Julie and Jeffrey Schurman; Matthew (Brittney Gogulski), Eric and Chad Mencarelli; Travis, Kristin (Shane Powell) and Kara Kingma; Jonathan and Claire Spoelhof; Kaitlin (Scott) De Maagd; Christopher, Jameson and Schuyler Boerema; Tyler, Nathan, Austin and Logan Morren.



**TUBERGEN** Anetta (Baar) 93, Ripon, CA, died December 13, 2011. Preceded in death by Henry, her husband of 50 years, and great-grandson John William Vander Schaaf. Lovingly remembered by children Narleen (Fred) Douma, Linda (Tom) Ackerman, Ruth (Dana) Johnson; grandchildren Susan (John) Vander Schaaf, Sheri (Dale) Struiksma, Beth Anne (Neil) Brouwer, Pam (Jim) Auman, Katherine (Mark) Hollebeek, Jennifer (Steve) Geelhood, Matt (Marianne) Ackerman, David (Jamie) Van Zanen, Paul Van Zanen; 14 great-grandchildren; 1 great-great-grandchild; sister Dorothy (Rich) Sytsma, sisters-in-law Anna Baar, Elsie Smith, Hattie Van Heerde; and many nieces and nephews.

**VANDER MOLEN**, Nellie (Van Wyk) age 99 of Pella, IA went to be with her Lord on Dec. 31, 2011. Her husband, Jacob and 5 siblings preceded her in death. She is survived by her children, Twylla (Will) Nieboer, Larry (Linda) Vander Molen, Maryan (Guy) De Haan; 10 grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren, and a sister Ila Ozinga.



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**VANDER SLUIS-DEVRIES**, Dorothy J. (nee Cok) Age 82 of Menlo Park CA and North Olmsted OH on January 24, 2012. Beloved wife of Thomas E. DeVries Jr. and Glenn A. Vander Sluis (deceased). Loving mother of Jan Seerveld (Luke), Russell Vander Sluis, Paul Vander Sluis (Lorna), and Judy Vander Sluis; Linda Klemencic (Fred), Thomas DeVries III (Laura), Donald DeVries, and Philip DeVries (Yu Soon). Loving sister of Audrey Fridsma (Bill), Ralph Cok (d.) (Coby), Stanley Cok (d.) (Janet), Allen Cok (d.) (Elena), Marilyn Gjeltema (Bert), Paul Cok (Marilyn), Earl Cok (Jan), and Marvin Cok (Diane). Loving grandmother of 11, great-grandmother of 4. Daughter of Ben and Catherine Cramer Cok. Contributions in Dorothy's memory can be made to the West Park CRC in Cleveland.

**VANDE WERFHORST** Frank age 99, of Oak Harbor, WA went to be with his Lord on Jan. 11, 2012. Survived by his 10 children, 22 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren, 6 great-great-grandchildren and 3 sisters.

**VELLENGA** Vera J. age 86, 6751 15th Ave N St. Petersburg, FL 33710, went to be with our Lord on January 8, 2012. Survived by her loving husband of 60 years, Russell Vellenga; her children, Ted Vellenga & Mary Vellenga; 2 sisters and 1 brother.

**ZAAGMAN SR.** Jacob R. 75 of Bradenton FL, went to be with the Lord on Jan 29. Survivors include wife Kathleen Judith (Bultema); children Jacob Jr., Beverly (Doug) Nagel, and Linda (Rob) Quarles; 4 grandsons; siblings Grace Vegeter, Raymond (Vi) Zaagman, and Mina (Art) Poortinga; sisters-in-law Jo Zaagman and Joyce Zaagman; preceded in death by brothers Paul and Henry. We praise our faithful Lord!

**ZANDSTRA**, Arnold (Dick), 102, of Highland, IN, went home to be with his Lord on January 6, 2012. He was preceded in death by his wife Elizabeth (Betty) in 2006. He was the father of David (Muriel), Bernard (Patricia), Arnold (Carol), Nick (Ruth), Faye (Keith) Gaiser, Daniel (Judy), and Lois (Jeff) DeVries. He was the grandfather of 25 grandchildren and the great-grandfather of 11 great-grandchildren.

## Employment

**CARE GIVERS** True Blue Care Givers, experienced, affordable, consistent, in home care for seniors, Calvin Grads, Grand Rapids truebluecaregivers@gmail.com or 616-406-6819

**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.

**DRIVERS NEEDED:** Local greenhouse looking for semi & straight truck drivers with current CDL and Medical Card for spring season. Competitive wages paid. Please contact Amy at 616-875-7211 for more information.

**PARTTIME YOUTH WORKER POSITION** Christ Community Church of Victoria, B. C. has an opening for a part-time youth worker. Please contact the office at 250-479-3227 or ccvictoria@shaw.ca for a copy of the job description.

## Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

**PHOENIX CONDO** Central & Camelback, 1/3 mi to Light Rail, unique arch, 1800 sq ft, pool, whirlpool spa, Feb-May @ \$2300/mo or \$1400/2 weeks 231-245-6113 or dalane0108@att.net. 231-245-6113

**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

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

**FT. MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT** 2 bed, 2 bath, sleeps 10, heated pool, hot tub, bikes, quiet cul-de-sac. 9 mi. to beach. Photos available. 905-332-6711

**BRADENTON, FL** For sale, Gulf Lakes - 55+ manufactured home. 2b, 2b, sunroom - launi - covered car port, furnished. 941-755-7606

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

**FLORIDA SEASONAL RENTAL HOME** NEW 3 BR, 2 BA, 20 min to beach \$600 wk or \$2000 mo. North Port, FL. Call or email for pictures bobinvestor1@yahoo.com 407-334-4895

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

**SOUTHERN MICHIGAN CONDO** Weekly rentals now or Summer of 2012. South Haven, Michigan. Pool and private beach. Sleeps 8, 2 1/2 baths, professionally decorated, wireless service and flatscreen TVs. Call Phil @ 269 344-8303

**COTTAGES** on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

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

**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

**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

**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.

**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

**LAKEFRONT LOG HOME** 2 bdr, sleeps 6-8, 30 min N of GR. Incl. Boat w/ trolling motor, 2 Kayaks, swim raft w/ diving board. Sandy swimming. \$750/wk. shawnboomstra@hotmail.com or 616-583-0407

**BARLOW LAKE COTTAGE** sleeps 13. 5 BR, 3 1/2 BA, great outdoor area. Weekly rentals June/July only. 30 min. from GR, MI. 1 mile from golf. Barlowsummerfun@gmail.com for info.

**BIG STAR LAKE** ~ Cottage for rent in North Bay Shores. \$800 wk. veltema1@sbcglobal.net or call 616-662-9659. Great beach area, large fire pit, boat slip. 2 bedroom sleeps 6.

**6 BDRM LAKE MICHIGAN HOUSE:** 400 ft. private beach & woods; 1 hour from Grand Rapids. View: www.greatlakehouse.com; Email: rental@greatlakehouse.com

**LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE** located in Edgewood Beach Assoc, 4 miles north of Holland State Park. Cute 2 BDR/1BA with large screened porch and outside deck. Accommodates 4 adults or 2 adults and 3 children. Beautiful large private shared beach 2 minute walk away. Available select weeks for 2012 season @ \$700/week. 517 372 6871 or bbeltman@acd.net

**SLEEPING BEAR AREA:** park model trailer on little Glen Lake. Excellent condition, clean, waterview site and park. Call (231) 228-2088 for info and pics or email, sandytoes15@yahoo.com.



**THE BEACH HOUSE:** Holland, MI, Rentals & Ownership: Upscale 1-3 BD/3-4BA, Open year-round, Lk Mac views, Lk MI beaches, Pool, Furnished, FREE GOLF. Virtual Tours

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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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**ONTARIO COTTAGE FOR RENT** Rustic, private, sleeps 6, on lake in Dorset, \$750 per wk, \$1100 per wk July/Aug 905-859-0190 or ronhartholt@hotmail.com



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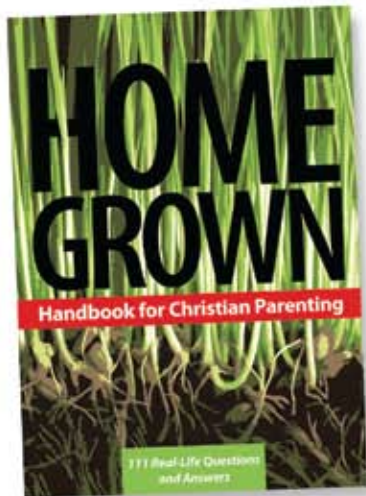
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## MISSIONAL NEWS

### How does a Christian in Saudi Arabia avoid prison and get a ministry diploma?

Christian Leaders Institute breaks the mold to answer this question.

I have a story to share. You might find it unbelievable. But it is true.

At the beginning of 2011, I had 250 students actively attending Christian Leaders Institute. One year later, I have more than 2,000 active students. How did this major growth happen?

#### Opening Closed Doors

I had spent years with David Feddes and Steve Elzinga training Article 23 students. Then one day I realized something: The Internet is everywhere, even in 'closed' countries.

#### Breaking the Mold

I realized that any Christian who understood English could take classes. They just needed Internet access.

The Internet allowed Christian Leaders Institute to penetrate closed countries and reach Christians. So I made scholarships available all

over the world. The response was immediate and overwhelming.

More than 2,000 Christians from over 85 countries are now in our student body.

#### This Blew My Mind

Church Leaders in Saudi Arabia are using Christian Leaders Institute through the Internet to train their congregation.

That way when the police arrest a Pastor, another Christian can step right in. The truth is, police have already arrested over 30 leaders in their congregation. They are still in prison.

#### Your Opportunity

Call me, Henry Reyenga, directly at 815-314-0007 or visit [www.clicrc.org](http://www.clicrc.org) to learn more and donate to Christian Leaders Institute.



## 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](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**A** wife asked her husband to brew coffee one morning. Her husband replied, "No way. Men don't brew coffee."

His wife said, "Oh yes, it says so in the Bible."

"Where does it say that?"

"In Hebrews!"

—Ben Zuidema

**O**ur daughter-in-law teaches first grade in South Dakota. Before Christmas one of her students was writing about being a wise man in the church Christmas play and giving a gift to baby Jesus. He asked her what frankincense was, and she explained that it was like perfume or stuff that smells good.

Later, when he was sharing his story with the class, someone asked him the same question. He said, "Well, Mrs. Hubers says it's like deodorant."

—Wick Hubers

**O**ne week the memory work in my grade 2 class was Matthew 28:19—the Great Commission. A few days later we watched a movie that portrayed Jesus' life. It ended with Jesus speaking those words to his disciples before he ascended into heaven: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. . ."

As Jesus was speaking, one student blurted out, "Hey, Jesus knows our memory work too!"

—Greta Godwin

**A**t Christmas time, many teachers receive gifts from their students. I hadn't realized how generous some parents were until I read my daughter's class newsletter following the Christmas holidays.

It read, "Thank you again for all the warm wishes and beautiful cars I received before the break. I was truly blessed by all of you!"

—Sharon Bean

**R**ecently we attended a church with friends. We sat in the overflow room and watched the service on a big screen. While walking out, we heard a little boy say, "Wow! That was a long movie!"

—Dick Bylsma

**I**n December I had the privilege of telling the Christmas story to my Sunday school class of 3- and 4-year-olds. With all the angel visitations and wealthy magi, I felt I needed to let the children know that Mary and Joseph were actually very ordinary people.

"You know, Mary was a good mommy," I mused as we did our craft. "She was a lot like your mommies." Pausing, I continued, "And Joseph was a good daddy; he was a lot like your daddies."

Little Seth looked up at me and said, "And the donkey, he was a good donkey, a lot like my brother Aiden."

—Judy Vriesema

**A**fter the children returned from winter break, the teacher asked about their vaca-

tions. David informed the class that he had visited his grandmother in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

"That sounds like an excellent vocabulary word," the teacher responded, "because we hear about that town every Groundhog Day. Would you please tell the class how to spell Punxsutawney?"

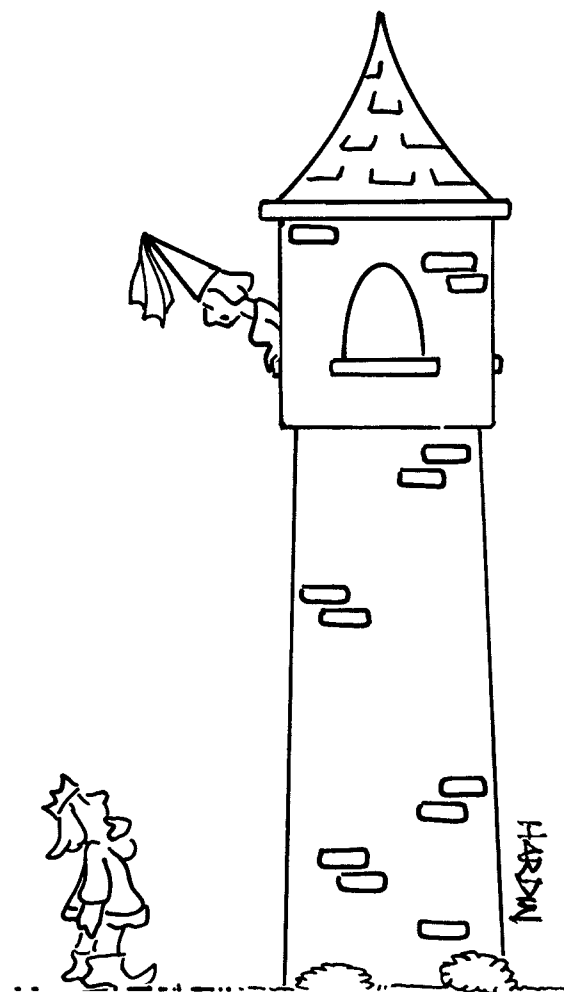
David paused a moment, and then said, "You know, when I think about it, we really went to Ohio."

—George Vanderweit

**A**t a recent Sunday morning service, the minister was wearing a green shirt and matching tie. Jason, our 4-year-old grandson, asked, in a voice that could be heard throughout most of the church, "Is that man in the green shirt God?"

The minister did not reply.

—Cal and Katy Danhof



"I'm sorry. But do you realize how much I was spending on shampoo and conditioner?"



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