



# BANNER

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

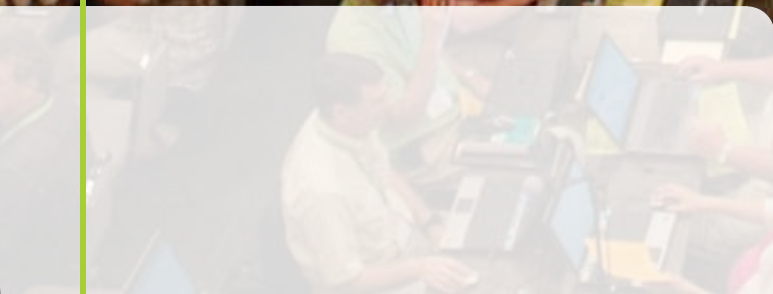
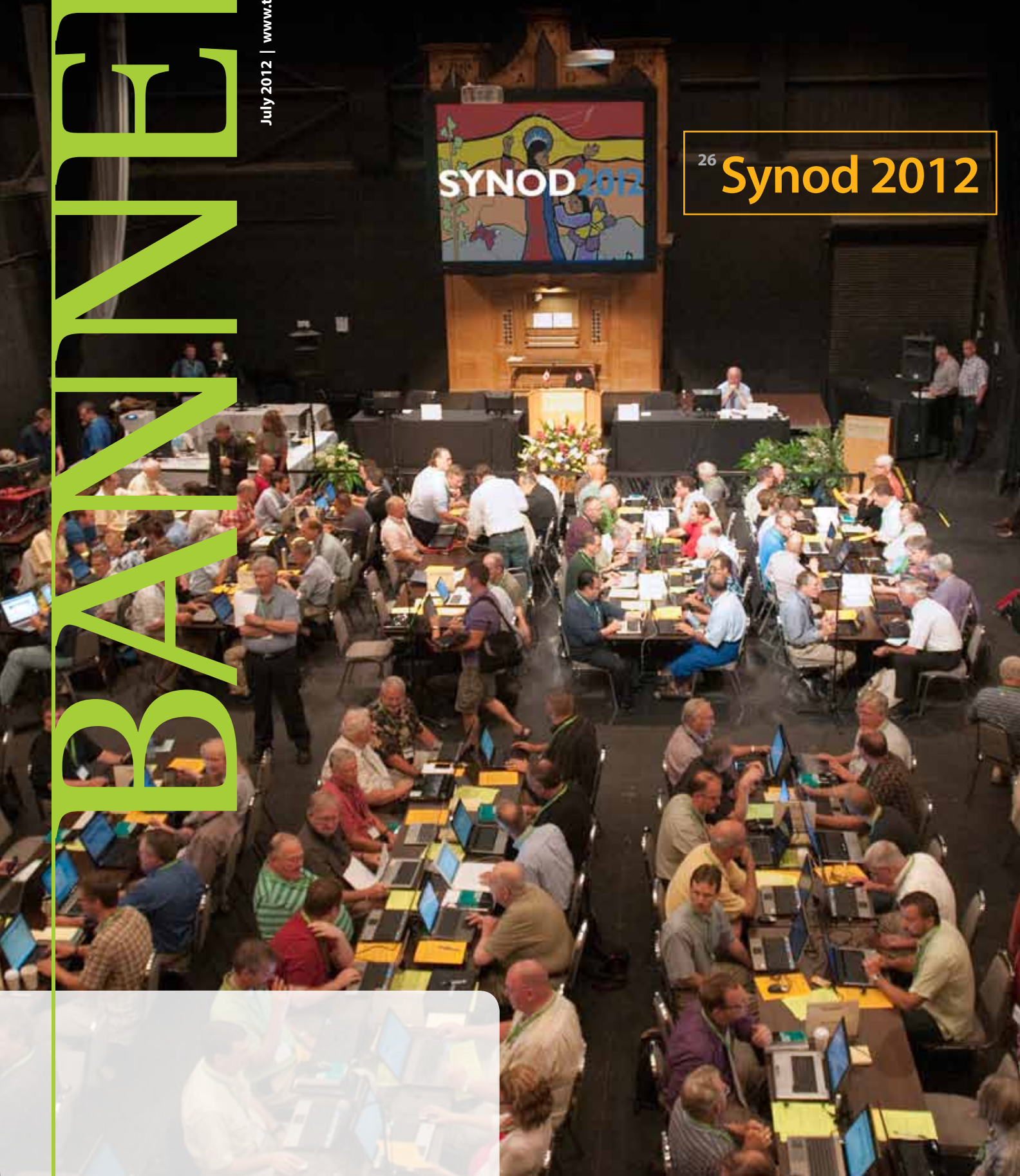
<sup>16</sup> Under the Radar

<sup>18</sup> Celebrating Faith Milestones

<sup>50</sup> Equipping God's People



<sup>26</sup> Synod 2012



## CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

### Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship

The Biblical

*psalms*  
spiritual vitality,  
rugged beauty, and  
enduring pastoral relevance  
continue to shape and nourish worshipping communities worldwide.

This brand-new resource provides one of the largest collections of psalms for worship ever published. Includes all 150 psalms, most in multiple formats. For each psalm –

- its actual biblical text, with pointing for responsive reading or chanting
- from 1-15 resources, including metrical hymns, contemporary, global, chant, and responsorial settings
- a brief introduction, suggestions for use in worship, and more
- edited by Martin Tel, Joyce Berger, and John D. Witvliet

Purchase at [www.faithaliveresources.org](http://www.faithaliveresources.org)



BrazosPress, Faith Alive Christian Resources,  
and Calvin Institute of Christian Worship  
(December 2011)

Follow us on Facebook. 

[WORSHIP.CALVIN.EDU](http://WORSHIP.CALVIN.EDU)



# Discover the joy

of adding a "Child Named Charity" to your estate plan.

It's a simple, but satisfying concept.

If your family has three children, you simply add a fourth child named "Charity" to your estate plan. Each child then receives one-fourth of your estate—with Charity's share of the estate given to one or more of your favorite kingdom causes.

Learn more about how you can bless your family and the kingdom of God with a "Child Named Charity." Call Barnabas Foundation at 1.888.448.3040.

[www.barnabasfoundation.com](http://www.barnabasfoundation.com)



**BARNABAS**  
FOUNDATION  
growing generosity

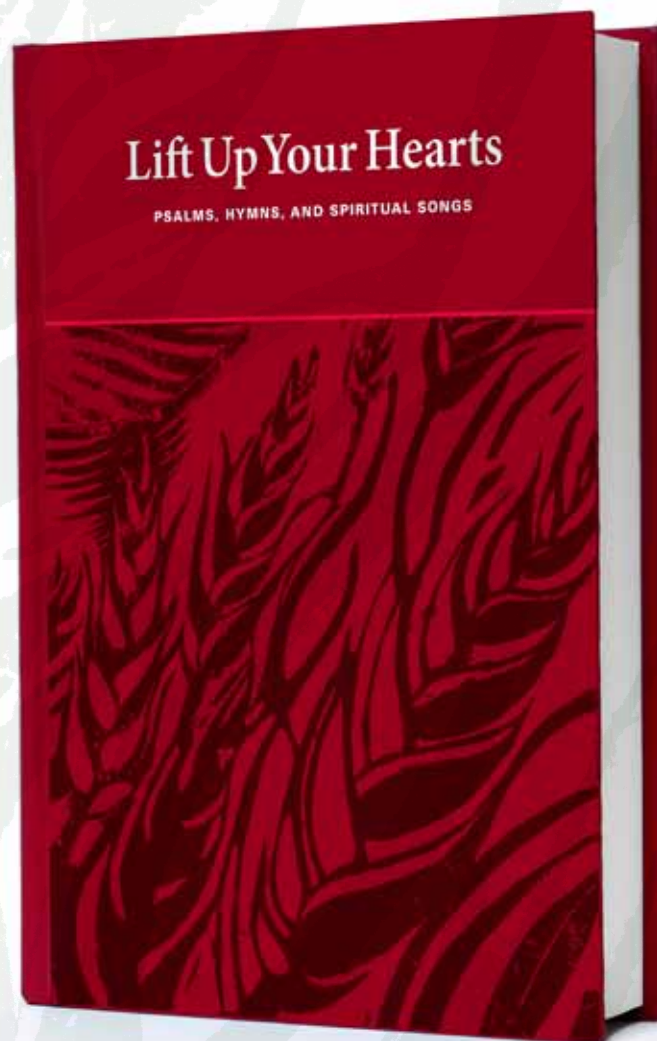
Coming June 2013

# Lift Up Your Hearts Hymnal

The aim of this collection is to provide a resource for congregational song that can give a common voice to our worship in the twenty-first century. This collection is broad enough to include music ranging from the traditional hymn repertoire to contemporary worship music and from Western music to the music of the global church. This collection is deep enough to give voice to our praises and laments, be both sung prayer and proclamation, and play a significant role in the faith formation of Reformed Christians old and young alike.

For more information, see

[LiftUpYourHeartsHymnal.org](http://LiftUpYourHeartsHymnal.org)



**\$14.99\*** per copy  
(preorder by 12/31/12)

**\$17.99\*** per copy  
(preorder between 1/1/13 and 5/31/13)

(All preorders billed and shipped in June 2013)

**\$19.99\*** for post-publication orders.

\*Canadian price at current exchange rate.



# BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE

 **TRINITY**  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

[www.trnty.edu/visit](http://www.trnty.edu/visit)  
Schedule a visit to our campus in Palos Heights, Illinois, just 30 minutes from downtown Chicago. 1.866.TRIN.4.ME

# Get Young Teens Ready to Make Profession of Faith!



## I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith

by Jessie Schut

I Believe is a one-on-one mentoring course for young teens. It's also:

- **Biblical and Reformed**—true to God's Word and the Reformed faith
- **Relevant**—meets young teens where they are
- **Easy-to-Use**—eight sessions include mentor notes, no experience necessary
- **Flexible**—mentor/mentee format, can also be used in a group setting

Order today!



1-800-333-8300  
[www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org)

28812

## EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Kuyper College is a school for those who truly want to make a difference. Our vision for the world is what motivates students to come here. They want to live lives of significance after they graduate. And they are doing so—with extraordinary results—as they use what they've learned at Kuyper to touch the lives of others.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Kuyper alumni are making a difference in more than 50 countries around the world. As social workers, pastors, teachers, professors, accountants, worship leaders, healthcare providers, and in many other professions they are helping to build God's Kingdom.

## EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Kuyper's high-quality education is very affordable. Tuition costs are significantly lower than comparable Christian colleges—an average of \$6000 less per year. In addition, Kuyper offers many scholarship opportunities.

## A CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP COLLEGE

As a ministry-focused Christian leadership college, Kuyper puts biblical faith first in the academic and educational experience of our students. We equip our students to become Leaders—training them to take responsibility for who they are, to accept where God has placed them, and then, with the skills He's given them, to go out and make a godly impact on those around them. It is this commitment to Christian leadership, undergirded by our Reformed worldview and by the extraordinary results-driven commitment of our students to lives of service, that makes Kuyper College unique in our educational mission.

KUYPER  COLLEGE

*Bringing God's Grace into Today's Culture*

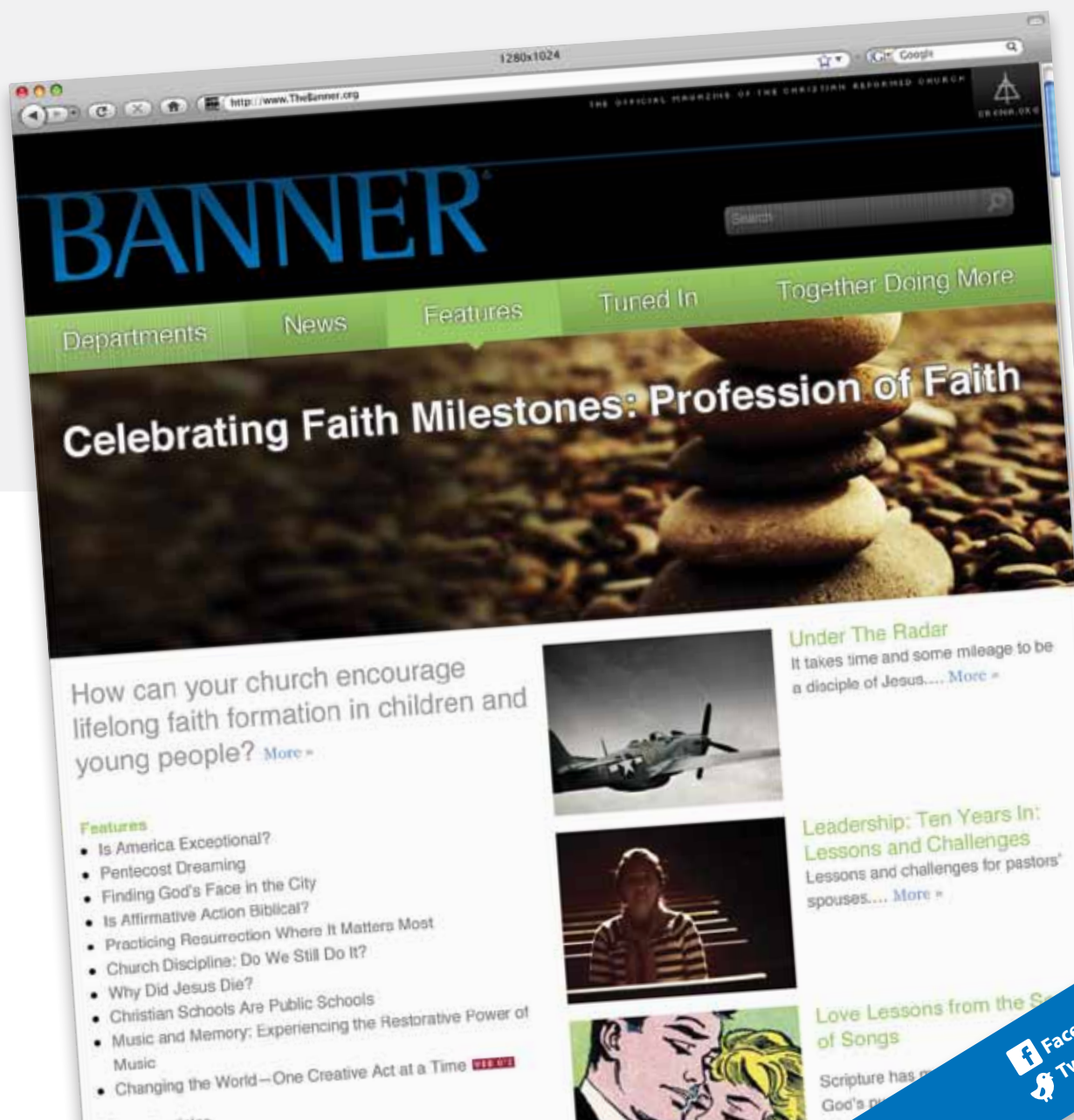
Grand Rapids, Michigan • 866.722.1004 • [www.kuyper.edu](http://www.kuyper.edu)

**Need the news faster?  
Waiting for your print copy?  
Want to tell us what you think?**

**Visit [www.TheBanner.org](http://www.TheBanner.org)**

Check out *The Banner* online to read the complete content of the newest issue or back issues, search for topics or specific articles, browse the classifieds, and comment on what you read.

You'll also find lots of web-only content, including extra Tuned In reviews, expanded news items, and additional features.



[Facebook.com/CRCBanner](https://www.facebook.com/CRCBanner)  
[Twitter.com/CRCBanner](https://twitter.com/CRCBanner)

# BANNER

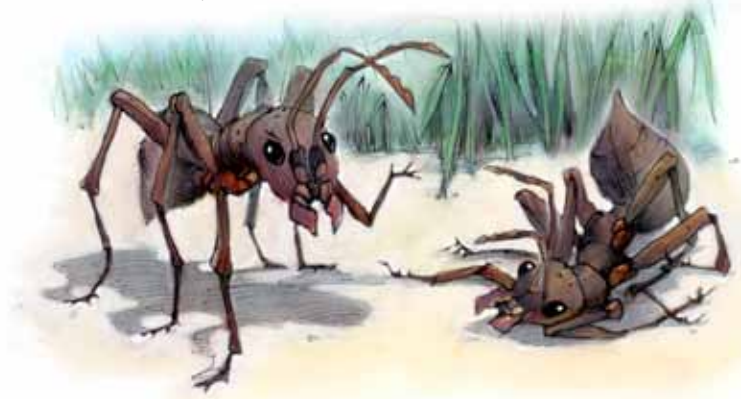


## FEATURES

- ◀ **16** **Under the Radar** [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)  
*Mark's gospel slowly reveals the secret of who Jesus is.*  
by Mark Nelesen

## SYNOD 2012 HIGHLIGHTS

- Editorial: Boldly Proclaim and Profess** by Bob De Moor **9**  
*The task of the institutional church is to proclaim the gospel in all its fullness.*
- Candidates for Ministry 2012** **10**
- In Our View: Climate Change in the Church** by Gayla R. Postma **26**  
*A growing wind of suspicion seemed to gust in discussions at Synod 2012.*
- Belhar Confession** **28**
- Creation Stewardship** **30**
- Education** **32**
- Denominational Life** **34**
- Ecumenical Relations** **42**
- Who Came to Synod** **44**
- re:kindle** **46**
- Scrapbook** **48**



## DEPARTMENTS

- Catch Your Breath: A Wise Investment** by Kory Plockmeyer **15**  
*The question is not "Was it all worth it?" but "How can I give back?"*
- Discipleship: Celebrating Faith Milestones: Profession of Faith** by Jill Friend **18**  
*How can your church encourage lifelong faith formation in children and young people?*
- Just for Kids: Small Wonders** by Joanne De Jonge **20**  
*Summer is the perfect time to poke around and discover some of creation's small wonders.*
- Tuned In: Ten Mainstream Albums Every Christian Should Hear** by Adam Stout **22**  
*A musical education for easy conversation.*
- Relating: Ask . . . and Make a Friend** by Jim Kok **24**  
*Giving isn't the only way to show love.*
- Next: Hungry for Connection** by Leanne Penny **25**  
*Connecting with each other gets us as close to heaven as we can be.*
- On the Journey: Paid in Full** by Gordon Van Zanten **62**  
*Fifty-one years later, the memory of a congregation's gift is still fresh.*
- Punch Lines** **63**

## TOGETHER DOING MORE

- Specialized Ministries: Equipping God's People** by Chris Meehan **50**  
*More and more, the specialized ministries are finding ways to work together.*
- The View from Here: Like a Father** by Joel Boot **54**

# Growing Deeper With Every Step



As kids get older, their faith gets deeper. Faith Alive's curriculum goes deeper as kids grow, too.

*Dwell*, *Kid Connection*, *Walk With Me* and *WE* help kids of all ages and stages of faith development know God, grow in their faith, and show God's love to others.

If growing deep faith is your church's goal, check out Faith Alive's four unique curricula to find the best fit for you.

- Download samples at [FaithAliveResources.org/curriculum](https://FaithAliveResources.org/curriculum)
- Call us at 800-333-8300 to save up to 20%.

Save 20% on  
your order!



▶ Tell the Story. Live the Story.



Bob De Moor *Editor*

Judy Hardy *Associate Editor*

Gayla R. Postma *News Editor*

Henry Hess *Editor,*  
*Together Doing More*

Kristy Quist *Tuned In Editor*

Sandy Swartzentruber *Copy Editor*

Joyce Kane *Editorial Assistant*

Dean R. Heetderks *Art Director*

Pete Euwema *Graphic Design*

Frank Gutbrod *Graphic Design*

## Contact Us

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560

Address Changes and Subscriptions  
800-777-7270 or visit our website at  
[www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

Classified Advertising  
616-224-0725 [classifieds@thebanner.org](mailto:classifieds@thebanner.org)

Display Advertising  
616-224-0729 [ads@crcna.org](mailto:ads@crcna.org)

Editorial  
616-224-0785 [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org)

News  
613-330-3145 [news@thebanner.org](mailto:news@thebanner.org)

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

Copyright 2012, Faith Alive Christian  
Resources, a ministry of the Christian  
Reformed Church. Printed in U.S.A.  
The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 147,  
No. 07, 2012.

Member of Associated Church Press and  
Evangelical Press Association.

## Boldly Proclaim and Profess

**WHAT SOCIETAL ISSUES OUGHT WE TO ADDRESS AS A DENOMINATION?** Synod 2012 wrestled with this question with respect to the Belhar Confession (p. 28), the report on Creation Stewardship (p. 30), and the work of the denomination's Office of Social Justice (p. 35).

In these debates, delegates often invoked the Reformed distinction between church as organism and church as institute.

The *church as organism* is Christ's church in its widest dimension: the body of Christ, made up of all true believers, wherever they are and in all of their living. They are *church*, called out to be God's people at home, school, work, in the marketplace, in government—wherever. Following the Lord of all, they live and grow God's kingdom. Most biblical references address the church as organism.

But Scripture also speaks of "church" in a narrower sense: a specific, organized gathering of believers. We call it the *church as institute*—local manifestations of Christ's body, gathering for worship, shepherding members, and reaching out with Word and deed to serve the community. These congregations often form wider structures for mutual accountability and engage in work better done together than alone (world missions, church planting, diaconate).

Synod delegates agreed that the church as organism should address all societal issues, since Jesus is Lord of all. Believers, individually and communally, should speak God's truth into family, politics, economics, and culture. But delegates were divided on whether the church as institute should also address contentious issues that arise in those spheres. Many believe that the institutional church should stick to its knitting, leaving it to individual believers and organizations to tackle issues that lie outside of the church's expertise (climate change, economic injustice).

I believe that the task of the institutional church is to proclaim the gospel in all its fullness. That proclamation is received first by its members—who then *confess* (say together) their faith in song, word, and deed. But it should also be addressed to those living beyond those solid oak doors. The gospel is for everyone. So the institutional church may allow the light of Scripture to illumine *every* issue. But it must do so *only* within its area of expertise: proclaiming and *professing* the Scriptures. It should speak out prophetically against those who promote or perpetuate racism, injustice, or poverty, or who despoil God's good creation.

The institutional church should *not* pretend to know or advocate for specific policies by which these concerns should be addressed. It should articulate the principles and leave their concretization and implementation to those who bear that responsibility (governments, educational institutions, businesses). Where the Christian Reformed Church can speak with one voice, let's let it speak. By clearly articulating what our Lord requires, we make our own unique contribution to those with the task of working out ways and means.

Let's not cease debate on this crucial question just because Synod 2012 is a wrap. And let's not focus on *what* issues the institutional church (congregation, denomination) should address, but *how* it should address them. ■

The institutional church may allow the light of Scripture to illumine every issue. But it must do so *only* within its area of expertise.



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

# 2012

## Candidates for the Ministry



**I**T'S CLEAR in the New Testament that everyone in God's family has spiritual gifts, and that those gifts vary widely from person to person. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Cor. 12:4-6). And all of these gifts are given "for the common good" (v. 7).

Pastoral ministry is one those gifts. On the following pages you'll meet the 43 men and women approved by Synod 2012 as new candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

Those who interviewed them on behalf of synod and the CRC were impressed by the dedication of these candidates, who embody a wide range of spiritual stories. God is doing a wonderful thing in calling such a diverse group to serve in CRC ministry: young men and young women, first career and second career, "CRC-rooted" and transplants from other traditions who have found a home in the CRC.

Any curious church member would have an enjoyable time engaging in conversation with the folks on these pages. It has been the privilege of Calvin Seminary faculty to walk alongside each of them. Many of these candidates have engaged in their entire seminary education at Calvin; others have completed the required denominational orientation process. All are ready to serve the church.

The "gifting" of the men and women on these pages is no more remarkable than the gifting of others among us who are completing a season of academic and vocational study. Yet these people, through their call to ministry and by the grace of God, will be used to serve the rest of us "as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10). Let us receive them with thanks and offer them our prayers and support in the journey ahead. For more detailed information on any of the candidates, visit the Candidacy Committee website at [crcna.org/pages/candidates12.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/candidates12.cfm). ■

—Rev. David Koll  
Director of Candidacy

*\*Asterisks indicate candidates who are not eligible for call until they have completed all requirements.*



**Andrew Aukema**

**Contact:**  
3963 Riverside Road  
Prince George, BC V2K 4Z2  
Canada  
250-301-2796  
andrewjaukema@gmail.com



**Mark Bonnes\***

**Contact:**  
11142 Shakespeare Street  
Westchester, IL 60154  
708-899-9040  
mrkbnns@gmail.com



**Kevin Boss**

**Contact:**  
2366 Charles Way  
El Cajon, CA 92020  
619-504-5383  
kboss1@calvinseminary.edu



**David Bosscher**

**Contact:**  
c/o Brian and Judy Bosscher  
8552 Beretta Court  
Jenison, MI 49428  
616-821-4548  
dbossch3@calvinseminary.edu



**Benjamin Scott Browneye**

**Contact:**  
2243 Plymouth Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616-581-1954  
beye20@me.com



**Jon R. Bushnell**

**Languages:** English, some Dutch  
and Spanish  
**Contact:**  
PO Box 74  
106 6th Street  
Prinsburg, MN 56281  
559-805-0015  
jnbshnll@gmail.com



**Wesley Collins**

**Contact:**  
28 Forster Avenue  
Thorold, ON L2V 4J5  
Canada  
289-362-0177  
wes.collins1@gmail.com



**Julie DeGraaf\***

**Languages:** English and Spanish  
**Contact:**  
1837 Eastbrook Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
616-723-6154  
jdgraaf3@calvinseminary.edu



**Michael De Witt**

**Languages:** English and Spanish  
**Contact:**  
236 NE Morris Street Apt B  
Portland, OR 97212  
616-901-8664  
miked26@gmail.com



**Bryan Dick**

**Contact:**  
9054 23 Mile Road  
Marion, MI 49665  
231-577-8352  
pastorbryand@gmail.com



**Gina L. Dick**

**Contact:**  
4730 Hall Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616-334-7071  
ginadick2@gmail.com



**Kyle Dieleman**

**Contact:**  
206 3rd Street  
Sully, IA 50251  
641-990-4575  
kdielem2@calvinseminary.edu





**John Mark Douglas**

**Contact:**

267 Sandcastle Drive  
Holland, MI 49424  
616-786-2918  
mdougl3@calvinseminary.edu



**Ken Douma**

**Contact:**

120 Tanya Crescent  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2G 2Z8  
204-668-4566  
kdouma@mymts.net



**Joseph Ellis**

**Contact:**

6200 Trappers Trail  
Anchorage, AK 99516  
907-351-4804  
jde022@calvinseminary.edu



**Michelle Ellis\***

**Contact:**

6200 Trappers Trail  
Anchorage, AK 99516  
907-351-4804  
michelle.ruth.ellis@gmail.com



**Shaun Furniss**

**Contact:**

2759 Leonard Street NW #B7  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616-325-0264  
shaunmfurniss@aol.com



**Matthew Alan Haan**

**Contact:**

c/o Rev. Floyd Haan  
614 C Avenue Box 97  
Pollock, SD 57648  
715-441-6930  
mhaan7@calvinseminary.edu



**Katherine Hirschberg**

**Contact:**

1958 Kingstons Drive SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
616-430-4558  
katherine.hirschberg@gmail.com



**Nicholas Hopkins**

**Contact:**

282 French Road  
Ludlow, ME 04730  
616-589-1459  
nicholas.d.hopkins@gmail.com



**Joseph Hwang**

**Languages:** English and Korean

**Contact:**

1829 Ridgewood Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616-916-5346  
joeaug@gmail.com



**Lee Khang**

**Languages:** Hmong and English

**Contact:**

3206 N. 8th Street  
Sheboygan, WI 53083  
616-719-7319  
leekhang1@gmail.com



**Allan Kirkpatrick\***

**Contact:**

155 Glovers Road #72  
Oshawa, ON L1G 7A4  
Canada  
905-438-8046  
ark011@calvinseminary.edu



**Braden Kok**

**Contact:**

4554 6th Street  
Caledonia, MI 49316  
360-815-1530  
bradenkok@gmail.com



**Pëtr Kornilov**

**Languages:** English and Russian

**Contact:**

329 Richard Terrace SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506-1718  
616-808-6676  
petrakoff@gmail.com



**Jeff Kroondyk**

**Languages:** English and Spanish

**Contact:**

2637 Longstreet Avenue  
Wyoming, MI 49509  
616-460-4634  
jeff@kroondyk.com



**Lisa Meyer**

**Contact:**

1744 Ridgewood Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616-975-2939  
lmeyer8@calvinseminary.edu



**Kurt Monroe**

**Contact:**

1438 Ridgewood Lane  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
505-717-6595  
kurt.a.monroe@gmail.com



**Roelof Peereboom**

**Languages:** English and Dutch

**Contact:**

528 Robinson Road  
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1  
Canada  
705-435-5038 (home)  
705-890-1294 (cell)  
rpeere2@calvinseminary.edu



**Kory Plockmeyer**

**Contact:**

302 W Main Street  
Dewitt, MI 48820  
517-763-9494  
kory@campusedgemsu.com



**Katrina Schaafsma**

**Languages:** English, French, and Spanish (intermediate)

**Contact:**

19890 Hill Road RR1  
Ridgetown, ON N0P 2C0  
Canada  
519-674-0458  
kschaaf8@calvinseminary.edu



**Alex Snider**

**Contact:**

4554 6th Street  
Caledonia, MI 49326  
616-430-0758  
snideral@gmail.com



**David Ten Clay\***

**Contact:**

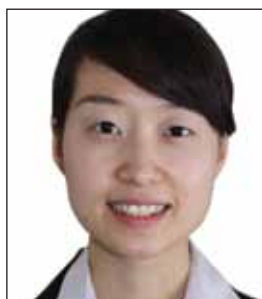
2612 Hart Road  
Highland, IN 46322  
712-348-3177  
dtenclay32@hotmail.com



**Aaron Thompson**

**Contact:**

4582 Brigden Road  
Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0  
Canada  
519-337-5055  
athomps8@calvinseminary.edu



**Hitomi Urushizaki Kornilov**

**Languages:** English and Japanese

**Contact:**

329 Richard Terrace SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506-1718  
616-432-4525  
hitomi.urushizaki@gmail.com



**Kelly Vander Woude**

**Contact:**

12030 SE 210th Street  
Kent, WA 98031  
253-653-7029  
kelly.l.vanderwoude@gmail.com





**Adam Van Gelder\***

**Contact:**

221 Colorado Avenue NW  
Orange City, IA 51041  
515-402-9325  
avgelde3@calvinseminary.edu



**Bryan Van Soelen**

**Contact:**

501 1st Avenue  
Sully, IA 50251  
641-780-4707  
bryan.vansoelen@gmail.com



**Caitlin Visser**

**Contact:**

2336 Everest Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
616-401-2125  
ccisek2@calvinseminary.edu



**Richard W. Visser**

**Contact:**

2336 Everest Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
616-401-9073  
rvisse7@calvinseminary.edu



**Kristopher Walhof**

**Contact:**

c/o Paul Sausser  
2466 Golfbury Drive SW  
Wyoming, MI 49519  
616-432-1119  
kristoph6@gmail.com



**Phillip Westra**

**Contact:**

1946 Sylvan Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616-808-7685  
pwestra4@calvinseminary.edu



**Douglas Wood**

**Contact:**

1756 Lilac Court  
Jension, MI 49428  
616-538-9350 ext. 13  
doug@gracebiblegrandville.org

## A Wise Investment



**VERY YEAR** the *Princeton Review* publishes a list of colleges and universities it considers to be the best value for students. This list takes into consideration

such factors as the cost of tuition, job placement rates, and the average starting salary of graduates. For a university, being near the top of this list is great cause for celebration. High school seniors are encouraged to think of college education as an investment in their future and to look for the school that is most likely to give them the highest rate of return.

Over the last three years, I have often found myself thinking of my seminary education in a similar framework. Seminary tuition is not cheap, after all. Some seminary students have moved away from comfortable jobs. Some of us regularly commute long distances. Some have scrimped and saved every last penny to cover the costs of room and board. Many have asked spouses and children to sacrifice in order for us to complete our

seminary education. Through it all, we find ourselves asking, “Was it worth it?”

In my final semester at Calvin Seminary, I took a course on Christian Reformed polity. As I read Henry De Moor’s *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, I was amazed to find that he turned this concern on its head. The primary concern is not whether or not I have invested wisely in myself by attending seminary, but whether or not the church has invested wisely by providing me with the opportunity to study and learn. The question at hand, then, is not “Was it all worth it?” but “How can I give back?”

The church has invested in all of us. Generous families have provided support for scholarships. Churches and classes have offered financial aid. Our brothers and sisters have lifted us up in prayer and have encouraged us time and again. The cards and notes, the smiles and handshakes after worship, the feedback (positive and negative) after we preach—all of these are ways the church has invested in us.

Now, after three-plus years, we are leaving the seminary. We go out to established churches, church plants, campus ministries, chaplaincies, continued academic work, and more. We go forth to give back. Giving back means that we will do our best to faithfully serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. It means praying for our ministries, speaking words of encouragement to those who lead them, and investing in the gifts God has poured out on each and every member of his body.

No matter where we are called, no matter what the future holds for each of us in this year’s graduating class at Calvin Seminary, it’s my hope and prayer that the church will find us a wise investment as together we seek to love and serve the One who sacrificed all for us. ■



**Kory Plockmeyer** is the pastor of Campus Edge Fellowship at Michigan State University and a candidate for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

We respond to the call of  
God by stepping out,  
one graced step at a time, into  
luminous darkness.  
Our direction is clear,  
but the route reveals itself  
only as we put one foot in  
front of the other.

— DEBORAH SMITH DOUGLAS





# UNDER THE RADAR

**I** F YOU READ THE GOSPEL of Mark, Jesus seems to be flying under the radar most of the time. Repeatedly—as he is performing miracles and afterward—Jesus calls for silence about who he is and what he has just done.

It's clear that Jesus knows who he is and what he is about. The author knows who Jesus is too, and so do we. Even the demons have Jesus rightly pegged.

Curiously though, the people who *should* know—the disciples, the religious folk, and the Pharisees—can't quite figure out who Jesus is. So they keep following him. Some do so out of naiveté, some out of curiosity. Others are looking for an

angle. Strangely, the gospel of Mark also includes one story in which Jesus does not allow someone to follow him when he wants to (5:18-20). Jesus' best-kept secret is not fully disclosed until almost the end of the book, when a Roman centurion finally voices what the demons had been saying all along: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (15:39).

Scholars of the book of Mark call Jesus' repeated request for silence the "Messianic Secret." In Mark's gospel, this secret is hard to keep—in part because the demons keep naming him for who he is. If Jesus is looking to be a stealthy Savior, the demons are like paparazzi who keep exposing him as the Messiah. It's hard

too because there's another segment of people who are catching on to Jesus: people who are upfront about their deep needs. Jesus' secret identity is hard for him to keep because these people keep arousing his compassion.

I used to question Jesus' (or Mark's) logic about living out the kingdom this way. Why not boldly announce and proclaim who Jesus is and what he's about? It seems more honest. Instead, Mark's gospel reveals a Jesus who is comfortable with ambiguity, who doesn't need to spell things out for clarity's sake, and who is perfectly fine with being misunderstood. In fact, the gospel of Mark seems to be written in a way that encourages the curious, the informed, the questioning, and



# MARK'S GOSPEL REVEALS A JESUS WHO IS PERFECTLY FINE WITH BEING MISUNDERSTOOD.

the seeking to keep following Jesus. It is almost as if the book is written so that we'll have an evolving understanding of and relationship with the Christ we meet in this gospel.

This logic is beginning to make more sense to me—not because of anything I have read in the Bible, but because of how people form relationships.

One of Mark's strategies in telling his story this way is to remind us that it takes time and some mileage to be a disciple of Jesus. A sturdy, trusting relationship does not develop overnight. Think about a summer camp or a retreat you may have experienced. Perhaps the speakers were gripping and the energy high. And maybe your enthusiasm in that moment was strong. But then, after it was over, daily routine settled in. It's hard to integrate that kind of intensity into ordinary life.

Could it be that part of the meaning of Jesus' incarnation is that he comes into the ordinary places in life? In ordinary life, any relationship worth having takes time. It requires "staying power." The things in which we invest our time and attention tend to grow; the things we neglect or give up on tend to wither. Perhaps the book of Mark is written the way it is to make us stick around a bit, keep reading, keep probing.

The Jesus we meet in Mark's gospel tells us a lot—but he doesn't seem to want to tell us everything. Perhaps we need to journey together for a while in order to truly hear what Jesus has to say and understand what he means. Only then can we put some of the pieces together.

Last summer while I was coaching Little League, I learned how important it is for relationships to have time to grow. The father of one of my players was very

supportive and helpful, but often kept to himself. Later, I learned that at the end of the season he had asked his wife, "So, what does Coach Marc do for a living?" When his wife said, "He's a minister," he replied, "Why didn't you tell me?" "Because you probably wouldn't have liked him or given him a chance," she said. "Now how do you feel about him?"

She knew her husband well enough to know that it would have been easy for him to dismiss the possibility of developing a relationship with a minister. His past experiences with Christians, and clergy in particular, would have ruled out any kind of friendship. He just wasn't ready to go there. Now that a friendship of sorts had taken root, he was stuck between his presuppositions and a relationship that he'd begun to value.

Given this relationship dynamic, there are times when I find myself realizing that the "clergy card" is the last one I wish to play. I am not ashamed of being a Christian or a clergy person, I just know that for many people, either of these terms can conjure up strong defense mechanisms. I'd rather fly under the radar.

It is much more work to live and practice new life and resurrection than it is to talk about it. That's why the phrase "preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words," attributed to Saint Francis, is one of my favorites.

I've come to believe that perhaps this is why Jesus is revealed the way he is in Mark's gospel: slowly and with some attempts at secrecy. Jesus does not want people to follow him for the miracle of a free lunch or to feed their hunger for a rebellion against Rome. Instead Jesus wants to lead a world-changing revolution of compassion and fairness unlike any

other kingdom anyone has seen. He wants people to do what he is doing: to live the reality of the kingdom that has now come. In that kingdom, titles aren't important. What is important is to live in ways that reveal God's coming into the world.

In order for people to do that, they are going to need time—time because they have their own memories and experiences of religious folk, miracle workers, and would-be messiahs. Mark shows us that discipleship is going to take time.

At times many of us have an inner urgency and impatience that suggests we should be more overt with the words of the gospel. But as I read the book of Mark, I find very little anxiety in Jesus, and I hear a continual invitation to spend time getting to know him more deeply. My hunch is that I would not be as interested if Jesus weren't flying under the radar. By the time he is fully revealed at the end of the book, I have been with him long enough that the only turning back I can do is to go back to the beginning of the story—a story that starts with baptism—and read it again. That is where Mark begins his story. That's where ours begins too. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



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

# Celebrating Faith Milestones: Profession of Faith

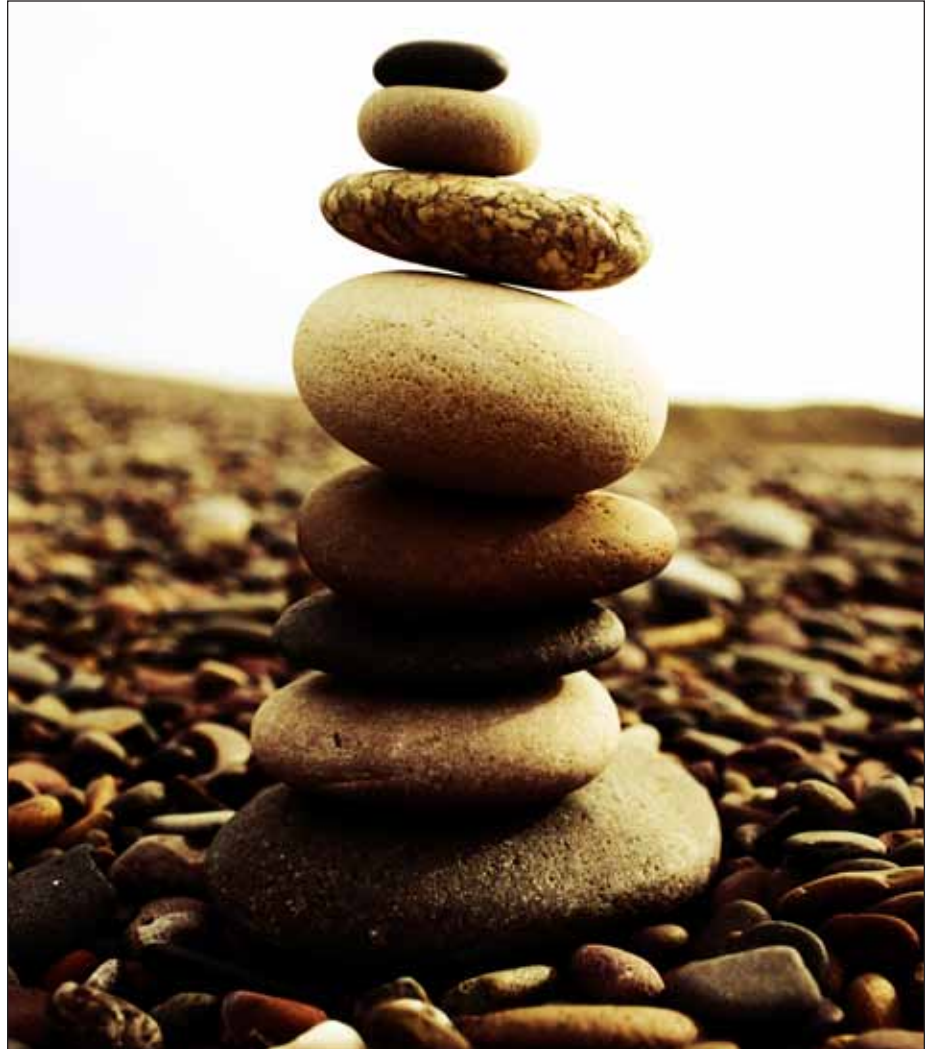
**Milestones.** Kids' lives are filled with them: first smile, first tooth, first word, first step, first day of school, first time behind the wheel. . . . Doting parents record these important milestones in baby books and flood the inboxes of family and friends with emails and Facebook updates.

But there are other milestones as well—the ones we celebrate in the church with brothers and sisters throughout a lifetime of faith nurture: baptism, church school, participating in the Lord's Supper, profession of faith, becoming an elder or deacon. . . .

Strengthening profession of faith is one important way to engage children and young people, help them mature in their faith, and draw them closer within the body of Christ. Until fairly recently, profession of faith was a gateway to participation in the Lord's Supper, but that is no longer the case. In many congregations, young members have become used to participating in communion long before they formally profess their faith.

To help churches deal with these changes, the denomination's Faith Formation Committee has gathered practical suggestions from churches across the CRC about how to strengthen this important faith milestone. Not every one of these ideas will fit the context of every congregation, nor is this list exhaustive. But hopefully the ideas that follow will spark creative thinking about ways to strengthen the current practice of profession of faith within your own congregation.

**Proactive encouragement.** Develop a strategy to encourage young people to profess their faith. Some church leaders and parents have a tendency to sit back and wait for young members to take the initiative. Instead, actively encourage young people to think about taking this important step.



**Time frame.** Consider the best time frame for encouraging youth to make profession of faith—perhaps around age 15 or 16. By then most young people have the capacity for in-depth understanding and personal reflection; yet this time frame also builds in a year or two before

high school graduation—a time to practice the learning and growth that have led to a young person's profession of faith.

**Training.** Historically, preparing for profession of faith has included—and continues to emphasize—systematic biblical study as well as a study of church history and the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. How well does your church do in providing the relevant training in these areas? Training for making profession of faith also includes instruction in spiritual disciplines and encourages lifelong habits of

For more resources, ideas, and suggestions from churches across North America, check out the Faith Formation Committee website at [crcna.org/pages/ffc\\_front.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/ffc_front.cfm).

## Until recently, profession of faith was a gateway to participation in the Lord's Supper, but that is no longer the case.

prayer, Bible reading, and worship. Such training need not be limited to Sunday school settings. If possible, invite young people to a weekend retreat or camp setting to spend time developing these habits of Christian discipleship together.

**Family involvement.** Kids spend much more time at home with their families than they do at church. So when it comes to faith nurture, parents have a huge role to play. Churches can support parents in becoming active participants in their children's training and preparation for the faith milestone of profession of faith. One way to do this is by providing "take-home assignments" that require young people to partner with a parent or family member. Using an intergenerational curriculum or asking a parent to follow along with their son or daughter's reading or

study materials goes a long way toward strengthening not only the student's faith but the faith of the whole family!

**Mentoring.** Matching teens with mature Christian adults who pray for them and come alongside them during their preparation for professing their faith (and beyond!) can be a life-changing experience for both the mentor and the young person. You'll want to choose mentors carefully, making sure they're willing to commit to partnering with someone for a significant length of time.

**Church leaders.** Before young people make their formal profession of faith, they should meet with the pastor and elders to give their testimony and to respond to questions that touch on (but are not limited to) the significance of their baptisms, understanding the basic teachings of the Christian faith, committing to Christian obedience, assenting to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church, and desiring to contribute to the life and work of the congregation.

**Celebrate!** You'll want to celebrate profession of faith in a worship service as a significant and meaningful part of the liturgy. There are many examples of liturgies congregations have developed for use in Reformed churches. (Check out the website mentioned on p. 18 for some of these.) To mark this significant milestone in the lives of young people, some congregations present them with a hand-made memento or even a scrapbook or portfolio detailing their faith journeys to that point.

**Lifelong discipleship.** Profession of faith isn't "graduation" from learning about and deepening our faith and commitment to Christ's church. So you'll want to develop a plan to encourage young people to keep growing in faith after this milestone moment. In addition to ongoing

church education, provide opportunities for intergenerational learning and discipleship. Invite young people to participate in your church's mission trips or other service projects.

Consider inviting young people to participate in a year or two of internship with an adult mentor after professing their faith. This provides time and space for young people to reflect on their gifts and identify particular ways to serve the congregation, such as helping to plan and lead worship, participating in drama, music, dance, or visual arts, or teaching younger children. And both mentor and mentee can encourage one another as each grows in faith.

**Follow-up and adult membership.** We suggest that the elders or the pastor engage those who make profession of faith in a follow-up conversation approximately a year later. This is a great opportunity to communicate to professing members the church's ongoing commitment to walk with them as they grow in faith. Included in this conversation could be a discussion of the congregation's guidelines for adult membership—for example, at what age they can hold office and vote in congregational meetings.

Ultimately, profession of faith is so much more than a one-time ceremony! As congregations look for ways to deepen their practice of profession of faith, we pray that they may continue to seek new ways to encourage members of all ages to profess their faith regularly throughout their lives and to provide liturgical opportunities for members to regularly affirm their baptisms and profess their faith in Christ. ■

### Wherever We Are . . .

Although we've talked about the importance of teaching young people about creeds and confessions as well as the habits of faithful discipleship, profession of faith is not primarily about head knowledge.

An adult in our church who has autism made profession of faith about a decade ago while he was in his forties. Because of his autism, he is not able to initiate conversation, but several members of the church and the pastor found ways to help him make the step of profession of faith.

The member who shared this story with me said how moving it was to see this person profess his faith in a simple but profound way. That particular profession of faith reminded her that although the gospel can be studied for a lifetime and still not be fully understood, the good news meets us wherever we are.

—JF



**Jill Friend** is a music teacher and worship planner in Sioux Center, Iowa, and is a member of the Faith Formation Committee.

# Small Wonders

It's summer—the perfect time to go outside, poke around, and check out creation's small wonders. Read on for some ideas.



## Making Tracks

Have you ever really watched an ant walk? How about a centipede? Ever wondered how these creatures move all those legs together without getting them tangled up? It's amazing! Trust me—these little creatures can't figure it out by themselves—their brains are too small. They just do it, because God programmed that into their genes.

Scientists haven't figured out exactly how those programs work. But they have learned a few things from "bug watching." Most creatures have at least two speeds—slow and fast. They do "slow" different from the way they do "fast." But they always have at least one foot on each side firmly on the ground so they don't tip over sideways. Also, the legs on the ground are usually moving backward, pushing the bug forward.

Watching those little wonders is way more fun than reading about them. Why not grab a magnifying glass and go out and try it right now?

No, no, no! That is all wrong!  
It is left leg 2, right leg 3, left leg 1,  
right leg 2, left leg 3, then right leg 1!  
Now try it again....



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



## Eye Spy

Have you ever looked a spider right in the eyes? If not, you've missed one of creation's small wonders!

Spider eyes aren't created to focus sharply, like ours. They're created to see movement. That's perfect for a hunter. And guess what! Spiders that hunt at night can see in the dark. Their eyes have a special lining that reflects light.

You can see for yourself. Go out at night with a flashlight. Place it on the side of your head, next to your eyes. Then sweep the beam slowly across the lawn. You'll probably see tiny points of light shining back at you. They're spider eyes, eyeing your "eye." Eye spy!



# FuN Facts

**One acre of grass** “exhales” enough oxygen to keep one person alive.

**Spiders’ eyes** come in pairs: either two, four, six, or eight. And they’re always grouped in the way that’s just right for that type of spider. Web weavers have fewer eyes in front. Jumpers have more eyes, even some in back.

**Male cicadas** make that buzzing noise to find a mate. The females don’t buzz—they just listen. But the females are “deaf” to the calls of other species. They can only hear the calls of the males of their own species.

## Breathing Trees

Did you know that green plants breathe? They do! All living things breathe. But the way plants breathe is the exact opposite of the way people breathe. We inhale (breathe in) oxygen and exhale (breathe out) carbon dioxide. Green plants inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen.

That’s handy for us. With enough green plants breathing nearby, we have enough oxygen to live. Maybe that’s why God put green plants just about everywhere over the earth.

## Bag Some Tree Breath

Did you know that with each breath, humans and plants lose just a tiny bit of water? If you’re patient, you can actually see a tree breathe. Try it!

### Here’s what you need:

- A clear plastic baggie
- Some twist ties

### Here’s what you do:

- Go outside on a sunny day and find a tree that has some low branches. Figure out when the sun will hit those branches.
- Tie the baggie over a few of the leaves just before sunlight hits them. Then go away for a couple of hours.
- When you return, you should find little droplets of water inside the baggie. That’s proof that green plants breathe!

## Bug Choir

Go outside on a hot summer day and just listen for a while. Hear that shrill buzz coming from a tree? That’s a cicada (say it *sih-kay-da*).

Believe it or not, that shrill call—especially when lots of cicadas are calling together—is what’s coolest about cicadas. What sounds to us like a bunch of noise is really a whole set of special signals.

Each cicada gives three different pitches—which people’s ears can’t tell apart. And different species of cicadas give different kinds of signals. So that “noise” is really a whole bunch of cicadas shouting a whole bunch of things to a whole bunch of other cicadas. And we get to listen in on the whole noisy wonder!



## Your Turn

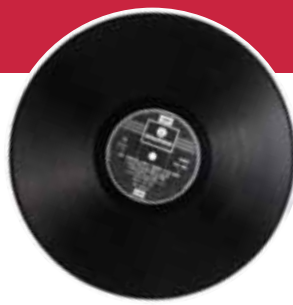
Here’s what one psalm writer said about God’s creation. Fill in the blanks. If you need help, look up the verse in your Bible.

How many are your \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_!  
In \_\_\_\_\_ you made them all: the earth is full  
of your \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 104:24).



**Joanne De Jonge** is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park Ranger. She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.

## Ten Mainstream Albums Every Christian Should Hear



**JESUS AND MUSIC ARE MY FAVORITE TOPICS** of conversation. But when I'm talking with people outside the church, we're not likely to talk about church music.

Here's a list of must-hear mainstream albums from the last 50 years that have been formative for generations of people—both inside and outside the church. Critically and commercially successful, they're great for striking up a conversation with people from all walks of life.

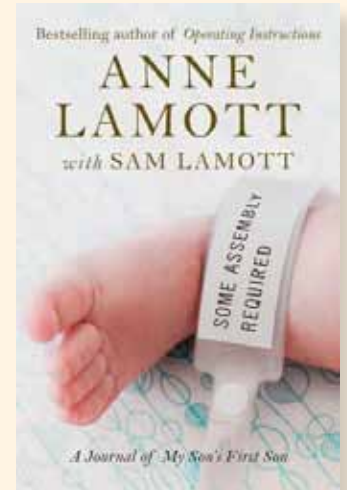
1. Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, 1963. This seminal folk album captures the cultural unrest and spiritual restlessness a-brewin' in the 1960s. (Sony)
2. Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*, 1966. Lush, summery pop sounds belie *Pet Sounds'* autumnal lyrics. Coming-of-age stories contrast with beautiful music to capture the beauty and pain of life as a teen or, heck, anyone. (Capitol)
3. Marvin Gaye, *What's Goin' On*, 1971. Gaye's R&B album sings of war, racial prejudice, and ecology without ever sounding preachy. (Motown)
4. Bob Marley, *Exodus*, 1977. Marley was the ambassador of reggae, which is now appreciated worldwide. No album captures Marley's pacifism, activism, spirituality, and love like *Exodus*. (Tuff Gong)
5. The Clash, *London Calling*, 1979. Punk has evolved musically since this album, but antiestablishment themes remain. While most Christians stayed silent about materialism and corporate greed, the Clash didn't. (Epic)
6. Paul Simon, *Graceland*, 1986. This pop/world music masterpiece made apartheid look foolish. Collaborations between all parties involved were historical, beautiful, and gave us a little taste of heaven: unity in diversity. (Sony)
7. Tracy Chapman, *Tracy Chapman*, 1988. It makes sense that an African-American female singer-songwriter would craft the quintessential album about injustice. The sound is timeless and, unfortunately, so are the issues. (Elektra)
8. R.E.M., *Automatic for the People*, 1992. The alternative and grunge movements of the early 90s took a little pause from self-destruction to listen to this album about mortality, struggle, and hope. (Warner Bros)
9. Lauryn Hill, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, 1998. Hip-hop still misses Ms. Hill. There has never been a singer/rapper so talented and with so much to say about relationships between people and God. (Sony)
10. Arcade Fire, *Funeral*, 2004. Indie rock was still in its early stages of commercial success when Arcade Fire recorded this album about isolation, loss, and life amid grief. Several band members lost family members and two got married during the time they were recording. (Merge)

Of course, there are dozens of great albums that didn't make this cut. Which albums do you think deserve to be here? Make your own suggestions at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)! ■

Jesus and music are my favorite topics of conversation.



**Adam Stout** shares the title of co-associate pastor of congregational life at Grace Valley Christian Reformed Church in German Valley, Ill. with his seminary sweetheart and new bride, Erin.



### Some Assembly Required: A Journal of My Son's First Son

by **Anne Lamott, with Sam Lamott**

reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

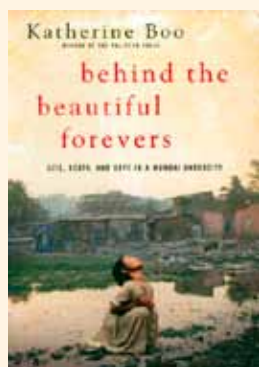
Becoming a grandparent for the first time requires some adjustment. For Lamott that included coming to grips with the fact that her 19-year-old son, Sam, was going to be a father. Anne and Sam muse on the difference between parenting and grandparenting. "With your own child you are fixated on . . . keeping the child safe and alive. With a grandchild the focus is softer beyond the anxious foreground." As usual, Lamott's irreverent tone is gentled as she speaks about "allowing Grace in" on this uncharted road. (Riverhead)



## The Secret World of Arrietty

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

Lush animation and a wonderful story make this Japanese film adaptation of Mary Norton's story *The Borrowers* great fun. The Clock family are Borrowers, tiny creatures who live under the house of the "beans"—human beings. The enormous neighbors that they depend on for survival must never see them. This gently suspenseful story is enhanced by young Arrietty's yearning for independence, her encounter with a kind-hearted, ailing human boy, and exquisitely imagined gardens that could spark any imagination. On DVD now. (Disney)



## Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity

by **Katherine Boo**

reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

From 2007-2011, Katherine Boo documented the lives of people living in Annawadi, a slum under persistent threat of demolition near the Mumbai airport. Her compelling narrative reads like fiction but is harrowingly true. Boo presses "uncomfortable questions about justice and opportunity for its least powerful citizens." She reveals basic truths that govern slum dwellers' lives: "that in a modernizing, increasingly prosperous city, their lives were embarrassments best confined to small spaces, and their deaths would matter not at all." (Random House)



## Wordle

reviewed by **Ron Vandenburg**

Looking for a way to summarize a Bible passage, a sermon, or a devotional? Wordle creates "word clouds," showing word frequency that quickly present viewers with the gist of a text at a glance. It's available in different fonts, layouts, and color schemes. Copy and paste your text at [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net), and not only will you create a word cloud that emphasizes key words, but you will also create a work of art perfect for use on a projection screen or to hang on your wall.

## THE LOWDOWN: MUSIC EDITION

There are many more reviews in the online *Banner* than we can print. Here are some excerpts from past album reviews you might have missed; go to the website to read the full story.

**Clear Blue Morning** by Many Voices . . . One Song: "The choir's flawless interpretation, articulation, and intonation unite as a shout from the soul."

**Follow Me Down** by Sarah Jarosz: "Her instrumental expertise is matched by a lilt-ing voice that complements her largely self-penned songs."

**Give Us Rest** by The David Crowder Band: "The band known for its unconventional approach doesn't disappoint."

**The Hunger Games: Songs from District 12 and Beyond** produced by T Bone Burnett: "Burnett's Christian faith seeps out of these tracks in a subtle way, and the album is full of artists who reference faith often in their music."

**With Love** by Rosie Thomas: "This upbeat, peaceful, and personal offering is the best she has produced yet."

**Wrecking Ball** by Bruce Springsteen: "Even as Springsteen sings about hardship, there is always a sense of hope."

[MORE REVIEWS ONLINE](#)



## New Wild Everywhere

by **Great Lake Swimmers**

reviewed by **Adele Konyndyk**

The Great Lake Swimmers have a tradition of recording their folk harmonies in odd and isolated Canadian locations. Their fifth album, *New Wild Everywhere*, emerged from the studio, yet the earthy beauty of their music holds. Its lyrics are rich in physical world imagery: rock, wind, forest, and sea. This band can make new, wild, graceful music anywhere. The upbeat "Easy Come, Easy Go" stands out, but even their hushed melodies will hook you. (Network Records)



PHOTO CREDIT: ASLI ALIN

## Ask . . . and Make a Friend

**AN ANCIENT MEMORY** lingers in my mind of the time my mother told me to walk across the street and borrow two eggs from Mrs. Klein. I was embarrassed, but Mrs. Klein showed no reluctance at all. In fact, she seemed happy to help.

A few weeks ago I was having a hard time putting a new battery in my car. As a last resort I walked two houses south, where a neighbor was puttering with his own car, and asked to borrow a Vise-Grip. Not only did he dig out the tool for me, he walked over and helped me do the job.

Ever since, my neighbor seems friendlier.

I was discovering a law of nature most of us don't really believe: asking for a helping hand is more likely to endear than to irritate. Negotiating for the loan of a lawnmower is more likely to enhance friendship than it is to cause resentment.

For most people, reaching out for help is hard. We feel like we are imposing or taking advantage of people when we need to ask for anything—the loan of a tool, two eggs, or a helping hand. We want others to think well of us, and we assume that borrowing bothers people.

Jesus, on the other hand, wasn't afraid to ask for help. One time he craved moral support from his closest friends. His heart was heavy, and he needed to go off and pray. So he asked his disciples to give him their presence, their wakefulness.

I wonder how many of us would dare to be that vulnerable and needy with anybody—even our closest friends. Would it feel like too much to invite friends to come along and wait—while we pray? I suspect we'd go alone.

Another time Jesus was thirsty, so he stopped at a well and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water.

Instead of modeling self-sufficiency, Jesus, the Son of God, chose to show vulnerability and admit his human weakness during his time on earth. He chose to show the disciples—and us—how to



**As a last resort I walked two houses south, where a neighbor was puttering with his own car, and asked to borrow a Vise-Grip.**

relate to others, to connect with people, to have fellowship with them.

Notice what happened after Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. He received the water, established a friendship, and entered a powerful conversation with her that led to a number of people coming to follow him.

When Jesus knelt to wash the apostle Peter's feet, Peter balked. He was sure it was beneath Jesus' dignity to wash a fisherman's dirty feet.

Like Peter, we have a lot to learn about giving and receiving. The lesson Jesus teaches us is this: to be mature disciples, we need to develop the capacity to receive. It's a lesson we can summarize in three parts:

1. Giving isn't the only way to show love. Jesus shows what healthy humanness is like by relying on others. We should resist our tendency to cover our neediness.
2. Giving an opportunity to help is a gift that benefits both giver and receiver. Ask and you'll receive a lot more than you'd expect.
3. Relationships are important. They grow stronger when we ask for help. ■



**Jim Kok** is a clinical pastoral education supervisor and the author of *The Miracle of Kindness*.



## Hungry for Connection

In your 20s or 30s? We want to hear what's on your mind as it relates to living out your faith in today's world. Please send manuscripts (600 words) to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

**I FEEL AS IF I'VE BEEN HUNGRY** for a long time. Absolutely starving, really—I mean the kind of hungry you feel when you're ready to tuck into a holiday feast complete with pie and appetizers. The thing is, this hunger I've got is not for food—although I love food; don't get me wrong.

What I'm really hungry for is time to connect with friends and family. I crave a long, satisfying meal filled with delicious food, infectious laughter, and that comfortable feeling you have when you know you are completely safe with someone. When you don't fear judgment because you know you're loved and known.

Most of my communication these days comes from texts, tweets, and e-messages in at least a million forms. These forms of relating are like saltines for my hungry soul. When you're so hungry you could eat your own arm and someone hands you one saltine, it's a joke! You might be thankful for a little something to chew on, but you need a whole lot more than one salty little morsel to satisfy your hunger.

Does anyone else feel like our techy forms of connection aren't cutting it? Does anyone else long to have a good deep belly laugh instead of a tweet-inspired chuckle? Does anyone else want to eat pot roast together instead of take-out alone over your iPhone?

Is it just me, or does anyone else feel as if we're missing out on the connection God has in mind for us? Face-to-face connection is so much more than pictures on a screen. You can't capture a breathtaking mountain view in a screen shot—it's just a poor copy of the real vista.

This entire year God has been calling me to search for something deeper in all areas of my life—to enter into something more satisfying. So I've decided it's time to stop being hungry. I'm going to throw more dinner parties and schedule more play dates. I'm going to open my home to friends in the hope that they want to connect as much as I do.

This isn't whining or a guilt trip. It's a manifesto, a mini or maxi revolution. I don't want to leave this earth not knowing the people I love as fully as I can. I want to be known, to open up my closed-off heart and be vulnerable. I want more connection with real friends and less casual contact with acquaintances.

Poets throughout history have written about drinking deeply of this life. I am certain I'm not alone in this feeling, either now or at any other time in history. Loneliness is a human condition. We aren't in the garden with God anymore; there's a rift that isn't healed yet.

The only one who knows us fully is God—and we aren't in face-to-face relationship with him right now. We live in between the garden and Christ's return. But God lives right now, on earth, in each of us.

So let's connect with each other and get as close to heaven as we can. ■

**Leanne Penny** spends her days drinking coffee and chasing her two kids with her college-pastor husband in Ada, Okla. Occasionally when the kids fall asleep or decide to play with their toys she ignores the dishes and writes about her journey of hurting, healing, and choosing joy at [www.leannepenny.com](http://www.leannepenny.com).



I don't want to leave this earth not knowing the people I love as fully as I can.

## Climate Change in the Church

**D**uring the past 15 years—really since the “women-in-office” synods in the early 1990s—I’ve watched as delegates to synods have strived to work together. Even as the issue of women in office lingered and other issues arose, the Christian Reformed Church has worked hard to stretch its tent enough to accommodate the diversity of opinions among us.

But a growing wind of suspicion or even mistrust seemed to gust in several discussions at Synod 2012. One person remarked, “It’s as if people came expecting the worst.”

A bit of skepticism isn’t always a bad thing. As a church, we are strongly committed to our confessional identity, so taking the time to deliberate over the details of how we live that out is surely in order.

But how much is too much? Does our tent keep getting bigger because we’re growing further apart on basic issues?

### Who Should Speak? What Should Be Said?

While discussing the Creation Stewardship report, some delegates expressed suspicion of the science regarding climate change, despite the study committee’s report that 97 percent of the international scientific community agrees that global warming is real and is likely caused by humans.

In other discussions, some delegates expressed distrust in what one called “the Grand Rapids elite.” One pastor said that more and more people in his congregation are saying they do not want the denomination speaking for them—especially when it comes to political matters. “They are growing frustrated,” he said.

That distrust showed up again when it was time to review the work of the Office of Social Justice. Many delegates would have preferred that

**Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland: The foundational mission of the church is to preach the gospel.**

synod simply recognize OSJ’s work, not commend it, because, as one delegate said, “[OSJ] has been very selective in one end of the political spectrum in what they choose to advocate for.”

Delegates even debated at length *whether* the church should speak out on political issues.

Many delegates seem to distrust what gets decided at the synodical level, preferring local control. Only by a narrow margin did synod say no to a request requiring that changes to the Reformed confessions

be approved by two-thirds of the classes before they could be adopted.

When the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee asked to change its name, some were suspicious that the organization is subtly trying to slip away from the CRC. “Don’t take Christian Reformed out of the name,” pleaded one delegate.

The new hymnal ran into that same distrust when some delegates didn’t want to approve it because they hadn’t seen all the songs, despite the fact that the editorial committee creating the hymnal includes seven people with theological degrees.

The discussion of the Belhar Confession resulted in synod creating a new category: “Ecumenical Faith Declaration.” Many reluctantly agreed to support that, provided synod revisit full adoption as a confession in a few years. Synod agreed to the former, but not the latter, leaving many who had reluctantly agreed to that new category disappointed, perhaps even mistrustful, after their concession on the one side was not matched by the other side.

Even young adults, who held their own re:kindle conference in conjunction with synod, are feeling disenfranchised. Their original plan to hold a sort of mini-synod was shelved because, as one organizer put it, “We aren’t listened to at the local level, so why would it be different at synod?”

**“I will come to you in the silence.”**



**Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Classis Toronto: Our response to global warming will proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

One delegate said, “We are a small denomination that needs a large tent.” But at what point do the seams of the tent start to split?

### And Yet . . .

And yet. Maybe the tent can withstand the prevailing winds, at least for a while. Despite some suspicions and mistrust, discussions are much more respectful and honest than they were back in those “women-in-office” synods, where, on both sides of the issue, it was sometimes more about politicking than deliberating.

On climate change, delegates acknowledged with respect to creation care that the scientific community is largely of one mind. And they



agreed that churches, even while discussing such contentious issues, need to “receive each other in love and encourage each other to be more stewardly, to the glory of God.”

Delegates acknowledged that even if they didn’t approve of some of the positions taken by the Office of Social Justice staff, OSJ is doing good work.

Delegates affirmed synod as the place where decisions about the confessions are made.

Delegates trusted CRWRC enough to let it adopt a new name that doesn’t include *our* name: World Renew.

A majority of delegates trusted the hymnal editorial committee enough to endorse the new hymnal, sight unseen.

Young adults who attended re:kindle were encouraged enough after delegates spent time listening to and praying with them that they are excited to continue the discussion at a local level.

The Covenant for Officebearers was finally adopted, unanimously, on its third trip to synod, after the committee that drafted it showed a great willingness to bend by reinserting language that had been excised earlier.

Even in its disappointment that the Belhar was not adopted as a confession, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee that had championed the Belhar for years graciously said it wished to be part of any effort to attain the most unity in relation to the Belhar.

**In the Silence, Hope**

But what gives me hope was not any decision taken or any speech given in plenary sessions.

What gives me hope happens in the advisory committees where delegates meet for the first two days of synod. Each committee deliberates and then serves synod with the best advice on how to deal with each of the agenda items assigned to it.

I spent several hours sitting in on various committees as they did their work. There were no microphones, no webcast that the folks back home were watching, no speeches, no posturing.

Instead, the roughly 20 people in each group talked and listened to each other.



**Rev. Joel Boot, executive director: Thirty-five plus overtures about the Belhar is . . . a glimpse of a church that takes confession of faith very seriously.**

In one committee, when the discussion reached an impasse, the chair called everyone to several minutes of silence, and then they prayed together. Then they went again about their work.

It brought to mind the words of a song I learned at this synod (from the new hymnal): “I will come to you in the silence. I will lift you from all your fears. You will hear my voice. . . . Be still and know I am here.”

In a week filled with so many, many words, it was in that silence that I found hope that our tent will continue to hold.

—Gayla R. Postma is news editor for The Banner

**Synod 2012 News Team**

The following pages contain extensive coverage of Synod 2012. Synod coverage included webcast, news releases, and Twitter and Facebook updates.

The synod webcast was viewed by 4,273 people in 19 different countries.

*The Banner* sent out more than 250 tweets and posted nearly 100 updates on Facebook during the proceedings.

Many of the stories are available in extended form on our website ([www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)).

All photos, unless otherwise noted, were taken by Karen Huttenga.

**The Synod 2012 news team (l-r): Tim Postuma, CRC Communications; Bob De Moor, *Banner* editor; Jonathan Wilson, social media; Roxanne Van Farowe, reporter; Karen Huttenga, photographer; Jeff Arnold, reporter; Gayla Postma, *Banner* news editor; Henry Hess, denominational director of communications; and Ryan Struyk, reporter.**



## Belhar Gets Official Status, but Not as a Confession

**S**ynod created a new category for adopting the Belhar Confession, stopping short of giving it full confessional status.

The Belhar Confession will be an “Ecumenical Faith Declaration” for the CRC, a new category that generated vigorous debate but in the end won a solid majority vote.

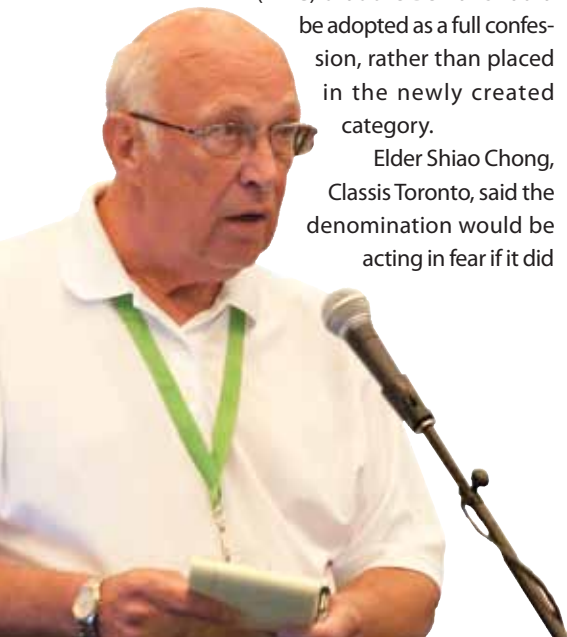
The Belhar Confession was created by Reformed Christians in South Africa in 1982 as a response to the sin of apartheid. They have invited other Reformed denominations to adopt the confession. The Reformed Church in America (RCA), a sister church of the CRC, recently adopted the Belhar.

The high level of interest in the Belhar generated 35 overtures (requests) to synod, the most on any issue since the 1990s when synod dealt with women’s ordination. The gallery at the college was almost full the evening the Belhar was discussed.

Before delegates even started discussing whether or not to adopt the confession, there was protracted debate about whether to describe the Belhar as “excellent,” “significant,” or “passionately moving and compelling.” Delegates settled on the word “significant.”

Many delegates agreed with the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) that the Belhar should be adopted as a full confession, rather than placed in the newly created category.

Elder Shiao Chong, Classis Toronto, said the denomination would be acting in fear if it did



**Elder Shiao Chong, Classis Toronto: Perhaps the Belhar rubs us the wrong way because of our cultural idols. We need to see our blind spots.**

not accept the Belhar as a confession. “Perhaps the Belhar is unwelcome [as a full confession] because it rubs us the wrong way . . . because of our cultural idols. . . . If so, we need to hear that voice resoundingly; let it rub us the wrong way so that we see our blind spots, so that we bear fruit as God’s people,” he said.

Teaching the churches about the Belhar has been the job of the EIRC. Despite the desire to have the Belhar adopted as a full confession, committee chairperson Rev. William Koopmans said the committee gave “qualified acquiescence” to the newly defined category: “We wish to be active partners in a discussion and decision that will attain the most unified position of appreciation for the Belhar Confession.”

Several delegates said they thought that creating the new category was a Spirit-led way to create that unity. “There is lots of ingenuity here—this is a new way of moving forward. It allows us to affirm the riches of the Belhar without any more debate. We are seeing that it does have a place for use in our congrega-

**Elder Jerry Heinen, Classis Wisconsin: We have studied this and studied this. The churches have spoken.**

tions,” said Rev. Ken Benjamins, Classis Hamilton.

Synod agreed, and adopted the Belhar as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration.

Synod decided it did not need a study committee to help the churches better agree on the nature and role of confessions in the life of the church.

The intent was that such a committee would have reported to Synod 2015 and opened the way for synod to reconsider adopting the Belhar as a confession.

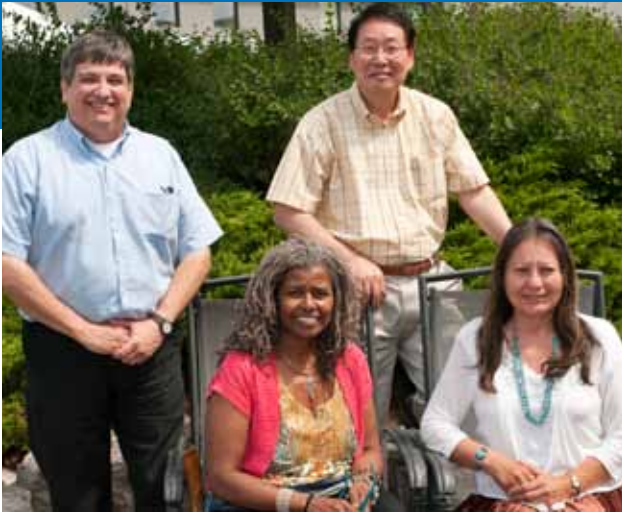
Synod chose not to study it further. “We have studied this and studied this and studied this,” said Elder Jerry Heinen, Classis Wisconsin. “The churches have spoken, and it doesn’t make any sense to kick it down the road again.”

As the debate ended, Rev. William Koopmans, whose term on the EIRC is finishing, spoke to delegates.

“[As] my last official act on behalf of the EIRC, I wish and I dream that we can find a way to submit ourselves to the binding force of the Belhar Confession with regard to these marvelous principles of unity and reconciliation—perhaps through something like a web page—where officebearers could voluntarily bind themselves from the heart,” he said.

“It is my dream that hundreds and hundreds would line up to do that.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe



(l-r) Rev. Gianni Gracia, Pastor Angela Taylor Perry, Rev. Roger Ryu, and Sue Silversmith. Not pictured: Pastor Jeffrey Hough

## Advisors Bring Ethnic Minority Views to Synod

Synod 2012 had five ethnic advisors, representing African-American, Korean-American, Native American, and Hispanic perspectives. “[Ethnic advisors] address cultural differences,” said Rev. Roger Ryu, a Korean-American. “If you ask for an African-American, Korean-American, or Native American context or view, then we will interject into the process.”

The number of ethnic advisors is up from three in 2011. Each year, synod has enough ethnic advisors to bring ethnic representation up to 25 delegates, with a maximum of seven.

—Ryan Struyk



Percentage of delegates representing an ethnic minority at Synod 2012



Rev. Peter Borgdorff (left) and Rev. William Koopmans were thanked for their work on the Belhar Confession.

## Synod 2012 Thanks Koopmans, Borgdorff

Synod 2012 expressed its thanks to Rev. William Koopmans and Rev. Peter Borgdorff for their work on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC), especially in their efforts to help the denomination study the Belhar Confession.

Koopmans expressed thanks to Borgdorff, who was described by synod vice president Rev. Bruce Persenaire as the “champion of the Belhar.”

“[Peter’s] leadership was more than capable, more than outstanding. I would say it was excellent,” Koopmans said, drawing laughter from delegates, who had earlier debated the use of the word “excellent” in describing the Belhar.

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod 2012 Elects Experienced Executive

Synod 2012 elected an executive with 23 years of synod experience, though only two members had previous experience holding office.

Rev. Leslie Kuiper, elected as president, also served as first clerk of Synod 2008. This was his eighth synod.

Rev. Bruce Persenaire, attending his 11th synod, was elected vice president.

Rev. Thea Leunk was elected first clerk. This was her fourth synod. She attended her first two



Officers of Synod 2012 (l-r): Thea Leunk, Leslie Kuiper, Bruce Persenaire, and Martin Bosveld

synods as a female advisor, and served as vice president of Synod 2008.

Second clerk this year was Martin Bosveld, an elder from

Chatham, Ontario, attending his fifth synod.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Synod Calls Church to Take Active Role in Climate Change Issue

**T**he Christian Reformed Church recognizes that there is near consensus by scientists that climate change poses a significant threat to the planet and to future generations, and that it is likely due to human activity.

Synod 2012 called for churches, members, and denominational agencies to be voices for creation



**Rev. Nick Overduin, Classis Toronto: We don't want to fiddle while creation burns.**

stewardship in reducing our individual and collective carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

But reaching that conclusion was not by any means a short order.

The report of the Creation Stewardship task force to synod sparked several hours of spirited discussion about the accuracy of the science involved and about what the church's responsibility is in addressing the issue.

When it ended, though, delegates had decided that the issue

of climate change was one the church can no longer afford to ignore.

"We don't want to fiddle while creation burns," said Rev. Nick Overduin, Classis Toronto.

Delegates who supported the report warned that if the CRC and its membership failed to act, it would be ignoring the threat of having an environment that future generations, along with the poor and vulnerable, would not want to live in.

While some delegates argued that creation care was not an issue that should be addressed either by synod or the church itself, others held that the CRC didn't have a choice but to act.

"Part of the church's call is to care for the poor and hungry," said Rev. Joel Schreurs, Classis Rocky Mountain. "This is about a simple obedience to care for the creation (God) loves. Those who will be most affected by this will be the poor and vulnerable—most of us will cope."

Those who opposed passing the task force's report argued that scientific findings did not rise to the same level of biblical teachings. Some delegates insisted that climate change was not caused by human activity but by other environmental issues.

Dr. Tom Ackerman, director of the University of Washington's Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean, said that 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is indeed caused by humans. His argument wasn't sufficient for some delegates.

Rev. Robert Cumings, Classis Pacific Northwest, said that

because science isn't exact, to move forward and to act on the views of scientists would be dangerous.

Rev. John Douma, Classis Grandville, agreed. "Ambiguity is a problem," he said. "We want to get it right and for me—a near consensus is not good enough."

Once synod decided that climate change is having an adverse affect on the planet, discussion shifted to how the church should respond.

Delegates agreed that the church should actively encourage members to live sustainably and to be wise in the way they are using energy.

Synod also called on the church and its members to consider and advocate for public strategies that reduce carbon emissions.

Several delegates stated that they did not believe it was their place to deliver such messages but to remain true to the foundational mission of the church to preach the gospel.

Elder Terry Gray, Classis Rocky Mountain, said although the CRC has a history of being active in social justice issues, that didn't make issues like climate change an ecclesiastical issue.

But Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Classis Toronto, said one couldn't be separated from the other. "Our response to global warning will proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ," Vander Laan said.

Despite such pleas, several delegates warned that to promote the task force's report and to call members to action was to carry out a mission of hopelessness.



**Rev. John Douma, Classis Grandville: A near consensus is not good enough.**

They told fellow delegates that the church's work was to promote a message of hope and that speaking to issues of the earth's deterioration was doing just the opposite.

Ackerman disagreed. He said that the issue is ultimately not about doom and gloom. Instead, the report that synod adopted is an attempt to provide greater hope for years to come as long as society—and the church—takes necessary action.

In the end, Synod 2012 also asked that churches provide gracious pastoral care to each other in the context of discussing such a contentious issue. "We receive each other in love. We encourage each other to be more stewardly, to the glory of God. We encourage the churches not to live in fear, but in the knowledge that God's Spirit renews the face of the earth, and his Spirit is with us."

—Jeff Arnold



**Elder Kenneth Verbrugge, seargent at arms**

## Synod Kept in Line by Jedi Delegate

It was like a scene out of "Star Wars."

Kenneth Verbrugge, a 30-year U.S. Navy veteran, was appointed seargent at arms for Synod 2012. The elder delegate from Classis Hackensack patrolled the delegates, light saber in hand.

"This is my first synod, so when the president asked me to be seargent at arms, and I accepted, I asked him, "What does that mean?"

The seargent at arms is responsible for encouraging delegates to take their seats quickly following breaks.

"I was told that [in previous years] there was a shepherd's crook or a staff that was given, but I could not find one," he said. "But my wife . . . did find me the sword of the spirit," he said, proudly pulling out his blue light saber.

Verbrugge was a strong candidate for the difficult job. He has also worked with classified intelligence information for the U.S. National Security Agency.

—Ryan Struyk

# Public Profession of Faith Includes Commitment to Creeds and Confessions

**S**ynod 2012 restored a requirement that public profession of faith include a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church.

Synod 2011 removed the requirement in response to a motion from the floor that the Faith Formation Committee did not anticipate, and did not respond to quickly enough when the motion was made.

"We didn't catch in time what was happening on the floor," said Syd Hielema, a member of the Faith Formation Committee. "In hindsight, we wish we had addressed that."

Some delegates had concerns about young members expressing their commitment to documents they might not understand.

"If this passes, and an 8-year-old professes his or her faith publicly, that child is required to make a commitment at that time to the Reformed confessions," said Rev. Terry Genzink, Classis Georgetown.

However, this requirement is nothing new to the church, said Rev. Kathy Smith, faculty adviser from Calvin Theological Seminary.



**Rev. Kathy Smith, Calvin Theological Seminary: Requiring a commitment to the creeds and confessions has always been there.**

"This is about retaining something that has always been there: a commitment to the creeds and confessions in profession of faith," she said. "The issue here is about restoring something that is very important."

The Faith Formation Committee is currently discussing differ-

ent milestones in the profession of faith process.

Synod 2012 approved the requirement with the expectation that the Faith Formation Committee will continue its work and present a clearer report on profession of faith to a future synod.

—Ryan Struyk

**Delegate:** "I'm not sure I can finish my speech in two minutes because of the language barrier."

**Synod president Rev. Les Kuiper:** "I will give you three minutes."

**Delegate:** "How generous of you."



**Average age of elder delegates at Synod 2012**

## Synod Affirms Michael Le Roy as President of Calvin College



**S**ynod 2012 overwhelmingly affirmed Michael Le Roy as the ninth president of Calvin College, which is owned by the Christian Reformed Church.

Synod heard that he is committed to keeping higher education affordable while remaining true to the school's mission.

Le Roy succeeds Gaylen Byker, Calvin's president for the past 17 years.

Le Roy told delegates that he is committed to keeping Calvin's ties to the CRC strong, but that he'd like to build diversity—both among students and faculty.

Le Roy said that Calvin would continue to be a school built on the moorings of

the truths it was founded on, including the authoritative nature of Scripture.

Le Roy said his leadership style and goals would be clear from the start. Ultimate success, he said, won't be about him—but about Calvin's students.

"The purpose of the college is to educate the next generation of faithful Christians," Le Roy said. "Scholarship is important, but it's not the end. The end is the development of students."

—Jeff Arnold

**Michael Le Roy: Success is educating the next generation of faithful Christians.**

**President:** "Two minutes are up!"

**Rev. Ken Benjamins, Classis Hamilton:** "Thank you very much. . . . I was almost done."

## Report on Human Origins Coming to Synod 2014

Calvin College will present to Synod 2014 its report on academic freedom and confessional fidelity.

The interim report, called "Evolution, Human Origins and Confessional Parameters," was presented to an advisory committee of synod, and delegates were told it is available on the Calvin College website.

The study originated at the college after a controversy erupted over the writings of two of its professors, John Schneider and Daniel Harlow. In those writings, they questioned the historicity of the creation story in Genesis. Schneider has since left the college.

Calvin commissioned a committee to study the relationship between academic freedom and the boundaries of the Christian Reformed Church's confessions. When Synod 2011 heard of the report, it asked to receive both the interim report and the final product.

—Jeff Arnold

## Gaylen Byker Departs as Calvin College President

Gaylen Byker gave his last address to synod as president of Calvin College, calling the school a "rare jewel and great gift."

Byker recently retired as Calvin's president after 17 years.

He pointed to public opinion that being true to both faith and scholarship is impossible. "I think we've proved them wrong," Byker said.

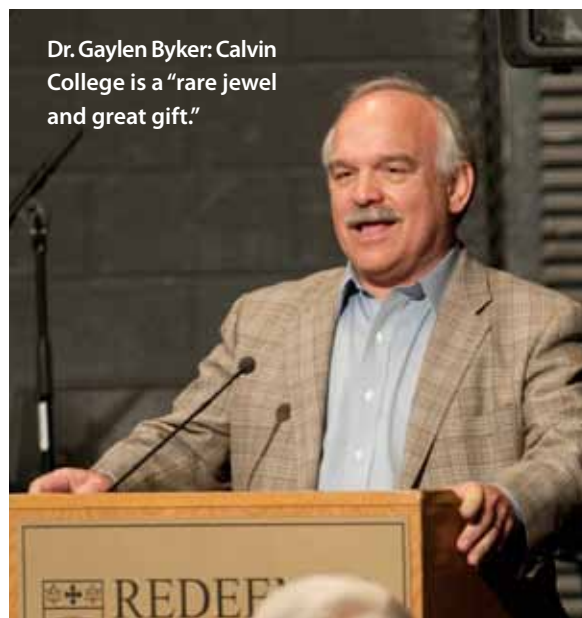
Calvin continues to be better supported by its founding church than any other denominationally backed school in the United States, Byker said.

At the same time, it is increasingly diverse, with a student body that is 20 percent international and represents 48 countries.

Byker leaves the school under the leadership of Michael Le Roy, whom synod overwhelmingly affirmed.

"I feel very blessed and I feel very optimistic about the future," Byker said.

—Jeff Arnold



**Dr. Gaylen Byker:** Calvin College is a "rare jewel and great gift."





## Synod 2012 Approves 43 Candidates for Ministry

Synod 2012 approved 43 candidates for the ministry.

Synod 2012 approved 43 candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. The group included 37 men and six women, including three husband and wife pairs.

Thirteen of the candidates were present at synod for the welcoming ceremony, while

another 12 gathered at the CRC's denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids (Mich.) to watch the ceremony on the synod webcast.

Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, used God's words to

Joshua, instructing candidates to be strong and courageous.

"God loves you, we love you," Medenblik said. "Now, love the church."

—Jeff Arnold



8

Percentage of female delegates at Synod 2012

## Synod Approved Appointment of Goheen to Calvin Seminary

Synod 2012 approved the appointment of Dr. Michael Goheen as a professor of missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary (reduced load).

Goheen said the evangelical groundings of knowing the Bible, evangelism, prayer, and individual ethics have positively influenced his beliefs about both mission and missions—concepts he said haven't always been stressed in the Christian Reformed Church.

His background in teaching Reformed Worldview will also be prevalent in his missiology instruction, teaching students how their beliefs will be shaped by the stories they are living out.

Goheen describes his new working bond with the seminary as a "kind of a unique relationship" that is complicated. He also works with students on projects in San Francisco and Phoenix.

—Jeff Arnold



Michael Goheen

**Delegate:** "Does anyone remember the population bomb? I suffered through a vasectomy because of that!"  
**Synod president Rev. Les Kuiper:** "Thank you for sharing."

## New Name for CRWRC Is Official

**C**hristian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) will soon change its name to World Renew. Synod 2012 approved a name change for the

Christian Reformed Church's relief and development agency, but not without debate, and the vote was not unanimous.

The name change is needed to better reflect the work of the agency, according to its report. The tagline "Living justice, Loving mercy, Serving Christ" will be included with the name, unless the board of CRWRC votes to change it.

"Continuing to include *Christian Reformed* in the name of the organization creates and implies a limitation in terms of participation and scope of work," stated CRWRC's report to synod. "Relief only touches the surface of what CRWRC is about. Also . . . in some cultures the idea of receiving *relief* is insulting . . . [and] use of the term *committee* is no longer accurate and presents confusion especially to our funding partners."

Some delegates argued that it was a loss not to include the word "Christian" in the name. One delegate wanted to change the name to "Christian Reformed World Renew," but that was voted down.



**Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, Canadian CRWRC director: We don't lose our Christian faith by what we're called.**



**Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Classis Toronto: Don't take Christian Reformed out of the name.**

"The reason we have the CRWRC right now is not so the organization can do the relief and development, it's so that my congregation can do the relief and development. Don't take Christian Reformed out of the name," said Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Classis Toronto.

Some delegates raised the issue that there is a publication called "World Renew" that seeks to bring young people back to the Roman Catholic church. Delegates from areas dominated by Roman Catholic people worried about the confusion that could cause.

But agency staff said the name was needed to build partnerships with other agencies and denominations, and even to gain access to some areas of the world. "The name World Renew does allow us entry into places that we would otherwise not be allowed," said Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, Canadian

director for the agency. "We don't lose our Christian faith by what we're called."

In the end, most delegates agreed.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



**5,567**  
Number of meals served at Synod 2012

**Sarah Cook, Classis Eastern Canada, following the retirement lunch, which included a poem: "I found [the retirement lunch] so inspiring that I thought maybe I should present this report in rhyming verse, but I'm not allowed to change any words."**



Rev. Brian Kuyper, Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan: Whether or not we agree with it, they're still doing good work.

## Synod 2012 Gives Faint Praise to Office of Social Justice

When Synod 2012 reviewed the work of the Christian Reformed Church's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ), several delegates preferred to simply "recognize" its work, rather than commend it.

Those delegates disagreed with the way the agency interprets its principles. "The [OSJ] has been very selective in one end of the political spectrum in what they choose to advocate for," said Elder Mick Vanden Bosch of Classis Iakota.

Other delegates were more positive. "Whether or not we agree with it, they're still doing good work," said Rev. Brian Kuyper, Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan.

Synod voted 95-75 to "commend" the work.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Elder Kenneth Piers, Classis Grand Rapids East: The church has a calling to speak prophetically.

Rev. Duane Nieuwsma, Classis Grandville: We need to use discretion how we talk about things that are debatable.

## Synod 2012 Struggles with the Role of the Church in Society

Are there some political and social issues that denominational boards and leaders of the Christian Reformed Church should just stay away from?

One classis (a regional group of churches) requested that synod tell leaders to "refrain from making pronouncements on issues that lie outside of the mission of the church as institution."

Another classis requested synod to appoint a study committee to define the role of the church as *institute* and the church as *organism*, and how the church should speak to society.

"It is not our practice to use the pulpit as a forum for political ends and platforms. The proclamation of the Word of God is central to our tradition," said Rev. Duane Nieuwsma of Classis Grandville.

Rev. George Koopmans, Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, said that more and more voices within his congregation are saying they

do not want the denomination speaking for them—especially when it comes to political matters. "They are growing frustrated," Koopmans said.

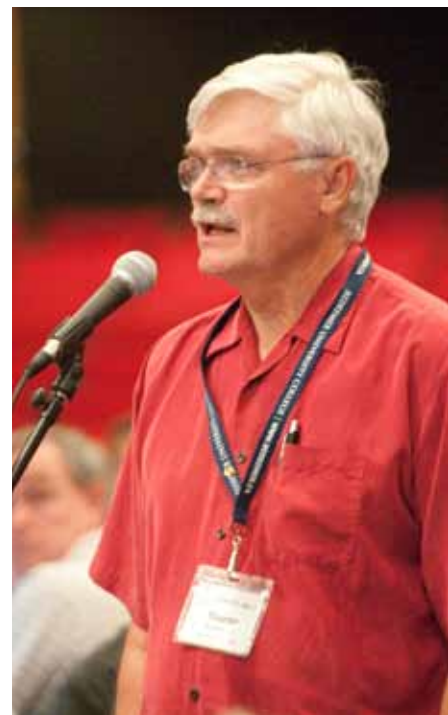
However, Elder Kenneth Piers, Classis Grand Rapids East, said the church has a calling to speak prophetically and to speak to the culture in which it lives.

After talking about it at length, synod didn't appoint a study committee, but it asked the task force studying the church's structure and culture to take note of the concern.

In addition, Rev. Joel Boot, the CRC's executive director, will write a pastoral letter to the churches, urging them to reflect on the extent to which the church should advocate or lobby on politicized issues.

As Rev. Phil Covert, Classis Northern Illinois, pointed out, "This synod has shown us we are a small denomination with a large tent."

—Banner staff



Rev. Michael Winnowski, Classis Wisconsin: "Am I making sense, or should I just sit down?"



Rev. Joel Boot

## Executive Director Tells Synod the State of the Church Is Critical

It has become a tradition that the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church delivers a “state of the church” address at synod.

Rev. Joel Boot delivered his address to Synod 2012 at a combined meeting of the delegates of synod and the delegates of the first ever young adult leadership summit, called re:kindle 2012.

“The condition [of the church] is critical,” Boot said. “There are new people, new things happening, new organizations taking shape, and the ground is shaking beneath our feet.”

Boot noted the many changes in leadership at the ministry agencies and educational institutions

of the CRC that have taken place. He pointed out the shifting ecumenical relationships for the CRC, especially the closer relationship developing with the Reformed Church in America.

Noting the slow but steady decline of the CRC’s membership, Boot said that this could be the start of the worst of times or it could be among the best of times, and he suggested it is the latter.

“Just maybe,” he said, “the ground shaking beneath our feet is the dramatic movement of the Spirit of God. And what we do about it makes all the difference in the world.”

Boot said that the creation stewardship report coming to

synod is the product of a church that believes the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it. The report from the Faith Formation committee reflects a church seeking to be obedient to God’s expectation that we train up our children in the way they should go.

“Thirty-five plus overtures about the Belhar is not about a church at odds with itself,” he said, “but a glimpse of a church that takes confession of faith very seriously.”

Boot closed by saying the church’s condition is critical because the time is critical. “What we let God do to us and through us this week, even tonight, is critical.”

—Gayla R. Postma

## Synod 2012 Deals with Maranatha CRC and Classis Quinte

Synod 2012 ruled that Rev. John Visser, senior pastor of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, in Belleville, Ontario, is to be suspended from ministry for at least 90 days. It also issued reprimands to Classis Quinte (the regional group of churches).

Synod spent several hours behind closed doors deliberating on a conflict between the church and the classis.

Synod 2012 ruled that Visser had not breached confidentiality. However, it did rule that special discipline be applied to Visser, suspending him for 90 days, noting that “Visser abused his office for inappropriate ends and/or self-interest by soliciting and/or allowing a counselee and her husband, both of whom were parishioners, to invest in companies that he and his family owned.”

Synod authorized the denomination’s Board of Trustees to oversee a process, paid for by the denomination, to evaluate Visser’s readiness to return to ministry. After 90 days, if the board is satisfied, it may lift the suspension.

Synod 2012 reprimanded Classis Quinte for violating the right of Maranatha to a fair hearing. It also reprimanded the classis for not directing the dissenting members of the congregation to refrain from publicly circulating their grievances, and for giving them documents to distribute.

Synod directed the council of Maranatha CRC to contract immediately for ongoing oversight of the healing ministry at the church by an independent, accredited agency, because, it said, “Council, comprised of laypersons, is not capable of such oversight.”

Visser may not be reinstated before this condition is met.

Synod did not act on a recommendation regarding whether church-based counseling ministries should be regulated at the denominational level.

—Gayla R. Postma



## Synod 2013 in Michigan, 2014 in Iowa

Synod 2012 approved the locations for the annual leadership meeting for the next two years.

Synod 2013 will meet June 7-14 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids (Mich.), with Roosevelt Park Christian Reformed Church serving as the convening church.

Synod 2014 will meet at Central College in Pella, Iowa, accepting the invitation from the Reformed Church in America to meet simultaneously with its synod and to participate in joint sessions.

Rev. Joel Boot, executive director of the CRC, said joint sessions would likely include worship and discussion of issues common to both denominations.

Delegates also decided to continue beginning synod on a Friday. It was moved from Saturday to Friday in 2011 as an exception, but beginning a day earlier means Sunday provides a natural break between the scheduled two days of advisory committee meetings and the start-up of full plenary sessions.

—Jeff Arnold

## Synod 2012 Celebrates in Worship

Synod 2012 worshiped together in Ancaster (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church for the annual



**Rev. William Veenstra: Christianity is not a spectator sport.**

Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise.

The service focused on the importance of building the kingdom of Christ, maturing in our faith, and transforming those around us.

Rev. William Veenstra challenged the congregation to ask themselves three questions: What do I need to learn? What do I need to be challenged on? With whom can I share what God is doing in my life?

Using the illustration of the upcoming London Olympic Games, he said, "Christianity is not a spectator sport. That's not the way it should be. We want every person mature in Christ."



**(L-r) Ed Henson, Joel Dykxhoorn, Nathan Heemskerck**

Rev. Leslie Kuiper, president of Synod 2012, and Rev. Bruce Perse-naire, vice president, led the congregation in the celebration of communion.

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod 2012 Comes to Canada

Synod 2012 took place at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. This is only the second time that synod has been held in Canada. The last time was in 1999.

Some of the preparations included reconstruction of the auditorium stage and installing new wireless Internet equipment.

This was the second year that synod went paperless, which required infrastructure improvements "to support the IT needs for all the delegates," said Yolanda Bax, assistant director of campus services.

The event included the president's picnic, held indoors because of rain. Delegates were treated to a completely Canadian experience, from Alberta beef to homegrown corn, served by Redeemer's president and vice presidents. A member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Mountie) also attended.

Doreen Gringhuis, director of campus services, said, "We wanted them to experience not only Redeemer hospitality, but Canadian hospitality." —Monica de Regt



**Rev. Leslie Kuiper (left) and Rev. Joel Boot with a Mountie.**



**Redeemer president Hubert Krygsman and Elsje Zwart, vice president for advancement, serve dinner during the president's picnic.**

## Ministry Shares Increase, No Pension Plan Review

Synod 2012 approved a ministry shares amount of \$326.26 per member for 2013. Ministry shares funds are used to support shared ministries of the Christian Reformed Church.

The approved ministry shares amount represents a 3 percent increase from 2012. Most of the increase, about \$600,000, is intended to go to Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing arm of the CRC.

Synod 2012 said no to a request to have an independent review of the Christian Reformed Church's ministers' pension plan. The request came from Classis Minnkota, a regional group of churches.

Synod noted that a review had been done in 2005 and that a similar study investigating numerous plan design changes had been done in 2011. To do so again a year later "would be an additional unnecessary expense."

Transitioning from the current structure to a plan such as a 401K could be cost-prohibitive to congregations that are already providing funding from their respective churches to their minister's contribution plan.

Synod agreed that the current plan being offered by the CRC met the standards of being equitable, flexible, and sustainable—the qualities sought by Classis Minnkota.

—Jeff Arnold

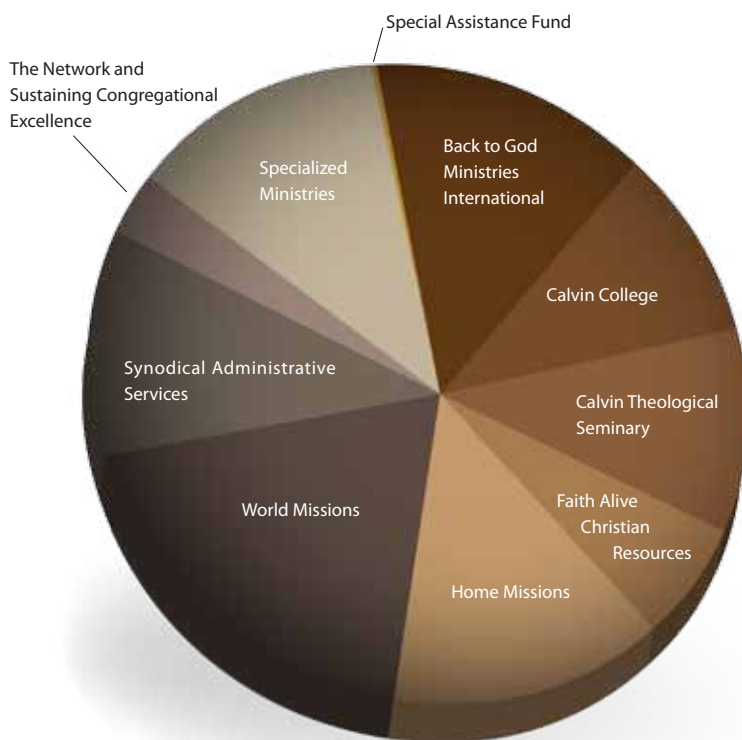
## Synod Wants Strategy to Confront Pornography Use

Because pornography has become so easy to access, Synod 2012 wants churches to have help in dealing with it.

Synod instructed the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees to "develop and implement a plan to assist churches in confronting pornography use within their congregations, in understanding the factors that lead to its use and the damage it causes, and in supporting healing for those who are affected by its use."

Synod 1988 urged churches to call the use of pornography a sin, "however, very little has been done within our congregations to bring this sin into the light," the decision from synod stated.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



### Ministry Share Breakdown for Fiscal 2013<sup>1</sup>

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| ● Back to God Ministries International                                      | \$43.97 |
| ● Calvin College  | \$31.60 |
| ● Calvin Theological Seminary   | \$35.91 |
| ● Faith Alive Christian Resources   | \$21.99 |
| ● Home Missions   | \$46.88 |
| ● World Missions  | \$60.56 |
| ● Synodical Administrative Services <sup>2</sup>                            | \$34.84 |
| ● The Network, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, and Volunteer Services | \$10.13 |
| ● Specialized Ministries <sup>3</sup>                                       | \$40.02 |
| ● Special Assistance Fund <sup>4</sup>                                      | \$0.36  |

**Total Per-Member Assessment** **\$326.26**  
(a 3 percent increase from 2012)

<sup>1</sup> These amounts represent allocation for the \$326.26 ministry share for the 2013 fiscal year budget (July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013). The \$21.99 of ministry shares for Faith Alive reflects the \$9.50 increase, effective January 1, 2013. Allocation of ministry shares for fiscal 2014 will be determined as the budgets for that year are developed this fall.

<sup>2</sup> Synod Assembly, Board of Trustees, and General Administration.

<sup>3</sup> Chaplaincy and Care Ministries, Disability Concerns, ministries in Canada (Aboriginal Ministries, Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue), Pastor-Church Relations, Race Relations, Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, and Safe Church Ministry.

<sup>4</sup> A fund that provides assistance to cover the cost of a pastor's final move at retirement, as well as special needs of retired pastors or their surviving spouses.



Rev. Jim Dekker: I've been chair of the [study] committee for what seems like an eternity now.

## New Covenant for Officebearers Passes Unanimously

Synod 2012 accepted a new Covenant for Officebearers that must be signed by all ministers, elders, deacons, and professors at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

The document, which replaces the Form of Subscription, calls officebearers to affirm their commitment to the Scriptures and to the church's creeds and confessions.

Synod approved the new document unanimously and gave a standing ovation to the study committee that spent seven years developing it.

"I've been chair of the [study] committee for what seems like an eternity now," said Rev. James Dekker, introducing himself.

Both Synod 2008 and Synod 2011 had considered previous drafts of the document, but recommitted them to the study committee for further revision.

"I deeply appreciate how the [committee] has stated in unambiguous terms that we agree with the doctrine of the Reformed confessions because and only because they fully agree with the Word of God," said Cedric Parsels, a young adult representative.

Some delegates had concerns with including reference in the Covenant to *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

But synod decided to leave reference to the testimony in the document, asking officebearers to "recognize" it, but stopping short of "affirming" it, as is required for creeds and confessions.

The passing of the document was met with enthusiastic applause.

"This has been a long journey for your committee," said synod president Rev. Leslie Kuiper. "[Thank you] for the deep commitment that you've demonstrated in working through all of the process."

—Ryan Struyk

**Rev. Gary Roest, Classis Hackensack:** "We'll adopt the form of subscription now and deal with the heresy later."

## Synod Endorses New Hymnal

Synod 2012 endorsed a new hymnal, *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, for use in Christian Reformed congregations.

Some delegates didn't like the fact that they didn't get to see the texts of all the songs.

"I find it problematic that synod is being asked to endorse this hymnbook," said Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland. "It says that the [synod advisory] committee did not have an opportunity to review the songs. [This] would be a hollow endorsement."

Rev. Joyce Borger, worship editor at Faith Alive, noted that "there are 13 people on our committee; at least seven have theological degrees, so [the texts] have been discussed a lot," she said.

Synod did endorse the new hymnal, which is a joint effort by the CRC and Reformed Church in America (RCA).

"We had enough confidence in Faith Alive and the hymnal review process that the word 'endorse' was appropriate," said Terry Gray, an elder from Classis Rocky Mountain.



Rev. Joyce Borger: Of 13 people on the committee, at least seven have theological degrees. These texts have been discussed a lot.

The hymnal is scheduled for release in June 2013.

—Ryan Struyk

**Rev. Len Vanderzee:** "You'll be happy to know that we returned to the 'thees' and 'thous' in this hymnal."

**Vice President Rev. Bruce Perse-naire:** "We thank thee."



Number of pages read by delegates

## Search Process in Place for New Executive Director

Synod 2012 approved a process for seeking and appointing a new executive director of the Christian Reformed Church.

Synod directed the Board of Trustees to form a search committee with the goal of presenting a nominee to Synod 2013. The nine-member search committee will include three members of the Board of Trustees, two members of the task force reviewing structure and culture, and four members of the CRCNA. The search committee is to begin its work as soon as possible.

Rev. Joel Boot, current executive director, was originally appointed to a two-year term that was supposed to end in 2013. However, synod extended his appointment by one year to serve as a counselor to the new executive director.

Rev. Michael Winnowski, Classis Wisconsin, told synod, "Joel Boot agreed to this because we are holding his grandchildren for ransom."

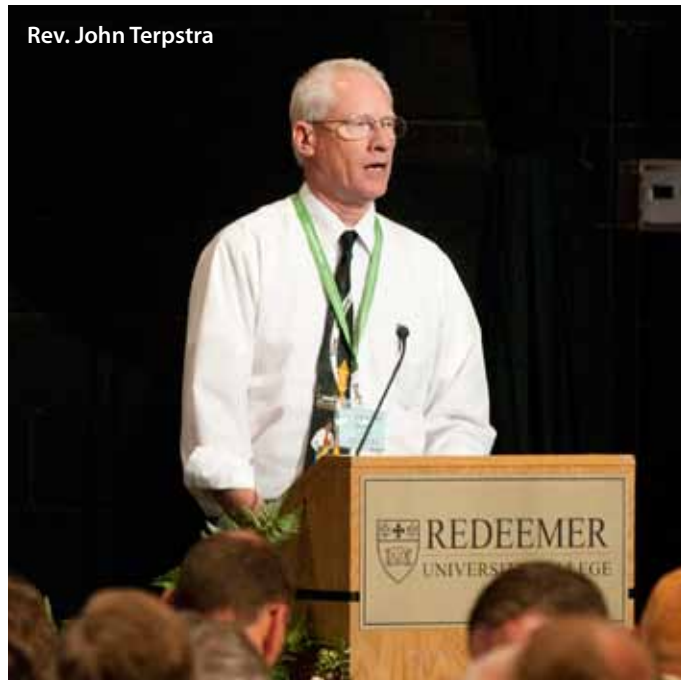
—Gayla R. Postma

## Board President Reviews Joys, Challenges of Previous Year

**R**ev. John Terpstra, president of the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees, delivered a report on the board's work to Synod 2012. This is the second year that such a report was given.

Terpstra listed for delegates the many ways in which the executive director, Rev. Joel Boot, has provided pastoral care for staff who grieved at a variety of levels after the resignations last year of the previous executive director and the director of denominational ministries, and the way Boot has carried out the administrative functions of the role.

Terpstra also noted the highlights of the past year, including the interviews of Bonnie Nicholas, Michael Le Roy, and Rev. Kurt Selles, all assuming new leadership positions in the CRC. He told delegates of the many ways in which the ministry



Rev. John Terpstra

agencies extend the ministry of the CRC in today's complex mission field of North America.

Terpstra said there are challenges facing the CRC. "We have targets for diverse leadership that elude us," he said. "We need to revisit the conversation about how

to more effectively be a denomination with a kingdom presence in two countries. I offer no new solutions, only that I continue to hear concerns, and I see the need to talk more about it."

—Gayla R. Postma



**\$326.26**

Per-member ministry shares amount for 2013

## Synod Affirms Infant Baptism

Synod 2012 said that pastors and elders should not lead child or infant dedications.

Instead, synod called for pastors and elders to give a faithful, encouraging, and pastoral response to parents who want their children dedicated.

It also called them to teach the parents about infant baptism.

—Ryan Struyk

**Rev. Michael Winnowski, Classis Wisconsin, to retiring ministry associates:** "You'll retire as ministry associates, but in our hearts, you will forever be commissioned pastors."





**Elder José Rayas, Classis Arizona: We have been doing a lot of work in conjunction with the RCA.**

## What Synod Didn't Do

### No New Process for Shared Supervision

Synod 2012 did not change the process for shared supervision of an ordained minister employed by the Christian Reformed Church's denominational administration. Synod encouraged churches to conscientiously follow the current Church Order guidelines.

### No New Process to Change Reformed Confessions

Synod 2012 did not change the process by which the CRC deals with changes to the Reformed confessions to one similar to that of the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Those churches require two-thirds of the classes to ratify changes before a final adoption by synod.

Some delegates said the proposed process would take away from the deliberative nature of synod.

"As soon as we farm it out to the individual classes, that deliberative nature happens just in that classis, but it does not happen between the classes," said Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Classis Toronto. "I am afraid that is going to cause more division within our denomination."

Synod voted down the proposal by a vote of 89-73.

### No New Church Order Category for Pastors Leaving for Study

Synod 2012 did not add a new category in the Church Order for pastors who leave ministry in a local congregation to pursue further education. Church Order Article 17a applies to all situations when a pastor separates from a congregation. Synod said that the current system allows for both positive and negative release, and singling out one reason is not necessary.

### No Union Classes with Reformed Church in America

Synod 2012 said no to allowing a classis (a regional group of churches) to belong to both the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

"[We] have been doing a lot of work in conjunction with the RCA," said Elder José Rayas, Classis Arizona. "What we are looking for is to have something, maybe a new article [of] the Church Order, which would allow us to work with the classes of the RCA."

The CRC currently allows for union churches, in which a single church can be a member of both the CRC and RCA.

However, synod did not approve this change because the request lacked specifics.

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod Renames Ministry Associates as Commissioned Pastors

Synod 2012 changed the title of Ministry Associate to Commissioned Pastor.

CRC Director of Candidacy David Koll said giving current ministry associates the title "commissioned pastors" would be encouraging to those who have felt as if their ministry wasn't as valuable as that of Ministers of the Word.

It doesn't change the duties of the office, Koll said, but rather solidifies ministry associates in their mission to minister to those in their care.

That made some ministry associates happy. "It's confusing doing ministry work," said Shiao Chong, a campus pastor at York University in North York, Ontario. He said a new title would simplify his ministry to students at the secular university where he works.

The title "ministry associate" was adopted in 2003 after the original title of "evangelist" was deemed inappropriate.

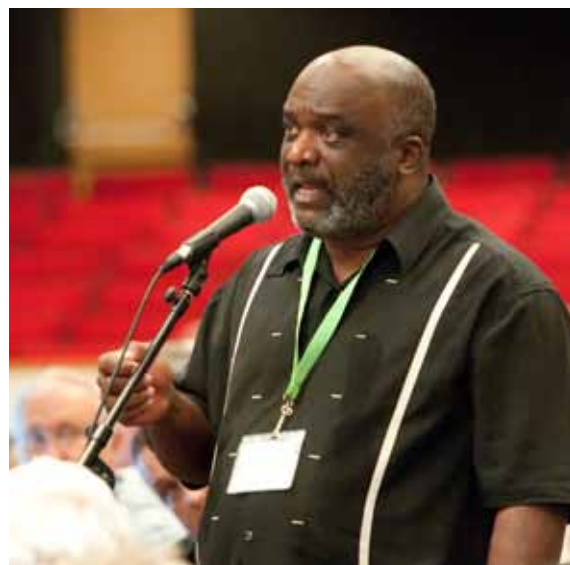
"It doesn't matter what you call me," said Daniel Lindley, an elder representing Classis Northwest Iowa. "I'm going to continue to be a pastor as long as God calls me to be a pastor. The title's not the issue."

For Rev. Jeffrey Hough, who attended synod as an ethnic advisor, the change will help. Hough said that the way he's referred to in his ministry in West Michigan rarely comes up.

But in the few times that it does come up, he said, it matters.

—Jeff Arnold

**Jeffrey Hough, ethnic advisor: When the title comes up, it matters.**



## Looking Back on How CRC Ecumenicity Has Changed

**A**s he completed his term on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC), five of them as chair, Rev. William Koopmans reflected on how ecumenicity for the Christian Reformed Church has changed in recent years.

In recent years, the EIRC's work was dominated by the Belhar Confession. Koopmans said an image of the church has unfolded of a denomination "that is both deeply committed to finding a way to affirm the principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice, but deeply divided over the precise way that the Belhar will function in moving toward that goal," he said. "We run the risk of limiting our ability to express unity when we scrutinize ourselves so closely."

The CRC was also very involved in the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) when the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council merged.

"We have a significant role in helping shape the character and identity of this organization," Koopmans said. He has a seven-year appointment as an advisor to the executive committee of WCRC.

In 2006, synod revised the ecumenical charter to reflect that the CRC is "less insistent than we once were that our partners understand Christian, or even Reformed, truth in the same way as the CRC."

Synod 2010 gave the EIRC the task of representing the CRC in interfaith dialogue and providing resources to those in that dialogue, resulting in the committee's new name: Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

The CRC severed its formal relationship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) because of the views held by that denomination, particularly on homosexuality. A major component of the PCN is, in many ways, the mother church of the Christian Reformed Church.

"We're still seeking to come toward a mutually agreeable memorandum of understanding," Koopmans said.

On a brighter note, Koopmans noted the relationships that have been developed with both the Christian Reformed Church in Haiti and the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Koopmans was grateful for his time on the EIRC, and to his home congregation in Chatham, Ontario, for allowing him that time. He said he was reminded of words he heard from Peter Borgdorff, that ecumenical work is both addictive and contagious.

"He's right," Koopmans said. "To have our horizons broadened and our faith stretched and strengthened through people who are different from ourselves, but every bit as much alive in Christ, is marvelous."

—Gayla R. Postma



**Rev. Cornelis van Rensburg:** We are moving away from the paralyzing legacy of apartheid.

## NGK to Synod: Make the Belhar a Full Confession

Rev. Cornelis van Rensburg of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (NGK) urged Synod 2012 to adopt the Belhar as a full confession. "In the Reformed tradition, a confession is adopted when the truth of the gospel is at stake," he said, adding that the Belhar Confession was created at such a time in South Africa.

Van Rensburg said his denomination is entering a "new process of discernment . . . a season of listening, teachability, compassion, trust," he said, as they move "away from the paralyzing legacy of apartheid."

—Roxanne Van Farowe



**Rev. Tom DeVries, Reformed Church in America:** The CRC and RCA are cooperating in impoverished neighborhoods.

## Greetings from Reformed Church in America

Rev. Thomas DeVries, General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America, brought greetings from his denomination to Synod 2012.

He focused on the partnerships between the RCA and the CRC, showing a video about one called Kingdom Enterprise, in Wyoming (Mich.).

"I don't think that either denomination, because of the needs of the city, can address the needs by themselves," said a pastor in the video. "I would love [that] this would be a common desire to love this community one block at a time."

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod Receives Thanks from CRC of Haiti



**Rev. Romelus St. Yves, Christian Reformed Church of Haiti:** Thank you for your partnership, thank you for your prayer.

Rev. Romelus St. Yves of the Eglise Chrétienne Réformée d'Haiti (Christian Reformed Church of Haiti) thanked Synod 2012 for the work the CRC has done in Haiti following the earthquake in 2010. The CRC of Haiti has roughly 3,000 members in 48 churches.

"Thank you for your financial support. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your prayer. May the Lord Almighty bless you abundantly," he said.

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod 2012 Hears from Synod Potchefstroom in South Africa



**Rev. Dries du Plooy, Reformed Churches of South Africa Synod Potchefstroom.**

Rev. Dries du Plooy, representing the Reformed Churches of South Africa Synod Potchefstroom, told delegates of Synod 2012 that in Christ, we are one body, but in unity, there must be diversity. "We accept and manage the diversity."

Synod Potchefstroom faces a reality, he said, of watching many South Africans leave to become immigrants to Europe and North America, yet the church continues to grow.

"We're doing well," du Plooy said. "We have a vision to make Reformed theology available around the globe."  
—Jeff Arnold



**Rev. Takashi Yoshida, Reformed Church in Japan: You showed us Christian love in word and in deed.**

## Reformed Church of Japan Brings Thanks to Synod 2012

Rev. Takashi Yoshida, moderator of the Reformed Church in Japan, thanked Synod 2012 for help given by the Christian Reformed Church following last year's earthquake and tsunami.

"We came here to express deep appreciation, face to face, for all that you have done and are still doing for us, responding to the great earthquake, tsunami, and the following accident of the nuclear plant," Yoshida said. "You showed us what Christian love is, not only by your word, but also by deed."

—Ryan Struyk

## Adopt the Belhar, South African Delegate Says

Rev. Motlalentwa Godfrey Betha of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa commended synod for taking the matter of the Belhar Confession in what has been "a journey of faith," but he warned delegates that if they failed to recognize the Belhar as a fourth confession, they were not treating the Belhar "with the integrity and respect which it deserves."

Later that day, Synod 2012 adopted the Belhar as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration, giving it some status in the church but not adopting it as a fourth confession.

—Jeff Arnold

**Rev. Motlalentwa Godfrey Betha: Adopt the Belhar.**



**Aileen Van Ginkel, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, cited the challenge of keeping young adults in the church.**

## Greetings from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Aileen Van Ginkel brought greetings to Synod 2012 from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), of which the Christian Reformed Church is a member.

The organization is made up of 100 different ministries, 35 Christian institutions of higher education, and over 800 congregations.

"A challenge to all of the church in Canada to consider is how youth and young adults are engaging—or, unfortunately, disengaging—the church," Van Ginkel said. "I would really ask you to pray for all of those who are engaged in ministry with this group."

—Ryan Struyk

## Synod 2012 Receives Greetings from South Africa

Rev. T.C. Rabali from the Reformed Churches of South Africa, Synod Zoutspanberg, told delegates of Synod 2012 that his presence in Ancaster, Ontario, was evidence of the value his church places on maintaining strong bonds with the Christian Reformed Church.

He encouraged CRC delegates to continue contact between themselves and their Reformed Church brethren, and invited them to the celebration of Synod Zoutspanberg's 50th anniversary in 2013.

"We believe there are valuable lessons in our history we are celebrating," Rabali said. "We look back and thank God for his grace and faithfulness."

—Jeff Arnold



**Rev. T.C. Rabali, Reformed Churches in South Africa, Synod Zoutspanberg**

**Elder Terry Gray, Classis Rocky Mountain:**  
"The motion from the Ecumenical—the E-R-I-R-E—whatever it is!"



## Synod's Youngest and Oldest Delegates

At 84 years old, Elder Don Dykstra, Classis Illiana, was the oldest delegate to this year's synod. Rev. Albert Postma, 28, of Classis Lake Superior, was the youngest delegate. This was Dykstra's 14th synod, and Postma's first.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Rev. Kurt Selles was ratified by Synod 2012 as the director of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), the media agency of the Christian Reformed Church.



(From left): Jim Terpstra, Tim Pot, Chad VanderValk, and Shayne DeHaan brought their anti-pornography message to synod.

## Bikers Roar to Synod with a Message

Bikers Jim Terpstra, Tim Pot, Chad VanderValk, and Shayne DeHaan made a 20-hour road trip—all the way from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, to Ancaster, Ontario—to bring their anti-pornography message to Synod 2012.

Terpstra is planning a cross-continent trip called "Shore to Shore with a Roar" for 2014, making stops in key CRC locations such as Michigan, Iowa, and southern Ontario, raising awareness about the problem of pornography and encouraging people to "take every thought captive" for Christ, he said.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



## Synod Was a Family Affair

Synod 2012 doubled as a family reunion for five men. They are cousins, all with different last names, some of whom hadn't seen each other in 40 years.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

(L-r) Marv Goodyk, Dale Poel, Rich Sytsma, Larry Baar, and Tom Ackerman.



Chaplain (Captain) Richard Hill tuned in to synod from Afghanistan.

## Chaplain Tunes in to Synod from Afghanistan

Tuning in to Synod 2012 was so important to Chaplain (Captain) Richard Hill that he started weeks earlier getting security clearances to be able to watch the webcast from Afghanistan.

Hill, who is a member of New Life Christian Reformed Church in Spring, Texas, is in the middle of a deployment in southern Ghazni Province as the Battalion Chaplain in the 82nd Airborne Division, based out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

Because of his deployment, Hill was unable to attend the annual chaplains' conference that precedes synod. "I wanted to 'attend' synod via webcast so I could in some way participate in denominational activities this year," he said.

But it wasn't as simple as booting up his computer. "There is not an Internet structure out here, so things that eat up a lot of bandwidth are restricted."

Hill had to submit a request to be allowed video streaming, which went through his battalion, up to his brigade, and then on up to the general in charge of Regional Command (East), Afghanistan. "It took a few weeks, and then a little testing to make sure my account was properly set up," he said. "I was allowed this temporary exception because the Army takes very seriously the need for a chaplain to be in good standing with his or her endorser. Had I not been deployed, my commander would have sent me to the chaplain's conference and Synod 2012."

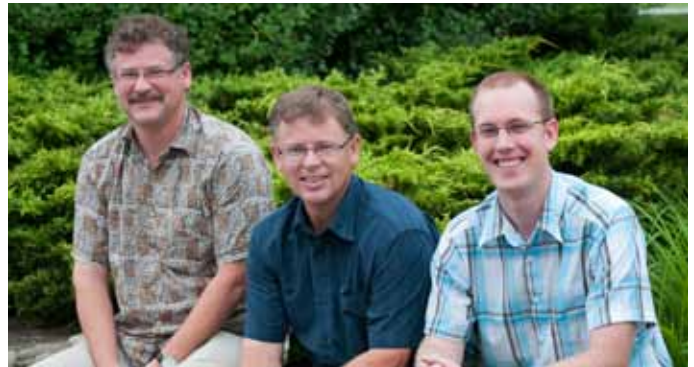
—Gayla R. Postma

**Rev. Joel Boot, executive director:** "I don't even know who I am right now."



## Mother and Son Delegates Attend Synod

In a synod first, a mother and son attended Synod 2102 as delegates. Elder Jenny Douma came from Classis Chatham, and her son, Rev. John Douma, came from Classis Grandville. This was Jenny's first synod and John's third. —Ryan Struyk



## Brothers, Son-in-Law Attend Synod

Synod was a family affair for three men. Rev. William Koopmans (center) attended synod as the chairman of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC).

His brother George Koopmans (left) was a delegate from Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan.

William's son-in-law Albert Postma (right) was a delegate from Classis Lake Superior. —Ryan Struyk



Number of times the webcast was viewed during Synod 2012

Synod delegates and young adults prayed together.



## re:kindle Encourages Young Adult Leaders

**S**ometimes I feel like I'm the only young person who sticks around my church," said Joya VanderMeulen, 24, from Waterdown, Ontario.

She's not alone.

"Our generation is leaving the church in numbers that are unprecedented," said Rev. Mark Hilbelink, 28, pastor of Sunrise Community CRC in Austin, Texas.

Hilbelink was one of the organizers of re:kindle, a leadership summit for young adults in the Christian Reformed Church. There were 68 young adults at re:kindle, ages 18 to 31, most of whom were nominated by local pastors and churches to attend after showing leadership in their home churches.

"What we are doing here does not have a lot of precedent," explained Hilbelink. "[We're] gathering a group of young adults who love the church, who want to see the church make it to the next generation, who want to grow in leadership in the church."

However, he said, many young adults, even pastors, feel depressed and burned out. "It is a challenge, and it is difficult [for young adults] to be in such a minority, not only in our churches, but in our denomination."

During the summit, the group gathered to worship, listen to speakers, watch short films, and discuss issues facing young adults. Then they divided up into small groups for discussion and devotions each night.

"It's encouraging to know that the people in my denomination aren't just statistics or cold numbers on a page, but they are people, and God works in all of our lives," said Miguel Valdez, 19, from Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Jenica Groot-Nibbelink, from Dorchester, Ontario, appreciated the genuine conversation. "I wasn't expecting the honesty and transparency that they've had, but I was really grateful for hearing other people voicing that frustration too," she said.



**Rev. Mark Hilbelink: We're gathering young adults who want to grow in leadership in the church.**

The young adults heard several speakers on topics ranging from young adult leadership to cultural gaps to dating relationships. One speaker encouraged attendees to persevere in the church.



### Synod delegates and young adults talked in small groups.

"What I've really gotten out of this weekend is to not give up on your church just because you don't feel like it's convenient for you," said Holly Dekkema, 18, from Newmarket, Ontario.

This dedication to the church is important to re:kindle leaders, but finding acceptance of young adult leadership in churches takes time.

"We feel like one of the major impediments is that churches just aren't talking about this," said Hilbelink.

That was one of the reasons Synod 2011 approved the plan for this event. The plan originated with the youth observers who attended Synod 2010, including Amy Vander Vliet, 27.

The original plan called for some kind of a synod conference for young adults. "[We] wanted to give young adults the chance to do something related to synod," Vander Vliet said. In 2011, what was proposed was a triennial young adult summit overlapping with synod in order to provide a visible voice for the young adults and spark interest in church government.

Each participant paid a \$100 fee and paid for their transportation, and the denomination supplied food, lodging, and materials, using \$30,000 of gifts designated to the Leadership Exchange.

However, once the planning got started, the aim started to shift.

"We wanted people to show up, and our common sense was that they wouldn't pay to show up for a junior synod," explained Hilbelink. "We were sitting there like 'so, are we really expecting people to come to this?'"

Vander Vliet explained, "We realized we couldn't get interest in a mini-synod immediately.

If you haven't been listened to locally, why would synod listen? We had to backtrack."

Some attendees *wanted* to discuss the issues before Synod 2012.

John Horlings, 20, was especially interested in the creation stewardship report coming to synod. "I was talking to one [delegate], and one of the big issues is the environment," he said. "It would have really been cool to see that conversation and offer a youth perspective."

Others questioned the message of encouraging participants not to give up on the church. Aaron Mamuyac, 23, also from Port St. Lucie, said, "Most people here are heavily involved in church."

Despite the change in direction, attendees at re:kindle did have an opportunity to talk with delegates to Synod 2012. On the first evening of synod, delegates and young adults divided into small groups to share their concerns and pray for the church.

"It's really nice having the chance to have meals with synod representatives and really talk," said Horlings.

The young adults were excited to continue the discussion in their home churches and bring more young adults into the movement.

"I plan to take this weekend and do it on a smaller scale back home, specifically with mentoring and learning new strategies with young people," said David Bultman, from Kalamazoo, Mich.

"I thought it was going to be a lot more like synod, that we were going to be having a lot more discussion with synod. I thought that's why we were here," said Laura Vandervliet, 22, from Guelph, Ontario.

Despite that, she was still excited about the event. "God showed up this weekend and did amazing things. There are so many young adults who didn't have this experience and are still struggling with the church. I want them to know what is going on—and that we are starting to have a voice."

—Ryan Struyk



Caption: (Back row, l-r) Tim Dykstra, Cedric Parsels, Travis Green; (center l-r) Kyla Smits, John Kloosterman; (front l-r) David Groen, Jenn McIntyre

## Young Adults Represent Views at Synod

This year, seven men and women brought a young adult perspective to Synod 2012.

Young adult representatives do not vote at synod, but they provide a young adult perspective on the business before synod by speaking to delegates in committees and plenary session.

—Ryan Struyk

# NEWS SYNOD 2012

Elder Rod Hugen, Classis Arizona, functioned as the poet laureate of Synod 2012. A video and the text of his poem are posted on our website at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).



Synod 2012 had a festive air when celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CRWRC and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Disability Concerns.



Delegates enjoyed outdoor breaks when weather permitted.

If technological disaster struck, delegates called on the 'blue shirts,' IT staff who were ready to assist.







Someone brought along his bobblehead doll of Queen Elizabeth.



A series of paintings called "The Creator's Sacrifice," by native Canadian Ovide Bighetty, was on display during Synod 2012.



The synod prayer room was always open.



David Yi found time to play soccer.



Tim Toeset (left) and Doug Fakkema found a moment to relax.

Some delegates found time to watch soccer.



### Specialized Ministries: Equipping God's People

by *Chris Meehan*

Dan Spelt sitting at the foot of the cross.

SAMUEL MADSEN

**R**ev. Mark Stephenson recalls how the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) responded quickly and forcefully in 2010 when Canadian lawmakers were considering a “right-to-die” bill.

Stephenson is director of Disability Concerns, one of the denomination’s Specialized Ministries.

His office helped to initiate the response after learning of the proposed measure, which would have legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia in Canada.

The CRC needed to speak out, says Stephenson, because the legislation cut to the very heart of his ministry—and that of the church itself—to protect the dignity of all of God’s children.

His office urgently wanted to contact leaders of Canadian congregations to have their members get in touch with their

lawmakers. But it didn’t have the resources to do that, he says.

Around that time, though, leaders of the Specialized Ministries had been meeting together to share aspects of their ministries, and Stephenson knew that the CRC’s Office of Social Justice (OSJ) could help. Along with the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue in Canada, OSJ is deeply involved in matters of social justice and regularly interacts with lawmakers.

Peter Vander Meulen, director of OSJ, says his office readily pitched in, helping put together an “action alert” that was quickly distributed to churches and individuals all over Canada, with a message that read, in part:

As Christians, we’re called to be advocates for those who have been robbed of a voice. Our leaders need to hear from

Christians whose interest is justice, and who wish to see government use its authority to ensure that all people flourish.

In the end, the Canadian Parliament rejected the bill by a vote of 228 to 59.

No one knows for sure whether the denomination’s efforts swayed lawmakers, but it was an example of an initiative that started in 2008 to have Specialized Ministries work more closely together.

Before that, the Specialized Ministries had been stand-alone ministries, quietly serving the church in their own ways. But several years ago, denominational leaders asked them to sit down and discuss areas of work and outreach they had in common.

As they met, they came to see that they shared a great deal, especially a core value.

“We have increasingly discovered that we have important things in common,

You add.  
God multiplies.



Disability Advocates responding to legislation.

and one of the strongest common themes that runs through many of our ministries is justice—social justice,” says Vander Meulen.

As a result, the ministries “are more and more doing things together rather than alone.”

The action alert, he says, made sure the voice of the denomination was heard on an important issue. It also underscored the joint mission of OSJ, Disability Concerns, and other CRCNA ministries to assist churches and others to “treat everyone as equal,” regardless of their abilities.

Besides Disability Concerns and OSJ, Specialized Ministries includes Race Relations, Pastor-Church Relations, Safe Church Ministry, and Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, the Candidacy Committee, the CRC Loan Fund, and the Classis Renewal Ministry Team were asked to be part of the effort as well.

Rev. Esteban Lugo, director of the Office of Race Relations, welcomes the spirit of cooperation he sees unfolding as leaders of the ministries have met. “We appreciate it when

other ministries of the CRC work with us to bring about racial reconciliation among people in our churches and among the churches themselves,” Lugo says.

As they have met, says Vander Meulen, he has come to see more fully how the other ministries operate. For instance, he has a new appreciation for how Safe Church Ministry “is deeply concerned with ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are surrounded by a culture of protection and safety.”

Led by Bonnie Nicholas, Safe Church Ministry works in many areas, especially by providing support and advocacy for people who have been abused by leaders in their churches.

Safe Church Ministry, says Nicholas, has a network of trained Safe Church Advocates who provide support to those who have been hurt in different ways by the church. The ministry also helps churches across the denomination establish safe church guidelines.

In addition, the ministry provides educational and outreach materials on such »

## Uniformed and Reformed

A strong background in the Reformed worldview, with its focus on “every square inch” of creation being under the sovereignty of God, is especially helpful for military chaplains, says Rev. Ronald Klimp, director of the Christian Reformed Church’s Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

Several military chaplains, including former chaplaincy director Rev. Herm Keizer Jr., have held high positions in the Pentagon.

Col. Jack Van Dyken Jr., the recently retired command chaplain for the U.S. Army-Pacific Command, is another example.

As command chaplain, Van Dyken oversaw the work of about 170 senior chaplains who serve with military units assigned to Pacific Rim countries from Japan to New Zealand and in countries across Southeast Asia.

He says the education he received at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary helped him to understand, accept, and live out the Reformed faith. This Reformed worldview provided a faith perspective that helped him time and again as he addressed issues that come up in pluralistic settings like the military.

“It is very exciting to work with soldiers who come from so many places and faiths. But some of them don’t want to hear about Jesus, or they are atheists,” he says.

In responding to them, he tries to gauge how best to pray. “We do all of our praying in the name of Jesus, and some chaplains believe that is the only way to do it. But there are so many ways to use the name of Jesus without offending someone.”

Van Dyken says he can pray in “Your Most Holy Name,” or in the “Name Above Names,” or in the “Name of Our Lord.” “I am still praying in Jesus’ name without offending Jews or Muslims or even some Christians,” he says.

Besides the military, CRC chaplains work in hospitals and hospice-care facilities, in industrial settings, in correctional facilities, and as clinical pastoral care supervisors. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Ron Klimp (left) and Jack Van Dyken



Participants at a Safe Church conference check out a display.

topics as teen dating, focusing on preventing the types of behavior that can injure others.

Lis Van Harten, program director of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and Sustaining Congregational Excellence, says she has learned a great deal as the Specialized Ministries group has been meeting and working toward additional ways to partner in ministry.

“We’ve been able to share what we’re working on and what new ideas we’re thinking about. This sharing allows us to collaborate in ways that haven’t happened in the past—often because we didn’t know what the other ministries were up to,” she says.

This spring, her office partnered with Pastor-Church Relations, directed by Rev. Norm Thomsma. His office often works with churches in crisis, but is increasingly trying to find ways to prevent problems before they occur.

So Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and Pastor-Church Relations held a “learning event” for pastors and their spouses. The event gave pastors and spouses a chance to gather and discuss a range of topics related to building and sustaining healthy relationships.

One pastor who attended the event said that he and his wife returned home feeling refreshed and eager to move ahead, having discovered additional ways to cre-

ate and maintain a healthy life and vital spirit in their church.

As they’ve met over the last few years, Specialized Ministries leaders have come up with a new working name for their ministries: Church Resource Group.

It is not likely that the group will become one ministry administratively, but denominational leaders and the Board of Trustees are encouraging the ministries to continue to cooperate wherever possible, says Stephenson, who serves as facilitator of the meetings.

As part of the CRC’s ongoing Task Force on Culture and Renewal, denominational leaders “are looking at changes in how we are currently structured. How that will end up has not been decided yet,” says Stephenson.

Another example of cooperation that the ministries have supported is a program that grows out of the restorative justice movement. Promoted by OSJ and the Centre for Public Dialogue, restorative justice offers a fresh approach for people to follow Christ’s command to seek reconciliation and unity.

Restorative justice is especially about the biblical teaching of forgiveness, but not in a way that simply gives lip service to the word, says Rev. John Lamsma, U.S. director for the Restorative Justice ministry in the CRC. It is about the business of changing the hearts, not necessarily the minds, of people and congregations.

“Its purpose is to help people and congregations learn how to be practitioners of restoration,” adds Vander Meulen. “This year [Specialized Ministries] jointly sponsored a one-day training for leaders in the CRC denominational offices and for regional representatives of Safe Church Ministry.”

Specialized Ministries also plans to sponsor a longer three-day training session at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario, on the topic “Learning How to Grow Restorative Churches.”

“It’s these kinds of programs—programs that cut across our narrower ministry goals and reinforce them all—that we see equipping congregations to live in justice and love, to truly be salt and light in their communities and in our wider world,” says Vander Meulen.

While each remains committed to its own special area of ministry, says Ste-



phenson, they are increasingly driven by a vision expressed in a video presentation made to Synod 2010: “The Specialized Ministries are a voice of the Christian Reformed Church as together we create a dialogue for change that reconciles people and restores communities to God’s redemptive plan.” ■



Chris Meehan is news and media manager for CRC Communications.

You add.  
God multiplies.

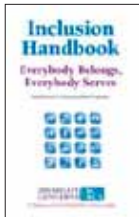
# A Look at the CRC's Specialized Ministries

## Office of Disability Concerns

Rev. Mark Stephenson, director  
616-224-0844 or 888-463-0272  
[disabilityconcerns@crcna.org](mailto:disabilityconcerns@crcna.org)



Disability Concerns helps churches to end the isolation and disconnectedness of persons with disabilities and their families. It also nurtures the spiritual lives of people with disabilities so that they become professing and active members of their churches, and encourages the gifts of people with disabilities so that they can serve God fully in their churches.



## Safe Church Ministry

Bonnie Nicholas, director  
616-224-0735  
[safechurchministry@crcna.org](mailto:safechurchministry@crcna.org)



Safe Church Ministry works to make sure that all CRC congregations become places where people are safe from any threat of abuse, the value of each person is honored, and relationships are open, honest, and respectful. Safe Church Ministry also provides resources to help congregations make every effort to prevent abuse and to respond effectively with compassion and justice when abuse has occurred.

## Race Relations

Esteban Lugo, director  
800-272-5125  
[elugo@crcna.org](mailto:elugo@crcna.org)



Synod 2004 approved a statement of vision and a revised mandate for Race Relations, paving the way for it to "initiate and provide effective and collaborative training" for the purpose of dismantling racism in all its forms. Synod 2010 adopted motions to "reaffirm its commitment to ethnic diversity in the CRC" and to call for a yearly report from Race Relations "on the status of denominational efforts to address issues of ethnic diversity and racial justice."

## Office of Social Justice

Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator  
616-224-0807  
[pvandermeulen@crcna.org](mailto:pvandermeulen@crcna.org)



The Office of Social Justice is a ministry of the CRC that responds to God's call to let justice flow like a river in our personal and communal lives, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty. It educates CRC members, encourages and supports their engagement in social justice issues, and occasionally is involved in direct advocacy.

## The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager  
905-336-2920  
[publicdialogue@crcna.ca](mailto:publicdialogue@crcna.ca)



The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue is mandated to present a prophetic witness that demonstrates Jesus' ministry of justice to public officials today. Its work is based, whenever possible, on the official positions of the Christian Reformed Church, as determined by synod, and it follows particular guidelines for submissions to government. The Centre for Public Dialogue opened an office in Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, in 2010.

## Pastor-Church Relations

Norm Thomasma, director  
616-224-0764  
[nthomasma@crcna.org](mailto:nthomasma@crcna.org)  
Cecil VanNiejehuis  
616-224-0746  
[cvanniejehuis@crcna.org](mailto:cvanniejehuis@crcna.org)



Pastor-Church Relations advocates for healthy relationships between congregations, pastors, and staff; manages ministerial and church profiles in the pastor search process; oversees the credentialing program for nonordained staff; endorses Specialized Transitional Ministers and helps congregations obtain their services; provides consultation in times of transition or crisis; and oversees the Continuing Education Fund for pastors and church staff.



## Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Ron Klimp, director  
616-224-0733  
[rklimp@crcna.org](mailto:rklimp@crcna.org)

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry supports and develops chaplaincy by recruiting and assisting prospective candidates through their specialized training, endorsing chaplains and their ministry, supporting chaplains and their families, maintaining links between chaplains and the church through conferences and newsletters, and promoting chaplaincy ministry in the church and community. ■

[MORE ONLINE](#)

## Like a Father

*“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him” (Ps. 103:13).*

Compassion was not something that came to me naturally. Parenting provided me with opportunities to practice it—often. But becoming a grandparent gave me the greatest opportunity of all—particularly with one of our grandchildren.

It’s not that I love her more than the others. She was born with a rare, non-life-threatening, but very difficult syndrome. Just learning that was a painfully long road for our family; dealing with the frequent appointments and treatments and surgeries it requires draws out of me compassion I did not know I was capable of.

I would gladly take her malady myself if it were possible. My heart goes out to her. My arms reach for her. I ache for her. I have compassion for her in the deepest sense of that word—I *suffer with her*.

All of that has made God’s compassion even dearer to me. Just as I have compassion for my children and grandchildren, God has compassion for me. God feels for me. God reaches for me. God hurts for me. God loves me. And, in Jesus Christ, God actually says, “I would do anything to take it from you and onto myself.”

And then he does it! In Christ he heals my brokenness, and yours, “for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Ps. 103:14).

Let me suggest that God exhibits his heartfelt compassion in part through the Specialized Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Think of it this way.

“God’s heart goes out to you and me. His arms reach toward us.”

God sees the brokenness of some of our relationships as pastors and congregants, and through the ministry of *Pastor-Church Relations* seeks to reconcile and relieve and heal that brokenness.

God sees the hurts we sometimes inflict on one another and endure from one another, and through *Safe Church Ministry* seeks to restore what is broken and prevent further injury.

God knows the fear we have of those who are different from us and the pain that we cause one another, and through the ministry of *Race Relations* seeks to make one what never should have been otherwise.

God understands the loneliness in the workplace and the anxiety that resides in hospitals and the anger that is locked up in prisons, and through the ministry of *Chaplaincy and Care* seeks to befriend and comfort and soothe what ails us.

God, in Jesus Christ, voluntarily disabled himself, gave up some of his deity (what else does it mean that he “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”?) and through the ministry of *Disability Concerns* seeks to show the value of each of us to all of us.

God sees a world broken from injustice and hungry for bread, and through the ministry of *Social Justice and Hunger Action* seeks to show us how to stand up for justice and offer food in Jesus’ name.

In these ways, and many others, the “Father of compassion” shows his love to us and through us. I did not learn compassion only by walking alongside my granddaughter. I learned it through the heavenly Father who “has compassion on his children.”

God’s heart goes out to you and me. His arms reach toward us. And then he graciously allows us to be God-like, in our own personal ways, and through the ministries of the church. ■



ISTOCKPHOTO



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

You add.  
God multiplies.

## God's Word: A Lifeline for Cubans

Despite harassment and political pressure against Christians in Cuba, the church there continues to grow. But discipleship is crucial to help new believers grow in faith.

To help meet this need, the Spanish team of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has produced and shipped 8,000 *Cada Dia* (*Every Day*) devotional booklets to be distributed by a network of believers in Cuba.

"I am very happy now, since I just finished reading the *Cada Dia* you sent," wrote Manuel. "I believe it is a gift from God that I am able to read these messages."



Cuban woman reading a copy of *Cada Dia*.

"The Cuba project was funded by several Presbyterian partner churches in Brazil," notes Rev. Guillermo Serrano, BTGMI Spanish ministry leader. "They wanted to put *Cada Dia*

in the hands and, more important, in the hearts, of seekers and new believers in Cuba."

Denise, a young woman who has contracted HIV, also received a copy of the devotional booklet. She sent this note of thanks to the BTGMI Spanish team:

"I write these few lines to let you know how wonderful I feel each time I read the *Cada Dia*. I feel stronger in my faith and ready to face each new day. I pray every night and sometimes reread the devotional, which I thank you for sending every month. I am greatly moved and touched by them. May God bless you and may you feel his presence surrounding you."

BTGMI's Spanish program *La Hora de la Reforma* (*The Hour of Reformation*) beams into Cuba over shortwave radio stations many times every day. Responses keep coming in from seekers and listeners who are searching for answers wherever they can. The ministry replies by sending the *Cada Dia* devotional guide.

"We don't know when the political situation is going to change in Cuba," Rev. Serrano adds. "We only know that we have a mandate: to continue preaching the gospel and lead people to our Savior's feet." ■

—Nancy VanderMeer,  
Back to God Ministries  
International

## Basketball Standout Highlights Her Brother's 'Inner Gifting'

Many young women would gratefully take a bow after being honored for accomplishments such as these:

In 2012, Carissa Verkaik's name was etched in the Calvin history books for her accomplishments on and off the basketball court.

- During her junior year, Verkaik was named a Capital One Division III Academic All-American, becoming just the second person in Calvin women's basketball history to earn that distinction. The All-American honor recognizes an athlete's achievements both on the court and in the classroom.
- In 2012, Verkaik helped lead the women's basketball team to a 25-2



Carissa Verkaik handles the ball during a game.

record. She was honored as the Division III News Player of the Year, the only Calvin women's basketball player ever to be so honored, and subsequently named as Division III All-American.

- An elementary education major who will be a senior this year, Verkaik has maintained a high grade point average. Last year she was named to the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association Honor Roll.
- Verkaik is noted for serving as a volunteer with the Special Olympics

and with Youth Unlimited, a non-profit ministry dedicated to youth.

But Verkaik takes very little credit for her gifts. She points to those of her brother, Chad, who has an intellectual disability, saying Chad has been a great inspiration to her.

"Growing up with him kind of put a passion in my heart to help kids," she said.

She considers her brother a singularly gifted person. "It's all in your perspective on what a gift is. People often don't recognize the inner gifting," she said. ■

—Myrna Anderson, Calvin College

## Toilets and Tillage

**H**ow can your bathroom habits improve the quality and quantity of the food you produce?

Many families in Mali asked themselves this question after the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and its local partner, ODES, first talked to them about EcoSan latrines.

Several people already had learned the value of “deep-pit latrines” and how they reduced the spread of disease. But EcoSan latrines were different. They require a

much shallower pit than traditional latrines and enable communities to safely compost human manure into organic fertilizer.

Although skeptical, people agreed to use the latrines. After a year and a half, noticing marked differences in their crop yields, they were eager to learn more.

Many people in the developing world do not use toilets or latrines, instead relieving themselves behind bushes or trees. This, in turn, has increased the spread of disease, especially when waste products seep into the local water supply.



The chief of the village of Boura shows off a new eco-friendly latrine.

To combat this sanitation issue, many nonprofit organizations, including CRWRC, have encouraged the communities where they work to build and use deep-pit latrines. These latrines improve hygiene, contain waste, and limit the spread of germs. When a pit is full, it is covered over and a new latrine built.

But CRWRC sees a better solution in the EcoSan latrines.

“While the idea may sound bizarre, it is actually quite ingenious,” said Jan Disselkoen, a CRWRC representative. “By adding a handful of wood ash and a handful of soil to the pit after each use, flies are repelled, diseases are destroyed, and there is no foul odor.”

Each family digs two pits. The average family of five fills a pit in six months. When that pit is full, the family moves to the second pit.

The first pit is covered and left for six more months for the human manure to compost. At the end, the rich compost is removed and used on the family’s field or garden. Since the second pit should then be full, the latrine is returned to the first pit and the cycle continues.

CRWRC has been promoting EcoSan latrines for several years in African countries, and communities have seen huge boosts in the production of crops.

Even in years of scarce rain, the EcoSan latrine has provided the compost people might not have otherwise had.

As they introduce this program in other areas, CRWRC representatives are asking people to keep the promotion of this program in their prayers. ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, CRWRC Communications

## Guelph Students Meet Outdoors for Worship, Rain or Shine

**A** group of students meets for worship every Friday at 7:30 a.m. in a grassy area in the middle of the University of Guelph campus. Sometimes huddling under a cold rain or shivering in snow showers, they’re there every week, praying and celebrating communion together.



University of Guelph students meet outside for worship and communion on Friday mornings during the school year.

“We worship outside because it’s a sacrifice,” says Jamie VanderBerg, campus pastor at the Christian Reformed Home Missions-supported campus ministry at the University of Guelph in Ontario. “There is meaning in sacrifice.”

VanderBerg has been leading the weekly 45-minute worship gathering of sleepy-eyed students for the past two years. The group normally opens with prayer and a time of praise, followed by reading a litany. VanderBerg includes litanies from different Christian traditions because the students come from a range of Christian faith backgrounds.

After the litany, there’s a chance for more prayer, followed by communion led by VanderBerg. Students then form small groups for a period of intimate prayer.

After worship, they usually go inside to have breakfast.

The Friday gathering attracts up to 35 students every week.

“We keep doing this outside because the students want to do it,” VanderBerg remarks. “Snow, rain, or sun, they really prefer it this way. Their dedication has been a wonderful blessing to the ministry.” ■

—Ben VanHouten, Christian Reformed Home Missions



You add.  
God multiplies.

## NIV Bible Group Meets at Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary was privileged to host a meeting of Bible translators, publishers, and technologists.



Among the group were Scott Bolinder, executive vice president of Biblica (formerly International Bible Society); Doug Moo, Wessner Chair of Biblical Studies at Wheaton College and Chair of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) for the New International Version of the Bible; and Michael Williams, professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, and secretary of CBT.

The group met to discuss current efforts at marking the NIV with XML coding. This coding would enable current technologies to integrate the NIV much more easily into a variety of applications, both electronic and print, while ensuring that its form remains consistent.

As a result, the work of Bible publishers, Bible translators, and Bible distributors throughout the world will be much more efficient, making the Bible more accessible to more people—one more way the church is using contemporary resources to engage the world with the unchanging good news of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is the bestselling book in history, and the NIV is the bestselling modern English-language version year after year. More than 400 million copies have been sold since its first full publication in 1978. It is also the bestselling Bible eBook. The NIV is easy to understand, yet rich with the detail found in the original languages. ■

—Michael Williams,  
Calvin Theological Seminary

## Crossing Cultures at Home

As missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions, we typically have three-year rotations. After two-and-a-half years on the field, we spend the remaining six months doing ministry and reporting to our partner churches and individuals in North America.

This year our family started home service in February, traveling weekly to one of our 18 partner churches and letting them know how God connects and equips the Nigerian leaders and organizations with whom we work for positive transformation.

During these visits, we also listen to church members talk about their experiences. They often highlight how “anywhere is everywhere” nowadays. In Sioux City, Iowa, one church member told us, “I’ve lived in Kenya before. I’ve met more Somalians here in Sioux City than I did during our time in East Africa.”

Speaking of other cross-cultural experiences, a member from Sanborn CRC in Iowa said, “I felt uncomfortable when they kept trying to hug us.” “They didn’t like our food!” said another.

These responses and others remind us that as

Christian Reformed congregations in North America experience increasing diversity, it is important that we continue to gain awareness for cross-cultural communication.

So along with listening in our partner churches, we encourage a rich dialogue by presenting a cross-cultural simulation.



We explain how, as guests, we follow the lead of our Nigerian collaborators, walking together in mission. Respectful cross-cultural communication—how and what we say verbally and nonverbally—can strengthen or weaken relationships.

We ask church members, young and old, to divide into four groups, each receiving a list of cultural traits unique to a specific ethnic group. Each group has the same task—saying hello, saying goodbye, finding an item of beauty, and sharing or receiving food.

The fun gets underway when the groups representing different cultures visit each other and move through their differences—often with courage and humor as well as anxiety and caution.

As they visit, one culture may say that they expect direct eye contact, while the other considers such directness offensive.

People in one culture may hug strangers, while the other culture avoids that type of hugging, which can then draw a response from the initial culture.

Afterward, we discuss the phrase “it’s not wrong, it’s just different,” and reflect on how we can look through the lens of Scripture to discern faithful responses, rather than pushing one uniform way when responding to cultural differences. ■

—Mike and Megan  
Ribbens,  
Christian Reformed  
World Missions

# ADS

**Deadlines:** September issue is 8/6/2012. Details online.

**Prices:** Most ads are \$0.33<sup>US</sup> 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 \$22<sup>US</sup> 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

### Retirement



**1ST OOSTBURG CRC** of WI, announces the retirement of Dr. Leslie Kuiper after 24 years of faithful ministry in the congregation and 38 years in the denomination. He was deeply involved in Christian education and missions, Calvin and Dorst board service, classis and synodical leadership,

and local ministerial counseling. May God continue to richly bless Les and Marlene as they have been a blessing to others.

**FIRST CUTLERVILLE CRC** celebrates Pastor Ken VanWyk's 40 years of service in Gods Kingdom. We praise God for Pastor Ken and his wife Sandy's service to the church and pray God will continue to use their gifts in their retirement years.

### Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **Aminah Al-Attas Bradford** has now completed her 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 **Kenneth Kruithoff** 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

**CLASSICAL STUDENT AID** - CLASSIS NORTHERN ILLINOIS is now accepting student aid applications from students pursuing word-related

ministries. Contact committee chair, Mark van Stee, 5130 Wolf Rd., Western Springs IL 60558 (email [office@crcws.org](mailto:office@crcws.org)). Application deadline July 31. 708-246-4638

### Meetings of Classis

**CLASSIS HOLLAND** will meet in regular session Thursday, October 4, 2012 at 3:00 PM at Park CRC, Holland, MI. Agenda items are due by August 16, 2012 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk. Email: [louwerse@macatawa.org](mailto:louwerse@macatawa.org), FAX: 616-494-6054.

## Congregational

### Church's 125th Anniversary

**OAKLAND CHRISTIAN REF CHURCH** in Zeeland, MI is celebrating it's 125th anniversary. Many events are planned celebrating we are rooted in faith growing in God's grace. Many former pastor's and sons of the congregation will help us celebrate. Check out our website: [oaklandcrc.org/pages/default.aspx](http://oaklandcrc.org/pages/default.aspx) to see our schedule of events and join us in celebrating our awesome God.

## Announcements

**COMMISSION INVITES COMMENTS** Kuyper College seeks comments from the public about the College in preparation for its periodic evaluation by its regional accrediting agency. The College will undergo evaluation visit November 5 to November 7, 2012, by a team representing the Commission on Institutes of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The team will review the institution's ongoing ability to meet the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements. The public is invited to send comments regarding Kuyper College to: The Higher Learning Commission, 230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500, Chicago,

IL 60604-1413 Phone: 800.621.7440 / 312.263.0456; Fax: 312.263.7462; [Info@hlcommission.org](mailto:Info@hlcommission.org). Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Only signed comments are forwarded to the institution. All comments must include the name and address of the person(s) providing the comments. All comments must be received by August 27, 2012.

## Birthdays

### 95th Birthday

**LAWRENCE BOUMA**, 1950 So. Mountain Ave., #2021, Ontario, CA 91762, will celebrate his 95th birthday on July 19th. His children, Dick & Maureen Bouma, Larry & Marj Bouma, Sharon (Tony, deceased) DeBie, Kathy & Rich VanderTuig, Bonnie & Pete VanderFeer, Gwenny & Gerard Slegers, Susie & Steve Whitten, and also his 25 grandchildren and 48 great-grandchildren, all praise God for His faithfulness.

### 90th Birthday

**GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS:** Dr. Tom Bardolph, Pam Eiten, and Jack Bardolph give thanks to God for 90 years of blessings in the life of their mother, **Gertrude Bardolph**. Cards may be sent to the birthday girl at 145 Columbia Ave, Apt 318, Holland, MI 49423. Friends and relatives are invited to an Open House on Saturday, July 7 from 2-4pm in the Friendship Room at Raybrook Manor, Grand Rapids, MI.

**JEANETTE (VANKOEVERING) DYK** will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 5, 2012. Her address is 7358 Pinegrove Dr., Jenison, Michigan 49428. Her children Kenneth and Barbara Dyk, Gloria and Ronald Kragt, Judi and Kenneth Woodwyk and Yvonne and Donald VanderHeide, 12 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren all wish her a blessed 90th birthday. We thank God for her life and for her influence in our lives.

**JOHN KOOY** of Meadowgreens Retirement Community, 301 Homestead Blvd, Lynden, WA 98264, will celebrate 90 years on July 2. John and his wife Dena have 6 children and spouses, 13 grand children, and 9 great-grandchildren. Thank God for many blessings!

**JOHN G. STOB**, Elmhurst, IL, celebrated his 90th birthday (June 23, 2012) with gratitude to God for His faithfulness. His wife Elaine, 10 children and spouses, 30 grandchildren & spouses and 16 great-grandchildren thank God for the blessing he is in our lives. [jgs110@comcast.net](mailto:jgs110@comcast.net). Psalm 27:1

**ADRIAN "ADE" VAN SLEDRIGHT** of Grand Rapids, MI, will celebrate his 90th birthday Dv on August 3. Friends and family are invited to an Open House on Friday, Aug 3 from 2-4 at East Paris CRC in the "Branch" bldg. Address: 2804 Bridgeside DR SE, Caledonia, MI 49316. Thank God for his many years and service to others and his Lord.

**COBY VANTHOF** will be celebrating her 90th birthday on July 21, 2012. Lex and Kim, Joanne and Art, Martin and Nancy and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren wish her God's blessing on her special day and in the year to come.

### 85th Birthday

**HELEN NOORT** (née Davids) celebrated her 85th birthday May 22, 2012. Her family praises the Lord and thanks Him for these many years of blessings.

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**KINGMA**, Harvey & Bernice, 1450 E. Fulton, Grand Rapids, MI.49503 Praise God for 70 yrs. of marriage on June 9, 2012. 6 children, 18 gr children, 29 gr. gr children



Partnering with Local Ministry Leaders  
[www.crwmm.org/localleaders](http://www.crwmm.org/localleaders)



Christian Reformed  
World Missions

**VANDER LUGT** William and Kathryn (Zylman) July 18; Redland, California. Children: Gene Vander Lugt (deceased), Judith Vander Lugt, Joan (Leonard) De Vries. Four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren. God is Good!

#### 65th Anniversary

**SPAAN** Howard & Margaret, Beaverton, OR - June 27. Family: Harlow, Radall & Betty, Curtis & Beth, (Rebecca & Andrew, Dennis, James) Scott.

**STEKETEE** Milton & Gladys (Dyke) 136 E. 24th St. Holland, MI 49423, along with their 3 children and spouses, 6 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren, give thanks to God for 65 years of marriage on July 31.

#### 60th Anniversary

**BOSMA** Alvin & Estelle, July 10, 10549 Lynn Dr., Orland Park, IL 60467. Children: Rich & Carol, Joyce & Don Beenes, Judi Jasperse, Jane & Lonny Staal, 10 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren. We praise God for His love and faithfulness.



**COOPER**, Art & Eleanor 33844 Avenue C, Yucaipa, CA 92399, celebrated 60 years of marriage on June 25, 2012. Sandy & Bill, Jim & Anna, Jody & Ed, Holly & Bryan, 11 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren praise God

for their example of His love and faithfulness.

**DE BOER** Peter and Joy (Kosters) of Grand Rapids, MI, June 19, 1952. Congratulations and love from your children & grandchildren!

**DEVOS**, Jack and Rosemary will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 19. They have three children, eight grand children and three great grand children.

**NYHOFF** Kenneth Merle & Rose will celebrate 60 years of marriage on July 24, 2012. Their children Ken (Beth) Nyhoff, Mike Nyhoff, Greg (Cindy) Nyhoff, Kathy Nyhoff and 7 grandchildren thank God for his blessings on their love and faithfulness to Him, each other, and us. Congratulations may be sent to 610 E. Ross St., Downs, KS 67437.

#### 50th Anniversary

**CRAWFORD** Jack & Paula (LaFleur) - 142 Country Club Dr; Whitinsville, MA. Family: Sharon & David Morrow; Geoff & Rachel Tanham; Dana & Leah Mathews & grandchildren have been blessed with 50 years of marriage on June 9th.

**HUTT** Gary & Roberta. 4217 S Tenfel Ln., Spokane WA 99223. Celebrate with us at an Open House Sat. August 4, 1- 4 pm at Immanuel CRC, 8302 Normandy Ave, Burbank, IL. To God be the glory!

**KRYGSHELD** John and Karen, 848 Bluejay Way, Dyer IN 46311 family: Jack and Valerie, Jeff and Darcy (Lindsey, Jared) Tim and Sheila (Jenna, Jessica, Nathan, Nolan) Dan and Beaulah (Diya) Great is thy faithfulness!

**PRAAMSMA** Riemer and Joyce (Vanderzwaag) are Blessed with 50 years of marriage on June 9, 2012.

### Obituaries

**BAUMAN** Harold, 83 years, went to be with his Lord on May 9, 2012. Formerly of Lynden and Seattle, WA; died Grand Rapids, MI. Survived by his wife Wilma; children Debi (Peter) Visser, Jim (Erica) Bauman, Ruth (Jim) Lingbeek, Irene (Ron) DeBoer, Ken (Eva) Bauman; 13 grandchildren; 2 great granddaughters.

**BROUWER** Neil, age 88 of Abbotsford, BC went to his eternal home on May 14. He is survived by his wife Jo, children Jerry & Margaret, Janice, Art & Colleen, Joyce & Chris plus 8 grandchildren.

**DEJONG** Sidney "Sicco" age 91; May 25, 2012; Grand Rapids, MI; He was preceded in death by his wife of 64 years, Cora. Sid is survived by his children: Gerben (Janice) DeJong, Carole (John) Ornee, William (Karen) DeJong, Edward (Tamara) DeJong, Diane (James) Visser, Richard DeJong, and Yvonne (Steven) Dykstra; 23 grandchildren; and 28 great-grandchildren.

**DE PATER** Alice (nee Teunissen) went to her heavenly home on May 8, 2012. Survived by her husband John of 63 years. Children: Margo (Jack), Bea (Renny), Jan (Elizabeth), Alice (Dean), James (Barb), Stephen (Sue); 24 grandchildren & 23 great-grandchildren. 3 Fifth W, Morrisburg, ON, K0C 1

**DORNBUSH**, Agnes (VanHaitsma), age 98, of Jenison MI on May 19, 2012. Preceded in death by her husband Ross and all their siblings. Survived by 4 sons and their spouses: Sherwin and Joyce, Kenneth and Phyllis, James and Connie, Roger and Edie; 13 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren.

**EINFELD**, Jake, age 94 of Bradenton, FL, went home to be with his Lord April 26, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Joan (Haan); children: Gail (Dean) Douma; Brad (Beth), Wayne (Carol deceased), Kevin (Lori), 12 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by his wife, Esther (Battjes) and 1 granddaughter.

**LAGERWEY**, Wilhelmina Christina Ditar, age 96. Wilma was preceded in death by her husband Walter on June 2, 2005. She is survived by her children Wallace and Marcia Lagerwey, John and Véronique Lagerwey, Nelva and Wayne Lagerwey-DeBrake, Marcia Lagerwey and Loren Hoekzema, Mark Lagerwey; grandchildren Garth, Chad, Jorie, Chloé, Odile, Martin, Maria, Nicholas, Karin, Dylan, Nathaniel, Nora, Tamera; great grandchildren Owen, Cade, Wyatt, Bennett, Viviane, Jeremy, Joline, Tidjan, Irene, Carter, Jenna, Rylee, Landon, Ayden, Levi, Eliot; two sisters, Margaret Helder and Jane Werkema.

### Church Position Announcements

**TRANSCONA CRC** of Winnipeg, Manitoba is seeking a full time Pastor. Please direct all inquires and communications to Calvin Vaags - calvaags@escape.ca or church office @ 204-222-4336

**FULL TIME PASTOR** Bethel Church of Sun Valley, CA is seeking a full-time pastor for our growing multicultural church in northeast LA. We are searching for a pastor who is bilingual English/Spanish, passionate about multicultural ministries, with strong preaching and shepherding skills, and who relates well with all ages. For more info, contact the office at bethelsunvalley@gmail.com, 818-767-4488, or www.bethelsunvalley.com.

**YOUTH DIRECTOR** 12th Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, MI, is seeking a part-time Youth Director for our children's and youth ministries. We are looking for a Christ-follower who has a passion for young people and for reaching out to the community. The Youth Director responsibilities require approximately 20 hrs/wk. Please visit our website at www.12thaveccr.org to view the full job description and to apply. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

**FIRST CRC OF TABER ALBERTA** is seeking a Lead Pastor. We are a vibrant congregation with a diversity of members. The successful candidate must have a strong preaching and leadership of the worship services. Dedication to the youth of the congregation, organize and support of Youth Programs and Serve Trips. Teaching of Catechism and pre-confession classes. Working with the young adults with their programs and pre-marital counseling. Being involved with the Classis/Synodical issues and the community ministerial meetings. Forward your resume and letters of response to tabercrcsearch@gmail.com or contact Richard Visser Taber CRC Search Committee Chairman. 403-223-8354 for more information

**PASTOR** Prince George CRC, located in the centre of beautiful British Columbia, seeks a fulltime pastor. We are among five northern BC CRCs. Prince George has many amenities, including a university, a K-12 Christian school, and excellent recreational facilities. Biblical preaching and a real passion for our Lord's kingdom are essentials.

More information and our profile are available by e-mailing pg.crc.search@hotmail.com 250-562-1586

**SENIOR PASTOR** First Reformed Church in Pella, IA is seeking an energetic pastor who is willing to accept the challenge of growing the number of young families in our congregation so that our ministry may continue for another 150 years. Visit our web site at www.frcpella.org or contact Jerry Nikkel at nikkelj@central.edu. or 641-780-9960

**MINISTER/CONGREGATIONAL LIFE** Faith CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, a Chicago suburb, seeks a pastor to administer and lead the adult ministries and pastoral care of the church, preach and lead worship regularly and support evangelism and community outreach. Please direct all inquiries to Ray Middel at 630-862-1861 or (frcsearchteam@gmail.com).

**PASTOR OPENING AT OPCRC** Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago seeks an energetic, passionate pastor who will champion OPCRC's mission of reaching out with the Good News of Jesus Christ and building up people in their faith. We are seeking a pastor especially gifted in strong biblically-based preaching who will challenge the congregation spiritually and share in the leadership of staff and church ministries. This position is open due to our Pastor retiring in July of 2013. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at Orland Church, visit www.OrlandChurch.com. Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to pastorsearch@oprc.org.

**YOUTH PASTOR** Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville, MI, is accepting resumes for the full-time position of ordained or eligible for ordination Youth Pastor. Hillcrest CRC is a multi-generational congregation which values Godly worship and nurturing our youth. The qualified candidate will have a passion for the Lord and also for building relationships with the youth of our church as they grow in their walk with Jesus Christ. The selected candidate will be responsible for the continued development of youth programs: youth group, church school, post high, and profession of faith mentoring programs. The Youth Pastor

will also assume some preaching duties. For a complete job description please contact the church office at office@hillcrestccr.org or 616-669-6556. Resumes and cover letters can be submitted via email or at 3617 Hillcrest, Hudsonville, MI, 49426, and directed to Dean DeKoster.

**ALBERNI VALLEY CRC** in beautiful BC is seeking a Senior Pastor. We are a diversified, loving, vibrant community church worshipping in relaxed contemporary style service. Church profile available upon request. Contact richardwu@shaw.ca

**SEEKING SENIOR PASTOR** Athabasca Reformed Congregation in Athabasca, Alberta is seeking a full-time Pastor (we are part of the Reformed Church in America). We are a diverse and vibrant congregation of approx. 180, in a small community. For information and to obtain a church profile, email mgleicht@live.com.

**FIRST CRC, THUNDER BAY, ON** is seeking a full time pastor who is committed to sound biblical preaching and able to interact with the youth as well as our surrounding community. Help us to achieve the next step in our spiritual development and refocus our mission in our own congregation and to our neighbours. Please send inquiries to harold@unitized.ca.

**PASTOR:** Hillside CRC in Abbotsford BC is seeking a pastor for a 50-60% position in our small church. Responsibilities involve leading a pastoral and enabling ministry with some preaching. We are looking for a pastor who would use his or her gifts to further enable our member-participant ministry and work alongside our worship planning teams. We are looking for a candidate who would live in the Abbotsford area. To express interest or request information please email hillsidecrr@gmail.com

**PASTOR:** First Orillia CRC is a caring, smaller church looking for a full-time minister with a passion for preaching to help ignite believers in their devotion to God, to live gracious lives, and to develop relationships with those whom God is calling. A 2012 Transitional Report needs a spiritual leader to encourage its recommendations. Contact Maarten Reinders at searchteam@orilliacrc.com.

**MOLEWYK** Donald H. age 86 of Grand Rapids, MI went to dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23) on February 4, 2012. Don is survived by and will be lovingly missed by his wife, Kathleen, of 61 years: his children Linda (Thomas) De Boer, Terry (Kathryn) Molewyk, and Mary Molewyk (Robert) Doornbos; his grandchildren Kristina (Andrew) Meyer, Matthew and Mark Molewyk, and Eric Doornbos; his 3 great-grandchildren Anna, Luke and Caleb Meyer; his sister, Margaret Petroelje, and his sister-in-law and brother-in-law Verna and Joe Betten. We are grateful for Don's enduring legacy of faith and the knowledge that he belonged, in life and in death, to His faithful Savior Jesus Christ (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #1).



**TEMPLEMAN, Tony** On December 8 2011, aged 79, passed away peacefully in the presence of his family to be with our Lord. A resident of Artesia, CA and business owner of Advance Radiator and Air Conditioning in Downey, CA. He was a faithful member of the Bellflower Bethany CRC.

He is survived by his wife, Janice of 52 years. Three sons, Phillip, Kirk(Cathleen), Bryan, and grandson, Garrett Anthony, sisters Marie Postma, Kay Templeman both of Grand Rapids MI, brother John and Betty Tempelman of Lansing IL, and preceded in death by brother Luke Tempelman.

**TERPSTRA** Donald Edward, age 85, of Holland, MI entered the glorious presence of his Lord and Savior on May 8, 2012. He is survived by his wife of 64 years Lois, children: Doug and Dawn Terpstra, Judy Terpstra, Mary Terpstra, Duane and Cindy Terpstra, his grandchildren: Lisa and Jeff Van Wyk, Laura Terpstra, Brian Terpstra, Darren Terpstra, Jason Terpstra, Cassie Terpstra, great-grandchildren: Abby, Zachary, and Cohen Van Wyk, in-laws: Mary Ruth Kamps, Marcella Bosch, Eunice Yankiv, Sherwin and Ruth Kamps, many nieces and nephews. Memorials may be sent to: First Christian Reformed Church Bridge Ministry, 15 South Church St., Zeeland MI 49464

**DR. JOHN A. VOSS, M. D.;** age 85; May 9, 2012; 5047 S. Quail Crest Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife of 40 years: Dorothy (nee Vander Goot); children: Susan Butler of Florida, Jane and Kenneth Secord of Hudsonville, Dr. Todd and Julie Ann Voss of So. Carolina, Lois Benedict of Kentwood, Dr. Julie Voss and husband, Scott Shuler, Mark and Laura Voss all of No. Carolina; many grandchildren and great grandchildren; sisters: Christina and Henry Vande Kerk, and Agnes Steegstra; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Barney Sweetman, John and Wilma Vander Goot, Dr. Ronald and Gertrude Van Putten, Peg and John De Hoog, and Sam and Grace Vander Goot.

**WESTRA**-Tryntje "Toos", nee Veen, age 80, of Worth, IL, went home to be with the Lord on June 1, 2012. Member of Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church. Beloved wife of Edward J. Westra. Loving mother of John Westra, Marlene (Richard) Boonstra, Evelyn (Tony) Bylenga, and Michael Westra. Dear grandmother of seven. Fond sister of Lubbertus "Bert" Veen and the late Cornelius "Cor" Veen. "I know that my Redeemer lives. . . ." Job 19:25

### Employment

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

**CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR** - Harderwyk Ministries of Holland, MI, is seeking a church administrator. For a complete description of the position requirements, check the Harderwyk website at www.harderwyk.com/files/Administrator.pdf. Send resume to Personnel Committee, Harderwyk Ministries, 1627 West Lakewood Boulevard, Holland, MI 49424

**CNA AND HOME ASSISTANTS NEEDED** Helpers of Holland Home located in Grand Rapids MI is seeking candidates who are passionate about providing private duty services for our older adult clients in their homes; assisting in personal care, light housekeeping, errands, meal prep, transportation. These positions offer flexible scheduling, however require a commitment of one weekend per month. Home Assistant position pays \$8.75 per hour for non-certified aides. Certified Nurse Aides pays \$9.75 per hour. A heart for serving older adults along with a valid drivers license with good driving record, current proof of insurance and reliable transportation are required. If you are interested in working with seniors in their homes, fax your information to Danae at 616-235-8697 or email danae.compagner@hollandhome.org. Review all employment opportunities at www.hollandhome.org.

**HELP WANTED** We are looking for someone to clean a large executive home in the Ada/Cascade area once a week. This would be full-service cleaning, including some laundry. References required. Please call 616-726-8015

**HELP WANTED:** Friendship Family Homes, located in McBain, MI., is seeking a single or couple to be our live-in houseparent(s) / caregiver. We are an Christian adult foster care home that serves ladies with developmental disabilities. Room and board are furnished in addition to wages. We are seeking individuals who have a heart for ministry to the disabled and that share the Christian values that our Home was founded on. For more information, please forward letter of interest and resume to FFH, c/o 200 E. Euclid St., McBain, MI 49657. You can also call 231-825-2122 for more information.

**SIDING/WINDOW INSTALLER** Reputable Southern Ontario renovation company looking for a full time siding/door/window installer; benefits included, experience preferred, willing to train. Clean drivers abstract required. Fax or e-mail resume with expected remuneration to: Ralph Buitenhuis, Peter Van Egmond & Sons. Fax no.: 905-336-5894, E-mail: pvanegmond@on.aibn.com

**YOUTH DIRECTOR** : Willmar CRC In Willmar, MN is currently seeking applicants for a Youth Director to oversee our junior and senior high youth ministry—Solid Rock. A detailed job description is available from Renae Kleinhuizen (320-235-3060/ renaekleinhuizen@hotmail.com). Please submit a cover letter and resume to Renae by June 11, 2012 at: Willmar CRC/ATTN: Renae Kleinhuizen/1708 SW 8th Street/ Willmar/ MN/ 56201 or digitally at renaekleinhuizen@hotmail.com

### Volunteers

**VOLUNTEERS:** URGENTLY NEEDED for Mississippi Christian Family Services - Rolling Fork, MS. Work in the Thrift Store and/or light maintenance. A/C apts provided on campus. Pleasant and rewarding work. Desire minimum of two weeks. More details contact Larry Faber 616-257-4489 or lefaber@att.net.

### Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

**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

**NETTLES ISLAND FL.** Rental 1bdrm 1ba prk mdl with prch 12/13. 1,700 mo. or 5,000 for 3mo. new cntrl a/c. golf cart optl for 150 mo. diane @ 616-340-7427 616-662-1024

**BEAUTIFUL LONG BOAT** Key, Florida near Sarasota, Bradenton. 2 BR 2 BA condo on white sandy beach. Upscale, \$1,400 per week and up depending on season. 630-655-2888.

**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 Groenijk@aol.com for info.



## Staying safe at home with HomeCare of Holland Home.

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

Call today **616.235.5113** [www.homecareofhollandhome.org](http://www.homecareofhollandhome.org)



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





**4 BEDROOM HOUSE FOR RENT** Crestwood IL - Near forest preserves, across from Elim Christian Services, near Trinity Christian College, and Southwest Chicago Christian Schools. 1800+ utilities 708-420-5786.

**SOUTH HOLLAND, ILLINOIS** 2 BR home for sale: new BA, kitchen, appliances, electric, plumbing, roof, doors, windows! hard wood floors, full unfinished basement, C/A, detached 1.5 Car Garage \$79,000 815-347-9698

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

**LAKEFRONT COTTAGE** for rent Big Star Lake, Baldwin, MI. 4BR, sleeps 10, fully equipped, sandy beach. \$1,000/wk. 231-798-8755/joyousart1@netzero.com

**HOME FOR SALE** - Payne Lake-close to G. Rapids & Kazoo. 3bed/2.5 bath with 85' frontage on all sports lake. Call 616-648-2767 or email bob.potter62@yahoo.com.

**DUPLEX FOR SALE** near Calvin College. Both sides rented to Calvin students through May 2013. Both sides 3 bed/2bath with living room and family room. Call 616-648-2767 or email bob.potter62@yahoo.com.

**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

**SMOKY MT CABIN RENTAL** in Pigeon Forge, TN, area. Jacuzzi, Hot tub, fireplace, Hiking/attractions. Great for couples and families, 219-322-2722.

## Travel



**HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND** in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours. www.chestnutlane.nl

**NIAGARA FALLS** Trillium Bed & Breakfast. All Rooms on main level, all with a/c private bath. Brian & Mary 905-354-3863 or book online at www.Trilliumbb.ca

**TOUR'S 2012** Join us for "The Great Mystery of 2012" Aug 21-23. \$449.00, "Circle Lake Superior" Sept 28-Oct 4 \$1179.00, "Fireside Christmas" Dec 13-14 \$309.00. For 2013 Join us on our cruise to the Panama Canal, Mar 8, round trip Fort Lauderdale, or on tour in Aug to Canadian Rockies. Call or email for detailed itinerary. Alpine Pleasure Tours, Cliff & Helene Doornbos, 3074 Richmond St NW GrandRapids, MI 49534. 616-791-4334, 888-922-4334 toll free or huddyd@gmail.com

**AMERICA'S SOUTHWEST TOUR:** The Calvin Alumni Association and the Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning (CALL) are sponsoring America's Southwest tour, September 6 - 17, 2012, hosted by John Apol. Explore the magnificent beauty of Monument Valley, Antelope Canyon, the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Canyon de Chelly and much more! Reserve your spot today! Contact Witte Tours, (616) 957-8113, 800 GO WITTE, or groups@wittetravel.com. For a complete list of tours, visit www.wittetours.com

**EGYPT**, featuring a Nile River Cruise, September 19 - 29, 2012, hosted by Pastor Steve Wunderink, a church planter for the Christian Reformed Church. Discover the wonders of fascinating Egypt and study its impact on Christianity. Visit Cairo and Luxor (ancient Thebes) and their environs, enjoy an excursion to Abu Simbel, and four days on a Nile River cruise starting in Luxor and ending in Aswan. Pastor Steve will lecture each evening to illustrate how ancient Egypt impacts our view of scripture, in both the Old and New Testament. Reserve your spot today. Contact Witte Tours, 616-957-8113, 800-GO WITTE, groups@wittetravel.com or Steve Wunderink, 702-561-5619 or lwunder@cox.net.

## Products and Services

**ABSOLUTELY BEST PRICES** paid for religious books. Contact Credo Books, 1540 Pinnacle East SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, ph. (616) 249-9291. gvsbooks@gmail.com

**A. A. A. PROFESSIONAL AIR DUCT CLEANING** - Providing superior air duct cleaning using the latest equipment and technology. For a free estimate call 616-534-6710 or 616-887-7925.

**BOERS' TRANSFER & STORAGE, INC** Offering professional moving services within the United States and Canada. EXCELLENT CLERGY DISCOUNTS and an approved mover for retired CRC clergy! 13325 Riley Street, Holland, MI; 1-800-433-9799 or 616-399-2690 email: larry@boerstransfer.com; www.boerstransfer.com Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.

**CARING FOR AGING PARENTS?** Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** is a small agency that offers experienced and affordable care to seniors in their home. We are owned by Calvin grads, who are passionate about this work. West Michigan area only. truebluecaregivers@gmail.com or call 616-406-6819

**BUILDING/REMODELING** - Call Ken today for a free estimate. Licensed/insured. Serving West Michigan since 1985. 616-457-5880. www.homework-construction.com

**CELEBRATE RURAL DUTCH HERITAGE** with Daniel Boerman's memoir The Flying Farm Boy on a Michigan family farm in the 50's and 60's. See www.flyingfarmboy.com.

**BEACON HILL AT EASTGATE**- A CONTINUING CARE COMMUNITY: Our dedicated, experienced & highly trained staff will work with you to design a program of care that meets the individualized needs of your loved one. Our enrichment programs will enhance their lives & offer the family peace of mind. Call Beth Mans @ 616-608-8233 for a tour of our beautifully renovated community. 1845 Boston St. SE GR, MI 49506

## Miscellaneous

**FOR SALE** Church Bus, 25 passenger, 1995 Champion Sparrow Trade. Great condition, 75,000 miles, \$9900. Call Ivanrest CRC, 616-534-3114.


# RESOURCES


*for you and your church!*

Whether you want to connect with kids or open new spiritual horizons for adults, Faith Alive offers inspiring resources for your church and home, including


- devotionals
- family faith nurture
- Bible studies and topical studies
- Sunday school curriculum
- youth group resources
- ...and much more!


Shop online today or request a copy of our  
**NEW 2012-2013 Resource Catalog!**





1.800.333.8300  
www.FaithAliveResources.org








**Crossroad**  
BIBLE INSTITUTE

P.O. BOX 900  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
49509-0900

800.668.2450  
www.cbi.fm

## Reaching God's People in Prison

Crossroad Bible Institute will train you to correct the Bible study lessons of prisoners in a safe and secure mentoring program.

## Paid in Full

**I**t was 1960—the year Bill Mazeroski of the Pittsburgh Pirates hit a walk-off home run to beat the New York Yankees in the seventh game of the World Series. ESPN called that drive over the left field fence at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh the greatest home run ever. The game was particularly memorable for me since I had seen the Pirates play the Cubs at Wrigley Field that summer. As a lifelong baseball fan, I vividly remember the underdog Pirates beating the mighty Yankees. Even so, my reflections about that summer are usually not about baseball.

In July of 1960, my younger brother passed away from bone cancer, one month before his twelfth birthday. He had been diagnosed in September of the previous year—and despite radiation treatments, an arm amputation, and a strong will to survive, he succumbed to the disease that he had battled for ten months.

Then, in September, my dad was involved in a farm accident that required hospitalization and intense rehabilitation. An eighth grader at the time, I went to school part-time and spent many hours assisting my grandfather with the harvest and caring for the livestock. Even though the farm work was getting done, our family's financial situation was becoming more and more dismal. In that era, health insurance was nonexistent, and our medical expenses were overwhelming.

Then, on December 7, adding to what seemed like an already hopeless financial situation for our family, I fractured my ankle. As I lay in the back seat of a 1955 Ford, headed to the hospital for medical attention, I remember wondering how all of this was going to be paid for. On a wintry Sunday afternoon, following surgery and four days of recuperation, I



### I vividly remember the underdog Pirates beating the mighty Yankees.

was supposed to be discharged from the Sioux Valley Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In those days, the procedure for being discharged from the hospital was to report to the business office to pay for the medical expenses incurred.

As my mom and I made the trek from my hospital room to the business office, I wondered what she was going to say to the accountant. I knew that we had no money to pay the bill. As she stood near the counter, I heard her say my name. Then I heard the accountant say, “Your account has been paid in full.”

“No, my mom said, “that’s not possible; my son just had surgery and spent four days in the hospital.”

The accountant smiled and said, “A deacon from your church came in yesterday to pay the bill; your account has been paid in full.”

My mom started to sob, and I—an impressionable 13-year-old—learned a significant life lesson about how influential and loving a church family can be. My parents remained lifelong members of the Christian Reformed church in Colton, South Dakota.

This past November—two days after Thanksgiving—my dad’s funeral service was conducted there. Fifty-one years after that congregation’s gift was presented to our family, it is still remembered! ■



**Gordon Van Zanten** taught English at Pella Christian High School for 35 years at Pella Christian High School; he and his wife, Carol, now reside in Golden, Colorado.

## 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**fter giving the children's message on the story of the Good Shepherd, the pastor asked who the children thought the Good Shepherd really was.

"Jesus," a little girl enthusiastically replied.

Then the pastor asked what role a pastor might play in this story.

A little boy replied, "You're the dog because you help keep the sheep in line."

—Jan Bieri

**A**n FBI agent came to the farm and told the farmer, "I'm here to check your fields."

"OK," said the farmer, "but don't go near the 40 acres in the middle."

"Do you see this badge?" said the agent. "With this badge I can go anywhere I want."

A little while later the agent came running at full speed, chased by a bull.

The farmer shouted, "Show him your badge! Show him your badge!"

—Harvey Bergsma

**A**t the Arizona church we attend in winter, a child is invited to take home a bag and bring it back the following week with one object of his or her

choice in it. That object then becomes the talking point for the children's message.

One Sunday a little kingdom worker brought up her bag. The pastor removed a plastic stemware glass.

He asked, "What do we do with this glass?"

Several answers were offered: Drink lemonade, or water, or orange juice.

The pastor continued, "Jesus once may have used a cup like this when eating a meal with his disciples. Do any of you remember what he said when he raised the cup?"

One little boy's hand shot up as he shouted, "Cheers!"

—Dan F. Bloem

**O**ur 2-year-old grandson, Abraham, was hugging his 5-year-old brother, Caleb.

"Don't hurt my heart, Abraham," said Caleb. "That's where Jesus lives."

—M. Ballast

**O**verheard in the car as the Christian radio station was playing the song "I am a friend of God . . . he calls me friend": the young child in the backseat was singing along with these words: "I am a friend of God, he calls me Fred."

—Cora Kuiper

**C**lassified ad spotted in the Brockville, Ontario, *Recorder and Times*:

"When this model rolled off the assembly line, the manufacturer knew that it was one-of-a-kind. With its sleek body style, durable exterior, and delicate interior, it was

sought after by many. I fell in love with it the moment I laid eyes on it and soon after took out a lifetime lease. Although it has been known to blow the odd gasket over the years, it still purrs like a kitten and even on the coldest morning starts up without any hesitation. Although the body has changed and the seat is not as firm as it used to be, it does have a spare tire. I would not sell, lease, or trade this model for anything in the world.

Happy 50th birthday, Harold!"

—Jan Groenewoud

**M**y 5-year-old granddaughter, Hannah, has been praying for a hamster for quite some time, even though her

parents have told her they can't get one because of her sister's allergies.

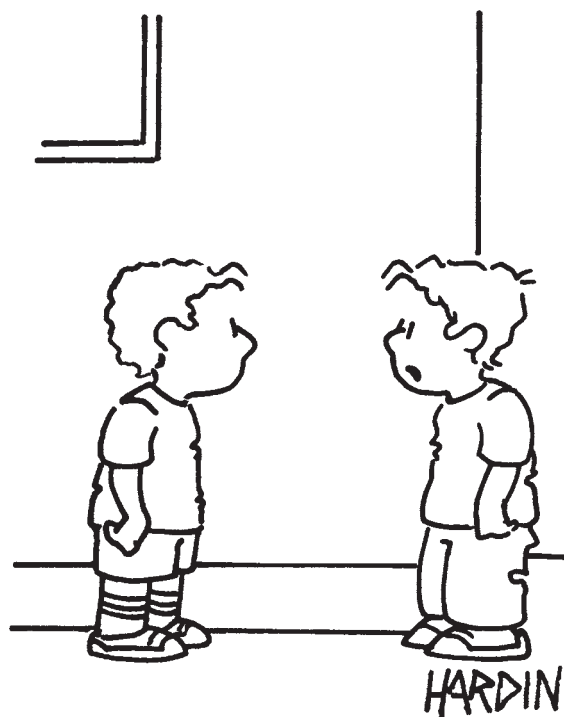
One day she told me, "Nana, if I put my hand by my ear and be real quiet, I can hear God whisper to me."

"Really?" I asked. "And what does he say to you?"

"He said he's getting me a hamster."

When I reminded her that her mommy had already said no, she confidently said, "That's okay, Nana, because God's the boss and he said yes."

—James Schaaf



"I always pray before meals—but when I open my eyes, the vegetables are still there."

# Look what you are doing!



270

Number of churches with special programs.

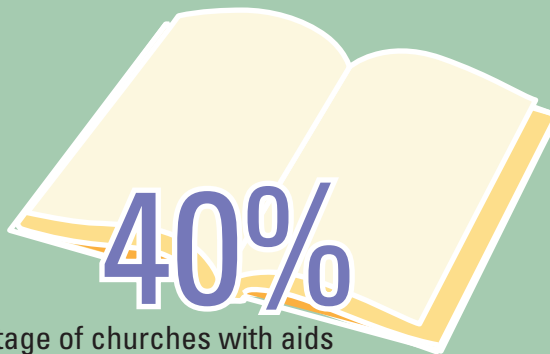


49

Number of churches with sign language interpretation.

Number of churches with accessible facilities.

| Location         | 2002 | 2011 |
|------------------|------|------|
| Worship Area     | 482  | 914  |
| Fellowship Areas | 446  | 908  |
| Classrooms       | 365  | 796  |
| Restrooms        | 396  | 807  |
| Pulpit Area      | 68   | 352  |
| Main Entrance    | 421  | 857  |



40%

Percentage of churches with aids for people with visual impairments.



527

Number of churches that provide transportation.

531

Number of churches that offer aids for people with hearing impairments.

