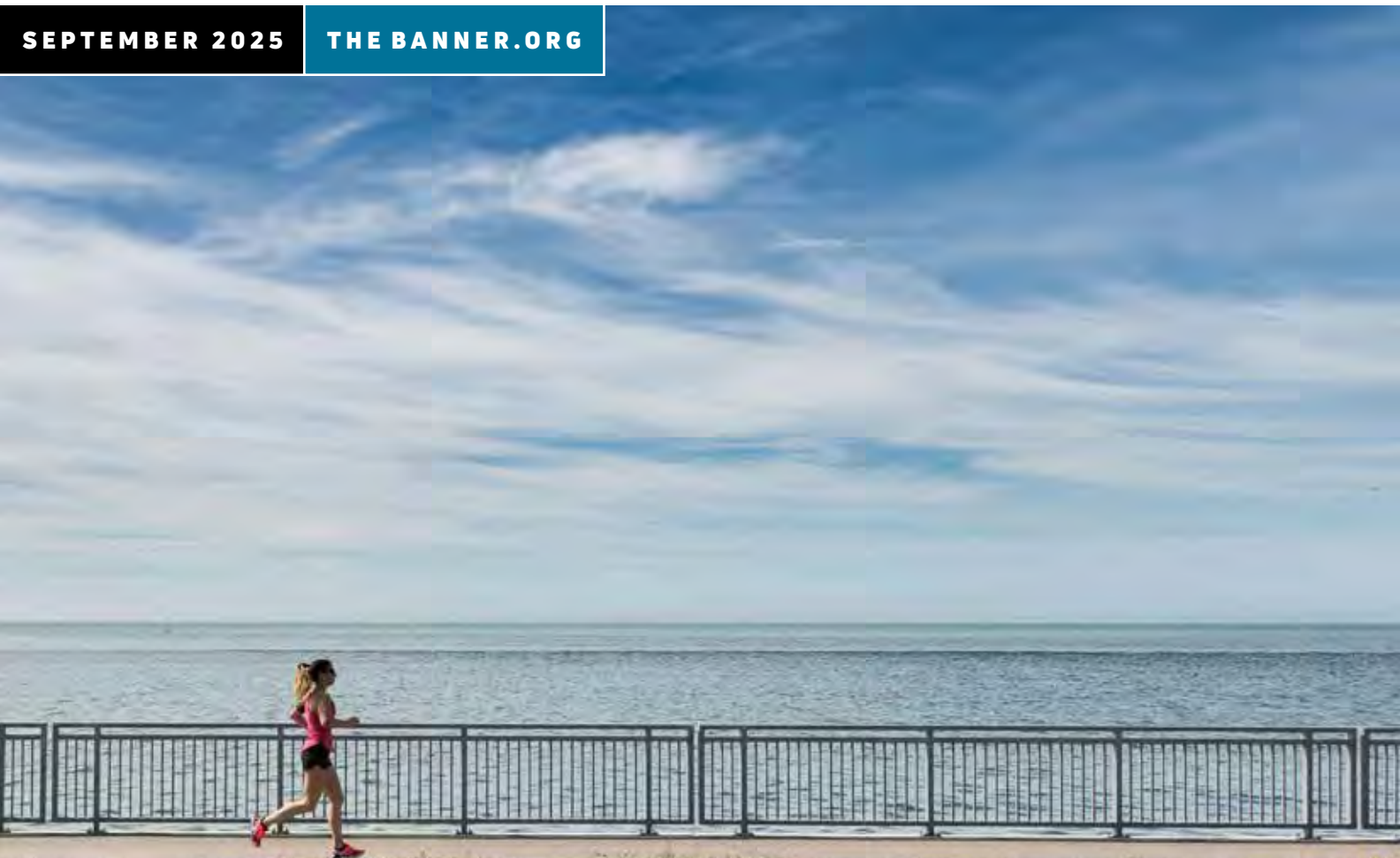


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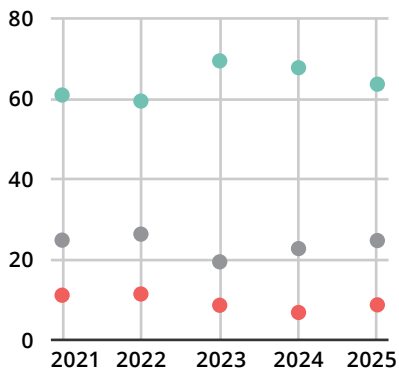
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# BANNER

## BY THE NUMBERS

From the past five years of denominational survey data we see little fluctuation in how respondents answered **"How would you say your spiritual life and faith has changed over the last 12 months?"** The percentage of those reporting "a little" or "significant" growth has gone up a bit, those reporting a "stable" faith are about the same now as in 2021, and the percentage reporting "a little" or "significant" decline has gone down a bit.

### Experiencing Spiritual Growth?



Each year the survey has been administered by DataWise Consulting LLC and members from a fifth of the denomination's active congregations are encouraged to participate. There were 2,116 respondents in 2021; 1,535 in 2022; 1,530 in 2023; 1,397 in 2024; and 1,067 in 2025.

## WHAT'S ONLINE

Looking for more? Here are just a few of the stories you'll find online at *TheBanner.org*. (Try typing the headlines into the search box.)

- » News: Sensory Rooms Offer Support for Neurodivergent Worshipers
- » News: Coffee Production Partnership Grows in Scope
- » Book: *With Open Ears: 60 Reflections on Sound From a Woman Born Blind*, by Karen Wingate
- » Movie: *F1: The Movie*
- » Music: *Let it Begin*, by Big Daddy Weave

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### Eating With Jesus

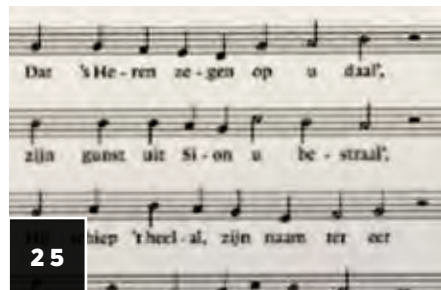
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# BANNER

*The Banner* is the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. Opinions expressed in *The Banner* are not necessarily those of the editor or the CRCNA.

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# Being Your Denominational Magazine

*The Banner* is  
a journalistic  
institution whose  
journalists  
love the church  
and want to  
love it well.



Sarah Heth Sundt is the associate editor of *The Banner*. She lives in Hamilton, Mich., with her husband, their two children, and their fluffy dog.

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean)에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).

*The July/August issue contained Shiao Chong's farewell editorial. While the search for an interim and long-term editor begins, we're reprinting a condensed version of this article that was first published online at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org) under the "Behind the Banner" tag.*

**FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY,** *The Banner* has been the official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. Since 2015, this magazine has worked under a mandate and publishing guidelines that called editorial staff to show "the diverse positions held within the church," to "lead and encourage a responsible discussion of the issues important to the life of the church through editorial comment and publication of articles that represent the various views held within the church," and to permit "people of the church to voice their views and reactions even though some of these views may be unacceptable to others in the church" (emphasis mine).

As of Synod 2025 those things are no longer part of the guidelines, and *The Banner's* evaluation of trends within the church will now include "proper acknowledgement and respect for the official positions of the CRCNA and within the confines of our confessional commitments." A new piece has been added, calling us to "represent the denomination publicly to the broader Christian church and to the world at large by speaking from a distinctly Reformed perspective in line with our confessions and synodical decisions, representing the CRCNA as its official publication."

I lament the abruptness with which synod brought in these changes and how the appearance of curtailing any variety of opinion has affected what people think they can expect from *The Banner*.

But with a closer look, especially at what has stayed the same from the 2015 guidelines, these updates won't much change how we operate. Those of us who continue to serve *The Banner* hope


and believe it is possible to maintain a journalistic publication that fulfills synod's mandate with integrity.

Serving under this mandate will not change how we cover the news of the CRC, and we have always worked within the Christian Reformed belief system when presenting feature articles. We often have included editor's notes indicating the official stance of the CRC. Now we will be more consistent in this practice and be even more specific about official denominational positions.

The mandate still calls us to report in an honest, unbiased manner information about activities affecting the church. We are still called to present materials to edify readers and encourage them to grow in Christian maturity and live out their faith in daily life. We are still called to provide a vehicle through which church members can express their views and opinions on pertinent issues. All these things we have done and will continue to do to the best of our ability, God willing.

What also has not changed is our editorial freedom to "inform ... readers ... about what is occurring in the church—including relevant problems, needs, and concerns—even though some persons, congregations, or agencies may prefer that such information not be disseminated" (italics added). We have no intention of dropping this responsibility. *The Banner* is a journalistic institution whose journalists love the church and want to love it well by raising "relevant problems, needs, and concerns," as the guidelines require of us.

Our guidelines still include an important section on editorial integrity, which hasn't changed. Among the 11 points are "Truth must be written but always in love" and "Criticism must be constructive and fair." This is the spirit in which we share this editorial. We will continue to use editorial integrity as we keep this magazine running.

Will you continue with us? 





# Eating With Jesus

By Courtney Saldivar

One of my favorite memories of seminary is a meal I ate.

I interned at an organization for recovering addicts, the same place where a local church ran a Wednesday Euchre group. Every year at Christmastime someone from that church invited the whole group to eat at his home. In 2013, as a new and subpar Euchre player, I was invited to eat that meal.

We all arrived at a fully decorated house. The tree was trimmed, and tables complete with napkins and buns in baskets graced the whole main floor. It was a Christmas meal with everything you can imagine, but the main attraction was the mussels. Dozens of mussels prepared in a special sauce greeted us as we took our seats. It's a shame I don't like mussels, but the sauce was great.

For those who lived at the recovery center, these elaborate meals were uncommon, but at that particular

meal they feasted in the company of friends and were simply guests. They were not recovering addicts. They were not residents of this organization. They were just welcomed. This meal told them that the love, friendship, and acceptance they tasted throughout the year was genuine—not just on Euchre Wednesdays and not just on Sundays at church, but at Christmas, a time often reserved for our closest family and friends.

Jesus hosted a similar feast at Passover. At that meal Jesus showed us that there is a table—or rather, an abundant life with God—that is prepared for God's people to enjoy. A table of feasting and nourishment awaits us as we surrender to the host of the meal in three ways.

## Acceptance

God is the creator and sustainer of all things. Our lives, our schedules, and every table we eat at submit to and praise God, who gives us every good thing. And because we are not just guests, but children of God, we

know God hosts *and* holds our lives all together. Accepting this means trusting that our seat at God's table is genuine and secure. We see this in Matthew's gospel when Jesus reclines to eat with all 12 disciples.

Matthew's account is specific in naming the 12 twice—first when one of them went to the chief priests to betray Jesus, and later when Jesus reclined in the presence of all 12.

It would make sense to see that number change—Jesus reclining with 11, not 12. Yet 12 are present at the table Jesus has prepared: Judas, Peter, and all the disciples who abandoned him at the cross.

At the recovery center we often talked about similar themes, because we tend to set tables differently than Jesus does. When there is hurt or disagreement, we revise the invitations, and sometimes the invitations are changed on us.

But part of acceptance is trusting that when it comes to God's table, the



invitations are up to God alone. God sets the table and then calls our names, fills us with faith, and gives us life to the full—not because we have earned our seats, but because God is the most gracious host, and God chooses for us to be there. Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.” We tend to invite people based on our shared past, but Christ’s invitations are for the future. We are fruit bearers.

Even when our meal is messy, we must trust God’s invitation. We must pull our seat close to the table and put our napkin on our lap so that we catch every piece of food God offers.

### **Honesty**

We do not know what Judas was thinking during that Passover meal. Perhaps he is thinking nothing of his betrayal, because he was clearly surprised that Jesus knew or that Jesus mentioned it. “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord,” Judas said to Jesus.

But because our Lord Jesus Christ is honest, in every account of this meal Jesus addresses the betrayal. There does not seem to be a table where Jesus does not include the truth.

The host who sets, prepares, and invites us to the table has the power to offer honesty that affects how we experience our meal.

Judas’ initial desire to betray Jesus was a very human problem. We have all turned away from Christ. The greater problem for Judas was his inability to come before Christ, the one who already knew all things, and say, “It was I.”

Being honest with ourselves is good, but honestly, it is never enough. We need the host of our lives to be honest with us, because Christ’s honesty is still an opportunity. In John’s account

There does not  
seem to be a table  
where Jesus does  
not include  
the truth.

of this meal, Jesus offers Judas the sop, a small offering of bread commonly given to a special guest at the Passover meal to signify love, goodwill, and even special favor, according to F.F. Bruce’s *The Gospel of John*. Jesus offers the sop to Judas and in doing so takes Judas to the place where Christ’s honesty always takes us: his grace. The sop meant mercy and a chance to repent. If Judas had exchanged with Christ a single look of sorrow and regret, would that not have been a wonderful change in the direction Judas was heading?

Yet just one chapter later, in front of the crowd with swords and clubs, Judas approaches Jesus and gives him a kiss of betrayal—a sorrowful ending to the meal Judas ate.

Christ’s honesty nourishes us because even though we come to God’s table full of guilt and shame, Jesus promises in John 6 that “whoever comes to me will never go hungry.”

### **Forgiveness**

At God’s table, Christ is the centerpiece. When we come to the table and lift up our eyes to Jesus, who holds our life with God altogether, we know why we are there. It’s not because we are good guests. It’s because we are forgiven.


Meals have a way of telling us where we stand, and at God’s table we sit, eat, and stand forgiven.

Matthew 26:26-27 say, “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’”

All of you? Drink from it, Judas? Drink from it, Peter? Drink from it, all of you who will desert me and flee?

Drink from it, all of you, says Jesus. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

This is the heart of the table—not what we bring to the meal, but all that God offers in Christ to those who believe.

So though you sit at the table that has been prepared for you, and though some might whisper “You shouldn’t be sitting here,” take heart and remember that you are at God’s table. Bring your eyes up from your shame and fear, behold Christ seated at the middle of the table offering himself, who is real food and real drink, and then turn to your host and say the only thing that any forgiven guest can say: Thank you, God, for inviting me to eat. 



Courtney Saldivar lives in Milton, Ont., with her husband and two children. She is a pastor at Crosstowne Church in Milton and also serves as a chaplain with Marketplace Care Canada at three businesses within Halton Hills.

# New Mexico Church Helps Tackle Summer Food Insecurity

## NEWS

**For more news** and longer stories about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit *TheBanner.org*. Or get the free app by searching for “CRCNA Banner” in your app store.

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**Got a news tip?**

Know of a noteworthy event or accomplishment in the life of a CRC member? Have details about an interesting ministry in a CRC congregation? Send your news tip to *news@TheBanner.org*.



**Food collected by Chelwood CRC and its neighbors for the Coyote Kitchen Project.**

Chelwood Christian Reformed Church in Albuquerque, N.M., its neighborhood association, and a local elementary school worked together this spring to provide students' families with a supply of food before summer break.

The Coyote Kitchen Project, named for the school's mascot, included three donation drop-off locations—one at the church, one at the school, and one at the home of elder Sherry TenClay. TenClay came up with the idea after seeing a note about a school-hosted food drive in the neighborhood association newsletter. She reached out to the school to explore a partnership.

Allie Weeda, the principal at Onate Elementary School, said the school has just over 300 students, with 43% of them experiencing food insecurity in 2024.

“Our philosophy as a church has always been ‘We do things with people, not to people or for people,’” TenClay said, noting that while some churches may be hesitant to work with secular organizations, collaboration is possible when values agree. “If you can find where your vision, mission, and values align,” she explained, “that’s where you can have agreement.”

—Kristen Parker

## Marking 125 Years of Ministry



First Christian Reformed Church in Lynden, Wash., celebrated 125 years of ministry July 11-13 with a concert, an ice cream social, community tours, and an organ recital. The church also compiled a video history and published a quasiquicentennial booklet.

This photo is of the 1925 congregation assembled on the lawn of First CRC five years after it had planted Second CRC. It planted Third CRC in 1938 and went on to help form Bethel CRC, Faith Christian Fellowship in Everson (disbanded 2018), Hope in Christ CRC in Bellingham, and Sumas (Wash.) CRC.

Since its founding in 1900, First CRC has had 16 lead pastors. The current pastor, Robert Woodyard, has been at First since 2007 and is the congregation's longest-serving pastor.

—Jenny deGroot



## Michigan and Kenyan GEMS Clubs Share God's Love

Photo courtesy of Joanie Zuiderveen



**A GEMS Club in Kenya received notes and handmade gifts from Friendship CRC's GEMS Club in Byron Center, Mich.**

The GEMS girls club of Friendship Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., and a start-up club in Kenya are developing an intercontinental connection, sparked when leaders from the two clubs met in August 2023.

GEMS—Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior—has 489 discipleship clubs internationally, each connected to a local church or Christian organization.

Joanie Zuiderveen, a Friendship member and treasurer of its GEMS Club, met Doreen Riinye, coordinator of the first GEMS club in Nairobi, Kenya, at a meet-and-greet event while Zuiderveen was on a mission trip. Riinye shared how she started a GEMS club after a local Calvinist Cadet Corps group asked for a separate club to “get rid of the girls”—the sisters who kept showing up to Cadets with the boys. At the time the Kenyan GEMS club, which Riinye runs with three other women, had no funds, no supplies, and no curriculum. Zuiderveen, who's been serving with GEMS for about 45 years, can remember starting with empty cupboards. She assured Riinye that Friendship CRC would help the Nairobi club get needed supplies and cover the cost of a GEMS membership to access online resources.

Friendship CRC held a fundraiser in fall 2023, and by January 2024 the Kenyan club was fully resourced. In February, Friendship CRC's third-grade GEMS group created valentines and sent them to the Kenyan GEMS. The following February, the whole Friendship CRC club made yarn dolls, butterfly hair clips, and personal notes to send to the Kenyan girls.

Wendy Hammond, executive director of GEMS Girls Clubs, said the organization is learning from the Friendship/Kenya relationship and hopes such partnerships will be an area of growth for GEMS.

—Kristen Parker

## Community Play & Café Offers Vital Connection

For the past two years, Grace Community Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont., has used its large open foyer as a community play space on Thursday mornings. Called Community Play & Café, it's a drop-in for caregivers and young children with no agenda other than play and connection.

“This is a place where anyone may drop in to play, meet people, and build relationships,” said co-founder Mary-Jo Steenbeek, who along with Melanie Burnip brought the plan to the church's council in July 2023.

Starting with fewer than 10 people, the play time “very quickly grew to an average of 30 people—adults and children—by June 2024,” Steenbeek said. Renee Bouwman, a member of Grace Community CRC who attended with her son, 4, and daughter, 1, saw an opportunity to expand the basic play scheme so home-schooling families could attend with older children. They added The Village Hub—with spaces for coloring, board games and puzzles, climbing mats, and active play equipment—to run at the same time as Play & Café.

“I noticed many drop-in programs in the city only range from the ages of 0 to 4 years old,” Bouwman said. “There is a lack of regularly scheduled programs that allow you to bring your children aged older than 4 along with you, which means you just don't end up going to any of the programs.”

Steenbeek said, “We have learned that for some of our friends, this group has become a very important part of their week. One woman even credits the group with saving her life. She moved to the community as a new mom with no family or friend connections in the area. She saw our sign and dropped in. She has been with us for the full two years so far, and we have shared in some of her life journey.”

—Alissa Vernon



Photo by Mary-Jo Steenbeek

**Grace Community CRC sets out toys and play equipment for its Thursday Community Play & Café mornings.**

## 'Go to the Nearest CRC, and They Will Help You'



**Young singers from Phoenix (Ariz.) CRC and Embassy Church sing "Takadamu (Lead the Way)" at a joint Pentecost service June 8.**

"Go to the nearest CRC, and they will help you." That's the advice a Congolese pastor looking for a place to worship with his Arizona congregation got from a fellow transplanted pastor in Michigan. Three months later, Embassy Church had its first service in the fellowship hall of Phoenix (Ariz.) Christian Reformed Church.

Phoenix CRC and Embassy Church have shared a building since October 2024 and worshiped together three times, including a Pentecost celebration June 8. About 20 people from Embassy Church and 80 from Phoenix CRC participated in the combined Pentecost service. Teens from both churches sang "Takadamu (Lead the Way)" in Swahili at the beginning of worship, and Phoenix CRC pastor Anthony DeKorte preached from Acts 16, highlighting Pentecost as a consequence of Easter. "Pentecost provides a multicultural picture of the people of God," he said. "Pentecost is an invitation to live inside an alternative community: the kingdom of God."

Fabiola Jenson, an Embassy Church leader, taught the teens to sing together. "Just like the words of the song 'Takadamu,' the students worked together to learn the words and helped one another," she said. "The song is partly in English and partly in Swahili, so those that had learned the song in high school helped those that were learning it for the first time."

Embassy pastor Joe Rwemera first visited Phoenix CRC in July 2024 after searching for a

few months for a Christian church where he could meet with his parishioners—a group of recent immigrants who speak Swahili, Kinyarwanda, or English.

Rwemera came straight to Phoenix CRC after a flight back from Michigan, where he'd seen his friend Claude Maseruka Ngendahayo, pastor of Victory Fellowship, which meets in the Oakdale Park Church building in Grand Rapids. Oakdale Park was a Christian Reformed congregation at the time but has since disaffiliated. "Claude told his friend Joe, 'When you get back to Phoenix, go to the nearest CRC, and they will help you,'" DeKorte said. "That's exactly what Joe did. His return flight to Phoenix was July 7. It was a Sunday. Joe drove the five miles from the airport to PCRC and worshiped with us, leaving his luggage in our lobby." Soon Rwemera and DeKorte were meeting weekly for encouragement and relationship. On Oct. 6, Embassy Church had its first service in the fellowship hall of Phoenix CRC.

Teens from both congregations make up a single youth group at the church. "It seemed like an obvious invite for us to make since they did not have a youth group nor the leadership capacity to lead one," DeKorte said. The group meets every other Sunday after Embassy Church's afternoon service. The combined group participated in a SERVE trip in July—traveling almost 1,250 miles (2,010 km) to Gallatin Valley, Mont.

—Sarah DeGraff

## Noteworthy



**Grace VanZandwijk, 15, and Avery DeWitt, 13, from Stratford (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church, earned silver and bronze medals with Team Canada at the World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Brandenburg an der Havel, Germany, July 16-20. The silver medal was for the under 16 200-meter women's race. The team earned bronze in four other races: the women's 500-, 1000-, and 2000-meter and the mixed 200-meter.**

DeWitt and VanZandwijk were chosen for the team along with six other Stratford youth after they attended a testing camp in Pickering, Ont., in October 2024. More than 30 countries participated in the global competition.



## Discipleship Homes Build Routine, Mentorship in New Jersey

Since 1997, Crossroads Community Ministries, an outreach ministry of Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, N.J., has given about 250 men a start in recovery and life transformation through its residential discipleship program. Living in and using five properties along Madison Avenue, men are able to build community, grow in faith, and establish more productive lives.

The discipleship houses are just one of Crossroads' ministries and address the need for concentrated care and mentoring in one place. Thomas Henion, Crossroads director since 2001, said that with multiple programs running at once, there's no establishing of "a long obedience in the same direction"—theologian Eugene Peterson's definition of discipleship. The live-in discipleship houses provide a space to create rhythms and routine.

The men live together in shared or single rooms, depending on the number of weeks they've been participating, and grow in healthy habits, faith, and integrity. Participants are required to have a job, a bank account, and a sponsor to go through the program, which includes an intake interview, one-on-one sessions, and group therapy. Other requirements include participation in Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous and consent to unscheduled alcohol and drug tests. The structure of the program allows participants to learn how to rebuild themselves and renew relationships over a year or 18 months, depending on the need.

Former participant John Grice has directed the discipleship house program for 11 years. He said he's seen many men go "from hell to amazing—a piece of heaven while still on earth."

Madison Avenue Church has seen many of the men become long-term members of its worshiping community and three who so matured in their faith that they have served as deacons.



Photo by Crossroads Community Ministries

### **Residents of Crossroads Community Ministries' three discipleship houses help each other grow in healthy habits.**

Grice credits Luther Frierson, the previous program coordinator who died in 2014, as being instrumental to who he is today. "Everyone deserves a second or third shot," Grice said—an opportunity to be "a better example someone will follow."

Grice works with Paul Reddan, another graduate of the program, who attends to the maintenance and mechanical needs of the discipleship houses. Crossroads Community Ministries obtained the properties over time, starting with one building it used as an office, food pantry, and programming headquarters. As donors

contributed toward down payments for additional properties, Crossroads purchased four neighboring houses. Henion said having the program remain in Paterson means having a place in the county seat, a place of influence.

Gifts from partnering churches and from Madison Avenue CRC members continue to support about 35% of the discipleship house costs. Participants also pay a \$110 weekly fee. As of May 2025 the program had 23 participants and a waiting list of about 10.

—Kimberly Simpson

# Calgary Church Moves Toward Alignment With Synod; Half Leave to Form Independent Congregation

Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alta., was removed from limited suspension in March after Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan recognized the church council's decision to retract statements from 2023 that did not align with Synod 2022's decision to declare as confessional the view that homosexual sex is always sinful. That act also set in motion a separation with members of Emmanuel who did not affirm the synodical decision. The leaving group formed a worshipping community called The Table, a currently independent church, with Emmanuel's former preaching pastor Dan Roukema (honorably released in 2025) serving as pastor. Retired pastor Martin Mobach is attending to the pastoral care needs of the remaining Emmanuel CRC congregation as a contract pastor.

In the spring of 2023, Emmanuel CRC, like many other Christian Reformed congregations, had to determine how to respond to synod's decisions and the recommended teachings in the human sexuality report. Emmanuel's council at the time decided to take time to fully understand the implications of the report and its teaching before making a firm decision. Kathy Stol, the current clerk of Emmanuel's council, said it was a determined effort to ensure that all members of Emmanuel felt heard and had a place to worship. The 2023 council decided to stay "in a moment of tension and unease as they wrestled with all the possible outcomes," Stol said. At that point the congregation said it would not require officebearers—those who serve as elders, deacons, or pastors—to affirm synod's decision.



Photo by Kathy Stol

Not being fully in line with Synod 2022 caused unease among some members, and some members left. Emmanuel stayed with this course until the summer of 2024, when the church determined that it was under limited suspension according to synod's definition of such congregations: those who "have made public statements, by their actions or in any form of media, that directly contradict synod's decision regarding unchastity" (Acts of Synod 2024). Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan acknowledged that status and appointed a church visitor to work with Emmanuel's council. Knowing members were divided on this issue, council polled the congregation in the fall of 2024. Fifty-four percent selected "I advise Council to begin the process to disaffiliate Emmanuel from the CRCNA," and 46% selected "I advise Council to align Emmanuel with the CRCNA."

Though the majority supported disaffiliation, the council decided in November 2024 that supporting those who wanted to leave to form a new congregation and allowing those who wanted to stay to remain as Emmanuel CRC was the best

course of action—a significantly simpler process with no legal rearrangement or formal changes required. The remaining Emmanuel CRC would affirm and align with the decisions of synod. The motion passed by council was "that Council begin the process of aligning Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church with the CRCNA by repenting of actions and decisions related to human sexuality that contradict Synod's latest decisions, and in so doing, resolve to work toward a peaceful separation with members of Emmanuel who desire to leave."

The departing group currently meets in a rented church building in downtown Calgary.

"While there are some hard feelings around how this process is being handled, the overall sentiment is that of grief that we cannot remain together as one local body," Roukema said. "The hope is that we can continue to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ."

The Table has begun conversations with other churches in various stages of disaffiliation from the CRC. "The goal is not to start a new denomination, but to build a community of like-minded churches who can support, encourage, and equip each other," Roukema said. The Table desires to be a church that allows and encourages full participation to all regardless of where they stand in regards to synod's declaration that homosexual sex is sinful.

Emmanuel has also begun talks with other churches to see what things might look like going forward. "The cost to operate the church and keep the lights on does not change just because half the members are now worshipping elsewhere," Stol said. "What does that look like in the short term, and what does that look like long term? Those are some of the practical things that we at Emmanuel must sort through."

—Dan Veeneman



# Closing CRC Blesses Recovery Mission With Its Property



Photo by Jamie Wall

**Gerrit Damsteegt, an elder from Faith Community Christian Reformed Church in Milford, N.S., brings greetings to John Calvin CRC at its last Sunday service. Transitional pastor Tom van Milligen is in the pew behind him.**

John Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Truro, N.S., which held its final service April 27, donated its property to Souls Harbor Rescue Mission, a ministry with over a dozen active and developing locations across Nova Scotia.

Matt Forrest, a pastor and manager of Souls Harbour's current Truro site, said the donation will allow the ministry to serve about 20 men in a year-long residential recovery program.

"This initiative will significantly expand our ability to address addiction at its root—through a holistic, Christ-centered approach that nurtures spiritual growth, daily disciplines, and long-term recovery," Forrest said.

The church's closing committee landed on Souls Harbour as the best fit for the property after receiving proposals from a handful of different organizations, all with previous connections to the church.

Tom van Milligen, a specialized transitional minister who served John Calvin CRC through the winters of 2023-24 and 2024-25, said it was helpful for the congregation to see that the people who might be served by the donation "weren't strangers, but people they'd supported" and partnered with already.

Forrest said minimal renovations are required to prepare the church building to be a residential recovery center—mainly installing showers and laundry facilities. He expects the building to be ready for residents as soon as six to eight months after Souls Harbour acquires the building. The facility will be named The Helm-Truro in keeping with Souls Harbour's first recovery center in Halifax, also named The Helm.

—Alissa Vernon

## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dirk Evans*

1940-2025

Dirk Evans was known for his ability to listen. "While he was adept at talking," said one of his sons, "I think his superpower was listening—with intent, seeking to understand, and not interrupting." Dirk, 85, died June 10 after several years of living with Alzheimer's disease.

Born in the Netherlands as Aalt Dirk van Sligtenhorst, Dirk immigrated to Ontario, Canada, with his family when he was 10 years old. It was an experience that led him to be welcoming to others for the rest of his life.

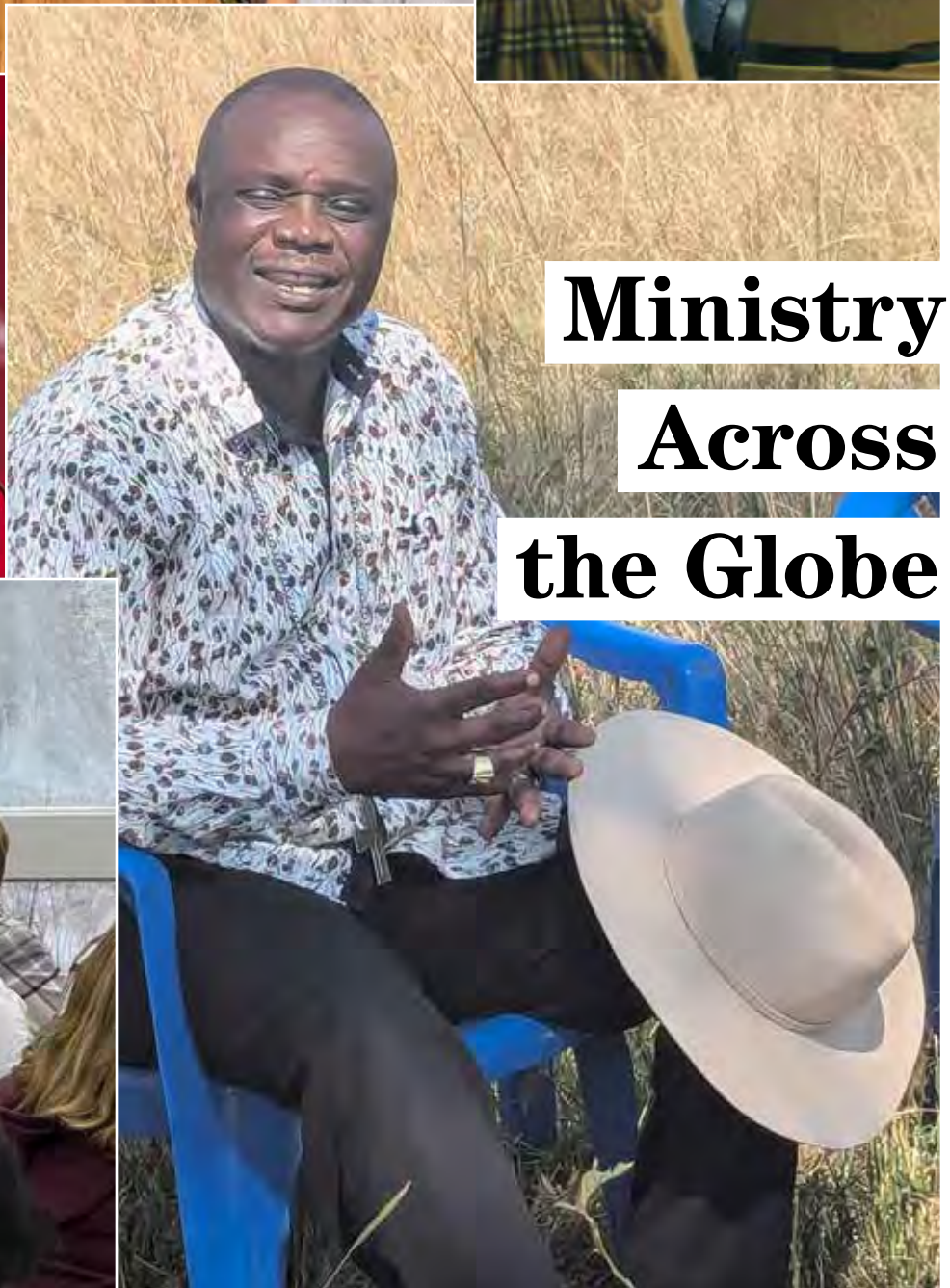
After graduation from Calvin College (now University) and Calvin Seminary and ordination in 1967, Dirk pastored Englewood (N.J.) Christian Reformed Church for three years. He then completed chaplaincy training and served as chaplain and supervisor of Clinical Pastoral Education for the next 26 years in hospitals in Detroit and Toronto. He pastored two more churches in Ontario—Immanuel CRC in Caledon, and CrossPoint CRC in Brampton—before retiring in 2005 and moving with his wife to Michigan to be closer to family.

Dirk skied into his 80s and enjoyed woodworking, caning chair seats, and gardening. He used his painting, drywalling, and carpentry skills on numerous mission trips.

Dirk is survived by Elly, his wife of 62 years; three children; three grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus





# Ministry Across the Globe





Since its founding almost 170 years ago, the Christian Reformed Church in North America has valued doing kingdom work together by creating and funding shared ministries in which all members and churches could take part. These ministries include those that plant churches or share the gospel via missionaries, those that alleviate poverty and rebuild after natural disasters, those that equip local congregations to be stronger and more vital parts of their own neighborhoods, and those that share the good news via a variety of media outlets. They also include educational institutions and a seminary.

If you have ever contributed ministry shares, put money in your church's collection plate, volunteered on a mission trip, or prayed for CRCNA ministries, then you are a vital component of these shared ministries. The stories that follow are snapshots of some of what you are helping to make possible right now all around the globe. **B**

## In Africa: A Shared Vision for Building God's Kingdom

Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor." At World Renew, we witness that good return firsthand through our partnerships with churches and like-minded organizations around the globe.

In Uganda, World Renew partners with the Nebbi Diocese of the Church of Uganda. The Nebbi Diocese serves about 1 million people with the support of World Renew. Through this partnership, World Renew strengthens church capacity to carry out community transformation programs such as food security initiatives and savings groups that help families in Uganda improve their own livelihoods.

Leading the Nebbi Diocese is Bishop Pons Ozelle. Those who meet Ozelle describe him as a larger-than-life personality, yet he leads his congregation and shares God's Word from a tiny office. He travels rugged roads to visit the communities the diocese serves, sometimes even hitching a ride on a motorcycle to get to church members. But Ozelle is also excitedly overseeing the building of a new church in his

diocese, where he will soon have enough space to lead 5,000 people in worship.

Part of Ozelle's ministry involves welcoming newcomers. As families flee rising violence and conflict in South Sudan, Uganda has welcomed more than a million displaced people. "They look like us," Ozelle explained. "Many of them have family here."

At the same time, the massive influx of people is straining the country's resources and its refugee response model. Ozelle wants to ensure refugees can find safety and welcome in his community. He extends his already-stretched budget to provide support to people who have resettled in the area. "You need your brother to take your hand and help lift you up," Ozelle said. "You can't do it alone."

As Ozelle cares for the most vulnerable members of his community, he said he is grateful for the direction he receives from World Renew Uganda. "The partnership between Nebbi Diocese and World Renew has brought about marked positive impact," Ozelle said, adding that he especially appreciates his diocese and World Renew's "alike vision of building the kingdom of God."

World Renew recognizes that bonds with its partners are not simply business relationships, but relationships built on mutual respect, a common purpose, and a deep faith in God. Together we can continue furthering God's kingdom and extending God's compassion to those who need it most.

"The harvest is truly plenty," Ozelle said, "and the Lord of the harvest is calling on all of us believers to take part."

—Kayleigh Van Wyk  
and Laurisa O'Brien,  
World Renew

## In Asia: Lost in Grief, Found in Christ

A gong sounded, followed by chanting, as Masahiro Kitamura knelt on the temple floor. The air was heavy with the haze and scent of burning incense. Like many people in Japan, Kitamura had been raised in a Buddhist family. But lately he was starting to wonder more about the truth—and he wasn't sure the Buddhist temple was where he was going to find answers.

With guidance from Resonate Global Mission missionary Jeong Gho, Kitamura found the truth in the Bible.

Less than 1 percent of Japan's population identifies as Christian, but Resonate missionaries are working alongside

**Your gifts support God's work around the world. Clockwise from top left - Resonate Global Mission missionary Jeong Cho front right, ReFrame Ministries radio host Emma Sereda, World Renew partner Bishop Pons, CRCNA co-senior leader for intercultural ministry Sebastian Maldonado, and Calvin University commencement speaker Carlos Erazo.**

local churches and believers to spread the gospel in the country.

While Kitamura had grown up kneeling on temple floors, his wife, Rie, was one of the few people in Japan who had grown up as a Christian. When the two married, Rie Kitamura attended worship services less and less often and eventually stopped going altogether.

Then, within a few years, both of Rie's parents died, and she was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. Her parents' funerals brought her back to church for the first time in years. Her husband joined her at church for the first time in his life.

Reeling from grief and in search of hope, they started attending worship regularly. Masahiro Kitamura said he was "drawn to the word of the Bible," but the couple felt out of place and weren't sure whom to lean on.

And then one Sunday, Gho preached at the church. When he invited the congregation to stay after the service for a Bible study, the Kitamuras jumped at the opportunity.

Gho and Masahiro Kitamura became fast friends. They spent many hours together, sharing meals and studying the Bible. The couple regularly joined online Bible studies—even from the hospital, where Rie's health was rapidly deteriorating.

When Rie died, Gho was there for her grieving husband. As time passed, Kitamura became more certain that Jesus was the truth he had been searching for. He recently decided to commit his life to Christ and celebrated his baptism.

Kitamura is thankful that he has found a new identity in Christ and is comforted by the assurance that he will see his wife again someday. He said that Gho has been instrumental in his walk with Christ: "It's due to him that I was able to get to know Jesus more."

—Cassie Marcionetti,  
*Resonate Global Mission*

## In Central America: Calvin Alumnus Encourages Class of 2025 to Embrace Faithfulness, Vision, and Bold Obedience

More than 900 members of Calvin University's class of 2025 crossed the stage inside Van Noord Arena on May 10, cheered on by thousands of family, friends, and faculty. Degrees were awarded in 74 areas of study, including more

than 120 master's degrees and six four-year certificates through the university's Life and Career Studies program, which serves students with intellectual disabilities.

Carlos Erazo, a 2013 graduate, pastor, and international content creator known for his digital ministry on YouTube and social media, gave the commencement address. Originally from El Salvador, Erazo shared his journey to Calvin—a path marked by uncertainty, faith, and God's provision.

As a high school student in El Salvador, he applied to Calvin after the deadline at his mother's urging. "You never know where God might open a door," she told him. That step of faith eventually led him to a transformative experience on campus. He began to discover and lean into his passion for pastoral ministry and faith-based storytelling through social media—a calling that would later define his career.

"I was nervous. I didn't know much. But I knew this: God brought me here, and his presence and grace were with me," Erazo said.

From that foundation, Erazo shared three lessons that have shaped his life and vocation—lessons he challenged the graduates to carry forward.

First, pursue faithfulness over success. Erazo encouraged students to stay committed to their callings, even when outcomes seem uncertain or slow to develop. "Faithfulness is not fast," he said. "It's a long obedience in the same direction." Referencing the parable of the talents and Galatians 6:9, he reminded the audience that God honors perseverance more than performance.

Second, expand your vision. Erazo shared how a simple YouTube video inspired him to begin making faith-based content for friends back home in El Salvador, eventually leading to a full-time ministry in digital evangelism. "Your vision should be so big that it's only possible if God accomplishes it through you," he said, urging the class to dream beyond cultural expectations and into God's purposes.

Third, be bold in obedience. Reflecting on his post-graduation path, Erazo reminded students that faith doesn't eliminate fear; it moves forward despite it. "There are people waiting on the other side of your obedience," he said. "Make much of God's glory, wherever he leads."

Carlos encouraged graduates to live out Calvin's mission: to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal.

—John Zimmerman,  
*Calvin University*



## In Europe: Supporting Women in War-torn Ukraine

A welcoming introduction opens the latest episode of *Hugs*, a radio program in Kyiv, Ukraine: “*Hugs* is a warm place for everyone who is waiting for their heroes.” Before introducing her guest, host Emma Sereda shares comments expressing anger from women whose loved ones have been fighting on the front lines of the war with Russia. Turning to her guest, a Christian psychologist, Sereda kicks off an in-depth discussion about dealing with anger in the fear and loss endemic to everyday life in war-torn Ukraine.

Sereda lives in Kyiv with her husband, Igor, and their two daughters, ages 8 and 4.

*Hugs* is part of a media mission called Embrace, which supports women whose husbands or sons are deployed on the front lines. It can be heard throughout Ukraine, including in territories occupied by Russian forces. “Maybe it’s a mother whose husband serves in the army, and she is all alone,” Sereda said. “She’s doing all the things to care for her house, she needs to work to earn money, she needs to support everyone in the whole family. Or maybe they have lost their building because it was destroyed, and they have been forced to move to another city. We want to help people admit, ‘It’s OK that I’m not OK right now during the war.’” Discussion centers on biblical truths to help listeners see God as their main source of strength to cope with the war. It also emphasizes healthy processing of feelings and emotions.

Off the air, the Embrace project teaches church leaders and volunteers how to work with people affected emotionally and spiritually by war. “Sometimes Christians want to support someone,” Sereda said, “but they use Christian vocabulary like ‘It’s OK; God will help you! Everything will be good!’ But people in the middle of depression or anxiety will not understand these words correctly, so we need to know how to speak with them to touch their hearts” without adding to their burdens. Sereda and her partners equip volunteers to host nightly Zoom prayer meetings to help women experience a little peace in very tough circumstances. Just hearing someone pray can be very comforting. One goal is to connect participants to a local church so they can join worship services and Bible studies.

How can we pray for Sereda and her ministry? “First for peace,” she said, but also for support for workers and volunteers who find it difficult to remain positive and upbeat when they suffer from the very same struggles. Finally,

Sereda asks for prayers for spiritual awakening. “We really see a huge wave of awakening in Ukraine right now,” she said, noting that the worry and fear surrounding the war have opened many people’s hearts to the gospel.

—Christopher Hunt,  
ReFrame Ministries

## In North America: New Intercultural Congregations Network

The explosion of cultural diversity in Canada since World War II is increasingly reflected in Christian Reformed congregations across the country. What was once known as a Dutch immigrant denomination is now the spiritual home and church community of people with dozens of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Adapting to this diversity can be challenging. That’s why the CRCNA’s Intercultural Ministry office has introduced the Intercultural Congregations Network, an initiative designed to connect several CRCNA congregations experiencing multicultural growth. The goal is to help them foster unity and participate in God’s work across cultures.

Building on the work of a pilot cohort of churches that began this work a year ago, the network will serve as a hub for resources, personalized coaching, and collaborative learning to help churches truly integrate and empower visitors, newcomers, and longtime members from all backgrounds.

“We know congregations are eager to grow in this area, and we’ve gathered and developed practical tools to help them do just that,” said Jeremiah Bašurić, co-senior leader for Intercultural Ministry.

A key offering of the Intercultural Congregations Network is expert coaching tailored to each church’s unique context. “It’s about meeting churches where they are and helping them develop a tailored approach to their specific context,” co-senior leader Sebastian Maldonado said. “This isn’t a one-size-fits-all model; it’s about empowering local leaders with the wisdom they need.”

By Victoria Veenstra,  
Canadian Justice Ministries

## The View From Here

# Hunkering Down Versus Looking Around

**IN TIMES OF UPHEAVAL** and uncertainty, there is a strong temptation to hunker down and look after your own. In churches this can happen when there is a difficult separation with a pastor or a painful division that results in members departing a congregation.

While a certain amount of introspection is necessary to address unhealthy dynamics in a family or congregation, consider the behavior of the early church. Its founder and Messiah had been betrayed and murdered. Its adherents were being persecuted and martyred. The church was bitterly divided over the ongoing observance of the Old Testament law. If anyone had the right to hunker down and look after their own, it was the early church. But it took the opposite approach.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 15:19-20: “So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.” The early church sent missionaries as far as Spain and Persia to gather in believers from every race, tribe, and language. What could motivate a small, struggling, persecuted, and scattered band of believers “to preach the gospel where Christ was not known?”

On Pentecost, the disciples were holed up in a room together, waiting for the visitation of Jesus’ promised “power from on high.” After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit launched them into the big, wide, scary world.

What does this mean for our Christian Reformed congregations 2,000 years later? Much like that early church, CRC congregations are experiencing upheaval and uncertainty. I would argue that today God is calling us from a posture of hunkering down to one of looking around.

We have been  
saved by grace to  
be ambassadors  
of Christ’s mercy  
to this broken and  
hurting world.


First, God is calling us to look around and embrace his global vision for the church. Nearly a quarter of CRC congregations are made up primarily of non-white believers, many of them immigrants. Many more predominantly white congregations are blessed to be increasingly diverse. Many of our immigrant brothers and sisters are still connected to friends, family, and congregations around the world. These global relationships provide opportunities for mutual learning, growth, church planting, and mission, in North America and beyond.

The CRCNA’s synod has established a Global Vision Implementation Team to study and recommend ways for congregations, classes, and our denomination to deepen their connections to the global church. I have been blessed to be part of this work.

I would be remiss if I didn’t note that in North America, especially in the United States, immigration policy and enforcement has become increasingly harsh and hurtful. In contrast, the CRCNA has always advocated for a posture of love and welcome toward immigrants, migrants, and refugees in alignment with Scripture and our confessions (See [crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/immigration-and-refugees](http://crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/immigration-and-refugees)).

Second, God is calling us to look around and embrace the gospel mission. Scripture and our confessions teach that God eternally chose believers for the free gift of salvation (Eph. 1). But we have been saved by grace to be ambassadors of Christ’s mercy to this broken and hurting world. Jesus’ mission includes the proclamation of the gospel, but also concrete acts of mercy and kindness. How much energy in our congregations goes to these kinds of good works?

Finally, we can look around and embrace the blessing of our shared CRCNA ministries. In this segment of *The Banner*, you can read stories about how these ministries are mobilizing and supporting local Christian Reformed congregations in their missional calling. These stories are inspiring, and they speak powerfully to the obedience of generations of CRC members to the gospel call that led the early church to send out apostles to the end of the earth.

As we consider ways in which we can embrace God’s outward vision for our congregations’ ministries, may we remember that the same Spirit that launched the early church “from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum” empowers us today. 



Rev. Zachary King is the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He is a member of Cascade Fellowship CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are

available at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean)에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).



# Stob Lecture Series: A Legacy of Thought Leadership

**CHRISTOPHER WATKIN**, a senior lecturer in French studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, will give the 2025 Stob Lecture on Nov. 18. Watkin's research examines how people make sense of the world and interact with ideas and positions different from their own. His latest book, *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Zondervan, 2022), evaluates through the lens of the biblical story the often-hidden assumptions and concepts that shape late-modern society.

Established in 1985, the Stob Lecture Series—originally named the Stob Lectureship—is a joint initiative between Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University created to honor professor Henry Stob's legacy of Reformed Christian scholarship. The lectureship was founded to bring distinguished or emerging scholars in philosophical theology, ethics, and apologetics to campus each year, fostering intellectual engagement with faculty, staff, students, and the broader community.

"The lecture series honors Stob's work, a 'bridge' to show that faith and the journey of understanding should and can go together," Seminary president Jul Medenblik said.

Lecturers are selected based on their academic excellence, alignment with Reformed and Christian perspectives, and ability to speak meaningfully and effectively to a wide audience. For more than three decades these lectures have served as a significant platform for exploring issues at the intersection of faith and reason.

In 2017, the Stob Lectures were incorporated into Calvin University's January Series to more effectively serve a diverse and growing audience. The current structure includes a



public lecture tailored to undergraduates, alumni, seminary students, and community members, as well as a closed evening colloquium organized by Calvin's philosophy and theology faculty. Select students are invited for more intimate academic dialogue.

While its subjects vary, the series maintains a focus on topics including ethics, apologetics, and philosophical theology, Medenblik said, continuing its mission of thought-provoking and accessible Christian scholarship. Past lecturers include Lydia Dugdale, Jeremy Begbie, Esau McCaulley, Sarah Coakley, and John Swinton.

"If you review the speaker list and topics," Medenblik said, "you will find a rich variety but also a singular focus to understand the world that God so made and God so loves by helping us see connections and challenges that we are called to face as Christians."

Calvin Theological Seminary invites the public to Watkin's lecture on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at Calvin Theological Seminary. For additional information, visit [calvinseminary.edu/events](http://calvinseminary.edu/events).

—Leah Jolly,  
Calvin Theological Seminary

The Our Shared Ministry section of *The Banner* is where you'll find news and inspiration from the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church.





# Self-Control: Running to Win

By Ben deRegt

**B**efore my feet even touch the floor, the battle between my desires and God's will has begun. The phone next to my bed begs me to check my texts before I give any thought to prayer. A hot shower woos me to linger longer than needed. I face the choice between scrolling Facebook or enjoying conversation with my wife. And that is just the first 30 minutes of my day! From sunup to sundown, I meet endless crossroads where I must choose whether to be ruled by impulse or restraint. And it seems the battle for self-control is not mine alone—in North America, more than a third of adults are considered obese, nearly a million people were arrested for drunk driving in 2024, and pornography websites rake in tens of billions of dollars.

Checking a phone, indulging a craving, or mindlessly frittering time might not seem like matters of great consequence. But don't be deceived: the conflict between the Spirit and our sinful desires is a war (1 Pet. 2:11), and our enemy is taking prisoners (Rom. 7:23). Solomon warned that a person who lacks self-control is as vulnerable to assault as a city with broken walls (Prov. 25:28). Impulse left unchecked will eventually result in casualties.

Countless sobering stories in Scripture show the steep price of impulses squelching self-control. Consider Esau, who in a moment of hunger traded all the benefits of his birthright for a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:29-34). Samson, though strong in body, was weak in the presence of a seductive woman. His lack of restraint cost him respect, his sight, and ultimately his life. King Saul, panicked and impatient, took matters into his own hands instead of waiting on God; it cost him his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:5-14). And David's unchecked desires plunged him into the darkness of adultery, deceit, and murder. Not even this man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) was immune from the dangers of impulse. Caving to fear, even Peter did what he boldly insisted he would never do: deny Jesus. Poor Peter traded peace for the pain of bitter regret. Clearly, self-control is not merely a helpful habit; it is a necessity. But where does this strength come from, and how can we grow in it?

## Holy Spirit-gifted

As an apple tree grows from a seed, self-control is produced by the Holy Spirit. Self-control is not self-generated, but Spirit-gifted: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"

(Gal. 5:22-23). We can no more generate Christ-like self-control in ourselves apart from the Holy Spirit than an apple tree can produce acorns. Before we can exercise self-control, it must be received from the Spirit.

And what an important gift it is! Though no more valuable than the other eight spiritual attributes, we can see God's wisdom in including self-control in the Spirit's gift bag. Without self-control, it is hard to imagine how the other gifts could grow and thrive.

Think about it:

- » Without self-control, love risks becoming self-serving and manipulative rather than sacrificial. The soul-wrenched tears of a wife whose husband won't stop his porn habit shout the truth of the matter: without self-control, love is destroyed.
- » Without godly restraint, we sabotage tomorrow's joy for today's pleasures.
- » Without taking every thought captive (2 Cor. 10:5), peace is consumed by worry.
- » Without the guardrails of self-control, patience dies a quick death.
- » Enslaved to impulses, we are likely to respond to insults with harshness, not gentleness and kindness.



Self-control not only arises from the Spirit, but it is essential to a fruitful life in the Spirit.

#### **Grace-taught**

Professional golfer Ryan McCormick had been struggling with angry outbursts on the course. He tried various approaches to control his anger, but nothing seemed to work. As a last resort, he decided to tape his mouth shut. While this unconventional strategy for self-control did make him briefly internet famous, it didn't help his score or produce long-term results for his on-course demeanor. Thankfully, we have a better teacher than tape: grace. Paul tells his young protégé Titus that grace "teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives" (Titus 2:11-12).

Grace seems an unlikely tutor of self-control. We are more likely to imagine a drill sergeant demanding obedience, with forehead veins bulging, face red, neck craning, spitting just inches from the nose of a fearful young recruit. But Scripture paints a different story.

It is "in view of God's mercy" that we are called to offer ourselves as living sacrifices who do not conform to the patterns of this world but rather are transformed by the renewing of our minds to live Spirit-controlled lives (Rom. 12:1-2). It is love that compels the apostles to no longer live for themselves, but for Christ, who died for them and was raised again (2 Cor. 5:14). Grace, mercy, and love are far more effective motivators than fear. Fear forces, but grace empowers and inspires.

#### **Grace-empowered**

Grace is not passive; it is a powerful force. The wonder of salvation through Jesus Christ is not only that his blood cleanses us from our sin, but that his Spirit empowers us to resist sin. The

From sunup to  
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Spirit enables us to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13). The promise of Galatians 5:16 is powerful—"walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." We need not rely on willpower, but on God's power to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. "It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). The very Spirit of Christ himself is within us.

Throughout his life, Jesus exercised the discipline of self-control. At the start of this public ministry, Jesus revealed his power over the desires of the flesh by resisting the devil's promises of provision, power, and praise in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). At his last Passover meal with his disciples, fully knowing the evil in Judas' heart (John 13:21-30), Jesus resisted the urge to expose him. Instead, Jesus washed Judas' feet and shared a meal. When the impressed crowds wanted to make Jesus king (John 6:14-15), Jesus—who was tempted in every way as we are—fought the temptation to take glory on human terms. Jesus set his face like a flint toward Jerusalem—not to ascend a throne, but to die a criminal's death.

In the garden of Gethsemane, agonizing over the painful road ahead, Jesus prayed, "If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but

as you will" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus pressed on. Moments later, Jesus faced Judas, who was flanked by a large crowd armed with swords and clubs (Matt. 26:47-56). With legions of angels at his disposal, it would have been nothing for Jesus to disperse or even destroy this violent mob. To fulfill Scripture, Jesus restrained himself.

During his trial, though falsely accused and ridiculed, Jesus harnessed his tongue. He didn't react. Instead of lashing out, Jesus kept silent (Matt. 26:57-68).

At the cross, in a mocking chorus the religious leaders and the passersby taunted Jesus and told him to save himself—"Come down from the cross, if you are the son of God! ... He saved others, but he can't save himself!" (Matt. 27:40, 42). Jesus ignored their insults, refusing vindication's immediate satisfaction. Instead, he chose to accept his suffering for the glory of his Father.

Jesus encountered every sinful impulse and overcame it. Where do you most lack self-control? Consider this and be empowered: "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

#### **Grace-inspired**

Grace inspires us to please our Father by being like his Son. God's grace adopts us into the family of God and makes us God's children. Nothing gives children greater joy than pleasing their parents. This is why Paul encourages us to "find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). Our Father's pleasure is our joy. Jesus understood this motivation when he commanded us to let our good deeds shine before others so that our Father in heaven would be glorified (Matt. 5:16). Exercising self-control is not about drawing attention to

ourselves, but about pointing to God's power in us. Surrendering our will to our Father's will brings glory to God's name. Self-control is an act of worship! Consider this and be inspired. Every time you refuse another drink or refrain from tailgating a slower driver, you are raising a "Hallelujah." Whenever you push through the impulse to procrastinate or to speak before you think, you sing a quiet doxology. For anyone who delights in pleasing the Father, this mindset really does make a difference.

### **Practical P's for Self-Control**

So how do we grow in the grace of Spirit-empowered self-control? Here are three simple but powerful practices.

» **Pray:** Jesus urged his disciples to "watch and pray" so they would "not fall into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). When called into the ring against the flesh's desires, pray. But don't pray for self-control. Rather, thank Jesus that he has already given it to you. In Christ, we have been given a Spirit of "power, love and self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Imagine the difference this could make the next time you are tempted to head for the fridge, click on that site, or explode in anger toward your unruly child. What you need is self-control; what you *have* is self-control. To think that the power God used when raising Jesus from the dead is the very power that is at work for us (Eph. 1:18-22) and in us (Eph. 3:20)! Pray for wisdom to recognize, accept, and exercise this truth for God's glory.


» **Practice:** Paul writes, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training" (1 Cor. 9:24-25). We won't win

with self-control in high-stakes competitions unless we are training diligently in the daily foot races. Like any gift, self-control needs to be developed through practice and repetition. Practice self-control by saying "no" to that third handful of Cool Ranch Doritos. Rehearse putting the desires of the flesh to death by setting a limit on your screen time and sticking to it. Stretch that muscle by choosing to turn off Netflix and getting to bed on time. Put yourself into strict training by saying nothing when your impulse is to share your unsolicited opinion. Little by little, day by day, if you train yourself with practice runs, you will be far more likely to win in the harder ones.

» **Press On:** When our oldest son was in junior high, he itched to summit Mount Baker, a popular peak in the Pacific Northwest. We had excellent intentions. We practiced our ascent by going to the gym to sweat it out on an inclined treadmill. That was 10 years ago. Sadly, I'm no longer using the gym, and we still haven't reached the summit. My problem was not practice or prayer. It was perseverance. Failing to stick with it, I forfeited the prize of sharing what would have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience with my son. Looking back, had I focused on the goal rather than the grind, I might have pressed on.

Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him"—the joy of returning to glory at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2). Paul persevered to get "a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor. 9:25). The Spirit promises that if we don't give up in doing good, "at the proper time we will reap a harvest" (Gal. 6:9). Self-control is attainable in the present when we set sights on our glorious future.

According to the apostle Paul, an undisciplined person is like a runner who, nearing the finish line, eases up ever so slightly and raises his arms in premature celebration only to be overtaken by his opponent in the final seconds. Paul urges perseverance in self-control, declaring, "I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that ... I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27)—not from salvation, but from the joy of life lived in step with the Spirit. How tragic to run hard and still lose the race for lack of self-control!

Self-control starts not with trying harder, but with trusting more deeply. The Spirit provides what the flesh cannot: the grace to grow and the power to finish well. Don't trade lasting joy for fleeting pleasures. Run to win. 



Ben is pastor of Second Christian Reformed Church in Lynden, Wash. ([secondlyndencrc.com](http://secondlyndencrc.com)).

1. Before you read this article, how highly would you have rated self-control among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)? Why?

2. Would you consider yourself as having strong or weak self-control? Why?

**READ MORE ONLINE**



# My Opa

Why had I never  
written to him?  
... How could  
I not have?

**NOT LONG BEFORE** leaving for Canada, I went to say goodbye to my Opa and Oma. After some pleasant chitchat, Oma staying in her chair, Opa went to place an open *Psalter Hymnal* on the old pedal organ. Getting the message, I laughed, went to the organ, and began to play what he had put up: Psalm 134. The instrument sounded asthmatic. Not having been played often, it was probably clogged with dust. Standing behind me, Opa stretched out his hands over me, and with a voice still strong he began to sing. Slowly, in whole notes, the song drifted through the darkened room, returning to me muted from within the pleats of the heavily curtained windows.

*Dat's Heeren zegen op U daal  
Zijn gunst uit Sion U bestraal  
Hij schiep't heelal zijn naam ter eer  
Looft, looft dan all der Heeren Heer.*

Translated from the Dutch, this reads close to "May the Lord's blessing descend on you and Zion's favor cover you. He created all there is to honor his name. Praise, praise the Lord of Lords."

The blessing—its melody the same as "Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow"—made my eyes fill with tears. Because of its familiarity, I could finish playing it without needing the music—just a sleeve of my jacket. On the way out, with a "Don't tell Oma," Opa put a gold 10-guilder coin in my hand, followed by Oma, who with a "Don't tell Opa" gave me another one! Then, with a kiss and a final goodbye wave, I left.

One time, when biking home from the bank where I worked as a teller, I reflected on how well I had acclimated to my new life in Canada in just three years. When home, I put my bike away and sat down by the kitchen table, where Mom brought me a cup of tea. Dad looked up from his newspaper and, just like that, said, "Opa is dead."

I put my cup down and didn't know what to say. "Dead?" He nodded.

I got up and went outside. My thoughts traveled back to Alphen, the Hofzichtstraat home with stained-glass windows, and my last visit there. Such good, good people! And deeply within, my soul wept. Then, with a shock, I felt sick. In those three years I had never written to Opa—not a letter, not a card, not a birthday wish, nothing. Then the tears came, and I cried suddenly, my loud, anguished wails getting lost in the open field next to me. Why? Why had I never written to him? I was his first grandchild, named after him, blessed by him. How could I not have?

I'm an Opa myself now, yet the question remains unanswered. The Lord's Prayer does not appear to have made provision for forgiving oneself. How can I ever forgive myself and forget the shame I put on myself?

Then, despaired and dispirited, my thoughts strayed (or were directed?) to a text that is very personal to me and hangs framed in our living room: Eugene Peterson's take on Ephesians 3:20:

"God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us" (*The Message*).

And miraculously, the balm of Paul's words to the Ephesians brought release of my anguish—and peace. B



Frank DeVries is a past principal at Christian schools in Wyoming, Ont.; Houston, B.C.; and Vancouver, B.C. He and his wife, Celia, are members of Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, B.C.

# Matlock Anchors a TV Preview for Fall

**A COZY COURTROOM** procedural with loads of humor and charm, and starring Kathy Bates? I'm all in. Add intergenerational dynamics and an underpinning quest for goodness and justice, and you have a show well worth watching. Millions of viewers and critics agree—Matlock is one of the most-watched and critically acclaimed shows on network TV.

When Madeline “Matty” Matlock (Bates) walks into the august halls of the Jacobson & Moore law firm, viewers are already on to her. She has to be more than the sweet old woman whose husband left her penniless. Right?

As viewers discover at the end of the first episode, there is more to Matty than meets the eye. The retired attorney has a secret agenda for working at the law firm, which I won't give away here, but it fuels the show for the entire season.

As Matty infiltrates the firm using her folksy Southern charm and brilliant legal mind, she gets to know her coworkers, including the hard-driving boss Olympia (Skye P. Marshall) and Olympia's affable ex-husband, Julian (Jason Ritter). Those two waver between love for each other and their children and their competition to score the firm's next partnership.

At first, Matty and Olympia's dynamic is lopsided, with Olympia barely tolerating the “junior” attorney she never wanted to hire, but she begins to respect Matty's clever mind and imaginative ways of unlocking clues and getting suspects and witnesses to talk. The two begin to form a bond, which is inconvenient for Matty. Their friendship is the heartbeat of the show, and the two actresses give riveting performances.

Half case-of-the-week procedural and half ongoing mystery, *Matlock* tackles complex legal issues, including the opioid crisis, environmental causes, and human trafficking. Because Olympia's team takes on pro bono cases, mercy for the most marginalized in society is a theme throughout. Christian viewers will appreciate the way the show explores justice for the least of these.

Rounding out the cast are Matty's truly junior office mates, Billy (David Del Rio) and Sarah (Leah Lewis). Billy is aw-shucks engaging, and Sarah, though she has a spiky shell, is likable once you get to know her. Throughout the season, Billy and Sarah rely on Matty's winsome wisdom, and the three become a solid team.

Though there are plenty of humorous hijinks that make it a reliable comfort watch, *Matlock* invites some serious questions about the nature of justice, loyalty, and friendship. Is it OK to lie to people to expose their wrongdoing? In other words, do the ends justify the means? That's the big question at the core of *Matlock*, and I for one can't wait to find out how this endearing cast figures out all of its layers in season two. (TV-14, CBS, Paramount+, Prime Video) **B**



Lorilee Craker, a native of Winnipeg, Man., lives in Grand Rapids, Mich. The author of 16 books, she is the Mixed Media editor of *The Banner*. Her latest book is called *Eat Like a Heroine: Nourish and Flourish With Bookish Stars From Anne of Green Gables to Zora Neale Hurston*.



## Gold & Greed: The Hunt for Fenn's Treasure

Reviewed by Sam Gutierrez

In 2010, Forest Fenn, an eccentric 80-year-old millionaire, hid a chest full of treasure worth over \$1 million somewhere in the Rocky Mountains north of Santa Fe, N.M. In his memoir *The Thrill of the Chase*, Fenn published a 24-line poem containing nine clues to the treasure's location.

This fascinating three-episode show on Netflix tells the stories of four different people who got caught up in “the thrill of the chase.” These treasure hunters describe how they deciphered the clues in Fenn's poem and went searching for what they believed was an “X marks the spot” location. It's a gripping look at our human lust for gold and the greed that drives it. (Netflix; rated TV-MA for language.)





## Murder in a Small Town

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Based on mystery novels by Canadian author L.R. Wright, *Murder in a Small Town* portrays the quaint but strangely homicide-ridden harbor town of Gibsons, B.C., and its stoic and offbeat chief of police, Karl Alberg (Rossif Sutherland).

Alberg has fled the big city for the supposedly slower pace of Gibsons. Unfortunately for him and the victims, people regularly turn up dead. Often it's Alberg's uncanny eye for a detail missed by 99% of other detectives that solves the case.

Though it has been compared to *Murder, She Wrote* and *Sullivan's Crossing*, *Murder in a Small Town* is not as cozy as the first and not as romantic as the second. Because it appears on network TV, things don't devolve into total depravity, but it's still not as charming as I wanted it to be. Maybe next season. (Fox, Hulu, StackTV, and other streaming platforms; rated TV-14 for violence, mild language.)



## Titanic: The Digital Resurrection

Reviewed by Sam Gutierrez

In *Titanic: The Digital Resurrection*, a team of explorers uses high-resolution cameras attached to remote-controlled submarines to take 715,000 sonar images of the sunken *Titanic* to create a high-resolution 3D digital recreation of the ship.

As the three expert hosts survey the entire site, projected on gigantic screens, they find evidence that either backs up or disproves eyewitness accounts of what happened the night of April 15, 1912, when the unsinkable *Titanic* sank.

For Christian audiences, the greatest takeaway might be that every day is a precious gift that can be lived with the full assurance in God's love while never knowing what tomorrow holds. (Disney+; rated TV-14)



## Doc

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Medical dramas are a dime a dozen, but *Doc* hooked me from the first episode and never let up over its 10-episode first season.

The premise is based on a true story: Dr. Amy Larsen (played by a marvelous Molly Parker) loses eight years of her life when a car crash results in her having retrograde amnesia.

As Larsen rebuilds her life and career, now shadowing the very lowlings she once belittled, she grows in humility and begins to pick up the pieces one by one.

With grief, grace, and forgiveness as themes of this artfully acted and written drama, *Doc* is a worthy exploration of healing in the halls of medicine. (Fox, Hulu, GlobalTV, and StackTV; rated TV-14 for blood, trauma, and preludes to sexual situations.)

## The Lowdown

**Raspberry Wars:** Born into a family in a small Dutch Michigan town in the early 1950s and raised by his religious grandmother, Sherwood De Visser navigates bullying and learns what it means to choose a life of faith, love, and joy amid chaos in this memoir with connections to the Christian Reformed Church. (Yopi Press)

**The Senior:** Thirty-five years after getting kicked off his college football team, 59-year-old Mike Flynt decides to return to the gridiron for his senior year of eligibility and prove to his family, former teammates, and himself that it's never too late to tackle your dreams. Based on a true story. (PG; Angel Studios; in theaters Sept. 19)

**Based on the Bestselling Book:** In the series *Chicken Sisters*, sisters Amanda and Mae are reunited when reality show *Kitchen Clash* comes to their town, and the competition between their two feuding chicken restaurants heats up. (Hallmark)

**The Story of a Giant Teenager:** Set in a small town in Wisconsin, Ron Rindo's book *Life, and Death, and Giants* tells the tale of Gabriel, a 17-year-old boy who is nearly eight feet tall, and the people who are transformed by their encounters with him. (St. Martin's)

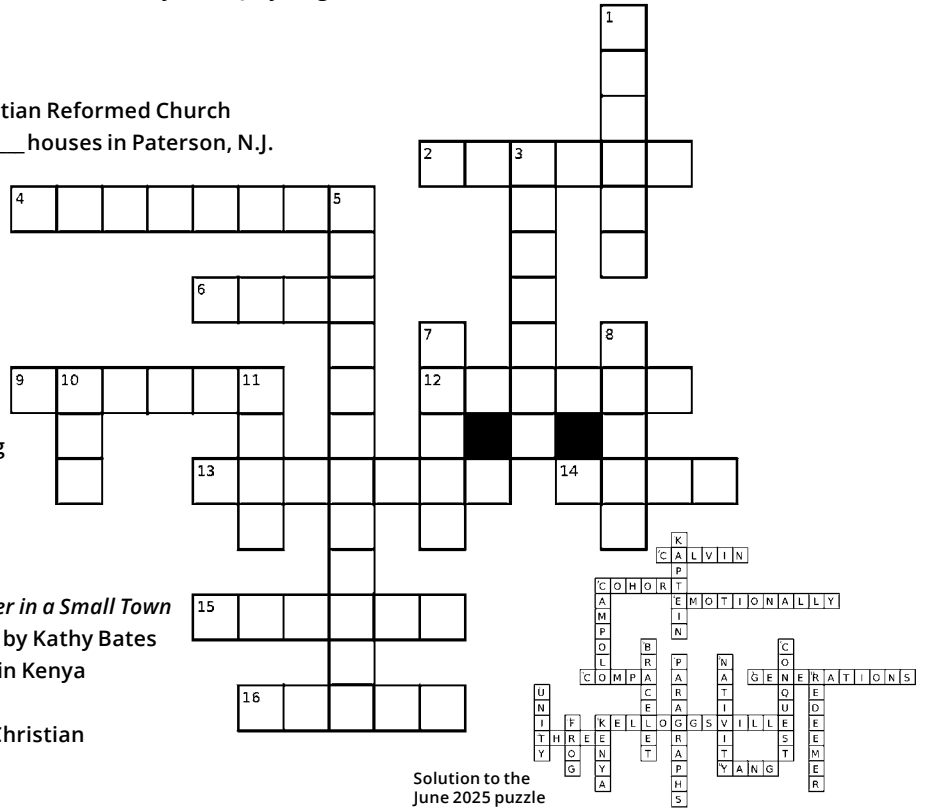
Find the answers to this crossword puzzle throughout this issue of *The Banner*! See the solutions in the next print issue. (Please note we do not publish Word Play in the July/August issue.)

### Down

1. Number of disciples who ate with Jesus
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Church meets at Phoenix (Ariz.) Christian Reformed Church
5. Crossroads Community Ministries runs \_\_\_\_\_ houses in Paterson, N.J.
7. Fear forces, but \_\_\_\_\_ empowers
8. The kind of connections made at an Ontario church's drop-in play time
10. A Dutch grandfather
11. He sold his birthright for a bowl of soup


### Across

2. His ministry involves welcoming newcomers
4. \_\_\_\_\_ De Visser's memoir navigates bullying and explores what it means to choose a life of faith, love, and joy amid chaos
6. Radio program in Kyiv, Ukraine
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ Kitchen Project
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Sutherland is chief of police in *Murder in a Small Town*
13. Titular character Madeline \_\_\_\_\_ is played by Kathy Bates
14. Dolls made of this were sent to a GEMS club in Kenya
15. Card game Courtney Saldivar played in 2013
16. Less than 1% of its population identifies as Christian



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**DEADLINES:** Ads for the October issue are due August 29, 2025; November: October 3, 2025. Subject to availability. Details online at [thebanner.org/classifieds](http://thebanner.org/classifieds), or for display ads see [thebanner.org/ads](http://thebanner.org/ads). Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

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## Church Anniversary

### CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 100 YEARS

**EAST LEONARD CRC** in Grand Rapids, MI is celebrating its 100th Anniversary at 9:30am on October 19, 2025. We invite you to join us for worship as we celebrate God's blessings and look forward to serving Him in the years to come!

### CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 75 YEARS

**LADNER CRC (CLASSIS BC SOUTHEAST)** celebrates 75 years of God's faithfulness on Saturday, October 18, 2 – 5 p.m. Former congregants and friends are invited to attend, by RSVP to [office@ladnercrc.com](mailto:office@ladnercrc.com) or (604)946-7033. Live stream link for the 3:00 program: <https://youtu.be/l7DWsGC66Wc>

Live stream link for Sunday, Oct 19, 10:00 a.m. celebratory service: <https://youtu.be/drXFfZz1U4>

**ORANGEVILLE CRC**, The Lord willing will celebrate 75 years of the faithfulness of God to the Orangeville CRC. All past members are welcome to the banquet for \$20.00 per person on October the 18th. The Sunday service on October 19th at 10:00 AM. For more information and tickets contact [jkoosterhof@gmail.com](mailto:jkoosterhof@gmail.com) before Sept. 12th.

### CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS

**GEORGETOWN CRC HUDSONVILLE MI** will celebrate 50 years on Sunday, September 7, 2025 with a worship service at 9:30am and a meal at 11:30am. A time of fellowship will follow the meal. All are welcome! ([office@georgetowncrc.org](mailto:office@georgetowncrc.org))

## Church Positions Available

**LEAD PASTOR** - Calvin CRC, located in Canada's capital Ottawa, Ontario, is prayerfully seeking a full-time lead pastor. The successful candidate would have a strong faith, prayer life, and spiritual vitality expressed through inspiring biblical preaching and empathetic pastoral care. Ottawa is a vibrant city providing many opportunities for our lead pastor to shape a unifying vision for our community programs. A strong commitment to Reformed theology and the denomination is essential. More information can be found at our church website at [calvincrc.ca](http://calvincrc.ca). Direct inquiries for more information about this position should be sent to: [psc-co-chairs@calvincrc.ca](mailto:psc-co-chairs@calvincrc.ca).

**PASTOR:** Grace CRC in Welland, Ont., Canada, in the heart of Niagara is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching & Congregational Care. To

faithfully preach the Word, nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation and reach out into the community to facilitate growth. For more information, our profile is located at [network.crcna.org/jobs](http://network.crcna.org/jobs), also contact George Sportel at [sport57geo@gmail.com](mailto:sport57geo@gmail.com) and/or call 905-714-1100.

### SUNNYSIDE CRC SEEKING ASSOC. PASTOR

Join us in connecting the Lower Yakima Valley to Christ! Job description can be found at: <https://www.suncrc.org/jobs>

**UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR A FT SR. PASTOR** at Golden Gate CRC ([ggcrc.org](http://ggcrc.org)) in San Francisco to provide leadership, direction and vision for our 3 diverse congregations and 4 associate pastors. Qual: M.Div. accredited theological seminary. Min 5 yrs. church pastor exp. Proficient in English; fluent in Mandarin or Cantonese. Authorized to work in the US. Inquire at [srpastorsearch@gggcrc.org](mailto:srpastorsearch@gggcrc.org).

## Wedding Anniversary

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS



**ROLFFS, JOHN AND SHIRLEY** celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 8th. Shirley celebrated her 90th birthday on August 16. They thank God for the many years

he has given them and for the family of 45 plus all the nephews and nieces and cousins and Friends. They would appreciate cards or phone calls. Shirley 320-220-0031, John 320-220-1900 address: 1015 Southeast Willmar Avenue, Apt 222 Willmar Minnesota 56201

## Obituaries

**BUIKEMA, YVONNE L.** (Ven Housen), 76, of Westchester, Illinois passed away on June 5, 2025. She is survived by her husband of 56 years, Edward Buikema; daughter of the late William and the late Anne Ven Housen, mother of Todd (Carolee) Buikema and Amy Buikema; grandmother of Peter, Matthew, Joseph and Andrew Buikema; sister of LuAnn (William) Stefek; aunt of many nieces and nephews.

**DOORNBOS, MARIE ANN (VISSER)** A cherished and beloved child of God, went home to heaven to live forever with her Lord and Savior on May 13, 2025. Marie, aged 92, of Zeeland, Michigan was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Rev. Marvin Doornbos, of 27 years. During her marriage to Marvin, Marie served alongside him at Calvary CRC Pella, Iowa; Bethany CRC South Holland, Illinois; Highland Hills (Westend) CRC Grand Rapids, Michigan; and First CRC Zeeland, Michigan. Marie was predeceased by her daughter Kathy, and is survived by her son Robert and daughter Mary as well as 5 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. Marie leaves a robust legacy of Christian hospitality and faith.

**EVENHOUSE, REV. NEVA** (Vander Zee) went to meet her Savior on June 9, 2025 at age 91. Trained as a nurse, she helped found and write and later publish and distribute Coffee Break, now a part of Resonate Global Missions. She graduated Western Theological Seminary and was ordained in the RCA at age 51, serving congregations in Holland MI and Wurtsboro NY. She is predeceased by her husband Robert and son Robert Jr. Survived by sons Mark (Shelley), Keith (Laura) and Richard, grandchildren David (Tessa), Kate, and Erin, great grandchildren Maddie and Jasper, siblings Bonnie, Leonard (Jean) and John (Wendy).

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**ROETERS, JOHN H.** of Berwyn, IL went to meet his Savior on 4-25-25. He is survived by 8 children, 16 grands and 7 greats and his siblings: Theresa (the late Ben & Pete) Hoekstra, Eleanore (the late Ted) De Jong, the late Anne, the late Harriet Linhart, the late Pete & Marilyn Roeters, Marilyn (the late Jim) Ronda and the late Henry. Uncle & friend to many. He was a devoted member of Ebenezer CRC and loved the Lord. He was an avid bowler and golfer.

**VAN EE, KEITH** age 69, of Pella, Iowa passed away April 10, 2025 after a 28 month battle with brain cancer. He is survived by his wife, Susan (Walhof), their daughters Tricia and Chandler Molbert, Krystal and Ben Lefevre, and 4 granddaughters.

**VANDE REE, CORNELIUS (CASE)** of Pella Iowa, age 94, passed away June 16, 2025. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Helen (Van Zee), and his 3 children Cheri Ottenbaker, Caryn (Russ) Van Hemert, Brian (Carri) Vande Ree, 10 grandchildren, and 17 great grandchildren.

**VAN DER AA, TERRY** age 79, a long-time resident of Hinsdale, Illinois, went to be with his Lord and Savior on January 17, 2025. He passed away peacefully at his home in Naples, Florida. For 54 years he was the beloved husband of Linda Van Der Aa (née Eenigenburg); a devoted father to Michael, Kristin (John) Gianoulis, and Kelly (John) Wilbraham; and a cherished grandfather to Kees, Gage, Katelyn, Libby, Rita, Jane, and Margaret. Terry is survived by his dear sister, Joyce (the late Jim) Lagestee, and was preceded in death by his older brother, John "Son" (the late Joan) Van Der Aa, mother Katie Van Der Aa (née Schepel), and father Mitchell "Mike" Van Der Aa. Born on January 16, 1946, Terry was raised in South Holland, Illinois. He attended Calvin Christian Grade School and Illiana Christian High School,

forming the foundation of his lifelong dedication to faith, family, and Christian education.

Terry was a visionary entrepreneur. Terry's father, Mitchell, founded what later became Vancom, a transportation company in 1925. By the time Terry was 25 years old he was a co-owner of Vancom and played a pivotal role in its growth, turning it into the largest privately held school bus company in the United States. His leadership and vision extended to the privatization of public transit systems and airport shuttle services across the country. He also collaborated internationally, introducing competitive practices and the privatization of transit operations in the Netherlands.

Terry was deeply committed to giving back. In 2004, Terry became a founding member of Providence Bank & Trust, serving as Chairman of the Board. The bank became a trusted financial institution that reflected his values and dedication to supporting the community. He supported the Calvin Prison Initiative, which provides education to incarcerated individuals. The "Terry Van Der Aa Legacy Award" honors contributions to the program. He was passionate about prison ministry and will be laid to rest in a casket handcrafted by prisoners at Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Terry served on the boards of the Prison Seminars Foundation, The Brooklyn Tabernacle, Timothy Christian Schools, Trinity Christian College, Calvin University, Ingalls Memorial Hospital, and the University of Chicago Hospitals. He also served as an Elder and on the Senior Leadership Team at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church. He was Chairman of the Board of Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship ministry, reflecting his lifelong commitment to Christian education, faith, and community.

Terry loved traveling with the love of his life, Linda. Together they visited over 40 countries on all 7 continents. Known for his strong work ethic and unwavering dedication to excellence, Terry lived by the motto, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well." He was a man of deep faith, a loving family patriarch, and a trusted mentor to many. His influence will be felt for generations to come.

Terry will be remembered for his remarkable vision, generosity, and the profound impact he made on those around him.



**VRYHOF, WESLEY** "Wes" passed away peacefully on July 7, 2025, at the remarkable age of 100.

He was born to Cornelius and Dora Vryhof on November 7th, 1924, in Holland, Michigan. Wes was the beloved husband of the late Frances Vryhof for over 70 wonderful years. Loving father of Sue (William) Aupperlee, David Vryhof, and Steve (Gayle) Vryhof.

Cherished grandfather of Mark (Jana), Todd (Shannon), Anna (Dan), Gwen (Jim), Daniel (Theiju), and Nick. And dear great-grandfa-

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ther of Drew, Kate, Joe, Ryan, Reid, Gwen, Grant, Marin, Nathan, and Abby. He will also be missed by 2 sisters-in-law, and many nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Wesley was a charter member of Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church, and he was deeply devoted to his faith. He also dedicated 39 years of his life to teaching at Grand Rapids Christian High School and he loved every minute of it. Wes fought for his country and served bravely in the army during World War II as a medic. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.



**YONKER, WENDELL E. "WENDY"**, age 101, of Palos Heights, IL was welcomed into Heaven Wednesday, May 29, 2025. He was born January 15, 1924, in Chicago, IL. Son of the late Martin James and Catherine (Hoort) Yonker.

Wendell is preceded by his wife of 73 years Dorothy Persenaire Yonker, daughter Cathy Larsen, brothers Kenneth (Mary) Yonker, Norris (Peggy) Yonker, his sisters-in-law Betty (Con) Douma, Phyllis (John) Groot, Jean (John) Rossier, June (Earl) Wolff, brother-in-law Charles (Phyllis) Persenaire, and brother-in-law John Leo. Wendell is survived by his sister-in-law Donna Leo, his daughter Wendy Sue (Eric) Van Vugt, son Thomas (Judy) Yonker and son-in-law Dave (Sally) Larsen. His nine grandchildren Josh (Debbie) Larsen, Anne (Dave) Vander Weele, Jennifer (Chad) Harris, Erin (Craig

Haan, Cate (Joe) Huizenga, Heather (Austin) Ramirez, Kyle (Heather) Yonker, Tim Van Vugt, and Chad (Lorien) Yonker. His 23 great grandchildren and countless nieces and nephews.



**ZUIDERVEEN, HENRY** passed on July 16, 2025. He is survived by his wife Verla (Dornbos) Zuiderveen; children Julie and Mark Palkowski, Marc and Sharon Zuiderveen, Scott and Pam Zuiderveen; nine cherished grandchildren; and twelve adored great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his sisters Betty Scholten and Annetta Marcusse and his brother Herman Zuiderveen. Henry was a member of LaGrave Ave. CRC.

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