

BANNER

April 2009 | www.thebanner.org

³² Does Your Church Have
the Right to Exist?
⁷ Holy Failure

²⁶ Signs of
God's
Faithfulness

¹⁸ Comforted in
the Darkness



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COVER PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO

Who Teaches the Profs?

THE INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES (ICS) IN TORONTO IS A GRADUATE SCHOOL started by, funded by, and for folks in the Reformed Christian tradition. It specializes in Christian worldview and philosophical studies and graduates students at the master's and doctoral levels. It has ably equipped many Christian scholars around the globe who are now profs at Christian institutions, including the Christian Reformed Church's own Calvin College. Beyond that it has prepared many Christian scholars for service in secular universities, campus ministries, and other areas of kingdom service.

For more than 40 years ICS has made its unique and key contribution in, for example, teaching the professors who teach the teachers who teach our high schoolers and kindergartners. But today ICS finds itself in the same life-or-death financial struggle as the Big Three. Its future is arguably even more precarious.

Why?

Two reasons, I think. First, the cost of providing Christian education at the graduate level is high. Neither parents of nor doctoral students themselves (already facing massive school debts) can pay much out of their own pockets. So ICS relies heavily on donors. But economic realities no longer allow larger donors to support ICS as they once could.

Second, ICS has not managed to widen its support base. It has done an awesome job of readying scholars for kingdom service (including several of my own family members—so, yes, I readily admit my bias). But that strategic contribution has never caught the imagination of most Reformed Christians inside or outside of the Christian Reformed Church.

Maybe it's because ICS is located in Toronto instead of Grand Rapids, Mich. Maybe it's because early on ICS profs would occasionally bite the ecclesiastical hands that fed them. Maybe the distance from the barn, office, or shop floor to the seminar room is too far. But I suspect the larger reason is that the vision of providing Christian day school education at *all* levels is eroding steadily in denominations like the CRC. It's ironic that the generations that benefited the most from the huge financial sacrifices of earlier generations on this score are exactly the ones who are fumbling the ball.

Granted, we've often failed to affirm the right and wisdom of many Christian Reformed parents to send their kids to public schools. Granted, we've done a bad job of integrating public school kids into the life and ministries of the church. We need to fix that, but not by losing our vision of providing biblically centered Christian day school education at all levels.

Time is running out for ICS. Its demise wouldn't cause much of a ripple in our denomination. But it would bang another nail into the coffin of what we're called to be as Reformed Christians and as Christian Reformed congregations that promote Christian day schooling. Why do we promote it? Because Jesus, our Savior and Lord, claims us as his very own. With his own precious blood he bought us 24/7: heart, hands, and head. So we take seriously our baptismal vows "to do all in [our] power to instruct these children in the Christian faith" (CRC baptismal form).

Not one thin dime in Obama's and Harper's rescue packages are earmarked for ICS. Who among us can and will step up to rescue it? ■

Time is running out for ICS.



Alberta. See his blog at www.thebanner.org.

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Holy Failure

BOWLING was not my first choice. But I went along with the plan because I was eager to spend time with our friends and everyone else wanted to go bowling. So on a Saturday afternoon we showed up at the bowling alley and divided into two groups: the three adults and our teenage daughter on one lane, and the two middle schoolers and two grade schoolers on the neighboring lane.

None of us has much talent for the sport, so the results were predictable: many groans as the ball lapsed half-heartedly into the gutter and occasional triumphant cheers when someone—for mysterious reasons—managed to get a strike. The final scores were, of course, dismal.

All this was especially frustrating for my daughter, who is an excellent athlete and always strives to do well. She concentrated, she adjusted her approach, she focused on her follow-through, but none of it seemed to have any direct effect on how many pins fell over. Meanwhile, her brothers were rolling balls from between their legs, then leaping and high-fiving when (several seconds later) their slow-rolling balls toppled every last pin.

“Bowling,” I sagely remarked to my daughter, “is a great way to face failure. It’s good for the soul.” This did not comfort her.

That afternoon happened to be Holy Saturday—the day between Good Friday and Easter—and I’ve been thinking ever since about the role of failure in the spiritual life. Could failure be a “day” we have to live through before redemption becomes real in us?

As a teacher, I think about failure a lot at the end of the school year. My own failure, that is. Early fall is all about new ideas and high hopes. By spring, disheartening clarity sets in. I recall my poorly designed class periods, untapped student potential, projects proposed but never

even started—so much lost opportunity. It’s not as if I didn’t try. But my best efforts are never enough.

Often we think of our brokenness only in terms of our culpable sins, but what about our ordinary, daily shortcomings and weaknesses, the ways we fail despite our striving efforts simply because we are limited and weak and mortal?

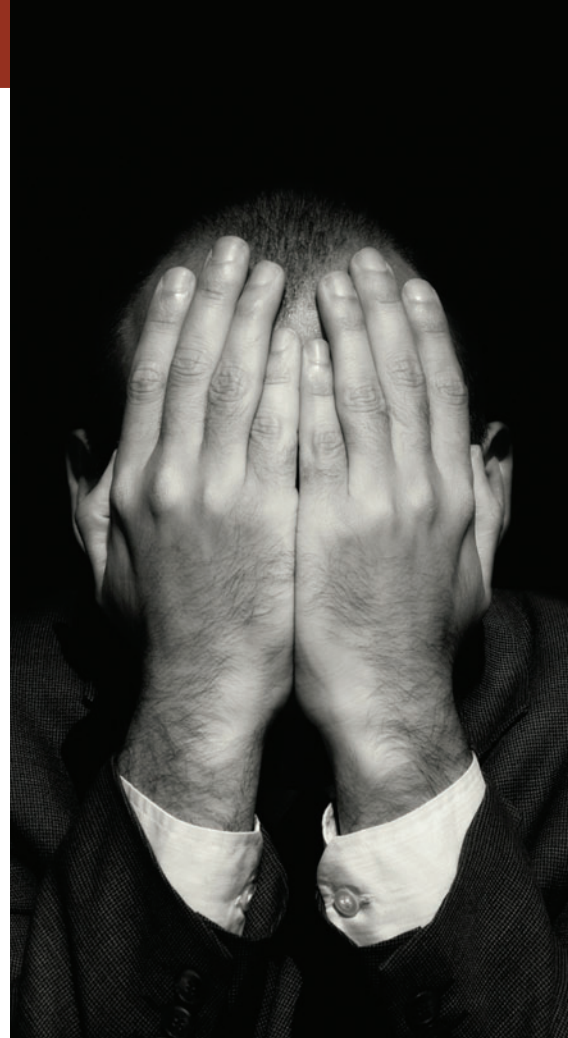
In the day of failure, we can falter into despair. Or we can instead look to the holy. God uses our failures as well as our excellence to spin the threads of blessing. A singer thinks she sang off-key, yet someone in the congregation was comforted. A new employee unknowingly gets tangled in a long-boiling conflict, yet his blunder somehow reconciles the warring parties. A doctor cannot save the elderly grandfather’s life, yet the family thanks her with tears of gratitude for her compassion and attentiveness.

God has turned my failures into holy moments often enough to cultivate in me a realistic humility about anything that looks like “success.” What careful engineering of the Spirit goes into every blessed thing! We give energy and effort and excellence, as best we can, in order to be faithful. But that’s not what makes miracles happen. We know that redemption—that ultimate miracle—is not about our efforts, but about grace. Likewise, little miracles happen when we stumble into the light of the holy.

Such moments may seem as random as someone with my skill level bowling a strike. But they’re not random at all: they are the Spirit’s Saturday designs, flashes of Easter Sunday grace coaxing all our days into the light. ■



Debra Rienstra is an associate professor of English at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.



IT IS INDEED
THROUGH OUR BROKEN,
VULNERABLE,
MORTAL WAYS OF BEING
THAT THE
HEALING POWER
OF THE ETERNAL GOD
BECOMES
VISIBLE TO US.

—HENRI NOUWEN

Fear Not the Teenagers

IMHO



TEENAGERS make adults anxious.

It's true. I've yet to encounter an adult who's never experienced anxiety at the sight of a teen in some type of situation. Think of how many times you've walked through a mall or down a street and seen a group of teens hanging out. Has it ever made you uncomfortable? Have you ever caught yourself thinking, "Those kids are probably up to no good" or something along those lines?

Quite often these days it seems that the reputation of teenagers is not one most people would want. Why? That's a tough one to figure out—perhaps many of us really don't want to. Yet it's an issue we struggle with, not just "us" as a church but "us" as a society. The seemingly default feeling of society when it comes to relating to teens as a group is one of nervousness and sometimes disdain.

How did we get to be so judgmental?

I believe the reason for the separation between teens and adults is a "structural disconnect," one I think Mark Yaconelli, author of *Contemplative Youth Ministry* (Zondervan, 2006) sums up best: "The separation between adults and youth begins long before adolescence. Many

youth spend most of their childhoods segregated in daycares and schools, afternoons and evenings in front of televisions and computers, weekends hanging out with friends. By early adolescence most young people are attuned to a different reality, a different world than adults. The less contact adults have with young people, the more mysterious they seem. Adults can fall into the traps of projection, speculation, worry, and fearful imaginings. Congregations and church leaders find themselves relying on the media to learn about kids. They absorb stories about teenage gangs and violence; they watch videos and movies that portray teens in a less than ideal light. . . . And all this becomes a filter of how young people are perceived. Sadly, many adults are unable to see what the truth is."

Today's teens are actually the least violent and careless of all teens in the past 20 years. Bill Strauss, co-author of *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*, says, "Never before has there been a generation that is less violent and less vulgar than the culture being offered them."

If you compare what society presents to us with real-life encounters with teens, you'll find today's young people quite impressive.

So would you like to get to know a teen? Instead of trying to relate to him or her through what society says is the cultural norm, try relating through actual encounters. Talk to teens, interact with them, and determine for yourself what they are like; don't go by what Hollywood says.

I think you'll be surprised. ■



Brent Lamberts is youth director of Unity Reformed Church, Kentwood, Mich.



Talking About Homosexuality

Regarding the Editorial and IMHO of the March 2009 issue ("What's to Discuss?" and "Where Is My Son Welcome?"), insert any other sin in place of homosexuality—would we still be having this discussion?

Let's not worry about conforming to "the expectations of most straight Christians" (IMHO), but to the expectations of God.

—John P. VanStaalduinen
Terra Ceia, N.C.

While I appreciate the thoughts and tone of your March editorial, I wonder how successful attempts at greater understanding and acceptance of gay people can be when the starting point of the discussion is "we know God's will on this topic." This attitude is implicit in the Christian Reformed Church's position on homosexuality.

If there is a genuine desire to achieve greater understanding, I suggest that it begin by listening to the experiences of gay men and women—those in the CRC and the many who have left. Stephanie Sandberg's *Seven Passages* would be a good starting place. After seeing this play, I was left with this question: when people experience so much pain, why do they remain? Indeed, many have not, myself included.

—F. William Voetberg
Grand Rapids, Mich.

LETTERS

The Holy Scripture is the only rule of faith and living. We as Christians are to strive to live as the Holy Scriptures teach us to. When we use other means to live our lives, we can run into trouble. These other means could be our feelings, our opinions, or our desires. The Christian lifestyle is to reflect what the Holy Bible teaches, not the other way around. The Bible gives us example after example of those who did it the other way around and the trouble it caused for them and their society.

—Don VanderKuyf
Hudsonville, Mich.

Who in their right minds would “choose” being gay and being held up to constant ridicule and abuse of all kinds? Continually being reminded by the church that we are never “good enough,” and definitely “not worthy”?

I was born gay. I had no choice in the matter—heaven knows I spent years of my life trying to “conform to the expectations of most straight Christians,” to the point of wanting to take my own life.

My will to survive made me seek help. Through this help (which did not come from any religious community) I realized I am a unique human being—as each one of us is—created in the image of our Creator, and I learned to accept myself simply as I am, being responsible to love, care for, and accept all human beings.

—Neil Mudde
Toronto, Ontario

One would be insensitive indeed not to feel the pain in Mike Veenema’s article or sense the compassion in Bob DeMoor’s editorial.

However, in both the article and editorial there seems to be an unspoken assumption reflecting the cultural opinion that living in a sexual relationship is both inevitable and may even be a natural human right. Yet there are countless singles who, for various reasons, have

either never married or have been widowed or divorced for much of their lives. Many of them live with extreme loneliness and sexual frustration. This too is a result of our fallenness, but not something for which they are necessarily directly responsible. We can understand and sympathize when they give in to temptation, but because of the teaching of Scripture, we are not yet prepared to accept the legitimacy of non-marital sexual relations (even if we also turn a blind eye to them on occasion). Why should it be any different for homosexuals?

The pursuit of happiness in this life is enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, but not in Scripture. Sometimes we have to live with deep sorrow, loss, and pain, secure in the assurance that this is infinitely preferable to gaining the world and losing our souls.

—J. Cameron Fraser
Lethbridge, Alberta

Evolution Conundrum

Regarding “Speaking of Evolution” (February 2009), is it any wonder that 50 percent of our youths leave the church? When we apologetically compromise the Genesis creation account, why should we accept any of the other biblical miracles as true fact?

There are many scientific resources available that substantiate a six-day creation—the Answers in Genesis Organization; the Creation Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio; Australia’s Creation Ministries International, to name just a few. Why not promote and celebrate these resources?

—Ray Dykstra
Listowel, Ontario

I enjoyed your coverage of evolution in the February issue, but I thought you missed a point or two. The scope of science is limited to theoretical speculation that leads to empirically testable hypotheses. This means that questions such as

God’s role in creation fall outside the scope of science. Darwin was not an atheist—he apparently believed in God and respected Christian beliefs. There is no conflict between believing that God is the Creator of the universe and exploring evolution scientifically.

I suggest that Christians turn their attention away from pseudo-conflicts such as evolution versus creation and devote their energy to questions such as what God wants us to do about poverty, war, starvation, and the gross inequities in distribution of wealth created by our almost worshipful attitude toward capitalism.

—Frank Barefield
Holland, Mich.

In reply to your excellent article, I recommend a book called *The Language of God* written by Francis Collins, a well-known Human Genome Project geneticist and former atheist. He makes a case where he personally discovered some of the scientific evidence for common descent of all living creatures.

—George Lieuwen
Langley, British Columbia

The Banner received many more letters in response to the February and March articles on evolution and homosexuality than can be printed here. Look for continued discussion online under April Letters at www.thebanner.org.

Correction

The Banner apologizes to Nicaragua for mistakenly placing it in the Southern Hemisphere (“Sea to Sea in Nicaragua,” March 2009). It was an editing error and not the fault of our faithful news correspondent Jenny de Groot, who happened to appear on the cover.

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Nursing home resident Bill Chambers (left) visits with Daniel Yazzie of Sanostee CRC following a worship service at the nursing home.



JACK KLUMPENHOWER

Going the Extra (100) Miles in New Mexico

Members of Sanostee, N.M., Christian Reformed Church have to drive a lot of extra miles for their nursing home ministry. The small church is in a remote community on Navajo Indian land, 65 miles from the nearest licensed nursing home.

"We'd been praying about what kind of ministry to do and never thought about going way out there," said Rev. Raymond Slim. "But the Lord led us there. I think those are the more neglected people of our community." Now the church has committed to make the long drive to the nursing home every Sunday afternoon for a year.

Church members leave after their morning service, skip lunch, arrive in time to hold an afternoon service in the nursing home, and stay to visit with residents afterward.

Those miles of highway take the church across cultural barriers as well. On a recent visit to the Cedar Ridge Inn nursing home in Farmington, N.M., the Navajo members from Sanostee found themselves ministering to a group of people who are mostly not Native American.

Rev. Slim preached in English and Navajo. The worshipers sang hymns in both languages, too. Church members passed out

gifts of warm socks, slippers, and gloves as snow fell outside.

"We love our brothers and sisters in Christ who are here," said church member Linda Yazzie. Her husband, Daniel, explained, "If you believe in God, you've got to be everywhere, not just one place."

The whole church, including children, is taking part. The Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining

Congregational Excellence program helps with the expenses.

"I think it's wonderful," said nursing home resident Catherine Bessie after attending a service. "I love their service, and the fact they take the time and come out here."

—Jack Klumpenhower



125 for Roseland Madison Humphrey was one of many happy second-graders who helped celebrate the 125th anniversary of Roseland Christian School with a coat drive.

The Christian Reformed Church started Roseland in Chicago in 1884, but it has since become an independent school with its own board of directors. There is also a Roseland Christian Reformed Church.

The coats will go to the Roseland Christian Ministries Center, which houses mothers and children who are homeless and runs a drop-in center for people living on the street. The students collected 38 new and gently used coats.

—Ruth Moblard De Young



Putting Cancer to Rest Sarah Thomas, a member of New Life Christian Reformed Church in Red Deer, Alberta, and her friend Hannah Muzsik (right), are working hard to put cancer to rest. The two 11-year-olds stitch up small pillows to raise money for cancer research, selling the pillows to their classmates and church members.

Sarah explained that her family has been closely affected by cancer. "My grandpa died of brain cancer, my aunt died of bone cancer, my mom's second cousin died of leukemia, and a good friend of mine is in the hospital with liver cancer."

The two young girls were quite surprised at the response to their pillows. "Our fellow students at Gateway Christian School cared more than we thought. We made \$250 in one day, and it felt good to make a little difference," said Sarah.

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

Raising the Roof in Nicaragua

Every January you can find a group of dedicated volunteers from DeMotte, Ind., somewhere in Central America, building something.

They are members of Christian Reformed churches in DeMotte, and they have gained a reputation for excellence at welding and working with steel over the past 15 years.

Bob Gabrielse, a DeMotte attorney, and his wife, Arla, organize the trips. They meet each year with a representative of Worldwide Christian Schools to find out where the team's skills can best be used.

"We are a goal-oriented team. We bring welding equipment, saws, grinders, and lots of other equipment on the plane," Bob Gabrielse said. "Projects like this must be highly organized."

This past January nine men and six women traveled to Managua, Nicaragua, to build a two-story church that will be shared with neighboring Gamaliel Christian School.

Local workers took down the old one-story church. Paint, steel, and roofing materials were on site when the DeMotte team arrived.

The women painted numerous steel beams and moved scaffolding, while the men put together the beams, welded them in place, and put on the roof.

Meanwhile, team artists painted three murals on the courtyard walls. The local



Volunteers from DeMotte, Ind., construct a church Managua, Nicaragua.

church will put up the concrete walls of the church building.

Each DeMotte volunteer pays his or her own way for the trip. Offerings from the four Indiana Christian Reformed churches involved paid the \$17,000 for project materials. "The offering is always exactly what we need. God provides," said Gabrielse.

—Ruth Moblard De Young

Financial Peace Comes to Rock Valley

"But I'm always going to have a car payment!"

"It will take thirty years to pay off my house!"

"Financial Peace University," a workshop written by Dave Ramsey and offered by Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Rock Valley, Iowa, seeks to shatter those myths, said co-coordinator Dianne De Wit.

Debt elimination, communication skills, a house purchase, investing, and saving for tuition are just some of the topics covered. "The bottom line is being able to give to [God's] kingdom," said De Wit. "It's powerful stuff."

Two 13-week sessions recently attracted nearly 100 people from



Cutting up the credit card was one of the things Sarah and Lance Vander Pol (pictured here with daughters Sydney and Megan) learned at their church's finance class.

the congregation and the surrounding community. The church offered child care during the classes as well.

Statistics show that financial trouble is the number-one reason for broken marriages, De Wit noted, though not every couple

who attended the classes was in debt. Some came to help others with what they've learned. "It's so encouraging to see young couples get involved and teaching their kids," said De Wit.

Lance and Sarah Vander Pol are taking the classes. When spending money, they've learned to ask, "Do I need or want this?"

They are also teaching their children. Sydney, 5, and Megan, 3, have daily chores. The money they earn goes into decorated envelopes marked "give," "save," and "spend." The first envelope goes into the church offering. Sydney said she is saving for a Barbie doll.

"I'm not just going to hand them money," Sarah Vander Pol said. "If they want something, they have to bring their purse."

—Sherry Kooiker

From Racine (Wis.) Christian Reformed Church to **Rev. Douglas Aldrink** of Bradenton (Fla.) CRC.

Synod, Budget Both High on CRC Board Agenda

The denomination's budget and many reports and issues related to synod dominated the agenda of a recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church. (Synod is the annual leadership gathering of the denomination.) The board met Feb. 26-27 in Burlington, Ontario.

No Synod for Edmonton?

Due to the financial circumstances facing the church, the board will ask Synod 2009 to approve holding Synod 2010 in Grand Rapids, Mich., instead of Edmonton, Alberta, as had been planned. The change is expected to save the denomination at least \$70,000.

The board also discussed the possibility of proposing that synod be held every other year instead of annually. Each synod costs roughly \$300,000. The board will receive a report regarding a biennial synod in September.

Budget Update

The board approved changes to the pensions and benefits of

denominational employees that will see employees pay more toward their health-care premiums and employer contribution to pensions cut by nearly two-thirds.

The reductions are part of an effort to cut \$2.5 million from expenses in this year's budget. Even with the cuts, John Bolt, director of finance and administration for the church, projected a shortfall as high as \$3.5 million by the June 30 fiscal year end.

Pensions

The Ministers' Pension Fund in both the U.S. and Canada sustained serious losses in 2008. However, the pension benefit payments are secure, according to Bolt. Cash income into the fund remains high. "There's no reason to panic," he said.

New Center for Congregations

The board approved more specifics on a new denominational office provisionally called the Center for Congregations, including a budget and a director. The concept was approved at the board's meeting in September 2008.

The board approved the appointment of Rev. Michael Bruinooge as interim director of the new office. He will divide his time between that role and his current job as the denomination's director of ministry planning.

The center's \$316,000 budget will be covered by \$75,000 in a new ministry-share request, \$100,000 transferred from the Sustaining Congregational Excellence program, \$15,000 in gifts above ministry shares, and \$126,000 in staff re-allocation.

The church's specialized ministries, such as Chaplaincy Services and Disability Concerns, will not be housed by the new center, as had originally been announced.

Synod 2009 to Have Youth Observers

In an effort to more actively engage young adults in the life of the denomination, the next synod will have a panel of youth observers. Four of the seven observers between the ages of 18 and 26 will come from the Christian colleges affiliated with the CRC, with three more nominated by the Board of Trustees.

The young people will attend advisory committee meetings and plenary sessions of synod, but they will not be entitled to participate in sessions or vote. After synod ends, they will give feedback on their experience.

Name Changes

The board approved changing the name of the Abuse Prevention office to the Safe Church Ministry to more clearly identify its purpose. The Interchurch Relations Committee has also been renamed the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

Banner Writer Needed

Do you have the WRITE stuff? *The Banner* is looking for a news correspondent in the Pacific Northwest (Washington and Oregon) to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

All expressions of interest should be sent via e-mail to Gayla Postma, news editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please submit a short resume, including your writing experience, and two recent samples of your work.



Banner Pals Carol Smith from Modesto, Calif., and Sandy Santjer from Rapid City, South Dakota, are still handwriting letters to each other like they've done for 50 years.

It was a young Sandy who put her name in *The Banner*, hoping to find a pen pal through the former "Banner Pals" section. Carol replied and a 50-year friendship was born.

The two have shared many joys and sorrows over the years, through marriage, births of children, and deaths of parents.

"We both have a strong mutual faith in God; it has kept us close across the miles," said Santjer.

Now Santjer and Smith have granddaughters near the same age who are continuing the long-distance tradition—by e-mail.

—Heidi Wicker

—Gayla R. Postma



The McBain, Mich., church recently celebrated 125 years.

Lucas CRC Celebrates 125th

Lucas Christian Reformed Church in McBain, Mich., celebrated its 125th anniversary recently.

Rev. Steve Van Noort, pastor of the church, said the celebration, which included four former pastors, hosted more than 500 people from the area.

“These people had been impacted through this church,” said Van Noort.

Just prior to the celebration, Lucas CRC had been without a pastor for several years. Van Noort said the anniversary was meaningful to him since he had just accepted a call to Lucas and was one week from being ordained.

He said he was coming in “to stand in line” and join the former pastors and church in its ministry, which he said is “full of optimism and hope.”

—Karen Gorter

Mexican Seminarians Help Spanish-speaking Inmates

A cross-border ministry is matching seminary students in Mexico with Spanish-speaking prisoners in the U.S. who need Christian encouragement.

Students at All Nations Seminary in Juarez, Mexico, spend one evening each week grading Bible lessons mailed in by prison inmates. They also write letters back to the prisoners.

All Nations Seminary is a ministry of the CRC’s All Nations Church of Lake View Terrace, Calif. It also partners with Sunshine Community CRC in nearby El Paso, Texas.

Rev. Daniel Kuiper, who teaches at the seminary, says



DANIEL AND JEANNE KUIPER

the letter writing expands those ministries’ reach while improving the students’ education. “They begin to apply what they’ve studied, especially pastoral care, and apply that on the front line,” he said.

“I like to help people who are in need,” said student Esperanza Orozco. “This is a way to apply my learning and to obey the words of Jesus.”

The idea came from Jeananne Kuiper, wife of Daniel Kuiper. Jeananne knew Spanish-speaking prisoners in

the U.S. would be encouraged by contact with Christian leaders who shared their language and culture. So she arranged for the Mexican students to reply to homework submitted in Spanish through Crossroad Bible Institute, a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based prison ministry offering correspondence courses.

“The students put time and prayer and effort into these letters and realize this is a powerful way they can minister,” she said.

—Jack Klumpenhouwer

Massachusetts Church Opens Teen Center

For years students from local middle and high schools hung out after school on the back steps of Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church in Whitinsville, Mass. Since some smoked, the group became known as the Smokers’ Club.

Instead of discouraging kids from loitering there, the church saw it as an opportunity.

Youth pastor Bill Hodgeman and a couple of students from the church opened the Real Life Student Center in a dedicated space in the church this past fall.

The center is open three afternoons a week from 2-5 p.m. and staffed by volunteers from the church and community. Students play games, do homework, have a snack, cook, work on computers, or leave a “mark” on a graffiti/art wall.

Hodgeman says many of the students come from “at-risk” homes in the area and some are now coming to the youth programs offered by the church.

Seventh-grader Marie Delgado summed it up for many of the kids when she said, “Coming here is the highlight of my week.”

—Calvin Hulstein

Ninth-grader Gianna Loranga works on an art project at the Real Life Student Center at Pleasant Street CRC.



LEO AUDETTE

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Jeffrey D. Voorhees
1971 – 2008

Rev. Jeffrey D. Voorhees, a pastor who had deep love for his parishioners, was passionate about his convictions, was gifted in music, and was a loving, dedicated husband and father, passed away at age 37. His death came as a result of a traffic accident Nov. 21, 2008.

Voorhees entered ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 2000. He served two churches in Holland, Mich.

Voorhees was a gifted, articulate preacher. His thorough understanding of God's Word was matched by his personal faith conviction and appreciation of the Reformed heritage. He was passionate about evangelism and church revitalization, topics that were also the focus of his doctoral studies, which he was about to complete.

A man of joyful spontaneity and loyalty, his company was always appreciated by his colleagues in the ministry.

Voorhees is survived by his wife, Katie, and their four young children. He is also survived by his parents, Donald and Barbara Voorhees.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Voorhees, please visit www.thebanner.org. Further information on recently deceased ministers is also available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.

Colorado Kids Build Farm

Sunday school kids from Cragmor Christian Reformed Church have gone into the farm business—big-time.

What started out as a Christmas project in this Colorado Springs, Colo., church has turned into a year-long effort to make a difference in a needy world.

The children's goal was to build a farm by collecting enough money to buy one cow, one pig, one sheep, and one seed package through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee gift catalog.

With the theme, "change can make a difference," the children challenged the congregation to find coins lying around their homes, in their cars, or anywhere. They made colorful paper barns and distributed them to church members as reminders to pray for the poor in other countries and to bring their coins to church.

Education director Mike Broekhuis said, "It was fun to



Kalvin Blauert (front), Sara Courduff, Carsyn Hamstra, Rebecca Robinson, Abby Bolt, Avyrie Hamstra (middle, l-r), and Chase Marra, David Bolt, and Culley Hamstra (back) are helping build a farm with CRWRC.

watch the kids running around after church collecting the coins and putting them in the 'collection silo.'"

The initial project was so successful, they added four goats to the Christmas farm and decided to keep on collecting coins throughout the year. More purchases are being made as money comes in and will continue throughout this year.

One student said, "I couldn't believe how much we could buy with just collecting coins."

"It felt good to know that we could help some people living way across the world," another added.

Broekhuis said if 100 people found a penny a day, it adds up to \$365 a year—enough to build a whole farm.

—Alice Durfee

Delivering More Than Furniture

Furniture delivery volunteers from Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Cutlerville, Mich., often meet people who own just a suitcase and a blanket.

What makes 35 volunteers lug heavy loads of donated furniture up two or three sets of stairs in all kinds of weather? "We're instructed in the Bible to help others in need. We're following instructions," Rog Naber said on a recent winter day when snow made deliveries difficult.

Furniture goes to fire victims, refugees, and others.



Just following instructions: from left, Rog Naber, Bob Theule, and Bob Storteboom help move gently used furniture.

Donations to the six-year-old ministry come from stores and individuals. Another volunteer, Robert Storteboom, keeps track of all incoming items and lets local agencies know what is available.

Each recipient also gets a Bible and a Bible study course. "One man said, 'Of all the things you gave me, the one I'll cherish most is the Bible,'" Naber said.

—Carolyn Koster Yost



Dylan Boone, 3, Jacob Hoving, 11, and Faith Boone, 7, enjoy fresh produce from the community garden planted by Fairway CRC in Jenison, Mich.

Digging in to Feed Others

A community garden in Jenison, Mich., is a living sermon for Kara Kaluske.

Kaluske reflects on God's goodness while picking beans and tomatoes with her two children. "The intent of the garden being free really comes across. What a great illustration of God's gift of salvation to all who want it!" she said.

The free garden is provided and tended by Fairway Christian Reformed Church. Several members launched the project a year ago, enlisting seed and plant donations from businesses and collecting cash for underground sprinkling on the 100- by 150-foot plot next to the church, Scott Helder said.

Neighbors, clients of a church networking organization, food pantries, and church families all enjoyed the bounty of the harvest. One Sunday church members picked 100 pounds of beans to give to a food pantry. By last summer's end, every pepper and eggplant had been consumed.

"It's difficult to know how many people used the garden, but immediately after we sent fliers, we saw parents and children coming," Helder said.

Neighbor Jennie Boone noticed many harvesters visiting the garden, including her green-thumbed son, Jacob Hoving, 11. "He would be in that garden all the time if I let him," she said.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Washington Students Learn "Vertical Habits"

In a unique partnership between church and school, Sunnyside (Wash.) Christian Reformed Church and Sunnyside Christian School are developing vertical habits.

Vertical Habits is a program developed by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to engage people more deeply in worship. Funded by a grant from the Lilly Foundation, the church and school are working together to focus families on nine specific habits of the Christian life: praise, gratitude, service, illumination, petition, confession, creed, lament, and blessing.

"The purpose is for the home, school, and church to partner together to help our children and their families focus on worshiping God every day, not just Sundays," said Mary Werkhoven, worship administrator for the church.

Sandy Vis, a teacher at the school and worship coordinator for Sunnyside CRC, said, "I love the way we have been connected with this theme . . . school, home, church, to see the same words and images/symbols in each of these places."

Each month's theme is preached on and supported with visual reminders (banners) at church and then addressed at school. Sunnyside teacher Dana Clark said, "It's life-changing—the reminder that we have so many avenues through which to worship."

—Heidi Wicker



(Clockwise, starting lower left): Students Connor Duim, Deyton Cleveringa, Seth Knotts, Adrian Heffron, Aydan Harrington, and classmates write their praises to God.

Ontario Author Shines Light on Child Refugees

Two of Sonya VanderVeen Feddema's passions, children's literature and refugee concerns, recently converged in the publishing of her book *Monzi and Mama's Stories*. Written for 7- to 10-year-olds, the book is about refugee children.

VanderVeen Feddema, who has always appreciated children's stories that involve social issues, joined with a number of others in 2004 to begin praying regularly for refugees.

In 2007 she went on a Refugee Learning Tour to Africa organized by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the CRC's relief and development agency. There she visited refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya.

"It was my hope and prayer that I could write a picture book for kids," said VanderVeen Feddema. But when she returned to Canada she felt she needed to delve still more deeply into the lives of refugee children. She connected with Ugandan aid worker Mary Amolo, whom she had met in a refugee camp, and enlisted Amolo's help in collecting the stories of refugee children.

Using the children's accounts and what she herself had seen in the camps, VanderVeen Feddema wrote *Monzi and Mama's Stories*. Kenyan-based Phoenix Publishers (www.phoenixpublishers.co.ke) published the book. Royalties from the book will be donated to the refugee sponsorship program of CRWRC Canada.

VanderVeen Feddema is a member of Covenant CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario.

—Sophie Vandenberg



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema with her book about refugee children

WORLDNEWS

CRC Australia Helps with Fire Disaster

The Christian Reformed Church of Australia (CRCA) has many congregations in the Melbourne area, where wildfires burned out of control the first week of February.

Jonathan Vandenberg, who works at the denomination's resource center, said that in early February they had three days in a row of 44 C temperatures (111 F), when the area faced its worst wildfires ever.

In outer regions of Melbourne and rural Victoria, where many CRCA churches are located, fires spread so fast and hot that whole towns were destroyed and more than 200 people died. More than 700 homes, schools, and businesses were destroyed.

"The CRCA has only a few members who have lost homes and property. To our knowledge, none of its members perished in the blazes," Vandenberg reported.

"The CRCA churches in the areas close to the fires are meeting with other local churches and local government to organize the churches' relief work and community care," Vandenberg said. "Many CRCA congregations throughout Australia are contributing special offerings for the relief that is going to be distributed via the CRCA diaconal relief team."

(REC)

The Shack Author Speaks at Trinity

Where is God in a world filled with such unspeakable pain?

When the character Mackenzie Philips broaches this subject with "God" in the *New York Times* best-seller *The Shack*, the answers he receives challenge his beliefs about God's character, power, mercy, and grace, as well as his perception of what it means to be loved by God.

Author Paul Young spoke to 800 people Feb. 17 at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill.

Young describes his wildly popular self-published work of fiction as "somewhat autobiographical." He said the story draws on his life experiences—from staggering losses to transformational healing—and was written for his six children, with no intention to publish.

How sales grew to 1 million copies in the space of a few



Paul Young, author of *The Shack*, spoke at Trinity Christian College in February.

years is explained by Young as "a God thing, not a Paul thing."

Throughout the evening, Young shared several stories, which elicited uproarious laughter and even tears from the audience.

Young also addressed some of the "push back" he has experi-

enced from those who question his theology and his portrayal of God the Father as a gregarious African American woman.

"All imagery created to represent God is inadequate," he said. "God doesn't fit into our categorical boxes."

Young graduated summa cum laude from Warner Pacific College in Portland, Ore., with a degree in religion. Currently he works as a general manager, janitor, and salesman for a small manufacturer's rep company in Oregon, where he lives with his wife, Kim.

Young said he has always been a writer and has written stories and poems over the years to give as gifts to family and friends. "I'm not a real author," he said. "I'm an accidental one."

—Amanda Cleary, Trinity Christian College

MAKINGNEWS

Church Stops Signing All Marriage Licenses

Leaders of a Congregational church in Cleveland, Ohio, say they will not sign marriage licenses until gay and lesbian couples are allowed to legally wed in the state. The move, approved by an overwhelming voice vote during a recent congregational meeting, is a civil-rights protest, said the church's pastor, Rev. John Tamilio III.

Hispanic Christians Rally for Immigration Reform

A U.S. Hispanic Christian group plans to hold monthly prayer vigils on Capitol Hill in hopes of pushing Congress toward passing an immigration reform bill.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., urged the government to stop deporting undocumented immigrants and focus on more pressing security threats.

Presbyterians to Study Civil Unions

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has tapped a 13-member committee to investigate the place same-sex unions should have in Christianity and wider society and issue a report in 2010. Like most mainline Protestant denominations, the PC (USA) has been divided for years about the role of gays and lesbians in the church. Currently, 173 presbyteries, or local governing bodies, are voting on whether to allow gay

and lesbian ministers. Clergy are allowed to bless same-sex unions so long as the relationship is not equated with marriage.

Religious Broadcasters Brace for Uncertain Future

Digital podcasts and streaming video aren't bringing in the cash that religious broadcast ministries need to weather a painful economy. To make ends meet, religious broadcasters are postponing innovations and counting on loyal (largely senior) audiences to keep donating even when it hurts.

See the story behind each headline in the April Banner online at www.thebanner.org.

FAQS

Creation

Q As a fifth-grade Sunday school teacher, how can I teach Genesis 1 without setting up students for conflict when they study science in school and college? I currently teach that God created a glorious creation, but I do not talk about the six days. Is this a proper method or a cop-out?

A We're glad you emphasize God's glory in creation! This is a key theme in the Bible that sometimes gets lost in all the controversy.

You're right, though, that it's important to prepare students to understand the controversy when they grow older. Young children are not yet able to understand gray areas, so it's appropriate to simply teach the Bible stories as written; these passages have been used across cultures for thousands of years to teach about God's glory and the goodness of creation.

By upper elementary, you can begin to teach children about the culture in which Genesis was written. Just as you explain the culture of idol worship in Old Testament times, you can explain that those cultures viewed the physical world very differently than we do today, as a flat earth with a solid-dome sky. Most people also believed that the earth and sky and sun were all gods that must be worshipped. Ask students to imagine how the Israelites felt to hear that those things actually are not gods, but good things created by Israel's God, Yahweh.

When students reach middle and high school, they can begin to understand different Christian positions on origins. The *Walk With Me* curriculum from Faith Alive Christian Resources includes a unit on creation for grades 6-8 (year 3, unit 5), which emphasizes that science and the Bible both teach us about creation and that we should respect different Christian viewpoints on origins. This theme is continued in more depth in the Faith Alive four-session curriculum for high school students called "Fossils and Faith." Some parts of these curricula could be adapted to younger grades, depending on the questions your fifth graders have.

—Deborah and Loren Haarsma

Deborah and Loren Haarsma are professors in the Physics and Astronomy department of Calvin

College. They are authors of "Speaking of Evolution," which appeared in the February 2009 Banner and of *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and Evolution* (Faith Alive).

Health

Q When should a person seek medical attention for chest pains?

A For severe chest pains the answer is *now*—and to the nearest emergency department. If the pain is not that bad but associated with shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, loss or change in consciousness, or pain in the arm, neck, and jaw the answer is also to go to the ER—now. Call 911. Transport should ideally be by ambulance because the crew is able to give you early oxygen, do an ECG, give drugs as necessary, and monitor for and treat potentially fatal heart rhythms.

Another reason for going quickly is to prevent permanent heart damage (time is muscle), using increasingly sophisticated treatments. For communities that do not have a hospital or local ambulance, still call 911 to determine your best options.

If it turns out not to be your heart, one needs to think of other major problems such as blood clots to the lung, collapsed lung, or aortic aneurysm, as examples. Not all cardiac diagnoses mean you are having "the big one." A concept of "risk stratification" can be used to determine if you need emergent admission to a coronary unit, a ward bed, or if you can be managed outside the hospital.

Patients with chest pains are not a nuisance in the ER—everyone in the system knows what's at stake. Delaying your own treatment unnecessarily is seen as foolish.

The ER is not your only option. For minor, temporary chest discomforts, an office visit may be appropriate. If you can speak to your doctor, he or she can guide you further.

No one is able to tell exactly which set of symptoms should trigger a doctor's visit because people vary so greatly in their symptoms—everyone's owner's manual is different. If you have any doubt please check with your doctor or the nearest ER.

—Herman Borkent

Dr. Herman Borkent practices medicine at Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta.

Relationships

Q My pastor's wife is rude to me. How should I handle this?

A The first thing to remember is that perception is not the same thing as objective truth. For instance, people's differing character traits and cultural upbringing can lead to very different interpretations of the same behavior. We should be slow to judge and quick to tolerate differences.

Having said that, the possibility always exists that your pastor's wife seeks to insult and wound you when the opportunity presents itself. Your best approach is to speak to her privately and ask if there is anything you did to upset her. If she gives you a litany of what is wrong with you, listen attentively and mirror back to her what it is that she is saying so you know you have understood her correctly. Do not become defensive. Apologize if your actions or words have been hurtful to her in some way and thank her for her observations. Then end your meeting.

Talk about her observations with a close friend whom you consider to be wise. Ask your friend if she sees the same faults in you that have been expressed by the pastor's wife. If your friend sees some merit in them, learn from them. If the accusations are vague, however, or completely untrue upon reflection with a friend, ignore them.

Accept that you may never be the pastor's wife's favorite person. Be pleasant and polite if you are thrown together, but for the rest, go on with your life, and accept that you can't please everyone.

If your pastor's wife tells you that nothing is wrong, she will likely apologize for having hurt your feelings. Accept her apology, express your relief, and enjoy a good laugh together about the incident.

—Judy Cook

Judy Cook is a family therapist and clinical director of Salem Christian Counseling Services, Hamilton, Ontario. ■

BY BRIAN WALSH

Comforted in the DARKNESS

Offering an Easter cuddle in the face of death

PEOPLE DON'T TEND to knock when they come into my office. Maybe it's my location near the bookstore, maybe it's the nature of the space, but people don't tend to knock.

So I wasn't really surprised when I turned around from my telephone conversation to see an elderly woman looking at my collection of tea. She had simply walked in without knocking.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"I hope so," she replied.

Can I help you? In some contexts that's a question of commerce. Can I help you find something that you would like to purchase? Sometimes, it's a question of dismissal. You have intruded into my space, can I now politely get rid of you?

But in a campus ministry office, indeed, in the context of any concern for ministry, for the Good News, this must be a question of invitation.

exactly what the Bible suggests that she will meet. "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence," writes the psalmist (115:17). That is what you meet when you go into the sleep of death.

Maybe the problem is that her friend's imagination has been so taken up with the our culture's stories of light and angels in others' near-death experiences that she was frightened because her experience didn't match those stories. Maybe she had fallen prey to that romanticized view of heavenly existence that had been the church's heresy for so long.

So we talked about resurrection. We talked about 1 Thessalonians 4 and the dead rising first. We talked about a triumphal eschatological "meeting" with the Lord in order to accompany him, as the New Jerusalem comes down as a bride out of heaven to the earth. We talked about a new creation, redeemed bodies.

All good stuff. All true. All custom-

Some parents buy their kids a night light so they won't actually have to deal with the dark. Sylvia and I have never gone that route. There is darkness. And it can be scary, but artificially illuminating that darkness is, well . . . artificial.

What do we do with our kids when they are afraid of the dark? We climb into bed with them or we invite them into our bed. Are you afraid of the dark? Then come and let me hold you, let me cuddle you. You will still have to face the dark, and we will have to be silent if we are to embrace sleep, but you will not have to face the darkness and the silence alone. Come into the dark, but come with my arms surrounding you, my breath beside your face, my heart beating close to yours. There, my darling, now go gently into your sleep tonight.

The difference between my kids being cuddled to sleep and a friend being cuddled unto death is that while my children will wake up alone in their beds,

You will not have to face the DARKNESS and the SILENCE alone.

"Can I help you?" I asked. "I hope so" she replied. And I thought, "I hope so too."

Her question was serious. Her question was pastoral. It was about a friend, and I knew it really was about a friend, not just a cover for her own question.

Her friend was, like her, elderly. But she was also sick, she was dying. Indeed, she had already had a near-death experience.

And that was what scared her friend. No shining light, no angels, no sound, no joy, just darkness and silence. In her moment close to death she met darkness and silence. And now this woman of faith was frightened of death. She didn't want to go into that darkness, into that silence.

Could I help this woman in my office find a way to help her friend? I hoped so.

Turning to Scripture

We began with the Scriptures. Her friend met darkness and silence? Well that is

made to provide a deeper hope in the face of death than any of the sentimental, pious, and dualistic alternatives.

The elderly woman was excited. She was taking notes. Yes, maybe this would help. Maybe her friend needed to imagine things differently.

Holding Out a Hand

And yet, I knew all along that these were all ideas. Good ideas, even true ideas, but ideas nonetheless. Could ideas give this woman's dying friend comfort? Somehow I knew that they couldn't. At least not on their own.

So we came back to the fear. What is she afraid of? She's afraid of the dark. She's afraid of that silence and that loneliness of the dark. Well, what do we do when children are afraid of the dark? Tell them not to be silly? Tell them that there are no monsters under their bed? No. That won't comfort a child afraid of the dark.

that friend will wake up still cuddled—in the healing arms of Jesus.

And this is what the woman in my office needed to hear. She needed to hear that she was called to embrace her friend unto death. She needed to know that her love for her frightened friend was an invitation for her to hold her friend as she enters into the darkness and the silence of her death.

An incredibly high calling. A wonderful honor and privilege.

I then prayed for the woman who walked into my office without knocking. I prayed that she would receive this ministry of cuddling in the dark, cuddling unto death, with joy and peace. ■



Dr. Brian Walsh is a Christian Reformed campus minister at the University of Toronto. He is member of Lindsay (Ont.) CRC.

Books on the Big Screen



IN RECENT YEARS I'VE SEEN SEVERAL

literature-to-film adaptations I enjoyed and could recommend, even as a lover of literature. However, as a children's librarian and teacher concerned about the wave of aliteracy sweeping the United States, I am cautious. It's hard enough getting young people to read good books without telling them there is a passive, visually stimulating alternative.

If a film is the only exposure some kids will get to a great literary work, I've learned to take what I can get. On the other hand, I honestly believe a good literary adaptation can lead moviegoers to the original work, just as one WonderWorks production of *Anne of Green Gables* led me to discover—and devour—the novels of Lucy Maude Montgomery.

Still, *The Birth of a Nation* was adapted from somebody's idea of great literature. That, along with having seen cinema "auteurs" butcher some genuine classics, makes me wary. One has to be careful, not only of adaptations of books people might want to think twice about reading, but also of screen renditions of worthy books that run roughshod over the

A good literary adaptation can lead moviegoers to the original work.

original work. For example, there's a movie I like to call "Demi Moore's *Scarlet Letter*." I won't even count the ways the film diverges from Hawthorne's novel.

Jane Austen's work has fared only slightly better in Hollywood; some aficionados describe both the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* with Greer Garson and the 2005 version with Keira Knightley as "Austen Light." A standout exception, however, is director Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995). Based on Emma Thompson's outstanding screenplay, the film beautifully captures the essence of the novel and, I'd say, honors Austen's work as successfully as Peter Jackson did Tolkien's in *The Lord of the Rings* movies.

Such happy exceptions may be on the rise. This is due in part to Walden Media's ongoing efforts to bring literary excellence, particularly in children's literature, to the big screen. From this rich well sprang fine adaptations of the first two installments in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Because of Winn Dixie*, and *Holes*, just to name a few. And there are more to come—C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* has found a place among Walden's future releases. Spread the word that the movie is based on a book! ■



Jennifer Parker is a writer, teacher, and children's librarian in West Point, Miss.

Son of Man

reviewed by Ron Vandenburg



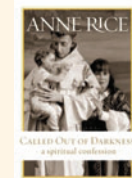
The South African film *Son of Man* moves the life and death of Jesus Christ from Roman-ruled

Judea to a modern day African shantytown. Using the biblical story as a framework, the film delves into African social and political concerns. Here, those in charge watch via television as Jesus leads spontaneous labor rallies calling for the end of injustices toward the workers and the poor. Roman guards are replaced with machine-gun toting thugs. Finally, Jesus' resurrection points to an optimistic new hope for Africa. (Spier)

Called Out of Darkness: A Spiritual Confession

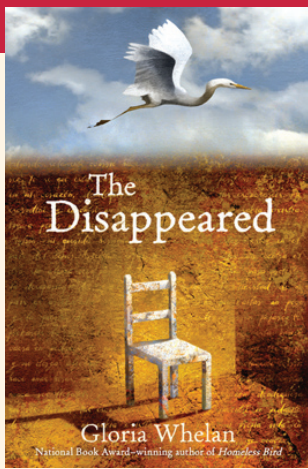
by Anne Rice

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack



Long before the current bestselling *Twilight* vampire series, Anne Rice ruled with her gothic horror

classics, such as *Interview with the Vampire*. In *Called Out of Darkness*, her powerful spiritual autobiography, Rice deftly describes how geography, aesthetics, and family tragedy shaped a Christ-haunting conversion that has transformed her life and literary goals. Readers learn the sometimes ponderous details of Rice's early days of ultra-Catholic church upbringing in New Orleans and how she rediscovered and fully embraced her childhood faith after 38 years of virulent atheism. (Knopf)



The Disappeared

by **Gloria Whelan**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Silvia and Eduardo once believed “nothing evil could reach us.” But they were mistaken. As civil conflict in 1970s Argentina escalates, and government forces cause protesting citizens to “disappear,” the teenage siblings face imprisonment, torture, and the prospect of death. Told in the alternating voices of Silvia and Eduardo, readers encounter a society where, though evil seems victorious, “small creatures” who work together “are stronger than all the generals.” Whelan handles her difficult subject matter deftly and with great sensitivity for her teen audience. (Dial)



Canopy Glow

by **Anathallo**
reviewed by **Elizabeth Gonzalez**

Anathallo is living proof that seven people can make music together, artfully and compellingly, as demonstrated in their second release, *Canopy Glow*. Eighteen national tours have given Anathallo a unified heart that shines through their songs. In “John J. Audubon,” the singers urge the consideration of nature conservation through art. With every member playing multiple instruments, their sound and harmonies melt together so that each song feels as natural as breathing, making *Canopy Glow* a must for music aficionados. (anticon.)



Collide

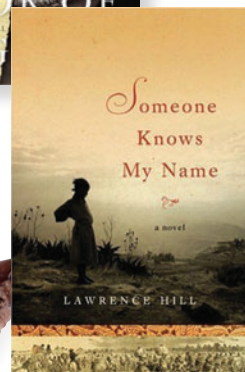
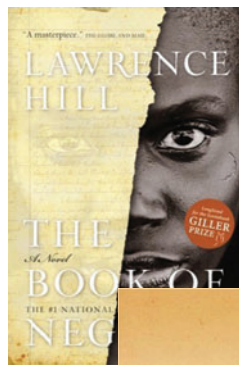
reviewed by **Steph DeBoer**

Debating “where media and the church converge” can reveal very different opinions, and now there’s a magazine dedicated to the discussion. *Collide* presents a variety of articles exploring the use of media in the church. For example, one recent article asked “Should There Be a Video Standard for Churches?” Though the magazine emphasizes how media enhances the overall church experience, the possible negative aspects are also examined. Readers will appreciate *Collide*’s willingness to discuss both sides of the issue.

The Book of Negroes (Canada) Someone Knows My Name (USA)

by **Lawrence Hill**
reviewed by **Rev. Jim Poelman**

This gripping novel introduces one of the many people from Africa forced into slavery. Aminata Diallo is the *djeli* (the storyteller with a purpose) of her own life. Her wisdom and skill will draw readers in, giving a human face and an original name to one of those who became their masters’ property. Aminata’s question, “How could humans do this to each other?” reaches beyond the story of her life into our own. (HarperCollins Canada/W. W. Norton)



THE LOWDOWN

Seize the Day: April 26 is Internet Evangelism

Day. Go to <http://www.internetevangeliismday.com> to find out how your church can use its website and other Internet tools to reach out.



A Daily Dose of Calvin: Princeton Theological

Seminary is celebrating John Calvin’s 500th by offering online readings of the Institutes. Read them, listen to them, or download them to your iPod. Go to www.ptsem.edu/calvin2009.



Add Some Color: The *Charley Harper Coloring Book*

takes some of Harper’s distinctive illustrations and turns them into coloring pages that no one could resist. (Ammo)

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

Working Together

by Ben Van Houten

Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church. We are committed to collaborating with partners to renew and multiply churches, campus ministries, and leaders.

The more than 200 ministries Home Missions supports are changing lives with the power of the gospel. This transformation takes place with the help of 12 ministry teams located across the United States and Canada.

Working through these teams, Home Missions staff collaborates with local and classis leaders to cast mission vision and set goals; to support and encourage church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach; and to make budget allocation recommendations for new and continuing ministry partnership grants.

Home Missions' ministry teams are also committed to advancing Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic ministries.

In the following stories, you will discover some ways in which the Lord is working through Home Missions to transform lives and communities in the United States and Canada.



Rev. Arturo Olguin and his family

New Ministry Reaches Out to Migrant Workers

The small, rural community of DeMotte, Ind., is marked by dozens of huge dairy and cattle farms. Because the farmers are mostly Anglo, DeMotte might not seem an obvious place to plant a Hispanic church. But some local farmers knew why it was a good idea: a growing number of the workers on their farms are Mexican immigrants.

Northwest Indiana's First CRC, Community CRC, and

Bethel CRC, along with a group of DeMotte area farmers and Home Missions, partnered to plant a church called Agua Viva ("Living Water") last summer. Now, with Rev. Arturo Olguin leading the way, Agua Viva attracts more than 50 migrant workers and their families to Sunday morning services.

Before calling Olguin to DeMotte, the three CRCs and local businesses had formed ministry support teams to serve the needs of immigrants and migrant workers in their community. The teams, which include local Hispanic couples, deal with financial matters and

also help with general support for Agua Viva's local activities, such as a summer vacation Bible school.

Olguin, who previously led a Home Missions-funded church in New York City, preaches the Word every Sunday. But he also functions as a sort of "circuit rider," traveling to local farms to hold Bible studies with Hispanic farm workers. This is a critical part of his ministry, because many of the workers are on the job when Agua Viva worship services are taking place.

Olguin and his team also offer three English as a Sec-

ond Language classes, with more than 20 people currently enrolled. Olguin also offers family counseling and family Bible studies. “To me, that’s the heart of this ministry,” he says. “I’m trying to relate to families, sharing what the Bible has to say about being parents and children.”

Old Mission, New Ministry

In 2005, Susan LaClear’s stepfather told her the story of Maranatha CRC, a Navajo mission church in Farmington, New Mexico. LaClear’s great-grandfather, L.P. Brink, had established the tiny mission 70 years before. But now the church was struggling spiritually and financially and hadn’t had a pastor for three years. Out of the blue, LaClear’s stepfather encouraged her to consider becoming the church’s pastor.

“I certainly wasn’t a very viable candidate,” says LaClear. “I had no divinity degree, little experience in



Children from Maranatha CRC

preaching, and we were very hesitant about moving to New Mexico. Their classis hadn’t even approved ordination for women yet.”

But in spite of the risks for the congregation and LaClear’s family, everyone stepped out in faith to answer God’s call, and she now serves as pastor of the church.

Today the old mission is alive with new ministry, thanks in part to a mission-focused church grant from Home Missions. A dynamic worship team integrates contemporary songs, hymns, and Navajo language into the worship experience. An influx of new families continues to revitalize the aging congregation. LaClear’s husband, Michael, works with the youth, and a team of servant-hearted members leads a vibrant children’s ministry. The church is also recruiting and training new leaders through the new Home Missions-funded Leadership Development Network.

LaClear, who grew up in Holland, Mich., and attended

Christian schools from kindergarten through high school, didn’t clearly understand God’s call on her life until she went to the University of Michigan. While studying as a music major, God took hold of her heart and changed her

life during a mission trip to Haiti. The mission experience, LaClear says, left her “so consumed with God and ministry that there was no turning back.”

She returned to Haiti for three years, then completed »

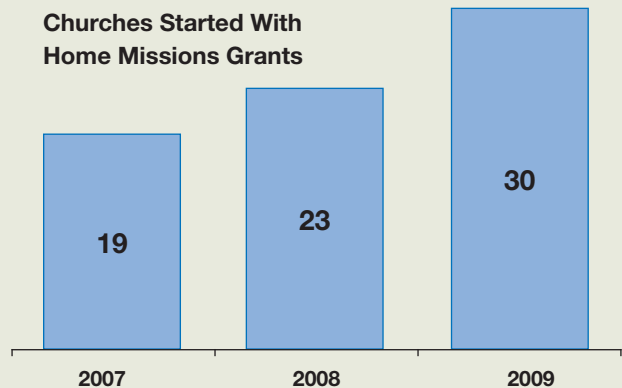
Home Missions at a Glance



CHRISTIAN REFORMED
HOME MISSIONS

Right now there are millions of North Americans who don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but Christian Reformed Home Missions is dedicated to changing that! Through more than 200 ministries we support, we see the love of Christ **transforming lives and communities** across North America. The chart below reflects the recent growth of new Home Missions-supported CRCs.

New Christian Reformed Churches Started With Home Missions Grants



Susan LaClear

her undergraduate degree at Michigan State University, spent two years at an Assemblies of God Bible college, and took a job as minister of music for a church in Jackson, Mich., where she served before being called to New Mexico.

Today, she can't imagine being anywhere else. "We're being transformed from a spiritually tired congregation into an energetic, outward-reaching faith community," she says. "We emphasize prayer, and we see the results every day. God is renewing people's lives."

—Ben Van Houten

Exploring Faith on Campus

When Christian Reformed campus minister Neil Lettinga teaches classes on comparative religions, the topic is much more than an academic exercise. At the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, British Columbia, where Lettinga and his wife, Virginia, minister, students' religious beliefs range from Buddhist to Sikh to atheist to Christian.

At the end of one semester, a graduate student named Peter who was in the comparative religions class stopped in Lettinga's office for a chat about some PowerPoint slides. But on his way out the door, Peter turned and added one



Neil and Virginia Lettinga

more thing: "Before, if you asked me what my religion was, maybe I would have said 'academic' or maybe I would have said 'Christian,' but I wouldn't have meant anything serious by that.

"But through this class I've come to think that Christianity is something more than that. I've come to think of it as something that is right and true. But I really don't know anything about

Our Ministries

Home Missions is helping the CRC introduce people to Jesus in new churches, in mission-focused congregations, on college campuses, in small groups, and through Christian schools in New Mexico.

- **Church Planting and Development:** Currently 75 new CRCs receive financial assistance from Home Missions through these partnerships, with many more in the planning stages. Many of these new congregations are urban multicultural churches like Open Door Fellowship of East Harlem, which started this year in the heart of New York City's East Harlem neighborhood.
- **Mission-focused Churches:** Home Missions helps revitalize existing Christian Reformed churches through mission-focused ministries and grants. Working through mission-focused partnerships, we provide seminars, festivals, leadership coaching, assessment centers, support

networks, and consulting to local churches. We also provide grants for programs, staffing, and technology.

- **Educational Mission:** Home Missions provides grant funding and professional support for 22 campus ministries across North America. Home Missions also directly assists Rehoboth Christian School and Zuni Christian Mission School in New Mexico.
- **Leadership Development:** Through classis-based partnerships, Home Missions resources 13 Leadership Development Networks (LDNs). An LDN is a three- to four-year in-ministry training program. LDNs are conducted in English, Spanish, and Korean. Many LDN graduates enter gospel ministry as pastors, evangelists, church planters, or church staff in the CRC. Home Missions also funds internships through which leaders are trained for outreach and discipleship.

- **Small Groups:** Home Missions' small group ministry reaches more than 500 Christian Reformed and nearly 400 non-CRC congregations in North America. Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events, Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs, and evangelism. These small group ministries provide much-needed opportunities for people to support, encourage, love, and disciple each other.
- **Easter Sunday Offering:** Home Missions is thankful to Christian Reformed churches and members and appreciates your prayers and generous financial support. On Easter Sunday, April 12, you can support the work of Home Missions with your church offerings. For more information, visit www.crhm.org or call 1-800-266-2175.

it that's not academic. What should I do? Where should I start to really explore this faith?"

Lettinga gave Peter copies of the books *Mere Christianity* and *Girl Meets God*, and is looking forward to continuing conversations with him.

—Ben Van Houten

New Church Brings Light to Seattle

Seattle is known for rainy weather and gray skies, so people trying to “put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” have their work cut out for them.

Ben Katt, pastor and church planter, is no meteorologist, but he definitely helps forecast the light through *Awake*, a new church plant along Seattle's rough Aurora Avenue.

Awake serves a very poor neighborhood that's even more marginalized by the incredible affluence surrounding it. “The area is very transient and trust is in short supply, especially for anyone who comes in professing to proclaim ‘good news,’” Katt says. “Our primary goal right now is simply to be there for the sojourner.”

Awake meets once a week in a local café for worship, fosters relationships with local motel owners and the residents who call the motels home, and creates opportunities for relationship-building;



cookouts at homes, picnics in parks, and hanging out in the neighborhood.

“If we're *here*—acting with love, living and speaking the good news—people will respond,” says Katt. “They'll encounter Jesus and experience God's grace.”



Ben Van Houten is a senior writer with Christian Reformed Home Missions

A scene along Seattle's gritty Aurora Avenue near a new Christian Reformed church plant

HM Appoints Development Officer for Chicago

Home Missions has hired former church planter Marc V. Zumhagen to work as a development officer out of the agency's new Chicago-area office.

Zumhagen, 26, is a native of Chicago's near southwest suburbs. He attended Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently working toward an M. Div. degree from Liberty University. Prior to joining Home Missions, he spent several years working on a political website that tracked the 2004 Illinois state senate race. He also helped plant a church in Michigan in 2006.

As a development officer, Zumhagen will help spread the message of Home Missions throughout Chicagoland, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota. “I want to help build the kingdom. That happens through meeting with our donors and asking for their continued support, and by going into churches and preaching and teaching about how God is working through Home Missions' ministries,” he says.

Home Missions' new office is located in Palos Heights, Ill., directly across the street from Back to God Ministries International and Trinity Christian College. The region is also home to a dozen Home Missions churches, three Home Missions-funded Leadership Development Networks, three CRC classes, and the Home Missions Chicagoland Ministry Team.

Signs of God's Faithfulness

T HAS BEEN A LONG, HARD WINTER. Longer and harder than any I can recall in recent years. The snow has been deeper, the temperatures colder, and the sky grayer. Spring is just around the corner and I, for one, am very glad.

Spring is a time for new beginnings, for fresh starts. There is something exciting about trees budding and daffodils pushing through the moist soil. Life seems to take on new meaning and a sense of hope.

I am grateful for the change in seasons, not simply because winter is coming to a close but because spring is an annual reminder that God is faithful. Though the trees may appear to die each winter, we know that come spring those dormant trees will burst into life. We can trust that every winter will end in spring and that each night breaks into a new day.

These cycles have continued since God called the earth and heavens into being. Winter, spring, summer, and fall—each follows the other, year in and year out. From chaos to God's good order, creation declares his glory, his dominion, his faithfulness.

As it is with the days and weeks and seasons, so, too, it is in our lives. We have known the winters of our despair. In one way or another, we feel the cold, the darkness, the hibernation—these are part of our life's cycle. We pass through those times when the God of life seems distant, far away from our circumstances. Yet even in the darkest and loneliest seasons of our lives we trust—we know—that God is faithful and that spring will slowly push aside the dark, the cold, the lifelessness of our winter's discontent.

In those seasons of darkness and despair we may find ourselves feeling abandoned and forgotten by our God. With the psalmist we may cry out, "My God, my God, why have

“Where others find darkness and gloom, Christ's followers see signs of God's faithfulness breaking out all around.”

you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?" (Ps. 22:1). Yet even in the darkest hours we know that because Jesus also cried out those words, we are assured that the spring of God's new life will not be long in coming.

If it is so in our personal lives, it is also true for the church. This year we celebrate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth. He was born at one of the darkest hours in human history—just a few short years before Luther's theological challenge ushered in the Protestant Reformation ending a wintery spiritual malaise and theological darkness. From a human perspective there was little hope for revival, but God prepared the hearts and minds of people like Luther and Calvin to lead the church into a new season.

Even now, the cycle of seasons and God's faithfulness continue. In times of economic despair, God breaks forth, leading his church into new, creative ministries that touch the hearts and lives of people worldwide. Where others find darkness and gloom, Christ's followers see signs of God's faithfulness breaking out all around. Christ's followers everywhere, with the Spirit's help, are planting new churches, revitalizing existing churches, making campus ministries more vibrant, feeding the poor, and making disciples in our neighborhoods and around the world. In times seemingly characterized by spiritual lethargy, God transforms the lives of thousands by the power of his Spirit.

What may seem to us to be a winter of darkness and gloom is a time for God to break forth in his season of hope. God is not only alive and well, but he continues to prepare his church, his people, his chosen ones, for the day of Christ's return. What a day of rejoicing that will be! ■



Jerry Dykstra is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

CRC PRAYER GUIDE ENCOURAGES A HEART FOR MINISTRY

Fred wants his children to develop a heart for mission outreach. So, as part of their evening supper tradition, his family prays together using the *CRC Prayer Guide*. Sometimes Fred and his wife get out a globe so their three children can locate countries mentioned in the prayer requests.

“We love the *Prayer Guide*,” says Fred. “We have been impressed with the powerful stories of people responding to ministries across the globe.”

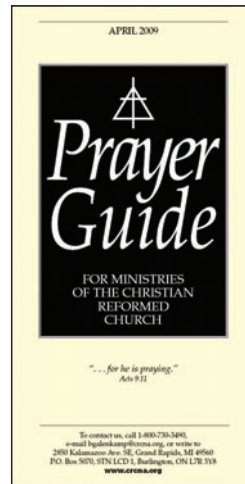
Fred’s prayers and heart for missions also prompted him to action. Inspired by the stories in the *Prayer Guide*, Fred and his wife decided it would be a good time for them to step up their giving, and they sent a financial gift in support of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). He noted that the current economic downturn has curtailed

people’s ability to give, but feels his job is fairly secure.

“We are grateful for Fred’s prayers and gifts at this time,” said BTGMI director Bob Heerspink. “As we face challenging economic times, there are great things in ministry to report. It’s critically important that during a time of financial challenge we don’t lose sight of the way God continues to work through our media ministry.”

Fred gave permission to share his story (without using his last name) to encourage others to pray and give in support of missions.

The *Prayer Guide* is produced by the combined ministries of the CRC to help church members pray specifically for the



mission outreach of our denomination. Fred picks up his printed copy from his local church. Ask your pastor or church administrator for copies of the *Prayer Guide*, or e-mail bgalenkamp@crcna.org.

You can also access prayer requests online at www.crcna.org/pages/prayer_requests.cfm. To receive current prayer requests weekly by email, go to prayerline_subscribe@list.crcna.net.

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

GOD’S TREASURES

Going to the doctor can be scary, especially when you’re only 10 years old. But Miriam didn’t have to go alone when she visited a neurologist who assessed how she was coping with cerebral palsy.

A caretaker from Tesoros de Dios, a school and rehabilitation center for Nicaraguan children who are faced with developmental challenges, went with Miriam and stayed with her as she underwent the probes and prods and tests to assess her disease. Accompanying her to the doctor is one way the center staff shows Miriam and other children the love of God.

When Miriam and the caretaker arrived back at the school in Managua, Michelle Adams, director of the school and center, asked the caretaker to write a report on how the appointment went. But more important, she wanted to



Michelle Adams (left) with a child and caretakers at Tesoros de Dios

know how God is at work in Miriam’s life through the center.

Tesoros de Dios, translated “God’s Treasures,” provides therapy, physical therapy, and education for children with developmental disabilities.

Adams, who works in partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions as

well as with Fundación El Samaritano, a nonprofit organization registered with the Nicaraguan government, shared Miriam’s story in a recent newsletter.

“I feel happy to have arrived at this center, to have such beautiful people by my side with whom I can share my joy,” Miriam says in the newsletter. “This center is the most marvelous place that God could have put in my path.”

Adams says that Miriam now is able to stand up alone and has more strength when using a walker. “She also has more confidence. Miriam has advanced a lot in the therapy and she can do a lot of new things in the school.”

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*

CALVIN COLLEGE NEWS

Former Calvin College physics professor Vernon J. Ehlers introduced a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives honoring former Calvin president William Spoelhof. House Resolution 91 concludes with the words: “Resolved, That the House of Representatives honors the life of Dr. William Spoelhof and his outstanding devotion and service as a member of the military, teacher, and professor, president, and friend of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.” Ehlers, a U.S. Congressman from Michigan, spent three years at Calvin as a student before earning his undergraduate degree in physics and his doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of California at Berkeley. He taught at Calvin for 16 years.

NEH Award for Romanowski

Communication arts and sciences professor William Romanowski has been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support six months of research for a book on American Protestants and the movies. Romanowski said the book will explore “the struggle of two dynamic American institutions over the possession of cultural power and the function of entertainment.”

Van Reeuwijk Honored

Jo-Ann Van Reeuwijk, a professor of art, was honored with a Michigan Campus Compact (MCC) Community Service-Learning Award. The award recognizes the numerous ways in which she integrates service-learning into her art education courses, through which her students have collaborated with everyone from the Grand Rapids Public Schools to the Kent County Correctional Facility. MCC, of which Calvin is one of 43 members, exists to “promote the education and commitment of Michigan college students to be civically engaged citizens.”

Smith Earns ICS Honor

David Smith, director of the Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning at Calvin College, has been named the 2009 Worldview Lecturer for the Toronto-based Institute for Christian Studies (ICS). Smith, who earned a master’s degree at ICS, will offer a series of public lectures at a variety of venues throughout 2009, including Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, Sioux Center, and Grand Rapids. The series is sponsored by ICS, the Kuyers Institute, and Calvin’s graduate programs in teacher education.

—*Calvin News*

CREATING HEALTHIER PASTORS

How do we avoid destroying the temple of God? It’s a question that’s relevant for us all, but it’s especially important for pastors. Stress, depression, obesity, lack of physical activity, high blood pressure, and heart disease are significant health problems for pastors. These problems influence not only the pastor’s wellbeing, but may also affect the ministry of the church.

As a little “preventive medicine,” Calvin Theological Seminary’s student senate sponsored a town hall meeting on this topic, led by Dr. Kenneth Dudley, M.D., a family physician for 25 years and associate professor of medicine at Michigan State University.

Dudley’s presentation focused on health maintenance for seminarians and showed how changes in diet and exercise can have significant effects on a person’s health and on prevention of serious medical conditions—and can even lead to longer lives and ministries.

Studies by the Lilly Endowment and by other groups concerned about pastoral effectiveness consistently cite the physical health of pastors as a key ingredient in overall ministry effectiveness and well-being.

Dudley says that instead of “destroying the temple of God” (our bodies), we can build up our bodies and the whole body of Christ by taking care of ourselves. His basic advice included: have a physical; get screening



Dr. Kenneth Dudley speaks at Calvin Seminary.

tests for major diseases; achieve your ideal weight through diet and exercise; take your medications; don’t smoke; and limit alcohol.

An audio recording of Dudley’s presentation, as well as his fact-filled PowerPoint presentation, are available on the seminary website (www.calvinseminary.edu) under Continuing Education.

Seminary attendees appreciated the presentation so much that afterward they even avoided the usual town hall cookie table!

—*Kathy Smith is director of continuing education for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Calvin Theological Seminary.*

“REFRAME MEDIA” TO REACH EXPANDED AUDIENCE

In order to reach out to a broader audience, Back to God Ministries International has endorsed moving to “ReFrame Media” as the new name for its English-language ministry.

The name includes a strategy and website that will help build relationships to all of the English-language ministries (see www.reframe-media.com). It’s also a play on words to convey the Reformed perspective of the ministry.

“The name ReFrame helps us speak into a troubled world,” said Rev. Steven Koster, who oversees BTGMI English-language ministries. “Our goal is to invite people to see in a new way what God is already doing in their lives. God reveals, revives,

and renews, and when you see it, your whole world is reframed by a new perspective: seeing God’s story in your life.

“Many people know and support Back to God Ministries International as partners in our outreach to audiences around the world, but we also seek to connect more directly to listeners, readers, and users right here in North America,” Koster added. “We’re committed to reaching a new generation through online and social networking tools.”

“Many people will be drawn to one of our programs without realizing we have a whole family of programming to help nurture their faith lives and those of their family,” notes Rev. Bob Heerspink, BTGMI director.

—Back to God Ministries International

TINY PACKAGES WITH SATIN RIBBONS

It’s early morning, and the temperature has already reached 100 degrees in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Dulcimar Rangel pours herself a cup of coffee and sits at the kitchen table to finish preparing the tiny packages that she uses to spread the gospel.

Rangel collects outdated copies of the *CADA DIA* devotional booklet produced by the Back to God Ministries International Portuguese media team. Her family and friends donate copies as well. When she has a large enough stack, she carefully cuts the book apart into separate devotionals. She takes each page, removes the date, rolls it up, and ties it with a colorful satin ribbon.

Under the hot sun Rangel sets out to deliver these tiny packages to as many people as possible. She hands them out at hospitals, malls, anywhere she can. She even waits



Dulcimar Rangel hands out bits of hope tied up in satin ribbons.

at bus stops and hands them to the people sitting by the open windows of the bus.

She hands out a total of 180 *CADA DIA* pages each month, always with a welcoming smile, always saying silent prayers for the people she meets.

Why? As Portuguese ministry leader Rev. Celsino Gama observes, “Every day, terrible things happen in Rio. We hear news of death, violence, and

corruption. Our hearts ache for Rio. Our once-marvelous city has become a battlefield.

“But in this battlefield is Dulcimar, a woman who has taken the only resource she has at hand and turned it into an instrument of love. Every day she survives the terrible reality and heat of her city to tell the news of a wonderful and perfect city in heaven. Dulcimar hands out bits of hope tied

up in colorful satin ribbons.”

What a wonderful way to recycle old paper while sharing the Good News that never gets old.

—Carolina Gama Gudin, Back to God Ministries International Portuguese staff writer

The Most Amazing Control Room in the Universe

Maybe you've seen a room like this in the movies: it's deep inside a building, there are lots of dials and gauges, and engineers sit in the room in silence to monitor the controls and adjust them when necessary.

Then the slow, scary music begins to play. You know what's going to happen next, right?

Sirens! Flashing lights! Engineers running around like crazy, adjusting dials, frantically trying to solve the problem.

That kind of job is boring 99 percent of the time, but terrifying for the other 1 percent. Especially at a place like a nuclear reactor. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of people could die if there is a meltdown.

Now imagine that *you* are an engineer in a similar room with hundreds of dials and gauges. This time, though, if things go wrong there's much more at stake than a nuclear meltdown. You're in charge of making sure the universe continues to exist in such a way that it will support life on earth!

1. Gravity and Glue

In this control room, right in front of you is a dial as big as a steering wheel. It's one of the sun dials. (Like that pun?) You have to make sure that not even a housefly lands on this dial, because the weight of the fly will move it the tiniest fraction of an inch. If that happens, life in any form on earth disappears.

You see, this dial represents the force of gravity that holds stars like our sun together. Tinker with gravity in the slightest, and stars form differently. They become too big or too small. If that happens, no life.

Stars are among the largest objects in the universe, but you, the engineer, are also responsible for the smallest objects: molecules, atoms, and all the pieces of those atoms.

So among the hundreds of dials on your control panel is one that controls the strength of the "glue" that holds atoms and molecules together.

If you accidentally sneeze on the dial, the force of the air from your lungs will move the dial microscopically. Oops! Should have covered your mouth. Now all life will vanish.

Science tells us that if the force at the center of an atom is the slightest bit weaker or stronger, not only is life gone, but so is nearly every kind of molecule and atom in the universe.

And that's not even the scariest part of your job as the engineer. You have to make sure that HUNDREDS of dials are each set precisely in one spot and remain there, otherwise we won't exist.



Sigmund Brouwer is author of several children's books and a member of First CRC, Red Deer, Alberta.

SCOTT HOLLADAY



2. Balancing Act

In taking care of the universe, you have to pay special attention to the dials of our solar system and our planet.

We need our solar system to remain adjusted exactly as it is. The bubble of atmosphere around the earth not only provides us with oxygen, it also protects us from damaging sun rays and coddles us in a narrow temperature range.

Here are some details you'll need to keep in mind for your imaginary dials:

- If the earth rotates slower or faster, no life.
- If the earth wasn't tilted on its axis, no life.
- Smaller or larger earth, no life.
- Smaller or larger moon, no life.
- Closer or farther moon, no life.
- Thinner or thicker crust on the earth, no life.
- Closer or farther from the sun, no life.
- Different type of orbit, no life.

3. Mind-Boggling

If you spend too much time thinking about how easily life could cease to exist, it can become a little scary.

But you can find a lot of comfort in the complexity of it all too.

Put it this way. For life to exist by accident, the chance that one dial is set perfectly is like winning the lottery. We could accept that as a lucky accident when someone wins it once. Even though it's a 1 in 10 million chance, it's possible. After all, someone has to win.

But if you heard of someone winning 200 weeks in a row, would you still call that an accident? Or would you decide that someone in control of the lottery was cheating to make this happen on purpose?

If you think 1 in 10 million is a long shot for just one dial to be set perfectly, then you'll be amazed to know that a famous mathematician once estimated the chances of all the dials being set in a position to support life to be 1 in 10^{23} . That number is so big, it's a one followed by 23 zeros! It would take you years to count that high.

It's like a million blind monkeys each pounding on a computer keyboard, all finishing an entire Shakespeare play at the exact same time—with no words spelled wrong and all the words in perfect order!

In short, it's mathematically impossible that all these amazing coincidences happened by accident.

4. Who's in Charge

Many scientists have come to believe in God because of the universe's many amazing "coincidences."

They believe the evidence of such a finely-tuned universe suggests it was created to make life possible for humans. They call this the "Anthropic Principle." They've concluded what the beginning of the book of Genesis tells us: This universe was designed and created. For us.

Genesis also tells us that God continues to actively govern the universe he created. God is the engineer in charge of all those imaginary dials! (They don't seem so scary now, do they?)

Most important, while Genesis doesn't tell us *how* God created a universe that, against all odds, is just perfect for humans to exist on earth, Genesis does tell us *why*.

We are designed to live in a relationship with God—our Creator and our Protector.



Does Your Church Have the RIGHT to Exist?

WHAT AN IMPERTINENT question! *Why would you even ask such a thing? The church is the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus gathers and builds the church, and it belongs to him!*

When asked to wrestle with the probing title question, our initial reaction was the same. Yet the question gives us each an opportunity to respond with our understanding about what the church means to us. And it's one that many people in our post-Christian and increasingly unchurched culture are asking. It's important for us to have ready and appropriate responses.

So please think about it with us, and join our conversation as we share some of our reflections.

Allen: Jul, this question provoked some of my strong convictions about the church. As one who values good biblical theology (with a Reformed accent), I'm inclined to respond with

fundamental biblical teachings to the opening sentences above. The church is the creation of the Holy Spirit. The church is the people of God who are called out to be God's family, the bride of Jesus Christ. But we know each other well and can assume these common understandings.

My view of the church has been shaped by my long ministry journey as a church planter and later work with church planters. That journey began with the call I received in Dr. Robert Recker's mission class at Calvin Seminary to be a "missionary pastor." That's where I first heard the concept of *missio Dei* (mission of God). I can recall vividly how with passion and tears in his eyes, Dr. Recker shared about God's love for the world—a missionary God who sent his Son, the Holy Spirit, and the church into the world to fulfill his reconciling mission of love. I've never been the same since.

I was convicted by Jesus' invitation, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). From then on I believed what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said so profoundly, "The church is only the church when it exists for others."

I'm concerned about the lack of support for the above in the way churches practice ministry. Obviously no one would openly deny Jesus' call and challenge, "So I send you." But saying that the church is a missionary church and working out the implications of that tends to encounter resistance. Too many congregational meetings betray a "church for us" rather than a "church for others" belief. It has taken us a long time to see North America as a mission field. **We still tend to think of the church as doing mission (or missions) rather than understanding mission as an essential part of its nature.** Or, as the Reformed missiologist Craig Van Gelder says, "God's mission has a church."

So, Jul, what do you think? Does your church have a right to exist?

Jul: In a culture that's increasingly unchurched, people see the church as increasingly irrelevant. Allen, you laid out well some of the biblical, historical answers to the original question, but I think the question has changed for most people. **I think today's culture is asking, "Why does your church exist?" and even, "What is a church?"**

If the local church gives the impression that they exist for themselves as some type of "holier than thou" gathering, then the heart of the church will not connect with the mission field that begins just outside the doorways of the church building.

But when the church is engaged with the community and the needs of that community, it is being "salt and light" (Matt. 5:13-16). When we let that light shine, so that the world may see our good deeds, they will praise our Father in heaven. Worship is an outgrowth of mission.

Every church probably would say that we exist for others, not for ourselves—but are we willing to submit our programs and ministries to a "mission" test? The world is looking for people who live out their faith convictions.

One of our Reformed accents is the understanding that Word and deed ministry is a balanced presentation of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm extremely encouraged by newer church plants that come alongside and serve within their communities. The "Communities First" initiative, by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, has helped shaped the next wave of church planters.

I would challenge a church wrestling with the question of their "right" to exist to create an inventory of where and how they can make points of Kingdom contact with the local community. I come to this question as a founding pastor of a church that had to "prove" to the community that we were there for them and not for ourselves. Our witness of the Kingdom was made brighter by such ministries as Divorce Care, Celebrate

Recovery, and Cadet and GEMS boys' and girls' programs that were always "making room for one more."

I suggest that we're entering an era in which the local church is always on the edge of being alienated from the world to which it was sent to by Jesus. A local church that is alienated from that world may follow a strategy of separation from the world, but there is another more biblical directive—to transform the world by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

One of the bright lights in the Christian Reformed Church shines in our discussions on what biblical church health looks like and on our understanding that the church is about "transforming lives and communities worldwide." **A local church that is not involved in transforming lives and the local community is not fully developing as a church.** It is in danger of becoming merely a social club and "playing" church rather than being the church. Such a church gives up its rootedness in Christ and as such gives up its "right" to exist.

As a former lawyer, I would argue that with rights there are also responsibilities. For a local church to have the "right" to exist, the church must be aware of their responsibilities as well.

Allen, what do you think are some of the responsibilities of the local church?

Allen: As I pondered your question about responsibilities, my thoughts turned to Matthew 9. As Jesus was deeply engaged in his teaching and healing ministry, his eyes embraced and his heart was broken for the lonely, shepherdless "sheep." The church cannot be the church for others and step into its missionary calling apart from a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus. Only then, with Jesus' eyes and heart of compassion, will we be motivated to reach out with the whole gospel to the whole person and the whole community (including its institutions and social fabric). So at the center of the church's responsibility is inviting Christ followers into an ever-deeper relationship with Jesus. As Leighton Ford once said so succinctly, "We need to lead more like Jesus to lead more to Jesus."

This responsibility involves following Jesus' model of the incarnation. We are sent as Jesus was sent. **John 1:14 tells of Jesus' total entrance into the life and world of those he came to love and save. We can do no less.** A missionary church has the responsibility to "dwell among" the people of the community it is called to serve. Jesus demonstrated the intimate relationships required as he practiced eating and spending time with "sinners" (Luke 15:1).

Like you, my experience with living this out happened primarily in church plants. We intentionally inventoried the places in our lives where we regularly saw the same people. »



We sought to match our gifts with opportunities to be involved in community organizations. These “spheres of influence” are the locations of mission for the followers of Christ. The responsibility of the church is to help Christ followers to be “salt and light” in these places.

When we discover and live out our missionary roles, we grow and thrive spiritually. Congregations likewise grow and thrive.

In answering your question, Jul, I’d summarize my response this way: the responsibility of the church is to be an incarnational church. Be the heart and hands of Jesus and practice the incarnational behaviors of Jesus. Discover ways to “serve” the community as Christ followers, to “be all things” to them in the way Paul expresses (1 Cor. 9:19ff).

I’m curious Jul, as the church planting and development team Leader for our denomination, how does this impact the strategy of church planting? And how does planting churches influence or help other churches to be engaged in Christ’s mission?

Jul: In my early years as a church planter, I was asked a number of times, “So, when are you building the church?” Those folks meant, as I’m sure you guessed, the actual brick and mortar of a church building. It wasn’t long before we began giving this answer: “We are building the church now, one life at a time.”

Building a community is a whole-heart endeavor where a planter needs to reflect the passion that Paul identifies: “Because we loved you so much, we delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” (1 Thess. 2:8, TNIV).

A recent gathering of urban church planters illustrated the mosaic of ways they are connecting and serving in their communities. I have one image in mind of Pastor John Hoekwater of Chicago walking outside the “Common Cup” coffee shop set up by the church and managed by John’s wife, Ruth. They minister on the street, in the coffee shop, and in a cooperative space-sharing ministry with many, many others in the Rogers Park neighborhood. **This type of ministry isn’t into quick fixes or “seven steps to a better family,” but focuses on presenting the full gospel of Christ.**

I have also seen a developing dialogue between what some would call “established” churches and church plants. We can and should learn from one another. All of us face the same challenge—how to faithfully and fruitfully be witnesses for Jesus Christ in this world. One of the ways I’ve seen this being worked out is through the development of clusters or networks—whether in Seattle, the San Francisco Bay area, or Calgary—where leaders from many churches come together to challenge and learn from one another. Clusters and networks will be one of the key ways that we not only plant churches but also nourish them.

Allen, we started this conversation by noting that the church is the body of Christ. Rather than just recite a definition, we have the opportunity to paint a picture—a picture of the people of God at work in a community, a picture in which the ones who are “sent” also serve.

When we are the body of Christ in this world, we are the hope of the world, and we are the firstfruits of the kingdom of God. We exist because Jesus Christ is formed in us and through us. What an adventure! What a calling! ■

The Church at Work

In their *Church Planter Manual*, Timothy J. Keller and J. Allen Thompson answer the question *What does true community look like?* with the following:

We are to be

- an accepting community reflecting the grace we’ve been given from Christ.
- a holy community that urges one another to live God-pleasing lives.
- a truth-telling community that is free to repent and free to allow others to repent, because of the gospel.
- an encouraging community that builds one another up.
- a sacrificially generous community that spends its life and wealth on the needs of others.

WEB Q’S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner’s* website: www.thebanner.org.



Jul Medenblik is pastor of New Life church in New Lenox, Ill., and is the church planting and development director for Christian Reformed Home Missions.



Allen Likkel is the director of ministry teams for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

How Carefully God Watches

SOME CHRISTIANS ARE “BIG GOD” PEOPLE; others believe God’s a bit smaller and a little less powerful. “Smaller God” folks acknowledge, often with a hint of resignation, that sometimes things do happen that even God himself wishes hadn’t. “Big God” folks, however, claim—they sing!—with courage and trust, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.”

John Calvin ranks among Christian history’s biggest “Big God” thinkers. The same sovereign hand that once created the world, Calvin says, now guides and controls its every last detail. “To make God a momentary Creator, who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren. . . . [Thus] we see the presence of the divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as at its inception” (*Institutes* I.xvi.1).

In his *Treatise Against the Libertines* (1545), Calvin makes three bold claims:

1. In his wisdom God has fashioned a plan to run the entire universe in its every detail.
2. Though humans cannot understand that plan, we can learn to trust that through it God will secure both his own glory and also the welfare of those who put their trust in him.
3. Providence is God’s work in history, the means God uses to accomplish his plan.

All that exists, therefore—Calvin insists upon the word *all*—never exists independent of its Creator. “Even if for a single moment [God] withdrew his supportive hand, the universe would collapse,” Calvin writes.

Pretty heady and bold stuff, to be sure. And, let’s be honest, for some devout and faithful Christians, it’s more than they can honestly affirm about God—to say nothing about placing trust in God. For Calvinists, however, the knowledge that God’s children are held fast by a big God, whose power over them is shaped by God’s love for them, provides patience when the winds of life blow in their faces, gratitude when those winds are at their backs, and confidence for uncertain tomorrows.

Great saints, by God’s grace, often embody great Christian truths. Their daily living exemplifies what their hearts and mouths affirm. As a pastor, I’ve had the privilege of seeing the difference that belief in a big God can make in people’s lives. I’ve seen people receive extraordinary strength to endure trying circumstances by relying daily—even hourly and by the minute—on a big God.

My mother was one of those saints. Paralyzed completely (except for her face) by a dread disease at age 26, she spent the rest of her life—nearly 40 years—lying on her back in an iron lung, which carried out her breathing. Her demeanor, however, was seemingly out of sync with her circumstances: She was

The same sovereign hand that once created the world, Calvin says, now guides and controls its **every last detail.**

life-affirming, peaceable, kind, and gentle in spirit. Never, *never* did she complain. To me she seemed to take the very breath of God into her paralyzed lungs.

My mom’s thoughts about what had happened to her? She once told me: “I would not have chosen this course for my life; but I believe I was chosen by God for it. So, Dale, I aim to be a defender of our Lord’s honor.” She added: “There are things far worse than not knowing why some things happen. One is not being able to be confident that God is in control of them.” She lived by these words:

Though God’s wise and loving purpose
Clearly now I may not see,
Yet I believe, by grace through faith,
All will work for good to me.

I’ve had a front-row seat to see how trust in a big God can shape the way people go at their lives. My mother and countless saints with her felt themselves not as victims of their circumstances but as victors over them. They knew—for sure—that God was not abandoning them to face their life’s circumstances alone.

That’s why I so much want my spiritual children to know in their minds and hearts that same big God in whom my Calvinist ancestors taught me to place my trust. ■

WEB Q’S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner’s* website: www.thebanner.org.



Rev. Dale Cooper is chaplain emeritus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. *The Banner* thanks him for writing a special series this year on highlights from John Calvin’s teachings.

Mentoring Blessings

THE BIBLE IS FULL OF EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE who had mentors in their walk of faith. Paul mentored Timothy. Moses mentored Joshua. Elijah mentored Elisha. Naomi mentored Ruth. Elizabeth mentored Mary, the mother of Jesus. And most important, Jesus mentored his disciples.

Mentoring is all about relationships—usually one-on-one relationships. Spiritual mentoring involves teaching but is also about modeling how Christians walk with the Lord.

In the Christian Reformed Church, the mentoring of seminary students and new pastors is mandatory, and advocates say the benefits of both being a mentor and being mentored are many. But mentoring is valuable for more than just pastors.

Being Mentored

Rev. Heidi De Jonge knows the value of mentoring. She's had the benefit of being mentored for many years. "In high school I was mentored by my youth pastor in Bellingham, Washington," she said. She was mentored at Dordt College by professor John Vanderstelt.

Her mentor now is Rev. Marvin Hofman, pastor of Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. He has been her mentor since she was ordained in 2005. (All new ministers in the CRC must have a mentor for their first five years of ministry.)

"We meet once a month for breakfast, and we talk about the joys and stresses of pastoral ministry: preaching, leadership, church growth, difficult people, worship," De Jonge said. "Marv



was especially helpful as I discerned the call to my new position at Harderwyk CRC."

De Jonge said being mentored by Hofman is complemented by her relationship with a spiritual director, a Dominican sister in Grand Rapids, Mich.

She highly recommends having a mentor: "A mentor provides a safe space for so many kinds of conversations. A mentor is there for you in a way that others aren't."

De Jonge is now also a mentor herself, to a young woman training for ministry at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Being a Mentor

Rev. Mary Hulst is another pastor who has experienced mentoring from both sides. While she was pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., she mentored another young woman studying for ministry. "We met for meals, coffee, walks, at least once a month," Hulst said. "We talked about what God was doing in her life, what she was praying about, what she needed prayer for."

Hulst said that an important part of the mentoring process was holding her mentee up in prayer even when they weren't together.

Hulst still meets with her own mentor regularly, even though she has moved from pastoral ministry to teaching at the seminary. "He's walked me through some tough stuff," she said. She too noted the mentoring relationship as a safe place.

What to Look for in a Mentor

The difficult part of finding a mentor is knowing who to ask. It can be scary. Gina Hargreaves said it can be awkward, wondering if you are asking too much of a person. There can be fear of rejection. But she encourages people to take the risk. "Start with prayer," she advises. "Pray that God will connect you with the right person." Then, look for someone who

- is a bit older.
- has similar interests to yours.
- listens well.
- creates an encouraging climate.
- is slow to judge.
- will ask questions with tough honesty, rather than just saying nice things.
- has wisdom.
- will help you grow spiritually.
- will respect you.

Rev. Kathy Smith, director of continuing education at the seminary, says that having a consistent mentor throughout the seminary experience makes a big difference for students. “It is a person with whom they can process their questions about ministry and their growing experiences in ministry practice,” she explained.

The seminary requires all students studying for pastoral ministry to find a mentor during their first term at the seminary. Often the mentor is a pastor of the local church where the student is involved during seminary.

While it may seem that the person being mentored receives the most benefit, Smith said that those doing the mentoring also gain a great deal, learning new and fresh insights into ministry.

There are many people in church settings besides pastors who would benefit from mentoring, Smith noted, including new elders and deacons and young people showing an interest in ministry.

Mentoring for Moms

At Calvary Reformed Church in Ripon, Calif., the mentoring program has nothing to do with pastors or other church leaders. Rather, young moms are being mentored by moms whose children are already older or grown up.

Gina Hargreaves is the church’s women’s ministry director. She said their mentoring program is a variation on mentoring that takes place in a typical MOPs program (Mothers of Preschoolers).

“Our older moms meet with a group of six to seven women, twice per month, focusing on the encouragement and nurture

of young moms,” Hargreaves said. “The young moms need to know someone is there for them.”

Hargreaves said that all the mentor moms come from their own congregation. She looks for women who are active in Bible study and have a heart for young moms, women who can talk about what it was like when they were raising young children.

“The biggest thing is that these women testify to God’s faithfulness to them when they were raising children,” she said.

Hargreaves also noted that her church’s high schoolers have the same youth leader all four years of high school, making that person a *de facto* mentor.

She would love to see more mentoring happening with men in the congregation. “All it takes is for one or two respected men in the congregations to be in mentoring relationships with younger men. That example would do far more than setting up a program,” she said.

(Promise Keepers Canada has a training program for peer mentoring among men, called “Discipleship Training Unleashed: Mentoring Men to Leave No Man Behind.” See www.promisekeepers.ca.)

What Makes a Good Mentor?

De Jonge says spiritual mentors and mentees ask three important questions: Who is God? Who am I? What am I to do with my life?

“Any time these kinds of intentional conversations are happening in one-on-one ways in a church, community develops, vision intensifies, and the kingdom of God grows,” she said.

Hargreaves says that first and foremost, a mentor must be someone walking with the Lord.

And of course a mentor must be compassionate, a listener, and an encourager. “A mentor is a person who can ask discerning questions in a way that the mentee will experience caring and encouragement, not judgment,” said Smith.

“Love, love, love,” said Hulst. “Always be a safe person. And don’t give advice unless the person asks for it.” ■

Being a Mentor

If you want to be a mentor, first of all, pray about it. Ask God to place someone on your heart. Ask yourself if people have affirmed in you the kinds of gifts that make a good mentor.

When mentoring someone,

- meet in a quiet place with minimal distractions.
- turn off the telephone and hang up a Do Not Disturb sign.
- begin with prayer.
- have a specific time set for the meeting, usually one hour.
- be alert to feelings behind spoken words.
- be patient, as people may not share deep issues right away. Trust takes time.
- insist that your mentee stay connected with a regular body of believers, providing a wider context of accountability.
- help your mentee develop his or her own spiritual gifts.



Gayla R. Postma is news editor for *The Banner* and a member of Community CRC of Dixon’s Corners, Ontario.

The Not-So-Cloistered Walk

I LIVE IN THE SOUTH—a simple place with smiling folks who Hodding Carter described as “polite right up to the point they get mad enough to kill you.”

I’m one of those folks now. It’s taken only four years for a reformed Yankee like me to start whistling “Dixie,” give my daughters double names, savor sweet tea and pulled pork barbecue, and refer to that pesky bit of history as the War of Northern Aggression.

Assimilation is a funny thing. It happens quietly and on the margins, like a trickling mountain stream you don’t notice until you’re halfway off the waterfall. And when you start to identify with a culture, you begin to appreciate it and, eventually, defend it. That’s often the way it is with our tendency to adapt, not just to the regional aspects of our national culture, but to the godless ways of our culture at large.

And therein lies the Christian’s challenge: how to be countercultural when it’s oh-so-easy to slip into an open-armed embrace of secular life. Personally, I fear in many ways I’m both *in* and *of* Augustine’s City of Man, and it disgusts me.

Lord willing, recognition is the first step toward redemption.

In his 1951 book *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr identifies five ways believers engage with their surrounding culture. First, there are *Christ against culture* believers—monastic or fundamentalist Christians who deliberately separate themselves from a “diseased” and “damned” culture. (Many modern-day monastics do not go to a monastery to flee culture; Thomas Merton, for example, was a political activist while being in the monastery.) This cloistered remnant stores post-apocalypse dried goods in bulk but has hope in short supply.

On the other end of the spectrum, Niebuhr’s “accommodationists” take the *Christ of culture* approach by paralleling their Christian ideals with a national morality. Resistance is indeed futile, as full assimilation into the culture is the only way to the Father here.

Next there are three intervening categories. The Roman Catholic *Christ above*

culture view sees a culture peppered with God’s blessings, but requires church leaders to adequately reveal them. (This is a gross generality, especially in this day and age. Laypeople in the Catholic Church, like people in any other church, have a great deal of freedom to live as they see fit.) The *Christ in paradox with culture* believers walk a tightrope between society’s holy ordination and a wholly corrupted human nature. Finally, the *Christ transforming culture* position presumes a world fallen short of the glory of God but allows for Christ’s redemption in every nook and cultural cranny.

While classifications and reductions of this type are always fraught with peril, Niebuhr does plant helpful markers to gauge how our conception of Christ determines how deeply we assimilate into our surrounding culture.

What route is best: against, of, above, in paradox with, or transforming? I lean toward the last one, since “transforming culture” has that Hollywood-Kuyperian ring to it, and it’s certainly a worthy goal. But objectives and execution are two very different things, and actually engaging in this transformational work may prove much more difficult, and dangerous, than it sounds.

Transformation is a messy process. God seldom works in straight lines. And God doesn’t always make his will crystal clear. God could, but God doesn’t.

So before donning “Jesus Freak” T-shirts and eschewing assimilation, it’s important we realize the culture we’re countering is much more potent than many pretend. Even foot soldiers in the Lord’s Army lose the occasional skirmish.

Still, Christ will transform this culture with us, through us, or in spite of us. We can live confidently knowing that the war for this world will end, the old order of things will pass away, and victory will be God’s. And as a carpetbagger I can tell you, post-war Reconstruction ain’t half bad. ■

Ben Fox works for Governor Mark Sanford in South Carolina and attends Columbia Crossroads Church with his wife and two daughters.



Transformation is
a messy process.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

Changes in the 2009 Yearbook

Classis Rocky Mountain: Synodical Deputy is Tom Draayer; Alternate Synodical Deputy is Bob Westenbroek. Alternate Stated Clerk is Duane Sjaardema.

National Day of Prayer (U.S.)

In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 7.

The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969).

"Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow countrymen on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958).

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

Available for Call

Mr. Efen Echipare is now available for call within the Christian Reformed Church. Having successfully been examined according to Article 7 of the Church Order, Classis Hackensack and Mr. Echipare's home church, the Norfolk, VA CRC, heartily recommend him to the churches. Please contact him directly at: Mr. Efen Echipare, 1725 Meadowlake Drive, Norfolk VA 23518. His phone number is 757-855-8467 and his e-mail address is eechipare@suffolkrrha.org.

Eligible for Call

The Council of Kincardine Christian Reformed Church of Kincardine, Ontario wishes to announce that Rev. Elzo Tenyenhuis was declared eligible for call by Classis Huron on January 14, 2009. Rev. Tenyenhuis can be reached at (519) 908-9298 or email at etenyenhuis@cogeco.ca

Financial Aid

Students from Classis Rocky Mountain preparing for ordained/ non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team for the 2009-2010 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westenbroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303)400-6723 or e-mail: robertwestenbroek@comcast.net or bwestenbroek@ehills.org. All requests to be received by May 31, 2009.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, 3 PM, at the First CRC of Zeeland. Agenda deadline is April 8, 2009.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Congregational Announcements

75th Anniversary

First CRC Sarnia, On. will be celebrating the 75th Anniversary of its organization the weekend of May 30 & 31. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join in this cel-

bration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crc75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

50th Anniversary

Bethlehem CRC, Thunder Bay, ON, invites members and former members to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of God's goodness on the weekend of May 22 to 24, 2009. Tickets are required for meal planning. For more information, or, to RSVP, contact the church office at (807) 767-3961, or, email bethcrc@tbaytel.net

25th Anniversary

COMMUNITY CRC in Wyoming, MI will celebrate 25 years as an organized church with an open house on Sat, April 18, 2009 from 2:00-5:00 pm, and a special worship service at 10:00 am on April 19, followed by a potluck lunch. We are pleased to share our vision for "Building Community for Tomorrow" with the purchase of adjacent property to build an education wing in the near future. All friends and former members are welcome to these events. You may contact us at 616-534-1779, or by mail at 150 Burt St SE, Wyoming, MI 49548, or visit our website at communitycrc.org.

Announcements

BEACON CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on May 29 - 31. All alumni and teachers are invited to attend. See website for information and registration www.beaconchristian.org 1-905-937-7411

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, Brampton, Ontario will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary on Saturday, May 30, 2009. There will be a Golf Tournament beginning at 7AM, an Open House from 4-6 PM, followed by a Dinner at 6:30PM. Join us for one or all of the events! All past and

present alumni, staff and supporters are invited to join in this celebration of God's enduring faithfulness! For more information, or to register, go to www.bramptonjkcs.org or e-mail [blessings@bramptonjkcs.org](mailto: blessings@bramptonjkcs.org)

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

PYLMAN Ed & Anna (DeHaan), 1175-68th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508, will celebrate 65 years of marriage on Apr. 5. Congratulations from your children: Judy & Ken Slager, Sharon & Jim Oppenhuizen, Ed & Lori, Marilyn & Frank Smith, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness.

60th Anniversary

MULDER, Paul and Joan, 7804 W. James Dr., New Era, MI 49446 March 19, 2009. Congratulations, Dad & Mom! We love you and thank God for you. Your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

TJAPKES Burt & Mary (Sturuss) 3506 NW 63rd PL. Gainesville, FL 32653. Celebrating their 60th Wedding Anniversary April 22, 2009. Mom and Dad, you have been a wonderful example of God's Love and Faithfulness. You inspire every life you touch, especially your children Jean (Gerald), Susan (Carl), Julie (Bill), Joan (Bob), 8 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren. "For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5

55th Anniversary

VANDER LUGT, Peter & Lauretta (Slagter), 503 W. Trosky Rd., Edgerton, MN 56128, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on March 30. Congratulations and love from your family: Alvin & Joyce, Al & Marianne, Kevin & Bev, Glenn & Pearl, Ruth, and your 12 grandchildren & 4 great-grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness.

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Church Positions Available

YOUTH MINISTRY OPENING First CRC of Visalia California is seeking a youth pastor to join our ministry to jr. and sr. high students. This person will partner with our current full time youth staff in leading our various youth discipleship and missional ministries. For more information contact the head of our search team, Doug De Groff @ (559)280-7880 or send inquiries to: ym search team c/o First CRC, 1030 S. Linwood St. Visalia, CA 93277. Email: visaliacrc1@sbcglobal.net

NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CRC, Kincheloe, MI, is seeking a pastor. We have an exciting, diverse congregation with a passion for community outreach. We have strong ministries in place, and there is the potential for more to be developed. We are a small rural community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our current membership is about 40 member families. To obtain more information or a church profile please contact Joni Andary at 906-478-3205 or jandary@centurytel.net.

FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF VISALIA, CA is seeking a full-time pastor of congregational life and outreach. Job descriptions include encouraging and providing leadership to small groups and congregational life and being able to develop and utilize creative approaches for our outreach ministries. For information, please contact the search committee chair, Stu Veltkamp at: visalia crc1@sbcglobal.net. Or contact the church at MCLD search, 1030 S. Linwood, Visalia, CA 93277. Phone number (559) 625-0444.

LAGLACE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH is seeking a full time pastor. The hamlet of LaGlance is located in North Central Alberta. A church profile is available from the search committee by emailing natashavan dellen@hotmail.com or by calling Nick (780)568-3906 or John (780)568-4141.

ALAMOSA, CO—SENIOR PASTOR needed for devoted, 50-family church congregation located in beautiful southern Colorado. This congregation was planted over 100 years ago by Dutch settlers and is alive yet today. The pastor God has selected for us will enjoy the challenge of inspiring, growing and ministering to His children who live in the beautiful San Luis Valley, home to the Great Sand Dunes. Are you the pastor whom God is calling to us? Let's find out together. Visit www.alamosacrc.org and Contact Paul Heersink at (719) 852-3436 or e-mail at pwh@amigo.net.

PART TIME PASTOR - smaller CRC congregation with commitment to becoming fully missional seeks part time pastor who has missional heart and action. Important is pastor's access to health benefits from another source. Retired pastor can be considered. This multi-ethnic group located in Albuquerque, NM offers large parsonage, church office, some professional expenses. Contact Interim Pastor, Bob Walter, at 505-298-3176 or Council President, Sherry TenClay at 505-294-4942.

IMMANUEL CRC, a small but gifted congregation in New York's beautiful Hudson Valley, is seeking a full time pastor. We need a caring and visionary leader to guide a committed group of believers in our passion to serve the Lord. The candidate should be an effective speaker who cultivates a close, devotional relationship with God. Visit our website at www.immanuelcwf.org. If interested, email Deb Townsend at DeblTownsend@gmail.com.

LEAD PASTOR - First CRC of New Westminster located in the greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, in Western Canada, is looking for a full-time Pastor committed to the Reformed tradition to work in team ministry with a part-time preaching pastor (Mike Goheen) and a youth pastor (David Groen) to give leadership in developing a missional congregation in a multi-ethnic setting. This pastor will need a missional imagination, will have gifts in preaching and pastoral care, will be a man of prayer and (if married) will be devoted to the godly leadership of his family. Interested candidates can call the church office at 604-521-0111 or email at nwcc@telus.net or contact Pastor Peter Brouwer, chair of the search committee at pebro@shaw.ca.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC DIRECTOR - Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI; 700 member congregations seeks passionate, Spirit-filled person to lead and develop our music and worship ministries in a half-time position. Person should have a strong musical background (both vocal and instrumental), good communications skills, a vision for blended worship, and a sincere commitment to Christ and to the

Reformed faith. Contact Pastor Curt Walters at (616) 455-5120 (ext. 105) or e-mail at curt.walters@covenant-crc.org. To learn more about our church, please visit our website at www.covenant-crc.org.

HERE'S THE SCOOP! In Le Mars, Iowa, the Ice Cream Capital of the World, there is a special church with a special need. Calvin CRC, a diverse congregation, is praying for a pastor to lead this congregation. We are confident that God will bring to us a pastor who has a strong desire for sound biblical preaching and will compassionately lead this family-friendly church. Direct inquiries/profiles to: georgealleen@yahoo.com (Gayle) or cezomermaand@hotmail.com (Chuck). Phone Chuck @ 712-562-6110.

THE OWEN SOUND FIRST CRC is located on beautiful Georgian Bay in Southwest Ontario. We are seeking an experienced pastor who is an effective preacher and good communicator committed to the Reformed faith. You should be a nurturing caregiver, a caring mentor for our youth, and be willing and able to challenge us to obedience in our daily lives. We offer a congregation with a high number of willing and gifted members that has given 60 years of service to our area, and is eager to be led in more. If you sense God calling you to be part of His plan for this community, please send your profile c/o Pastor John Veenstra, our interim minister, at jveenstra@bmts.com or call his cell at 519-374-9946.

HOPE CRC in Port Perry, Ontario, Canada, would like to announce that we are actively seeking the next person that God would have lead our congregation as pastor. We are a multi-generational congregation of approximately 220 persons with active ministries and an emphasis on 'serve and serving'. Our adopted mission is "to know and to show the love of Jesus". Our vision is to be a place where people are led into a life changing personal relationship with Jesus, enfolded into a loving fellowship of Christians, and equipped as partners in service to actively share the love of Jesus with others. Services are led by P&W team(s) and involvement from all persons and all ages is encouraged. Youth involvement opportunities at Hope are important and encouraged. If God is prompting your heart and you feel that you may be the person that God has in mind to partner with Hope in 'growing' through the next phase, we invite you to contact us. Our church profile is available upon request. You may contact Nick Stevens, chair of the ST by email at nstevens@i-zoom.net for more information / detailed job description. 905-985-3962

ORANGEVILLE CRC in beautiful Orangeville, Ontario, is seeking a full time pastor with strong leadership skills as well as a passion for evangelism and community outreach. The ideal candidate is a gifted speaker, able to apply sound biblical preaching to daily life, and is comfortable leading both traditional and contemporary worship styles. Orangeville is a growing rural community of 30,000, located within one hour of the cultural delights of downtown Toronto as well as outdoor activities such as skiing, hiking, boating, camping, etc. Please contact John Oorebeek at 519-928-9796 or jmoorebeek@sympatico.ca for more information.

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE - Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, ON is seeking a full time, ordained Pastor, who will fill a newly created position responsible for leading and equipping our Pastoral and Diaconal Ministry Teams. This person will ensure that all aspects of congregational care are being fulfilled, and reflect the vision of our church. We are an 800+ member congregation led by a staff ministry team which presently includes a Lead Pastor and a Youth Pastor. The town of Grimsby is a growing community located on the southern shores of Lake Ontario in the heart of Niagara. Please send inquiries to: Search Committee, Mountainview CRC, 290 Main St. E., Grimsby, ON L3M 1P8 or email searchcommittee@mountainviewcwc.org. Further information may be obtained by visiting our website www.mountainviewcwc.org or contacting Annette Klingenberg, chair of Search Committee, at 905-563-5736 (evenings 7pm-10pm EST)

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY - Prince George CRC is seeking a part-time, paid Children's Ministry Coordinator to facilitate growing programs. To apply please submit letter of interest and resume to egadema@shaw.ca by May 30, 2009.

MOLINE NEEDS YOU! Do you have a passion to share God with early teens—post highs? Moline (MI) CRC needs YOU! We are searching for a part-time Youth Ministries Director to organize and execute

meaningful spiritual/relational programs for youth and leaders. For more info visit www.molinecwc.org; call Pastor John Ouwinga at 616-877-4218 or Carol Smith at 616-877-4347. Deadline: Apr 15.

VIBRANT YOUNG CHURCH in Fairview Alberta is earnestly seeking for a pastor. Please contact: dhbosma@gmail.com

BETHEL CRC of Waupun Wisconsin is accepting resumes for a Youth Pastor position available May 2009. Please submit resumes by email, waupunbethelcwc@att.net.

GRACE CRC OF COBOURG, ONTARIO, is looking for a fulltime, experienced pastor. As our pastor you will cultivate a close relationship with God; and through effective preaching, worship and encouragement you will help to grow our spiritual passion and deepen the fellowship among our members. Your gifts should also include the ability to engage our youth and inactive members. Cobourg is a small, beautiful city named "the gem of Lake Ontario", located approx. 110 km. east of Toronto. A church profile is available. Please contact search committee chair Toby Smits at smitseng@eagle.ca or call (905) 349-3454 evenings or weekends.

NEW CHURCH SEEKS PASTOR: Living Water Community Church is a new and vibrant congregation in Orange City, IA, eager to share the Living Water with all who thirst. We are searching for a full-time pastor with a vision for outreach and a passion for teaching God's Word. To view our church profile, visit the Christian Reformed website. For inquiries please e-mail or call Scott Groeneweg at 712-548-8131 skgroen@yahoo.com or Al Schuiteman at 712-441-6352 cfs@longlines.com.

SUNLIGHT COMMUNITY CHURCH of Port St. Lucie FL is seeking a passionate, Christ-centered, full-time Associate Pastor of Congregational Life. Our congregation has a tremendous mission in our community and is growing rapidly. To learn more visit www.sunlightcc.org. For inquiries contact pastor@sunlightcc.org.

INTERIM PASTOR - The Christian Reformed Church of San Diego, CA, a 150 member, 65 year old congregation is earnestly seeking God's will in leading a Specialized Transition Minister or State Supply to minister within our congregation beginning in April 2009 and throughout a period of transition between the retirement of our Pastor and prior to calling our next Pastor. For further information and details please respond to rlniemeyer@yahoo.com

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Western Springs CRC (western suburbs of Chicago) seeks a highly qualified individual to lead the music ministry of the church. The ideal candidate will be able to plan liturgy, select a variety of music for worship services, direct the choir, coordinate soloist and ensemble participation in the worship services, and participate in some or all of the following tasks: leading congregational singing through organ, piano, instrumental, or vocal accompaniment, and developing other musical ministries of the church (handbells, children's choir, etc.). We are a church committed to communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the richness of its historic and contemporary forms as expressed by the church of all ages. We invite qualified candidates to send us their inquiries by email at office@crcws.org.

YOUTH DIRECTOR: Western Springs CRC (western suburbs of Chicago) seeks a highly qualified individual to lead the youth ministry of the church. The ideal candidate for this part-time position will be able to lead the junior high and senior high youth programs of the church through organizing regular meetings, planning special events, coordinating youth involvement in worship, and participating in youth education. We invite qualified candidates to send us their inquiries by email at office@crcws.org.

YOUTH DIRECTOR/PASTOR: Chatham Grace CRC has an exciting opportunity to work with youth. This individual will need a strong ability to encourage and develop young people's faith. We anticipate this fulltime position to begin July/August 2009. A related college or university degree, or equivalent youth director experience, is required. For more information contact Patrick at 519-354-5363 or email mcmamara.family@sympatico.ca. You can also send resumes to Grace CRC YD Search Comm. c/o Patrick, 255 Tweedsmuir Ave. W., Chatham, ON (Canada) N7M 5K4. You can also check out our website at www.chathamgrace.com

50th Anniversary

FRIESEMA, Jacob & Janice (Rusthoven) 1527 Mound Rd, Delavan, WI 53115 celebrated 50 yrs. of marriage on March 13, 2009. Children: Joan & Ed Swets, Bill, Patricia & Bill Elgersma, David and (friend Kathy Frederick). 10 grandchildren. We thank God for His many blessings.

KUYERS, John and Marge (DeHaan) 10817 Fawn Trail Dr., Orland Park, IL 60467, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on May 1. Children: Kristi & Bill Kuiper; Jenna, Mitch, Steph and Jon & Julie; Josh, Jillian, Jaclyn. We thank God for His goodness. An open house will be held at their home on May 2 from 2-4pm.

SCHELHAASS, Ron and Stephanie (Drost), 145 Wheeler Ave., Dorchester, ON, NOL 1G0, celebrate their 50th anniversary on May 15. Blessings from your family. Open House, May 16, 2-4pm, Bethel CRC, London, ON

SPOELMA, Rus and Esther (Faber), 12500 Lakeshore Dr., Grand Haven, Michigan, 49417 will celebrate 50 years of marriage with an open house at First CRC of Grand Haven: 516 S. Ferry St. on May 9, 2009 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. (No gifts please.) We hope you can enjoy this special occasion with us! Congratulations from your children and grandchildren: Dave and Cheryl (Kyle, Tyler), Dan and Kim (Grace). We love you and praise God for you!

45th Anniversary

HOLTROP Donald G. and Barbara A. (Schuitema), 17368 Stanton St., West Olive, MI 49460, will celebrate their 45th Anniversary on Apr. 10, 2009. Children: Dennis, Dean (Faith Begay) and Mike; granddaughters, Marin and Dylan. Congratulations, Nana and G-Pa! We love you every day.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



Friends and family of **ARNOLD (DICK) ZANDSTRA**, 1635 Fisher Street, Munster, IN 46321 are invited to celebrate his 100th birthday at an open house at 2nd Highland CRC, May 2, from 1-4 PM. His children Dave, Bernie, Butch, Nick, Faye, Dan, Lois, their spouses, 33 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren give thanks to God for his long life.

98th Birthday



MARCUS VAN WYCK, 2920 Crystal Lane (Unit 233), Kalamazoo, MI, 49009 will celebrate his 98th birthday on April 13. He and his family give thanks to God for his many blessings.

95th Birthday

THERESA VANDERZEE [Tracy] 769 Pt. Sheldon, Grandville MI 49418. April 29. Children-Bette[Phil] Brink, Jim[Sharon] & John. 6 grandchildren & 7 great grandchildren. Great is God's faithfulness.

90th Birthday

LESTER DEN OUDEN, 913 W Second Street, Ripon CA 95366, will be celebrating his 90th birthday on April 4. His leadership to his family and church community is sincerely appreciated. Congratulations from your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

MARIE TEITSMA LUDWICK of West Palm Beach FL will be celebrating her 90th birthday on April 12 with thanksgiving to God. Her life is richly blessed by her children: Edward, Tom & Betsy, Kathy & Jim, Doug & Sylvia, 9 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. A family trip to the Netherlands is planned.

JOYCE SCHIPPER (VerBeek), 94 Old Mill Drive, Holland, MI celebrates her 90th birthday on April 1. Her husband Wilmur, children Lynn & Gloria and grandchildren Kristi, Kara, Jeff & Kara thank God for her life.

HELEN SPAANSTRA, 1801 32nd St. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49508 will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 18. Her children, Judith Verhulst, Jean Grevengoed, Elyn(Steve) Draft along with her grandchildren and great grandchildren give thanks to God for her long life.

Identical twins, **ARNOLD** (Art) and **ANDREW VANDERWALL** will celebrate their 90th birthday on April 16. We wish you God's blessings from your family and friends.

85th Birthday

GRACE (VANDERLAAN) DYKE, 9235 Waymond Ave., Unit 5, Highland, IN 46322 will celebrate her 85th birthday on April 29, 2009. Rejoicing with her are her children Arlene (Si deceased) Visser, Bev & Wes Mesman, Bill & Harriet Dyke, John & Elaine Dyke, Tom & Christy Dyke, Marilyn & Dennis Churilla, Janis & Dave Standarski, Linda & Scott Paarberg, many grandchildren & great-grandchildren. Mother, Grandma & Great-Grandma to our large family, we praise God and look forward to celebrating His blessings with her.

80th Birthday

JOANNE VAN GYSSEL (Van Nieuwkerk) 403, 5102-48 St, Lacombe AB T4L 2J4, will celebrate her 80th birthday on April 17. We thank the Lord for her many years of love, prayer and example. Her children Janet and Norman, Barb and Rod, Hilda and Ron, John and Dana, Cora and Pete and all her 21 grandchildren praise the Lord for this day.

Obituaries

BOONSTRA, Angeline, (Jacob) passed away Feb. 8, 2009. Children: Glenn (Doris), Doug (Gwen), Ken (Anita), Ron (Audrey), Eileen McKeever (Nate), 15 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren. Rest in Peace.

COMPAGNER, Carl; age 80; February 16, 2009; 2316 Edgewood S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife: Winifred "Wynn" Compagner; children: Douglas (Mary Peterson) Compagner, Jennifer (Gregory) Fritsch; grandchildren: Abigail, Grace and Skylar Compagner, Jessica and Taylor Fritsch; sisters and brother: Ada Ver Beek, Laura Vander Poppen, and Eugene (Ruth) Compagner; brothers-in-law: Otto Gaastra and George (Dorothy) Gaastra.

DEJONG, Arthur Everett, age 80. Bellflower Artesia, CA. Went home to be with Jesus January 26, 2009. Husband of Eleanor Jane Alsum, 56 years. Father of Goldene (Tom) Byma, Gerald, Arthur (Erika) DeJong. Grandfather of Gerrit (Christal) Byma, Allen (Adina) Byma, Thomas (Jennifer) Byma. Great grandfather of Wyatt, Jackson, Ariella, and

Logan. Sisters: Kathleen Andrews, Phyllis (Jerry) Witskin, Virginia (John) Rozenboom. With many nephews and nieces.

DE JONG, Marlo, age 70, Feb. 10, 2009, 4682 E. Vassar Ave. Denver, CO 80222. He is survived by his wife, Joyce; Children: Bob and Mary, Barry (deceased) and Kimberly, Tammy and Dean Harder, Jr., Matt and Lisa, Marla and Dan Alexander, 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

DE YOUNG, Helen J., nee Glupker, age 84. 1909 60th St, La Grange, IL 60525. Wife of John E. De Young, Sr. Mother of Nancy, John E., Jr. (Rachel), Robert (Karen) and Sue De Young. Grandmother of John E., III (Rhonda), David (Jennifer) De Young; Tessa (Jaime) Bunn, Melissa and Becca De Young. Great-Grandmother of William Jack De Young. Sister of George (Betty) and the late Robert (the late Clara) Glupker. Sister-in-law of Norman (JoAnn) De Young, the late Carole (George) Hoekstra, and the late Kenneth (the late Doris) De Young.

JORRITSMA, Ann, aged 80, began her new life free of Alzheimer's on February 17, 2009. She was a loving and much loved wife, mom, grandma and pastor's wife. She is survived by her devoted husband of 59 years, Menno; children & grandchildren, Anne & Pete Haverhals (Michael, David) and Mark & Ruth Jorritsma (Christopher, Stephanie). Memorial gifts to Crista Nursing Center. For more information or to send a message to the family, go to: www.michaelhaverhals.com/annjorritsma

KELLY, Aaltje (Zantingh) age 76, of 216 Logan Rd. Dunnville, Ont., N1A 2W7. She went to her heavenly home on Feb 2, 2009. She is survived by her beloved husband, Harm of 56 yrs. 8 children, 43 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren. The Lord is my Shepherd. Ps. 23:1

KUIPERS, Henrietta (Vogelzang); aged 100; February 13, 2009; 1845 Boston SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; She is preceded in death by her husband, Bernard Henry Kuipers and siblings: Geraldine, Leonard, John, and Nicholas. She is survived by siblings: Wilma, Abraham, and William; children Dr. Donald and Lucille Kuiper, Joanne and Dr. Arnold Pals, Dr. Bernard and Dr. Suzannah Kuipers, and Carole and Ken Dykema; 12 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren.

KUYVENHOVEN, Klazina Ena (Heerema); aged 77; February 16, 2009; 2105 Raybrook SE, Unit 4059 Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She supported and shared the ministry of her husband of 56 years, (Rev.) Andrew Kuyvenhoven. Children: Jo Kuyvenhoven, Grand Rapids, MI; Joyce (Hal Maring), Washington D. C.; Philip (Lori) Kuyvenhoven, Ashley, IN; Margaret (Frank Hofland), Marietta, GA; Cora (Martin) Kuyvenhoven-Spencer, Columbus, OH; and Leonard (Sue) Kuyvenhoven, Grand Rapids, MI. Grandchildren: Rachel, Jessica, and Joshua; Luke and Miriam; Mary Ena and Matthew; Rebecca, Sarah, and Emma; Carmina and Ben; Jacob, Allison and Lizzie. Great grandchildren: Yannick Dierolf and Jayci Stanley. We miss her, but go on, blessed by her many rich gifts to us.

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M O M E N T U M F O R L I F E

MESMAN-BLOM Stephanie Joan, age 32, December 31, 2008; 1600 182nd Street, Lansing, IL 60438. Survived by her husband, Daniel Blom; parents Wesley and Beverly (Dyke) Mesman; sister Kimberly; brother Todd; grandmother, Grace Dyke; grandfather, John Mesman. We live with the confidence that we will see her again someday.

STRUIKSMA, Wilbur, age 87 of Artesia, Ca. went home to be with his Lord on Feb.7, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Pearl,

daughters, Donna (Ken) Kline, Darlene (Steve) Coffman, DeDe (Gary) VanEssen and son Dan (Natalie) Struikisma, 14 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren, 2 sisters and 1 brother.

STEENBERGEN, Bernice, age 50, Red Deer AB, went to be with her Lord on Jan. 9/09. Husband of Henry, mother of Melinda (Sean), Dan & Kristen, Josh (Kristin), Ben. Daughter of Bert & Marie VandenBerg; sister of Marilyn & Dick, Phil & Jannetta, Bruce & Sharon. Daughter-

in-law of Alice Steenbergen; sister-in-law of Bill & Karen, Peter & Jan, Fanny & Nick, Marg & Jess, Alina & Ralph, Hilma.

VANDEBOSCH, Laura H, Age 82, 4400 Creekside Dr. Apt 117, Sioux Falls, SD 57106, died on Dec. 21, 2008. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Pastor Tom VandenBosch, two sons, Tom L. and G. Scott (Laurie) VandenBosch, daughter Gloria (Dale) Hansen, five grandchildren, five great grandchildren, two brother, Bernard (Nelvia) Van't Hul, Gary (Joyce) Van't Hul, one sister, Carolyne Groot.

VANDE RIET - Rev. Garrett Vande Riet, age 95, of Jenison, went to be with his Lord and Savior on Monday, February 2, 2009. He was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years, Cora (Voss) Vande Riet; siblings, Florence Vander Kooi, Alyce Lemmen, Herman Vande Riet, and Ethel Overway. He will be lovingly remembered by his children, Tim (Jean) Vande Riet, Mary (Glenn) De Mots, Mark (Sheri) Vande Riet, and Sue (Greg) Wevers; 12 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren; sister, Louise Louisma; sister-in-law, Leona Voss; many nieces, nephews, and friends. The family wishes to give special thanks to the staff at Sunset Manor and Brookcrest Christian Nursing Home for the loving and compassionate care they provided for their father.



VERMEER, Gary J., Founder and Chairman Emeritus of Vermeer Corporation in Pella, Iowa, passed away February 2, 2009, at the Hospice of Pella Comfort House at the age of 90 years. Gary will be remembered for his commitment to church and family, his innovation, contributions to many

projects locally and worldwide, and love of the outdoors. He is survived by his wife, Matilda; three children and their spouses, Stanley J. and Alma Vermeer, Robert L. and Lois Vermeer, and Mary A. and Dale Andringa; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and a brother, John H. Vermeer. Memorials in his memory may be designated for Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Hospice of Pella Comfort House, or the Pella Christian Schools in Pella, Iowa.

WASSENAAR, Norman G.; age 82; February 15, 2009; 6980 Rollingview, Hudsonville, MI 49426; He is survived by his loving wife of 62 years Carolyn (Workman) Wassenaar; children: David A. and Lucille Wassenaar, Linda A. and George Dalman, Ronald J. and Jean Wassenaar; grandchildren: Alisha and Ryan Beltramini, Ryan and Courtney Dalman, Ben and Erika Dalman, Kurt and Anna Dalman, Anne Dalman, Justin Wassenaar, Jeremy Wassenaar, Melissa Wassenaar; great-grandchildren: Ona Mae, Ari Liam, George Bryce, Eleanor Grace (Ellie); sister: Betty (Keith Fitzgerald); brothers: Jack (Shirley) Wassenaar, Gordon (Patsy) Wassenaar; sister-in-law: June Breuker; brother-in-law and sister-in-law: John and Carol Workman; brother-in-law and sister-in-law: Albertus and Cleo Elve.

WIERINGA Norman Jay, 61. 18 169th Street, Hammond, IN 46324. Husband of the late Elaine, nee Kapus. Loving father of Brian (Angela) Wieringa, Norman Jr. (Michelle) Wieringa, Autumn (Michael) Nagele, April Wieringa, and Gerrit (Amy) Wieringa. Grandfather of Matthew, Mara, Michael, Thomas, Timothy, Sarah, Theodore, Summer, and Micah Jay. Brother of Marilynn Swierenga, Jerry (Carole) Wieringa, Garry (Barbara) Wieringa, Judy (Paul) Eshmann, and the late Donald Wieringa. Dear uncle of many nieces and nephews.

Employment

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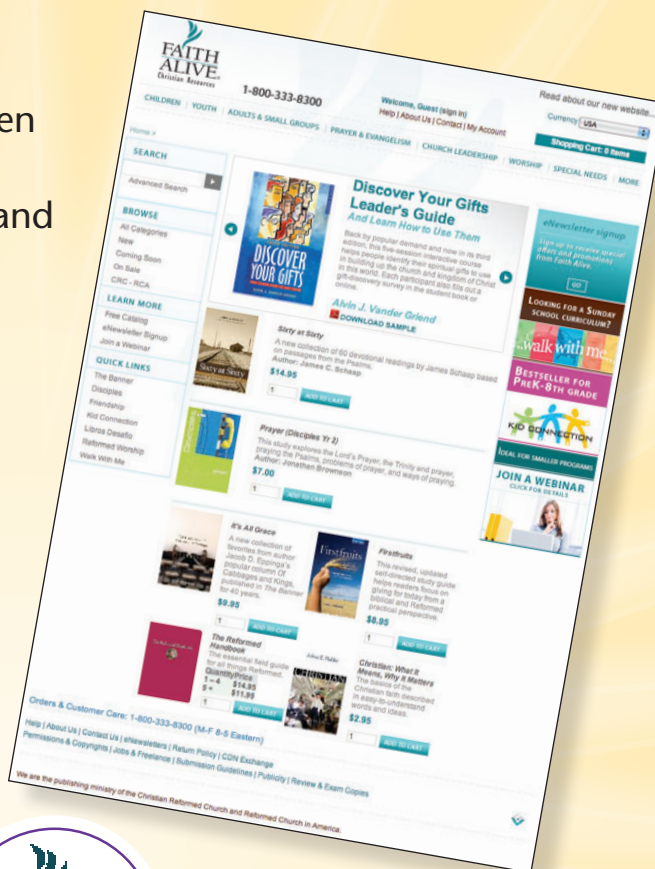
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Punch Lines

One morning after breakfast we were just finishing up our Bible reading and prayers—my 5-year-old son finished his prayer with “Amen.” Then he said, “Now let us take a moment to greet one another in the name of the Lord.”

Apparently he *does* pay attention in church.

—Vernanda Buwalda

A young boy was misbehaving. When his mother got after him, he ran and hid under the bed. Later, when his father got home and heard about the trouble, he crawled under the bed after his son. The boy asked, “Is she after you too?”

—Anonymous

We watched proudly as our first child marched off to her very first day of Sunday school. On our way home from church, we were eager to hear how it all went. So we began asking Shannon, then 4 years old, all our questions: “So who is your teacher?” “Who is in your class?” Then—just to see if she remembered the most important part—“What was your story about today?”

“God made the Earth,” she announced. “He made the sun, moon, flowers, trees, and the animals!”

We responded encouragingly. But when she didn’t continue, we asked, “What about making the people, Adam and Eve?”

“No, that’s next week” she announced. And with that, question time was over.

—Annette Zylstra

“I know what the Bible means!” the young son told his father proudly.

His father smiled and replied, “What do you mean you ‘know’ what the Bible means?”

“I *do* know!” the son said.

“OK,” said his father, “What does the Bible mean?”

“That’s easy,” the boy answered. “It stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.”

—Joanne Vriend

I remember as a child being confused and uncertain about many things I heard from the pulpit and in Sunday school. But one thing I clearly remember being quite sure of was that the epistles were the wives of the apostles.

—Tony Ehlers

Last night we read the Bible story of the boy with five loaves and two fish. At the end of every story there are questions. This one was, “What can you give to Jesus?”—to which 4-year-old Max replied, “My vegetables and maybe some fruit snacks!”

Then I said, “What about some of your ice cream?”—to which he replied without hesitation, “If I have a big bowl, then I can share. But if I have a little bowl, then I can’t.”

—Scott Heerema

During a Sunday-morning worship service, a mother tried everything she could think

of—including rewards, scoldings, and threats—to get her fidgety 7-year-old to be quiet. Nothing worked. Finally, about halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered something in the little boy’s ear. He immediately stopped fidgeting and sat quietly for the rest of the service.

Afterward a friend sitting in the row behind asked the young mother what she had said to her son. The mother smiled slyly and replied, “If you don’t be quiet, the preacher is going to lose his place, and then he’ll have to start his sermon all over again.”

—Petronella Venhuis

The Banner staff sent John Calvin on a whirlwind world tour this year in honor of his 500th birthday. Look for photos of his travels on this page each month.



Stuart Williams from Fellowship CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, took this photo of John Calvin against the majestic mountains near Banff, Alberta. Being a longtime resident of Switzerland, John felt right at home. Stuart and his wife, Marian, took John with them on their travels from Edmonton as far east as Emo, Ontario, introducing him to their friends along the way and providing him with an unparalleled birthday excursion.

Photo: Stuart Williams

Jesus went through all the towns and villages,



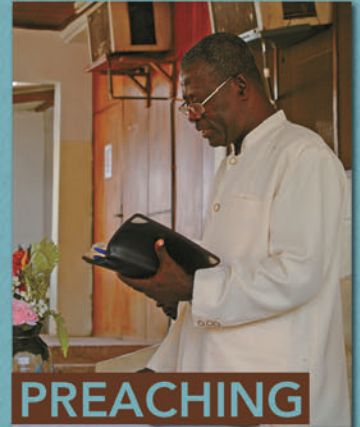
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When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless,



like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:35-38



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