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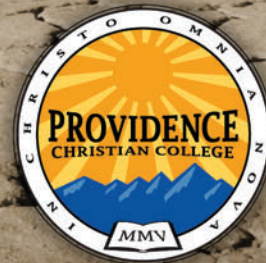
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. . . That's how it felt for August, a man serving time at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. Raised in a broken home, he spent his youth dabbling in drugs and crime. Then, in 2003, he was arrested and sent behind bars.

"My family would not talk to me anymore and I lost all contact with the outside world," he recalls. "I realized how worthless my life had really become."

On the verge of suicide, August was encouraged by his fellow prisoners to check out **Cornerstone Prison Church**, a Home Missions-supported ministry that meets inside penitentiary walls. After spending time worshipping and studying the Bible with other prisoners, he decided to commit himself to Christ. "I gave my life over to God and became involved in the church, which led me to believe I had something to live for," he says.

Home Missions is bringing hope to prisoners like August through prison ministries like **Cornerstone Prison Church** and **Celebration Fellowship**, a new prison ministry in Ionia, Michigan. Through these ministries, Home Missions is giving hope to the hopeless through the transforming power of the gospel.

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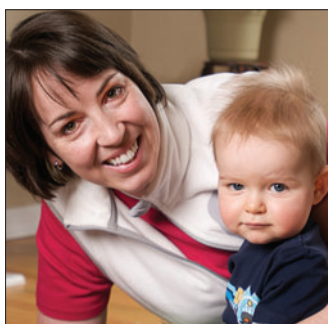
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Cover: Andrea Visser-Bult with her son, Eli, who was born July 1, 2008. Last year, while she was still pregnant, Andrea reflected on Mother's Day, giving thanks for both her mother as well as her biological mother, who gave her up for adoption. See "Mother's Day in a Three-Way Mirror," p. 38. Andrea, her husband, Michael, and Eli are members of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN HUTTENGA



We Can Be Sure *and* Wrong, Right?

WITH GREAT INTEREST I'VE FOLLOWED OUR DISCUSSIONS on homosexuality in *The Banner*, on the *Banner* website, and on "Bob's Blog," also on the *Banner* website (www.thebanner.org).

Two things strike me. The first is that these conversations are open, respectful, and keenly concerned about being true to Scripture. That's hopeful. The second is that so many of us are so sure about stuff—even though what *we're* sure of stands diametrically opposed to what *others* are sure of.

This is what many respondents are sure of:

- The Bible clearly forbids all homosexual practices.
- The Bible does not forbid all homosexual practices.
- The church must discipline those who are in same-sex relationships.
- The church must not discipline those who are in same-sex relationships.
- If parents love their homosexual children, they will support them if they choose a same-sex partner.
- If parents love their homosexual children, they will warn their children away from same-sex relationships.

Interestingly, respondents on both sides of the debate agree that they're sure the *Banner* editor raised this issue because he's secretly hoping that the present church policy will be liberalized. But the one side is sure that's a good thing, the other that it's a bad thing.

(For the record, if you refer back to the March issue of *The Banner* you'll see that the editor is not at all sure of what's needed, just that there are a lot of people hurting out there and that we either need to help our churches better implement the policy we have, or we need to adjust it in some way to meet the challenge placed before us by Synods 2002 and 2003 to provide better pastoral care.)

I see hope in the fact that we're all sure we must do what Scripture would have us do.

So what might get our conversation unstuck? What might get us beyond our conundrum? I see hope in the fact that we're all sure we must do what Scripture would have us do—both in terms of the policy we adopt and how we implement that policy in extending loving acceptance and pastoral care to all our members. Might it help our conversation forward if we parked our certainties at the door and humbly asked our best minds to do some fresh, serious Bible study that is also informed by the latest scientific research on the subject (since Reformed folks do need to consult creation revelation as well)? A new synodical study committee might help us to do that, and, further, to advise our churches on how we are to implement CRC policy (changed or unchanged) in an appropriate manner.

Sometimes the more we study, the less we know we really know. That's not a bad thing because it opens us up to the Holy Spirit's leading as we pray, learn, dialogue, and continue to live together in love.

I'm *sure* that the same applies to the issue at hand. And, yeah, I *could* be wrong. ■



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta. See his blog at www.thebanner.org.

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Home Free

I'VE SUNK DEEPER into our home lately. Being home can be like sinking into the heavy, wet sand of a bog or like sinking into the warm, light sand of a beach.

I started a “parental leave” this past March to be the primary caregiver for our two small children. At the same time my wife, Joy, returned to work after being home for seven months to tend our new baby daughter, Petra. Now it’s my turn. You might call it a parental sabbatical. A new “home” mission.

It’s been mostly an amiable transition. In previous days I roamed the continent, crisscrossing the U.S. and Canada to bolster the Christian Reformed Church’s campus ministry movement. Now my territory stretches a block from the local Price Chopper to Riverside Park.

I’ve heard people describe “cabin fever” and going “stir-crazy” in their home with kids. Part of me empathizes with this. Life really slows down. Just crossing the threshold to the outdoors takes a good 15 minutes.

Sleep has been spotty. I have fallen asleep reading children’s books to my 2-year-old son, Joseph. During his bedtime.

I’m more easily distracted: when chatting with a friend my attention suddenly darts to a lamp that may be threatened by an unwary child. When supposedly playing “train” I’m thinking of ideas for this article.

That is the bog.

There is also the beach. I left behind stimulating binational work and kind, cheerful colleagues. But I also said goodbye to a stale world of long drives, airports, hotels, and fast food, not to mention an undying flood of e-mail. Because I live in Canada, this doesn’t mean I lose my salary, either. I get paid 60 percent of my wages in order to care for my kids. Privilege through policy, grace through government.

G.K. Chesterton once said, “The real habitation of Liberty is in the home.” That

is the opposite of what many of us have been told. But think about it. Few jobs permit you to saunter around in your underwear all morning, fry up pancakes with bacon for lunch, and spend the afternoon playing in the park.

Sure you have to change putrid diapers, haul out the garbage, and put up with some ear-piercing tantrums. But being in the home can be as freeing as being on the open beach, with the only limit our imagination. We have gone to the library, petting zoos, and swimming lessons. We’ve zipped down a neighbor’s inflatable water slide. We eat fresh foods. We take afternoon naps.

This past winter a snow cow, snow turtle, and snow lizard graced our front lawn. I wouldn’t have sculpted them for myself. Children are an easy excuse for playfulness and creativity.

Children are also great entertainment as they discover the world for the first time. My son squeals when I roll my eyes up and around. He is fascinated by the garbage truck, enthralled by the mail carrier, and mysteriously silenced by strangers. He jumps around maniacally when he hears a favorite tune (or if you just yell “Dance!”).

This transitional experience can be spiritual practice: giving up, letting go, embracing the new moment. I naturally gravitate to ideas and crave constant intellectual input. To be attentive to the practical, to put a small child first, and to try seeing the familiar with them as “new every morning” are happy disciplines. God is truly in the details. I want to savor this time of simplicity, for it will slip away like a summer day on the beach. ■



Peter Schuurman has formally left his position with Christian Reformed Home Missions to care for his two children at home in Guelph, Ontario. He teaches world religions part-time at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. What he will do in September remains uncertain.



The miraculous
is not extraordinary
but the common
mode of existence.
It is our daily bread.

— WENDELL BERRY

How We Fail to Create Safe Churches

THE
BANNER

Only 20 of the 47 classes in the CRC have formed abuse-response teams.

ABOUT 25 YEARS AGO reports began to surface about physical, emotional, and sexual abuse perpetrated by members and even leaders in the Christian Reformed Church. Synod appointed a committee to study the matter. The committee hired social researchers to conduct a professional survey of the extent of abuse within the denomination. The research showed that abuse *did* occur within the denomination, and it occurred to approximately the same extent as in the general society.

Upon receiving that report, Synod appointed another committee to recommend how the CRC should respond to this distressing situation.

One of that committee's recommendations was that the CRC set up and maintain an Office of Abuse Prevention with a full-time director. Its mandate was to provide educational resources, develop policies and procedures, and conduct training designed to reduce the risk of abuse in churches and to respond with justice and compassion when abuse has occurred.

Synod adopted that recommendation, and Beth Swagman was appointed

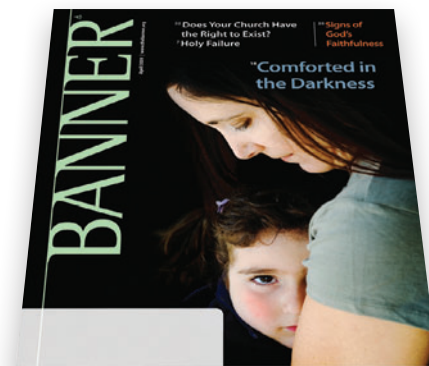
as full-time director. She has served with distinction for nearly 15 years. I was a member of both of the synod committees and continue to serve on the Office of Abuse Prevention's advisory committee.

Many things have been accomplished. Awareness of the problem of abuse within churches has certainly increased. Many churches have adopted safe-church policies and procedures regarding nursery, Sunday school, children's ministries, and youth ministries to safeguard young people under the care of the church. Some churches have observed the semi-annual "Abuse Awareness Sunday" with appropriate liturgies, sermons, and church bulletin inserts. Many churches require police checks of staff, volunteers, and even church council members. There have been attempts to educate congregations and members about the potential for abuse, as well as attempts to promote healthier relationships between people.

But serious gaps remain.

Each classis has been asked by synod to form a Safe Church Team to educate church members about abuse prevention and to respond to allegations of sexual abuse by a church leader. Each team usually consists of people who have professional expertise in some aspect of the patterns of sexual and physical abuse. Each team has been trained in the specific procedures to follow when an allegation of sexual abuse is brought against a church leader, who in 80 percent of the charges brought thus far has been a pastor. These teams conduct fact-finding regarding the allegation while maintaining the confidentiality of both the alleged victim and the alleged offender.

Continued on p. 40 »



Coffee Shop Confusion

I appreciated the excellent and important article "Does Your Church Have the Right to Exist?" (April 2009).

However, I would like to correct a detail that has been repeatedly misrepresented: the relationship between the Common Cup coffee shop and Many Peoples Church in Chicago (see "Coffee and Connections in a Chicago Suburb," December 2007).

In the April 2009 article, Rev. Jul Medenblik rightly recognizes the ministry of John and Ruth Hoekwater as a good example of a church's community engagement and service. Rather than a ministry of Many Peoples Church, however, their coffee shop is a for-profit business that is in no way financed by either the CRC or Many Peoples Church.

The Hoekwaters have made significant sacrifices in order to answer what they felt was God's call for their lives in Chicago. They deserve to be recognized and supported for this. Let's not mislead readers that such a "tentmaking" venture as the Common Cup must be organized by the church in order to legitimately enact the church's mission.

—Sara VanderHaagen
Chicago, Ill.

LETTERS

Singles in the CRC

When I read “What If We Don’t Focus on the Family?” (February 2009), I felt like high five-ing someone. I am single and almost 40 years old (gasp!). I have never been married and I don’t have any children. I never expected to hit this age and not be married with 2.5 children and a pet of some kind. But my life didn’t turn out that way.

I want to say a huge “thank you” to my family and friends for believing that it is OK to be single. Even my church family is great about it. I have many married and single friends, and being single really isn’t an issue at all.

I’d like to see more articles like this to encourage the single/divorced people within our reach and let them know that life is good and to trust in the plan that God has for them.

—Kari DeRaaf
Lethbridge, Alberta

We can be a hard group to figure out, but as one single I say thanks for the effort!

—Katelyn Bangma
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Evolution

The continued discussion online about the Haarsmas’ article “Speaking of Evolution” (February 2009), presents an interesting ratio. One letter asks for a clearer CRC stand on the matter, and another mistakenly says that only four Christian institutions give geology degrees (more do). Meanwhile, 11 letters challenge the Haarsmas’ claims and/or provide credible alternatives to their suggestion that biblical and evolutionary thinking can be harmonized. Meanwhile, the April 2009 *Banner* printed two letters that supported the Haarsmas’ position and only one that refuted it. Was this *Banner* bias to readers’ reactions or just poor math? An issue this important deserves proportional treatment.

—Michael DuMez
Oostburg, Wis.

Good point, Michael. The Banner tries to print a fair representation of letters in response to articles. In this case, many of the 11 letters you cite came in after our deadline for the April print magazine, and we saved others so we could give them more room on our website that month. —Ed.

Homosexuality

It is with sadness and dismay that I read of your proposal to open again the discussion on our church’s understanding of homosexuality (“What’s to Discuss?” March 2009). Although not altogether unexpected, I fear we are headed further down the path toward the acceptance of homosexual activity among our members and, eventually, clergy. I know that usually when things get “discussed,” that means bringing us closer to the norms of our culture, never more in harmony with the truth of God’s Word.

—Barbara Viss
Ripon, Calif.

It seems to me that one of the marks of “strong faith and Christian maturity” is to have victory over sin. . . . Would the solution to the problem of men who cannot commit to one woman be a committed polygamous relationship (assuming everyone is consenting)? Of course not.

Since less than 5 percent of the population is homosexual, most of us have difficulty relating to the temptation. Part of the solution is to invite the dialogue of those who have successfully dealt with it. At the very least we ought to have the humility to accept that there is lots of sin going on within the heterosexual community. There is a need for compassion, yes, but certainly not to accept defeat.

—Len Prins
Chatham, Ontario

I very much appreciated the agony displayed in the article by Rev. Michael Veenema about himself and his gay son. I also deeply appreciated the editorial on

homosexuality by Rev. Bob De Moor in the same issue. Yes, let’s talk.

I believe for a further discussion we should begin by referring to Article 47 of our Contemporary Testimony, “Our World Belongs to God.” Instead of singling out homosexuality as a “result of humanity’s fallen condition,” we should begin by stating, as Article 47 says, that “sexuality is disordered in our fallen world.” We need to talk about all sexuality, and from there we can talk about homosexuality.

—Simon Wolfert
Surrey, British Columbia

I am fearful for the gay children of the CRC because I don’t see our current policies and behavior as enfolding them into our church. We expect sexual behavior from them that we require of no other straight children. But my biggest fear is that they will see themselves as rejected by God. Yes, we must continue the discussion.

—Sheryl Rice Mulder
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Thanks

I am relatively new to the denomination (I was drawn in while studying at the Institute for Christian Studies a few years back), and one thing that has kept me in the Christian Reformed Church is the dedication to quality thought, writing, and discussion, which you reflect so well in *The Banner*. I am so impressed with the willingness of people (and this publication) to consistently take on hard issues and discuss them with genuine openness and humility. It is so refreshing to be part of a community that holds fast to its convictions and, at the same time, is willing to entertain the notion that it might have gotten things wrong from time to time. Blessings on you as you do this hard but important work.

—Tanya DeRoo
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Getting to Church by Way of Prison

It's a midwinter Monday night in Michigan, and a group of people are on their way to church.

In the middle of rural Ionia County, they walk past an abundant crop of barbed wire fences and are herded in small groups of five or six into a small sterile room.

They empty their pockets. No metal pens are allowed; only see-through plastic ones. They hold out their arms, walk through a metal detector, and then receive a full-body pat-down. Each is given a small black box with a bright-red button—it's an alarm and locator device. Just in case.

The air is crisp and cold as they walk through the dark yard to be escorted into building 300, where a squadron of closed-circuit cameras monitors their every move.

The congregation is already assembled and facing the front; deep baritone voices sing "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus." The latecomers find places to sit at tables among them.

So begins another weekly service of Celebration Fellowship Congregation at the Ionia Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility, the only Christian Reformed church located entirely within a prison.

Every Monday night 30 to 35 inmates come to this makeshift sanctuary to study and worship,

The weekly service of Celebration Fellowship CRC at the Ionia Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility.

joined by 10 to 15 visitors from local Michigan churches who partner with them and commit to attending every week so that relationships can be built.

Everyone takes out a copy of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and for the next hour the congregants read through a chapter and talk through a list of questions that the inmates compiled.

When it comes time for the sermon, Rev. Rich Rienstra takes the pulpit. Rienstra was called by Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., to lead this new congregation. Rienstra's work with jail ministries goes back to his first ministry in the 1970s when he was a young pastor fresh out of seminary. But prison ministry has a personal dimension for him; his own son is an inmate in a Michigan prison.

Rienstra explains that the ministry is training inmates to

Banner Writer Needed

Do you have the WRITE stuff? *The Banner* is looking for a news correspondent in southwestern Ontario 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.

become leaders and prepare for life after prison. "We're grooming the future elders and deacons of the church," he said. "Our highest priority is making disciples."

In many ways the worship service is like any other—people yawn occasionally and shift in their seats, they recite the Apostles' Creed together. There's even a children's prayer. Though no children are present, many of the men have families outside the walls.

When it comes time for the offering, an older inmate named Mike sings "Jesus, Jesus, There's Just Something About That Name." The other inmates quietly join in the repeating chorus. An empty bowl is passed around to gather the inmates' written prayers and hopes, as they have no money to give.

One of the visitors is Adria Libolt, a retired prison warden. "I never dreamed I'd want to come back [to a prison]," Libolt said. During the Bible study before the worship service, a prisoner seated at Libolt's table asks her, "Do you consider yourself God's friend?"

"Prisoners didn't use to say things to me like that," she explained. "It was really moving."

Afterward, the visitors are free to go. They walk back to their cars and slowly drive away. Back behind the barbed wire, the Spirit of God remains.

—Christian Bell

Organist Featured on PBS

Benton Blasingame, the organist for Rochester Christian Reformed Church in Penfield, N.Y., was recently one of the featured organists at a concert to be broadcast on *Pipedreams Live!*, a PBS program that airs on 150 stations across the United States.

Blasingame is a first-year student at the highly acclaimed Eastman School of Music and a recent graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. He has won numerous awards, including first prize in the high school division



STEVE TRYON

Benton Blasingame at the Hal-loran-All Saints Organ at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York

Blasingame says he felt privileged to be part of *Pipedreams Live!* because the program, hosted by Michael Barone, helps keep the organ world alive, interesting, and exciting.

—Calvin Hulstein

of the 2007 Albert Schweitzer Organ Competition.

Nebraska Inmates Lend a Hand



MATT KEYSER

Inmates at a minimum security prison in Lincoln, Neb., are volunteering time while doing time. Several of them have partnered with Northern Lighthouse Christian Reformed Church to form Charity Autos, a car repair service for people who can't afford repairs elsewhere.

Steven Oliver loves helping people. On Saturdays he is one of seven or eight inmates who donate labor to repair cars for single moms, seniors, and people who have disabilities.

"It's a good feeling to know that you have helped someone at the end of the day and got them on the road," said Oliver.

He heard about the program while worshiping at Northern Lighthouse. "I feel like I am doing the Lord's work through auto mechanics and also helping people who are in need," he said.

Inmate Bill White repairs a car.

Northern Lighthouse CRC was originally established as a typical church in a new housing development, according to ministry associate Jeff Heerspink. But a prisoner-release program brought inmates in to worship. When one prisoner expressed a wish for work to do, a car was repaired and a ministry was born.

"I think one of the most beautiful pieces of the Charity Autos program is there's a number of people who show up and say, 'I want nothing to do with church, but I can work on a car,'" said Heerspink. "And then they get to know some of the members of Lighthouse. The inmates find a loving, caring place. Then they say, 'Well, I'll come to church,'" he said. "A lot of them find Christ."

—Sherry Kooiker



Florida Champs The Lake Worth (Fla.) Christian High School girls' basketball team won the state championship for its division. This first-ever championship title coincided with the school's 50th anniversary. Though several teams came close to winning state titles, "It's been a great experience for everybody that we were finally able to make it happen," said athletic director Jim Harwood. Team member Antishia Wright, named Most Valuable Player, has accepted a full scholarship to play basketball for West Virginia University next year. Lake Worth's girls' coach, Carlos Palacios, was named "Florida 1A Coach of the Year" by the *Palm Beach Post* and the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

CALLS ACCEPTED

From Hope Christian Reformed Church in Stony Plain, Alberta, to **Rev. Fred Bultman** of Trinity CRC, Edmonton, Alberta.

From First CRC, Visalia, Calif., to **Rev. Joel Renkema** of Christian Reformed World Missions, to be pastor of congregational life and outreach.

From Pipestone (Minn.) CRC to **Rev. Tim Ouwinga** of First CRC, Orange City, Iowa.

Student Wilderness Ministry Explores “Book” of Creation

Dog-sled teams cross a snow-covered lake in Ontario’s Algonquin Park.



MIKE FALLON

Every year, Mike Fallon leads hundreds of students out of their classrooms and into the wild to be tested and taught by God’s creation.

Away from cell phones, the Internet, Facebook, YouTube, and the busy pace of their day-to-day lives, students learn teamwork, develop servant

hearts, and experience opportunities to reflect on God in silence.

“It’s where leaders often are born,” said Fallon, a Christian Reformed campus chaplain at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and founder of Re-creation Wilderness Ministry.

Referring to the Belgic Confession, Fallon notes that God reveals himself in two ways: through

Scripture and through the “book” of creation. “We strive to shape hearts to love God and his creation,” he said.

In their daily life, many of the students are cut off from nature and other living creatures. Rock climbing, cleaning up streams, backpacking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and outdoor retreats help students foster an intimacy with God’s creation and cultivate what Fallon calls a “stewardly consciousness.”

For instance, on dog-sledding trips students learn that when it’s time to make camp at the end of the day, the animals, who have worked hard for them and for whom they are responsible, come first.

“The first thing [students] . . . do is unharness [the dogs] and check their paws. They . . . feed [the dogs] and water them before they prepare their own food,” said Fallon.

“We try to plant seeds of stewardship and encourage our students to become agents of re-creation,” he said.

—Sophie Vandenberg



Chris Kelderman and his children, Mollie and Noah, attend the divorce care group at Faith CRC.

Divorce Care in Minnesota Church

Faith Christian Reformed Church in New Brighton, Minn., offers healing to families going through divorce.

DivorceCare™ and DC4K™ specifically target divorced parents and their children. One parent must participate in the adult group in order for his or her child to take part in the kids’ group.

“We started both programs for our own families but also advertised and have generally had more [families] from the community than our own,” said Rev. Archie Vander Hart, pastor of Faith CRC.

“Some come from other churches. Some are unchurched. The programs have strong support from the church and its leadership, and they are deeply appreciated by the participants,” he said.

Faith member Chris Kelderman and his two children, Mollie, 10, and Noah, 7, enjoy the groups.

“I think DC4K is important to my kids,” Kelderman said. “They can express their feelings . . . and see there are others experiencing the same thing. Going through DC4K, they realize they are not alone.”

“It’s fun because there are a lot of people there I know,” Noah said. “We watch videos, play games.”

Kelderman has benefited from the fellowship too. “It helps me not feel so much loneliness as I work through this,” he said. “It helps you realize the feelings you have are normal.”

For more information on these national programs, see www.divorcecare.org.

—Paul Delger

No AIDS Stigma in Atlanta Church

At Good News Community Christian Reformed Church in Atlanta, people living with HIV/AIDS have found a place to worship and belong.

Nine years ago the Christian Reformed church plant began by reaching out to people with addictions. They found that many of the people they were reaching were HIV-positive, so their focus shifted.

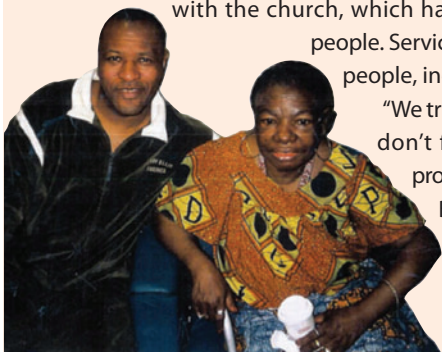
The church has five staff members and 10 volunteers who work with about 400 clients a year, helping them find jobs, recover from addictions, and get established in housing. The AIDS ministry collaborates with several other local AIDS organizations and has become known for taking on tough cases.

Dozens of the AIDS ministry's clients have gotten involved with the church, which has grown to about 85 people. Services, geared to younger people, include hip-hop music.

"We try to target people who don't fit into anyone else's program," said Rev. George Boyd. "It's a great tool for us to meet people and help them."

Read more about this church at www.thebanner.org.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Rev. George Boyd (left) and Mary, a 68-year-old member of Good News Community CRC who lives with HIV.

Illinois Artist Uses Glass as His Canvas

The sanctuary of Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Sauk Village, Ill., is enhanced by two glass windows and a baptismal bowl, both created by world-renowned glass artist Charles Lotton.

Lotton's glass art is displayed in art museums throughout the world and prized by collectors. Emmanuel CRC is a recipient of Lotton's work because Lotton, 73, has been a member of the congregation for 38 years. Lotton also donates pieces of his art to Christian schools, which sell the donated pieces at fund-raising auctions.

A self-taught artist, Lotton is known for using unique colors. He makes his own colored glass, which is unusual for glass artists. Asked where he gets all the shapes and colors in his creations, he said, "I pray for them."

The furnace where he works runs at about 2100 degrees Fahrenheit. The glass is heated and reheated many times as an art



RUTH MOBILARD DEYOUNG

CRC glass artist Charles Lotton adds flowers to the vase he is designing.

piece is created. Lotton draws on his pieces with hot melted glass, making beautiful designs such as vines, leaves and flowers, or peacock feathers.

Visitors to his studio are allowed to watch him work. Lotton has a gallery at his studio and another in Chicago.

—Ruth Mobilard DeYoung

U.S. Immigration Delays Pastor's Call

No one expected that more than a year would pass from the time Rev. John Huizenga was called from Lethbridge, Alberta, till he moved to his new church in Lombard, Ill. But that is exactly what happened.

Huizenga was pastor of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Lethbridge when he received a call from Lombard CRC. He and his three children are dual citizens of the United States and Canada, but Huizenga's wife, Sandra, is a Canadian citizen. The application for permanent residency in the U.S. for Sandra led to many months of waiting on the U.S. Immigration office to act.



CAROL BOSMA

For Rev. John Huizenga, a call to a U.S. church meant more than a year of wrangling with U.S. Immigration, even though he is a dual citizen of Canadian and the U.S.

Attorneys were consulted, appeals were made to government officials, and plans for housing, leaving old jobs in Canada,

and schooling for the children were made and unmade.

Rev. Huizenga participated in meetings of Lombard CRC via speakerphone. Because of continual unexpected delays he ended up preaching three farewell sermons for the Lethbridge church. Don Engelsman, council president for Lombard CRC, now wonders whether his congregation would have made the call had they known in advance how difficult and lengthy the process would be for all concerned.

Huizenga was finally installed in his new church in March 2009. As of this writing, Sandra is still living with their high-school-aged daughter in Lethbridge, awaiting a final interview. She expects to

join her husband in Lombard this summer.

"At the very least," said Rev. Huizenga, "[the CRC] ought to get together with other bi-national denominations and approach the U.S. government about creating a more timely and just process for moving pastors between the two countries."

Synod 2004 requested that the denomination's Board of Trustees look into the matter, but the board informed Synod 2005 that the possibility of obtaining special status for personnel to move across the border was too remote to make pursuing it feasible.

—Doug Evenhouse



Rev. Garrett H. Vande Riet
1913 - 2009

Rev. Garrett H. Vande Riet, 95, gentle pastor, devout reader of the Scriptures, and contender for the Reformed faith and piety, passed away Feb. 2.

Vande Riet was born in 1913 in Cleveland, Ohio, where his father, Garrett Sr., was pastor of a Christian Reformed church. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1941.

Vande Riet served congregations in Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Alberta, and British Columbia. He also served as a chaplain at Bethesda Christian Hospital in Denver, Colo. He retired in 1978.

Vande Riet is remembered as a humble, sympathetic pastor who was deeply concerned about the spiritual well-being of parishioners. He was a gifted singer who treasured the church's hymnal legacy.

Vande Riet was preceded in death by his wife, Cora (Voss). He is survived by four children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Vande Riet, please see www.thebanner.org. In addition to being posted online, further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.

Los Angeles Churches Celebrate a Different Kind of Harvest

Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Artesia, Calif., hosted more than 500 people at its Harvest Festival in January. But it wasn't a celebration of harvest of the land; it was a celebration of the harvest of souls gathered into Christ's kingdom.

Fourteen Christian Reformed church planters, 14 ethnic congregations, and 10 parent churches joined in the celebration.

The service was an opportunity for the new churches, the church planters, and the mother churches to celebrate the fruits of their labor. "Every ethnic church-planting congregation represented shared the joy of their salvation through cultural dance or praise songs in their language," said Rev. Elmer Tand-



Several ethnic and cultural groups led songs, dances, and presentations at the Los Angeles Harvest Festival.

ayu, the CRC's New Church Development Specialist for Greater Los Angeles.

It was also a demonstration of unity. Rev. Peter Holwerda, Chris-

tian Reformed Home Missions Regional Team Leader for the West Coast, said, "It was a great testimony to God's awesome work in removing racial barriers and in bringing hundreds of new people into his church and kingdom."

—Heidi Wicker



Ashley Jones in concert at City Grace Church in New York City

New York City Church Hosts CD Release

City Grace Church, an emerging Christian Reformed church in New York City's Greenwich Village, was the location for the release of Ashley Jones's new CD, *Songs About Falling*.

Jones leads worship for the church and is also a signed artist with World Vision.

Jones has traveled to Rwanda to promote child sponsorship. She incorporates those experiences in her songs along with her passion and love for God.

Rev. Ben Spalink, pastor of City Grace, a church for urban professionals, says the congregation embraces the arts to be contextually sensitive. A release party like this encourages aspiring artists and benefits the outreach of the church by showing New Yorkers that they care about arts and are willing to support them in different ways, Spalink said.

More than 200 people attended the release concert. "I was absolutely blown away by the crowd. . . . The whole night was just fantastic. It would not have happened without City Grace," Jones said. "I am so grateful for their support and enthusiasm."

—Calvin Hulstein

News from Winter Classis Meetings

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to classis, a regional grouping of churches. Delegates at those meetings review and make decisions about their shared ministries and practice mutual accountability for their congregations' individual ministries. Here are highlights from the most recent classis meetings:

Several people were **welcomed into ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church, including seminary graduates Martin Boardman, John Lee, James Knochenhauer, Henry J. Reyenga, Christian R. Pedersen, Joel Van Soelen, and Zachary E. Vandenberg.

Pablo Canche was **admitted to ministry** via special gifts (a case in process before Church Order Article 7 rules were changed by Synod 2006). Rev. Don Belanus was admitted from another denomination, and Rev. Frank Guter was readmitted to CRC ministry.

Rev. Byoung-il Song was **loaned** to a non-CRC church, and Rev. Charles Walton was **released** to serve in a Presbyterian congregation.

Rev. John Moes **resigned** from CRC ministry and Ken Rip was **deposed**.

New ministries were started in Tucson, Ariz.; Kansas City, Kan.; Providence, R.I.; and Paw Paw, Mich.

The Lynnwood (Wash.) Korean CRC **closed**.

Classis Atlantic Northeast requested synod to appoint **diaconal advisers to synod**.

Seating women as delegates to Classis Kalamazoo caused Second CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., to stop attending classis. Beaverdam (Mich.) CRC **protested the seating of female delegates** at Classis Zeeland, while Rusk (Mich.) CRC **withdrew its delegates** from that meeting for the same reason.

Classis Minnkota said a report to Synod 2000 contains errors in its explanation of the **biblical basis for the ordination of women**. The same classis said it wants its protest of **seating women at synod** recorded in the minutes.

Classes Grand Rapids East, Hackensack, and Pacific Northwest discussed the **Belhar Confession**.

Classis Heartland told Synod 2009 it agrees with a synodical committee's minority report that some of the teaching of **Third Wave Pentecostalism** about demonology and spiritual warfare goes beyond the clear teaching of Scripture.

Classes Columbia, Heartland, Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone held discussions about material from the denomination's **Faith Formation** Committee.

Classis Niagara declined to adopt statements regarding **homosexuality** beyond what synod has already said.

More details and additional news from the classes is available in this month's online *Banner* at www.thebanner.org.

—Banner News Correspondents

Celebrating Souper Mission Sunday

February 1 was Super Bowl Sunday to many, but for Providence Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., it was Souper Mission Sunday.

That Sunday was the finale of Focus '09, a month that focused on spiritual growth and missions both during worship services and in evening small groups.

Souper Sunday involved 400 members (two-thirds of the church) going out to serve the surrounding community before returning to the church for a soup lunch hosted by student ministries.

"Instead of *talking* mission, we decided to *do* mission," said Sue Prins, director of adult discipleship for the congregation.

On Souper Mission Sunday, small group members participated in many kinds of mission work. Some made deliveries to two fire stations and visited with the fire fighters. Others

visited nursing homes. Some groups went grocery shopping and made deliveries to families in need. One small group made first-aid kits for people in Africa with whom Providence is affiliated.

Rebecca Leep and her small group visited the personnel at two fire stations. Group members, including children, delivered baked goods and chili along with gift cards for distribution to families in need.

Leep's 5-year old daughter, Stephanie, spoke of how she helped for Souper Mission Sunday and what she remembered. "I baked cookies and muffins," she said, adding, "I got to try on their oxygen masks and tanks."

"It was an amazing experience to do this as a body—the church being the church," said Prins. "It reinforced the desire we have to be hands and feet of Christ."

—Karen Gorter



A small group from a Holland, Mich., church delivered food to personnel at two fire stations, along with gift cards for distribution to families in need.

Capetown Churches Pledge More Help for Zimbabwe

The Western Cape Synods of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa intend to create some "centers of hope" for Zimbabwe. Following a fact-finding trip by Kobus Odendaal of the churches' combined Commission for Witness and Action, the churches said they want especially to focus on emergency funds to keep some hospitals and schools open.

Odendaal reported that the 20 church-supported hospitals in Zimbabwe are about the only places left where basic medical care is offered. Zimbabwe dollars, however, are practically worthless for the purchase of food and medicine. Odendaal observed that people traveled hundreds of miles to get to the hospital at Morgenster, which is run by the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. He pledged funds to restore the pump at the well and to get the hospital's ambulance working again.

Odendaal noted that there has been widespread publicity about the country's cholera epidemic, but that is just one sign of the damage created by the financial crisis there. He noted that U.S. dollars and South African rand are the two main currencies now used in Zimbabwe's marketplaces. "Teachers have refused to teach unless they are paid in foreign currency," he reported.

(Die Kerkbode)

Congregations Face Difficult Choices in Sour Economy

Across North America, congregations and other religious organizations are facing the same belt-tightening challenges as everyone else.

The U.S. National Association of Church Business Administration, in a February survey, found that 32 percent of congregations reported financial difficulties related to the economy, and 47 percent had reduced or frozen staff benefits.

Church administrators reported cutting costs by taking small steps such as taking one light bulb out of three-bulb fixtures, and bigger steps like cutting back on long-distance mission trips and focusing on mission efforts closer to home.

"Of course, the last thing they want to do is cut ministries and program services, so they're try-

ing to find every way to reduce utilities and just anything they can do before they get around to cutting ministries or cutting staff," said Simeon May, CEO of the association.

John Nesbitt is executive pastor of West Shore Evangelical Free Church in Mechanicsburg, Pa., where three out of 14 staff ministers were recently laid off. Nesbitt said donors, who had previously supported the congregation at high levels, either own or work at businesses that have been hit by the economic downturn.

The economic effect trickles down—or up—along all levels of some denominations. For example, executives of the Presbyterian Church (USA) have eliminated scheduled pay raises for 2010.

Many worshipers have taken a greater interest in financial courses that help members reduce their debt and, in turn, may help congregations eventually reap the benefit of increased giving.

Ken Munday, a church liaison for financial adviser Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace University," said the number of 13-week classes in churches has almost doubled in the past two years, in part because of the state of the economy.

Luane Bastianelli, who has taught the program for Kensington Community Church in Troy, Mich., for four years, said people previously wondered how they could live without their credit cards.

"What I'm seeing now, clearly because of the times—we have a lot more people in difficulty, a lot more people in danger of losing their homes," she said of the church, which draws about 11,000 people each weekend. "Now we get questions like, 'If I have to choose between keeping my credit cards and my house, what do I pay?'"

(RNS)

MAKINGNEWS

Survey: Personal Invites Most Effective for Churches

An invitation from a family member or friend is the most effective way to get people to attend church, a new survey shows. Other approaches—from broadcast commercials to information packets left on doorknobs—are far less effective.

Angel Food Ministries Settles Lawsuit

Angel Food Ministries, under investigation by the FBI, has settled a lawsuit filed by two board members. Angel Food, which distributes \$30 boxes of food through tens of thousands of volunteers nationwide, has

come under scrutiny for unusually large compensation paid to members of the Wingo family.

Clergy Support Push for Truth Panel on Torture

Saying the United States "must never again engage in torture," a group of religious leaders is supporting a call for a "Commission of Inquiry" to investigate U.S.-sponsored torture under the Bush administration.

Conservatives Talk Abortion Reduction with White House

Leaders from several prominent conservative Christian groups met March 24 with the head of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Part-

nerships to discuss ways to reduce abortions.

Creation Museum Opens Exhibit on Natural Selection

The Kentucky-based Creation Museum unveiled an exhibit in March that affirms Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection while rejecting his teachings on evolution. The exhibit, titled "Natural Selection Is Not Evolution," features blind cavefish to show how organisms possess traits specific to their environment.

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

FAQS

Finance

Q I heard [national Christian financial counselor] Dave Ramsey say, “If you live like no one else, later you can live like no one else.” Is “living like no one else” really an appropriate goal for Christians?

A I have great respect for Dave Ramsey and know that God has used him to bless and challenge thousands of people—myself included.

But I also believe that the statement you quoted can leave people with an incomplete (and even inaccurate) picture of what God calls us to do with our money.

It is true that the Bible calls us to “live like no one else.” One of the many examples is found in Romans 12:2, where we are called to “not conform any longer to the pattern of the world.”

The 18th-century Reformer John Wesley noted that when people become transformed by Christ, they become more diligent in their work and more frugal with their money. The good news, Wesley pointed out, is that this process often leads to a growing measure of prosperity. The bad news, he said, is that prosperity often causes believers to become self-sufficient and self-centered.

So what do we do if God uses our “living like no one else” to bless us financially? The answer is found in 2 Corinthians 9:11: “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.”

God offers us an amazing journey of financial freedom when we “live like no one else.” And as we walk by faith along this path, may our hearts become more in tune with God’s heart—for his glory and the eternal joy of others.

—Mike Buwalda

Mike Buwalda (mike@barnabasfoundation.com) is a stewardship consultant for Barnabas Foundation.

Church/Bible

Q May a pastor tell a baptized 18-year-old who has been a member of the church all his life and has been attending catechism classes that he may not make profession of faith unless he’s sure he’s going to be a member of this congregation?

A Your question seems to refer to a specific case in your congregation. I don’t know the dynamics involved in that case. All I can do is indicate what is generally appropriate.

First, the elders are responsible for the spiritual nurture of the congregation, and any

God offers us an amazing journey of financial freedom when we “live like no one else.”

regulations concerning profession of faith are to be made by them, not by the pastor alone.

Second, persons currently involved in the congregation should be able to profess their faith in the congregation that nurtured them even if they will be leaving shortly for any number of reasons—going away to school, getting married and attending the spouse’s church, etc.

Persons who are already worshiping in another congregation should be encouraged to make their profession in that congregation even though they have emotional and/or family ties to their “home” congregation. This gives them an opportunity to share their spiritual journey with their current faith community. It also gives the members of their

current congregation an opportunity to better know and incorporate them and to say with integrity the words spoken by the congregation at this time, “We promise you our love, encouragement, and prayers.”

—George Vander Weit

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

Culture

Q Should churches get involved in politics? Our adult education class discusses political issues, and during the last campaign it seemed there was more advocacy in that class than there should be in a church.

A You raise a tough question. Under law, churches operate as nonprofits and are barred from advocating political positions. If they do, they run the risk of losing their nonprofit status. On the other hand, churches offer insight into how faith and theology affect our everyday lives.

It seems to me that it is completely appropriate for churches to encourage people to fulfill their duties as citizens. So encouraging people to vote, allowing the use of their facilities as voting stations, and holding bipartisan forums fit that responsibility.

Where churches can go wrong is when sermons and educational opportunities align with any one given political party or point of view.

As Reformed Christians, we have to allow that God’s grace works throughout the world, as does total depravity. Churches need to honor the complexity of life and the mysteries of God’s movements in the world. They should also presume the good will and good character of people who hold different points of view.

—Helen Sterk

Dr. Helen Sterk is chair of communication arts and sciences at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. ■

BY ROB BRAUN

A SECOND BLESSING?

*Into Christ, with water, by the Holy Spirit—
just how many baptisms are there in a believer's life?*

I WAS A MEMBER of a Second Blessing church before I joined the Christian Reformed Church.

“Second Blessing” is a common term used by many Holiness, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches. It refers to a teaching that there are two or more spiritual stages (blessings) in a believer’s life. The first stage is usually understood as the person’s declaration of faith, when he or she becomes spiritually “born again.”

The second stage, or second blessing, is the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” It is usually understood as having to do with the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in a believer’s life—especially speaking in other tongues, along with the practice of spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, singing in the Spirit, and other gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

Many times Second Blessing groups will also identify multiple blessings or “stages of salvation.” Because of a unique interpretation of several passages in the book of Acts, in particular chapters 8, 10, and 11, some of these movements believe there are two, three, or in some cases even more such baptisms in a Christian’s life.

A good example of a Scripture passage that gives rise to their view of several baptisms is Acts 8:14-17: “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Another example is Acts 1:5: “For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

As Reformed Christians we believe what Paul taught in Ephesians 4:3-4—that there is only one genuine sacrament of baptism for the Christian believer. Paul writes, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the

Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

The confusion often comes from the multiple ways the word *baptism* is used throughout the New Testament. On the one hand, the New Testament predominantly uses *baptism* as the traditionally understood sacrament of repentance and forgiveness of sins symbolized in the outward washing in water. On the other hand, the New Testament speaks of other baptisms as well—the baptism of fire, the baptism of repentance, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of water, and the baptism of John.

all comfort; giving us true assurance of [God’s] fatherly goodness; clothing us with the ‘new man’ and stripping off the ‘old,’ with all its works.”

My Second Blessing brothers and sisters often challenge me for believing in only one sacrament of baptism. From my present view as a Reformed believer, I think the root of our differences is that they confuse the biblical teaching of the sacrament of baptism with what all Christians should expect throughout their lives: the continual progression of spiritual growth and blessing, not multiple kinds of baptisms or second blessings. In other words, we shouldn’t expect just a “second blessing,” but a daily spiritual blessing in Christ. As Reformed believers we see all those spiritual expe-

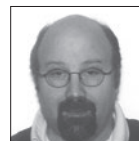
We shouldn’t expect just a second blessing, but a daily spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ultimately, however, each of those baptisms flows from the one baptism of Christ’s death on the cross. Paul writes, “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:3-4; see also Lord’s Days 25 and 26 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

Reformed believers view water baptism as the outward sign of the inward sealing of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. Article 34 of our Belgic Confession speaks about this as well: “So ministers, as far as their work is concerned, give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies—namely the invisible gifts and graces; washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with

riences and blessings as being rooted in the one original experience of spiritual regeneration, or being born again.

When challenged by my Second Blessing brothers and sisters, I usually respond by pointing to passages from Scripture. The first is Titus 3:5-7, which reads, “[God] saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.” And the second is found in 2 Corinthians 4:16: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.” ■



Rob Braun is a salesman, a freelance writer, and a part-time minister for Princeton (Minn.) Community Church. He is a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Princeton.

Who Owns a Story?



THE MOVIE ENDED and this message rolled across the theater screen: *Based on the short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald.* I was taken aback, since I thought I had read everything Fitzgerald ever wrote.

So I went home and found, indeed, a short story from his early years called “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” It unfolded exactly as the film did—except that Benjamin’s mother did not die at his birth; nor was he rejected by his father; nor did he grow up in a retirement home; nor was his family’s business in buttons (they ran a hardware store, and Benjamin worked there); nor was it primarily a love story; nor did he have a daughter (but he did have a son who later disliked him); and rather than travel the world, all Benjamin really wanted to do was go to university and play football.

So is the movie based on the short story? Different plot, different characters, different focus, different beginning, different ending. Whose story *is* this, anyway?

As a pastor, teacher, and writer, I love stories and have used them all my life to communicate ideas, queries, hopes, and insights. I have a quiver full of them. But whose stories are they? I can tell the best stories of Tony Campolo, Fred Craddock, Thomas Long, Don Richardson, and a host of others. Mostly I give credit when I use their stories, but some tales have grown to be mine, with larger lives than could have been the case in their original contexts.

Recently a student requested permission to use a story I had told him of events in my life long ago. Yet when I saw the

When I saw the incident as he related it on paper, it was no longer my story, but his.

incident as he related it on paper, it was no longer my story, but his.

Who owns a story? She who tells it with passion and purpose, I suppose, along with those who enter the tale as if stepping into a world both familiar and fresh. But deception tempts storytellers to claim worlds for themselves that they did not create, and lies may spin lines of truth into webs of manipulative fantasy. So it is the better part of honesty to admit that the premise of a movie like *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* originated with F. Scott Fitzgerald.

But it is also a great part of truth to cast, in all storytelling, a vision of the world as God has made and is remaking it. After all, when God wanted to communicate most effectively with us, “the Word became flesh” and came to be known as the greatest storyteller of all time. ■



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

The Heretic’s Daughter

by Kathleen Kent
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



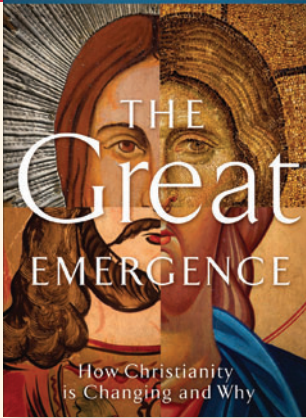
Author Kathleen Kent’s ancestor, Martha Carrier, was convicted of witchcraft in 1690s Salem. In this fictionalized account, Martha tells her daughter, Sarah, to assent to any charges brought against her because the lives of victims who did so were often spared. Sarah pleads with her mother to do the same, but Martha refuses, saying, “Someone must speak for the truth of things.” Kent’s exploration of a society where the “winds of hysteria” swept away entire families is both terrifying and hopeful. (Little, Brown)

New Surrender

by Anberlin
reviewed by Elizabeth Gonzalez



When a good band finally receives a decent record deal, its fans are generally skeptical that the new will be as good as the old. Rest assured, Anberlin has only improved with age. The group’s fourth release, *New Surrender*, showcases a more coherent sound that ranges from rock anthems to ballads that avoid sentimentality. While they don’t shy away from trials, Anberlin’s sound is more altruistic and optimistic than most musicians of their genre. Through well-played guitars and drums, they avoid clichés in favor of communicating hope. (Universal Republic)



The Great Emergence

by Phyllis Tickle
reviewed by Bryan Berghoef

Regardless of your perspective on the Emerging Church or anything “emergent,” Christianity is changing, asserts Phyllis Tickle. In this concise work, the author (and religious editor for *Publishers Weekly*) lays out some of the larger shifts in the history of the church, comparing today’s changes to the Great Reformation and the Great Schism. The author nicely weaves in social, political, and cultural changes that come to bear on how we view and live out our faith traditions. Recommended for those interested in church history and in the future of the church in America. (Baker)



Dailychallenge.org

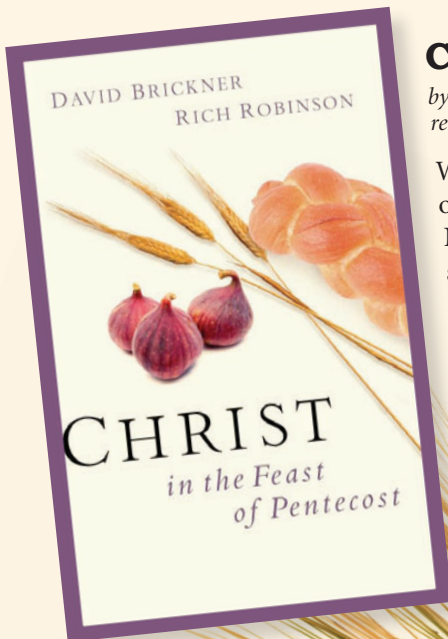
reviewed by Ray Wiersma

Dailychallenge.org is a social networking site with a straightforward motto: “Do one good, daily.” Visitors can sign up, free of charge, by creating a brief personal profile. After becoming a member—or a “Do Gooder”—you will receive daily “Do Gooder” challenges through your email. You can choose to accept or decline challenges, browse the site for issues that interest you, or submit challenges of your own. This unique and innovative site lives up to its belief that “many people doing small acts of kindness can change the world.”

Christ in the Feast of Pentecost

by David Brickner and Rich Robinson
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

What is the connection between the Old Testament Feast of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? The authors answer this question by showing that “as much as the countdown to Pentecost was a time of preparation for the wheat harvest, so for the followers of Jesus we are to proclaim the gospel as we count down to a harvest of souls.” The book also contains recipes for Pentecost celebrations, personal devotional readings, and a Pentecost service. (Moody)



THE LOWDOWN



Common Grounds: Coffee grounds, available free of charge

from your local Starbucks, can be used in your gardening and composting. See your local barista or www.starbucks.com for details.



It's Only Fair: May 9 is World Fair Trade Day, and you can

celebrate by using or enjoying some fair-trade products. For tips and product information, check the Fair Trade Resource Network at www.ftrn.org.



Purposeful Periodical: *Purpose-Driven Connection*, a new quarterly

magazine from Rick Warren with web-based benefits, offers a DVD and study guide for small groups in every issue. See www.purpose-driven.com.



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

Ministry with Muslims: A New Approach by Chris Meehan



Because he was known as a hard worker and a devout Muslim, a young man got a good job herding cattle for wealthy families in his West African village. The families fed and paid him well. He liked the job and it helped him and his family members survive.

But then something happened. The young man started to talk with friends and others about Christianity—a religion about which he had known very little. He began to pray and reflect. One day, although he was frightened to make the move, he became a Christian.

At first he was happy and relieved. But then a group of Christians from another area told him that he needed to stop going to the mosque, stop fasting during Ramadan, and start speaking out against Islam.

The young man did this, but it didn't go over well in his village. His friends turned against him. He lost his job. His wife was taken from him. He was attacked and beaten. Soon he was ostracized and not able to participate in the life of his village. In despair, he moved away.

Only later, after talking to other Christians, did he realize that he could have acted differently. These Christians told him that people had not been ready to hear his testimony. Following the first group's advice had driven people away and made it harder for anyone to talk about Christianity. If the young man had kept his new faith "under the radar," over time he might have been able to help others to consider becoming Christians.

Another Way

This story is an example of why Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) joined with other groups last year to hold a conference and training session for about 160 persons in West Africa.

The conference helped CRWM begin exploring new ways of doing evangelism among people who follow Islam, a religion that is widespread and growing across nearly the entire continent of Africa. Instead of pushing for converts to speak out, a quieter, less public process is being considered.

During last year's conference, participants discussed CRWM's ministry efforts in Africa. They learned of educational programs, church planting opportunities, possible partnerships with other Christian organizations, the possibility



of opening a center that will focus on transformational development, and the agency's success in bringing Timothy Leadership materials to various groups. But for the most part they discussed evangelism among Muslims.

Participants shared their stories, such as the story of four former Muslims who struggled with developing their prayer lives and often left women out of discussions about the Bible. With the help of

missionaries, women are starting to be given a larger role to play and the group is learning to pray with greater intensity and to come up with prayer requests.

Conferences like these, however, are just the start of CRWM taking a look at a different approach to missions among Muslims. Christian Reformed Home Missions is also taking part in the new initiative. "Home Missions and World Missions want to cooperate to reach Muslims in

“ We need to meet Muslims where they are and where they live. ”

North America and elsewhere and to develop good plans and strategies to do this. We need to meet Muslims where they are and where they live,” says Joel Hogan, director of international ministries for CRWM.

“Right now we are on the cusp of a new approach. Given the need to keep a handle on our resources, we have to determine what is the best way to be involved,” says Hogan. He acknowledges that not everyone is comfortable with this new »

Tensions and Triumphs

Here are a few stories that reflect the tensions and triumphs among those who do ministry among Muslim peoples in Africa.

A young Muslim man married into a Christian family. He was curious about his wife's faith, but didn't pursue it. He continued to worship as he had all his life.

When the young man grew ill, a relative took him to pray with a local missionary. While there, the young man came across *Today*, the devotional booklet published by Back to God Ministries International.

He liked what he read and wanted to read more. There were articles in the small booklet that helped to explain the Christian faith. The more he read and thought about it, the more the

Christian faith and the saving power of Jesus intrigued him.

After his illness passed, he began a more serious study of the Christian faith, wondering if it was for him.

One day a woman who was a Christian convert went to church, while her Muslim husband stayed home. During the service she fell sick and returned home. No one, including the pastor, came to see her. As the days passed she grew sicker and became more desperate. When it became clear that members of her church were not going to help, she went to some animist friends for traditional medicine.

When members of the church heard about that, the church put her under discipline and refused

to pray for her. In a testimony to her faith, the woman didn't grow bitter and she refused to denounce the members of her church or the pastor.

Then she met with the pastor. Opening her heart to him, she said that it was his neglect that pushed her to her animist friends. This shocked the pastor. Talking to the woman, he saw his sin. They prayed together, confessed, and forgave one another. She is now an active member of the church.

An elder in a church visited his hometown for a vacation. While there, his wife's family demanded he make a decision: renounce Christianity or lose his wife. It was a terrible choice. He wanted

to stay with his wife. Yet he also now knew about the saving power of Jesus and he didn't want to turn from that. He didn't know what to do.

He met with a Christian friend, then returned to speak with his wife's family and explain why he is a Christian. The family listened, and then took his wife away. Painful as it was, the elder returned to his church and remains at work, praying to God to heal his hurt.

—Chris Meehan



Bold Professions, Hidden Movements

This new ministry approach is not unique to CRWM. It developed in Asia in the 1980s and has spread to many other Muslim-majority countries.

The debate, says Ron Geerlings, CRWM director for West Africa, centers on whether to give space to those who are not yet ready to go public with their faith. He offers the example of a Muslim man who was given a Bible many years ago. “It took him 20 years of reading the Bible and talking with missionaries before he was prepared to announce his faith and be publicly baptized.”

There are those, he says, who are intrigued by what the Quran has to say about Jesus and then want to know more about him and how he is regarded by Christians. “What we are seeing are some bold professions and secret prayers as well as visible gatherings and hidden movements.”

A CRWM missionary in Africa says that traditional strategies for ministry with Muslims encouraged new believers to quit their Muslim prayers and openly declare for Christ. But the question is whether it might be more effective to keep one’s conversion a secret until it becomes clear that the time has come when others want to know more about the Bible, the missionary says.

With all these factors in mind, CRWM is moving slowly and carefully, but it is moving, because even in difficult circumstances people need the gospel message.



Chris Meehan is news and media relations director for CRC Communications.

approach, and hopes to help coordinate training sessions with experts in Islam to discuss the issue further and possibly find a person who can lead the effort.

Allen Likkel, ministry teams leader for Home Missions, says his agency has high hopes for the work it can do with World Missions. “We are strategizing together with a combined task force, including a missionary pastor CRHM supports in Dearborn, Mich., in Arabic ministry,” he says.

What We Do

Your partnership with CRWM, through prayer and financial support, enables missionaries around the world to proclaim the gospel, promote healthy churches, and work to break the cycles of poverty. Some of the many tasks of CRWM missionaries include:

- Evangelism & Church Planting
- Leadership Training & Development
- Discipleship
- Christian Education
- Teacher & Literacy Training
- Bible Studies
- Regional Networking Centers
- Community Development & Micro-Enterprise
- Internships
- Summer Mission Program
- Service Learning Teams



Breaking the Cycles of Poverty

CRWM works to break cycles of poverty by addressing their root causes, by helping people learn a Biblical worldview, and by working with God’s people toward long-term personal and social transformation through the following strategies:

- Leadership Development
- Discipleship
- Christian Education
- Centers for Transformation
- Capacity Building



Where We Work

We have missionaries in more than 20 countries and, through partnerships, our work extends to more than 30 countries.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Bangladesh | Kazakhstan |
| Belize | Liberia |
| Cambodia | Lithuania |
| China | Mali |
| Costa Rica | Mexico |
| Cuba | Mongolia |
| Dominican Republic | Nicaragua |
| El Salvador | Niger |
| France | Nigeria |
| The Gambia | Philippines |
| Guinea | Russia |
| Haiti | Senegal |
| Honduras | Sierra Leone |
| Hungary | South Africa |
| India | Uganda |
| Japan | Ukraine |



Helping Christian Reformed Churches to fulfill the Great Commission



Learn more online at www.crwm.org

Developing Libraries for the 21st Century

What would you do if someone gave you the money to buy 30,000 books and asked you to start a library for a seminary?

It sounds far-fetched, but it happens to Christian school and seminary administrators around the world. That's why Christian Reformed World Missions sent Ray and Barb Bouma to Nigeria and Mexico to help institutions of Christian education to use a foundational resource: their library.

"In Nigeria we were not only able to go to Mkar University, but to Wukari Jubilee University as well to evaluate their libraries and develop a plan for them to bring their universities into the 21st century," said Ray Bouma.

The Boumas worked in Nigeria 36 years ago. "We stayed in a guesthouse in the university that used to be our home," Ray said. "The stone pathways that I put in years ago are still there; the hedges I put in are still there."

They set to work immediately. "We visited the Reformed Bible College in Harga, the Reformed Theological Seminary in Mkar, the Veenstra Theological Seminary in Lupwe, and several others," said Barb.

They evaluated the libraries and talked with leaders about how to enhance them. "We tried to help them see their libraries not as a storage facility for books but as the heart of the educational endeavor—



Ray Bouma with two faculty members at Mkar University, Nigeria.

or—a place for learning," Ray said. "They agreed, so we set out to find ways to do that."

Part of the action plan is to connect the libraries with resources around the world by obtaining Internet access and developing Internet-based cataloging systems.

A highlight of the Boumas' trip was observing the dedication of the theological professors and the librarians. "They want to produce quality seminary education for their graduates," Barb said. "They have excellent quality in leadership, their spirituality is excellent, and academically they are excellent."

In addition to their evaluations, the Boumas gave a seminar on how to put together a theological library. "Librarians (in North America) could learn how to develop a library on a shoestring," Barb said.

Evaluating these libraries is just the beginning. World Missions is looking for librarians to help provide on-site expertise and assistance as the libraries develop.

The Boumas also visited All Nations Seminary in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to see if World Missions could be of help to their library.

"We sent an e-mail to all our missionaries asking if there was a need in any of our partner libraries," said Albert Hamstra, director of special projects for Christian Reformed World Missions. "[Ray and Barb] responded, so we sent them."

"Interestingly enough, we found out that we can help [All Nations Seminary] with the acquisition of Spanish-language materials," Hamstra said.

There are already plans to send the Boumas back to Nigeria

and volunteer librarians Henry and Judy DeVries to Mexico City on a regular basis.

The library program started in 2003 when Christian Reformed World Missions surveyed partner seminaries and schools and found that some libraries were underutilized and lacking in resources.

A small online community has been set up for librarians the world over who want to offer the gifts that God gave them to those who can use them most. For more information, visit <http://volunteerlibrarians.org>.



Mariano Avila III is communications manager for Christian Reformed World Missions.

DEAR READER

A Fire Burning Round the World

“IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK to get a fire going.” Those words became all too real for me a number of years ago when I was clearing a small wooded area next to our home. I had spent hours raking and piling leaves, pine needles, and branches. My work was nearly finished. All that remained was to burn the leaves.

Little did I know that the combination of the dry brush and the fall breeze would turn my small fire into a blazing inferno that nearly raged beyond my control as the flames reached the lower branches of surrounding trees. Thankfully there was a garden hose nearby and, after a few tense moments, the fire was under control and danger was averted.

Later, as I reflected on the events of that afternoon, I thought about Pentecost. As the disciples gathered in prayer, waiting and wondering how and when God would reveal himself to a post-ascension community of believers, the room was suddenly filled with the sound of a rushing wind and “tongues of fire” appeared above each of them. Fire and wind—a powerful combination. What started that day as small flames of fire spread from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the far edges of the world.

Fanned by the wind of the Holy Spirit, the message of grace burned across a tinderbox world dried by death and sin. The flames could not be controlled as they spread further and faster, bringing hope to despairing people.

Throughout history, that fire has continued to burn. Even though at times it seemed that the fire had all but died,

“**The fire of Pentecost and the message of hope continue to transform lives and communities around the world.**”



God blew across the few glowing embers and raised up leaders such as Luther and Calvin to rekindle his fire of salvation.

Like all fires, the fire of salvation expands where there is fresh fuel—along the edges. I recently visited with church leaders who tend the fire on the edges. These men and women find themselves doing ministry in places where the only thing that is certain is uncertainty; where ministry is messy, chaos is the norm, and the work of God is constantly surprising. In these ministries the flames of Pentecost spread and burn with passion and power.

Jesus described the spread of the gospel burning from the center (Jerusalem) out to the edges of the world. It has been more than 2,000 years since the Great Commission was first announced to the disciples, and still the fires of grace continue to burn.

We find hotspots of this fire around the world. In North America, the fire burns where local congregations engage their neighbors and communities with the transformational power of the gospel. In China, it burns in house churches that gather for study and prayer. In Africa, it burns in the face of radical Muslim fundamentalism.

The fire of Pentecost and the message of hope continue to transform lives and communities around the world. I invite you to read the stories of how the Christian Reformed Church is doing its part. Celebrate God’s power and join the work of God’s consuming fire as it spreads around the world. It only takes a spark!

Though the fire of God can be an intimidating and awesome thing, we are called to fan the flames and spread the Word. Let’s join together in the transformation work that began at Pentecost and will continue until Christ returns to claim his church.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29). ■



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

A NEW HOME FOR SURVIVORS

Georgia Roberts had been living with 10 of her children and four grandchildren in trailers and mobile homes since Hurricane Katrina destroyed her house in August 2005.

Today she has a brand new house, thanks to God, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's Disaster Response Services (CRWRC-DRS), and the hard work of the people of Orland Park (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church.

Like many others, Roberts had been living in "temporary" housing since Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast.



One of the teams from Oakland Park CRC that worked on the house.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) gave her three adjacent trailers to house her family. Later they were given a couple of mobile homes. These were intended to be a temporary fix, but three and a half years later the family still lived there.

CRWRC has been working in the Gulf Coast to help families like these. While the Red Cross met emergency needs and FEMA provided temporary shelter, thousands of families are still waiting for someone to help repair and rebuild their homes.

Using trained construction supervisors and various work teams, CRWRC-DRS has been meeting the need, one house at a time.

Orland Park CRC is one of the churches providing volunteer work teams. They sent crews of volunteers to Franklinton, La., to work on Roberts's house in one-week shifts. In total, 59 people from the church participated.

"This is the third year in a row that Orland Park CRC has come down and built homes," said Arnie Gustafson, CRWRC-DRS construction coordinator in the Gulf Coast. "They come as real servants, are willing to do anything they are asked, and always provide a knowledgeable, professional crew. They come to do God's work."

Don Waterlander of the Orland Park Adult Serve Committee says the church is blessed with an abundance of skilled construction professionals. During the winter when work is slow, they find joy in putting their talents to work for people who need their help.

"We are very fortunate to have a lot of gifted people who love to serve," he says.

Their contribution made a lasting impact on Roberts's life. With help from Grace Community CRC, First Oak Lawn CRC, Palos Heights CRC, and Faith CRC, the volunteers from Orland Park completed her 2,700 square foot, six-bedroom, three-bathroom house in early March.

Filmmaker Chad Kremer was on the scene to film the home's progress. Short clips of his video can be viewed at www.oprc.org.

—Stelle Sloomaker,
CRWRC communications

HULST IS NEW CALVIN CHAPLAIN

Back in her student days at Calvin College, there was one on-campus job that appealed to Mary Hulst.

"I thought that the chaplain job looked like a vibrant job, a fun job," Hulst remembers. "And Coop did it so well," she added, referring to Rev. Dale Cooper, who served as Calvin's chaplain for 30 years before retiring in 2007.

Today, Rev. Hulst has the job. She was named the third Calvin chaplain—and the first woman—to serve since the role was created in 1962. "It's amazing, letting it settle over me that this is now my job," she said.



Rev. Mary Hulst

"She's a strong pastor, preacher, teacher, and scholar—and, I think, a natural student," said Calvin English professor Karen Saupe, a member of the committee that selected Hulst. "She loves to learn, and I think that shows in her preaching."

Currently a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Hulst will assume her new duties this summer. She will serve a pastoral role for students and for faculty and staff as well. She will head the office of Christian formation, mentoring associate chaplains and other staff. She will also teach in the new department of congregational and ministries studies and in the seminary.

A longtime preacher at Calvin's Living Our Faith Together (LOFT) services, Hulst is looking forward to getting better acquainted with Calvin students. "What I love about working with college students is they're so open and eager to talk. They ask big questions. They listen to the answers. They can be very wacky and playful and funny," she said.

Students bring a distinctive pastoral challenge, Hulst added. "They're at a point of really owning the faith for themselves. You have people who have grown up in Christian homes and done things from habit, and they have to own the faith for their own—and that is just really exciting."

—Myrna Anderson,
Calvin College communications and marketing



Rev. Sergei Sosedkin broadcasts the gospel in Russia.

EFFECTIVE PRAYERS IN RUSSIA

Alexandra is a Christian from the Penza region of Russia, a little more than 700 km south of Moscow. In a letter to Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Russia ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International, she wrote, “I often listen to your broadcasts and pray for you.”

Alexandra also prayed faithfully for her husband, who for years showed no interest in hearing the gospel. “In the past he would always leave the room whenever I turned my radio on.”

But in a recent letter, she reported: “Praise be to God! Today my husband listened to your program for the first time . . . and he has started reading Christian publications. The Lord is starting to touch his heart.”

“We are grateful that our messages have an impact on people’s lives,” noted Sosedkin, “and we always appreciate hearing that our listeners pray for us and our ministry.”

Last year more than 65,000 people responded to BTGMI’s Russian media outreach. Your prayers and financial support open the door to reach many more people who hear the gospel but may never let us know.

Pray that God will continue to transform lives through the media outreach of Back to God Ministries International. Your prayers are also requested for Sosedkin, who has been delayed in Russia as he awaits a new visa. Pray that God will open doors so he is able to travel to North America to continue follow-up work here.

Meanwhile, God opened up an opportunity for Sosedkin to broadcast a new live call-in program in Moscow that explores life in the light of the current harsh economic situation. He received more than a dozen phone calls in response to a program in which he discussed the comfort we find, not in material things, but in Christ who dwells with us.

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International

Zinaida, a listener who lives in southern Russia, sent this response: “I heard your radio message about prayer. Praise God that he uses you to touch many hearts. My heart was one of them. As I listened I felt a great desire to share what I heard with many people.”

Zinaida, who is 70, prays with a 69-year-old friend every Friday for the people of their village. “We are weak, but we have a huge desire to pray,” Zinaida says. At her request, Sosedkin sent Christian literature to her and her friend to help them share the gospel with the people of their village.

WELCOME TO EL CLUB

How would you feel if your children only had access to dubbed translations of foreign videos?

That was the main option for many children in Latin America until Back to God Ministries International began producing *El Club del Arca*, a culturally authentic, Spanish-language children’s puppet series.

Through the adventures of its Muppet-like characters, *El Club del Arca* (The Ark Clubhouse) introduces children to biblical values and to Jesus.

Originally produced in Brazil by BTGMI’s Portuguese media team, the DVD series was translated into Spanish, reaching a potential 500,000 children throughout Latin America every week.

“The program is a hit on Saturday mornings in Central America,” reports Rev. Guillermo Serrano, Spanish ministry leader. While children love the

music, the stories, and the puppets, “parents have sent us letters telling us they appreciate the programming with an authentic cultural setting.”

Maria, a second-grade teacher, told Serrano: “I watched the first episode of *El Club del Arca* with 20 of my students. The children were glued to the screen and enjoyed the entire show. Please arrange with the local TV station so we can view all of these wonderful programs!”

A station manager in Guatemala noted that *El Club del Arca* “offers good programming with technical quality comparable to any secular programming we receive.”

“All 50 episodes of the children’s program are ready for distribution, and we are working hard to contract with stations to air them free of charge,” Serrano said. “We are grateful that *El Club del Arca* can open new doors for us in many towns and cities in Latin America.”

Thanks to your faithful support, Back to God Ministries International Spanish



El Club del Arca is a Spanish-language children’s puppet series.

radio broadcasts have aired for more than 40 years. The ministry also produces a television program for adults called *La Vida Ahora* (*Life Today*), which airs on more than 130 stations throughout Central and South America.

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International

NEW CHURCH OFFERS “NEW LIFE”

Growing up in Cuba, Juan Pablo Sanchez never saw the inside of a church . . . or the outside, for that matter. “Nobody I knew went to church,” he says. “I didn’t even know where any churches were because they didn’t have signs. Officially, churches didn’t exist.”

But in 1980, Juan Pablo and his wife, Alicia, fled Cuba by boat and landed in Miami, Fla., where their lives changed forever.

One Sunday, Juan Pablo went “reluctantly” with his mother-in-law to church and made an amazing discovery. “The church welcomed me like a long-lost brother,” he says. “I found a loving, caring home—something I hadn’t had as a child.”

In time, Juan Pablo also discovered a faithful God who planted in his heart a deep desire to help build his kingdom. That desire led to service within the church and, eventually, to seminary.

One evening in 2000, Juan Pablo and Alicia hosted a Bible study in their living room. Four people showed up, and *Vida Nueva* (New Life) got its start. “Our vision was to build a family of supportive and service-oriented followers of Christ,” Juan Pablo reports.

“So as our small groups evolved and multiplied, they went naturally into the community to serve and witness.” They offered special festivals for kids, baby showers for low-income couples, and Bible studies for people of all ages.

Today, Sanchez is creating a Christian community that sees its mission as reaching out to and serving its neighbors. The Miami-based church, funded by Christian Reformed Home Missions, recently relocated to a 2,000-square-foot facility and is starting to grow beyond its current 120 members.

In addition to Sunday worship, *Vida Nueva* offers support ministry for couples and The Restoration Center, where counselors provide guidance, emotional support, and help for those dealing with addictions.

Says Sanchez, “Our great hope for *Vida Nueva* is that as our numbers grow, so will our spiritual maturity. I want people to see daily reminders of how God’s tremendous power transforms lives.”

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

SEMINARY INTRODUCES NEW PROGRAMS IN MINISTRY

When churches add ministry staff—worship leaders, youth pastors, administrators, pastoral caregivers—they often seek training for those new leaders. Calvin Theological Seminary is meeting the need with learning opportunities for church staff and volunteers through a variety of new programs.

In the fall of 2009 the seminary’s M.A. degree program will include two new specializations: Youth & Family Ministries and Pastoral Care. They join the current specializations in Worship, Educational Ministries, and Evangelism & Missions. Along with adding the new specializations, the entire M.A. curriculum has also been revised.

The core curriculum maintains CTS’s rich studies in Bible and theology, while specialized courses provide focused training in particular ministry areas.

The M.A. program has a strong international presence, with students from a dozen countries. This enriches the entire seminary community, including the other professional degree program, the Master of Divinity (M.Div.), which prepares students to be ordained ministers.

The new curriculum provides opportunities for M. Div. and M.A. students to dialogue inside and outside of class, modeling the interaction they will experience in church staff ministry. The new curriculum also pursues creative and thoughtful use of technology, preparing students to use it in the various ministries of the church.



Yuanita Gitamara, director of youth and discipleship at Bethel CRC in Lynden, Wash., focused her M.A. project on pastoral care to the elderly.

CTS has also added a unique Master of Arts in Bible and Theology degree for those who wish to deepen their understanding of Scripture and theology but are not preparing for a particular ministry role. These students can learn how Bible study and Reformed theology contribute to their occupations and life experiences.

CTS is also offering new certificate programs beginning

in the fall of 2009 for those who desire further study but are not planning on getting a master’s degree. For more information on CTS’s M.A. degree and certificate programs, see www.calvinseminary.edu/degrees.

—Becky Ochsner works in the Making Connections Initiative and Continuing Education Office at Calvin Theological Seminary.

The Big Night Mystery

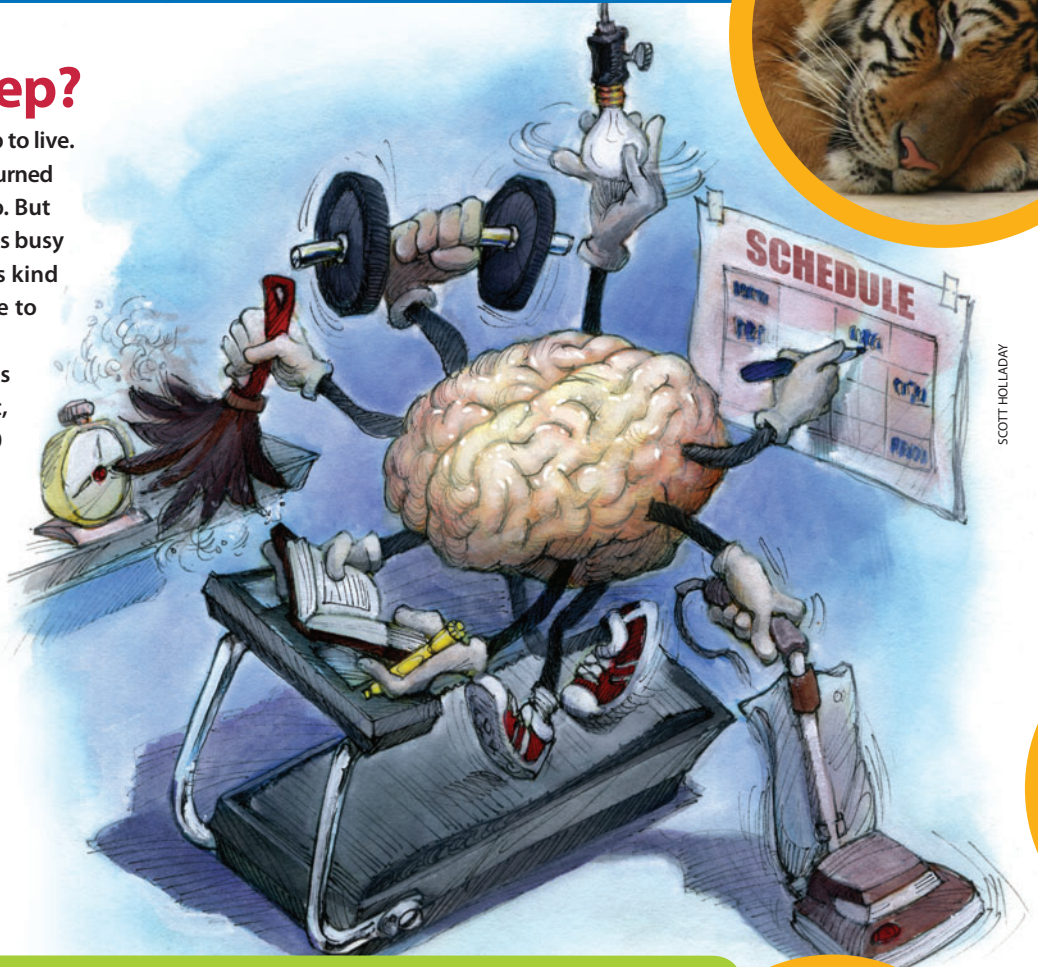
Every night of your life, something very mysterious happens to you. You lie down, close your eyes, and you **FALL ASLEEP**. OK, maybe that doesn't sound very mysterious—after all, everybody sleeps, right? But sleep really *is* a mystery.

Scientists don't know a whole lot about it, but the things they do know are really cool. Read more to find out about the mysterious things that happen to **YOU** every night!

Why Do We Sleep?

Humans and animals both need sleep to live. People used to think that their brains turned themselves off when they fell asleep. But now scientists know that your brain is busy doing all sorts of things at night! It's kind of like nighttime is your brain's time to clean house.

When you're asleep, your muscles and cells repair themselves. (In fact, some cells in your brain are 5 to 10 times more active when you're asleep than when you're awake!) Your immune system strengthens itself to help you fight off sickness. When you sleep, your brain also organizes the things you learned during the day. With all that activity going on, it's amazing you get any rest at all!



SCOTT HOLLADAY

"Night Night, Sleep Tight..."

How much sleep do animals need? That depends on the animal. Some animals sleep almost all day. Some hardly ever sleep. Check out this chart—do you wish you could be a brown bat or a giraffe?

Animal	Amount of sleep per day
Brown bat	20 hours
Tiger	16 hours
Squirrel	15 hours
Cheetah	12 hours
Dolphin	10 hours
Guppy	7 hours
Horse	3 hours
Giraffe	2 hours



—Source: <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chasleep.html>

FuN Facts

Newborn dolphins and killer whales sometimes don't sleep for a whole month after they're born.

In the wild, **three-toed sloths** sleep about 9 hours a day. Sloths that live in a zoo sleep about 15 hours a day. (Why do you think that happens?)

Most **birds** can sleep with one eye open, and they can sleep with only half of their brain at a time. The other half stays awake to watch out for cats and other predators. Scientists think some birds, like the albatross, can even sleep while they're flying!

The **golden dormouse** balances on a small tree branch while it sleeps. If it feels the branch start to move, it knows another animal is coming, so it wakes up right away.



In Your Dreams

Sleep is a mystery, but dreams are even more mysterious. Most dreams happen in a stage of sleep called REM (Rapid Eye Movement), when your brain is really active. Most people have REM sleep 5 or 6 times a night, so that means 5 or 6 dreams a night. That's more than 1,800 dreams a year! How many of *your* 1,800 dreams can you remember?

In the Bible, God often talked to people when they were asleep and dreaming. In 1 Kings 3:5-15, King Solomon dreamed that God came to him and told him he could ask for ANYTHING he wanted. Do you know what Solomon asked God for? He didn't ask for lots of money or three magical wishes or a lifetime supply of cookies. Solomon asked for wisdom so that he would be a good king.

What would YOU ask for if God came to you in a dream?

Psalm 4:8

In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, LORD,
make me dwell in safety.



Take the Sleep Quiz

Think you know a lot about sleep? Take this quiz and find out!

1. **True or False?** Kids between the ages of 7 and 11 need about 8 hours of sleep every night.
2. **True or False?** You grow more when you're asleep than when you're awake.
3. **True or False?** If you don't sleep enough during the week, you can catch up on your sleep over the weekend.
4. **True or False?** Elephants don't dream.
5. **True or False?** Warm milk helps you sleep.
6. **True or False?** Sunshine helps you sleep.
7. **True or False?** The longest any human has ever gone without sleep is 4 days.

ANSWERS

1. **False.** Most kids that age need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night.
2. **True!** When you sleep, your body releases more "growth hormones"—chemicals that help you grow.
3. **False.** Your body works best when you go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. "Sleeping in" or trying to catch up on sleep doesn't really help much.
4. **False.** All mammals dream, but we don't know what those dreams are like.
5. **True!** Milk contains a chemical called tryptophan, which helps you sleep. Other foods that have tryptophan include oats, bananas, eggs, and turkey.
6. **True!** People who get outside in the sunshine during the daytime sleep better at night.
7. **False.** The record for going without sleep was set by Toimi Soini of Hamina, Finland, in 1964. Toimi stayed awake for 11 days, or 276 hours! (That would make most people *really* sick, so don't try this at home.)

Who Needs a Lullaby?

Do you ever have trouble falling asleep? Here are some tips for getting a really great night's sleep:

- After dinnertime, don't eat or drink things that have a lot of sugar and caffeine (things like sodas and chocolate can keep you awake).
- An hour or so before bedtime, turn off the computer, the TV, and videogames so your brain can start to relax.
- When it's getting close to bedtime, turn the lights in your house down low. Bright lights make your body think it's still daytime.
- Turn down the heat and pull the shades in your room. If your room is cool, dark, and quiet, it's easier to fall asleep.



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Alive. Most nights she gets about 7 hours of sleep, which she now knows is not quite enough.



BY TONY MEYER

Light for a Dark Path

PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ARE ALL AROUND US. YET THEY OFTEN SUFFER ALONE.

JOHN NASH is one of the most gifted mathematicians of our lifetime. As a student at Princeton he wowed everyone with his genius. In 1994 he was awarded the highest honor in the field of economics: the Nobel Prize.

John Nash is a brilliant man. John Nash also struggles with mental illness.

The Academy Award-winning movie *A Beautiful Mind*, released in 2001, poignantly showed both Nash's mathematical genius and his fight against schizophrenia, which profoundly affected his life. The film put the issue of mental illness in the social spotlight, for a moment at least. It also put a human face on an issue that we would prefer not to talk about, let alone see—even in the church.

But followers of Jesus must recognize that mental illness isn't, and shouldn't be, far away from us. It isn't limited to the distant halls of Princeton University and Nobel Prize winners, to brilliant people who struggle with that fine line between genius and madness. And it isn't limited to the other extreme, to the many people who so struggle with mental illness that they can't cope with society and end up living on the street. Mental illness isn't far away. It is right here among us, maybe even within us.

More Common than We Admit

None of us has a perfectly healthy body. Some of us are seriously ill with weak hearts or failing backs. Others of us just aren't as healthy as we could be—we've got a cold we can't shake, our cholesterol is a little too high, or we've got a knee that acts up every time a storm is on the horizon. Similarly, none of us has a perfectly healthy mind. One Christian doctor writes, "Most people look at mental illness differently than physical illness. They tend to believe that mental illness is due to a character flaw or moral weakness. It's important to recognize that the brain is an organ that is vulnerable to diseases just as any other organ of the body is vulnerable to diseases."

Mental illness is more common than we'd like to admit. In any given year, 20

percent of adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness, and 6 percent suffer from a serious mental illness. Of the 100,000 homes that receive this magazine, about 20,000 will have someone suffering from a diagnosable mental illness, and about 6,000 will have someone with serious mental illness this year.

We like to think that Christian communities are somehow exempt. They aren't.

Mental illness is painfully real for many of you reading this article right now. My guess is that none of our lives is untouched by this issue. My own family has had to deal with dementia, Alzheimer's, panic attacks, and suicidal depression. And I think my family is pretty healthy.

Mental illness is a reality in our communities; however, many of us would just rather ignore it. But if anyone should be talking about mental illness, the church should be. If any place in the world should be a safe place where people can find encouragement and support and compassion for their hurts—both physical and mental—the church should be that place. Most often we have responded out of igno-

lays out clearly how God calls us to live together in love.

We are to be devoted to each other. We are to patiently love each other. We are to share ourselves with those in need. And we are to empathize with each other—to experience joy *and* hurt with each other. How do we do that as a community of Jesus Christ with people who are deeply hurting mentally?

We can begin by accepting mental illness as a reality in our families and in our community. The more we learn about it and understand it, the less we will fear it and the better we will know how to love as Jesus called us to love.

We need to understand that people with mental illness are not able to heal themselves, just as people with diabetes are not able to heal themselves. Someone struggling with depression can't just "snap out of it" and make the choice to be happy. Someone who has been diagnosed with ADD or ADHD can't just "sit still and concentrate." Someone with obsessive-compulsive behavior can't just will himself to stop.

None of us has a perfectly healthy body, and none of us has a perfectly healthy mind.

rance and fear. We haven't been a safe place for people to share their struggles with mental illness. We haven't been understanding and compassionate and loving and nonjudgmental. We haven't been patient.

We don't know how to respond.

If someone has cancer, we know what to do—we bring meals and mow lawns and send cards. Cancer is a "casserole illness." Mental illness is not. We don't know what to do for someone who is severely depressed or who has bipolar tendencies or early-onset Alzheimer's. So we often end up doing nothing.

A Community of Love

That isn't the kind of community God has called us to be. In Romans 12 Paul

Eighty-five percent of people who have a functional brain illness will get better. We don't always know how the healing occurs, but it does. We need to understand that medication doesn't cure the illness; it only relieves the symptoms. And we need to understand that this isn't an "us-them" issue; it's an "us" issue. Each one of us is affected. Not one of us is perfectly healthy (and to think we are is proof that we aren't). Some of us struggle more than others, but we need to understand that we are in this together.

When we begin to understand the truth about mental illness, we will begin to empathize instead of judge. I asked my family member who struggled with »

suicidal depression to tell me her story so I could better understand her struggle. Her story gave me a glimpse into the stigma and shame that our society and our Christian community place on those with mental illness. I understand better the pain that our ignorant comments can inflict. I felt with her how difficult it was to make that first call for help. I understand better why mental illness usually isolates individuals and families so they suffer alone while watching people with physical illnesses get meals and cards and prayers.

I also began to understand the spiritual repercussions of the disease. For many people, mental illness isolates them from God. Some wrestle with truth and faith.

Someone struggling with depression can't just "snap out of it."

Some question God. Some lose contact with God.

Psalms 139 is one of the most comforting psalms in the Bible and a favorite of many. It speaks of God's presence and personal care for each one of us. But what would your faith be like if your mind raged against each of this psalm's assurances? What if your mind told you that God didn't know you? What if you felt like you had outrun the Spirit of God? What if your mind told you that the darkness you were in was outside God's reach? What if when you awoke you couldn't believe you were still with God?

God has called us to be a community of compassion through which God can bring love and care to his hurting children. God doesn't call us to be a community of judgment—the world around us does enough of that. And God doesn't call us to be a community of technical cures—God often does that work through medical professionals and medication.

Help, My Dad's Depressed

I am 16 years old. Downstairs on the living room couch my dad is sprawled, sleeping, oblivious to the chaos he's caused. Years of my life lie in tatters, torn to pieces by the strain of living with this ticking time bomb.

"Sweetheart, Dad has depression. He's . . ."

"I know, Mom. Dad just doesn't care about us."

Hands clenching, I remember days that started out much like this one but ended much worse. Anger and fear boil up. I recall the day a police officer calmed down my dad from a fit of vicious rage. Dad left us that day by ambulance, only to return weeks later. Another time a stretcher took him he was full of enough drugs to stop his heart.

A voice interrupts my thoughts.

"Honey, I have to go to practice at the church. Want to come or stay home?"

"Don't leave, Mom. I'm coming!" Nearly frantic at the thought of being left home alone with my father, I dive for books, pens, and paper. "I'm coming! Don't leave!"

As we turn into the big asphalt parking lot, I stare at the brick church building. It stands as a reminder to me that God cares, that he's faithful. Inside its hard exterior is a loving family, one I can depend on. They give me a reason to go on. My own family reminds me of those dinosaur skeletons at the museum—dead and helpless.

We make our way into the peaceful sanctuary. As I sit in a pew near the front, I stare at a wooden emblem of two hands reaching up to a cross. It reminds me of myself.

I open my books and begin studying.

CREAK. Looking up just in time, I see our pastor come into the sanctuary and motion to Mom. My senses fill with a familiar dread. I can almost see the black cloud hanging over the pastor's head. But after talking for what seems like forever, Mom walks back to her practice. Everything is all right, I tell myself. I'm just suffering from pre-exam stress. Robotically, I begin writing down answers again.

"Honey?"

Nearly falling off the pew, I try to calm my heart rate.

"Ya, Mom?" I gain back some of my breath.

"Dad just called and told Pastor Dave that he tried to hang himself and needs help."

I choose to walk home later. Alone. Full of trepidation I arrive to find the door locked. Piercing my wandering, now worried thoughts, our phone begins to ring. Jumping to action, I run for the spare key, knowing somehow that this call is important. Through the open window I hear the answering machine click on.

"Honey, this is Mom. I'm at the hospital with Dad."

Slowly my body grinds into movement, sliding the key into the lock. I open the door and, walking around the corner, stop dead in my tracks. A tie, ripped, lies on the coffee table, occupying the spot beside the phone. Evidence of attempted suicide. Cold sweat breaks out. Breathing becomes difficult. My cheeks are wet. Overwhelmed, I drop to my knees and sob, "God, help!"

—Name Withheld

God calls us to be compassionate, to imitate Jesus.

When he saw hurting people, Jesus hurt along with them. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). When Jesus "saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their

sick" (14:14). While teaching on the mountainside Jesus said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat" (15:32). When Jesus met two blind men outside Jericho he "had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him" (Matt. 20:34). »

My Journey into the Dark

I can't.

I'm done.

It's dark.

Terrified. . . . So afraid to step into the light.

Don't tell me that fear involves risk. Heard it.

Don't tell me to explain my perception of light. In no mood.

Cynical? Oh yeah.

Skeptical? You bet.

Angry? Raging.

Desolate? It's dark, painfully dark.

My heart aches.

I wrote those words to my pastor from an adult psych ward.

September 21, 2007, I walked into a local emergency room after struggling with depression for two years. I was done. I spent the day in a quiet, dark room, curled up in a chair while waiting for a member of the crisis team to assess me.

I wanted to die. Thoughts of oncoming gravel trucks filled my mind.

I was admitted to the hospital. I remember asking my sister-in-law, "How do I go home?"

I was done. Little did I know that my descent into the dark was only beginning.

Depression is a brutal illness. Imagine forsaking all you hold dear. I walked away from my husband, my children, my home, the activities surrounding it, the love intertwined through it, the security I felt within. It felt foreign. I knew no way to return.

After a week in the hospital I was admitted to a psychiatric facility. I truly admire those who choose to do that. It takes raw courage. I bolted after six hours. So what now?

My parents graciously took me into their home—a safe place to rest. But we all knew the issue of my illness was not being addressed. After eight weeks, in a fit of anger I packed up and went home. This time my thoughts were on leaving a note for my family and starting the van in the garage.

One week later I was back in the emergency room. This time I was certified; I had no choice. Either I would show up at the psych ward or the police would haul me there. I was slipping further into an angry,

intense dark. My thoughts screamed, "Why can't I fix this?!"

I spent six weeks behind locked doors. My routine consisted of a daily visit with the psychiatrist, a cocktail of medications, and compulsory group therapy.

My comfort came from the other patients. There was no pretense—we were all broken. We shared our meals, conversations, stories. We were a community, a family of sorts. I was safe behind closed doors, safe from my agony, from myself.

By January I went home. I was well—or so I thought. This time my thoughts were on my pills, on playing Russian roulette with them. Which ones shall I swallow? How many? I was sinking deeper. How far, Lord, will I sink? Enough already.

I was readmitted on February 2. I spent hours curled up in my bed, reciting the song "I Lift My Eyes Up" (Ps. 121)—"so I will wait for you to come and rescue me, come and give me life." But that was interspersed with, "Where are you, Lord? Where are you? I cannot see you; it's so dark. Help me, Lord. Help me."

My daily visits with the doctor became angry battles where I would spit at him: "Don't tell me to try!" or "Don't tell me it will be OK. If it were OK, I wouldn't be here!"

After two more weeks he sent me home with stronger medication. I felt hopeless.

I wanted to die.

Suicide consumed my thoughts, eating away the rational, the logical. I was filled with rage. I hated who I was. I would wear dresses in a sad attempt to cover the ugliness. Living with myself was extremely frustrating. I wanted to crawl out of my own skin.

Intensive daily group therapy was brutal. We discussed the frustration of living with a misunderstood illness. Maybe we should wear bandages on our heads, we thought, so we would look as sick as we felt. I thought the therapists were annoyingly positive, the clichés sickening.

Every day I woke up wanting to end it. Family would constantly remind me of all that I had, but I couldn't see the blessings for the dark.

My comfort came in knowing I was not alone. Every day I met with others who trav-

eled a similar path. Alcoholics, drug addicts, those dealing with chronic anxiety disorders and debilitating diseases as well as depression.

We sat huddled together, listening, cheering each other on, comforting, listening more. In those long hours I obtained the coping skills to live with this illness.

Along with therapy I visited with my pastor on a regular basis. Through our conversations I renewed a tentative relationship with my Lord and Savior. I now know God was present in the dark. God taught me to see beyond the brokenness. I have great respect for the addict who has been sober for a week—I now understand how difficult that is. I now know that everyone carries his or her own stories, all of which deserve to be heard. I am grateful to my church community for their many prayers; I believe they held me up. And I now know God forgives. "All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." God holds the broken ones in the palm of his hand. There is no better place to be.

I still deal with depression. It sneaks in when I am tired or when life becomes overwhelming. I am not always comfortable in my own home, and I deal with anxiety on a daily basis.

But I have been given much. I treasure color: oranges, yellows, blues, greens. I treasure my bright orange bowls and green spatulas. I send myself colorful cards full of words of encouragement to open on bad days. I buy myself bouquets of bright flowers. I still wear dresses, not to hide the ugliness but to enjoy their feel. And every morning I wrap myself in a warm cotton sweater and enjoy a walk with my dog through the trees. And if the wind is in the trees, I can feel the breath of God settling into me. He is there.

Update: I was recently released from a nine-day hospital stay. I no longer feel God's breath in the trees. Just now and then a whisper.



Angie Salomons is a member of Woodynook CRC, Lacombe, Alberta.

Jesus lived with compassion. He hurt with those who were hurting.

And now Jesus calls us to be communities of compassion. In 2 Corinthians 1 God commands us to comfort each other with the comfort that God himself has given us (vv. 3-4). We see the exact same command in Philippians 2:1-2, Colossians 3:12, and Ephesians 4:32. We must be communities of compassion where even those with mental illness—*especially* those with mental illness—can experience the love of God.

Four Compassionate Responses

How can we become communities of compassion? The answer to that question is a conversation we must continue to have with each other. Let me share four ways to begin.

First, we must maintain each other's dignity. We must define each other at our most basic and greatest value: we are all loved children of God. That definition affords us dignity and respect no matter what our condition may be—even if our

In any given year, 20 percent of adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness, and 6 percent suffer from a serious mental illness.

illness prevents us from giving ourselves that dignity and respect.

We must also learn as individuals and as communities to listen in love without judging or condemning or gossiping. We must be safe places where we can hurt together and know that we are loved.

We must also be ready to offer practical help to those who are hurting mentally, along with their families, just as we minister to those who are hurting physically. We must serve them, their families, their children, and their spouses in love. Jesus' compassion always led to action. Ours must as well.

Finally, maybe the greatest thing we can and must do is talk to Jesus for and with people who deal with mental illness. Pray for them—they themselves might not be able to. Compassionately speak the truth of Jesus' love that they might not be able to feel. Share that love in Jesus' name so Jesus may be present with them through you.

What's Next?

I don't expect one article to completely change our culture or our communities. I do hope it will start the conversations that need to happen. If nothing else, I hope this article does three things. I hope that those of you who haven't experienced the pain of mental illness will begin to understand it a little better so that as individuals and as the community of Jesus Christ we can begin to respond with love and compassion. I hope that those of you who are hurting right now know, maybe for the first time, that you are not alone. There are people right in your own churches hurting along with you. And for those of you who haven't yet dared to ask for help, I hope you know that help is available and you can move toward healing.

If any of those things happens, God has worked. If more than that should happen—if our communities begin to become safe places where everyone can find love and compassion no matter their hurt—God has worked in a mighty way! ■

Gifted and Bipolar

Recently I was hospitalized for bipolar disorder. My medication was being adjusted. I know the importance of taking my medication. I know I need it. But I had stopped taking it. It's hard for me to understand why. It's hard for me to explain. And my friends and loved ones are afraid that I will stop again. But I promised the Lord I wouldn't stop. I meant it, and God will hold me to it.

In Pine Rest I saw an informative video. It was about people who have bipolar disorder and their experiences. They talked about their highs and lows. Some of them are very successful in business and art. Some are musicians and newscasters. (There have even been presidents with the illness.) They talked about medication and treatment for their illness. They talked about how some of their best achievements were when they were high. Some said that they didn't want to come down from the high. But then when the lows occurred, it felt like they wouldn't come out of it.

When I was at Pine Rest I recognized that I had a lot of stored up anger that I needed to release. I couldn't deny my anger. But I had thought of myself as being calm and collected. I began learning how to deal with stress.

At the same time I was being treated, God used me to make a difference in the lives of the other women in the unit.

And God used my experiences to strengthen my own faith. My relationship with him is much better. I believe God has a purpose for everything and for my life. I want to serve God in the capacity he wants me to for his glory.

So what is your view of me and others like me? Do we have room in your heart and church? Is there a place for us to use our gifts and talents? How will you treat me and all of us with mental illness? I hope you will receive us with love and compassion, as Jesus would.

—Verna Haverhals is a member of Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

WEB Q'S *Let's keep talking.* You'll find discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner's* website: www.thebanner.org.



Rev. Tony Meyer is pastor of Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church, Grandville, Mich.

Our Heart Challenge

Last year Rev. Angela Taylor Perry, the first African American woman to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary, was appointed Pastor of Reconciliation for Faith Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Mich. Hers is the first such position in the CRC, setting a powerful precedent for the growth of culturally diverse congregations. *The Banner* asked her to tell us more about herself and her work.



WITH MORE STRENGTH IS HOW I LIVE.

In the first year of my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, I realized that I could choose to live my life victoriously, or I could choose to live in fear of the “beast.”

Twenty-three years of triumphant living have taught me that God’s grace is truly sufficient.

As pastor of reconciliation for Faith Church, I am called as an open, living vessel of God’s faithfulness to bring broken hearts into spiritual alignment.

Webster’s defines *reconciliation* as bringing into harmony that which is out of balance. I charge that the church, Christ’s gathered body, is in deep need of heart balancing.

The church, in its unity and diversity, is the means by which God intends to reveal himself, to proclaim the good news, and to unite all things in Christ. So how do we respond obediently to the scriptural mandate not only to be reconciled to God but to receive the ministry of reconciliation?

Often our hearts are kept bound by the fear of being known and the sin of judging others based on our own human limitations. We nurture biblical kingdom diversity by seeking to be reconciled to God first and pleading with God to change our hearts. Then our reconciliation to each other will flow out of our intentional living sacrifice.

I believe that the first step toward reconciliation is a willing spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines. A willing heart who basks in prayer, silence, solitude, and Scripture reading will truly reap the rewards of drawing near to God. And a repentant heart who welcomes the call as an ambassador of reconciliation enters into the reciprocal love language that God desires with us in worship.

I accepted the call to Faith Church not to recruit more ethnic folks but to facilitate real heart change. Along with leading worship, my first task was to recruit a small team for prayer and accountability. I meet with the team once a month.

Next, I extended an open invitation to the congregation to explore together what reconciliation would look like in Faith Church. Twenty-eight folks accepted the challenge. We shared

stories about the first time we experienced race and racism, watched films exposing white privilege, read books and articles on multicultural church ministry, and welcomed speakers from the community. I extended personal invitations to members of this group to meet with me one on one to intentionally develop interracial friendships.

For these informal hours of disclosure I use a curriculum I am writing titled *Hearts in Harmony*. We meet at restaurants or coffee shops—sharing a meal together creates a wonderful atmosphere for fellowship. These relationships are good for building communication skills; however, the real challenge is for members to establish interracial and crosscultural relationships in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

Developing a deeper relationship with God and nurturing intentional interracial friendships is one big step toward bridging what divides us. Stronger steps will include a witness against racism and prejudice, and defense of all people as image-bearers of God. Equally important is to develop joint worship and work projects with congregations from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Those steps help take us out of our comfort zones and require ethnic leadership.

The reconciliation that God desires and that Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians is what I call our “heart challenge.” It requires intentionality and sacrifice. But I believe that when we seek God’s righteousness as a priority for reconciliation with each other, we will have stepped onto the bridge. ■

Next Steps

The CRC’s Race Relations ministry offers churches training in biblical racial reconciliation through workshops called “Dance of Racial Reconciliation” (U.S.) and “Widening the Circle” (Canada). For more information or to schedule a workshop, please call the Office of Race Relations at 877-864-3977 (toll free) or 616-224-5883 and ask for Rev. Esteban Lugo, director, or Jan Ortiz, administrative assistant. For more information on Rev. Taylor Perry’s curriculum for cultivating interracial friendships, see www.spaceforracialreconciliation.com.



Rev. Angela Taylor Perry is pastor of reconciliation ministries for Faith Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Mich.

Mother's Day in a Three-Way Mirror

AFTER GLANCING AT MY CALENDAR and doing a double-take at my ever-growing pregnant belly, I realize that I will miss out on Mother's Day by about a month this year. This is disappointing, not only because I'm excited to join the ranks of first-time mothers, but because my dining room table could really use some flowers. But I will have to wait until next year to be celebrated or given little handprints of paint under the words *I love you* or "breakfasted" in true Mother's Day fashion.

But even though there won't be a large celebration at my house this year, there are two reasons why Mother's Day will still be very special for me.

On Mother's Day I honor my mother, who worked hard to raise me to be a God-fearing woman able to make positive contributions to society. Knowing my tomboy nature and my tendency to be a bit rough around the edges, she did not underestimate the size of this task. She dragged me to soup kitchens to serve meals, forced me to toil in her massive garden so I could learn about the benefits of hard work, and volunteered my services to perform community roadside cleanup. I'm so thankful for her intentional steps to shape me. I think they worked. I consider Mom my dearest friend, and I attribute much of who I am to her wisdom and work in my life.

But she is not the only person I celebrate on Mother's Day. I also celebrate my biological mother, who carried me for nine months and made the difficult and sacrificial decision to give me a better life with another family. While my biological mother has not shaped my life in the same way my adoptive mother has, the difficult choice she made ensured that I would have a life to shape.

She was very young, and no doubt endured stares and whispers as she walked

the halls of her high school with a growing belly under her sweatshirt. Amid rumors and judgment, she walked the rocky road of pregnancy and did so without hearing the mantra of comfort that rings in my own head: "This is all worth it; I'll have a little baby at the end of this."

People who know I am adopted often ask me if Mother's Day is difficult for me or wonder if I am angry or hurt about being "given up" for adoption. I'm not. I'm grateful that this is a part of the story God penned for me—a story of growing up in a family that loves the Lord and taught me to do the same. Now the story continues, and about a month after Mother's Day, God will start writing a new chapter for me and for my little one.

I know there are moms who have given up children for adoption—and moms who have adopted—who wonder if they acted in God's plan. Mother's Day is a day for me to encourage both camps. God has a story to write for all of us. There might be unplanned pregnancies, but there are no unplanned children of God.

While I will not get breakfast in bed on Mother's Day—this year, at least—I will still say a prayer of gratitude for all mothers who make the tough decision to carry children they won't raise and mothers who make the tough decision to raise children they didn't carry. I have been blessed by both. ■

Andrea Visser-Bult formerly taught English at Holland (Mich.) Christian High School. She is now a stay-at-home mom with Eli, who was born July 1, 2008. The family belongs to Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.



On Mother's Day
I honor my
mother, but she's
not the only
person I celebrate.

The Sorry Spectacle of Our Foulness

“HE WHO KNOWS HIS OWN SIN IS GREATER THAN the angels,” said seventh-century Isaac of Nineveh. John Calvin would agree.

To live well, says Calvin, we must come to know ourselves. But that’s difficult to do (*Institutes* II.i.1). We tend to think too highly of ourselves. In our heart of hearts, we too much cherish “some opinion of our own pre-eminence” (III.vii.4).

Coming to know ourselves, says Calvin, must take place in two stages. First we must recall our original lofty status—“what we were given at creation” (II.i.1). Then we must also “call to mind our miserable condition after Adam’s fall.”

It’s far less inviting to do the second task, of course, which requires great courage and brutal honesty. But there’s no other way of tearing out at its roots our sinful tendency toward “boasting and self-assurance.” Coming to know and to admit our sin “should truly humble and overwhelm us with shame,” Calvin says (II.i.1).

To go soft on sin’s effects
is to subtract from
God’s glorious work of
saving you from them.

To ensure that his readers don’t skip merrily past sin’s ugly side, in his second book of *The Institutes* Calvin writes a 100-page penetrating analysis of “the sorry spectacle of our foulness.” He describes sin’s origin and nature. He points out that we never sin out of innocent ignorance, but always out of rebellious perversity. He shows how powerless we are against sin’s ferocious strength; we’re “willing slaves” to it, he says. Sin continually keeps breeding within us a “perversity that is never idle.”

“Isn’t all this a bit much?” you may ask. Behind Calvin’s lengthy treatment lies a 1,500-year controversy among Christian theologians. They went back and forth about whether salvation is the work of God alone or whether humans add their own little contribution. St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430), following the teachings of St. Paul, was adamant: Sin holds human wills so strongly in its suffocating grip that we simply

cannot, on our own, decide to respond to God’s initiative; salvation is God’s activity from start to finish.

A century later, however, the Council of Orange (A.D. 529) presented a toned-down Augustinian perspective called “semi-Pelagianism,” which said that human wills, though weakened, do have enough strength left to respond to God. A thousand years after Orange, the Reformers returned to Augustine and insisted that human wills are bound by sin, helplessly “held in sin’s dread sway,” as the old hymn puts it. (My best illustration of bondage of the will came to me from a student friend who was a recovering alcoholic. He told me, “I used to think that my willpower could keep me sober, but eventually I came to see that my will was as drunk as I was.”)

Deep down, we all wish that Pelagius was right—that we’re not that bad and that we can do our own little part toward making salvation happen. But the gospel keeps bringing us up short. It reminds us that each of us is as sick and as sinful as our deepest, darkest secret.

For two reasons, Calvin and the other Reformers wouldn’t budge a millimeter on the doctrine of bondage of the will.

First, if you muffle the words “we are weak” when you sing “Jesus Loves Me,” then you’ll also fail to give the words, “but he is strong,” the vigor they deserve. To go soft on sin’s effects is to subtract from God’s glorious work of saving you from them.

Second, if we human beings need to contribute even the tiniest bit to our own salvation, how will we know when we’ve offered enough? Insecure hearts can only find peace in God’s grace.

Sin seems to have become a neglected word in the postmodern vocabulary. People prefer not to mention it, let alone admit that they’re guilty of it. But the older I become, the more I find myself identifying with the twin declarations of John Newton on his deathbed: “My memory is nearly gone, but two things I know: I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior.” ■

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. He’s writing a special series for *The Banner* this year on the teachings of John Calvin.

Sadly, only 20 of the 47 classes in the denomination have formed such a team.

When an allegation of abuse is made, an advisory panel from the Safe Church Team is formed to hear from the alleged victim and the alleged offender. If the alleged offender admits or confesses to misconduct or the panel finds misconduct under a standard of probability and gravity, then the panel reports its findings to the executive committee and council of the alleged offender's church.

But too often the panel's report has been denied or discounted by the committee or council, with little or no consequence to the offender.

In our system of church government, the council has the final authority for the local church. Of the more than 20 cases in which an advisory panel has been convened to deal with an allegation of abuse, rarely has an offender faced consequences from the local church council, even when the offense has occurred over time with a minor. The usual excuses given include, "She asked for it," "It was consensual," "It was a one-time slip." The excuses are accepted; the church leader is "forgiven" and carries on—almost always to offend again.

The victim is usually not interested in a lawsuit; coming forward and asking the denomination for help is difficult enough. When the victim sees justice denied and the church acting only in the interest of the offender, she or he usually leaves the church.

And the panel? They have spent hours on a difficult task, heard testimony from both the alleged victim and the alleged offender, and have seen their work disregarded, even when the offender has acknowledged his offense.

Offenders rarely face consequences from the local church council, even when minors have been abused.

What is wrong here? For one thing, too many church councils assume that sexual offences by pastors or other leaders do not affect the broader denomination. Sometimes we have been so worried about maintaining confidentiality that we have not allowed necessary information to be shared beyond the local council.

But secrecy and confidentiality are *not* the same thing.

Surely a sexual offense by a pastor is an abuse of office that affects more than the victim. It becomes a hindrance to the appropriate exercise of his (so far it has always been "his") office in all areas. It is an abuse of power, a behavioral characteristic that carries on to any future congregations or forms of service he may engage in. It is a stain on the body of Christ. It should not be a secret to be kept for his protection or for the convenience of the council.

So what can we do to make things better? When the advisory panel's work is presented to the council, the church visitors from classis or representatives from a neighboring church council should be present so that the information is not contained totally within that council. I believe that if the panel's report is ignored or rejected, the panel must appeal to classis at a meeting with

the synodical deputies present. It should not be up to the victim to pursue an appeal to classis. And the ministerial credentials of the pastor, if he is not deposed, should contain an account of the judgment against him.

Through the Office of Abuse Prevention, the Christian Reformed Church has developed effective policies for preventing abuse and for dealing with allegations of abuse. Our leaders, classes, and church councils need to wake up to their responsibility to use them. ■



Mary Vander Vennen is a retired psychotherapist living in Toronto. She is a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church, Scarborough, Ontario.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: June 2009 issue is 5/4/09. July 2009 issue is 6/1/09. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

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

To Advertise: Place your classified ad online at www.TheBanner.org/classifieds. If you are unable to submit your ad online you may continue to email it to classifieds@TheBanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. If you have questions, call 616-224-0725.

Publication of advertisements implies neither endorsement nor approval by *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, or the Christian Reformed Church. We reserve the right to refuse or edit any ad for appropriateness.

Denominational and Classical Announcements

The council of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2009 to meet in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, on Saturday, June 13, at 9:00 a.m.

All area members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 14, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. at Elmhurst CRC, 155 West Brush Hill Road, Elmhurst, Illinois. Rev. Bert De Jong will deliver the message.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 7, and on Sunday, June 14.

Council of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois

Admitted into the Ministry

Classis Alberta South & Saskatchewan gives praise and thanksgiving for Candidate Martin Boardman, who has been called to serve church in Brooks, Alberta. Martin successfully sustained his Classical Examination on Mar. 13 and was installed as an ordained Minister of the Word on Mar. 20, 2009.

CLASSIS HACKENSACK is pleased to announce that the Rev. Dr. Donald Belanus successfully sustained a Colloquium Doctum per Art. 8 of the Church Order at the March 2-3, 2009 meeting of Classis. His installation will take place, the Lord willing, on April 19, 2009 at the Washington DC Christian Reformed Church. He will serve as an associate minister for media ministries. Rev. Belanus spent nearly his entire ministerial career as a Christian Reformed Pastor and then as CRC Chaplain in the U. S. Navy until his formal retirement from the Navy. He then "loaned" himself to serve in his local PCUSA congregation as interim and then as senior pastor. Having completed that service we are blessed to be able to welcome him again as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA. Rev. Clair Vander Neut, Stated Clerk

Available for Call

PASTOR DAVID WATSON on 03/03/09 the Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church Council, passed a motion to make Pastor David Watson available for call.

Change in Time of Service

CHANGE IN WORSHIP TIME Bethany CRC, Gallup, NM, will have one Sunday worship service at 10:00 a.m. from May 24 through Sept. 6.

Eligible for Call

First CRC of Montreal and Classis Eastern Canada (CEC) declare Frank Guter eligible for call according to Church Order Art. 14-e. In 2002, he was granted an honourable discharge according to Church Order Art. 14-b by CEC from the ordained ministry in order to become a tent-making missionary involved in church-planting in the UK and Ireland. He may be contacted at 36 Ardmore Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland or fcguter@hotmail.com or ph. 003531 214 8677.

Financial Aid

CLASSIS NORTHERN ILLINOIS is now accepting student aid applications from students pursuing word-related ministries. Contact committee chair, Fred DeJong, 12410 VanDyke Road, Plainfield, IL 60585 phone 815-254-3800 email admin@aplacetoconnect.com. Application deadline June 30.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS GEORGETOWN will meet in regular session on Thursday, May 21, 2009 at 8:30 AM. Classis will meet at the First Jenison Christian Reformed Church. The church is located at 8360 Cottonwood Drive in Jenison, Michigan. Harold Postma, S. C.

Congregational Announcements

WITH JOY AND thanksgiving to God, Fellowship CRC in Grandville, MI is making plans for a ministry ordination anniversary celebration of two members on Sunday, June 14, 9:30 a.m. service, followed by a lunch. We are celebrating 55 years of ordained ministry for Rev. William Huyser and 40 years of ordained ministry for Rev. Robert Uken. Friends are invited. RSVP is helpful for planning, but not required. For more information or to RSVP please e-mail us at secretary@fellowshipcrc.com or call 616.532.2350 ext. 11.

75th Anniversary

Hollandale CRC, Hollandale, MN. will be celebrating 75 years of God's faithfulness the weekend of Sept 5 and 6. Friends and former members are invited to join us. For information or to order banquet tickets, please e-mail padklout@smig.net or call 507 437-1334

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 celebration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1c7c75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

Church's 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 bethcra@tbaytel.net

Announcements

BEACON CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS, St. Catharines, ON will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on May 29 - 31, 2009. Join us for this weekend of celebrations which will conclude with a special worship service on Sunday afternoon. All alumni, past and present staff, and supporters are invited and encouraged to attend! See website for information and registration www.beaconchristian.org 1-905-937-7411.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

BEATRICE CORSTANGE - 7811 Cottonwood Dr., Jenison MI 49428 - formerly of Kalamazoo MI, will celebrate her 100th birthday on June 1. Her children, Ron (Cathie) and Ken (Marilyn), and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren thank God for her many years

EMELINE C. ROBERTS, 550 Crosstown Parkway #903, Kalamazoo, MI 49008, will celebrate her 100th birthday on May 20, 2009. Family members

include daughter and son-in-law Betty and Tony Ehlers, 3 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren. Praise God!

97th Birthday

BERNARD KOOPS, 630 Hastings St., #233, Holland, MI 49423 celebrated his 97th birthday on April 20. His children, Marcia Chryzanowski, Barry, Rob, Glen, and Paul think everyone should have a Dad like ours. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren, too, are proud of his strong faith, vitality, generosity, and indomitable spirit.

95th Birthday

JAMES HOEKSTRA (60 W. 32nd St., Holland, MI 49423) celebrated his 95th birthday on April 11. Congratulations with love from his wife, Grace, children—Jan (Carl Afman), Gerry (Merry), Marv (Beth), Norm (Nancy) & #8209; 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.



ALETTA J. (RUS) KUIPERS, wife of the late John W. Kuipers, and a member of Fairlawn CRC, celebrated her 95th birthday on March 8 in her home at 43 Heritage Drive, Whitinsville, MA 01588. Her children Emma (Carl) Butenas, Marvin (Betty) Kuipers, Margaret (Thomas, deceased)

Sawyer, and John (Laurel) Kuipers, 6 grandchildren, and 1 great-grandchild thank God for her cheerful spirit and constant faith.

90th Birthday

CELIA BEERENS, 10633 Claroskee Rd., Marion, MI 49665, celebrating 90 yrs. of God's faithfulness, May 5. Lifelong Vogel Center CRC member. Blessed with 4 children (Gene/Gail, Marge/Bob DeYoung, Carol/Keith Buning, Dan/Sheryl), 12 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren. We love you



HENRY H HEERES' children and grandchildren invite you to join them for a 90th birthday celebration at Ellsworth CRC on May 9. A luncheon will be served from 4-6pm. Henry's birthday is May 12, 1919. 9654 Circle Dr, Ellsworth MI 49729

ANDREW P KLASSEN, 630 S Stewart, Fremont, MI 49412, celebrated his 90th birthday on April 8. His children, Jan & John Frens, Dave & Sandra Klassen, Mary & Jamie Muller, and Roger & Marianne Klassen along with 8 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren give thanks for his life of faith and Christian example.

IRENE KLOMP, 2121 Raybrook SE, Rm 329, Grand Rapids MI 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 5. Her children, Ray (Bauw), Judy (Don) Bandstra, and Carol (Randy) Hoekstra, 6 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren thank God for her love and her long life.

Anniversaries

60th Anniversary

HOEKSTRA Duke & Evelyn (Schurman) 613 Dogwood St. SW, DeMotte, IN 46310, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on March 11, 2009. Praising God with them are their children: Jim & Cindy, Jack & Lynn, Dave & Barb, Don & Lisa, 8 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

OPEN HOUSE A celebration of the the 60th wedding anniversary of Edward and Helen Kingma will take place Sunday, May 17 from 1:30 to 4:30 P. M. at the Bretonwoods Terrace, 2500 Bretonwoods Drive S. E., Kentwood, MI 49512. No gifts please. 616-538-9763

LA BRENZ F. Jim and Grace(Grove),2253 Tiffany Dr. Grand Junction, CO 81503, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on May 31. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren:Mike and Carol(David and Brittany, Ann and Colleen), Tina and Carl Chan(Janna, Michael and Gloria), David(deceased), Tim and Jana Van Dam(Jake and Jackie, Beth and Becca).

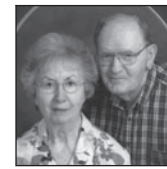
NYENHUIS, Charles & Henrietta (Koops), 4213 Del Mar Village Dr Sw, Grandville MI 49418. Celebrating 60 years of marriage on May 20,

2009. Love and congratulations from your children, Pat and Rich Secord and Steven Nyenhuis. 6 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

SLAGER— Bill and Pal (Harriet Kerkstra); May 20; 8830 Carn Ave. Mokena, IL 60448. Thanks be to God for His faithfulness.

SOODSMA Herbert & Jean (Van de Veene) Midland Park, N. J. celebrated 60 years of marriage on April 9th. Praising God with them are their children Peter & Beverly Ten Kate, Randall & Debra Veenstra, Kenneth & Cathy Lagerveld, William & Lisa Soodsma, 13 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

TOERING - Arnold and Lillian (Kooiker), 2586 - 38th St., S. W., Wyoming, MI, 49519, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on May 6. Congratulations from your children: Ron and Deb, Scott and Marcia, Mike & Pam and six grandchildren. Thanks be to God!



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

TIMMER - Gerard & Donna (VanderKolk) 1591 - 56th Ave. Zeeland, MI 49464. 55th on May 26, 2009. Children: Paul & Cari Timmer; Rev. Mark & Bonnie Timmer. 5 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren.

Church Positions Available

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.

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

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.

GRACE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH 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

BURDETT CRC, a small but gifted congregation on the prairies of Alberta, is seeking a full time pastor who will lead us in God's Word, encourage and challenge the youth, provide leadership in the church's spiritual journey and develop a small group ministry. D. V, we will celebrate our 100 Year anniversary in 2011! If you feel God's leading please contact Jos @ 403-833-2299 or solanumt@shockware.com

GEORGETOWN CRC is looking for an energetic, committed full-time Youth Pastor to join our ministry team. For more information please contact us at 905-877-4322 or at gcrcrecruiter@live.ca.

SENIOR PASTOR: First Reformed Church of Byron Center, MI is seeking a senior pastor to lead a congregation of 200+ members. We are looking for an ordained minister who is passionate about God's Word, believes strongly in the power of prayer, is eager to reach out to surrounding areas and is able to be a faith-driven leader and visionary in our church. For inquiries and to view our church profile please contact Bob Koopman at koopmanrobert@yahoo.com or the church office 616.878.1709

YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR. Messiah CRC Hudsonville, MI is seeking a youth ministries director to be a pastor to our youthful members and oversee our youth ministry program (early childhood to post high). Special focus is on senior high and middle school. At least a bachelor's degree in a field applicable to youth ministry is expected. Highly qualified applicants for 2 part-time positions will be considered. Send resumes and inquiries to Messiah CRC, 2900 Springdale, Hudsonville, MI 49426 or email at info@messiahcrc.org. 616-669-9091

PASTOR: New Life CRC is a vibrant faith community in Guelph, Ontario. Our gift based ministry seeks to follow the Spirit's leading both within our own congregation and in the community around us. New Life CRC is looking for a Pastor who is blessed with the gifts of leadership, including the development of leadership in others, encouragement, pastoral care and teaching. In particular we are seeking someone who can provide energetic and creative support to our ministries and be a mentor to our new members and our youth. The successful candidate(s) must be theologically trained and open to ordination in the CRCNA. Our new Pastor will be part of a team ministry and fellowship with a multi-generational congregation. Direct inquiries and resumes to the Administrator of the Search Committee, Nicole Ensing at worship@newlifecrc.net.

FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church of Visalia, CA is seeking a full-time Director of Music and Worship. A job description is available on our website: www.visaliafirstcrg.org. Please send inquires to kenzylstra@sbcglobal.net.

WEBSTER CRC is seeking a full-time pastor to help grow our community of believers. Our congregation of about 70 families is located in Webster, NY, a suburb of Rochester on the shore of Lake Ontario. We desire a pastor who is passionate about preaching the word of God, is comfortable with a blended style of worship, can relate to all age groups, and desires to reach out to the community. An interest in potluck suppers, softball, or volleyball is a plus. To learn more about

us, visit wrcr1.home.mindspring.com, contact the search committee at wrcr1@mindspring.com, or call Jean at the church office, 585-872-2352.

MARANATHA CRC Pastors, our congregation is actively praying that God will soon bless our search for a new pastor by working in the heart of the person we believe He is preparing to lead us in ministry in our community. Are you that person? If you feel led by the Spirit to inquire about this position, we ask you to contact us by mail or e-mail. Inquires should be mailed to Nathan Tintle, Pastoral Search Team, Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, 918 Central Ave, Holland, MI 49423, or e-mailed to Nathan Tintle at tintle@hope.edu. Maranatha CRC (www.maranathachurch.info) is a church of over 300 professing members celebrating over 50 years of service in God's kingdom.

COVENANT CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, whose membership is about 400 persons, is looking for a PASTOR OF EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT. The successful candidate's responsibilities will be to coordinate children, youth and young adult programs by building a team of lay leaders passionate about living out and extending Covenant's vision and mission, and to coordinate and develop healthy and challenging adult education programs focussed on training and spiritual growth. The candidate should be ordained or have a desire to be ordained as a minister or ministry associate. To forward a resume or to request more information, please contact Kevin Visscher at kmvissch@telus.net.

LaGlance 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.

MINISTRY OF YOUTH DIRECTOR: Want to reach the new generation? Ready to make God a real and relevant experience for young people? Grace Christian Reformed Church is hiring a full-time position starting July/August 2009 for ages 4-24. Includes activity participation and administrative duties. Post-secondary education or equivalent experience with youth a must. For more details, please check out the job description and our church at our website: www.gracecrocobourg.org or email us at grace.church@bellnet.ca. Resumes may be emailed or posted to Grace Christian Reformed Church, 440 King Street East, Cobourg, Ontario, K9A 1M6.

YOUTH PASTOR/DIRECTOR: River Terrace Church (a Christian Reformed Church) in East Lansing, MI is seeking a full time person to direct the youth ministry for grades 6-12. Responsibilities include: nurturing spiritual growth, building community, and leading others in this ministry. Experience with youth and a degree in youth ministry or a related area is required. A master's degree and/or ordination is desired. A position description is listed under job openings at the church website www.riverterrace.org. Send resume to: eunice@riverterrace.org or to Dr. Clayton Libolt, River Terrace Church, 1509 River Terrace Dr., East Lansing, MI 48823 by 5/15/09.

50th Anniversary

BASTIAN Carl & Margo (624 Country Trail Private, Carlsbad Springs, ON KOA 1K0) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 28th 2009. Mom and Dad, you are a wonderful example of God's faithfulness. Congratulations and love from your family Matthew (Judy), Lia (Rob), Manja (Al), Joanne (Jim), and 18 grandchildren.

BOSMA Andy & Judy, 15407 Primrose Ct, Orland Park IL 60462, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 5. Congratulations from your children Barb & Bruce Gabrielse, Carol, Ken & Linda, Donna & Dave Kamp, Jim & Janet and 14 grandchildren. We love you and thank God for you.

DEVREE, Ronald & Nell (VanderPloeg), Hudsonville, MI, celebrated 50 years of marriage on March 20, 2009. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren.

DEVRIES Ray and Helen (Haveman), Holland, MI, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on May 16. We love you. Your children and grandchildren.

HIEMSTRA Peter & Elizabeth (Friesema), W9348 Christie Rd Darien, WI 53114, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 1. Dad has just overcome esophageal cancer by the grace of God. All the more precious this time will be. Congratulations from your children: Gary & Sally, Elaine & Rick Vegter, Gene & Cindy, Sue & Doug Olson, Margie Gruel, Janet & Mike VerMeer, John & Dee & your 23 grandchildren. We love you! An open house will be held on July 4 at the Delavan CRC.

KORTMAN Curt and Phyllis (Hoekzema), 3743 Omaha Grandville, MI 49418 celebrate 50 years on May 15, 2009. Children John and Mary Kortman, Ann and Dean DeHoog, Jim and Pam Kortman and 11 grandchildren. Praise God for His many blessings.

VANDER SLOOT Charles and Christine (DeKryger), 656 Mulford SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 29. Rejoicing with them are their children and grandchildren: Curt and Krinn Vander Sloot (Charlie and William), Cam Vander Sloot (Nick, Andrea, Kevin and Kaylee), Carla Vander Sloot, Cindy and Mark Koll

(Heather and Emily). We love you dad and mom for your continued Christ-like examples and showing us all how to live for Him. "For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5.

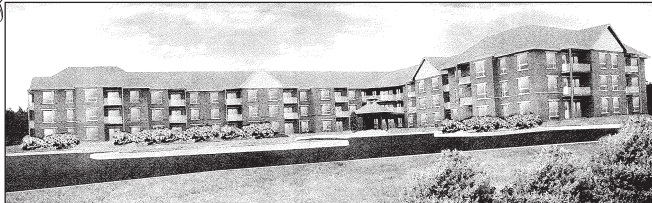
VELDINK, Gord & Loie (Berkenpas), 8675 Cedarbrook Ct., Jenison, MI 49428. May 28, 2009 Children: Gary & Judy Veldink (Kelli, Luke, Anna, Nicole) Jim & Karla Veldink (Joshua, Jacquelin, Vanessa) Rich Veldink - in Heaven since 1995. Sandy & Dan Helms (Jake, Kara, Cassie) Praise God for His Faithfulness!

VERBOOM Andy & Minie of Stewiacke, N. S. Canada, the Lord willing, plan to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on May 7. Plans are to mark the occasion this summer with a family reunion. May God continue to bless you!! Love your family.

Obituaries

BOERSMA-VANDER ARK, Mrs. Marie; age 92; March 20, 2009; 2105 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Aagje (Vander Griff) Van Soest; husbands, Donald Boersma and Mark Vander Ark; her children, Jack Donald Boersma and Steven Mark Boersma, and her granddaughter, Lynda Dee Westerhuis. She is survived by her children: Mary Kay (Jim) Westerhuis, Nancy (Carl) Andrews, Karel (Lynda) Boersma, and Kathleen (David) Boersma-Fagre; grandchildren: Jim (Johanna) Westerhuis, John (Anne Marie) Westerhuis, Kaaren Andrews, Kirsten (Mike) Beardsley, Jennifer (Aaron) McClendon, Jeremy (Esther) Boersma, Jeremy Boersma, Jessica Fagre, and Joel Fagre; great-grandchildren: Henry and Kay Lee Westerhuis, Gracie Westerhuis, Shay Andrews, and Owen Beardsley; her step-children: Sherman (Georgia) Vander Ark, Beverly (Ken) Danhof, and Fayth (Ken) Steensma; 11 step-grandchildren; 19 step-great-grandchildren; sisters: Marge Sharpe and Helen McFall; brother: John (Min) Van Soest; along with several nieces and nephews and a host of friends.

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DORNBOS, Anna (Schaaf), age 99, Falmouth, MI, passed away March 11, 2009. She is survived by her children: Charlene (Keith) Van Haitsma of Falmouth, Verla (Henry) Zuiderveen of Hudsonville, Muriel (Jerry) Lamer and Del (Vicki) Dornbos both of Byron Center; 16 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren

HAALSTRA, Siebo, age 78, Dunnville, ON, after a lengthy battle with cancer was called home to be with the Lord on January 28, 2009. Beloved husband of Anna Mae (Andringa), Dear father and grandfather of Karen, Patricia (Jay) Fedorowich - Tyler & Kyle, Ray and Marsha. Dear brother of Ralph (Jeanette), Margaret Kraal, Hilda (Albert) Anema, Clarence (Jenny), Maynard (Lynn), Jane Kroesbergen, Edward (Donna). Brother-in-law of Joyce Smith, Siebren DeBoer and Kathy (Andringa) & Russ Voorman. Predeceased by his son Paul, parents Maaik & Tenius, brother George, sister Esther, brothers-in-law Hank Kroesbergen and Peter Kraal. Address: 7283 Canborough Rd. R. R.#1, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

DORDT COLLEGE

Staff Opening

Learning Community Area Coordinator—

The office of Student Services has a potential opening for a Learning Community Area Coordinator. As an Area Coordinator, this individual would serve as an educator, role model, facilitator, mentor, leader, administrator, and an essential person in the effective operation of the residence life learning community program. Primary responsibilities would include supervising, training and evaluating student staff, advising the hall programming council, maintain the general operation of two residence halls including attention to significant administrative details, budget management, assessment of the physical environment and communication with the custodial staff. Other duties include monitoring the academic success of each hall, working with at-risk students to develop a plan for their success, and encouraging the development of student leaders.

This is a full-time, 12-month administrative staff position. A Bachelor of Arts degree is required, and a Master's of Arts degree is desired, or an equivalent combination of education and experience in student personnel or closely related field and two years of residence hall experience. Other requirements include a demonstrated knowledge of residence life programs and issues, as well as excellent interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills.

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Dordt College Human Resources
498 4th Avenue NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250
Phone: (712) 722-6011
Fax: (712) 722-6035
E-mail: hr@dordt.edu

Dordt College does not discriminate as to sex, age, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.

MULDER, Mrs. Helen E.; age 90; March 31, 2009; 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512; She was preceded in death by her husband, G. Arthur Mulder, M. D. She is survived by their four sons and their wives; James and Marilyn Mulder, Thomas and Lynda Mulder, Kenneth and Carol Mulder, Carl and Kate Mulder; 9 grandchildren; 5 great grandchildren; brother and sister-in-law, Jack and Katie Van Eerden; sister-in-law, Rev. John (deceased) and Anne Mulder.

OOSTERMAN, Marian (Flokstra); age 77, March 4, 2009; 0-45 Brookside Dr, Grandville MI, 49418. Wife of Mike, mother of Bob (Jill), Dave (Lynne), Doug (Courtenay). Six grandchildren.

SLINKMAN John Slinkman, 80, went to be with our Lord March 9, 2009. 100 W Butterfield Rd. 410N, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Husband of Marion, nee Goossens. Father of Sharon (Robert) Herlien and Chuck (Harma) Slinkman. Grandfather of Julie (Kevin) Cunniff and Robert M. Herlien; Tracy and Christopher (Melinda) Slinkman. Brother of Cora

(Stanley) Grohe, Pearl (the late Rich) Buikema, the late George (Karen) Slinkman, Betty (Ralph) VanderWagen and Henry Slinkman.

VAN DYKEN, Nell; aged 90; March 24, 2009; 2111 Raybrook SE, #4005, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by her husband Dr. Alexander Robert Van Dyken; brothers and sisters, Martin De Mey, Cornelius De Mey, Flo Van Del, Marie Thomas. She is survived by her children: Deborah Van Dyken and her husband William E. Blair of Beaufort, NC, Rick and Karen Van Dyken of Olney, MD; grandchildren: Charles A. and Dr. Carrie Barzola, Maya M. Van Dyken, Kimberly M. Van Dyken, Joshua K. and Stacy Van Dyken, Shane A. Van Dyken; 4 great grandchildren; sister: Catherine Buzze; sister-in-law: Louise De Mey; and numerous nieces and nephews.

VENHUIZEN, Wilhelmina (Hoeks), age 87, of South Holland, IL, went to be with her Lord on Feb 7, 2009. Preceded in death by her husband Fred and daughter Marilyn Biegel. Survived by her children: Fred (Nita), Ron (Juan), Ann (Ralph) Van Winkle, Tom (Jeanne), Elaine (George) Hyskes and son-in-law Doug (Deb) Biegel; many grandchildren and great grandchildren and brother Henry (Jeneva) Hoeks

WIERSEMA Albert L Wiersema, Jr. age 28, 4535 Highline Road, Manhattan, MT, was called home to be with his Lord and Savior on Feb. 7, 2009. He is survived by his parents, Al and Debra Wiersema; sisters Denise (Mark) Bausch, Carisa Wiersema, and Kim (Earl) Jolliff; nephews Tyler Plum, Cole Jolliff and Kaleb Bausch; nieces Megan Bausch and Riley Jolliff.

ZWAANSTRA Dorothy Zwaanstra (Knoll); Paradise Valley, AZ; went to be with her Lord on March 23, 2009 @ age 82. She was preceded in death by husband William, and 2 great-grandchildren. She is survived by daughters Donna (Jim) Malm and Diane Chambers; grandchildren Scott (Ann) Malm, Laurie (Jeff) Kooienga, Aaron Baldwin, and Alex Chambers. Great-grandchildren Lauren, TJ, Jace, Grace Malm; Riley, Austin, Logan Kooienga.

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POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY POSITION – A term position, most likely half time to three-quarter time starting August 16, 2009. Ph.D. preferred, teaching experience desired in areas of political theory or constitutional law.

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Employment

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Punch Lines

A preacher prepared for the Sunday-morning worship service, but only one person, a farmer, showed up. The preacher asked the farmer, "What do you think we should do?"

The farmer replied, "Well, if only one cow came into the barn, I'd feed it."

So the preacher stepped behind the pulpit and began to preach . . . and preach . . . and preach. After about two hours, he finished.

Then he stepped down and said to the farmer, "So what did you think?"

The farmer replied, "Well, if only one cow came into the barn, I certainly wouldn't feed it *all* the hay."

—John Veltkamp

Eve knew Adam wanted a computer for his birthday but didn't know what kind to get, so she asked him, "Adam, do you want a Compaq or a Dell PC?" Adam frowned and said, "I would rather have an Apple." Both suddenly heard an anguished cry from their son: "No, Dad! Don't you remember what happened *last time*?!"

—Ade Vander Starre

When I was in my 20s, I traveled around quite a bit, working in Iowa and California. My cousin and I were talking about what I was doing with my life. He was somewhat older than I was and told me I should be getting settled and putting down some roots.

Not long afterward I went to hear this cousin sing in a quartet

at a church hymn sing. The quartet sang "This World Is Not My Home, I'm Just Passing Through."

—John Davids

This year the U.S. taxpayers will receive an Economic Stimulus Payment. Here's a brief explanation of this very exciting program:

Q. What is an Economic Stimulus Payment?

A. It's money the federal government will send to taxpayers.

Q. Where will the government get this money?

A. From taxpayers.

Q. So the government is giving me back my own money?

A. Only a smidgen.

Q. What's the purpose of this payment?

A. You are encouraged to use the money to purchase a high-definition TV set, thus stimulating the economy.

Q. But isn't that stimulating the economy of China?

A. No comment.

—George Vander Weit

A 5-year-old boy wanted to caddy for his uncle's golf game. "You have to count my strokes," the uncle informed him. "How much is six plus nine plus eight?"

"Five," answered the nephew.

"OK," his uncle said, "let's go."

—John Veltkamp

A lady who never married passed away at the age of 85. She left a few instructions with her brother, stating what she'd like for her funeral. In one request she wrote, "I do not want to have men for my pallbearers." Why? "They never took me out when I was young, so I don't want them taking me out now."

—Elizabeth Joosse
Racine, Wis.



On March 12, 2009, the IGNITE Youth Group from Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church in Chilliwack, British Columbia, began a 40-hour journey from Canada, down the West Coast of the U.S., and into Mexico to learn from and minister to the people of Tijuana. In honor of his 500th birthday, John Calvin was invited to be the 27th member of the mission team. While in Tijuana, he participated in VBS ministry, puppet shows, community cleanup, and more. Here are John and his fellow team members in one of the colonials (depressed areas) of Tijuana. Thanks for joining the team, John!

“Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach.”
(1 Corinthians 9:16)



Compelled By His Spirit
Compelled to go, grow, teach, learn, tell and love