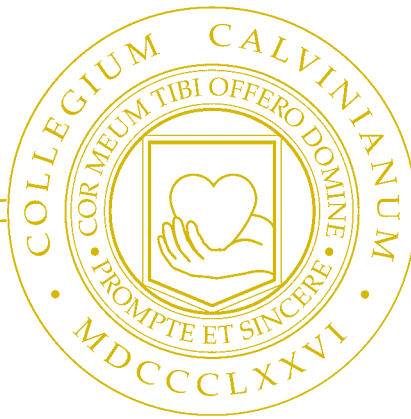


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# On Principle

**MY FELLOW CANADIANS** in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and I will pray for you, our American cousins, when you head for the voting booth next month. You have difficult and important choices to make that will affect you and the whole world.

In that context, I find the conversation between two CRC members (“Can We Talk First?” p. 18) so fascinating. Both belong to the same denomination and, presumably, share the same basic beliefs. Both have been taught the same principles yet have very divergent views about the real world. How can that be?

I believe it is a function of the mind-numbing complexity of identifying principles, deciding which apply, and then actually applying them to real-life situations. We might agree with Mitt Romney on one point of principle and with President Obama on another. So then what?

Distilling clear principles from Scripture is an important first step. But it’s *only* a first step, as is clearly indicated by the Dutch word for “principle,” which is *beginsel*.

*Beginsel* literally means “a place to begin.” Hence, a “principle” doesn’t automatically and inexorably lead us to one clear conclusion at all. It merely gives us a place to start. From there we’ll need to use our wits and our communal understanding and wisdom to figure out how and when and where to apply it. That’s why we can share the same principles yet end up on opposite sides of an issue.

We also should admit that we aren’t just driven by logic. The deepest inclinations of the heart often masquerade as rationality. For example, my favorite television show airs when I’m often out visiting, so I miss more episodes than I catch. For \$300, an upgraded cable box with a digital video recorder would resolve my dilemma. At the touch of a (pre)programming button I could watch “Mayday” anytime I want.

Conflicting principles made this a tough decision. On the yes side: we should keep some Sabbath, we should watch more edifying shows, and so on. On the no side: such materialism adds to global warming, we should donate money to save lives instead, and more.

My spouse had better things to do than plunge into my moral angst: “Darlin’, just do what you think you should; it’s fine by me either way.” Generous, but not exactly the oracle of Delphi.

Truthfully? Ultimately, principle had nothing to do with the final decision. I didn’t buy a DVR for the plain and simple reason that I’m too cheap to slap down 300 bucks for a spinning magnet in a metal box. Besides, Discovery Channel airs so many reruns that I’ll catch those missed episodes anyway.

Let’s recognize that we also adopt many of our political views based on something deep and personal and emotional and ingrained, quite apart from principle. Dare we start afresh by carefully examining whether we are actually basing our views on principle at all—then humbly, and in dialogue with others, explore where principle might actually take us? If so, we’ll probably discover more than one legitimate point of view.

We really need to talk. And because political positions and decisions matter, we need to drench that conversation in prayer. ■

My spouse had  
better things to do  
than plunge into  
my moral angst.



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# A Teachable Moment

**M**Y SON TELLS ME I'm making too much of this. But he's 15 and wildly allergic to teachable moments. Also, he knows I find teachable moments in every lost sock and spilled Coke.

But this one leaped out at me. Literally. The four robin chicks had hatched by the time I noticed activity in the nest built atop the light on the outside wall of our garage. By then the chicks were squirming pods of transparent, orangey skin ending in gaping beaks that rose up out of the nest bowl whenever they sensed a presence above them—including the 15-year-old or me peering in from the top of a stepladder. They looked like something dropped in from the age of dinosaurs.

Within a few days they had clearly elected to be birds. Juvenile feathers emerged, their bulging eyes opened, and they filled out, jostling each other for nest space. One in particular, when we looked in, pushed his biggest self to the top of the sibling heap and threw open his beak.

Ten mornings after I first noticed the chicks, I found the big guy looking wobbly

on a bonfire log left on the ground. He didn't move. Above him three heads bobbed in the nest. Nearby an adult robin skittered here and there. It didn't take me long to deduce that this first-to-fledge couldn't fly.

To my dog I said, "Do I pick it up and put it back?" The dog sat still. I took it as her signal to wait.

Long minutes passed. Every maternal bone in my body urged, *Pick it up, put it back*. But there was another mother to take into account. (Though both robin parents care for their young, I decided the one nearby was, of course, the mother.) What would she do with her over-eager offspring?

Finally the fledgling hopped off the log, into the grass, and then, tentatively, in the mother's general direction. Rather than rushing maternally toward it, the mother ran about, keeping some distance between them. It seemed so undirected a dance that now, in retrospect, I can't recreate how it happened, but eventually the chick was at the edge of and then into our small woods. The mother, in time, followed.

Immediately I perceived the parable played out before me: Impatient with the pace of healthy development, the over-

confident one leaps into danger-fraught situations ill-prepared, becoming easy prey for the likes of Liam, the stalking neighborhood tom.

Cue my son, who here tells me that I'm making too much of this.

I was sure I wasn't. Beginning to write this parable, I researched robin development:

"Even before they fly, [robins] must learn to walk and hop, to balance on branches . . . and to recognize danger. Some baby robins do die during this dangerous time, but many live long lives especially because they had the chance to . . . experiment while their parents are still looking out for them."

This teachable moment I haven't yet told my son. ■



Gayle Boss is a freelance writer living in Grand Rapids, Mich., where she is a member of Monroe Community Church.



You want to protect your child from pain,  
but what you get instead is life, and grace.

— ANNE LAMOTT

# Christian Tradition or Temptation?

# LE

PHOTO



Perhaps just one piece wouldn't hurt...

PHOTO BY DESIGN PICS

**IMAGINE** your favorite sweet. It looks delicious, and isn't it the best thing you've ever smelled? You can almost taste it. Imagine how good it feels once the sugar hits your brain. The dish is coming your way . . . it's right in front of you. You inhale as your eyes pick out the nicest-looking piece.

But you're on a diet, so you pass it on.

Three months later, you've learned to fend off cravings; in fact, you rarely have them anymore. There's the dish. It's coming your way. You can handle this! You pass it on.

Six months later, you're still eating right, but occasionally you don't make it to the gym. There's the dish. It's coming your way. Perhaps just one piece wouldn't hurt . . . but no, you don't want to blow it now. You pass it on.

Nine months later, you pass it on.

One year later, you've reached your weight loss goal. Your friends congratulate you; your family is so proud of you. Way to go—you've done it! Healthy eating is a habit now. There's the dish. You decide to have one. Just one. I can handle this, you think. You know what to do.

Now imagine that you have a chemical imbalance in your brain. Imagine your favorite drink. Hear, look, smell, imagine the taste, the feeling. One drink can destroy your family, your life. There's no guarantee that you will ever quit again.

What does a sober alcoholic do? Attend support groups. Go to counseling. Stay out of liquor stores and bars. Avoid places that serve alcohol. Check the ingredients on food, medication, cleaners, perfume. Your friends and family hold you accountable.

What does your church do? Sometimes your church passes you the poison.

I went to a Christian treatment center. My pastor and many members of the congregation prayed for me and sent words of encouragement.

I am grateful to God and to my Christian Reformed church family who continue to encourage and hold me accountable. Many are concerned for me at the Lord's Supper. Many feel that I am being tempted to return to my sinful past. Others feel that the wine is a tradition that cannot be changed for only one lamb.

But should I drop my guard for one second, the devil will pounce. One drink, and I'm done. ■



Lilly Eggink is a member at Jarvis Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church and a single mom of two boys. She has been sober for five-and-a-half years.



## Lament

Thank you for calling attention to the oft-ignored "Art of Lament" (August 2012). During times of profound loss, this authentic expression of grief has allowed me to embrace my faith rather than walk away from it. What a compassionate God we serve who welcomes, and even encourages, our raw honesty.

—Cindy Mouw  
Holland, Mich.

After our second boy died from leukemia and I experienced seven years of depression, God broke through to enable me to grieve and lament persistently until he provided me with relief from depression and the peace of Philippians 3:6-7. My grief, however, included my expression and confession of my self-centeredness at wanting my plan instead of God's plan for my life. God's gift of the peace that transcends understanding enabled me to accept God's plan that allowed, but didn't cause, Keith's death.

Many thanks to Professor Wolterstorff ("The Art of Lament") for sharing a much-needed article with us!

—Rev. Bruce Leiter  
Hudsonville, Mich.

## Punch Lines

I'm writing in response to one of the jokes in Punch Lines (August 2012).



# LETTERS

After she took communion for the first time, the 4-year-old commented, “I should have saved some of my candy so I can have dessert.”

Today, when there’s so much discussion on children taking communion, you should do some hard thinking before you [decide to print something like that]. The Lord’s Supper is not something to make fun of.

—*Alaine R. Knoll*  
*Zeeland, Mich.*

## Glaring Differences

I found it puzzling that Pastor Vander Weit, in his answer to the question about the Roman Catholic church (FAQs, August 2012), did not mention some of the glaring differences between the Reformed faith and the Roman Catholic church.

We deny the infallibility of the pope, do not pray to saints, and do not place Mary above Jesus, who is our only salvation.

—*John Rustenburg,*  
*Whitby, Ontario*

## Adam and Eve

I agree with Rev. Van Ee about the historicity of Genesis 1-11 (“Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?” August 2012). However, I do wonder how the Neanderthals, Cro-Magnons, and dinosaurs fit into this picture since they lived millions of years before Adam and Eve. Was there death before the Garden of Eden? Was there a double creation? Is this part of the “looking through a dark glass” that Paul refers to? I’m sure I’m not the only one who wonders how this all fits together.

—*Joel Veldheer*  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

Bernard Van Ee’s interpretation of the beginning of Genesis as a historical account is one way many Christians understand early Genesis and the origin of humankind (“Did Adam and Eve Really

Exist?”). However, although Rev. Van Ee writes that he believes in “true science,” to maintain such an interpretation one must discredit a vast amount of scientific evidence that counters this view. And when he writes that the Holy Spirit has “always led the Christian church to confess and believe that Genesis 1-11 is historical,” he is necessarily dismissing a rich history of theologians who interpreted early Genesis as non-historical based solely on the structure and style of the biblical text (long before conflicting scientific evidence emerged).

When a historical interpretation of early Genesis is presented as essential for Christian faith, at least two unfortunate outcomes result. First, we establish a litmus test for faith instead of recognizing and appreciating the richness of diverse opinions on this matter that are present within our congregations. Second, if presented with the false choice of either being a Christian or seriously engaging scientific evidence, many thoughtful young people today may unnecessarily choose against Christian faith.

Many Christians not only maintain their faith but find it deeply enriched by the most recent scientific discoveries. Furthermore, we can all benefit from open, respectful dialogue with other believers who integrate science and faith differently than we do.

Let’s continue to keep both books wide open (Scripture and creation) and not evade the hard work of understanding how they mutually inform one another.

—*David Warners*  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

Bernard Van Ee’s very first sentence sets the tone of the article (“Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?”). This is another “science versus the Bible” argument. As Reformed Calvinists we must be “con-

stantly reforming.” God has created science and provided humans with the Word. Discovering truth in each area comes to us in a different way. One shows us God’s creative power and unlimited abilities, and one shows us his unfathomable love. We should not use one area to understand or interpret the other or think that one area “trumps” the other.

Instead of taking sides in the Bible versus science argument, we should open our minds and hearts to how both areas proclaim the wonder of God.

—*Glenn Gronevelt*  
*Grand Haven, Mich.*

Bernard Van Ee (“Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?”) beautifully expresses how vital it is for us as Christians to affirm the historicity of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. I thank God for his willingness to stand with all those who say, in unison with the Holy Spirit, “Adam was real.”

—*Jeff Conklin*  
*Haslett, Mich.*

It is troubling when Scripture is misquoted. Rev. Van Ee’s article (“Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?”) uses the word “perfect” where Scripture says “good” and “very good.” The difference between good and perfect is huge. God is perfect—his creation is very good (Gen. 1:31).

—*Neal Vanderwerff*  
*Shoreline, Wash.*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

## Correction

Kim and Joe Kuster run a ministry for people with visual impairment—not hearing impairment, as *The Banner* incorrectly stated (“*Today in Print—and So Much More,*” *Together Doing More,* August 2012). We regret the error.

# NEWS

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## Sermon Catches Attention of Supertramp's Roger Hodgson

Probably it isn't often that the leader of a famous rock group tunes in to hear a sermon by a Christian Reformed pastor, but that's what happened this summer.

More than a year ago, John Van Sloten, pastor of New Hope CRC in Calgary, Alberta, preached a sermon entitled "How God Used Supertramp to Save My Life!"

Supertramp is a rock band that was popular in the 70s and 80s, led by and known for the distinctive voice of Roger Hodgson until he parted company with the group in 1983.

CBC Radio's Russell Bowers, a friend of Van Sloten's, was recently doing research for an interview with Roger Hodgson when he came across the Supertramp sermon online and told Hodgson about it backstage. The sermon, it turns out, has been viewed and listened to 16,000 times since it was originally preached.

Bowers wrote to Van Sloten: "When I talked to Hodgson backstage last night, I told him about your sermon and your work. He seemed quite gratified about it."



Supertramp's Roger Hodgson downloads John Van Sloten's sermon.

## Director of Canadian Ministries Resigns



Bruce Adema

Rev. Bruce Adema has resigned from his position as director of Canadian Ministries for the Christian Reformed Church, effective August 31.

Adema, 50, held the position for six years. During that time, he observed that "the CRC in Canada has become more ecumenical, more aware of social issues that call for a gospel response, [and] more willing to face the challenges of secularism and spiritual decay."

Adema said his greatest challenge, one that his successor will also face, was what he called the eternal questions of a binational denomination, where the one part is larger than the other, with different histories and inclinations: "How does the Canadian part of the CRC maintain an effective national witness while being part of a united denomination? How can national distinctiveness be celebrated without being perceived as a threat of division?"

Joel Boot, executive director of the CRC, wrote in a statement, "Both the Board Executive Committee and I want to express our appreciation to Bruce for his years of faithful service to our denomination, and to wish him God's blessings in his new pursuits."

What those pursuits will be is not yet clear. "I'm waiting to see what doors the Lord opens," Adema said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

Van Sloten, author of *The Day Metallica Came to Church: Searching for the Everywhere God in Everything*, published by Faith Alive, has preached sermons on the music of artists such as U2, Coldplay, Bob Dylan, Amy Winehouse, and Neil Young, to name a few. As he says in the preface of his book, "I believe they belong to God. And when things belong to God, they matter and they have something to say."

Regarding the number of times his sermon on Supertramp had been listened to, he said, "I didn't know the stats until I got the photo, but I wasn't too surprised. For some reason, preaching God's truth in the creational/cultural context catches people's attention. Those people include the media, online church attendees and visitors, and sometimes those we preach on."

About the attention his sermons garner (last year there were over 500,000 downloads), Van Sloten said, "I think it is God's way of saying, 'Keep at it.' It feels like an imprimatur."

—Janet A. Greidanus



Jill Roderick serves dinner to a carnival worker.

NATALIE LITTLEJOHN

## Washington Church Feeds Fair Workers

Step right up and enjoy a three-course meal. Every year, members of Sonlight Community Christian Reformed Church in Lynden, Wash., welcome the carnival workers of the Northwest Washington Fair with a hot meal.

This year, volunteers served a ham dinner, complete with ice cream and homemade pies, to approximately 200 carnival workers. The food was prepared in the church kitchen and brought directly to the fairgrounds when the carnival workers arrived.

Both church volunteers and carnival employees wore name tags, giving them a chance to interact and address one another by name.

"I love to go out there and sit down with the crew and talk with them . . . and I enjoy eating with them," said Roger Burke, a member of Sonlight Community CRC and organizer of the event. "We see firsthand that these people belong to families. They have hungers. They have needs. Some are sick. Some look rough. Life has been tough on them. They are people with stories."

Sarah, a carnival worker, said, "Lots of fairs lock their gates at night. Here in Lynden, we feel loved and embraced."

When the fair workers left the following Sunday, church members prepared a pancake breakfast with eggs and bacon cooked on grills at the fairgrounds. Robin, a carnival worker, said, "It is really good to be appreciated—not so much appreciated but just liked."

This is the eleventh year Sonlight CRC has sponsored this event. Pastor Pete Byma said, "The carnival workers look forward to coming to Lynden because they know they will be fed a full and well-balanced meal (for many, it's a long time since they have had such a meal), and have encouraging conversation. It is truly a time of being 'Jesus with skin on!'"

—Amy Toornstra

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. David Watson

1960 – 2012

Rev. David Kuyper Watson, widely traveled Renaissance man, engaging defender of the faith, spontaneous believer, and lover of nature, died at age 51 in a drowning accident at Mount Rainier, Washington.

After teaching English in both China and the United States, Watson graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1998 and entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

He served churches in North Carolina and Washington. He was also a language instructor at the Community College of Green River, Wash.

Watson liked to read, hike, and travel. He and his wife were known for their generosity and hospitality, and appreciated by many as a delightful couple to whom material advantages meant little. They maintained contact with people around the world, and their home was a haven for international students.

Watson is survived by his wife Jungsoon ("Jamie") and four children. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga  
Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the *Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook*.

**1,500**

The number of churches who purchased Faith Alive curriculum last year



# NEWS

## Everybody Belongs, Everybody SERVES

**S**hellie Power has always been amazed at what happens when young people are taken out of their comfort zones and allowed to contribute to God's kingdom in ways they never imagined.

But when Power, a member at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was asked to help redesign a Youth Unlimited SERVE project to include people with disabilities, her passion grew.



A recent SERVE project in Winnipeg paired young people with disabilities with mentors to participate at soup kitchens, thrift



People with disabilities participate in the Winnipeg SERVE project.



## West Michigan Church Builds Playground for Community



SUSAN VANDEN BERG

Volunteer Mark Buckland helps distribute bark for the new playground at Calvary CRC.

The neighborhood around Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., is full of places to live and shop. What it didn't have, however, was a park where children could play and neighbors gather. Calvary CRC is changing that.

The church is using its plentiful green space to provide a safe outdoor recreational area, dubbed Northside Community Park, for the neighborhood.

This summer, a new playground was erected over one weekend this summer by over 40 volunteers from the congregation. Funds were raised primarily by the congregation and supplemented with community grants.

"If you pass by on any evening you will likely see one or two families there playing. It is a nice place for people from surrounding neighborhoods to gather—something they didn't really have in the past," said Ross Graveling, director of community ministries at the church. "The people in the area and families from our congregation have found the playground a huge asset. It is so nice to have a fun, safe, and close place for kids to play," he said.

The next phase includes a pavilion/picnic area. The church hopes these steps are only the beginning of finding ways to bless their neighbors.

"God has given us this land in the neighborhood for a reason," said Graveling, "and we want to continue to find new ways to use it for his kingdom."

—Susan Vanden Berg

stores, and painting projects. "There is just something that happens in an individual to realize that they've been created to serve and that they have gifts and that they're needed," said Power.

During the recent Winnipeg project, six mentors who began the week expecting they'd give of themselves discovered that they were receiving from the nine participants they were paired with.

Over the week, participants and mentors formed friendships, shaping new attitudes and giving new meaning to the term *inclusion*—all in the name of serving together.

Covenant CRC associate pastor Ken Douma said. "At the beginning, the disability is very evident so there's a little fear and trepidation.

"But by the end, the disabilities kind of disappear and the [participants'] abilities and personalities really come out, and that's cool to see." — Jeff Arnold



## CRC Campus Chaplain Involved in Aftermath of Campus Shooting

Sometimes it takes a crisis to open people's eyes to the value of something they had not valued before.

In mid-June, five armed security guards were restocking an ATM machine at HUB Mall, a combined shopping mall and student residence at the University of Alberta, when three of them were killed, another critically injured, and a large amount of money stolen. Days later, the fifth guard was arrested at a U.S. border crossing and charged with the crime. Up to \$1.9 million remains unaccounted for.

After the shooting, police initiated an immediate lockdown. Students who were outside at the time wandered around all night; inside, a SWAT team of Edmonton



police officers began going room to room, unsure whether the killer remained in the building.

Christian Reformed campus chaplain Rick VanManen, along with other chaplains, worked through the day and night with displaced and distressed students.

"It was a terrible time," VanManen said.

**The student residence was cordoned off with crime scene tape.**

Many of HUB Mall's residents are international students, and many come from countries where violence and the terror of armed men arriving in the middle of the night to shoot or take away family members is not uncommon. So they were very upset and reluctant to return when HUB Mall reopened.

Campus chaplains held a "cleansing service" of the murder scene and individual students' rooms, led by the Buddhist chaplain. Many of the students then felt safe to return.

VanManen said he was sad that students had to experience this. But there was a positive side to it. "I know it sounds strange to say it, but this tragic event has had a very positive outcome for chaplaincy services at the university. It elevated the profile and the importance of the role of chaplains, especially in times of crisis," he said.

VanManen recounted the words of one senior university administrator who said, "Although we've had a number of tragic events on campus, and the place always felt 'heavy' afterwards, we never thought to call on the chaplains."

Maybe now they will.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Harold Petroelje

1918 – 2012

Rev. Harold Petroelje, 94, was conscientious and methodical in all his doings, a diligent pastoral visitor, and a lover of music. He passed away in Ripon, Calif.

Petroelje entered ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1941, serving congregations in South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and California. He retired in 1981.

Petroelje had a consummate sense of duty, and his ministry activities were meticulously prepared. His teaching and preaching ministries were enhanced by his gift of storytelling.

Classis Pella (a regional group of churches) profited from his administrative gifts by appointing him stated clerk. He was a member of the board of World Missions for nine years.

In Waupun, he was active in prison ministries. For more than 20 of his retirement years, he organized food donations to Ripon Interfaith Ministries.

Petroelje was predeceased by his wife, Joanne, and one daughter-in-law. He is survived by four children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

## West Michigan Church Raises Funds for Men's Shelter

This summer, Sheila Warners and 9-year-old Karlee French went knocking on doors, asking people how many pillows they had in their home. Then they asked if homeowners would be willing to donate \$1 for each pillow to raise funds for Love INC's new men's shelter in Grand Haven, Mich.

"One home gave us \$32. We just picked pillows because that is an item that would be bought with our money to equip a room at the shelter," said Warners.

The idea was just one of many creative ideas that members of Second Christian Reformed Church of Grand Haven came up with for their six-week "Make Room" fundraiser.

"We felt that we could 'Make Room'—not only a room at Love, but room in our hearts for people in need," said church member Julie Hordyk.

"I really felt the need to participate because God has given me so much, including the ability to ride a bike, so why not ride it for him and his kingdom," said Jason Zuidema, who organized a 40-mile (60-kilometer) bike ride.

The goal was to raise \$3,870 to furnish one room of the homeless shelter. After six weeks, the grand total surpassed the goal by several hundred dollars.

—Daina Kraai

# NEWS



BONNIE SMITH

Starfish Ministries helps Minneapolis-area families make better life and financial decisions.

## Starfish Ministries Brings Hope to Families

Families in greater Minneapolis who are struggling to make wise financial and life decisions are finding support from three area Christian Reformed congregations working together to support families in the area's impoverished community.

Starfish Ministries, formed in 1995, pairs church volunteers with local families in need, forming circles of hope and support. Volunteers help clients establish goals and advise them how to begin carving out a better life.

"Many people in poverty are isolated and don't have any healthy relationships," said ministry coordinator Bonnie Smith, a member of Grace CRC in Inver Grove Heights, Minn. "All of us need help when we change."

Two-and-a-half years ago, Denise Prokott was one of those people. When Prokott came to her first Circle of Hope meeting at Pease (Minn.) CRC, the single mother had been charged with a felony tied to her struggles with gambling.

"They didn't care what mistakes I made—as long as I wanted to improve myself," Prokott said. "When I failed, they didn't make me feel bad—they just helped me get back on track."

At Circle of Hope, Prokott found people who didn't judge her. Instead they worked to understand her situation and figure out how, together, they could change her life.

This year, Prokott finished paying off her restitution. She serves on the board of directors for a local food shelf and also volunteers with a Circle of Hope, giving back to a ministry that changed her life.

"Honestly, it's the best thing that has happened to me," Prokott said.

—Jeff Arnold

## Minnesota Church Celebrates 100 Years

There have been times over the past 100 years when congregants at Hancock (Minn.) Christian Reformed Church wondered how their beloved rural house of worship would remain intact.

The economic hardship that hit the western Minnesota farming community also hit this church.

So perhaps the fact that Hancock CRC is around to commemorate its centennial is reason enough to celebrate for the 100 people who call the church home.

"Despite questions of survival at times, simply because of size, God has really blessed this church with a vibrant group of dedicated people," said Rev. Harrison Newhouse, who has served Hancock CRC for several years. "They're very dedicated to their church and to their community, and that has made a big difference."

Nearly 300 people, including four former pastors, returned to Hancock for the celebrations that included a town parade and a reunion.

"It was a great, great weekend," Newhouse said.

—Jeff Arnold

## Burnaby Church Hosts Mandarin-Language Marriage Enrichment Classes

Doris Zhuang and her husband, Wilson Chen, partnered with Chinese Family for Christ to bring Mandarin-language marriage enrichment classes to Nelson Avenue Community Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia. More than 170 people participated over the course of the program.

Eleven volunteer couples hosted discussions on communication, solving conflict, God's view of marriage, and how family of origin can impact adult relationships. Church members provided childcare and served refreshments for the seminars.

While many of the participants were believers, the marriage seminars were organized with outreach in mind. "When a nonbeliever finds out that the Bible can provide practical help in building happy and healthy relationships, would he or she more readily accept the Christian faith?" Zhuang asked. "Facing the challenges in our couple relationships prepares us to face bigger challenges in other aspects of our lives and teaches us how to turn conflict into love and blessings. Both believers and nonbelievers can benefit from that."

—Tracey Yan



Volunteers from Nelson Avenue Community CRC

TRACEY YAN





Yavapai Elementary School teachers enjoy Palm Lane CRC's hospitality.

## Arizona Church Supports Local Teachers

Palm Lane Christian Reformed Church, Scottsdale, Ariz., enriched its relationship with nearby Yavapai Elementary School by serving the teachers an elegant back-to-school breakfast.

Yavapai is an ethnically diverse school that receives federal funds for its lower-income population of 620 students. Last spring, teachers cleaned out and stored their classroom materials as renovations to the 50-year-old school building began. Recently they returned to the upheaval of continued construction.

Donna Lowe, a former teacher herself, coordinated the breakfast out of a desire to improve the start of the school year. She said, "We wanted to give them an oasis of calm and normalcy on an otherwise chaotic day. In an unsettled environment, we wanted our church to offer a place of peace."

Mary Catherine Harris, a kindergarten teacher for Yavapai, exclaimed, "This is so lovely! I feel like I am at a tea. I feel like I am at a resort."

—Shashi DeHaan

## Reverse Offering for School Supplies

This fall, 50 children in Rock Valley, Iowa, went back to school with well-stocked backpacks, thanks to Calvin Christian Reformed Church.

We thought this would be a great way to be the "hands and feet of Christ," said Evy De Kam, a member of Calvin's Evangelism Committee.

Local banks contributed money to purchase the 50 backpacks they needed. Then the church held a reverse offering for the congregation to collect the school supplies to fill the backpacks.

In July, after the offering was received, the deacons passed the offering plates around once more. Instead of depositing cash, checks, and change, members of the congregation drew a slip of paper from the plate with requested supplies including notebooks, folders, pencils, and glue sticks.

"Each week it was so exciting to see the supply tote fill, even to overflowing," De Kam said.

At an evening dinner, the backpacks were handed out. Leftover supplies were given to the local school principal to distribute to students who were unable to make it to the event.

"Many of our workers and committee members experienced what we called 'God moments' throughout the evening," De Kam said. "This event was truly a blessing for our church and the community."

—Kate Padilla



Calvin CRC's congregation handed out school supplies they had gathered during a reverse offering.

## Getting Ready for the Turtle Island Ride

Motorcycles and their leather-clad riders might not immediately suggest reconciliation and understanding. But the 30 bikers who participated in the Turtle Island Pre-Ride on August 26 hoped to create that connection.

The ride, which started in Aylmer, was organized to raise awareness of next summer's cross-Canada Turtle Island Ride.

Turtle Island is a name many First Nations people use for North America. The aim of both rides is to encourage discussion and celebrate the progress being made in communication between First Nations and the Christian Reformed Church.

Ride organizers and motorcycle enthusiasts Dirk Miedema, pastor of Aylmer CRC, and Bruce Adema, former director of Canadian Ministries for the CRC, are excited about the work being done in Aboriginal ministries and believe more can be done. "The Ride, we believe, will move us further down the road," said Adema in his blog.

The day of the ride, Joseph Gilbert, a pastor, evangelist, and former chief of Walpole Island First Nation, led the Aylmer CRC worship service.



Turtle Island Pre-Ride bikers begin their two-hour ride through southern Ontario.

After a shared meal, the riders roared off on their bikes for their trip through Port Burwell, Port Bruce, Port Stanley, and then back to Aylmer.

In 2013, participants in the Turtle Island Ride will cross Canada, stopping in various First Nations communities and at CRC Aboriginal ministry centres to listen to the people and make connections.

—Anita Brinkman

# NEWS

## CHURCH WORLDWIDE

### Bible Game Show Aims for Religious Audience



The world's best-selling book has made it to the small screen in what is thought to be the first religiously themed game show on a secular network.

"The American Bible Challenge" tests teams' knowledge of the Old and New Testaments in a quiz show interspersed with stories of the

competitors and the charities they play for.

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy, of Fox's quiz show "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?" will host the Bible challenge. Foxworthy describes himself as a Christian and details attending Bible study with friends on the American Bible Challenge website.

The show tests biblical knowledge in culture, history, literature, and current events. In one segment, players try to differentiate "the Word of the Lord" from "the Lord of the Rings" and identify whether a character comes from the Bible or Star Wars.

Viewers can catch "The American Bible Challenge" Thursdays at 8 p.m. on GSN.

### Most Americans Keep Faith Private Online

While nearly half (45 percent) of Americans log in to their Facebook accounts at least a few times a week, fewer than one in 10 Americans report following a religious or spiritual leader on Twitter or Facebook (5 percent) or joining a religious or spiritual group on Facebook (6 percent), a new national survey finds.

The survey by the Public Religion Research Institute found that Americans generally do not use social media to supplement worship and mostly keep their faith private online.

The survey also found that half of Facebook users don't list their religious affiliation on their profile.

The survey also found that 10 percent have taken video or photos with their cell phone during worship, and nearly as many admitted to sending or reading email during services.

### Canadian Man Sues Over Recitation of Lord's Prayer

A Canadian man is suing his local government to stop the recitation of the Lord's Prayer before council meetings, saying the practice causes him "anguish, discrimination, exclusion, rejection and loss of enjoyment of life."

Peter Ferguson is seeking \$5,000 in damages, along with a court order for the local county council to stop opening its meetings with the Christian prayer.

Ferguson, who lives in the Ontario hamlet of Kimberley, said in an affidavit that he is a nonbeliever and that the prayer breaches his constitutional rights.

—Religion News Service

For more on all these stories, please visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)



SUSAN VANDEN BERG

Instructor Aaron Vriesman with student Meg Buehler.

### Pastor Teaches Tae Kwon Do

Each Wednesday evening, Aaron Vriesman, pastor of North Blendon Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., spends time in the gym of Borculo Christian School in a rather unusual ministry—teaching martial arts.

A black belt in Tae Kwon Do, Vriesman has been teaching the classes as an outreach ministry of North Blendon CRC since 2007.

Students work on their blocks, kicks, and stance as they build self-confidence, improve self-discipline, and demonstrate respect for others. Students with greater experience also develop leadership skills while working with newer students.

The martial arts program is non-competitive in focus. As Vriesman stated on the program's website: "I personally believe that competitive martial arts undermine the many personal benefits that are gained through this art."

—Susan Vanden Berg



# FAQs

## Church

**Q**I attended a Reformed Church anniversary service and noticed that many of the clergy wore a clerical collar, and some wore a robe. Is this a growing trend?

**A**I am indebted to Richard Harms of our denomination's Historical Committee for some of the information that follows.

To distinguish themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, clergy in the Reformed tradition wore the "Geneva gown" (similar to the western doctoral robe and the American judicial robe) in formal religious services but generally not for daily attire. During the 20th century there was a shift toward less formal religious services; in many cases a suit replaced the Geneva gown.

Around 1960 some CRC ministers began wearing robes. Today some wear robes for various occasions or wear a robe and add a stole—a strip of cloth worn like a scarf over the robe—to reflect the liturgical season.

The wearing of a clerical collar began in England in the Presbyterian Church during the last half of the 19th century. Many Protestant denominations adopted the collar as a convenient way of identifying clergy in public.

I don't know if the wearing of collars or robes is a growing trend in our denomination. Most CRC clergy I know do not wear a clerical collar, although some hospital chaplains do. Customs vary. Generally, in more liturgical churches ministers wear robes, and in more contemporary churches they dress casually.

—George Vander Weit

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

## Morality

**Q**Last year, along with many teachers in my district, I was told that I was out of work. More recently, the superintendent

informed me that I might be rehired, pending a review of my teaching effectiveness. I asked a friend who did not lose her job if she would contact the superintendent on my behalf and put in a good word. She promised to try to contact the superintendent. Later I discovered that she had made a single phone call, was told that the superintendent was in a meeting, and concluded that she had carried out her promise. Some friend! Is she in the clear, morally speaking?

**A**Although she is correct that she carried out her promise to try to contact the superintendent, she is not, in my opinion, morally blameless.

There's an important distinction between moral *obligation* and moral *expectation*. We are morally expected to do everything we are morally obliged to do, but the reverse is not true. She had a moral obligation to try to contact the superintendent, and this she fulfilled. But was she morally expected to try to do more than place a single phone call? I'm inclined to say yes. After all, she was your friend, not a total stranger, and she did not say up front that a single phone call was all she planned to make.

A person who fails to do what he or she is morally expected to do is morally blameworthy for this failure. Blameworthiness is a concept that involves degrees, and someone who does not carry out a moral expectation is blameworthy to at least a modest or minimal degree. (A person who fails to carry out a moral obligation is blameworthy to a much greater degree, other things being equal.) Your friend, though she did what was strictly permissible, is at least mildly blameworthy for not having done more. In addition, her approach to promise-making seems a bit adolescent.

—Gregory Mellema

*Gregory Mellema is a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## Young teens often embrace odd interests.

### Relationships

**Q**Our 14-year-old son has always been drawn to "scary" things like zombies and monsters. As he gets older, this attraction is intensifying. A clash is brewing between our desire to have him focus on more uplifting things and his desire for scarier stuff. How do we respect his preferences while steering him away from things that won't strengthen his walk with God and his development as a person?

**A**Fortunately our kids grow out of many habits and interests we worry about. Just as toddlers often refuse foods and ignore bathroom cues, so young teens often embrace odd interests. It's part of their learning to get to know themselves in relation to their world.

At his age, your son can no longer be "made" to behave in certain ways. Even when you encourage him to engage in healthy activities, his interests are now his choice. You do have a right and the responsibility to set good limits. By all means limit computer use and keep the family computer within view. Monitor viewing, and don't hesitate to call something off-limits if you feel it is inappropriate or unhealthy for him.

It might be helpful to explore with your son possible reasons for his growing attraction to the macabre. Is he overcompensating for fears about death and dying? Is he bored? Does he feed his ghoulish attraction because he knows you don't like it? Teens often try to define themselves in opposition to their parents' interests and values as a way to gain more independence.

Ask him what one thing he would change with respect to his relationship with you. Be ready to listen and learn, and be willing to change, along with your son.

—Judy Cook

*Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario. ■*



## \*Can We Talk First?

The Art of Respectful Dialogue in an Election Year

### IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED,

it's election season in the U.S. Several billions of dollars are being spent to sell us on a candidate and a party. But on November 6, when all the TV ads have run, the infomercials have finished, and the pundits become silent, how well will we actually understand the candidates' stances on issues? How well will we know their political records, personal integrity, and commitment to work toward a more God-pleasing world?

As Christians, we hold dual citizenship: we live in the kingdom of God *and* in a specific nation. This dual citizenship sets us apart. It also gives us a rock-solid base, a common ground from which to

talk to each other about political issues—to learn from, to question, and to appreciate each other.

Increasingly, though, we mimic the political polarization around us, vehemently disagreeing about what is to be done, how it is to be done, and why.

What's more, we seem to be losing the art of serious dialogue in the U.S. and Canada—and in the church. We just don't know how to talk to one another when we disagree, so we don't. And in that silence there's so much at stake: the opportunity to learn something new or to see the situation more clearly—or even to risk changing our minds.

What if we did try to talk to each other? What if we addressed some of the

different ways we view the role of government, the solutions to the problems facing us, and the call of God when we enter the voting booth? What if we were courageous enough, gracious enough, and respectful enough to listen to each other's views—especially when we disagree—and hold them in tension with our own?

We've asked two members of our denomination with fundamentally different views to do just that this election season—to model a new kind of conversation about political issues that opens the door to a more thoughtful, respectful, bold, and faith-filled engagement with our democracies.

—Peter Vander Meulen



**Edward Gabrielse:** There is no more important task for our next president than the recovery of our economy. When I go to the polls in November, I'll vote for the candidate who will best address our economic woes in three specific ways.

### Jobs

First, the candidate will give incentives to those who create jobs. Meaningful employment is the realization of our living in the image of a creative and productive God. Jobs provide much more than simply the income on which individuals and families depend. Jobs also provide a deep sense of satisfaction with life and deepen our sense of self-worth. And because public sector jobs can only exist if private sector workers agree to pay for them, the primary focus of the next president must be the creation of private-sector jobs.

### Capitalism

Second, the candidate must allow the system of capitalism to work. No economic system has come closer to providing the level of wealth and opportunity for more people than capitalism. It has enabled the U.S. to be the most generous country on earth, both corporately and individually, in giving accumulated wealth and other aid to those in need. Even some of the most notorious robber barons have lent their names to hospitals, libraries, and universities.

Those who find a way to accumulate wealth hire others to make the things they want. Eventually all money goes somewhere. It's my view that individuals who have earned money should have the right to decide how to spend it as opposed to the government dictating who deserves those hard-earned dollars. Our next president must not short-circuit the process of capitalism through overregulation and increased social welfare programs.

### Entitlement

Third, the candidate will address the glaring problems we face with our entitlement programs. Right now, nearly half of the

population of this country depends on government for some or all of their income. That percentage is growing. There are simply no profit margins or productivity improvements large enough to support this number of nonproductive or marginally productive citizens. Not only is this dependency resulting in more and more unsustainable debt; it is eating at the core of what has made the U.S. a great country. Our next president must find ways to encourage individuals to achieve financial independence.

**Kate Kooyman:** Here's a great place where we can agree—economic recovery must focus on job creation. I too believe that part of what it means to have been created in the image of God is that we were made to be creative—to work hard, make things, contribute our gifts, and live with dignity. Those who can work should work! If there were jobs available—and equal opportunity in filling them—we'd be well on our way to strengthening not just our economy but also our social fabric. I would, however, like to see a job creation plan that addresses some of the systemic reasons why people who are poor and vulnerable often find it difficult to find work, such as lack of education and access to affordable child care, a broken immigration system, jobs that pay less than a living wage, lack of access to public transportation, or barriers to employment for those with a criminal record.

I'm also concerned about unbridled capitalism. The recent collapse of the banking industry, for example, warns us of the dangers of an unregulated market. The "robber barons" you mention are also examples of what happens when people wind up with wealth that far exceeds the norm—I'm pretty sure those who were "robbed" would have much preferred to keep a roof over their heads than to visit the library.

Particularly in a system that excludes so many because of discrimination or lack of access to education, the notion that wealth will trickle down, or that everyone has an opportunity to create wealth, or that capitalism makes the U.S. the "land of opportunity" for all people is simply not

tenable. There are a few for whom pure, unregulated capitalism works well. But the playing field is not level. My hope is that our political system will guard against the injustices that arise from that set-up.

We also can agree that entitlements are not a long-term solution for those who live in poverty. It is much better to invest in programs that help lift people out of poverty. That's why I was happy to see our current administration's shift in foreign policy focus away from hand-outs toward developing sustainable communities through education and economic empowerment. Perhaps a similar shift here in the U.S. would be another place we could agree.

Rather than continuing to put money into our endangered entitlement programs, for example, let's come up with a plan for robust investment in our public schools. Simply cutting people off from public benefits (as many have suggested in the name of balancing budgets) would be unjust. If we could create a society that empowers all citizens to support themselves and gives everyone access to economic opportunities, we wouldn't need entitlements at all.

**Edward Gabrielse:** Christians of all political persuasions share a passion for helping those in need. To doubt the motives of Christians who see things differently is wrong. Across the political spectrum there are differences in the way we define relief, rehabilitation and development, and the expectations of individual initiative. And when these differences become institutionalized in programs and projects, they become very difficult to discuss rationally. When objective outcomes become confused with good intentions, feelings get hurt and communication within the body of Christ becomes nearly impossible.

Perhaps the only way to encourage respectful dialogue is to have the freedom within our fellowship to ask, "How does that program, tax, regulation, or vote demonstrate our love for our neighbor?" That is a standard to which we all must answer. It is the standard by which our Father will ultimately judge our efforts.





**Kate Kooyman:** I'm concerned about our economy. I'd like to see fewer people unemployed, better stock market gains, more lending and business growth, job creation, and prosperity.

### Protecting the Vulnerable

I am equally concerned, though, that we not continue to scapegoat the most vulnerable in our attempts to recover. The 2013 budget passed by the U.S. House of Representatives (the Ryan budget) is no friend to those in need. It slashes funding for the food stamp program and cuts health insurance programs for low-income Americans, just when millions more need them. And it does this while extending substantial tax breaks to the wealthy.

I hope to vote for a candidate who understands that we cannot stand on the backs of the poor in our efforts to regain economic prosperity. More than other countries, the U.S. has extreme inequality in income distribution—most of the money made goes to those at the top of the economic ladder. Winner takes all. In our weakened economy, it's the poor who suffer the most. More and more families live below the poverty line, suffer from hunger, and are desperate for help.

### The Role of Government

While I love Christian giving programs such as food pantries, I'm unsatisfied with the position that it is the solely the role of the church, not government, to address poverty. Charity alone was never God's design. The economy God outlined for the people of Israel in the book of Leviticus included protections to ensure that a gap like ours between the super-rich and the desperately poor would never occur.

David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, once noted that a 6 percent cut in federally-funded nutrition programs might get buried somewhere on the sixth page of the newspaper—not especially noteworthy—but a cut that size would be like eliminating every church food pantry in our country. The size of Christian generosity to the poor would have to explode if we were to meet the real needs currently

met by government assistance programs. I'm not sure my church is ready for that kind of challenge.

I hope to vote for a candidate who is willing to address this widening gap, who has an economic recovery plan that doesn't gouge the social welfare programs our

## ★★ As Christians, we hold dual citizenship. ★★

nation's vulnerable need to survive. Instead, I hope that budget-balancing will focus on things like cuts to our incredibly overfunded defense budget and just taxation of both the rich and the poor.

**Edward Gabrielse:** Banks collapsed because government required them to make loans to those without the means to pay them back, on properties that no reasonable lender would otherwise consider. The "community reinvestment act" bears a big share of the responsibility for this.

I do not know of any conservative politician who would "scapegoat the most vulnerable." Everyone I have met in political circles is passionate about helping the most vulnerable. But it is important that our policies do not enable people; instead, we must empower them. People who are most vulnerable certainly need relief, but when the government continues to provide assistance over the long term, I believe it stands in the way of their ability to stand on their own two feet. Instead of helping, this perpetuates vulnerability.

I believe that the Ryan budget is the only hope of saving Medicare and Social Security. (Is it more compassionate to save these programs or to run them empty?) This budget tackles the size of government through both attrition—not filling jobs when people retire—and limiting the growth of entitlements by extending the criteria for qualification some ten years or more in the future. This budget attempts to address the long-term problems of our entitlement programs, so perhaps it is a "friend to those in need" after all.

As for the gap between the rich and the poor in this country, which exists in many other countries as well, I would argue that during the past three years, the net worth of Americans has been reduced by 40 percent. If there is growing inequality, it is being achieved by reducing the

wealth of the middle class rather than by increasing the wealth accumulation of the more affluent. The dreams of parents for their children are being eroded by the continual depreciation of those who are financially successful.

**Kate Kooyman:** I'm pleased (and a little surprised!) to see the many places where Ed and I agree—even if we stand firmly apart on the political spectrum. Although I'm sure that neither Ed nor I will be changing parties anytime soon, I'm convinced that this kind of dialogue is part of our call to unity in the church.

This kind of robust dialogue, in which we are invited to thoughtfully present our opinion, question its strengths, and humbly challenge an opposing view, reminds me that we don't have to persuade one another in order to respect one another. And I believe it makes all participants better in the end. ■



STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Peter Vander Meulen** is director of the CRC's Office of Social Justice.



**Edward Gabrielse** is a longtime member of Wheaton (Ill.) CRC. He has taught and worked in marketing and communications until his recent retirement.



**Kate Kooyman** worships at Grace CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She works in campus ministries at Hope College.



## Political Partisanship

**I'M FINALLY LEARNING** that the Holy Spirit isn't particularly interested in uniting us about everything—not even everything of importance, like political positions. When Jesus and Paul tell us to be of one mind, they're referring to love first of all, and then to all those other gifts of the Spirit like joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If our politics get in the way of those things, we know we're making an idol of it.

In fact, the same chapter that enumerates the fruits of the Spirit includes a list of sins that, if lived in, keep us from inheriting the kingdom of God. Among them are dissensions and factions. People born of the Spirit renounce the faction that divides and look for comity.

The Spirit may never make liberals of conservatives, or conservatives of liberals, but will certainly eliminate the extremism at the ends of the political spectrum, allow both sides to recognize a broad common ground, and facilitate compromise. The result will be a movement toward healthy government in which liberalism and conservatism find their best expression. Each side respects and sees the good in the other, and the country benefits.

Other verses come to mind: "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). "We know that 'We all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:1-2). "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). "Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (Rom. 14:13). "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking [or of political conviction], but of righteousness, peace and joy in the



**Spiritual revival will not eliminate the yin and yang of politics; it will accomplish something even better.**

Holy Spirit. . . . Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Rom. 14:17, 19). These verses offer counsel as we consider our positions in today's supercharged political climate.

Humility and respect for others move us to believe that people on either end of the political spectrum have something to teach us. It seems only right, then, to be open to both, steering a course that avoids the danger on either side of hard partisanship. It's impossible to be a responsible citizen in a democracy and not take sides, but we ought to stand for truth against falsehood, knowledge against blind enthusiasm, compromise against intransigence, civility against slander, trust against fear, and calm against rage. Spiritual revival will not eliminate the yin and yang of politics; it will accomplish something even better. It will put the way

they complement each other to use for the good of the people. In other words, God will use politics to bless us.

Since left and right have come to stand for opposite ends of the political spectrum, it seems especially appropriate to take these verses to heart: "Be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or the left" (Josh. 23:6). "Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil" (Prov. 4:27). And finally, "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21). ■



**Leon Schaddelee** is a retired high school teacher and a writer. He is a member of Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich.

Agriculture extension officer Waziri Elias Lukumila talks with community members.



## Surprised by Transformation

*By Kristen Vanderberg*



You add.  
God multiplies.

“When you’ve been working somewhere for two-and-a-half years, as I have in Tanzania, you develop expectations for what you will see when you visit a community,” said Chris Enns, a staff member for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (now known as World Renew). “However, a recent visit to the community of Wagete near Serengeti National Park completely blew away my expectations.”

Wagete is a remote village made up of five hamlets comprising about 4,000 people, the majority of whom are subsistence farmers. In recent years, rainfall has been increasingly unpredictable and insufficient, making it hard to produce adequate crops using traditional farming practices.

People living in Wagete also face other challenges.

“A medical dispensary had been built, but the doctor did not want to move to the village, so people had to walk 12 kilometers (about seven-and-a-half miles) to get medical help,” said Enns. “In edu-

cation, there were too few teachers at the school and the school itself was too far [away for kids] to walk safely. Girls were especially at risk during these walks, so their attendance was poor.”

To address the concerns, World Renew and its long-term partner, the Africa Inland Church of Tanzania (AICT), worked to bring about transformation.

“Community members from the five hamlets in Wagete village attended a workshop and were asked to develop a joint map of their hamlets,” said Philip Chiwanga, an AICT staff member. “On the maps, they were asked to indicate different resources and structures that existed while also indicating the hazards that occur in each place.”

Community members then developed strategies and plans for combating the hazards using the resources available.

“We want to help them see how they can address these issues themselves without depending on us or others,” said Enns.

The men and women in Wagete used seeds to vote on which of the issues were most important to them. For example, if they placed five seeds on a picture of a clinic and two on a picture of a school, it showed that improved health care was the top priority, with a new school also a matter of concern.

Through this process, the community identified three priorities: improved access to health care, improved schooling for children, and improved agriculture.

Over the next several months, World Renew and AICT provided the villagers with training in better ways to plant their crops. They also provided improved cassava seed and helped the villagers form committees to work on solutions for their health and education priorities.

“As my partners and I traveled to a follow-up meeting with the community members, we intended to form an action plan for the year,” said Enns. “Imagine our surprise when they gave us their progress report—they had already »

### Why World Renew?

In June, Synod 2012 voted to approve the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee’s request to change its name to World Renew.

“Over the last 50 years, CRWRC has broadened and its scope has expanded exponentially,” Andrew Ryskamp, World Renew’s U.S. director, explains.

“Our work now reaches beyond the Christian Reformed Church, involves much more than disaster relief, and has been overseen by a board rather than a committee for decades.

“We came to a point where our context had changed so dramatically that our board encouraged us to consider changing our name.”

So why the name “World Renew”?

Ida Kaastra Mutoigo, World Renew’s Canadian director, says, “As Christians, we are called to extend the renewing work of God in our world. This is what World Renew strives to do as we walk alongside people suffering from poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice.

“Our organization does not hold the power to renew the world or solve its problems on our own,” she adds. “It is Christ in us and through us that does this renewal work. We are his agents, and as we carry out his work, we’ve been blessed to see real renewal happening.”

—Kristen Vanderberg



Development officer Charles Loleku (in red shirt) shows the new dorm built by the community so students can avoid a dangerous two-hour walk.

This is one of three houses built by the community to attract teachers.





completed most of the work themselves!”

Community members had spoken with the district medical officer and fixed up the dispensary and a house nearby; consequently, a doctor had moved into the village.

Members of the community had also built three houses to attract permanent teachers to work at the local school, trained parents and teachers on the importance of good attendance, and were finishing a building that could serve as a dormitory so that students could stay at the school and avoid the dangerous two-hour walk each day.



Villagers from five hamlets in Wagete, Tanzania, work together to map their community.

“You helped us become aware of these problems, but we saw that it should be up to us to deal with them. They are our problems, not AICT’s or World Renew’s,” said Health Committee head Musa Kaswahili.

The agricultural situation also had improved. Daudi Gorani, an evangelist and one of the elders in the community, said, “Our agriculture practices are completely different than they were last year. Farmers used to just throw the seeds from their hip. Now they know how to plant with more skill, and the cassava plants from the better-quality seeds are ready for harvest and for selling to others. We are seeing much better results than last year, thanks to AICT and World Renew.”

While the programs reached out to everyone in the community, regardless of their faith, the training was given through the local church by Christian AICT staff. As a result, the church has grown.

“The people in Wagete reported that membership in the community church had grown from 30 to 150 people in the last three years because of the way that the church has reached out to help them,” said Peter Ngwili, AICT program coordinator.

“People are coming to Jesus because the church is reaching out to them,” Ngwili said, “and they recognize that God is the one in whom to put their faith. We want to spread this message to all the villages involved in our programs.” ■



Kristen Vanderberg is communications project manager for World Renew.

## New Jobs and Homes in Haiti

In August, World Renew completed the last of 3,425 wood-framed, earthquake-resistant, hurricane-proof homes built in response to the massive earthquake that rocked Haiti in January 2010.

Not only did the project provide shelter to those who had lived through the devastation; it also provided job skills and employment to more than 300 people.

World Renew greatly values the contributions of volunteers, said Wayne de Jong, World Renew’s director of disaster response and rehabilitation.

“Although numerous members of the CRC and other denominations contacted us immediately after the earthquake and expressed a strong desire to volunteer in Haiti,” de Jong said, “we made the decision very early on to use only Haitian labor for our housing response program.

“In a country where more than two-thirds of the labor force do not have

**Jean Designe Henry, a construction engineer, is grateful for the fraternity he felt while working for World Renew.**



### World Renew at a Glance

Over the past 50 years, the agency now known as World Renew has responded on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church to disaster, poverty, and injustice in 87 countries.

Currently, World Renew works in 40 countries by partnering with 84 local churches and community organizations to equip them to carry on work in their own communities.

Last year, World Renew reached 886,245 people in 4,522 communities with long-term programs. It also provided immediate and long-term assistance to 777,570 disaster survivors in North America and around the world. This work was assisted by 3,373 volunteers who contributed more than 278,800 hours of their time.

To learn more, read prayer requests, volunteer, sign up for news updates, or make a donation, visit [www.worldrenew.net](http://www.worldrenew.net).

Please also look in your church for this year’s World Hunger Campaign materials, “A Heart for the World,” starting in mid-October, and join thousands of others participating in World Hunger Sunday on November 4.

—World Renew Communications

You add.  
God multiplies.



**By employing local men and women, World Renew provided meaningful employment and the opportunity to develop job skills for the future.**

formal jobs, and there is a dearth of on-the-job training opportunities, this only made sense.”

While World Renew did hire two Americans and one Filipino to oversee the project, the rest of the 300 staff who carried out project management, administration, and construction were Haitian. The teams built an average of 35 houses per week.

“It was an excellent opportunity [for Haitians] to earn much-needed income, but also to learn new skills, develop new ways of working, and be inspired by serving a Christian organization and having opportunities to share their faith with the communities and beneficiaries they worked with,” de Jong said.

Jean Designe Henry, who served as a construction engineer for the housing project, agrees.

“As part of the World Renew team, I felt a sense of fraternity,” he said. “World Renew treated the work very seriously, but they were also open-minded. If you had an idea, the program manager was open and encouraging. It was the best experience for me.”



**About 300 Haitians were employed by World Renew to construct homes. Over two years, they built 3,425 homes.**

With the project finished, most of these positions have now come to an end. “We pray that these former employees will be able to use their skills and experiences to find satisfactory employment,” said de Jong.

“We are also tremendously grateful for the generosity that made this program possible,” he added. “It was the prayers and financial gifts of people across North America in response to this earthquake that enabled World Renew to be there for the past two-and-a-half years. Thank you.”

The earthquake response also included food, cash, tarps, tools, rubble removal, home repairs, water and sanitation, animal restocking, seed distribution, and other livelihood projects. With the completion of the last home, the livelihood restoration project is the only project remaining. It is scheduled to conclude in December 2013. ■

—Kristen Vanderberg,  
World Renew Communications

### The Church at Prayer

The ministry of World Renew is made possible through the faithful prayer and financial support of the people of the Christian Reformed Church. Please join World Renew staff in

- praising God for 40 years of ministry through the Disaster Response Services program. Pray that the green-shirted volunteers will continue to be a strong witness in word and deed as they assist people who have lived through tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, or floods. Pray also for their safety as they serve at disaster sites across North America.
- asking God to provide rain in the Sahel region of Africa, where millions are suffering from severe drought. Pray too for World Renew staff members as they provide emergency food and long-term programs to help families better withstand future droughts.
- thanking God for his faithfulness over 50 years of ministry.



## Sharpening Each Other

It hangs over my desk—a gift from a friend, a solemn reminder. It’s a framed copy of Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

“We use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another” is how *The Message* renders it. And almost as quickly as we can nod assent, we ignore it.

Remember how a file can sharpen a knife? Remember how sharpening that knife makes it better, more useable? That is how we ought to function toward each other. Gently, consistently, carefully working toward the release of each other’s full potential.

In fact, the original Hebrew is phrased in such a way that it more accurately reads, “As iron sharpens iron, so each of us ought to sharpen one another.” The goal is sharpening—but not our tongues. (We’re quite adept at that, aren’t we?) Rather, we are to communicate in such a way that the other person is bettered by what we say and how we say it.

We’re called to become more like Joseph. You probably know him better as Barnabas, a nickname given to him by others because he realized so well that communication is a building tool, not a wrecking ball. His friends started calling him Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36), an old Hebrew way of affirming that encouragement was a vital part of who Joseph was. Every time we meet Joseph, he is sharpening someone.

Shortly after Saul was converted, he came to Jerusalem. The disciples there were all, understandably, “afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple” (9:26). Enter Barnabas, standing up in Paul’s defense, vouching for his faith and com-

mending his preaching. That day, Paul, already a sharp guy, became an even sharper tool for God because of the positive affirmation of Barnabas.

When persecution scattered believers far and wide, and some ended up in Antioch, the number of believers began to grow. At headquarters in Jerusalem, they decided to send Barnabas to see firsthand what was happening. His powerful encourage-

ment helped not only their numbers to grow even greater, but their hearts as well, to such an extent that the name *Christian* was invented to describe folks who were so obviously Christ-like. Barnabas was doing what he was so good at, sharpening others’ faith and causing it and them to grow.

When Paul refused to take John Mark on a second mission trip for fear he’d bail on them again, Barnabas took John

Mark under his wing and accepted and encouraged him. Paul and Silas went one way, Barnabas and John Mark another (Acts 15:37-41). But once again, the sharpening influence of Barnabas brought back into the work of the Lord one who had once deserted Paul but later became so valuable to him that he asked for him to come and be with him near the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:11). Through Barnabas, another life was sharpened, not only for Paul’s use but also for God’s use.

Barnabas was no pushover. He stood his ground and defended his faith. But he used his communication skills, written or oral, to build up others, to sharpen them.

I suggest that we need more “sharpeners” among us.

I suggest that God calls us all to be “sharpeners.” So let’s use our communication skills and opportunities to build up, to encourage, to reach toward, to draw in, to enhance, and to improve one another and the church we so dearly love.

This familiar text, seen through the filter of a disciple like Barnabas, calls all of us to be more like Jesus—not just in *what* we say but in *how* we say it. Then we will truly sharpen each other, recognize one another’s worth, and enhance each other’s service to God. ■



👉👉 We are to communicate in such a way that the other person is bettered by what we say and how we say it. 🗨️🗨️



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



## HERE AND THERE

### Jubilee Fellows Spend Summer Doing Ministry

**A**nnamarie Koster, a Calvin College senior, was able to plan an entire children's ministry curriculum this summer during her internship at Granite Springs Church in Lincoln, Calif.

Koster also worked at the church's booth at the local farmers' market, designed the church float for the local Fourth of July parade, helped lead worship services, and had the opportunity to plan an entire worship service.

Koster was able to gain this depth and breadth of ministry experience as one of 14 students awarded summer internships through Calvin College's annual Jubilee Fellows program. The program began in 2002.

"We match students with internship sites, taking into consideration the individual interests of the Jubilee Fellows and the needs of the churches," said program coordinator Kary Bosma.

Koster, who is majoring in both religion and English, found all she had hoped for in her internship at Granite Springs.



Annamarie Koster enjoyed her summer as a Jubilee Fellow at Granite Springs Church.

"I love this," she said, "because I gained real ministry experience. Also, working in Lincoln, which is a completely different environment from my home church in (Grandville), Mich., really pushed me out of my comfort zone."

Granite Springs's pastor, Kevin Adams, who helped start the church in the early 1990s as a Christian Reformed church

plant, has worked with the Jubilee Fellows program since 2007 and plans to stay connected to it.

"We have had five previous Fellows," he said, "and each year it is a treat—a learning and growing and enriching experience for all of us. It's a wonderful intersection of the academy and the church."

The internships benefit not just the students, Adams added, but also the host churches. "We get to know great people who become like family to us."

Their Fellow from two years ago, K.J. Van Ek, returned as Granite Springs's high school director this past year during a time of transition.

Last year's Fellow, Nicole Veenkamp, came back this summer to help lead the church's music and drama camp.

"We get a chance to connect to the broader church, and we get the joy of helping encourage and train the next generation of Christian leaders," said Adams. ■

—Phil deHaan,  
Calvin College Communications

### Words to Live By

**W**en-Jie Guo, Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) Chinese producer, was thankful to read a listener's comment on the BTGMI English World website.

"I found your site while searching on the web," said the listener. "I am also curious about the Jesus you mentioned in your program. I want to know more about him. . . . Can you point me in some direction?"

English World is a newly revised website designed to



Checking out BTGMI's new English World website.

reach out to Chinese-speaking people who desire to learn English.

Many of these listeners are especially interested in a new segment called "A Day

in the Life," in which Wen-Jie interviews people who discuss daily life in North America.

"A Day in the Life" has covered topics such as favor-

ite coffee, a marriage proposal, photography, and prayer.

"Each person reflects on something in their life and ties it to their Christian perspective," says Wen-Jie.

"It is our prayer that, through genuinely helping people learn a language skill, we honor God in this effort and lead them to faith in Christ," says Rev. Jimmy Lin, Chinese ministry leader. ■

—Nancy VanderMeer,  
Back to God Ministries  
International

## Ministry on Wheels

A group of teens on skateboards rolls through the streets, laughing and jumping over steps and sidewalks. It's a sight you might see in any urban neighborhood on a summer night.

But these skaters are different. They're from Madison at Ford, a church plant in Grand Rapids, Mich. Their mission? Simple: Skate and pray.

These are local teens who skate from house to house, share the gospel, pray for people, and invite folks to church.

"Teenagers want God to be a light in this neighborhood, and all they need is someone who believes in them," says Pastor Brad Knetsch, who preaches at the Home Missions-supported church.

As a result of the skaters' door-to-door efforts, families have joined the church.

Madison at Ford, a satellite of nearby Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, meets at an inner-city middle school.

In addition to attracting people to the church, the ministry also has garnered positive attention outside the neighborhood. The teens had the idea to write a letter to a prominent skateboarding manufacturer, sharing the news about their ministry. Since then, the company has sent Knetsch \$2,000 worth of skateboards.

"That was a real blessing because it was the kids' idea," Knetsch says. "They own the ministry, they run it, and they named it: 'Skate of Life.' All I do is get them together, train them in the gospel, and send them out—oh, and try to prevent injury." ■

—Ben Van Houten,  
Christian Reformed Home Missions



Pastor Brad Knetsch, left, with skaters.

## High School Students Face the Future

This summer, 29 high school students from around North America gathered at Calvin Theological Seminary to participate in the Facing Your Future (FYF) program.

FYF students are nominated by their pastor, teacher, or youth pastor as leaders in their community. They enter the program expressing interest in ministry as a vocation, leadership in the church, or theological study. They also are eager to think about where God is calling them next.

The goals of the program include

- encouraging students to think deeply about theological questions;
- giving participants a chance to grow spiritually and to learn through readings, discussion, devotions, and quiet times, practicing spiritual disciplines and incorporating them into their everyday lives; and
- equipping young members of the church for ministry in college, the workplace, and all of life.

Over the course of three weeks together, the students learned from CTS faculty members and from several seminarians. They also spent time reflecting together, especially on how they can best face the challenges of the future. ■

—Jessica Driesenga,  
CTS Communications

FYF participants join  
in discussion.





You add.  
God multiplies.

## Mending Broken Ties

Mary and Thomas (their names have been changed for security reasons) had been arguing bitterly for months. Both are members of a small community of believers in a predominantly Muslim West African country.

Theirs was a clash of personalities. Mary sees things as right or wrong. She eagerly serves the church, but often feels she does not receive enough recognition.

Meanwhile, Thomas, a recovering alcoholic, struggles to be independent after years of relying on others to care for him.

Things got so bad that the only time Mary and Thomas acknowledged each other was to insult one another.

Their quarrel created tensions within the whole church, says a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary who works with Mary and Thomas's church.

Hoping to resolve the quarrel, missionaries and other believers urged Mary and Thomas to talk through their issues, met with them individually, and held several mediation meetings.

Thomas apologized several times, but Mary would not accept his apologies, saying he was only doing it for show.

Then Thomas interrupted devotions at the start of a Monday church council meeting. He told the group that the Holy Spirit had told him to go ask for Mary's forgiveness.

The CRWM missionary, who had been part of the meeting, replied, "When the Spirit tells you to do something, do it immediately." They halted the meeting, prayed, and headed to Mary's home.

Unbeknownst to most of them, Mary had had a dream two weeks earlier in which God told her to forgive Thomas and ask for his forgiveness. So when Thomas came to apologize, she listened with tears in her eyes and asked for his forgiveness too.

"The tension that had been affecting the whole church is now miraculously gone," the missionary says. "The two are demonstrating a true (be it ever so flawed) love and forgiveness for one another. The broken body has been made whole again." ■

—Sarah Lin,  
Christian Reformed World Missions



## Webinars for Busy Leaders

Training ministry leaders is always a challenge, especially for busy volunteers and staff who can't take time to attend an out-of-town conference.

Earlier this year, CRC Communications launched a weekly series of one-hour webinars on a variety of practical ministry topics. From the comfort of their homes or offices, ministry leaders can get the benefit of a workshop without any travel time or costs.

Visit [www.crcna.org/webinars](http://www.crcna.org/webinars) to register for upcoming webinars, watch previous webinar recordings, or vote on future topics.

The schedule of topics for fall 2012 includes children with autism, youth ministry and missions, caring for members with mental illness, and much more. More topics are being added all the time; check out the website for the most up-to-date lineup.

All webinars are recorded and added to the archives, which are accessible anytime. Many include slides and handouts. Some churches have used these recordings in meetings or as a springboard for group discussion.

Through the support of CRC Ministry Shares, these webinars are offered free of charge. To participate, all you need is a computer with speakers or headphones.

Let us know if the types of resources you'd like to see in a webinar aren't there. Please email suggestions for topics or presenters to [communications@crcna.org](mailto:communications@crcna.org). ■

—Kim Chimienti,  
CRC Communications



A West African woman at work.



# Seedy Hitchhikers

Try this: Put on a pair of white socks—and a pair of shoes, of course. Go outside and find a roadside ditch or empty field. Walk through it. Then check your socks. You'll probably find lots of plant "junk" stuck to your socks. Pick these little stickers off and take a careful look. You should find several seeds hitching a ride.

Seeds hitchhiking a ride on your socks is one way plants make sure—actually, the Creator makes sure—that they will spring up again next year. Even if the original plant doesn't survive the winter, the seeds probably will. The more seeds each plant scatters, the more likely that kind of plant will survive.

But seedy hitchhikers don't just depend on your socks for transportation. They have lots of cool ways to move around. Read on to find out some of their hitchhiking methods.

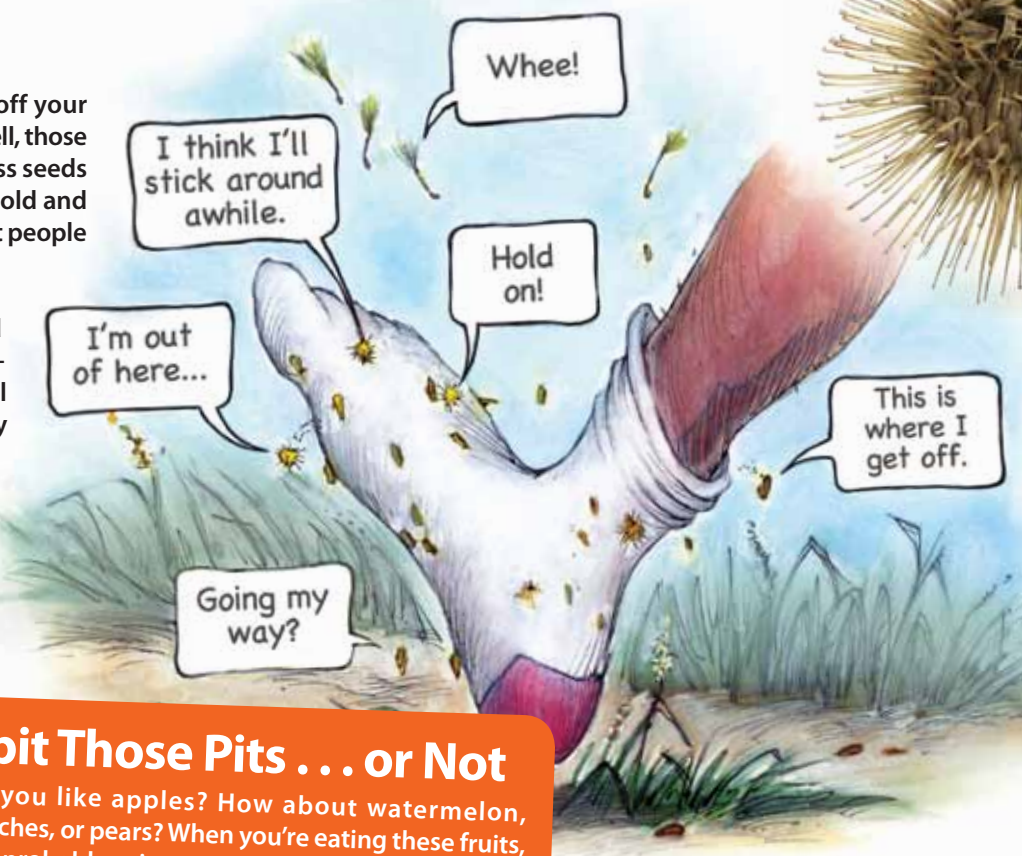
And here's a challenge: Go back outside and count how many seedy hitchhikers you can find!

## Hooks and Barbs

You know how hard it is to pick burrs off your pants or socks or your dog's fur, right? Well, those sticky burrs are just certain kinds of grass seeds trying to plant themselves. They grab hold and won't let go until you pull them off. Most people probably throw them into a wastebasket where they can't grow. But animals don't.

These burrs—and any kind of seed with hooks or barbs—usually hook themselves to animal fur. Eventually the animal pulls them off and drops them far away from the original plant.

Lots of plants that aren't very noticeable grow hooked seeds. That makes sense—since no one's going to pick them up on purpose, they have to grab a ride themselves.



## Spit Those Pits . . . or Not

Do you like apples? How about watermelon, peaches, or pears? When you're eating these fruits, you probably spit out the pits or throw them away in the garbage, right?

Animals like fruit too. Deer forage for apples; bears love blueberries; raccoons feast on berries. But unlike you, these animals don't spit out the pits. They gobble up the whole fruit, pits and all. The pits go through the animal's digestive system and come out, unharmed, in its droppings. Voilà! The fruit's seed has traveled away from the original plant.

The seeds of some wild plants actually have to go through an animal's digestive system before they can sprout. Usually the animal involved loves that kind of fruit. Can you think of why that might be? For sure it's no accident!



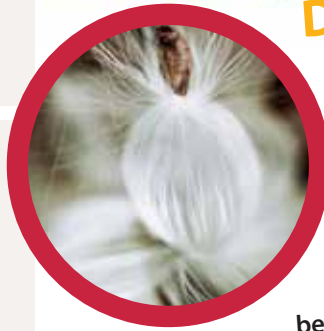


# FuN Facts

Mice love **pumpkin seeds**. Don't leave your pumpkins growing in a patch too long—the mice will get at them!

During World War II, schoolkids were sent to gather **milkweed fluff**. The fluff was used in life preservers.

**Mullein**, a common roadside plant, is designed to grow in soils that have been disturbed. Mullein plants help keep soil in place. They don't need to scatter their seeds because they grow well side by side. Disturbed soil is covered faster that way.



## Do-It-Yourselfers

"Do-it-yourselfers" are plants created to shoot, pop, spit, or blow their seeds as far from the plant as possible. Each plant goes a little ballistic trying to send its seeds away from home—and each does that in its own way.

Lupines, for instance, make long, bean-like seedpods. When the seedpod dries, one side dries faster than the other. That makes the pod twist or bend and snap open, shooting out the seeds. Wild geraniums fling their seeds out from the pods using a method that is very intricate and complicated.

Wood sorrel seeds are covered with an elastic-like coating. That coating dries out in the sunshine and then suddenly breaks like an old rubber band. The seeds shoot out as if someone had launched them with a slingshot.

Do-it-yourselfers aren't really hitchhikers. But like the hitchhikers, they are a very cool part of the plant world.

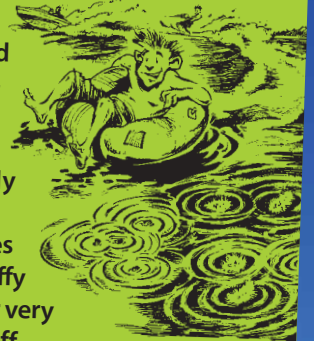


## Swimmers and Floaters

Have you ever floated down a river on an inner tube or water-skied behind a boat? That's what seeds from water-side plants do. Some, such as water-mint and foxglove, do this without a "tube" or "ski." The bare seeds simply float on the water.

Others, such as weeping willow trees that grow along a riverside, produce fluffy seeds that float. It's as if they have their very own "wetsuits" made of waterproof fluff.

Still other trees have "wetsuits" that are thick and insulated. Think of coconut trees growing on tropical beaches. Their seeds can float, protected, in salt water for months.



## Parachutes and Windsurfers

Some seeds spread by parachuting away from "home." Milkweed, dandelion, and goatsbeard are just a few plants whose seeds are attached to designed parachutes. Some are made to close when the humidity is very high. That way the seed hits the ground right before a rain-storm. Often these seeds have little backward-pointing barbs designed to keep the seed in the soil after it lands.

Windsurfing seeds float lazily on air currents. A thistle seed called thistledown does this. So do some types of daisy seeds. If you notice a seed that has fluff without a definite design, it's probably a windsurfer.

Here's another challenge: Try to catch some of those parachutes and windsurfing seeds. It might be harder than you think! It almost seems as if some of them are designed to elude your grasp. If you do catch one, take a careful look at it and try to figure out whether it's a parachute or a windsurfer.



**Joanne De Jonge** is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park Ranger.

She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.



## Just War, Not Just Another War

**R**ECENTLY on the news I witnessed the flag ceremony marking the end of nearly nine years of U.S. military operations in Iraq. The war, launched in March 2003, had been justified as retaliation for the attacks of 9/11 and was based on the assumption that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

But was that war really justified? Was it a *just* war? Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Synod 1939 adopted a position on “just war.” At the time it gave members of the Christian Reformed Church valuable guidance for their involvement in the war that was to fol-

low. But how relevant is this position in today’s complex world, which badly needs moral leadership in the arena of war and violence? How can and should the CRC, as a body of believers, lead nations toward greater biblical faithfulness in pursuing justice? How can we embrace the dynamic tension between obeying our governments and raising a collective voice of critique, or even dissent, when appropriate?

As a denomination, we have stated that a war can be seen as just when it defends that which is right or deters that which is wrong. There may be times when war is justified as the means of restraining or overturning the forces of evil, or as a last resort, exercised in line with the U.N.

initiative “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), as in the cases of Darfur and Rwanda. Military actions could be declared just if they meet certain criteria. One specific principle of just war thinking is that of *proportionality*, meaning a war should not do more harm than good. The immense harm caused by the willful killing of God’s imagebearers and the destruction of creation makes the justification of war a very weighty issue.

### Counting the Costs

The costs of the Iraqi war are staggering. In our collective silence, some 4,500 U.S. soldiers have been killed. An additional 32,000 have been wounded in body, and an estimated 100,000 have been wounded



## Have we erred on the side of personal responses to the gospel as opposed to a corporate response lived out in a community of faith?

in spirit, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The estimated death toll of Iraqis, conservatively estimated to be around 100,000, is likely much higher. And the financial cost of sending 1.5 million Americans to Iraq has exceeded \$1 trillion. Meanwhile, the carnage of civil war continues.

Americans face an uncertain legacy as we weigh what was accomplished against the human and financial costs. The question remains: was it just?

I believe the CRC has failed to grapple effectively with how to measure this war—as well as other wars since World War II—against just war criteria. Perhaps the fact that the war in Iraq was fought by an all-volunteer army made it easier for many in the CRC to keep it at an all-too-comfortable moral arm's length. Those who were fighting were “willing” soldiers—often from among the poorest and least empowered segments of our society.

### From Silence to Faithfulness

Now that the troops are back home, what should we as a church do? First, we must commit to prayer and pastoral care for the soldiers and families affected by the war. We must also resolve to move from silence to a renewed commitment to biblical faithfulness in our response to war.

I doubt we can honestly say today that the CRC is, in practice, a church of the just war tradition. That should bother us tremendously. In the Vietnam and Iraq wars, the church did not have the courage to do what it should have done. Apart from letters to governments and the

pastoral letter sent to congregations to support those considering military service, we kept silent. Issues that should have been dealt with communally were presumed to be primarily matters of personal conscience.

Instead, the church should have served as the conscience of the government, giving wise counsel to church leaders and members. Historically, Reformed people have been reluctant to bind individual conscience and responsibility. But the worth of holding a common position on just war lies in its ability to inform personal *and* collective responses, with the power to transform both.

I propose that at the next synod we corporately repent of our failures and commit to an active denominational assessment of future military actions that arise. The CRC should revisit and faithfully act upon the “War and Peace” report adopted by Synod 2006. This report issued a strong call for the CRC (collectively) to “speak a word of peace and to be an agent of shalom in a war-torn world.” It encouraged congregations and members to speak out on issues of war and to counsel our nations’ governments on moral issues related to military actions and weapons of mass destruction.

A 1927 synodical report entitled “Ethical Decisions about War” prophetically declared, “We have no modern nation, no sovereign states which are also identical with the people of God. We have no theocracies . . . [and] we regard all tendencies to claim a special national alliance with God as idolatrous and

wicked.” It follows that all militaristic ideologies are to be challenged. Our world needs the prophetic voice of the church to state publicly our conviction that war, unless carefully considered or under dire urgency, is inconsistent with the gospel call to peacemaking and justice.

Over the years, the CRC has made a number of bold and prophetic statements in synodical reports. But I suspect that few congregations and church councils have actually reflected on these reports carefully prepared by study committees and adopted by the church.

Have we erred on the side of personal responses to the gospel as opposed to a corporate response lived out in a community of faith? Are there perhaps painful parallels to be drawn between us and the German Protestant church of the 1930s and 40s—a common lack of vision, blindness to our call, and even cowardice? The German churches had no tradition of dissent and critique in their relationship to the state. Have we followed a similar path?

Killing is wrong, even when it is the lesser evil. Church father Tertullian put it this way: “In our doctrine we are given ampler liberty to be killed than to kill.” The church is called to the gospel pursuit of love—love for the whole world—and love never acts unjustly.

As a communal body, we must struggle with these issues instead of remaining silent. Let us move forward with courage as we reconsider the implications of our Lord’s directive to Peter: “Put your sword back in its place.” ■



Lee Hollaar is a council member of Hillside CRC in Abbotsford, British Columbia. He serves on the board of Citizens for Public Justice

and has been a member of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue.

## Virtual Discernment



**POPULAR REACTIONS TO VIDEO GAMES** have been wide-ranging. Some claim it was playing violent video games that led Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris to kill their classmates at Columbine High School. In contrast, Steven Johnson writes about the many intellectual benefits that video games provide.

Others point out the dangers of addiction, citing reports of gamers playing for days or weeks at a time. Game designer Jane McGonigal argues that if the same energies and talents that gamers develop while playing video games were put to real-world problems, we might be able to solve world hunger, oil shortages, and international pandemics.

These arguments highlight the complexity of figuring out the proper uses of technology. Technology and media are not neutral; they shape worldviews, habits, and virtues for better or worse. Should I be playing “Grand Theft Auto”? “Call of Duty”? “Words With Friends”? “Angry Birds”? These questions cannot be easily dismissed as virtual, unreal, and inconsequential.

Answering with thoughtful discernment can be overwhelming. Often we get

## Should I be playing “Grand Theft Auto”? “Words With Friends”?

lulled into not thinking too deeply about this stuff. But becoming numb to these questions can soon turn us into cynics and passive consumers. How do we remain people of hope and love, engaging our culture?

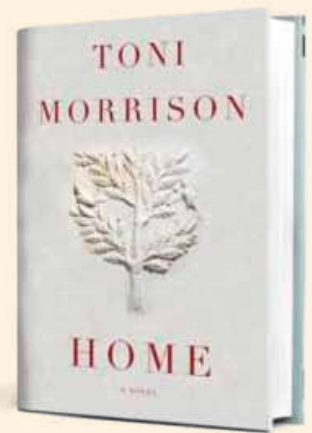
First, talk about and engage video games on their own terms. Play video games, ask others questions about the games they play, and learn the language to talk about gaming without prejudice.

Second, take an aesthetic approach. The Christian tendency is to jump straight to morality when it comes to stories and actions in video games. We tend to see puzzle games and simple games as morally neutral while assuming that first-person shooters and complex story lines are morally more problematic. Games are a visual, audio, participatory, storied medium; we have to take into account all of these dimensions.

Finally, take a more balanced approach. Extreme reactions and hyperbole will not draw us into dialogue with one another. Popular culture can often segregate us generationally. We need to move from a stance of quick judgment toward that of a discerning conversation. In this way the church can come together in community, appreciate the gifts and interests of each member, and journey toward a more Christ-like way of life. ■



**Greg Veltman** is research and program coordinator at the Student Activities Office, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s a member of Creston Christian Reformed Church.

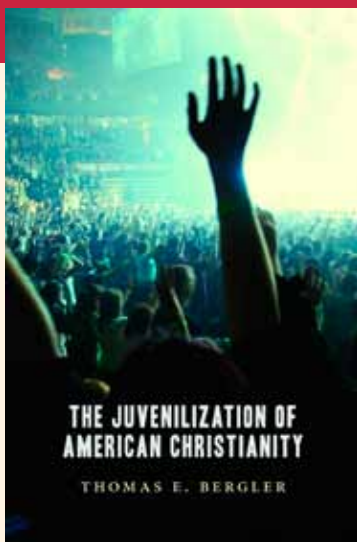


## Home

by **Toni Morrison**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

When Frank Money was a boy in Lotus, Ga., he did all he could to protect his younger sister Cee. The Korean War offered him an escape from his hometown. Now he has returned to America. Tormented by his own actions and by others’ racist attitudes, Frank is called upon once more to help Cee. When Frank takes Cee home to Lotus, the two are embraced by women whose “devotion to Jesus and one another centered them and placed them high above their lot in life.” This sparse narrative is raw, realistic, and redemptive. (Knopf)





## The Juvenilization of American Christianity

by Thomas E. Bergler  
reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

In this critical but constructive study of the intersection of Christianity and youth culture, Bergler explores a “quiet revolution in American church life.” Teenagers and their youth leaders have convinced churches that “the religious beliefs, practices, and developmental characteristics of adolescents” are now “appropriate for adults.” While these changes have breathed life into other major American church traditions over the last 75 years, white evangelicals have led this revolution, resulting in adults “embracing immature versions of the faith” with consumerism and self-centeredness popularizing a feel-good, theologically ignorant faith. (Eerdmans)



## Footnote

reviewed by Kristy Quist

An Israeli movie about the cramped, competitive world of Talmudic research, *Footnote* is also about family. Eliezer has been conducting laborious research all of his life, but acclaim has passed him by. Meanwhile, his son Uriel is rising through the academic ranks. The difference in their personalities has always rankled; a new twist in their careers strains their relationship further. This creative movie is quietly humorous in its send-up of academia, but painfully serious about the father-son relationship. Movie lovers will find plenty to talk about. (Sony Classics)

## Wonder

by R. J. Palacio  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Ten-year-old August has only one wish: to have a normal face. Born with a facial deformity, his 27 surgeries required that he be home-schooled for several years. When he’s enrolled in fifth grade in a prestigious middle school, August learns the meaning of the saying “Like a lamb to the slaughter.” With the help of teachers, friends, and family, he learns to overcome adversity. This juvenile novel, though it contains some profanity and several spiritual views that are not biblical, shares a compassionate, compelling window into one boy’s struggle to be accepted for who he is. Ages 10 and up. (Knopf)



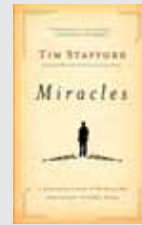
## Balloon Hat

reviewed by Ron VandenBurg

Photographer/filmmaker Charlie Eckert and balloon-hat maker Addi Somekh traveled to 34 countries in four years, taking over 12,000 images and endless film footage. Together they wanted to explore how people can be connected by laughter. With only 20 cents worth of deflated balloons, these two men discovered that they could break down cultural and language barriers. Photo essays and stories at [www.balloonhat.com](http://www.balloonhat.com) share their experiences, along with striking images of balloon hats on Mongolian horsemen, East L.A. tough guys, and Chinese communist officials.



## THE LOWDOWN



**Power Read:** In the book *Miracles*, Christian journalist Tim Stafford considers reports of modern-day miracles. (Bethany)



**Live Music:** The alternative rockers of Anberlin bring more pulsing music this month on their new album, *Vital*. (Universal Republic)



**Oh, Baby:** *October Baby*, a film about a college girl who finds out she was born after a failed abortion, is now out on disc. (Samuel Goldwyn Films)



**Booked Up:** Book club favorites *Wuthering Heights* and *Cloud Atlas* make it to the big screen as new films this month.

**MORE REVIEWS ONLINE**



## Saving the Story

### TRY THIS:

Take a child on your lap. Nestle her close and tell her a story about God. Begin with “*Once, a very long time ago . . .*” Speak with an awe-filled voice; scroll out the story; paint vibrant word pictures. Pause. Let the words settle like autumn leaves. She’s listening, collecting. When you’re finished, wait. Answer her questions the best you can, but tell the truth. Sometimes you won’t know the answer. Pick her up and tuck her into bed. Listen to her prayers, kiss her goodnight. Tell her you love her. Tell her God loves her even more. Stand in the darkened room, your shadow a guardian watching over her. Tiptoe out, closing the door with a soft click.

Eighteen years later, open the same door, walk in, and sit on the edge of the bed. Look around the room. You see her on rare weekends. Mostly you talk over airwaves and cyberspace. She’s smart, nearly an adult. You’re amazed at what she knows and confused by what she believes. She rarely attends church. The Bible is a problem, its message mixed and difficult. You remember her enthusiasm, her spiritual confidence. You’ve read alarming statistics about evidence of a mass exodus from the church. You wonder what you did wrong.

According to a variety of sources, an increasing number of children raised in Christian homes abandon church in their twenties. Walking the main aisle of a Christian bookstore recently, I counted over a half-dozen new titles addressing this topic. Related articles appear regularly in Christian periodicals. Confronting our fears, we commission polls, interview college students, and strategize.

For the past few decades I’ve taught high school catechism classes. Each year I listen as church-raised kids express their views about the church. Usually a rebel or two will dare to challenge the old folks and their ways. The disillusioned, those most sensitive to our inconsistencies and petty judgments, remain silent. The majority generously absorb whatever they’re told. Believers by osmosis, collectors of spiritual memorabilia, they comfortably repeat canned truth.

Some years I find myself trying to make rebels, raising questions, shaking assumptions. Rattling the gates of apathy. Instead

**What would happen if we taught our children to approach God’s story with thoughtful delight and humble uncertainty?**

students often react with fear—a reflected fear, one we too often model.

I’ve watched this fear packed away to college and adulthood, stowed alongside the faith tools we’ve handed our kids. We believe strongly in equipping young believers, training them to critically engage culture with the Word. Careful testers of truth, we’re known for long battles over sticky biblical issues. Defenders of God’s Word, we pile up texts to prove our positions. The Bible becomes a battlefield overrun with fear—fear that often begins with *what if?*

What if the creation story isn’t factually sound? What if the Noah account models a pagan folktale, or the tale of Jonah is nothing but a wildly ironic fable? What if some of the Bible’s stories are just, well, stories? For some, the answer is summed up in the bumper sticker I saw the other day: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.”

For others, it isn’t quite so simple. We know the Bible is God’s true and certain Word, but we struggle sometimes to apply ancient texts to our world. We have help: historical and textual criticism, better translations, and archeological discoveries inform our understanding. We teach our kids to read the Bible in context, to consider the audience, to wonder about the author’s purpose. In a few years they advance from listening toddlers to junior scholars deconstructing texts. I wonder if in all the scholarly dissection, we risk carving some life out of the Word, leaving it neatly parsed and labeled, devoid of awe. Is it possible to look closely and achieve distance?

I teach my class in the same church basement where I once fidgeted on a kid-size chair, watching my teacher shuffle paper shepherds across a flannelboard. Sitting in a circle of children, I absorbed the simple stories of faith. Later, we scribbled our crayoned interpretations, stick figures marching out of Egypt or riding flaming chariots into the sky. Growing up, I graduated from stories to doctrine, from Galilee to Heidelberg. At age 18 I professed my faith. By then I had left stories behind, exchanging them, I suppose, for the certainty of theology.

Today, I watch my four grown children encounter a world where ideas spread so rapidly we call them viral, like some infectious disease. I wonder how well we've equipped our kids. Have we handed them the right tools? Are they trained in their use, or will they wield them clumsily, causing harm to themselves and others? But what really worries me is this: Despite all they know, will they miss the point? Will they stand to the side like well-trained observers, or will they move near and truly hear?

Thinking back to that church basement, I remember my frustration with those cutout characters my teacher used to tell the story. Those paper patriarchs always seemed to face the wrong direction. Their sheep, legs folded in repose, moved offstage without standing. Jericho's walls stood solid one second, disappeared, and then reappeared, shattered. I recall complaining to my parents one Sunday. "Well, then," I still hear them saying, "just close your eyes and listen to the story."

Maybe in our effort to preserve and yet reveal biblical truth, we try too hard. The story, after all, belongs to God. Most Christians believe Scripture is inspired, infallible, sufficient. We argue about the details. The most persuasive voices for each side swing Scripture like hammers, driving home their points. After all, we like our truths nailed down, immovable. Meanwhile, our children watch.

Could we learn to be less sure? Not of the truth of God's Word, but of our individual interpretations. What would happen if we taught our children to approach God's story with thoughtful delight and humble uncertainty? Not dismissing centuries of scholarship or new tools of interpretation, but humbly admitting there are things yet unexplained. Less divided

over uncertain matters, we may speak with more authority on certain ones. After all, Jesus didn't condemn the religious leaders for searching the Scriptures, but for their own certain conclusions. To a community immersed in serious scholarship, he said, "*Truly, truly I say . . .*"

Given the chance, I may have written parts of the story differently. In *my* gospel accounts, Jesus returns after conferring with Moses and Elijah with tablets in hand. He hands over a clear and concise belief system to the religious leaders, instructing them to get it right this time. Instead, the real gospel shows Jesus descending empty-handed, trailed by three bewildered and awestruck disciples. Stepping into the pressing crowd, he asks, "What are you arguing about?" Then demons cower and humans learn a little more about faith. And soon he is telling stories again: "*The kingdom is like . . .*"

Sometimes I imagine a boat rocking gently under a bleaching sun. In it sits a storyteller, his hands floating with his words, his audience rapt. He's telling stories about rebellious sons and robbers and generals off to war. He mimes a farmer tossing seeds, and then his hands become birds pecking and flying away. His message is a pearl of great worth, a lost treasure unearthed. I listen and wonder—and sometimes, drawing from a storehouse of story, I discover treasures, both old and new. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Robert Vander Lugt** attends East Paris Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich.

## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

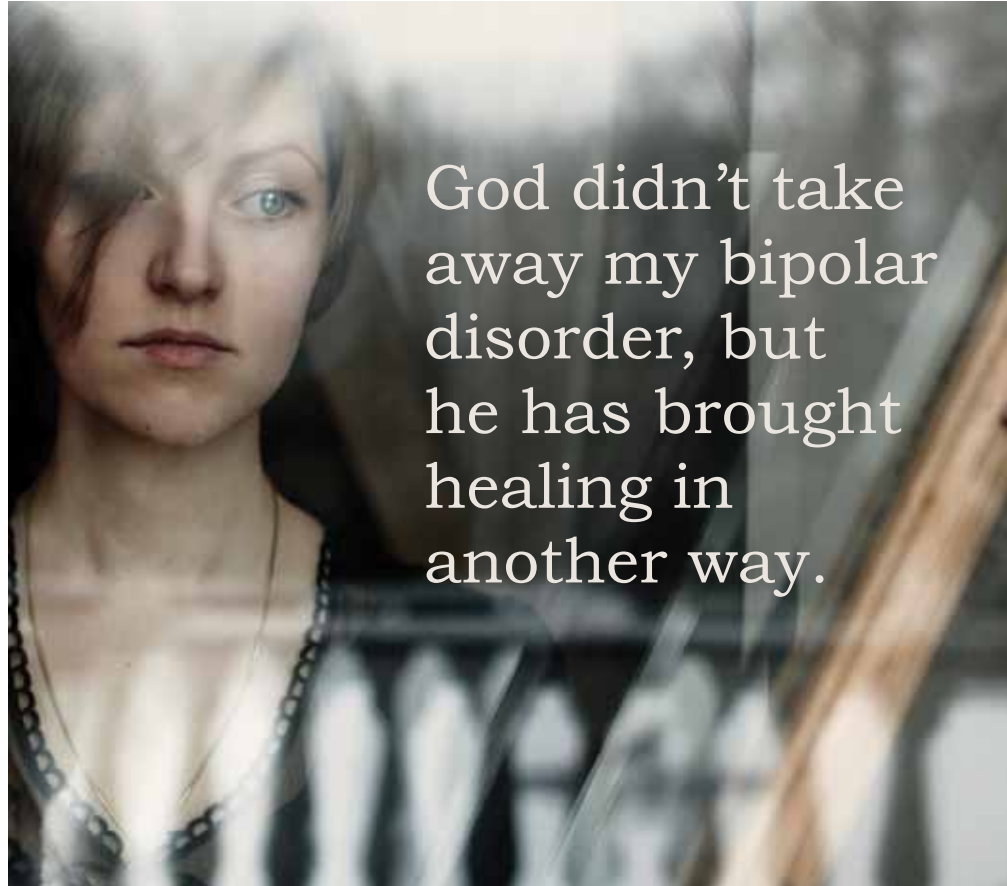
**G**ROWING UP in the Christian Reformed Church, I learned to appreciate my Reformed heritage. Even though my Reformed faith did not make me exempt from bipolar disorder, it helps me see that I am a part of God's creation. Along with the psalmist, I can say, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Ps. 139:14).

Since my diagnosis in 1983, I have had many ups and downs. I have been in the hospital many times. Several times I quit taking my medication—I don't know why. Sometimes I felt like I didn't need it; other times it seemed like the Lord told me to quit. But I know that my mind can play tricks on me. It wasn't the Lord who told me to stop. It was my own irrational thoughts.

After my last hospitalization, I made a promise to the Lord that I would not stop taking my medication. God has held me to my promise. It is vital for me to keep it. Not only are my moods in control, but I also have peace of mind. It makes a difference to those around me. I take my medication for the people I care for and who care for me.

When I take my pills, I can live a normal life. I can live on my own and do the things I need to do. I believe I can also be a more effective believer in Christ. With my moods in control, I am more rational and more pleasant to be with.

A case manager I once had told me how important it is to have positive thoughts. When I think negatively, I get depressed. He told me to replace a negative thought with a positive thought. Throughout my illness, I have made it a practice to think positive thoughts. Most important, I see how God has used my illness to increase my faith as I rely more



God didn't take away my bipolar disorder, but he has brought healing in another way.

on him. Because I live alone, I don't always have someone checking up on me to see if I am taking my medication. So I rely on God to keep me accountable.

There are times when it is hard for me to accept that I have bipolar disorder. I am like the apostle Paul, who pleaded with God to remove his thorn in his flesh. God answered that his grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). God didn't take away my bipolar disorder, but he has brought healing in another way.

I am thankful for all that God has done for me. God has used this illness for my good. He has helped me to grow in my faith and has given me boldness in it. I am thankful to have Jesus as my Savior and Lord. He has been with me through it all. He is my hope.

Now it is my prayer that God will use me to be an encouragement to others who have walked this journey. There is hope for people with mental illness. Help is available. Seek treatment. Take your medications. Jesus is there night and day. He is ready and willing to help you. Just cry out. He is listening. He loves you. God can turn your illness to good. ■



Verna Haverhals spends her time listening to Christian music and correcting lessons for Crossroad Bible Institute. She is a member of Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church.



# ADS

**Deadlines:** Nov. issue is 10/1/2012; Dec. issue is 11/5/2012. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Calls Accepted

**JOHN WILDEBOER**, Candidate serving Maranatha Woodstock as interim pastor has accepted the call from Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, ON. as pastor. He has declined a call from Maitland River CRC in Wingham, ON.

**WASHINGTON, DC CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH** is delighted to announce that Rev. Meg Jenista, Third CRC (Kalamazoo), has accepted a call to be our pastor.

### Available for Call

**THE COUNCIL OF CEDAR HILL CRC OF WYCKOFF, NEW JERSEY**, wishes to inform the denomination that Pastor Kooksung Kim is eligible for call within the denomination. His contact information can be found in the CRC yearbook. Ronald H. Steinginga, Clerk

### Meetings of Classis

**CLASSIS AB SOUTH & SASK.** will meet in regular session on Friday, Oct. 26, 2012 at First Lethbridge CRC. All agenda items should be sent Al Brander, the Stated Clerk at [clerkabss@gmail.com](mailto:clerkabss@gmail.com) or to 1203 High View Point, High River, AB T1V 1N9.

## Congregational

### Church's 125th Anniversary

**CALVIN CRC - OAK LAWN, IL** (formerly 1st Englewood, Chicago) is celebrating their 125th Anniversary with a banquet planned for October 20 at Trinity Christian College. For more information and tickets contact the church office, 9 AM- noon weekdays at 708 422-0790. A special service commemorating this anniversary event will be held Sunday morning, October 21. We encourage former members and friends of the church to join us in our milestone celebration.

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**LOMBARD CRC** will celebrate its 100th Anniversary with an open house and banquet on Saturday, October 13. Tickets will be necessary for the banquet. On Sunday, October 14, we are planning a special worship service at 10:00 a.m., followed by a time of fellowship. We extend an invitation to all former members and pastors to join us as we celebrate. An anniversary booklet and DVD will be available. Further information will be posted on our website: [www.LombardCRC.org](http://www.LombardCRC.org)

### Church's 60th Anniversary

**LUCKNOW COMMUNITY** Christian Reformed Church of Lucknow, Ontario, Canada will celebrate 60 years of God's faithfulness with a Celebration Worship Service on Sunday, October 21, 2012, at 10:00 am. Everyone is welcome.

**SPRINGDALE CRC** in Bradford Ontario is celebrating its 60th anniversary on the weekend of October 27th with a dinner and evening of fellowship. All are welcome. Check out our website: [www.springdalecrrc.net](http://www.springdalecrrc.net) or call 905-775-3731 for more details.

**TERRACE CRC** of Terrace, B. C. will celebrate its 60th Anniversary with a special banquet, followed by a celebratory evening service on November 3rd, 2012 commencing at 5:00p.m. We invite all former pastors, members and friends to join us or send greetings to help us celebrate. An anniversary booklet and DVD will be available. For further information see our website at [www.terracecrrc.org](http://www.terracecrrc.org). We thank God for his faithfulness.

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**PRINCE GEORGE CRC** will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness October 20 to 21st, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to fellowship with us. For more information, phone (250) 563-2639 or email [pgcrrc@hotmail.com](mailto:pgcrrc@hotmail.com)

### Retirement



**BETHEL CRC, LYNDEN WA:** Our pastor, Rev. John Van Schepen, will be retiring in October after 40 years of service in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. He has served Christian Reformed churches in Beaverdam, WI, Roselawn, IN, Salem, OR, Bellflower, CA, and Lynden, WA. During

his years in the ministry he has also served on numerous classical and denominational committees and boards including World Missions, Board of Trustees, and Dordt College. Rev. Van Schepen also taught pastors and church leaders in other countries including Cambodia, Uganda, Bolivia, and South Africa. A retirement and farewell gathering with Pastor John and wife Willie will be held on the evening of October 6, 2012 in Lynden, WA. You are welcome to email notes of blessing ([office@bethelcrrc.org](mailto:office@bethelcrrc.org)) or call the church office (360) 354-2361.

**PEASE CRC** of Pease, MN, announces the retirement of Pastor David Smit after 7 years of faithful service to our congregation and 38 years to the denomination. We praise God for Pastor Dave and his wife Marian's service to the church and pray God will continue to use their gifts in their retirement years. A farewell reception, community open house and special worship service are planned for the weekend of October 14. Friends, family and former colleagues are invited to help us celebrate. Call the church office or check our website for details:

[www.peasecrrc.org](http://www.peasecrrc.org). May God continue to bless Pastor Dave and Marian as they have been a blessing to us and so many others. 320-369-4228

### Congratulations

**MADISON SQUARE CRC** in Grand Rapids, MI, expresses joy and a resounding "Congratulations!" to Pastor Dave Beelen who is celebrating 30 years of faithful service. May God be praised! Special recognition will take place on Sunday AM, Oct. 7, 2012. Cards may be sent to: Pastor Dave c/o Madison Square Church, 1434 Madison Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49507.

## General

**WINTER VISITORS** When in the Phoenix/Sun City Az area, please visit the West Valley Christian Fellowship Church. 10:00AM & 6:00PM Sundays. [www.westvalleychristianfellowship.org](http://www.westvalleychristianfellowship.org)

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday



**JOSEPHINE ROUBOS** will celebrate her 100th birthday on October 28. Address: 1099 S Calle De Las Casitas, Green Valley, Az 85614. Children: Robert, deceased (Anne) Roubos, David (Susan) Roubos, Joanne (Ron) Rozema, Ruth (Dennis) Flynn, James (Leslie) Roubos, 24 grandchildren,

26 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild. We thank God for her many years and for the blessing she has been in our lives.



## ALUMNI AWARDS

Each year Calvin Theological Seminary is pleased to honor two alumni who have made significant ministry contributions in the Kingdom of God and have reflected positively upon the values and mission of CTS.

You are invited to submit nominations (with brief statement of rationale) by November 30, 2012 to: Rev. Jul Medenblik, President, Calvin Theological Seminary (email: [sempres@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:sempres@calvinseminary.edu)).

The recipients will be honored at the Seminary's Commencement on Saturday, May 18, 2013.



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## 90th Birthday



**DENA (MANS) MEYER** celebrated her 90th birthday on Aug 31 at 603 Kasan Ave, Volga, SD 57071. We give praise to God in gratitude for her life and love for the Lord, her husband (William, d. 1991), and her family!

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary



**HOEKSTRA** Jim and Grace (Appledorn Living Center, 727 Apple Ave. #B12, Holland, MI 49423) celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on September 23. Congratulations with love from their children - Jan (Carl Afman), Gerry (Merry), Marv (Beth) Norm (Nancy) - their 8 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

### 60th Anniversary

**GEELHOED** Donald and Hiroko (Betty) will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Sept. 26, 2012. Their children Dave (Pat), Andy (Helen), Tom (Nancy), Larry (Pat) Ellen (Bill Fagan) 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. God is Good!

**MULDER** Harley & Pauline of 6888 Willard S. E Grand Rapids, Mi. 49548 will celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on October 10, 2012. Their children, grandchildren & great grandchildren Praise God for his Love & Faithfulness.

**TEBOS** Marvin and Ruth celebrated 60 years of marriage on October 17, 2012. Their children Beverly and Brian Wispelwey, Marlene and Dean Helms, Karla and Dave Heuker, and Ken and Carol TeBos, along with their 13 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren praise God for continued blessings and faithfulness.

## Church Position Announcements

**PASTOR OPENING AT OPCRC** Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago seeks an energetic, passionate pastor who will champion OPCRC's mission of reaching out with the Good News of Jesus Christ and building up people in their faith. We are seeking a pastor especially gifted in strong biblically-based preaching who will challenge the congregation spiritually and share in the leadership of staff and church ministries. This position is open due to our Pastor retiring in July of 2013. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at Orland Church, visit [www.OrlandChurch.com](http://www.OrlandChurch.com). Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to [pastorsearch@opcrc.org](mailto:pastorsearch@opcrc.org).

**ANCHORAGE ALASKA** Trinity CRC is seeking a full time pastor. Please direct all inquiries to Ron Lindemulder at [rlinak@ci.net](mailto:rlinak@ci.net) or call 907-346-2081 or the church office 907-272-8431.

**FULL TIME SENIOR PASTOR:** East Leonard CRC of Grand Rapids, MI is seeking a full time pastor to shepherd a mid-size city church. A unique opportunity to lead an energetic body of Christ in reaching out to our surrounding community. Searching for strong leadership skills in effectively preaching God's word and developing the spiritual walk of all ages. Please contact at [elcc@elcc.org](mailto:elcc@elcc.org). 616-454-4444

**PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE:** Ridgewood CRC in Jenison, MI seeks half-time pastor of visitation and care. For a job description, contact David Dethmers at [pastordavid@ridgewoodcrc.com](mailto:pastordavid@ridgewoodcrc.com) or 616-457-3850.

**SENIOR PASTOR:** God already knows who our pastor will be. Is He calling you? Heritage CRC of Byron Center MI, a suburb of Grand Rapids, is searching for a Pastor of preaching and worship. Contact: [heritagecsearch@gmail.com](mailto:heritagecsearch@gmail.com)

**TOERING**, Cornie and Jo (Jansen) 810 5th Ave. SE Pipestone, MN 56164 will celebrate 60 years of marriage at an open house at the Pipestone CRC on Sat. Nov. 3 2-4 PM. Children: Sue and Loren Bolkema, Keith and Jill Toering, Ken and Kim Toering; 8 grandchildren, 10 great grandchildren. Praise God for His love and faithfulness.

**VAN DER WIELE** Sam & Mary celebrated 60 years on August 21. We thank God for your love and faithfulness to Him, each other, and your family. 5936 Elmwood Lake Dr., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

### 50th Anniversary

**MEYERS** Paul and Janet (Berkompas), Grand Haven, MI will celebrate 50 years of marriage on October 11. Their children Karen, Sue (Paul) Soper, Steve (Tonya), and grandchildren Elizabeth, Lydia, Sam, Anna, and Megan give thanks and praise to God from whom all blessings flow!

**ROELOFS**, Marv & Lois (Hoitenga), Chicago. Family: Jon & Sheri (Roosendaal) Roelofs (Kristin, Kyle, & Megan), WA; Kathleen & Michael Ridder (Madison & Jacob), SD. Contact: [caringlessons@aol.com](mailto:caringlessons@aol.com)

### 40th Anniversary

**KRAMER** Peter & Wilma (Plantinga) of Grand Rapids, MI will celebrate 40 years of marriage on Oct. 7. Congratulations and love from your children Joanne & David Peterson (Willa, Alice) and Kathy & Rob Bristow (Aidan, Mallory).

## Obituaries

**BANNING** Harold R., 80, of Whitinsville, MA. Hal went to be with his Lord on July 19, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Anita; his son and daughter-in-law, Bob and Beth Banning, and their children, Hilary and Andrew; his daughter and son-in-law, Anne Banning and Jerry Van Tol, and their daughter, Emmarie; his brother and sister-in-law, Willard and Helen Banning; and his sister and brother-in-law, Sylvia and Arnold Baker. Hal graduated from Whitinsville Christian School and attended Calvin College, served in the U. S. Army in the Korean War and served Kidde-Fenwal almost 30 years as a careful and efficient machinist. Hal, who lay down for the last time very tired and, in this life, found rising in the morning difficult, wanted Psalm 30:5 to be among his last thoughts, and his last farewell to be, "See you in the morning!"

**PASTOR:** Faith Community CRC in Wyckoff, NJ is seeking a full-time pastor who loves to preach, enjoys the company of people of all ages, and will help us walk graciously with God and our fellow human beings. We are a congregation who is gifted at helping people struggling with issues of faith and life and need a pastor who is eager to join us in this ministry. Visit us at [www.faithcommunitycrc.com](http://www.faithcommunitycrc.com). Please direct inquiries and communications to Kyle Talsma, Transition Team, 96 Oakdale Court, North Haledon NJ 07508 or phone 973-427-9895 or email [ktalsma@optimum.net](mailto:ktalsma@optimum.net)

**FRIENDSHIP CHAPEL**, an organized CRC in Jenison, MI, is seeking a pastor. We deeply value freedom in worship and ministry. We pray a lot. We have many hurting people around here and God has called us to help them, give them some hope, show them some grace, and introduce them to our Lord. We encourage collaboration and innovation in our ministry. We are seeking a pastor who can help us organize our work, grow in our faith, and honor our God by helping people. Please contact us at [fcsearch2012@gmail.com](mailto:fcsearch2012@gmail.com)

**SENIOR PASTOR** — Lafayette, IN CRC. We are seeking a pastor who can help us reach out to our community to grow our church both spiritually and in numbers. If you have experience and are gifted in outreach, leadership, leading worship, and feel led to explore this opportunity with us, please respond by sending your ministry profile/resume to [secretary@lafayettecerc.org](mailto:secretary@lafayettecerc.org). Our Search Team contact is Steve Jonker at [shjonker@yahoo.com](mailto:shjonker@yahoo.com)

**CO-PASTOR** Hebron CRC, Whitby, ON seeks a pastor with outreach-focused vision who will help equip and mobilize others for service, shepherd growth in the areas of disciple-making, prayer and missional living, and help us discern and obey the Spirit's leading as we seek to be Christ to the community and the world. We seek a pastor who will share in the preach-

**DE MOOY**, Adrian, 95, July 1, 2012, of Harbert, MI (also Palm Beach Shores, FL, and formerly of Western Springs, IL). Preceded in death by his wife, Claire (Plantinga). Beloved father of Diane Vander Pol, Adrienne and Michael Sremba, Adele De Mooy and Michael Leventhal; grandfather of Jonathan and Alexandra Vander Pol, Matthew and Leighann Sremba, Angela Sremba, and Kristin Sremba; great-grandfather of Havana Rose Vander Pol. "There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come; no more a stranger, nor a guest, but like a child at home."

**ELLENS** Stanley, age 78, of 4746 Brentwood Ct, Holland, MI 49423, went to his eternal home on July 8, 2012. Preceded in death by infant grandson Jordon Ellens. Stan is survived by his wife of 58 years, Joanne; children Gary & Jill, Ken, Paula & Rich Tanis, Jim & Rachel; 10 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

**GROTENHUIS** Dale, age 80; Aug 17, 2012; Jenison, MI. Preceded in death by son Jack. Survived by his wife Eleanor (Veldman); sons: Rev. Phil (Joy), Bob, Tom; 4 grandchildren, one sister.

**KAMPS** Grace (Heys) 91, August 1, 2012 of Manhattan Montana. Married 70 years to surviving husband George B. Kamps. Survived by children Gary (Jean) Kamps, Loretta (Keith) Fennema, 6 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, sisters Jenny Timmer, Ann Dykema, and Trudy Bolender.

**KNOPPERS-BOON** Bartha Maria (Barthie), age 94, went to be with her Lord on August 15, 2012 in Edmonton, Alberta. Barthie was preceded in death by her husband of 64 years, Rev. Nicolaas Bastiaan (Nick) Knoppers. She was a courageous woman, coping with World War II occupation in Holland, immigration to Canada, parenting 6 children, being the spouse of a busy minister, advocating equal rights for women in all spheres of life, and giving generously of her talents to many voluntary activities. She will be very much missed by her children and children-in-law, Jake and Jocelyne (Montreal); Annelies (Netherlands); Bastian and Joan (Chicago); Bartha and Daniel (Montreal), Nick and Joanne (Edmonton); Gary and Laura (State College, PA), 9 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren (with another expected any day). Memorial contributions may be made to the Knoppers-Boon Scholarship Fund at The King's University College, Edmonton, Canada ([www.kingsu.ca](http://www.kingsu.ca)).

ing, who has a passion for small group ministry and pastoral care. Our mission is to make passionate disciples of Jesus Christ. Hebron is a congregation of 350 located in a suburban community 50 km east of Toronto. A church profile and job description for Co-Pastor of Congregational Life are available upon request from Andy Buwalda at [calling@hebroncra.ca](mailto:calling@hebroncra.ca).

**PASTOR** Faith Fellowship CRC of Fairview, Alberta, a small congregation in northern Alberta is seeking a pastor to lead our church in following the will of God. Preference will be given to those who have experience working with youth, as well as to those who are interested in developing a men's ministry. For more information or to submit a resume, please email John @ [johnzylstra@abnorth.com](mailto:johnzylstra@abnorth.com).

**PASTOR** Mundy Park Christian Fellowship (CRC) in Coquitlam, part of Metro Vancouver, BC, a small but caring and loving congregation with desire and energy to be a witness to our community is searching for a full time pastor who will lead and equip us through preaching, pastoral work, teaching, team leadership, and progressive direction-setting. Church Profile available upon request. Contact Tim Greenwood, clerk, at: [t.greenwood@telus.net](mailto:t.greenwood@telus.net) or (604)882-4896.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES** Bellevue CRC (Bellevue, WA) is accepting applications for a Children's Ministries Coordinator. 20 hrs per wk. For detailed information, see the Employment tab at [bellevuecra.org](http://bellevuecra.org).

**LEAD PASTOR** First CRC of Bellflower, CA is seeking a full-time pastor for our established church as we strive to reach our diverse community in sunny Southern California. We are searching for a pastor who is passionate about preaching God's word and shepherding his people, and who has strong leadership skills, an enthusiastic attitude, and an ability to relate to all ages. For more information, contact Marv at 562-896-9339 or [Bell1SearchCommittee@hotmail.com](mailto:Bell1SearchCommittee@hotmail.com).





**LEO**, Frank T. Leo, Sr., age 85, transitioned to Glory on August 8, 2012. Beloved and devoted husband for 62 years to Johanna, nee De Vries. WWII U. S. Army Veteran. Loving father of Frank Jr. (Jennifer), Gary, Timothy (Tracy), Philip (Lisa), Jane (Kostas) Papadimitriou and the late David (Judy Ozinga). Cherished grandfather of 11. Dearest great-grandfather of 3. Fond brother of Annette Boersema, John H. Leo, and the late Elizabeth Bandstra, Catherine VanderMey, Grace Woodnorth and Thomas Leo. Dear uncle of many nieces and nephews. Memorials may be given in memory of Frank to CRWRC Team Free A Family, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

**MENNINGA** Grace Carol, born August 19, 1931 died August 7, 2012. Survived by husband Bernie and children: Mary (Bob) Boll, Harold Menninga, Wanda (Jack) Grochala, Joel (Leslie) Menninga, Peter (Jenny) Menninga and by sisters Muriel (Warren) Meyer, Lois (Jack) Wiersum, Sharon (Ted) Bulthuis, Cathy (Edward) Pruijm. 9 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

**POLINDER** Colleen (Haak), age 66, died on June 30, 2012 in Lynden, WA after a 15 month struggle with brain cancer. She was preceded in death by stillborn son, Shawn Mitchell and granddaughter, Olive Hope. She survived by her husband of 44 years, Ron, her mother, Harriet Haak, daughters, Stacia Hoeksema (Tom), Shawna VanderLeest (Scott) and son Rustin (Lynette), 10 grandchildren, sister Gloria Bode and brother Vic Haak, numerous in-laws and nieces and nephews. We give thanks for the love of the Christian community who supported us so faithfully, and for Colleen's beautiful life which was rooted in her faith and trust in the grace of God.

**PRANGER** Harold S., age 94, July 20, 2012; of Denver, CO. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mae and daughter Patricia Giezen. Survived by 5 children, 15 grandchildren, and 9 great grandchildren. He is greatly missed and remembered with love. Memorials to The Denver Hospice

**VAN TUINEN** Genevieve (Venema) August 20, 2012; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by Arthur, her beloved husband of 55 years, and by her siblings: Clarence, Jay, Edward, Ann Keuning and Josephine Hoving. She is survived by her children: Judith (Rev. Douglas) Warners, Dr. A. Robert (Susan) Van Tuinen, Jim (Jane) Van Tuinen, Nancy (Wencel) Kalinowski, Mary (Dr. Jack) Schurman; grand children and great grandchildren: Chris (Jade) Warners [Genevieve, Bella, Alexa], Amy (Mike) Hernandez [Megan, Ashlynn, Aaron, Annika], Joel (Alison) Warners [Jordan, Lauren], Betsy (Mike) Youngs [Allison, Sofie, Emily], Kim (David) Petty, Matt (Tricia) Van Tuinen [Caroline, Charlie, Louisa], Lindsey (Drew) Tilghman [Cara, Adia], Jennifer (Barry) Leslie (Avery), John (Sarah) Schurman, Julie Schurman, and Jeffrey Schurman.

**VENHOUSEN** Robert J., Sr. 838 S Grant, Villa Park, IL 60181. Husband of Carol Van Stedum, nee Schurman, and the late Donna, nee Visser. Father of Cindy (Clarence) Klaassens, Sharon (Al) Miedema, Robert, Jr. (Judy [Stremler] and the late Sherri) Venhousen and Debbie (Tom) Muhlena. Step-father of Sharon (James) Kamphuis and Susan (James) Lozeau. Grandfather of 31 and great-grandfather of 13. Brother of Gert (the late Louis) Tazelaar, the late Bill (Anne) Ven Housen, and the late Kaye (the late Pete) Holtrop, Peter (Mary) Ven Housen, June (the late Pete) Taming, Andrew (Sharon) Venhousen.

**WESTERVELT** Gerald, age 50, of Brinston, ON, went home to be with the Lord on April 4, 2012, after a lengthy battle with cancer. Survived by his wife, Pamela (Wind), his children Rebecca, Kimberly, Christopher, Jillian and Larissa, his father, Gerrit Westervelt, his siblings Evelyn (Gerald) Van Starckenburg, Margaret Westervelt, John (Jana) Westervelt, Martin (Trudy), and Calvin (Sheila) Westervelt. Pam's address is: 11245 Smail Rd., Brinston, ON K0E 1C0 Canada.

### Employment

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**DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH MINISTRY** Georgetown CRC of Hudsonville, Michigan is seeking applicants for a Director of Outreach Ministries. This 22 hour per week staff position is responsible for recruitment and empowerment of volunteers, coordinating the church's ministries with the wider community, and growing the church's relationships with other helping organizations. Preference will be shown for applicants with organizational, communication, and people skills. A current position description is available upon request. Potential candidates should submit a letter of interest that includes experience, reasons for application, and current contact information to: "Director of Outreach Search Team" at the church's address. Letters of interest should be received no later than October 31, 2012. Applicants need not be members to apply, but membership at Georgetown will be expected within one year of hire. Questions can be directed to Rev. Marc Nelesen marcnc@georgetowncrc.org; Georgetown CRC, 6475 40th Ave, Hudsonville, MI 49426 616-669-5180

**HAVE CHILDCARE EXPERIENCE?** Northlight Nannies of Grand Rapids, MI is looking for part-time and on call caregivers. Contact us at jeff@northlightnannies.com.

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E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
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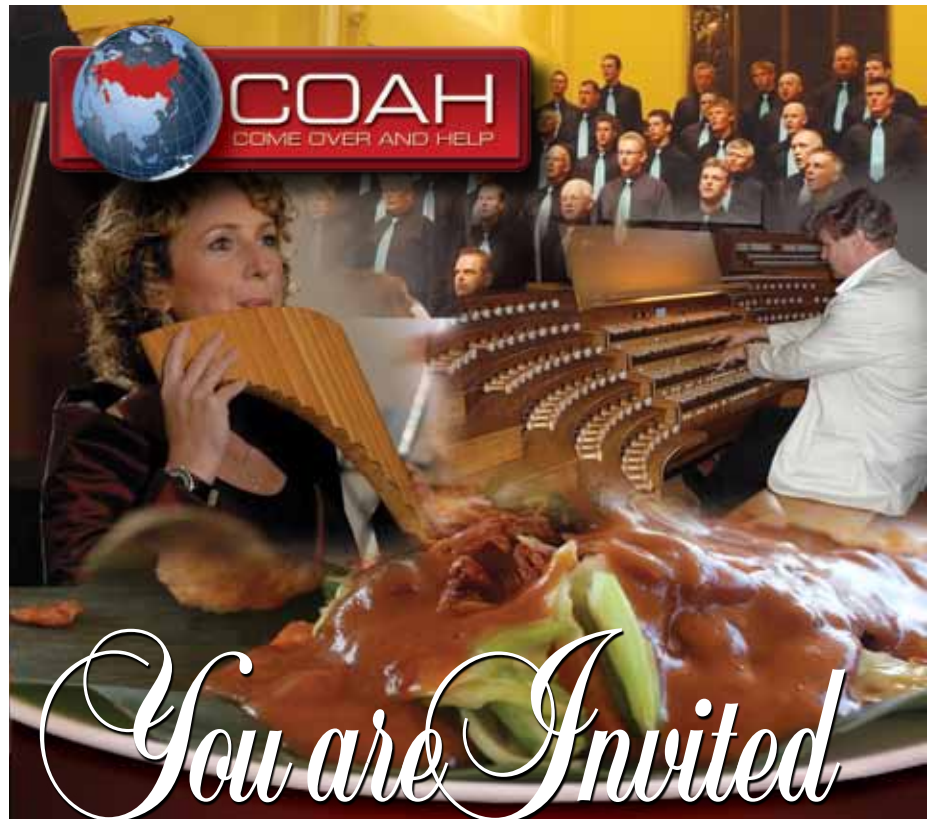
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Phone: 905-869-3508 Email: [jacktamminga@coah.org](mailto:jacktamminga@coah.org)

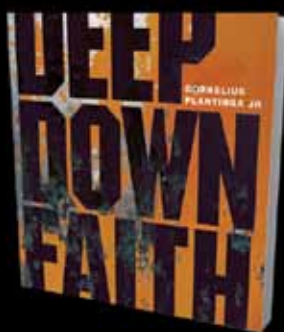
**LOCATION:** Smithville Canadian Reformed Church  
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**DATE:** Saturday, November 3, 2012

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# Punch Lines

What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**O**ur church's mission team, representing all ages, was flying out east to partner with another church across the country. On the plane, a youngster named Owen asked the pastor, "What are we having for dinner?"

"We're fasting," Pastor Rob told him.

"Great," said Owen. "Fast food . . . my favorite!"

—Scott Faber

**E**ach summer we pick the lovely blackberries that grow in abundance on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast. The berries are turned into delicious homemade jam, gifts to friends and family. One particularly productive day netted 35 jars.

The next morning, Jayne opened Kuyvenhoven's *Twilight* for morning devotions. The day's topic: Fruit-Bearing Seniors.

—Nick Loenen

**A**t Sunday school David learned that God created everything, including human beings. He paid special attention when the teacher said that Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs.

Later that week his mother noticed David lying down as if

he were ill. "What's the matter?" she asked.

David responded, "I have a pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

—George Vander Weit

**F**ive-year-old Mitchell was pretending to read a passage on a Bible app we had downloaded to our phone. He accidentally pushed a button that turned on an audio feature where a male voice reads the passage aloud. Wide-eyed, Mitchell jumped up and shouted, "It's Jesus! Jesus is in our phone!"

—Stacey DeWeerd

**A**s my daughter was putting her 5-year-old son to bed, he prayed, "God bless Mom, Dad, and sisters, Grandma, aunts, and uncles. Thanks for the pretty flowers, grass and trees, and electric too. Oh, no—that Thomas guy invented that. Amen."

—Wilma R. Bultema

**A**n elder was asked to pray before the potluck supper at the annual church picnic. "Lord, thank you for the food that has been prepared for us," he prayed. "We don't know what it is, but we are willing to take a chance. Amen."

—John Depooter

**B**looper spotted in a church bulletin: "Looking for persons interested in demonstrating the unconditional love of Christ by walking beside a returning citizen recently released from incarnation."

—Jim Tuininga

**A**lyssa, my 3-year-old granddaughter, and I were sharing a chair.

After touching the top part of my arm several times, she asked, "Grandma Evie, why is your arm like this?"

I said, "Honey, you are a little girl and your arm is nice and firm. I'm older, so that part of my arm is loose."

After she'd thought a moment, she jumped off the chair and said firmly, "Grandma Evie, when you get really old, that loose part of your arm will be down to your knees!"

—Evie Den Ouden Blankers

**A**t my grandson's preschool screening, the teacher was asking where different parts of his

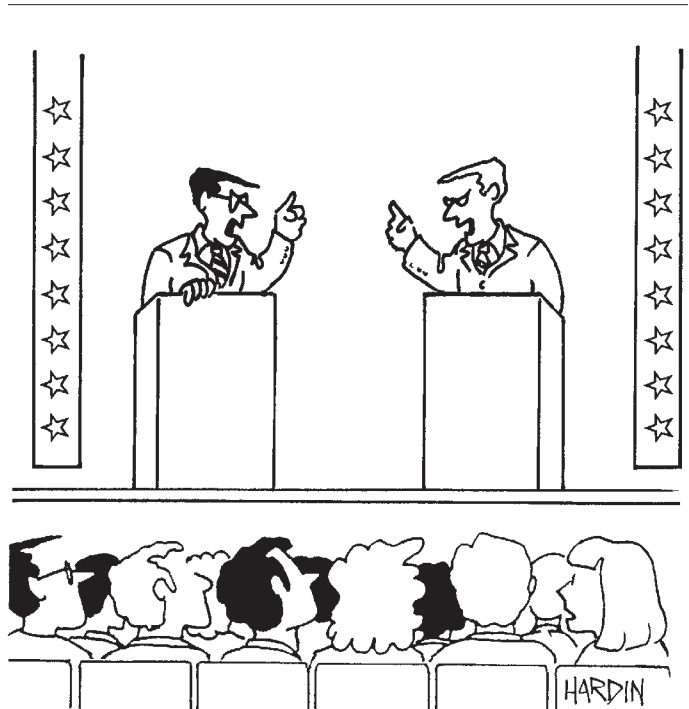
body were. He was doing just great until the teacher asked where his heels were. He raised his arms to his waist and said, "I don't know, but Jesus heals me!" The teacher chuckled and told him where his heels were.

"Oh, OK," said my grandson, "but Jesus still heals me."

—Audrey De Smet

**A**fter dinner, our 5-year-old grandson, Gavin, said our closing prayer. "Thank you for my mommy, thank you for my daddy, thank you for my dog, thank you for my sister, and thank you (followed by a long pause) for me!"

—Jean Venema



"Left wing, right wing—I wish they'd remember they're on the same bird."



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