

BANNER

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¹⁸ Church History Highlights

³² Expensive Grace

³⁶ Loving the World to Life

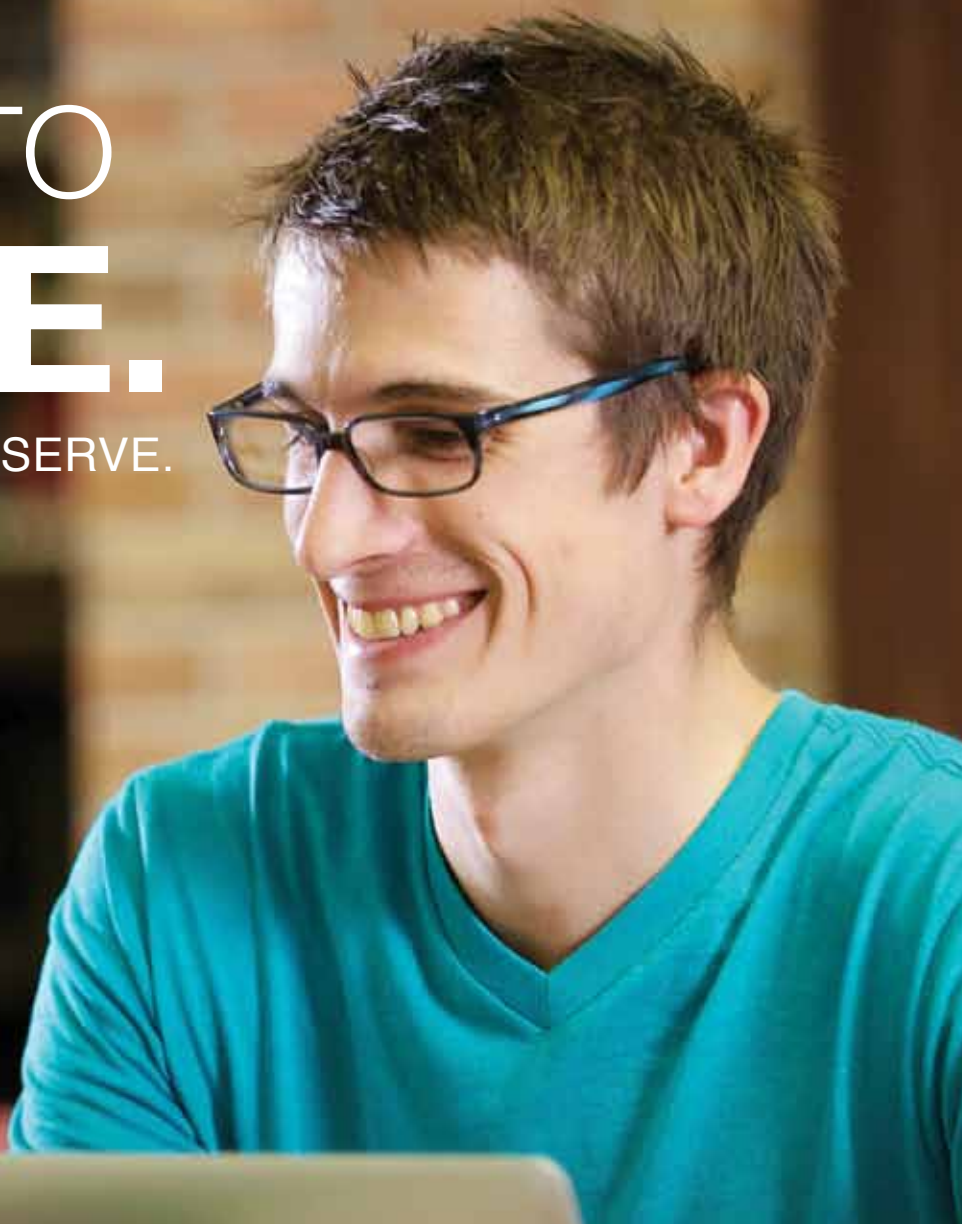
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Cover: Wayne Forte, *Headwound 1*, 2011

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Looking Ahead By Looking Back

“THOSE WHO FORGET THE PAST ARE DESTINED TO REPEAT IT,” observed Edmund Burke. That’s true. Our Bible would be much shorter if it weren’t. God’s people continually blunder into the same old messes. Because we fail to take the lessons from the past, we repeat our mistakes *ad nauseam*. Good thing we have a patient God.

It’s scary how little most Christians know about church history. Because each generation lives in a new age with different sets of circumstances, we *need* to know the past. We cannot afford to keep falling into the same old traps while facing all these new ones. Instructed by the past, we need to address our present with an eye to the future. Yet many Christians are historical agnostics, imagining themselves so spiritual and knowledgeable and gifted that they don’t need a history lesson. Unfortunately, history itself clearly teaches that they’re being hopelessly naive.

Lloyd Rang’s humorous but instructive bird’s-eye view gives us a global picture of two millennia of church history (see p. 18). In this wide-angle approach we can bicker over which events should or should not be included. But overall it gives us a good sense of the grand sweep of the Spirit’s movement. We can draw a variety of lessons from the church’s history.

God’s people continually blunder into the same old messes.

One lesson that emerges is that Christ’s church constantly struggles, often unsuccessfully, to hold on to or recover two basic essentials: truth and unity. We know that those are essentials because Jesus, just before he went to the cross, petitioned the Father for them in his high-priestly prayer recorded in John 17:

- “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (v. 17).
- “I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (vv. 20-21).

In Scripture we see how our passion for the truth often leads the church into *disunity* (1 John 2:18-19) since we humans aren’t always so clear on what exactly the truth is. And often our earnest desire to stay together in the bonds of Christian love makes us downplay the truth. Through each and every jog in our history, those two remain in polar tension. So, for example, the early church councils tried to delineate exactly who Jesus is and what he does for us by writing creeds, arguing about them, and then voting on them. As a result, many were expelled as “heretics.” So much for unity! Today the spirit of our age prompts us to worry more about loving and respecting each other than about any particular teaching or belief. Now truth gets trumped.

May our Good Shepherd, who alone gives us living bread and the river of life, grant us both. Heaven knows how much we need to be genuinely one in the Spirit, one in the Truth.

What lessons jump out at you as you reflect on Rang’s thumbnail sketch? ■



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His Blue Marble—and Mine

I **T WAS EARLY NOVEMBER.** I received a phone call from my neighbor offering to bring supper. I gratefully accepted. A few hours later she was at my door with a casserole and a book. We devoured the delicious supper. The book I placed on my headboard for some late-night reading.

That's when my story of the blue marble began.

The book was called *It's All Grace: The Best of Eppinga*. Many *Banner* readers remember Eppinga as a regular contributor, a master storyteller. Creative. Witty. This book is a collection of his best stories. Each night before I drifted off to sleep I would read one.

In one story, Eppinga tells of carrying a blue marble around in his pocket. He called it Old Bluey. He writes, "While casting about for an idea for the children's message for the coming Sunday, my fingers—playing with the blue marble—gave me an idea. It worked out pretty well. The children came forward, and I showed them my blue marble. I said that God holds the whole world in

his hands just like I hold my blue marble in mine. I said sometimes I forget about my blue marble, but God never forgets the world. I said sometimes I lose or misplace my blue marble, but God never loses or misplaces us. I showed them the chip in my blue marble, pointing out that it wasn't perfect. But, I added, this isn't a perfect world either because of sin. I told the children to get a blue marble of their own and put it on their dressers."

After finishing the story I drifted off to sleep.

I woke up the next morning with marbles on my mind. Where in our house would I find a blue marble? Our kids were not marble collectors as their mom was always afraid they would choke on them. Now these same kids were grown. A blue marble in this house?

It was time to get up. I put thoughts of marbles from my mind and got on with my day.

Supper rolled around.

Another phone call—my daughter needed to be picked up from a babysitting job. There was a chill in the air, so I

headed downstairs to pull my winter coat from hibernation. I plunged my hands into the pockets, hoping for some extra change. Deep down among the litter, my fingers found a bright blue marble.

We all have difficulties in our lives. When the journey seems hard to bear, some of us will feel God nearby. Others, like me, will feel his distance. But as I savored the feel of that marble in the palm of my hand, I knew without a doubt that God was nearby. He holds me in the palm of his hand, just as he holds the whole world.

My marble lives among the change and peppermints in the bottom of my purse—a constant reminder that God does have the whole world in his hands. ■



Angie Salomons is a wife and mother of six. She enjoys time spent with family and treasures her creativity. She is a member of Woodynook Church, Lacombe, Alberta.



God meets us where we are
and makes a healing
presence known to us
in the exact way we are
most ready to experience it.

— RICHARD ROHR

Thoughts on Justice and Mercy

LE

OPINION



Guess what? We broke the law.

AROUND 1995 I became a Crossroad Bible Institute instructor. Following CBI's daily guide for reading through the Bible, I became aware of the many verses expressing God's concern for the poor—widows, orphans, aliens; those who are helpless, hungry, afflicted—and marked them all in my Bible. It changed my life.

Recently I bought a copy of Ron Sider's book *For They Shall Be Fed*—200 pages of Bible verses he found on this topic. I'd found about 1,000 verses on this theme; Sider, about 1,850. The difference? Sider had included 25 verses on laziness; I did not look into that. And while I picked the key verse in a passage, Sider included the surrounding verses to set the context.

Regardless of the number of verses, what is significant is Sider's statement "Would anyone deny that [God's concern for the poor] is the second-most common theme in the Bible?"

This raises questions. First, why have I, in my 78 years in the Christian Reformed church, heard only five to 10 sermons on this subject? Have others noticed this? If so, how can the CRC increase its awareness of this issue? When our church worked through Rick Warren's

The Purpose-Driven Life, I saw no mention of the poor. Years later, Warren is quoted in *Rick Warren and the Purpose That Drives Him* by Richard Abanes as saying, "I'm sorry, God. How did I miss those 2,000 verses on the poor in the Bible? How did I miss that with all my training, doctrine, and education?" Since then Saddleback Church has changed its ministry to emphasize helping the poor.

Second, why is the CRC currently debating the role of the institutional church, with some saying the church should not speak out on justice issues? Clearly, God's concern for the poor is a biblical issue!

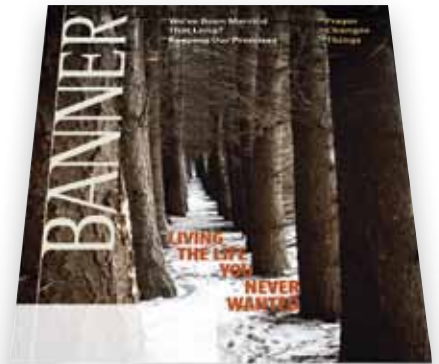
Finally, how do you respond to those who say "They broke the law" is the bottom line in dealing with people who are undocumented? Guess what? We broke the law—and we continue to break it, every one of us. Where would we be if God said, "That's it! You broke my law! No salvation for you!"

Praise God that he is not that way. Through Christ, God is consistently compassionate, patient, and forgiving with us. And he expects us to reflect him and do likewise. Could God say, "Now that you have been saved, your relationship toward others is no concern of mine?"

Even to say the Bible has two themes, salvation and concern for the poor, isn't correct. It's really all of one piece. God is compassionate to us; we must be compassionate toward "the least of these." Who says so? Jesus himself says so in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 (see also Cornelius Plantinga's powerful meditation on this parable in *Beyond Doubt*, Faith Alive). ■



Frank De Haan, a retired chemistry professor, is an elder at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Sun Valley, Calif.



Grace in Times of Evil

In his powerful article "Grace in Times of Evil" (January 2013), Jim Boldenow refers to Dick Cheney. The Reagan administration was complicit in the injustice in Guatemala of the 1980s (remember Col. Ollie North?). Yes, Jim Dekker and James Boldenow and a few others in our denomination knew what was happening, but so many others were silent. I would like to quote a sentence from Herman Keizer's online letter (January 2013) that fits well with Jim Boldenow's article: "We should examine as a church just how much we are like the churches in Nazi Germany." Remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer?

I would like to remind the denomination that the U.S. created the current chaos in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we created the severe damage to the Christian church in both countries (before the 2003 invasion, Iraq had up to 1 million Iraqi Christians; Afghanistan had some churches but all have since closed). Too many members of our denomination supported the invasions without considering the long-term costs to our personnel and the inhabitants of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

—Neal Bierling
Ada, Mich.

TTERS

What am I to say about the torture of not only James Boldenow but all those who were tortured and murdered by Guatemalan military governments, the worst of which was Rios Montt's ("Grace in Times of Evil," January 2013)?

I could explain the nuances of my position and point to the ultimate success of policies I supported. But why should Boldenow or others let me paper over their pain with strategic debating points?

The CRC must encourage and accept political diversity because politics are fraught with unintended consequences and dilemmas. No political program or ideology can conquer all injustice. And the history of Christian political action is as bad as that of secular political action—apartheid was developed by good Dutch Calvinists.

As political beings, it is part of our calling from God to be lords of creation. Doing politics should drive us to our knees, praying for wisdom, forgiveness, and love for our enemies—those who are our political opponents and those who are dictators whose overthrow we seek.

—Raymond P. Opeka
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Small Groups Over Worship?

It grieves me to see a fellow Christian Reformed church [encouraging members to choose] small groups over regular worship services ("Texas Church Encourages Small Group Meetings," January 2013).

It was bad enough when churches, new and old, discontinued evening services in favor of small groups. I am not against small groups but not at the expense of a worship service.

The need for two services with fellow believers is very important in my Christian walk and development.

Small groups should never be put ahead of the preaching of the Word. I hope we are not seeing a trend that corporate worship is in decline; it's just way too important.

—Dale Schut
Grand Rapids, Mich.

God's Belly Button

Thank you for Rev. Vander Zee's excellent piece "God's Belly Button" (December 2012). This essay had it all: a personal story, abundant Scripture references, quotes from revered theologians, and hymn lyrics, all carefully crafted into a terrific reminder of the season's shocking truth: God with *us*; God as one of *us*. We should all find a child (or an adult!) this season and tell them who else has a belly button.

—Steve Roels
Bath, Mich.

Living with Mystery

Joseph Brunsting asks if it's necessary to interpret the first 11 chapters of Genesis factually and historically ("Living with the Mystery," January 2013). I say yes for these reasons:

1. The Bible must be interpreted according to its own assumptions, not an agnostic's assumptions.
2. All that precedes Exodus 20 is Moses' historical prologue to the covenant renewal at Mount Sinai. In Genesis 1-11, inspired Moses gives our historical roots.
3. Jesus is a historical figure. Paul assumes a historical parallel and contrast between Adam's fall and Jesus' resurrection leading to our future resurrection. The Bible thus assumes that Adam is a historical figure too.

4. The "middle ground" Brunsting refers to must not water down the Bible's history but instead must be God's unconditional love shining through us to unbelievers.

5. I prefer John Calvin's method of letting the Bible be our lens to see creation correctly.

—Bruce Leiter
Hudsonville, Mich.

Mr. Brunsting's logic is puzzling ("Living with the Mystery," January 2013). He apparently accepts "the best well-accepted biological science of today" to propose that "it is not possible" that all humans descended from a literal Adam and Eve. That same logic/science would also label as not possible the virgin birth and the resurrection. We must all remember that the "science of today" by definition changes, while the Word of God is true and changeless yesterday, today, and tomorrow, starting from Genesis 1:1.

—Michael DuMez
Oostburg, Wisc.

Stewardship

Regarding "Can We Be Good Stewards of the Economy *and* the Environment?" (November 2012): Economics (*Oikonomos*) can only be dealt with from a biblical point of view that humans are not just social and economic beings but above all spiritual beings. Our past and present economic policies are self-imposed and have led to self-interest and indulgence; they are in need of transformation to scriptural normalcy. We need a new vision confronting global crisis such as Bob Goudzwaard's *Hope in Troubled Times*.

—G. Lieuwen
Langley, British Columbia

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Task Force Calls for Deacons at Classis, Synod

A task force studying the office of deacon is recommending that deacons be delegated to both classis meetings and to synod, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

The recommendations come from Diakonia Remixed, a task force appointed by Synod 2010 to review the articles of the Church Order related to the office of deacon and to recommend resources

that encourage revitalization of the diaconate and its role.

In its report, the task force indicated that the central principle guiding its recommendations is that “the church does not simply have deacons but is by its very nature and calling a diaconate—that is, a community created by the triune God to be a servant people in the world.”

Thus deacons are not called simply to perform acts of service

on behalf of the church but to lead the whole church in faithful obedience to its multifaceted participation.

To do that, the task force wrote, deacons need to participate in the church at all major assemblies. “When deacons are missing from major assemblies, the full voice of the church is not heard, nor is the full ministry of the church under discussion.” **»**

Film Explores Issues Facing Young Adults Leaving the CRC

Paul and Beth Terpstra and their daughter, Amelie.



Shift, a video about young adults leaving the Christian Reformed Church, has been gaining in popularity among congregations and Bible study groups across North America.

A series of 11 scenes featuring young adults in different situations, the film sheds light on multiple factors that contribute to young adults leaving the CRC.

Scriptwriter Beth Terpstra and her husband, Paul, produced the film through Terpstra Creative,

their production company in Hamilton, Ontario. With a cast and crew of 42 people, *Shift* was shot in four days at five locations with a budget of \$200.

“We were surprised at how many people were not only willing but eager to be involved in this project,” Beth Terpstra said. “It’s a topic that a lot of people feel strongly about.”

The film was originally made for the young adult re:kindle conference held last June in conjunc-

tion with Synod 2012, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. It has since been made available for sale as a DVD. Almost 100 copies have been purchased so far.

Rev. Mark Hilbelink has taken the DVD back to his home church in Austin, Texas, to Calvary CRC in Orange City, Iowa, and to Dordt College, where it has been a catalyst for discussions about the issues facing young adults within the denomination and what possibilities the future could hold.

“What’s so great about the format is that it ... takes the pressure off all parties at the local level in terms of broaching difficult issues,” he said. “*Shift* breaks the ice, so to speak, and then everybody jumps in to work on a solution together.” **MORE ONLINE**

—Monica deRegt





Martin Contant and bread baker Joshua deGroot set out fresh bread for communion during Lent 2012.

The task force recommends that each church delegate one minister, one elder, and one deacon to classis meetings, complying with each classis' decisions regarding gender.

At the synodical level, the delegation from each classis would include one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer.

The task force conducted a survey that suggested there is a lingering perception that deacons are "elders in training" and also that deacons receive inadequate training. So they recommend more flexibility in the length of terms of office. "Our studies lead us to believe that longer terms of office along with more intentional training may help to unleash ministry potential, change minimalist perception of the role of deacons, and lead to healthier churches with dynamic ministries."

The report will be discussed at Synod 2013, scheduled for June 7-14 in Grand Rapids, Mich.

—Gayla R. Postma

A Different Kind of Union

For the past several years, Crosswinds Community Christian Reformed Church and Grace Community Church (Reformed Church in America) were simply neighbors worshipping kitty-corner from each other at the intersection of Riley St. and 136th Ave. in Holland, Mich.

Recently, however, the two congregations became partners, forming a unique cross-denominational union called Intersection Ministries.

Crosswinds, which until July had worshiped in a school cafeteria, and Grace, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary, now share facilities, staff, and finances, but maintain separate congregations and pastors.

The arrangement follows a model known in the RCA as a



Aaron Anderson, pastor of Grace Community Church (RCA), and Jeff Meyer, pastor of Crosswinds Community CRC.

federated church, which is similar to a union church in the CRC, but whose denominational membership counts are kept separate.

"[We] both had some things that the other needed," said Jeff Meyer, pastor at Crosswinds. Grace wanted to make more inroads with the surrounding community. Crosswinds, on the other hand, was looking for a more permanent place to call home.

On Sundays Crosswinds now worships in the gymnasium;

across the parking lot, Grace worships in the sanctuary. Each church maintains access to both buildings.

"Part of the real success in blending is the fact we didn't merge together our worship," Meyer said. "It allows us to retain our distinctive character but at the same time learn from each other." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Susan Vanden Berg

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Gerald Essenburg
1941 – 2012

Rev. Gerald Essenburg, 71, a U.S. Navy veteran and a lover of good music, was meticulous and conscientious in his ministry and was known for his kindness and humility.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, he graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1970 and served Christian Reformed congregations in South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan.

Essenburg was a gentle and humble but strong Christian with a servant's heart. His faith was the direct outcome of his personal walk with his Savior. Growing up on a farm qualified him to minister with great effectiveness in rural congregations.

His love for making music stemmed from the years when he played tenor saxophone in high school. He and his wife, Janice, were known for the multitude of pastoral calls they made.

Essenburg is survived by his wife, three children and their spouses, and four grandchildren.

[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.

NEWS

Canadian Forum Causes Both Appreciation and Frustration

For the first time in 10 years, Canadians from across the country met to talk about ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in Canada.

The C3-Canadian Catalytic Conversation was sponsored by Classis Toronto (a regional group of churches). The 120 people who attended included delegates from each Canadian classis, denominational executives, members of the church's Board of Trustees, and many people who just wanted to be part of the conversation. It was not an official denominational event, but simply a conversation, with no decisions or planned next steps.

At the end, participants interviewed by *The Banner* expressed appreciation to Classis Toronto for organizing what they considered to be a much-needed conversation. Some expressed frustration that not enough time was spent discussing how the denominational structures are, in their view, preventing uniquely Canadian ministry initiatives from happening.



JEANNETTE ROMKEMA

Ralph Koops: "We need to continue these discussions to strengthen our Canadian voice."

"We accomplished a lot and we did it in a positive and honoring manner," said Albert Huizing of Classis Eastern Canada.

But Cathy Tilstra of Classis Alberta South was less enthusiastic. "A positive, respectful discussion was had," she said. "However, the question of what is our role as a Canadian arm of the CRC was asked so late in the forum [that] it did not allow ample time for us to thoroughly discuss all the challenges facing Canadian



GAYLA R. POSTMA

Sandra Williams: "The binational issue is only one part of the greater story, a symptom of serious systemic issues plaguing the denomination."

leadership within the binational context."

Ralph Koops, a retired pastor from Ontario, was very disappointed. "I thought we were coming to discuss our Reformed witness in our Canadian culture. I am really grateful that Classis Toronto initiated this conference, but we need to continue these discussions to strengthen our Canadian voice. To address the nation of Canada from out of Grand Rapids [Mich.] is ludicrous. Canada is a different nation from the U.S."

Most agreed that the event was only a first step in what needs to be an ongoing conversation. A statement written by a committee of Classis Toronto that many in attendance agreed accurately reflected the discussion, said that Canadians, while supporting a binational church, need a unique voice to respond to a national context that is bilingual, secular, multicultural, and with different political systems that deeply impact ministries in public justice, health, education, and ecumenical relations.

Canadian churches and classes were invited to consider sending



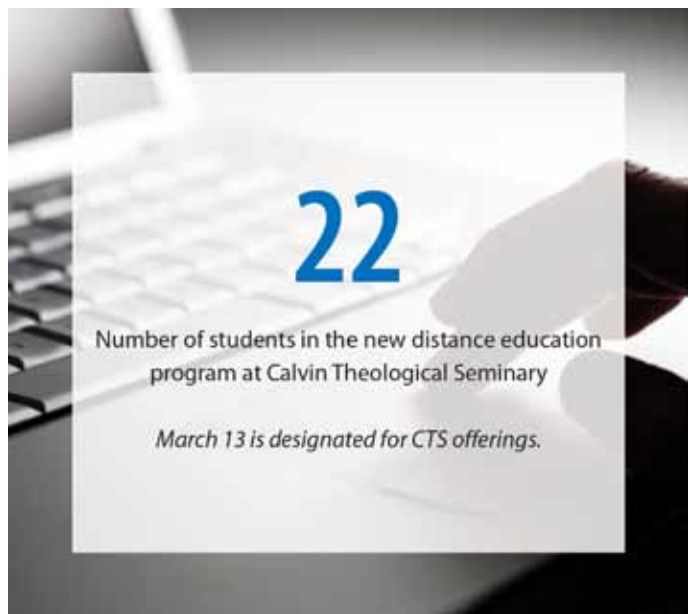
JEANNETTE ROMKEMA

Nate Vandenberg: "We must acknowledge the differences between Canada and the U.S. in order to be more deeply united."

overtures to Synod 2013 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) to strengthen the denomination's witness in Canada. Those overtures could include a call for the Canada corporation members of the CRC Board of Trustees to be given the resources needed "to exercise robust governance for Canadian programs and Canadian donor dollars, also in response to growing Canadian legal requirements," and a call to establish organizational structures that offer denominational leaders within Canada the authority and ability to faithfully respond to Canadian realities.

"We must acknowledge the differences between Canada and the U.S. in order to be more deeply united," said Nate Vandenberg from Classis Toronto. "Otherwise we continue operating as a U.S.-based denomination with congregations in Canada, which drowns out the Canadian voices and does not seem to offer much of a way forward for distinctive Canadian ministry." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma



Mentoring For Healthy Marriages

Five couples from Georgetown (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church have committed to helping keep marriages in their congregation strong and healthy through their Marriage Mentorship Ministry.

"Marriages are in trouble," said Rev. Gary Van Leeuwen as he faced the challenge of broken marriages in the church and in the broader community. "We need to start taking better care of them."

Wilma Grin, one of the organizers of the newly formed ministry, took a marriage mentorship training course with her husband, Albert, and six other couples through the Heart to Heart Marriage and Family Institute. The group soon discovered that the mentorship program wouldn't be used unless there was a culture in the church that addressed marriage issues and the importance of working toward healthy marriages.

"So we got together as couples and decided to raise the profile of marriage," said Grin, adding that the ministry is taking shape as they go. "We want to help shape the culture of marriage as a lifetime pursuit, not the one-day event that is the wedding day."

Van Leeuwen noted that marriage mentorship is not meant to replace marriage counseling but



Marriage mentors from Georgetown CRC

to prevent marital struggles from getting to the point where it's too late.

Recognizing that healthy marriages make healthy churches, Van Leeuwen said they hope to be intentionally present in each other's lives, especially during vulnerable times like the first year of marriage, the beginning of parenthood, the loss of a child, or other stresses.

The group has been putting together opportunities, such as the Alpha Marriage course as well as a weekend seminar on marriage, to strengthen marriages.

"Even if we can save just one struggling marriage, this is worth the effort," Grin said.

—Monica deRegt

Alberta College Gets New President, Top Ranking

The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, named a new president and received a top ranking in student satisfaction.

Dr. Melanie J. Humphreys has been named the institution's fourth president, succeeding Dr. J. Harry Fernhout, who retires at the end of June after eight years of service.

Humphreys comes to King's from Wheaton College in Illinois, where she was dean of student care and services.

"We are delighted and thankful to God for our new president," said Bill Diepeveen, chair of The



Dr. Melanie J. Humphreys

King's University College Board of Governors. "She has a proven track record in Christian higher education. Most important, she understands and is excited by King's vision and mission."

King's was also recently ranked number one in Canada for student satisfaction according to the annual survey of colleges and universities

conducted by *Maclean's* magazine, a widely read Canadian weekly publication. Its university rankings issue is the authority for many students when planning their education in Canada.

Students surveyed strongly agreed when asked about the quality of teaching they received and if they were satisfied with their decision to attend this university.

"At King's everyone is really accepting and friendly," said second-year history student Beth Sandle. "The small class sizes, usually around 40 people, make it easy to feel comfortable around new people and make it easy to get to know everybody. Professors are always responsive when you have a question." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Henry De Vries

1953 – 2012

Dr. Henry De Vries, 59, was passionate about his Savior's mission and deeply respected by the wider citizenry. An encourager of church leaders and a man of prayer, he died from unknown causes at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops, British Columbia.

De Vries began ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in Rimbey, Alberta. De Vries subsequently moved to Kamloops, where he served the Sahali Fellowship CRC for the next 23 years, when his widely respected ministry ended so sadly and suddenly.

Ever outgoing, he shared with people everywhere the cheer he knew himself in his Lord. Ever seeing possibilities for church expansion, his many initiatives led to a broad array of Christian services.

His genuine godliness made his very presence an experience of encouragement. The entire Kamloops community mourns his untimely death.

De Vries loved nature, he loved music, he loved camping, he loved to read, and he loved to be with his loved ones. He loved life.

He is survived by his wife, Fran, four children and their spouses, and 12 grandchildren. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

West Michigan University Launches Monday Night Worship

There's an experiment going on at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. But this one's not in the science hall. Campus Ministry @ GVSU, a joint outreach of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America to Grand Valley's 25,000 students, has ended its Sunday morning worship services to start a new Monday night ministry a dozen miles away in downtown Grand Rapids.

With more and more students moving to the Grand Rapids campus, the ministry launched The Well Downtown, a worship gathering held Monday nights in the basement of Gold Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids.



GVSU students gather for worship at The Well Downtown.

"We saw a need and an opportunity," said Scott Stark, one of two GVSU campus ministers. "We recognized that students are moving downtown, and they are moving there sooner rather than later."

Back at the Allendale campus, students are encouraged to spend Sunday mornings worshipping in local churches. Campus Ministry @ GVSU arranges transportation to nearby congregations that have

supported the ministry; it strives to foster connections between these churches and the campus.

For some, particularly the upper class students, "it's worked really well," Stark said. First-year students have been slower to embrace the change, and staff will spend the next months considering how to address the issue.

The Sunday evening gathering of The Well is still going strong. Said Stark, "We wanted students to still [worship] on campus and connect with other students as well. We continue to put a lot of energy into it." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Susan Vanden Berg

Illinois Church Focuses on Family-Integrated Worship

Family of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Monee, Ill., has no Sunday school, no GEMS or Cadets programs, no Coffee Break Bible study, not even a nursery.

And that's the way they like it.

"We put a high premium on family-integrated worship," said Rev. David Feddes, the church's part-time pastor. "We don't have a lot of segmented programs."

Family of Faith calls their approach "home discipleship." Each week, the members read from a suggested Bible reading plan. On Sundays, the pastor usually preaches from a passage that they have studied at home, which helps the many children in the sanctuary to understand the sermon.

"At the heart of our approach is encouraging daily time alone with the Lord and worship as a family, with prayer, a hymn, and Bible reading," said Feddes. "It's not fancy but increasingly rare and challenging nowadays."

Karie Blair was invited by a friend to try Family of Faith. "I never really like all the programs [at other churches] because I always thought our kids should be with us in church," said Blair, who homeschools and has seven children. "It was very natural to come here. I just prefer to hold my babies. I take them out if they cry."

The church does "sometimes" have a youth group, and as for the singles in the church, there is "nothing special for them to do"; they just join in the after-church



Members of Family of Faith Church recite the Scripture verses they have memorized.

fellowship and whatever else is going on, said the pastor.

"I'm not declaring from the housetops that every church should do what we do," said Feddes. However, he said this low-key approach, which he sees as a mixture of premodern and post-

modern ingredients, seems to be working for this congregation.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Indiana Church Helps Teen Moms with Accountability

“Even Jesus was born of a teenage mom,” said Janell Rottier of First Christian Reformed Church in Crown Point, Ind.

An enthusiastic mother of three, Rottier poured herself into launching a Teen MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) ministry at her church two years ago. But by the time summer came, Rottier said she realized that many young mothers were coming and going without much commitment or real impact on their lives.

So this past fall, Rottier and the other leaders set up what they call an “accountability system.” They selected nine teen moms and matched each with a mentoring volunteer.

“We had found through the course of last year that these girls needed more than just two hours of child-free time—they needed stability, love, support, encouragement, and some help overcoming the big obstacles in their lives,” Rottier said.

For Sarah, one of the teen moms, the group has been life-changing. “I have never felt like I belong anywhere,” she said. “In this group not only do I feel accepted but I know I belong here. It is the highlight of my week!”

Kim Oostman is Sarah’s mentoring mom. “Being a mom myself, I know there are difficult times and struggles of being a mom. . . . Everyone needs a support group, and that is what we are trying to be for these teen moms,” Oostman said.

The young women write out three-, six-, and 12-month goals with their mentors and then are held accountable for keeping those goals through the year. They must let leaders know if they are unable to attend.

In return, participants get help with their “biggest need—for some it’s just a monthly supply of diapers; for others it’s bigger issues like a car,” Rottier said.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Angela, a Teen MOPS participant, attends the group with her baby.

Taking a Walk for Lent

During Lent, a group from Immanuel Christian Reformed Church gathers for a weekly Lenten Prayer Walk through their Langley, British Columbia, community, praying for leadership, businesses, and community-based programs.

Participants stop to pray at places of significance—including the local hospital, police station, municipal and city halls, schools, a cemetery, and cenotaph.

Scripture is read and prayers are offered at the chosen sites.

“Often during the season of Lent people will make sacrifices, giving up something that is close to their heart, perhaps so that we may also understand a little better what it means to suffer,” said John Folkerts, who organizes the event each year. “It is also a good time to take up or renew a spiritual discipline or practice such as prayer or even a physical activity such as walking.”

—Jenny deGroot

Ontario Students Discover Water Contamination

For students at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, an analytical chemistry class project led to a visit with city officials.

The students, led by Professor Darren Brouwer, discovered significant contamination and water quality issues in the Chedoke Creek watershed near Hamilton and presented their findings at a public presentation attended by City of Hamilton representatives as well as other conservation authority members.

“We identified a real-world problem and just dove into it, learning as we went along. We don’t know all the issues in what is a very complicated issue, but our goal is to contribute one piece to the larger discussion,” said Brouwer.

Mark Bainbridge of the city’s public works department said that the city is already at work on a solution.

This new research plays an important role, Bainbridge noted. “This work raises public awareness of the issue. It helps garner sup-

port and build momentum to finding and resourcing the solutions needed to resolve a complicated problem.”

Jared Van Huizen, a third-year student from Trenton, Ontario, is one of the students who participated in the research. He said that the project was more than just an assignment.

“I call Hamilton my home now,” he said. “I love the city, especially its natural beauty, and this is one way I can be involved, to help.”

—Monica DeRegt

Religious Coalition Takes on the Gun Lobby



Dozens of faith leaders said in January that they're ready to take on the gun lobby and demanded that U.S. politicians take quick and concrete steps to stem gun violence.

Clergy members and heads of religious groups representing the spectrum of American religious life petitioned lawmakers to reinstate a ban on assault weapons, require background checks on all gun buyers, and make gun trafficking a federal crime.

Rev. Jim Wallis, the evangelical who heads the Christian group Sojourners, took on Wayne LaPierre, the outspoken executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, directly.

LaPierre's statement after Newtown that the "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun" is "morally mistaken" and "religiously repugnant," Wallis said.

Rev. J. Herbert Nelson II of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Washington office said people of faith must reframe the debate on gun control and support "those of

us who would challenge the false choice between guns and freedom."

Rachel Laser, deputy director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, quoted the words of Martin Luther King Jr. before he himself was shot to death: "By our readiness to allow arms to be purchased at will and fired at whim, by allowing our movie and television screens to teach our children that the hero is one who masters the art of shooting and the technique of killing . . . we have created an atmosphere in which violence and hatred have become popular pastimes."

—Religion News Service

Africa Rises, China Falls on Persecution List

The persecution of Christians "vastly rose" in 2012 as radical Islamists consolidated power in Africa, according to Open Doors, a Christian missionary organization that publishes an annual list of offending nations.

Increasing threats can be seen in the greater prevalence of radical Muslims in government, according to the California-based organization.

In Mali, for example, which made the biggest leap on the "World Watch List," from unranked in 2011 to seventh in 2012, a coup in the north brought fundamentalist Muslims to power. According to Open Doors spokesman Jerry Dykstra, Christians there are in grave danger.

North Korea topped the Open Doors list for the 11th year in a row, followed by Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

In neighboring China, the picture for Christians continues to improve. More than 100 Chinese Christians still languish in prison, and the government still keeps close tabs on church officials, but "house searches and the confiscation of Bibles and Christian books no longer occur on a large scale," according to Open Doors.

Syria, now in the throes of a bloody revolution, became a country of particular concern for the group. Syrian Christians are under pressure from rebels fighting against the regime and from radical jihadists who have entered Syria with an anti-Christian agenda.

—Religion News Service

For more on these stories, please visit thebanner.org.



Business leaders meet weekly.

Bringing Faith to the Marketplace

Every week about 40 Christian business leaders meet in small groups in offices all around the city of Abbotsford, British Columbia, to study the relevance of their faith in the marketplace.

They are led by Esther De Wolde, chief executive officer of Phantom Screens and a member of Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford.

"There is an awesome pool of Christian business leaders out there who can reach out at work through friendship evangelism," said De Wolde.

She explained that the discussion topics are designed so that everyone, including the unchurched, will find the meeting useful. "We may discuss a business book from the mainstream media that everyone is reading. But then we go beyond those topics to share our own journeys of faith, to show that we are holistic beings designed for something bigger," she said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Tracey Yan

FAQs

Justice

Q I read that more wealth leaves Africa than aid goes to Africa. Is it true? Is it just?

A Yes and no. Most people in the U.S., Canada, and Europe think we give a lot of money to help poor people in Africa. It is shocking, then, to read the growing number of well-documented reports that show we are net takers from Africa rather than the generous donors we think we are.

Economists continue to argue about the specific numbers. But there is general agreement that the majority of Africa's natural resources are being mined and exported for profits that are rarely used for the people of Africa. If resource-rich African countries were to get as much return from their resources as is the norm in developed countries and use the proceeds for health and education, they would not need to borrow money and ask for aid.

Your question about whether this is fair is one Christians should probe more deeply. We hear a lot about corruption in Africa but far less about how companies, banks, and public policies in our countries are complicit in robbing Africa of its resources. In the end we are all complicit because we benefit and don't use our voices to stand up for justice even when the facts are known.

Concern for justice raises difficult questions that even many aid agencies don't talk about because it might affect their donations. If we were to spend the same amount of talent and energy working for justice in trade and investment policies as we do providing aid and charity, the people in Africa would be better off and have more control over their own development.

—Kathy Vandergrift teaches public ethics to university students and advocates for the rights of children.

There is a difference between faith and beliefs.

Faith Formation

Q Our head GEMS (girls' club) counselor asked if we could brainstorm ways my preaching might connect better with 10- to 14-year-olds. Every time I prepare a sermon now I find myself imagining how those early teens are listening. I wish I had more tools in my toolkit. Any ideas?

A The tone of your letter suggests that you already possess one of the most important tools the sermon toolkit needs: a teachable spirit that invites listeners to approach you lovingly with suggestions for change.

Here are some other tools:

1. Get to know children and teens by name and chat with them briefly whenever you can. When they know that you know them, they listen differently.
2. Incorporate judicious use of projected graphics. (You could invite a visually gifted teen to prepare these for you.)
3. Use one or two stories or analogies from their world as sermon illustrations.
4. Be mindful of opportunities to use appropriate humor. Humor is almost always disarming and draws people in.
5. Invite someone to prepare a children's worksheet for your sermons.
6. Lead an interactive discussion with your youth or middle school group on how you prepare sermons.
7. Ask your classis to host a workshop focused on strengthening this toolkit.

Not all of these tools may suit you, and adjusting your toolkit is hard work. But once the adjustments are made and preparation routines established (and support people are in place), the blessings are immense.

—Syd Hielema is a professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and a member of the CRC's Synodical Faith Formation Study Committee.

Outreach

Q Lately I don't feel as if my beliefs are strong enough for me to pray. Is it OK if I don't pray for a while?

A It is normal to go through periods where one feels that God isn't listening or perhaps isn't even there to be listening. During such times, it is one's own choice whether or not to pray. The short story "Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr," by Spanish writer Miguel Unamuno, tells of a young man who returns from the city to his native village in Spain because his mother is dying. In the presence of the local priest, his mother clutches his hand and asks him to pray for her. The son does not answer, but as they leave the room he tells the priest that, much as he would like to, he cannot pray for his mother because he does not believe in God. "That's nonsense," the priest replies. "You don't have to believe in God to pray." The story, notes theologian Harvey Cox, highlights the difference between faith and beliefs. While our beliefs may shift or change, faith is more primal, allowing us to pray even if we don't "believe." You must make your own decisions about when or how often to pray during this time. But trust that God's grace extends to us even—or perhaps especially—in such times.

—Bryan Berghoef is a church planter starting a new faith community in Washington, D.C., and the author of *Pub Theology: Beer, Conversation, and God*. ■

BY LLOYD RANG

Church History Highlights



3 **THE CHURCH IS GOD'S FAMILY**, gathered by the Holy Spirit from all nations and peoples of the earth and redeemed by Jesus, its bridegroom. But how much do you know about the family history since that great outpouring of grace really got things going at Pentecost? We're hoping the highlights on this timeline—of course we couldn't include them all—will whet your appetite to learn more about the ways God has been working and the ways humans have responded, sometimes wisely but often sinfully.

Despite the deep divisions that still plague us, we live in eager expectation of the day when the timeline finds its fulfillment, when all who have come out of the great ordeal and “washed their robes ... in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7) shall be truly and evermore one in the Spirit, one in the Lord.

—Editor

AD30 The first and busiest year in the history of the church included the crucifixion of Christ, his resurrection and ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These events set in motion the informal meetings of believers that would, over time, become the organized church. Passing around peppermints during the service followed soon after.

AD35-46

Stephen is martyred in AD 35. Over the next few years, Paul is converted and begins his missionary journeys to the Gentiles. In AD 57 he dictates his letter to the Romans to his amanuensis Tertius. The legal battle over royalties continues to this day.



AD64 Fire breaks out in Rome. Emperor Nero blames Christians and launches persecutions. According to second-century historian Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, Nero was also responsible for the deaths of Peter and Paul in AD 65. He did not, however, fiddle while Rome burned—the violin wasn't invented for another 1,500 years.



The first churches are built. In AD 231 the first building and grounds committee is formed.

AD230

AD303 Emperor Diocletian commands that all subjects of Rome worship Roman gods. The Diocletian or “Great” Persecution results in thousands of deaths. Emperor Constantine, who converts to Christianity in AD 312, issues the Edict of Milan in AD 313, ending the persecution of Christians and restoring their property. Also at this time we stop using “AD” in front of dates.



325-451

The age of the great ecumenical councils: Nicea (settling the issue of the Trinity), Constantinople (repudiating Arianism and clarifying the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son), Ephesus (proclaiming Mary the mother of God), and Chalcedon (clarifying the two natures of Christ, human and divine). Chalcedon II and III and Nicea II follow, but the sequels aren't as exciting as the originals.



410 Rome is sacked by the Visigoths. For the next few centuries, churches and monasteries protect Roman and Greek texts, preserving them through the Dark Ages—something to think about next time you check out a book from the church library.

800 Charlemagne is crowned Holy Roman Emperor. During his reign the “Carolingian Renaissance” takes hold, leading to a rebirth of learning, arts, and culture. Subsequent Holy Roman administrations slash funding to the arts.

1054 The Great Schism splits Eastern and Western churches over theological issues. The Western churches become the Roman Catholic Church; the Eastern churches become the Eastern Orthodox Church, headquartered in Constantinople (now Istanbul). A giant row develops over which pope, the one chosen by Westerners or the one chosen by Easterners, is the real pope.

1095 The Council of Clermont launches the first Crusade in response to a request for military assistance from the emperor of Byzantium. A speech by Pope Urban II convinces leaders to take action and inspires Aaron Sorkin to write *The West Wing*.

1150 Universities of Paris and Oxford are founded. Centuries later, the study of the humanities ultimately leads to the Renaissance and Reformation—but immediately results in lots of black turtlenecks and bad undergraduate poetry.



1456 Gutenberg produces the first printed Bible. This puts Scripture directly into the hands of people everywhere, allowing more folks to read it for themselves.

1517 Martin Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg—customary university practice and not at all unusual. But these theses go “viral” through the hot new communication medium of the day: moveable type.

1518-1648 Age of the Reformation. What begins in 1517 with Martin Luther is amplified by such Reformers as Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Menno Simons, and John Knox. In 1648 the Peace of Westphalia ends the Thirty Years’ War and more than a century of schism, war, and scandal.



1536 John Calvin publishes his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Destined to become required reading for Reformed seminarians, these books become a cash cow for the Calvin College bookstore.

1611 The King James Version of the Bible is published. Despite its flaws, the KJV is arguably one of the greatest achievements of Western literature and is the reason so many people can recite Psalm 23 with every “thou” in its proper place.

1633 The Roman Catholic Church forces Galileo Galilei to recant his theory about the earth revolving around the sun. Later popes are embarrassed by this as it becomes increasingly clear that the earth revolves around Toronto, Ontario.

1703 Johann Sebastian Bach begins writing music. “The aim and final end of all music,” he wrote, “should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” Three of Bach’s works are included on the “Golden Record” carried by the Voyager 1 spacecraft, which last year became the first human-made object to exit our solar system.

1740 The First Great Awakening sweeps through Protestant Europe and British America. Revivalist preachers bring a message of personal morality, individual responsibility, and the need for a personal relationship with Jesus. This not only transforms American Christianity but gives shape to an emerging nation.

1789 The French Revolution signals a new age of secular government throughout Europe. This also has a lasting effect on the culture of the West—as well as on musical theater.

1859 Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* hits the shelves. The implications of his book are not fully appreciated until Charlton Heston stars in the original *Planet of the Apes*.

1870 First Vatican Council declares papal infallibility. Galileo is not amused.





1898 Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary call for the development of a Christian worldview encompassing all of life. Reformed church immediately appoints subcommittee to define "life," "encompassing," and "all."

1914 World War I begins. Veterans of that war, including C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, become some of the leading Christian writers and thinkers of the 20th century.

1949 Evangelist Billy Graham preaches his first crusade, launching the age of mass revival meetings, televangelism, and BEH—big evangelical hair.

1962 Vatican II—a council devoted to modernizing the Roman Catholic Church—opens in Rome.

1968 American preacher and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated.

2007 After 80 years of schism, the Russian Orthodox Church reunifies, providing hope that in the end, we may realize this fundamental truth: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:3-6).



Lloyd Rang is a writer and a member of Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville, Ontario.



Learning from the Edges

by Lorilee Craker

John Bouwers, a pastor in Milton, Ontario—a Toronto suburb that is Canada’s fastest-growing urban area—goes to his neighborhood convenience store for the daily newspaper. Over three months, he’s struck up what he describes as a faith-engaging friendship with three Muslim men who work at the Mac’s store.

“The big thing we talk about at Crosstowne is allowing the rhythms of our life to engage people, grow friendships, and bless people,” Bouwers says, referring to the Home Missions-supported church plant he leads.

One of the men from Mac’s, Nadim, invited Bouwers to come to his mosque and observe a service there. Nadim, in turn, attended Crosstowne’s Thanksgiving celebration.

Ibrahim, who works the midnight shift at Mac’s, gave Bouwers a copy of the Qu’ran to read, and they’ve had respectful and meaningful conversations about each other’s beliefs.

“Ibrahim is, in all but name, a Christ-follower,” Bouwers says.

John Bouwers



“Stone Soup” weekly potluck at Destination Church draws people who are physically and spiritually hungry.

“Brother John,” as his Muslim friends call him, is amazed at how many people he has met since he moved to Milton in the summer of 2011. Fittingly, “turning strangers into friends” is one of the values prominently featured on Crosstowne’s website.

Bouwers’s work with the people in his neighborhood is changing both him and them—something that doesn’t surprise Moses Chung, the director of Christian Reformed Home Missions. “Programs don’t change a person,” Chung said, “but friendships do.”

Chung, who has been director since May 2011, says Home Missions is undergoing a slow but sure sea change, moving into communities and neighborhoods in fresh, innovative ways and linking with fellow workers in real partnerships.

Many churches may struggle to do the kind of friendship evangelism Bouwers is doing in suburban Toronto, Chung says. The CRC, like much of the Western church, is “losing its power in culture and society.

“In 20 years,” Chung says, “we’ve lost 20 percent of our membership—far less than some mainline denominations, but still alarming.”

According to recent CRC *Yearbook* statistics, 565 ministries reported no new members added through evangelism in 2011.

In Chung’s mind, this adds up to a crisis situation, but it also is an opportunity to change, grow, and flourish anew. One of the biggest pieces of this is embracing innovation, “learning from the edges,” and creating original ways to reach the lost for Christ.

“We’re now engaged in a major turnaround in the culture and the DNA of the CRC,” says Chung.

“The spirit is moving powerfully in our denomination. How will we be missionaries to those in our own neighborhoods and also to those God brings to our churches, schools, and workplaces? We’re good at being friendly, but we’re not good at making friends.”

Innovators, Not Imitators

Just as John Bouwers befriended Nadim and Ibrahim through a local corner store,

You add.
God multiplies.

other Home Missions partner ministries are moving into communities, forging friendships, and being change-makers for Christ. Tapping into the creative power of the Holy Spirit, they are inventing new ways to be missionaries in their neighborhoods.

One Hope Community Church is bringing dreams and anticipation back to one of Philadelphia's most defeated neighborhoods: Hunting Park, a community darkened by a 50 percent unemployment rate, crime, and poverty.



Beth Fellingner

"We took a survey (about what to name the new church), and hope is one of those things we all need," says Pastor Matt Lin. "In Philly, there's a lot of hopelessness, and for us it comes down to our hope in Christ."

Hope's 50 congregants meet in a house they bought from the city and fixed up. "We've outgrown the house now," says Lin. They hope to build on a formerly derelict 7,000-square-foot city lot. Church members and new friends are working together to restore the neighborhood.

In the depressed area of St. Thomas, Ontario, Pastor Beth Fellingner's Destination Church is sharing Christ's redemptive power through programs such as a "Mom and Babes" class and "Stone Soup,"

a Thursday-night potluck that draws in people who are physically and spiritually hungry.

"Everyone brings one ingredient—it could be an apple, an orange, a jar of jam—and then we all decide what we're having for dinner," Fellingner says. "I try

to bring a protein or meat, but not always. One night we had pasta with pineapples and tomato sauce. It was really good!"

She says some of the 35 to 40 soup-makers are lonely widows or widowers who long to share a meal. "We have an 82-year-old lady who comes in her »

'Being Church' in New Places

As Home Missions turns its focus to helping churches move into their neighborhoods, the places where missional groups, church plants, and evangelistic outreaches are happening are also changing. Take a tour of some of these novel settings around North America:

Bleachers, Locker Rooms, and Basketball Courts

For Mike Wissink and his ministry to college athletes at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich., "church" looks less like walls and steeples and more like bleachers, squeaky gym floors, locker rooms, or even the open road.

"I often drive students with injuries to their doctor appointments and physical therapy sessions in Grand Rapids (an hour away from FSU)," he said. "This is a unique chance to hear their stories."

Pubs, Restaurants, and Microbreweries

Far from the norm, yet connecting with people who rarely get reached, Bryan Berghoef is willing to take some risks.

"Pub Theology" is an idea Berghoef borrowed from the British and brought to life, both in a book by the same name and in his recent ministry at Watershed in Traverse City, Mich.

"We met every Thursday night in a microbrewery and all were welcome," he said. "It was designed to be an open conversation about faith and life." Berghoef is now planting a new church called Roots DC in the U.S. capital.

Community Gardens

The Table, a Home Missions-supported ministry in Denver, Colo., celebrated the end of the 2012 growing season with Croptoberfest, its first annual fall harvest party.

The Table is a growing network of neighborhood gardens as well as deepening communities. Croptoberfest featured a roast pig, apple cider, pumpkin pie, live music, a reading of Johnny Appleseed, and a version of bobbing for apples—with apples hanging from a tree. The Table was able to donate nearly 1,500 pounds of food to two local food banks this season.

A Coffee Shop, a Garden, a Motel

Montana folk are forming small communities in unique places and dreaming up new ways to embrace faith through Imagine, a church plant in Bozeman, Mont., led by Pastor Randy Van Osdol.

"We're kind of a church for people recovering from church," said Van Osdol.

"Sprout," one of several missional groups, began in a community garden. Participants are invited to work and share in the harvest. Extra food goes to a local food bank. The initiative draws people from all walks of life and leads to friendships and conversations.

"Jason" came to Imagine through a gathering at Wild Joe's Coffee Shop. "We discuss a topic such as immigration," said Van Osdol. "I bring in a passage of Scripture to give a biblical perspective."

Drawing from Sprout, the coffee shop group, and other small groups, Imagine meets on Sunday mornings in a Microtel Inn meeting room in Bozeman. —Lorilee Craker

walker and brings a soup bone,” Fellingner says.

A new missional endeavor started by Eric Schlukebir in the well-groomed Tomball suburb of Houston, Texas, serves the self-sufficient, financially comfortable families who live in subdivisions.

“People drive to work and drive home and shut their garage doors and stay in,” says Schlukebir. “Many people are not from here. They don’t have community or family ties, so it’s easier to just isolate themselves.”

The core group of organizing families reached out by hosting a “make-your-own-s’mores” bonfire on one couple’s driveway on Halloween night. The women in the group are starting a book club with some of the moms they met at the bonfire.

1,084 Mission Fields

As Home Missions continues to support an established inner-city plant or a freshly-minted missional foray into the suburbs, its director also envisions a



Members of One Hope Community Church plant flowers behind the church on a lot that had been vandalized and used as a dumping ground.

movement back to the stalwart cornerstone congregations in the CRC.

“What is God up to in the neighborhoods where he has placed our 1,084 congregations?” asks Chung.

“How can we partner with a 75-year-old church so that church can find newness again to bring a gospel impact to their neighborhoods, cities, and the world?”

The key word is “partner,” Chung says. Learning from the challenges of the past, Home Missions is pursuing change, freshness, and reinvention. But this can’t happen on an island.

“We want to engage, to come alongside churches, classes, pastors, and congregational leaders,” Chung says.

Coworkers for Christ

Adrian Van Giessen, the Home Missions regional leader for Eastern Canada, sees his role as a catalyst, a bridge-builder, a coach, and an encourager. John Bouwers and Beth Fellingner both serve in his region.

“For John I found a certified coach at the start, and I meet with him every month or two to sit down, mostly listening and giving him a space for questions and concerns,” Van Giessen says.

Bouwers’s ministry is supported by its local classis, Toronto, but also by a neighboring classis, Huron. “It’s not in their area, but they believed in his ministry so

much that they generously supported him,” Van Giessen notes.

As for Fellingner, “she’s probably the best evangelist I’ve ever met,” Van Giessen says, noting that Destination Church “is reaching so many blue-collar and street people with the gospel. It’s an honor to see the fruit of that.”

Partnerships start with established local churches because without them, pioneering church plants wouldn’t get the traction they need.

Jerry Holleman, regional leader for West Central U.S., says this is sometimes done through a pastoral residency in an established church, “as a primer that familiarizes (evangelists) with the area and the culture they will be planting in.”

Chung adds: “We’ve got to work together as one team to face the massive challenges of 21st-century culture. North America is a new mission field. We are better together and we need each other.

“We want to create a space for you to discover what God is up to in your neighborhood, your circles, and your tribes,” Chung says. “Join us as we join God in mission!” ■

Please Pray . . .

- For small groups, including those in Coffee Break and Global Coffee Break, to be refreshed in discipling others to love and serve Jesus.
- For churches to respond to the invitation to send their pastor and another person to the second annual Prayer Summit April 15–17 in California.
- For the Holy Spirit to open doors for established and new churches to minister to those in their communities who do not know the gospel.
- For youth in churches and on campuses to be transformed by God’s direction in their lives and to follow where he leads.
- For new churches to have strength and wisdom in reaching their diverse communities with the love of Christ.
- For the gospel to go forth across North America.



Lorilee Craker is an author and freelance writer. A native of Winnipeg, Manitoba, she lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Madison Square CRC.

A Rich and Varied Mosaic

God has provided the Christian Reformed Church and Home Missions with many gifted leaders and resources. This family of God, with a rich heritage and traditions, is becoming increasingly multiethnic.

Four leaders representing different ethnic groups—Javier Torres, Hispanic Ministries; Bob Price, Black Ministries; Tong Park, Korean Ministries; and Stanley Jim, Native American Ministries—serve and support local Home Missions endeavors.

Each has numerous stories to tell of how they are involved at various levels in training, equipping, supporting, and partnering with ministries, classes, and Home Missions regions across the CRC. Here are a few pieces of the mosaic.

Wayne Coleman, Imagine Fellowship, Holland, Mich.

Wayne Coleman, the pastor of Imagine Fellowship, says African-Americans are the fastest-growing ethnic group in Holland, Mich., the community in which he's shepherded his flock for the last four years.



Imagine Fellowship members and visitors.

"This is a very transitional neighborhood," he says of Holland's core. "We have lots of families who have moved here to escape the violence, crime, and poor schools in Chicago and Detroit."

One migrant from Detroit, "LaKeshia," found refuge in both her adopted



Pastor Wayne Coleman preparing to baptize a young girl with her mother standing by.

city and in Imagine, her new spiritual home. "She grew up watching her mother murdered by her father, and from that trauma turned to drugs and prostitution," says Coleman. "Through the church and work of God in her life, she began to change before our very eyes."

Jose Vazquez, Jersey City Mission, Jersey City, N.J.

In the heart of the densely-packed, multicultural medley of Jersey City, a pastor's heart beats for the people he serves.

"Jersey City has so many different nationalities," says Pastor Jose Vazquez, who leads the Jersey City Mission Church, a Home Missions partner ministry.

The church reaches out to Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Honduras, Peru, and Mexico. The needs of the neighborhood

are vast; unemployment, poverty, and hunger threaten to choke local residents. Jersey City Mission tries to provide some practical as well as spiritual relief.

"We have 'free markets' in the summer where we give away shoes and used clothes," says Vazquez. "We also have appliances we sell for a very low price or give away if needed."

John Kim, Holland Korean Church, Holland, Mich.

Engineer expatriates and exchange students from the "Hermit Kingdom" may attend Holland Korean Church for delicious kalbi barbeque and spicy kimchi, but some of them are also encountering God for the very first time.

Eighty percent of the people who come to Holland Korean Church are non-Christians, says Pastor John Kim of the West Michigan church plant he leads, a ministry supported by Home Missions. "They come for cultural reasons, to hear their Korean language and eat Korean food at the lunch after church. So I preach the gospel every Sunday."



Holland Korean Church members at 2012 New Year's Eve communion service.

Carol Bremer-Bennett, Rehoboth Christian School, Rehoboth, N.M.

Rehoboth Christian School's director, Carol Bremer-Bennett, is adopted. Her rich background is a stew of Dutch, Mennonite, and Navajo, all ingredients God has stirred together to prepare her for ministry in New Mexico.

Bremer-Bennett was born to a Mennonite mother and a Navajo father and adopted by a Dutch CRC family. The school's population is largely Native American, with 70 percent of the students coming from Navajo or Zuni backgrounds. Many of them live on reservations.

"God had a place for me here at Rehoboth and a calling that would bring those worlds together," Bremer-Bennett says.

—Lorilee Craker

Rubbing Off

“**W**hen they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished. . . .” (Acts 4:13). Not a very complimentary description, and in the original Greek even less so—“unschooled, ordinary” literally means “ungrammared idiots.” Luke is telling us that Peter and John had not gone to seminary, nor to an evangelism seminar or conference. No “how-to” books or DVDs had prepared them for their task. But the authorities unwittingly recognized the source of their ability: “. . . they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

When the authorities came to that conclusion, Peter and John were in the busiest part of the temple complex—the place where the once-crippled man we meet in Acts 3 was set down so he could beg from the most people. And that is where we are too: Where people are. Where we live and work and shop and go to school and relax and work out and eat. Where we might see the clerk who works in the local market, the person who sits at the desk next to ours, the one who does our hair or walks the treadmill next to ours, who plays on the same team, who repairs our appliances or tunes our cars. Peter and John were where we usually are: where the people are.

There in the temple courtyard, at the crossroads of life, they showed not only that they knew and worshiped and believed in Jesus but that they “had *been with* Jesus.” Something about

their public and private conduct, their very conversation, demonstrated that Jesus had rubbed off on them. You could tell by the compassion they showed to the man with a disability. You could hear it in the gracious tone of their voices as they proclaimed the gospel of grace. You could tell by the courage with which they faced opposition. You could sense it in their refusal to be silenced. Jesus had rubbed off on them.

Might I suggest, as we think about and thank God for the ministry of Christian Reformed Home Missions, that we too are missionaries in the places we call home? Has Jesus rubbed off on us? If we were arrested for our testimony about Jesus, would the authorities take note that we have been with Jesus? You may be the only connection between some of the people you are with and Jesus. Will they see him, hear him, take note of him because of you?



A strange thing happened a while after I preached on this chapter and pointed out how Peter and John were characterized as “unschooled” and “ordinary.” The church council was going to hold its annual dinner and decided to roast me, their preacher. They hired an audio technician to listen to my tape-recorded sermons and take out of context some of my more outrageous paraphrasings, using them as my supposed answers to completely unrelated questions posed by an interviewer. This technician had to listen to a good number of my sermons, among them the sermon on Acts 4:13. He took note of my paraphrase about “unschooled idiots.” But more importantly, he heard me refer to the fact that you could tell Peter and John “had been with Jesus.” I still wonder if he could tell that I had been with Jesus too. That’s not a bad thing for each of us to wonder about: Can anybody tell I have been with Jesus? Is he rubbing off on me? ■

““ Something about their public and private conduct . . . demonstrated that Jesus had rubbed off on them.””



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

OUT AND ABOUT

'Life Teams' in Mozambique

Seven years ago, starting "life teams" in the rugged highlands of northern Mozambique was just an idea in the mind of Rebecca Vander Meulen.

A 1999 graduate of Calvin College who first went to Mozambique as a graduate student, Vander Meulen acted on her idea when she became the director of community development for the Anglican Diocese of Niassa.

"The bishop wanted to launch a more formal response to HIV and AIDS within the church . . . [by] bringing knowledge to local congregations because there was very much an idea that HIV was caused by witchcraft," she explained.



Rebecca Vander Meulen (second from right) stands with villagers who have begun a series of life changes in their communities.

Their use of the phrase "In Christ there is no positive or negative" caught on, she said.

Vander Meulen's vision for Mozambican-driven development has evolved into the local life teams.

"I would go to a village congregation and give robust

HIV training to anyone interested," she explained. "Then I would ask, 'OK, what would you like to do with this?'"

When the villagers realized there were more needs than HIV, they started organizing community projects.

Vander Meulen still visits communities where she equips people to train local teams, helping them see the gifts they have to offer their neighbors.

"This helps them come alive in new ways," she says. ■

—Calvin College Spark

Text Message Brings Tatyana Back to God

Tatyana called herself a Christian but really didn't have a relationship with God. She thought of church as a place to go when you had a problem.

So after she moved from the Ural Mountains of eastern Russia to Moscow to begin her studies at a university, she stopped going to church. She wasn't experiencing any real problems and thought she had no need of God.

Several months ago, Tatyana was one of several thousand cellphone users who received a text message from Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Russian outreach leader for Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI).

The texts—a Bible verse with an invitation to read more, a brief message of spiritual inspiration, or encouragement to practice faith in specific ways—are sent to people who have shown interest in the Russian ministry.

Tatyana's text encouraged her to attend a local church the next day.

"I thought I must have received that message for a purpose," Tatyana recently wrote to Sosedkin. "So I found a church near the university and have been attending faithfully ever since.

"I liked the worship and the people. But more importantly, it has renewed my relationship with Christ." ■

—Nancy VanderMeer, Back to God Ministries International

Text messaging is an effective way to reach younger people in Russia.



TOGETHER DOING MORE

Drawing Young Adults to Christ

Between 10 and 30 young adults attend lunch, Bible study, and fellowship gatherings at the home of Ken and Jeanie Lee, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionaries in Japan.

The Lees began holding the gatherings in their home instead of in church, hoping to make it easier for Christian young people to invite non-Christians along.

Ken keeps the lessons informal, choosing a topic based on his audience.

He says it is crucial to reach young adults before they start

a career and a family. “Unless they build a strong Christian foundation, they will have a hard time surviving.”

Young people not rooted in biblical teachings struggle in a society that is 99 percent non-Christian, he notes. “Like many youth worldwide,” Ken says, “Japanese youth are caught up in the fast-changing world.”

Ken Lee met Nao at an event in Tokyo. When he learned she was not a believer, he invited her to attend the Bible study. Eventually she became a Christian and shared the gospel with her family.



Ken Lee and his wife have been holding Bible studies and gatherings for Japanese young people in their home.

Now her parents are Christians too.

“My job is to team up with strong Christian young adults to guide those who struggle

between this world and heaven,” Ken says. ■

—Sarah Lin, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

Diversity in the Valley

Ten California pastors gather regularly to explore how to increase their effectiveness in multiplying healthy multiethnic, bilingual, and Spanish-speaking congregations.

The group is culturally and denominationally diverse, a mix of Anglo and Hispanic representatives from Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America congregations.

Meeting as peers has helped them to focus on how belief in Christ breaks down cultural and organizational barriers, they say.

“We’ve learned valuable lessons about both Latino and Anglo culture,” says Pastor Zeke Nelson, coordinator of the Central Valley Multiethnic Church Planters peer group. “It’s exciting to be part of a larger movement.”

Alfonso Silveira, originally from Mexico, is pastor of Iglesia Maranatha, a CRC/RCA church plant in Delhi, Calif.



California pastors have been meeting to talk about establishing healthy multiethnic churches.

He says, “I am so happy to be welcomed by Anglo churches. Doors have been opened. I see something bigger in the future.”

Funding for peer groups is available from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

(SPE) program. The next deadline for grant proposals is May 1. For more information, visit crcna.org/SPE. ■

—Lis Van Harten,
Sustaining Pastoral Excellence



Chay Dia shared his experiences using a new method of planting rice.

Yield of Plenty

Like other rice farmers in the Cambodian village of Peak Chiroat, Chay Dia had a year that started with promising rains but developed into a drought.

Despite the poor conditions, Dia was able to harvest a good crop by following a farming method known as the “System of Rice Intensification” (SRI) that he learned from World Renew.

Dia learned SRI and other farming techniques through one of the farmer field schools World Renew started with funding from the Foods Resource Bank.

“Now that I’ve learned these new methods, I have been much more successful and motivated to try new things,” Dia said.

Using what he learned, he prepared his land and put compost on the seed bed to help the young seedlings grow strong. Then he was able to transplant them earlier in the year than he normally could have.

Traditionally after the replanting, Dia would fertilize the field with chemicals and wait for harvest. This time he weeded his field regularly and spread natural fertilizer to supplement the chemical ones.

Dia told World Renew that by using the SRI method he is able to use less seed, less labor, and less chemical fertilizer while getting a greater yield. World Renew compared Dia’s results with the harvest of his neighbor, who planted using traditional methods.

“The results spoke for themselves,” said World Renew-Cambodia staff member Rachel Brink: Dia’s crop was larger than the other farmer’s. ■

—World Renew, Cambodia

OUT AND ABOUT

*You add.
God multiplies.*

Prayer Summit 2013 to Offer Personal Stories

Next month’s Christian Reformed Church prayer summit will feature stories of people whose lives were touched—and, in some cases, profoundly changed—by the first CRC prayer summit held last year.

Stories will include how congregations have “caught fire” for prayer, how people have entered into closer connection to God, and how, through prayer, churches have become more active in their communities.

“These stories will focus on how God’s faithfulness has affected local congregations,” says Rev. Moses Chung, director of Christian Reformed Home Missions and one of the organizers of the summit, set for April 15–17 at All Nations Church in Lakeview Terrace, Calif.

Through the stories, says Chung, “we will continue to listen to God through one another.”

At the same time, there will be lessons to be learned—and learned again. “God is strong, and he wants his people to be strong and not weak,” says Chung.

Speakers at this year’s summit will touch on such topics as kingdom praying, prayer as acknowledging the presence of God, prayer as honest conversation, and prayer as “wasted time” with a purpose.

Besides the personal stories and teaching, the summit will give participants time to pray and worship together, said Rev. Joel Boot, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church.

Boot said he hopes that many CRC congregations will send at least one person and their pastor to the event.

The idea is for people from across the denomination to join in prayer and find “ways for the Christian Reformed Church to develop and enhance prayer ministries in North America until we are truly a denomination on its knees,” Boot said.

“We need each other, and we need to be praying together,” says Chung. “The Word of God is powerful.”

One of those who attended last year’s summit says that as “a result of attending the summit I will commit to spreading the word among my fellow Christians. . . . I will also be praying for those who do not yet know the Lord and building deeper relationships.”

Another of the 900-plus participants said, “I am excited to continue to pray for revival in our church. . . . I am excited to see where the Holy Spirit is going to take us.”

Visit crcna.org/pages/summit to learn more. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Fruit Frenzy

What is your favorite fruit? Fruits come in lots of different shapes, colors, sizes, and flavors. They grow on every continent except Antarctica. Some of the most common fruits that grow in North America are apples, blueberries, grapes, and cherries. Other fruits such as bananas, pineapples, mangoes, and oranges grow only in places where the weather is warm most of the time. Which fruits do you have in your kitchen right now? Let's check out some of the world's coolest fruits!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



The World's Wildest Fruits



Dragon fruit
You won't find a fire-breathing dragon inside of this fruit! Dragon fruit grows in Mexico and in Central and South America. It is known for its beautiful flower-like shape and smooth rosy color. The inside of the fruit is white and seedy with a sweet, creamy flavor. Dragons never tasted so good!



African cucumber
This fruit looks kind of like a scary monster! Also known as the horned melon, the African cucumber has a green jellylike pulp surrounded by thick, thorny skin. The taste of this melon is similar to bananas, cucumbers, zucchini, lemons, and limes all mixed together!



Durian
Despite its strange look and stinky smell, many people claim that durian tastes great. Some people describe the flavor as similar to a creamy almond custard or rich vanilla pudding. Durians grow on large trees in Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.






Rambutan
Another fruit that grows in Southeast Asia is rambutan. These amazing bite-size fruits look like baby porcupines! Though rambutans have long, bristle-like spines, the skin of the fruit is soft and leathery. To eat this juicy fruit people break off the skin and chew the white flesh inside.



Star fruit
Many people agree that this crisp and sweet fruit tastes something like an apple. When sliced crossways, each slice is shaped like a star. Star fruit grows in countries such as India and Sri Lanka, but you can probably find some at a grocery store near you!

Fruit or Vegetable?

Guess what? Not all fruits are sweet and juicy. Scientists who study plants define fruits as the part of a plant or tree that has seeds and can be eaten as food for humans and animals. This means that some of our vegetables are really fruits! Guess which of the vegetables below are also considered fruits. Circle the best answers. Then check your answers at the bottom of the page!

-  onions
  potatoes
  tomatoes
  spinach
-  pumpkins
  carrots
  cabbage
  celery
-  asparagus
  cucumbers
  radishes
  lettuce



Chocolate-covered Banana Pops

Try making this fruity treat in your kitchen today!

What you'll need:

- Three or four ripe bananas, peeled and cut in half
- Popsicle sticks
- 1½ cups chocolate chips
- Sprinkles, chopped nuts, or flaked coconut (if you like)
- Cookie sheet
- Waxed paper or aluminum foil



What to do:

1. Pour the chocolate chips into a microwave-safe bowl and ask an adult to help you melt the chocolate in the microwave. Stir the chocolate with a spoon to make sure it is completely melted and smooth.
2. Tear off a sheet of wax paper or foil and put it on the cookie sheet. Place one Popsicle stick about halfway inside the top of each banana (not the cut side). Dip each banana in the chocolate and carefully cover each banana with sprinkles, chopped nuts, or coconut.
3. Place each banana on the cookie sheet and freeze the bananas for at least two hours. Then enjoy your frozen fruity treat!

The Best Fruit of All

Did you know that you have fruit inside of you? No, it's not the kind of fruit that you may have eaten today. It's a special kind of fruit that is with you all the time. That fruit is a gift from God—it's the fruit of the Spirit! Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Those of us who love and serve Jesus carry this fruit with us wherever we go.

Think of some ways you can share the fruit of the Spirit with those around you today. Perhaps you can show love and kindness to someone by writing a letter or by forgiving a friend who may have hurt you. Ask the Holy Spirit for some ideas of how you can spread joy, peace, and goodness to others!

Fruit Fun

Unscramble the following letters to discover each hidden fruit! See answers at the bottom of the page.

1. AGMON _____
2. IALPENPEP _____
3. RESGPA _____
4. AAYPAP _____
5. EMLNO _____
6. EREULIBRSEB _____



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Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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BY VICTOR KO



Expensive Grace & Earned Discipleship

DURING THE SEASON OF LENT it's become a tradition among many Christians to give up something they enjoy, such as chocolate, television, or coffee. They do so in an attempt to remember the suffering of our Lord and Savior and to follow him in self-denial. Indeed, it is good and fitting that we count the cost of discipleship. The gospel writer Luke is particularly intent on getting his readers to consider that cost. So here is the question of the season:

Have you given up everything to follow Jesus Christ?

Vain Discipleship

For much of my adult life as Christian, my own answer had been “No, I haven’t.” You see, I felt that I had not suffered for the sake of the Lord enough, obeyed his commandments

enough, or sacrificed myself enough. As a result, I experienced a sense of shame and guilt, making me feel like an unworthy servant. I did not measure up to the expectations Christ had set before me—or so I was convinced.

There can be no mistake about the call and the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. “Those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples,” says Jesus in Luke 14:33. The journey of the disciple, therefore, should be marked with self-denial and sacrifice. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer captured this truth in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

Jesus raises the bar even higher by demanding of us, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27).

Both of us needed the rich grace of Jesus Christ that gives birth to radical discipleship.

At first glance many people find this confusing. Isn't this the same Jesus whose life and message have been about loving God and loving neighbors? What does he mean by hating others? What Jesus is saying is this: "You must love me more than the persons that are most precious to you. In fact, you must love me more than yourself." Loving Jesus above all else is our highest calling and command.

I knew I fell short of that standard. And so I was convinced the cost of following Christ was not high enough in my life. I felt as if my discipleship was not costly enough for the grace of the Lord.

Cheap Grace

Tim was a friend of mine during college. He grew up in the church and was familiar with the Bible and with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But his heart seemed to be far from the Lord. After graduating, he landed a lucrative engineering job with Ford Motor Company. He appeared to be much more interested in making money, driving his Mustang Cobra Jet, having one-night stands with women, and getting drunk on weekends than in loving Jesus. When I would confront him about his pagan lifestyle, he'd candidly and sincerely remind me, "Victor, the grace of Jesus is sufficient for me." And although his confession was not clothed in any remorse or contrition, he meant it sincerely from his heart.

Years later, I came across these words of Bonhoeffer, who became a martyr during World War II, admonishing his fellow German Christians for not walking the journey of obedience and sacrifice as disciples of Jesus Christ: "We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

If I was committing the error of "works righteousness," living the life of an unworthy servant and attempting to gain God's approval through my own sacrifice and obedience, then Tim was committing the error of "cheapening" the grace of Jesus Christ by living the life of a glutton, drunk, and fornicator. Both of us needed the rich grace of Jesus Christ that gives birth to radical discipleship.

How Grace Works

I now realize the extravagant riches of grace. I had been feeling inadequate and unworthy because I'd assumed that Christ's grace was not sufficient for my lack of sacrifice and obedience.

Then I grasped that Jesus was ultimately talking about himself, his own sacrifice and obedience. Jesus is the only one who gave up everything he had to become a disciple of God. He is the only one who loved his Father in heaven more than his earthly father and mother, his brothers and sisters—yes, even more than his own life. He is the only one who carried his cross to death, obeying perfectly the will of God the Father. And by his extravagant grace, he has not only removed my sins on the cross but also has lavished on me his perfect sonship when he arose from the tomb. Christ's crucifixion cleansed me of my unrighteousness and his resurrection clothed me with his righteousness. I can add nothing to what Jesus Christ has accomplished for me.

Thanks to be God that Jesus Christ has clothed me with his own sacrifice and self-denial. And having received Jesus' costly discipleship unto the Father, I am able to pick up my own cross, counting the cost to follow Jesus on the journey of sacrifice and self-denial—not out of guilt or shame but out of gratitude, joy, and freedom.

Just as I needed the grace of Christ to transform me, Tim too stood in desperate need of it. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians that we are saved only by grace. This saving grace indeed changes us into children of God—sons and daughters who truly love the Father and desire to follow Christ on the journey of discipleship, obedience, and trust. Far be it from us that we should trample upon what Christ has done by turning it into a cheap grace: "They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jude 4).

Dallas Willard points out that the Beatitudes are not a set of instructions by which we enter the kingdom of God. Nor are they a formula for living a blessed life. Rather, they are simple and profound descriptions of those who, by the extravagant grace of Christ, live in the power and joy of the kingdom here and now.

Have you given up everything for Christ? Or has Christ given up everything for you so that now you can follow him in his grace? ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Victor Ko is a church planter at mosaicHouse Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Intouchables: Lost in Translation?



YOU KNOW A MOVIE IS POPULAR WHEN you arrive early and people are already lining up outside the cinema. You know it's very popular when the manager decides to open a second theater to accommodate the crowds. Such was my experience of the French film *The Intouchables* when I saw it in France with a student group in 2011.

Based on a true story, *The Intouchables* presents Philippe (François Cluzot), a wealthy Parisian who was paralyzed from the neck down following a paragliding accident. Dissatisfied with his caregivers and with life in general, he decides to hire Driss (Omar Sy), a Senegalese immigrant who grew up poor in a suburban housing project and has just served six months in prison for robbery.

Philippe is highly refined and Driss is crudely crass; their differences are the source of much humor. This very odd couple ends up forming a deep friendship, crossing their racial and social differences and helping Philippe to enjoy life again. Omar Sy's high-energy performance and first-rate comic timing earned him a César (France's equivalent of an Oscar) for best actor, a first for a French black actor.

Despite the backing of producer Harvey Weinstein, who helped turn *The Art-*

ist, another French hit, into an Oscar winner, *The Intouchables* was a flop in America. Why? I suspect early negative reviews that accused the movie of racism.

Margaret Pomeranz and David Stratton of Australia's *At the Movies* noted, for example, "There's the touch of *Driving Miss Daisy* in the idea of an uneducated black man bringing love and excitement into the life of his employer. *Driving Miss Daisy* was a period piece, and *The Intouchables* is set in the present, when racial stereotyping . . . is less acceptable."

While the movie is far from perfect (blatant product placements, gratuitous sexual content and language, some obvious "feel-good" moments), I think critics missed the point.

The movie's real focus is its refreshing treatment of physical, emotional, and class-related handicaps. The men learn from each other to pull out of themselves and face loved ones they have been selfishly avoiding. And the excellent chemistry between Cluzot and Sy far outweighs the film's predictable buddy-movie plotting.

Even though *The Intouchables* may have been lost and forgotten in American theaters, I hope its recent release on DVD will give it a second chance. ■

The Intouchables was a flop in America. Why?



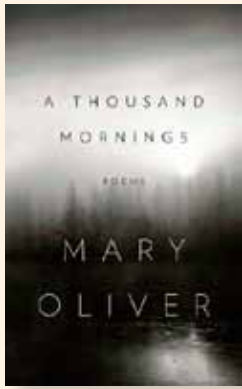
Otto Selles teaches French at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church.



He Is My Story: The Sanctified Soul of Arizona Dranes

by **Michael Corcoran**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

In June 1926, a blind and broke black woman took a train to Chicago to record for Okeh Records an album that is now recognized as the first gospel music to feature piano. Arizona Dranes, musical star of the Church of God in Christ, is credited with inventing "Christian barrelhouse," a blend of ragtime and boogie-woogie. In this stunning package, San Francisco-based label Tompkins Square offers Dranes's complete remastered works. The CD holds 16 inspirational piano-driven gospel tunes accompanied by a cloth-bound book that tells Dranes's pioneering life story, lavishly illustrated with period photographs and images of the segregationist era in which her joyful music was born. Without evangelist Arizona Dranes, there would have been no Little Richard. (Tompkins Square)



A Thousand Mornings

by **Mary Oliver**
reviewed by **Adele Konyndyk**

For almost 50 years, American poet Mary Oliver has been celebrated for her graceful inquisitions into the rhythms of the natural world. Her latest collection continues in this tradition, inviting readers to explore the creatures and shorelines of her beloved home of Provincetown, Mass. These are also works of spiritual exploration where questions of human purpose and sacred meaning are equally chased. It is an honor and a joy to journey with this master. (Penguin)



Flight Behavior

by **Barbara Kingsolver**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

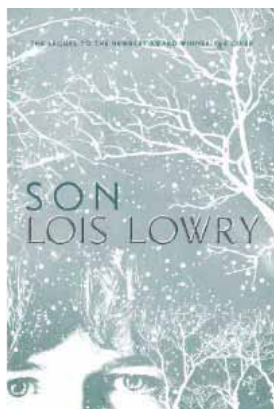
When 28-year-old Dellarobia encounters what appears to be a lake of fire on her trek up a mountain, her small-town Appalachian life irrevocably changes. Soon her “miracle” is the talk of her church community, scientists, the media, and nature lovers. Dellarobia is transformed by the people she meets as well as by her increasing knowledge and firsthand experience of climate change. Kingsolver deftly deals with complex issues without succumbing to stereotypes. Laugh-out-loud insights into parenting, marriage, friendship, technology, and church culture balance the weighty subject matter. (HarperCollins)



Love So Amazing, So Divine: Lent at LaGrave

by **LaGrave Avenue CRC**
reviewed by **Randall Engle**

This new recording from LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church shows how much can be done with an ambitious church music program. *Love So Amazing, So Divine* is the third in a series with music appropriate for the church year. This CD is for the Lenten season—or more precisely, for Holy Week. Featuring vocal and handbell choirs, instrumentalists, organ, and piano, the repertoire reiterates the gospel message of “love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” (lagrave.org)



Son

by **Lois Lowry**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

Son made its surprise appearance as the last in a quartet by Lois Lowry. Completing the story that includes *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, and *Messenger*, it intersects the lives of the characters from the previous books. *Son* is the story of a son’s yearning for his mother and of a mother’s sacrificial search for her son. Lowry brings to a satisfactory end the questions she left us with years ago. However, she leaves the true joy of the moment—and the future that follows—to her readers’ imaginations. (Houghton Mifflin)

THE LOWDOWN: Movies of 2012

Did you know that *The Banner* posts movie reviews online? Here are some excerpts; to see the full reviews, visit thebanner.org.

Beasts of the Southern Wild: “Recognizes that love and mercy have their place, even in the muddiest spots on earth.”

Brave: “‘True love’ will not make it all better for Merida. She has to repent, forgive, and reconcile.”

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey: “It sometimes feels as if we’ve seen all of this before.”

The Hunger Games: “Provides a way to reflect on what it means to be human in the midst of inhumanity.”

Les Misérables: “I got caught up in Victor Hugo’s powerful story of grace and redemption.”

Life of Pi: “The film has a quality of magical realism that enhances the narrative.”

Lincoln: “Viewers will walk away with renewed gratitude and respect.”

The Master: “Ironically, this movie about a charismatic leader who draws in the people around him held me at a distance.”

The Odd Life of Timothy Green: “Encourages compassion and care for the outsider.”

Ruby Sparks: “Exposes the limitations of our simplistic fantasies and our illusions about what we desire.”

The Secret World of Arrietty: “Lush animation and a wonderful story.”

Skyfall: “This is what our pop-culture figures come back from the dead to do: seek retribution, be it in the name of villainy or of justice.”

**MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE**

Loving the World to Life: How Genesis 1 Shapes Our Mission

ARE WE RESCUING SOULS OFF A DAMNED PLANET?

Fleeing a sinking ship? Does the world really matter to God?

The mission of the church must be shaped by a deep understanding of the value of the world God made. Sharing Christ's mission means sharing his affection for the world. And that affection immerses God's people in the life of the world, grieving its brokenness and celebrating its life.

As obvious as all this may sound, expressions of mission often downplay the value of the world. The great revivalist D. L. Moody once said, "I look at this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can. God will come in judgment and burn up this world. . . . The world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer. If you have any friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off.'"

Our mission, in contrast, is shaped and deepened by a robust theology of creation. In its original context, Genesis 1 challenges worldviews that diminish the value of the world. It challenges the assumptions of Israel's ancient Near East (ANE) neighbors, who viewed the world as an accidental consequence of the life of the gods. In Babylonian thought, for example, night fell as the sun god Shamash traveled through the netherworld, giving light and food to its miserable residents. For ancient Egyptians, the sun god Re travelled on his night barque. Stars served as oarsman and demons attacked him on his journey.

On the one hand, the world's relation to the ANE gods suggests a certain order and reliability. On the other hand, if the character and morality of the gods were no better than the character of humanity, life could be unpredictable. The gods could be good or bad, joyful or belligerent. The question of which god to placate at a given time was difficult to answer.

A Whole New World

Using the motifs and structures of its surrounding culture, Genesis 1 gives the world and humanity a serious upgrade.

Day 1: *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good (vv. 3-4).* Unlike the unpredict-

**We are loyal to the world
because God has made it
with care and delight.**

able gods of the ANE, Israel's God speaks with creative authority. Design and order pervade; life can be lived with confidence.

Day 2: *And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water" (v. 6).* In Babylonian mythology, Marduk, the chief deity, slays the goddess Tiamat, who represents water. He severs her corpse in two; the halves of her body form the watery sky above and the sea below. For Israel the world is not the collateral damage of cosmic violence but a gift.

Day 3: *And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." . . . And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation." . . . And God saw that it was good (vv. 9-12).* In the world of the ANE, evil and instability lurked. But Genesis 1 states seven times—the symbolic number of completeness—that creation is "good."

Day 4: *And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky." . . . God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night (vv. 14-16).* In the ANE the sun and moon are divine. For Israel they are creatures in the symphony of creation. Lest they be worshiped, the author even avoids using their names.

Day 5: *And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures." . . . So God created the great creatures of the sea (vv. 20-21).* In the ANE, sea dragons are powerful rivals whom the Canaanite gods conquer. Here the "great creatures of the sea" are simply aquatic animals created by God. Creation is non-threatening and stable.

Day 6: *Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness . . .” (v. 26).* In the ANE, humankind was created as an afterthought to provide the gods with food by offering sacrifices of produce and animals. Genesis reverses the roles: humanity is the climax of creation, privileged to image God to the world, which is shaped for the benefit and delight of humanity as humanity, in turn, exercises its dominion on God’s behalf. This is one of the biggest differences between the ANE’s worldview and that of Israel.

The creation account in Genesis 1 not only explains how we got here but challenges the prevailing worldview. It asks fundamental questions: What is this world like? What is the purpose of humanity? And then it answers them by waving a giant banner over the whole world that says this world matters to God!

Loving the World to Life

I recall listening to a man at a Christian men’s convention sharing how he’d struggled to feel purpose in his work. He was a carpenter. The man told us how he’d finally found direction and purpose by becoming a Bible study leader at his church. Now, the man said, he is living faithfully.

While we can certainly affirm the value of leading Bible studies, the root of this man’s discontent was not wrong activity but wrong understanding. He had undersold the value of the world and failed to realize that being a carpenter was his primary witness to the world. In working skillfully with wood, he calls attention to Christ’s powerful and creative reign. He advertises Christ’s lordship by relating to others a way that challenges idols of selfishness, sensuality, and individualism. The shape of his life is a witness to the cross and resurrection.

What this man expressed at the conference represents a retreat from the world that ignores the biblical teaching on creation. Ultimately such an approach renders the church’s witness irrelevant by consigning faith to a “spiritual” realm that has little to do with life.

On the other hand, a congregation that undergirds its mission with a robust theology of creation realizes that it displays

to the world most fully the gracious lordship of Christ during the week in offices, mothers’ groups, cafés, trucks, hospitals, and advocacy groups. From Monday to Saturday the church bears witness to the restorative reign of Christ, loving what Christ loves and challenging what Christ challenges.

How can we embark on this kind of mission? This kind of mission has affection for the world as its impulse. Here is a fierce loyalty to what has been made, to the stuff of this world. We are loyal to the world because God has made it with care and delight. And there remains much to love, even in the most fallen of creatures. In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”

Such loyalty to creation reflects the loyalty of Christ. For this world has been created with care and redeemed at a cost. In the death and resurrection of Christ, God has declared his affection and loyalty for the world, securing its future. God’s own mission compels his followers to be immersed in the life of the world, calling attention through word and deed to his restorative reign. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Mark Glanville, pastor of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church in Langley, British Columbia, is writing a doctoral thesis on Old Testament ethics. Mark blogs at markrglanville.wordpress.com.

The Unexpected Joys of Visiting

I F I'M REALLY HONEST, I have to admit that there are times when visiting elderly church members in nursing homes doesn't sound fun. It can be emotionally and physically exhausting. It's hard to see people who are so close to death or those who desire death. I wish I could take away their pain or their loneliness, but I can't.

But I've also experienced some powerful, unexpected joys when visiting these elderly saints. Here are a few of those joys:

Reminders of God's faithfulness. Some of these elderly saints have been followers of Jesus since they were children. They've persevered through many trials. God has been faithful to them and has done amazing things in their lives. Hearing their stories encourages, educates, and sometimes entertains me.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus. As people near death, their eyes are fixed on heaven. They are ready to be with Jesus and think about him every day. One man in particular tells me often, "Oh boy! We just can't imagine how good it will be to be with Jesus. We don't deserve it, but God is so good." Every time I talk to him, I'm reminded that life is short, and I get excited to see Jesus soon.

Sharing the gospel. Although I am the one appointed by the church to preach the gospel, I'm amazed at the way the people I visit preach the gospel back to me. They tell me about things they've done in their past and share their assurance of God's forgiveness. They remind me that we don't deserve God's love and mercy. They relish what Jesus has done for us, and they make my pleasure in the gospel a little richer.

Thanksgiving and contentment. These people do not have easy lives. They are



They make my pleasure in the gospel a little richer.

losing their independence as they have to rely more on others. Sometimes they are bored or lonely. And yet they never fail to say thanks—to me, to the church, but most of all to God. They have learned contentment and gratitude. I leave them feeling much more thankful for all God has done in my life.

Prayer ministry. God has given many elderly people a ministry of prayer. Even if their activities are extremely limited, they can pray. I was humbled and encouraged to find out that some of the people I visited were praying for me every day before I'd even met them.

God's sovereign plan. Some of the people I visit ask God every day to take them home, but they wait patiently. They say, "I tell God I'm ready to go home now, but he must have a plan here for me yet. He will take me when he is ready." Their trust reminds me to trust in God's sovereign plan for each of our lives.

An awesome God. A woman I visit has been bedridden for years and recently became blind. She has trouble remembering the names of her children. But she still talks for 30 minutes without taking a breath. One minute she'll be telling you a long story that doesn't seem to make sense; the next she'll offer an unscripted, deeply moving prayer. On my last visit, she said, "I just lie here and look up at Jesus in heaven and he looks at me." Is it really so far-fetched to believe that Jesus would give her this spiritual sight now that she has gone blind? Perhaps letting her see Jesus like Stephen did is God's special way of sustaining her. Our God is an awesome God! ■



Anthony Sytsma is pastor of Emden Christian Reformed Church in Renville, Minn.

ADS

Deadlines: April issue is 3/4/2013; May issue is 4/1/13. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2013 Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the office of the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda: a) Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15. b) Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1. c) Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15. d) Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15. Materials will be included in the printed Agenda if received before the synodically established deadlines.

Joel R. Boot Executive Director

ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER Synod has designated Wednesday, March 13, 2013, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, crops and industry, and the church worldwide. Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U.S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U.S.) is May 2, 2013. Joel R. Boot Executive Director

Financial Aid

CLASSIS HOLLAND CRC Leadership Development Team invites students from the Classis who are or intend to study for the ordained ministry in the CRC to apply for financial aid. Applications are being accept for the 2013-2014 academic year. Applications must be received prior to April 15, 2013. For more information and an application form, please contact Dave Altena at 616-335-6258 or by email to davidaltena5@gmail.com

CLASSIS ROCKY MOUNTAIN students preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid to the Classical Ministry Leadership Team for the 2013-2014 academic year. For information, contact Bob Westenbroek, 18474 E. Columbia Circle, Aurora, CO 80013 (303)400-6723, or (robertwestenbroek@comcast.net). All requests are to be received by May 31, 2013.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HOLLAND will meet in regular session Thursday, May 16, 2013 at 4:00 PM at South Bend CRC, South Bend, IN. Agenda items are due by April 5, 2013 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwerse, Stated Clerk. Email: louwerse@macatawa.org, FAX: 616-494-6054

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

WORTHINGTON CRC in Worthington, MN will celebrate 100 years on June 8 & 9. We invite all past pastors, members, and friends to join us for a Banquet (RSVP) the 8th and services and potluck on Sunday. For activities, lodging, and details contact wgtncrc@frontiernet.net or call 507-372-2811.

Church's 75th Anniversary

WESTERN SPRINGS CRC in Western Springs, IL will be celebrating its 75th anniversary with special services on April 28 and May 5. All former members, pastors, and friends are invited to join us. Please contact the church office (office@crcws.org or 708.246.4638) for details.

THE HOLLAND MARSH CRC in Ansnoorveldt, Ont. is celebrating their 75th anniversary this year. We are planning a pot luck supper on Sat. April 27 at 5:00pm with a program to follow, to be held in the Holland Marsh Dist. Chr. School. There will be celebration service on Sunday, April 28 at 10:00am. All former members welcome.

Announcements

LAKE ALFRED MINISTRY—CRC/RCA January thru April 14, 10:30 AM, 5:50 PM. Located on Rt.17/92, Lk Alfred, Fl. Close to Winter Haven & Rt. 27. Preaching Feb. Dr. J. Nederhood; March-April 14 Dr. G. Kroeze. Phone: 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442.

LOOKING TO ESCAPE the northern cold winter? Consider warm, sunny paradise on the S. W. coast of Florida at Venice. Enjoy warm, friendly welcome at the Reformed Church, 1600 Banyan Dr. (US Highway 41 and Center Rd.) Sunday morning worship, 10:30, 941-493-3075.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

SARAH WIGBOLDY (Elders, Barkema, Bonnema), 1950 S. Mountain Ave., #101, Ontario, CA 91762, will celebrate her 100th birthday on March 26. Her family praises God for her loving, faithful life. Open house, March 23, 10-2 pm at Inland Christian Home.

90th Birthday

MARJORIE (OLING) DEYOUNG celebrated her 90th birthday on Feb 6. Her address is 15958 Parkside, South Holland, IL 60473. Her children are Jeanne & Larry Bright, Barbara & John Groenewold, Sylvia DeYoung (deceased), David & Joan DeYoung, James & Cheryl DeYoung. Grandchildren: Tim (Kim), Mark, Emily (Jon), Henry, Andrew, Jonathan, and

7 great grandchildren. We all wish her a very happy 90th birthday and many blessings in the years to come. We love you mom!



EVELYN (VANNOORD) HOLWERDA- 2111 Raybrook Ave. SE #2014, Grand Rapids MI 49546- is celebrating her 90th birthday on March 6. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren delight in her and thank God for her. Her faith, expressing itself in love, continues to bless and inspire. To God be the glory.

EVELYN TRIEMSTRA (KIMM) 1201 Highland Blvd., B-205, Bozeman, MT 59715 celebrates her 90th birthday on Feb. 20. Her family of 5 children and spouses, 8 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness and our Mother.

85th Birthday

RUSS GOEMAN 4908 5th A St E Bradenton FL celebrates his 85th birthday Mar 22. His wife, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God for his life and faith.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

ENGBERS Rev. John & Violet 1807 17th Ave. Rock Valley, Ia. will celebrate 65 years of marriage on Mar 27 with their children, great-children, and great-grandchildren, praising God for His blessings.

60th Anniversary

DATEMA Frits and Grace (de Vries) will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on March 12, 2013 DV. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren wish them God's blessings, our love and congratulations...603-45 King Knoll Dr Brampton, Ont L6Y 5P2

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Church Position Announcements

DIRECTOR OF MINISTRIES First CRC of Byron Center, MI. is seeking a person responsible for coordinating, managing, and evaluating the ministries and staff of the church working with the Senior Pastor and Executive Comm. to promote and implement our vision. Detailed qualifications can be found at www.firstbyroncnc.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.

FULL TIME PASTOR Phoenix CRC in Phoenix, AZ is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a young and growing service oriented congregation located in the central Phoenix area. We desire an upbeat pastor who is committed to sound biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth as well as the neighboring community. If interested, or would like to send a resume contact Andy Keizer, search@phoenix-crc.org, 602-956-5440, website: www.phoenixcnc.org

ASSOCIATE PASTOR First CRC, Red Deer, AB. We are a growing congregation located in Central Alberta. We are seeking an energized full-time Associate Pastor to work alongside our Senior Pastor to grow and learn about our diverse congregation. We are seeking a Pastor who is gifted musically and can bring renewed leadership to the music ministry in our church. This individual would come equipped with an M. Div to provide spiritual leadership in the formation of small groups, discipleship and increasing outreach within our congregation and community while working alongside our Senior Pastor and other staff as a collaborative team. We are looking for an individual who feels gifted in working with children's ministries and young families. This individual would also be asked to preach once a month. If this position interests you please contact futurestaffing@firstcncredder.org. Visit our website at www.firstcncredder.org to learn more about our church and current programming.

WORSHIP/MUSIC DIRECTOR: Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, BC has an immediate opening for a half time Director of Worship/Music. The qualified applicant will have a deep love for Christ and His Church and a passion to give expression to our Reformed world-view utilizing a broad range of musical skills in a "blended" worship setting. For a position description and to submit a resume and application please contact the church office at office@cornerstonecnc.ca or 604-792-2517.

WORSHIP LEADER - Munster (Christian Reformed) Church, Munster, IN. Seeking candidates with a strong musical background (vocal and instrumental / keyboard) with a commitment to support the worship vision of the church, incorporating a blended worship style. Seeking a mature Christian with a preference to a Reformed background and ability to work with the Worship Team, Pastor and members of all ages. Munster Church is implementing a multifaceted Strategic Renewal Plan. Part-time / full time position available. Candidates are encouraged to visit our website: www.munsterchurch.org. Submit your resume and video link (ideally leading a worship service) to Paul Kats @ pkats@mmortho.com.

CHURCH SECRETARY Calvary CRC in Lowell, MI. is searching for a Church Secretary/Executive Assistant to become a part of their loving community. The position is for 12-15 flexible hours. Salary is negotiable depending on education, experience and gifts. Organizational skills, proficiency in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel required. We are looking to grow in our community through creativity, excellence and becoming a loving place for all walks of life. Calvary Church is located in scenic Lowell 15 minutes east of Grand Rapids MI. If you are interested in becoming a part of God's creative handiwork at Calvary, please look at our job description at www.calvarylowell.org. Click "About" then "Job Opening Church Secretary". To apply send resume to pastor@calvarylowell.org & calvarycnc@juno.com or call 616-897-7060. Attn: Pastor Rod Galindo

MINISTRY DIRECTOR Immanuel CRC is a progressive and dynamic church serving the communities of Brampton and Caledon, ON. We are seeking a Ministry Director who will be responsible for managing and supporting our vision, staff and ministries, with the objective to enhance the execution of all our ministries. For a detailed job description go to

www.immanuelcnc.ca and click on "What's Happening." All interested candidates are asked to submit their resume before March 31, 2013, along with a letter detailing their interests in the Ministry Director position, along with salary expectations to careers@immanuelcnc.ca.

LEAD PASTOR Calvin CRC, Ottawa, ON, seeks a lead pastor. Supported by capable lay leaders and a full-time Pastor of Youth and Congregational Life, the successful candidate is a strong Reformed-Biblical preacher who will challenge our diverse congregation and encourage us to live as Christ's followers in Canada's capital. Our new pastor will guide us in framing our aspirations into a new, Spirit-led vision statement and core values. To request the church profile and job description, contact the Chair of the Search Committee at larryvandergrift@rogers.com.

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES Northwest Indiana's Lake Central School Corp has one of the largest student populations in the state. These junior and senior high students need a youth pastor to lead them in their next step toward God. Crossroads Church's "brick-house" student ministry is looking for a leader to develop relationships on school campuses and in our multimedia student center. Must be able to recruit, train and empower coaches to oversee students' spiritual growth. Must be an effective delegator, relevant communicator, energetic leader with a vibrant faith in Christ and driven to reach unchurched students. An understanding and affirmation of Reformed theology is required. To apply for the position, please visit our website at www.aboutccc.com, click "about us" at the bottom of the website, then "employment opportunities" to fill out the job application. You can also read through a more extensive position description. Send your resume and application to Joan at jbuss@aboutccc.com

PASTOR: Cleveland, OH: Our church is seeking a caring full-time Pastor who is passionate about preaching, displays strong leadership skills, has an enthusiasm for urban community outreach and to help our church grow both spiritually and in membership. If you feel led to explore this opportunity with us, please respond by sending your ministry profile/resume to westparkcnc@att.net.

LEAD PASTOR Westend CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is seeking a full-time lead pastor. We are searching for a pastor who has an ability to relate to persons of all ages, and particularly youth, with strengths in preaching and relational gifts to lead our congregation in serving the church community. For more information and to obtain a church profile, please visit www.westendcnc.org or contact search@westendcnc.org.

FULL-TIME YOUTH LEADER Pease CRC, Pease, MN is looking for a dynamic, self-starting, visionary leader to develop programs and provide spiritual guidance for our 6th-12th grade students. Training in relevant field is required and degree is preferred. For more information and full job description, contact Trudy in the church office at 320-369-4228 or peasecnc@frontiernet.net

PASTOR AVAILABLE Daniel Roels, with preaching skill, passions for youth and outreach, and Spanish fluency, seeks God's next calling. pastor.dan.roels@gmail.com

PASTOR OUTREACH & DISCIPLESHIP River Terrace Church is an energetic, multi-generational, Christian Reformed church, located on the edge of the Michigan State University campus. As a congregation we seek to cultivate hearts and minds to flourish in Christ. Responsibilities of the Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship include providing discipleship training, support and outreach opportunities as we seek to glorify God in the community, the Michigan State University campus, and the world. Visit our website, www.riverterrace.org for a detailed job description. Send resumes and letters of interest by April 30, 2013 to: sam@riverterrace.org.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, MI is looking for a gifted pianist/vocalist with a vibrant love for God and His people to help plan and lead worship. We have a strong desire to reach the next generation while respecting our past. 20 hrs/wk. If interested contact us at: info@westviewcnc.org

FULL-TIME PASTOR Sunrise CRC in Lafayette, IN is seeking an ordained pastor who has a passion to lead our congregation in its outreach to nonbelievers, holds pastoral care as a priority, and actively engages worshippers through biblically-based preaching. If you would like to serve in a church that is actively loving for Christ, is concerned for its community, and invests in the lives of God's people, please send inquiries to: Search Committee, c/o Matt Davis at ms1davis123@gmail.com.



CONGRATULATIONS! We are happy to announce the 60th anniversary of John and Ria Jager from Lacombe Alberta - March 5, 2013! Congratulations from your children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren!

55th Anniversary

STRIUKSMA Bill & Marilyn (Kuyper) 13521 Droxford Cerritos, CA 90703. Celebrated 55 years of marriage on February 10 2013 Children, Bill Jr & Brenda, Mary (Steve Flietstra) Rodney & Tina, Dwayne & Linda, along with grandchildren and great grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

50th Anniversary

POST John & Marilyn (Heyboer) of Caledonia, MI will celebrate 50 years of marriage on April 5, 2013. Their children are Gary, Barb & Dave Stockwell, John Jr., Sharon & Brian Medendorp (Brooke) and Marcia & Rory Vanderby (Makayla, Jace, Brittyn). We praise God for His love and faithfulness for all these years together.

Obituaries

BILL Martha, 73, of Jarvis, ON began living in her eternal home with Jesus on Jan. 7, 2013. Surviving are her husband of 53 years, Louis, and their five children: Pam and Harry Stam, Jennifer and Bram Drost, Renée and Randy Nieuwsma, Barb and Ron Douwes, and Chris and Kelly Bill; 20 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

BONNEMA Marguerite, age 99; 2/8/1913-1/29/2013; c/o 5065 Philip St, Maple Hts, OH 44137. Preceded in death by parents Nicholas and Grace, siblings Theodore (Marie), Gertrude Louis (Henry), Walter (Lucille), Albert (Florence), Matilda Rogers (Herbert), Ruth and Robert. Nurse, teacher, co-founder of Bethany Christian Services. Beloved cousin, aunt, grand-, great- and great-great aunt and friend to many.

BOOT Aaltje was born on March 13th, 1932 in Enschede, Netherlands and was called home to be with her Lord on December 30th, 2012 in Vernon, B. C. at the age of 80 years. Aly will be lovingly remembered by her husband: Kornelis, her children Anthony (Christine) Boot, Teresa (Wesley) Jeltema, Deboraha (Brian) Zeutenhorst and Reginald (Dianne) Boot, eleven grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren, her 3 sisters and extended family.

DEBOER Edith (nee: Vander Meulen); aged 92; January 9, 2013; 4153 Lakeshore Dr. N, Holland, MI 49424; formerly of Oak Brook, IL; She was preceded in death by her sisters: Johanna (Al) Nederhood and Annette (Martin) Evenhouse. She is survived by her husband: Richard; children: Richard (Janice) DeBoer, Jack (Jennifer) DeBoer; grandchildren: Pam (Jeff) King, Eric (Hillary) DeBoer, Kara and Natalie DeBoer; great grandchildren: Jenna, Levi, and Wyatt.

DEBORST Julia (Dykstra) age 86; January 9, 2013; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her husband Dr. James H. DeBorst. She is survived by her daughter: Elizabeth (Craig) Hitchcock; son: James (Ruth) Padilla DeBorst; grandchildren: Daniel (Tracy) VanderHeide, Sarah (Jake) Cook, Maya Angela, Anton, Jonathan, Maria Isabel, Luana, and Natalia DeBorst; and great grandchildren: Sasha Rikkers DeBorst and Megan Vander Heide; sisters: Marjorie Pursifull and Gwendolyn Vruwink; sisters-in-law: Arlene Kladder, Jeanne DeBorst and Carol (Dick) Gootjes.

DEJONG Theodore, died Dec. 23, 2012 at age 86; formerly of Winfield, IL. Survived by wife Eleanor, children Jane (George) Zoeterman & Phil (Ruth), 9 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren, & 2 sisters. Preceded in death by son Ralph and 6 brothers.

DEN DULK Jacobina "Binie", age 93 of Ripon, CA went to be with her Lord and Savior on January 25, 2013. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. Gilbert and two step-sons, Clarence and Robert. Binie is survived by two step daughter-in-laws, Marian and Nel, many grandchildren and nieces and nephews.

DEN OUDEN Lester J., 93, of Ripon, CA. went to be with his Lord on Dec. 4, 2012. Survived by his wife of 71 years Angeline (Pasma); father of Judy Groen (Francis), Bud Den Ouden (Deanna), Sandra Visser, and

Robin Meeuwse; loving grandfather to 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

GRIEDE Esther E nee Meines, age 78; of La Mesa, CA went to be with her Lord on Jan. 6, 2013. Survived by her husband, Albert of 59 1/2 years, children, Cyndi (Ken) Boss, Sharon Houtman, Jack (Gayle) Griede, 12 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren.

HEKMAN Sylvia Sue (Jenema) went to celebrate Christmas in heaven with husband Henry on Thursday, December 20, 2012. She is survived by four sons, James (Lynn), Phillip, Stephen (Deborah), Douglas (Charlene) and one daughter Mary (Robert) Atkins, a sister, Ruth (Harold) Rozeveld, 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.



LEFFRING Sophie, age 91, resident of St. Anne, formerly of Chicago, born and raised in Roseland. Went to be with her Lord and Savior on January 15, 2013. Beloved daughter of the late Isaac and Bertha (nee Buursma) Leffring. Loving sister of the late Harry (Theresa), the late Louise (late Nick)

Schutt, the late Rena (late Louis) Clousing and the late Reynold (late Gertrude). Dear aunt of Joy Vander Weit, Harvey (Nancy) Leffring, Melody (Don) Visser, Crystal (Peter) Collins, Robert (Connie) Schutt, Shirley (Lor) Luchtenburg, Edward (Cindy) Schutt, Wayne (Greta) Clousing, Gary Clousing, Jim (Tina) Clousing, Jack Leffring and Steve (Bonnie) Leffring. Cherished great and great-great aunt of many nieces and nephews.

RHODA Arlene R. (Brummel), 84, went home to the Lord January 6, 2013. Preceded in death by her beloved husband of 64 years, Thomas A. Rhoda; mother of Michael (Barbara) Rhoda, Rilla (Jeffrey) Reinsma, Suenell (Don) Terreault, and Kenneth (Ellen) Rhoda; grandmother of Eric (Julie) Rhoda, Lauren (Jay) Marrs, Arletta Rhoda, James and John Reinsma, Nicole, Larissa, Janelle and Thomas Terreault, and Kellen Rhoda; grandma to Shannon (James) Zielonka; great grandmother of 6; great grandma to 2; sister of Diane (the late Robert C.) Bloem; and sister-in-law of Jeanette Vanden Bosch, David (Shirley) Rhoda, and Ronald (Shirley) Rhoda, Carol (the late William) Rhoda, Coral (the late Richard) Rhoda. Preceded in death by her parents William & Mary (Voss) Brummel, and Robert C. Bloem. Committal was at Ft Logan National Cemetery, Denver, CO

ROZEBOOM After waiting on the Lord (Ps. 130), former farmer George Rozeboom was taken home on 12/21/12 at age 96. Preceded in death by his wife Elizabeth of 66 years, he is lovingly remembered by children - John with Jeannie, Ida Ann with John Vander Molen, Gerry with Liz, and Eric, 10 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren. His legacy of gentleness and generosity touched his family, church, and community.

TAZELAAR Raymond, went to be with our Lord on January 30th, 2013, 2000 St. Regis Dr, #4G, Lombard, IL, 60148. Husband of Gertrude, formerly Kooima, nee Boeringa and the late Jean, nee Bel; father of the late Peter (the late Grace) Tazelaar, Jan (Joe) Commanda, Beth (Larry) Cunningham, Tom (Ruth) Tazelaar, Karen (George) Folkerts, Jim (Jo) Tazelaar, John (Cindy) Tazelaar, and Rob (Laura) Tazelaar, stepfather of Bob (Pat) Kooima, Barb (Dave) Vandermuellen, Arlene (Marty) Wezeman, George (Deanne) Kooima, James (Laura) Kooima, and Carol Verlare; grandfather of 42; great-grandfather of 70; brother of the late Louis Tazelaar, and the late Jeff (Jeanette) Tazelaar.



TEVELDE Zwaantina "Swannie" age 99 of Chino CA joined "the cloud of witnesses" January 16, 2013. Born in Platte SD to John and Grace Deurwaarder, a graduate of Grand Haven Christian Schools, she married Harm (1910-1990) and moved to Artesia CA in 1936. She was passionate about

Christian education and missions and had a deep desire that all, especially her immediate family of 118, know and love Jesus. Children: Margaret Houstma (Stephenville TX), John (1940-2005) and Sheryll (San Jacinto CA), Shirley and Jack De Groot (Denver CO), Ralph (1943-98) and Bonnie (Chino CA), Harry Theodore (1945-48), Grace and Dave Kreulen (Lansing MI), Betty and Herb Reinders (Nokomis FL), Marvin and Sandy (Ft Lupton CO), Harriet and Ralph Hill (Exton PA); 29 grandchildren; 52 great-grandchildren. Her children rise up and call her blessed (Prov 31).

TURNER Natasha (Meyer) age 41, passed peacefully into the arms of her Savior on January 25, 2013. She is survived by her loving husband Mark, daughter Zoe, parents Galen and Thelma Meyer, siblings Chris and Alison Meyer, Becki and Jim Veal; in-laws Darrel and Jane Turner, Beth and Jamey McLeod; two nephews and seven nieces. Her blog: meyerturner.com

VANDE KERK Christine (Voss); age 100; January 8, 2013; 0-151 Port Sheldon Rd., Grandville, MI 49418; She is survived by her husband, Henry Vande Kerk; his children: Del and Willy Vande Kerk, and Neva and John Jarvis; sister: Agnes Steegstra; sister-in-law: Dorothy Voss; numerous nieces and nephews.

VRIESEMA Harry, age 77 of Ridgewood, NJ went to be with Lord Dec 29, 2012. Survived by his wife, Barbara of 55 years, father of Richard (Kathy), William (Judy), John (Sandra), Linda Boonstra (Jack), and 15 grandchildren. Also survived by 3 brothers, Henry, Samuel and Kenneth. Great is His Faithfulness!

Employment

BIBLE AND THEOLOGY PROFESSOR Kuyper College's Bible and Theology Department seeks a faculty member committed to the Christian faith to fill a tenured-track appointment beginning in July 2013. Candidates should be able to articulate and adhere to a Reformed approach to the Bible and theology, and possess the ability to teach a variety of courses in theology and biblical studies. Candidates who currently possess a Ph. D. are preferred. Kuyper College is an equal opportunity, non-discriminatory employer, and is committed to diversity within its community. More information can be found at www.kuyper.edu/bibletheologyprofessor.

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NEW2YOU SHOPPE STORE MANAGER The New2You Shoppe, a retail thrift store whose proceeds provide funds for tuition assistance at Grand Rapids Christian Schools, is seeking a full-time Store General Manager. Qualified candidates should have previous management experience and be able to lead and work well in a team environment. Retail and/or volunteer experience is highly desirable. Candidates

must be committed to Christian Education, its principles and philosophies. We offer a competitive salary and benefits package. Send cover letter and resume to agninal@yahoo.com

PRINCIPAL NEEDED Alameda (CA) Christian School invites applications for the position of teaching principal beginning July 2013. More info including the position description, school profile, and application materials can be found online at www.alamedachristianschool.com or email acs.principal.search@gmail.com

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KING'S WELCOMES A NEW PRESIDENT!

The Board of Governors of the King's University College in Edmonton is delighted to announce the appointment of **Dr. Melanie Humphreys** as its fourth president. Effective July 1st, she will replace Dr. Harry Fernhout after he retires on June 30 following eight years of faithful service.

Dr. Humphreys is currently Dean of Student Care & Services at Wheaton College, top-ranked Christian liberal arts institution west of Chicago, where she has served since 2009. She also spent 10 years as Vice President of Student Life & Dean of Students at LCC International University in Lithuania, an internationally recognized Christian liberal arts institution offering a unique, future-oriented style of education.

The new president has a PhD in higher education from Azusa Pacific University in California, an undergraduate degree in English and Psychology and a master's degree in Administrative Leadership from Trinity Western University in B.C. She was born in Dawson Creek, B.C. and grew up in greater Vancouver.



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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. Thanks!

Years ago, we knew our then-3-year-old daughter, Jennifer, was listening each Sunday as her father, a pastor, led the congregation in the Lord's Prayer as part of the invocation. But we didn't know just how well she was listening until one evening at dinner when she amazed us by repeating the entire prayer, concluding with "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Please be seated."

—*Judy LePoire*

Before the election our 6-year-old granddaughter's friend asked her, "Who are your parents voting for?"

She replied lightly, "Oh, we always cheer for the San Francisco 49ers!"

—*Diana and Hank Bron*

My 5-year-old great-grandson, Joseph John, was told by his mother that he would soon have a brother. She showed him an ultrasound image, taken seven months into the pregnancy, that clearly showed a male child. A little while later, while riding in

the car, Joseph said, "Mom, even if my brother is ugly, we'll love him, won't we?"

—*Wayne K. Dornbursh*

A police car pulled up in front of Grandma's house, and Grandpa got out. The police officer explained to Grandma that the gentleman was lost in the park and couldn't find his way home.

"Oh, dear," said Grandma, "you've been going to that park for over 30 years. How could you get lost?"

Leaning close to her so the police officer couldn't hear, Grandpa whispered, "I wasn't lost. I was just too tired to walk home."

—*George Vander Weit*

My great-niece, 3-year-old Phoebe, was head over heels in love with her baby brother, Oscar. One day at Sunday school, the teacher told the children that Jesus was their very best friend. Phoebe put up her hand and said, "Actually, Teacher, Oscar is my very best friend."

—*Ruth Hensen*

Seen on a church sign in Oakville, Ontario:

Attend church today. Avoid the Christmas rush.

—*Julie Christiaan*

Samuel, my 5-year-old son, and I were making cookies. When I looked over at him, he looked so cute that I told him I was going to steal a kiss from him. He looked me straight in the eye and said,

"Mom, you know what the Bible says."

I responded, "What does it say?"

To which he replied, "You shouldn't steal."

—*Jen Schoenherr*

Want to know why women are called women? Adam saw Eve and he said, "Whoa, man!"

—*Daniel Niemeier*

I was out for lunch with my 4- and 2-year-old granddaughters and their parents. The little ones ordered from the kids' menu, which included a hamburger, drink, and dessert. Noticing the girls' unfinished meals, the waitress put their dessert in a bag to take home. When the 4-year-old

asked what was in the bag, my son-in-law replied that it was a treat for the car. Taking a peek at the cookies inside, she explained to her dad that the car does not eat cookies.

—*Jean Wolting*





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