

BANNER

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Don't Be So Sure

AN OLD JOKE GOES LIKE THIS:

Patient: "Doc, I'm just not sure of anything anymore."

Psychiatrist: "That's healthy. Only seriously deranged people know anything with complete certainty."

Patient: "Really? Are you sure about that?"

Psychiatrist: "I'm absolutely positive."

Clarence Vos's article (p. 18) cautioning us not to be so "dogmatic" might be unsettling, but we need to take it to heart.

For example, I knew a lot more going into seminary than when I graduated. It was tuition money well spent. And many "old warhorses" observe that their decades in ministry have made them less sure about more things and more sure about things that truly matter.

Hebrews 11 tells us that the people of faith "All . . . died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them" (v. 13, NRSV). From far off, we see the broad contours clearly enough but not the fine detail. The faithful (did it matter if they were pre- or post-tribulation rapturists?) taught us to leave that in God's hands as they expectantly trudged on to the New Jerusalem.

Leaving lots of room for each other on "disputable matters" doesn't need to spiral into unbelief. On the contrary, the more we study Scripture's truths, the more we become aware of our own inability to grasp their full height and depth and breadth. We live with the mysteries of creation, incarnation, justification, and sanctification. While we marvel at them, we admit that we can't possibly understand them. Biblically, a mystery is not something that gets solved by human deduction as in a dime-store novel. A true mystery is something that will always be an object of wonder, always revealing deeper levels of truth and beauty—like a finely faceted diamond.

Take the mystery of creation. Did God make the universe in seven actual days, through some very ancient "Big Bang," or in some other way? We have some brief creation passages in Scripture and some scientific data out there in God's good earth and sky. But why would we imagine that our personal *interpretation* of those is infallible? After all, we were not there in the beginning. The mystery is just too high. We don't get it. We don't *have* to get it. As Vos suggests, if it's a matter of real dogma, why would we even *expect* to get it? Let's show some humility as we continue to allow our faith to reach for greater understanding.

On many debatable issues *The Banner* has been accused of "pushing its own agenda." Truth to tell? We open the pages of this magazine to a discussion of such topics because we really and sincerely *don't* know, and we love it when folks on all sides exchange helpful, faith-informed thinking on the topic. We learn from that. It is our prayer that our readers will too, whether it changes their minds or not.

A well-functioning family thrives on open, honest discussion that dares to venture out in trust. We don't grow when everything remains rigidly nailed down.

As an exercise of faith, let's risk the conversation. ■



Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta.

A true
mystery is
something
that will
always be
an object
of wonder.

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Noisy Contemplation

TWO YEARS AGO my relationship with God took a nosedive. It wasn't some terrible tragedy that started the downward spiral. It wasn't the problem of evil, or doubts about my faith, or a lack of trust in God.

I had a baby.

Before the baby, my time was my own and I had a lot of it—though I didn't realize it then. I spent time in solitude. Went on retreats. Kept journals. Thought about things.

After the baby, my time belonged to a tiny human being who kept odd hours, filled diapers with astonishing frequency, and depended on me as the sole source of her food. Solitude was a distant memory. Retreats were out of the question. My journal gathered dust, and I was too tired to think. Deprived of the spiritual disciplines on which I had depended for a decade and intruded upon by a miniature third party whose highest priority was her own comfort, my relationship with God faltered. I looked forward to the day when I could use my time as I pleased. It was a discouragingly long way off.

In *Listening for the Soul*, Jean Stairs offers a different perspective. “The ordinary events of our experience,” she argues, “should not be in the way or apart from the way to living in the presence of God, but the way to it.” If this is right, then midnight feedings and diaper changes—the ordinary events of my suddenly-hijacked life—are, somehow, the way to the presence of God.

Silence and solitude are indispensable spiritual disciplines, but to practice them requires some measure of control over one's time and some measure of independence. Control and independence are some of our highest cultural ideals, but they are not a new mother's reality.

My downward spiral slowed and then reversed when I began to work not *against* the tied-down nature of my new existence, but *with* it. Sitting down to feed the baby became a reminder at regular intervals throughout the day to offer a prayer of gratitude to God for the way he sustains my life. Being always available to another human being became an opportunity for reflection on the nature of a God who never sleeps and always is available to all. The fierce love I felt for this baby paled in comparison, I realized, to God's love for his people.

The Christian tradition is rich with examples of people who lived with an awareness of God's presence in the most mundane of circumstances. Brother Lawrence reveled in the presence of God while washing dishes (*The Practice of the Presence of God*). St. Augustine wrote an extended meditation on God's provision to him through the ordinary medium of his mother's milk (*Confessions*). Jean Stairs refers to the awareness of God's presence and provision in the midst of the hustle and bustle of everyday life as “noisy contemplation.” For parents of young kids, it often seems there is no other kind! But if Brother Lawrence could sanctify the time he spent washing dirty dishes, who's to say we can't do the same with time spent changing dirty diapers? ■



Christina Rea has two stepchildren, ages 15 and 11, and two other children, ages 2 and 6 months. She is a resident in the Clinical

Pastoral Education program at St. Joseph Hospital in Mishawaka, Ind., and attends South Bend Christian Reformed Church.

You do not need to seek
him here or there.
He is no farther off than
the door of your heart.

— MEISTER ECKHART

Inclusive or Exclusive?

LEE

OPINION



Those of us who are “insiders” expect “outsiders” to understand us.

NOW THAT I’M RETIRED, I’m able to listen to and read sermons that others preach. It’s been an enjoyable experience, but I’ve also been struck by the use of exclusive language in some sermons. One pastor said, “A person could say that God is protecting him, glorifying him, keeping his head held high, and responding to his prayers when he already has everything going for him.” I couldn’t help thinking it would have been much more inclusive to use “people” and “them” instead of all those “him”s.

Another quoted Scripture using language that included such phrases as “the men of Judah,” “the sons of disobedience,” and “the unrighteousness of men.” In a society that is put off by sexist language, why use it—especially when gender-neutral translations of the Bible are readily available?

But our sensitivity to the people to whom we speak must go further than gender-neutral language. We also need to take a look at the acronyms we use in our speech, our bulletins, and our publications. One sermon I heard repeatedly mentioned the ESV. What’s the ESV? At a meeting I attended I was told that a

student had graduated from another seminary and was now enrolled in the EPMC program at Calvin Seminary. What’s EPMC?

Those of us who are “insiders” expect “outsiders” to understand us when we use our acronyms—unwittingly excluding the very people we wish to include. We use these acronyms so often that we don’t even realize that others might not know what we’re talking about. I once served on a committee with a person who used acronyms left and right. One night I sent him an email asking a question deliberately packed with acronyms. I expected him to respond, “OK, George, I get it. I’ll be more careful.” Instead he simply answered the question, presumably not even noticing the abundance of acronyms.

Every organization has its own supply of acronyms. For example, I recently flew to a meeting. When our plane was almost ready to take off, the pilot said, “Sorry, but we’re experiencing a short ATC delay.” Why not simply say “air traffic control”?

Clearly the church is not unique in its use of acronyms. But the church *is* in the business of communicating the gospel, of including people instead of excluding them. The language we use should give evidence of that. ■



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



The Life You Never Wanted

Joyce Kane’s article “Living the Life You Never Wanted” (February 2013) is a masterful piece that carefully picks up and handles, explores and illuminates that magic spot where everything changes when we do what we are supposed to do instead of what we are inclined to and want to do. It is that very space where the horror of the crucifixion can be understood: Jesus did not get what he deserved so that I also do not get what I deserve.

—Douglas Niehof
Albuquerque, N.M.

Valentine’s Embrace

Thank you, John Lee, for doing what Jesus would have done on that Valentine’s Day many years ago (“A Valentine’s Embrace,” February 2013). If we were all as brave and as loving as you, Christians would not be viewed in such a negative light by so many people. Your story is filled with the deepest and most profound love of all—the true love of Jesus Christ.

—Patricia Hartshorn
Dearborn, Mich.

I was moved by John Lee’s article “A Valentine’s Embrace.” Too often Christians rush to condemn and correct; John’s example created a wonderful image of Jesus in response to the brokenness of same-sex relationship. Unfortunately the article left me wanting more of John’s biblical response

TTERS

in leading his brother in Christ out of his brokenness (Rom 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-11). By leaving your readers with a good start we were deprived of a best ending. When it comes to addressing homosexuality, the church has yet to find a godly balance between loving the sinner and hating the sin.

—Mark A. Staal
Southern Pines, N.C.

Grace in Times of Evil

As a Christian mental health professional, I want to applaud Mr. Boldenow for his deep faith and his courage to speak out (“Grace in Times of Evil,” January 2013). His personal story is a powerful narrative on how evil can manifest in unexpected ways and how it is often not linked to personal action or intention.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be a devastating condition and, left untreated, can lead to other issues. Symptoms vary considerably from person to person.

If you or a family member is experiencing PTSD symptoms, please seek out professional as well as faith-based support. Far too many of our brothers and sisters in Christ carry this private burden. Let’s carry this burden together as we are called to do in Galatians 6:2.

—Michael Stolte
Edmonton, Alberta

I commend you for publishing “Grace in Times of Evil” (January 2013). Both the Nixon and Reagan administrations were heavily involved in CIA-backed covert activities. The museums in Santiago, Chile, show the September 11, 1973, bombing of the presidential palace followed by the assassination of President Salvador Allende all because the U.S. government believed Chile was becoming a socialist country.

With CIA support, Augusto Pinochet came to power. What followed was a mass

disappearance of Chilean citizens. The grave sites of many still have not been located.

I advise U.S. citizens not to travel to Chile during the month of September as emotions still can run high.

—Paul Groenenboom
New Sharon, Iowa

Living with the Mystery

Joseph Brunsting’s use of the Westminster Confession of Faith (“Living with the Mystery,” January 2013) to support his view of the relationship between science and the “myth” of Genesis 1-11 is ingenious, but not one the Westminster divines would have recognized.

The difficulty with putting creation on the same level as Scripture is that it fails to take into account that creation is fallen, as are those who interpret scientific evidence through the lens of their evolutionary presuppositions (not all scientists do). Granted, science can be used to correct faulty understandings of Scripture, as in the ancient view that the sun rotated around the earth, but when much of New Testament theology is built around the contrast between the first and second Adam (Christ), it is difficult to prove biblically that one Adam was historical and the other was not. It would be more consistent to posit either that both were—or neither.

—J. Cameron Fraser
Lethbridge, Alberta

Genesis is foundational to all the rest of Scripture and to the Christian faith. I believe science and the Bible are in complete agreement. For me the Genesis account is proof of the supernatural authorship and authority of the Bible. In the New Testament there are several references to Adam as a real person (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

—Neal G. Vanderwerff
Seattle, Wash.

The Banner starts the year off with a startling article written by Joseph Brunsting entitled “Living with the Mystery” (January 2013). It appears that our denomination encourages us to be open-minded to the point that our brains fall out! Is it any wonder many of our young people are leaving the CRC to worship elsewhere or don’t bother attending any church anymore? Where is truth? What is truth? Is absolute truth irrelevant in our postmodern era? Is it only a matter of one’s opinion? Articles like this attempt to confuse and make us doubt God’s Word.

—John Struik
Surrey, British Columbia

Accepting the Gift

“Accepting the Gift” (January 2013) reminded me of what happened to me at the checkout line last week. A woman ahead of me had some heavy items in her cart so I helped her to put them on the checkout belt. Then I placed the separating bar and my four items down. When it was my turn to pay for them, I noticed that they were with the woman’s things. I offered to pay her. She said, “I had food stamps and you helped me.”

—Jake Prins
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Don’t Blame God

I could not believe what I read in the editorial “Cast Your Bread upon the Waters” (January 2013). Enough of blaming God, the devil, and humanity for all that befalls us in the year 2013. We are the culprits. Let us put the blame where it belongs. Thanks be to God that the light of God continues to shine in the darkness throughout the year. As the title of Bob Goudzwaard’s latest book aptly says, [We have] “hope in troubled times”—times in which the light of God shines everywhere.

—Simon and Jean Wolfert
Surrey, British Columbia

NEWS

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Drastic Changes Ahead for Faith Alive



The Christian Reformed Church will continue to publish curriculum and resources for congregations under the brand name Faith Alive, but the task of doing that will likely be realigned with other ministries as part of further advancing the work done by the denomination's Faith Formation Committee over the past several years.

The Board of Trustees of the CRC approved a direction for that realignment that is very likely to include dissolving the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources effective June 30. The direction for realignment was also endorsed by the board of Faith Alive.

Faith Alive, in its current state, will be out of cash by June 30.

"Faith Alive's difficulties coincide with the emerging emphasis on the need to significantly focus on faith formation as the motif for denominational ministries," wrote Peter Borgdorff in his report to the Board of Trustees. Borgdorff is the CRC's deputy executive director.

The denomination will look at how to preserve the most critical functions of Faith Alive while finding a way for the work to become financially sustainable.

Borgdorff said that in May there will be a recommendation that an additional 2 percent of ministry shares (approximately \$500,000, or \$6.52 per professing member) be requested to support the overall faith formation initiative that will include some of the critical functions of Faith Alive and the specialized ministries. (Minis-

try shares are the funds paid by church members to support denominational ministries; the amount per member is set each year by synod.)

The new initiative will also absorb the ministry shares currently allocated to Faith Alive, which were increased from \$12.49 per member to \$21.99 by last year's synod in an effort to shore up Faith Alive's finances.

In endorsing this new direction, the Faith Alive board noted several items that need to be addressed in further detail, among them how to preserve the editorial freedom of *The Banner*, which is housed administratively in Faith Alive.

In a statement to the Board of Trustees, *The Banner's* editorial council communicated "its strong concern that *The Banner* remains a robust, independent voice within any new denominational structures that are taking shape."

Wilma Wiersma, chair of the Faith Alive board, said, "We are praying that reorganization will allow the excellent work of Faith Alive's staff to continue. By exchanging a bottom-line-driven business model for a more directly ministry-focused model, Faith Alive might even be freed to provide resources to a broader audience at a lower cost."

A more detailed plan will come to the Board of Trustees in May for approval, and from there it will go on to Synod 2013, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC, which will take place in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 7-14.

MORE ONLINE

—Gayla R. Postma

Washington Church Celebrates Easter with a Flowering Cross

On Easter morning, members of Tacoma (Wash.) Christian Reformed Community Church celebrate the cross as an instrument springing with new life.

Parishioners place fresh-cut flowers on the cross during the morning worship service. Clay Warren, the interim senior pastor, said it helps see how something so cruel can become something so filled with life. "As each person adds their flower to the cross, they are recognizing that it was because of that cross and Christ's resurrection that we have new life," he said.

This is the fourth year Tacoma CRC is celebrating Easter with a flowering cross.

—Amy Toornstra



The flowering cross at Tacoma CRC.

ROBB BLUCK



Redeemer University College Settles Class Action Lawsuit

A \$6 million class action lawsuit filed by 450 people against Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, was settled this past January.

The lawsuit was filed after a forgivable loan program offered through the Redeemer Foundation was found to be in violation of Canadian tax law and the 450 donors and parents were ordered to pay back taxes with interest.

According to Tim Wolfert, director of communications for Redeemer, the program was set up in consultation with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and followed its guidelines. The problem arose when the rules changed in 2002.

"Since this first became an issue, we have always done what we believe was in the best

interests of the affected donors," Wolfert said. "That's why we contested the original decision all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. . . . We looked for a resolution that would allow those affected to have this resolved in a timely and judicious manner."

The CRA, however, maintains that an earlier audit conducted in previous years found the Foundation to be noncompliant to their guidelines.

Under the terms of the settlement, donors will receive a 10 percent reimbursement of the money they donated. Donors are also given the option to return this money to the school as a donation. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Monica deRegt

Ontario Cadets and GEMS Build a Tabernacle

"Nothing like power tools and boys," said a counselor, watching his Cadet group one Monday night. The Cadets and GEMS groups of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock, Ontario, teamed up to create a tabernacle as part of a church-wide focus on the ancient Hebrew

structure. Cadets and GEMS are the groups for boys and girls in many Christian Reformed churches.

The boys studied the temple objects with their counselors, planned ways to recreate them, gathered materials, and then, with great enthusiasm, set to work. "I

can't believe the whole church will see this!" exclaimed one. His partner looked up. "Careful—don't drill my hand!"

Meanwhile, some of the GEMS girls were working on curtains to set apart the Most Holy Place and to mark its entrance. The tabernacle was a tent-like structure, a sort of portable temple the Israelites used for worship before the temple was built in Jerusalem. The project meets some of the requirements for a sewing badge.

The tabernacle series, part of the church's use of the WE intergenerational curriculum from Faith Alive Christian Resources, helps people understand how the tabernacle points to Christ and to God's desire to live with his people. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Anita Brinkman

Cadets work on the altar for the tabernacle.



KRISTIN KLEIN

News Roundup from the Board of Trustees

Canadian ministries, senior leadership transitions, ministry realignment, Faith Alive, budget and finance—the Board of Trustees tackled a large agenda in two days of meetings in late February.

Ben Vandezande, interim director of Canadian ministries, reported on conversations in regions across Canada about the future of CRC ministry in Canada.

The board extended the employment of current executive director Joel Boot and deputy executive director Peter Borgdorff for up to an extra year, until June 30, 2014, with the amount of time within that year to be determined by the BOT executive in consultation with the new director. They will serve as deputies of the new executive director, expected to be appointed in June by Synod 2013 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC).

The board spent a great deal of time talking about the future of Faith Alive and how the work of Faith Alive fits into the motif of faith formation (see p. 10).

In other actions, the board

- discussed at length its budgeting priorities (see p. 14).
- endorsed the report of the Task Force to Review Structure and Culture, which will go to Synod 2013.
- discussed the report to Synod 2013 from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG II), particularly its proposal for a two-year position for a director of diversity.
- discussed a report that will go to Synod 2013 that will provide ways for Pastor Church Relations to become involved more quickly when tension develops in a congregation.

The board meets next in early May in Grand Rapids, Mich.

—Gayla R. Postma

NEWS

Calvin College Reveals More Information about Debt

Michael Le Roy, the new president of Calvin College, has made available much more detail about the college's \$115 million debt, first reported in late 2012.

In late February, Le Roy posted a letter to the college community on the college's website. "During the Lenten season we are reminded that renewal begins with the recognition of our brokenness, our acts of omission and commission, and our failures," he wrote. "Perhaps

money to build while investing donor funds for those projects in investments, in the hope that those investments would raise additional revenue. But the plan did not work as expected (see graphic).

That left the investment pool needed to generate the profit to service the debt short by \$69.4 million dollars. As a result, payments on the college's debt will soon have to come entirely out of the college's operating budget. Those payments will consume approximately 9 percent of the annual operating budget, come 2017, assuming revenue doesn't grow.

The college has already begun a process of prioritizing programs and strategic planning in order to meet that increased debt servicing a few years from now.

Budgeting practices have been significantly overhauled, including making sure debt service and amortization payments are fully visible in the annual operating budget.

But the board is also significantly changing its governance structure and has created a new investment charter. "What was clear was that investment governance and administration practices had a lot of room for improvement," Le Roy told *The Banner*. "We weren't satisfied and have made significant strides [toward improvement]."

On behalf of the board, chair Scott Spoelhof also posted a letter on the website. He wrote that the board is taking "a hard look at what brought us to this point." He stopped short of an apology but acknowledged that Calvin "has been living beyond its means" and that "stronger board oversight may have detected the issues earlier."

Calvin College is a liberal arts college in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is owned by the Christian Reformed Church. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

\$30.8 Million: Cost of construction that exceeded fundraising
\$5.0 Million: Real estate purchases for which no funds were raised
\$1.3 Million: Negative cash flow from rental properties purchased
\$32.3 Million: Amount of debt interest not covered by portfolio earnings

it is no coincidence that we are communicating the results of Calvin College's internal review of its financial situation during this Lenten season."

Le Roy appointed an independent task force shortly after his arrival at the college last year to provide a complete review of the college's financial situation. Le Roy posted his summary of the task force's findings on the same web page.

In his summary, Le Roy wrote that there were multiple causes for the financial hole the college is in, most having to do with investment policy and financial management and with board oversight and governance.

Gaylen Byker, president of the college for 16 years before retiring last summer, told *The Banner* last year that 14 building and renovation projects had been completed on the campus during his tenure.

The task force reported that during that time, the college's strategy had been to borrow



CHELSEY HARMON

One station in Christ Community Church's prayer labyrinth.

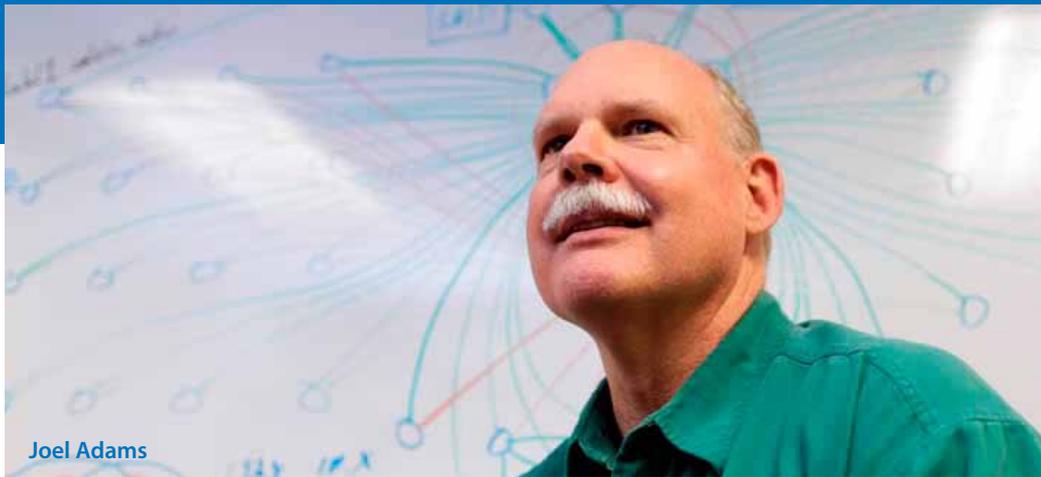
A Labyrinth of Prayer in British Columbia

When Christ Community Christian Reformed Church in Nanaimo, British Columbia, planned a prayer week, the main attraction was a prayer labyrinth set up in the church sanctuary, a marked pathway meant to represent life's journey with God.

About 50 church members were guided through various stations along the way, stopping to pray about various aspects of their faith and church life. Most stations included tactile activities to encourage prayer such as placing a stone, adding a link to a paper chain, or looking in a mirror, each with its own significance.

"Our intent was simply to create space to be the church in prayer, rather than simply talking about how important prayer is," explained Chelsey Harmon, associate pastor at Christ Community. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Tracey Yan



Joel Adams

Computer Science Prof Lands Prestigious Award

The world's largest professional association for computer scientists has named Joel Adams as one of its six 2012 Distinguished Educators.

Adams is the computer science department chair at Calvin College, the Grand Rapids, Mich.,-based liberal arts school owned by the Christian Reformed Church.

The honor comes from the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), a professional organization with chapters in more than 50 countries.

Adams, who has been teaching at the college for 24 years, said he was pleased to receive the award on behalf of the college. "The other five people who received this award are from excellent schools—Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, Berkeley, and so on—so it is great to see a Christian college like Calvin listed alongside those schools."

A member of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Adams has been the chief architect of four supercomputers, three of them at Calvin College. [MORE ONLINE](#) —Roxanne Van Farowe

New Beer Named After Colorado Farmer

Lugene Sas was as surprised as anyone when Odell's Brewery named a beer after him. Lugene's Chocolate Milk Stout was released on January 6.

For 15 years, Sas, a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Fort Collins, Colo., has picked up spent grain from the



EMILY RYAN

Lugene Sas feeds his cow spent grain from a local brewery.

brewery to feed the 18 Guernsey, Holstein, and Brown Swiss cows that he calls his "girls." The brewery is happy to have its spent grain taken away; Sas is delighted at a source of high-protein grain to mix into the feed for his cows. It's a win-win situation.

On the release date, members from Immanuel CRC went to the

brewery to get some of the first of the beer and T-shirts. Many others offered their congratulations. "It has only been positive," said Sas.

"I think it is such a good example of our Reformed theology of 'every square inch' belonging to Christ. Lugene sees his work very much as a calling," said John Terpstra, pastor of Immanuel CRC.

[MORE ONLINE](#) —Heidi Wicker



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Leonard Stockmeier

1925 – 2013

Rev. Leonard Stockmeier, 87, was deeply devoted to his Savior and deeply appreciative of the Reformed confessions.

Stockmeier first entered the gospel ministry in the Evangelical and Reformed Church before joining the Christian Reformed Church. He served congregations in Wisconsin, South Dakota, Arizona, and Iowa before retiring in 1987.

Stockmeier knew the Scriptures as the source of his faith, preaching, and pastoral practice. He found in the Heidelberg Catechism a precious guide for his faith. The family still has a collector's copy of the German version of the Heidelberg dated 1724 with a handwritten inscription on the front cover.

Stockmeier was known for a phenomenal memory that enhanced the quality of every part of his ministry. He studied and read widely. He made countless pastoral visits with his wife. The sick and the elderly had their compassionate attention.

Predeceased by his wife, Alice, Stockmeier is survived by two children and their spouses, eight grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

NEWS

Board of Trustees Struggles with Budgeting for New Ministry Priorities

At its February meeting, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church struggled at length to find a way to match budgeting needs with ministry priorities.

The ministry share recommendations to Synod 2013 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) are likely to include a request for a 2 percent increase for faith formation initiatives that will also, if adopted, roll in the ministry shares currently allocated to Faith

Alive. That will raise the current ministry share of \$326.26 to \$332.78 per adult member. Ministry shares are the funds used to support denominational ministries.

The board also endorsed a report from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations that lays out ways to engage with pastors and churches before tensions escalate beyond being able to be resolved. The report, which will go to Synod 2013, is in response to a request

from Synod 2012. If adopted, it will have budget implications.

Study committees bringing reports directly to Synod 2013 also have budget implications. The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II (DLPG II) is asking for \$1 million over two years.

The *Diakonia Remixed* study report recommends the creation of a deacons' institute.

The board also noted with concern that above-ministry-share donor income at Christian Reformed Home Missions is currently running at only 50 percent of what was budgeted for this year.

The board requested that the administration bring possible options for funding the recommendations of Pastor-Church Relations proposals and the budget implications of the DLPG II if it is adopted.

Unless there is an additional increase in ministry shares to fund the new initiatives, the board noted, the money will have to come out of the budget of the other ministry agencies.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

Michigan Teacher Named Educator of the Year



Pigs, chickens, and bees were major players in Dirk Walhout's Educator of the Year Award awarded by the Missaukee Conservation District.

Walhout, who attends Lucas Christian Reformed Church, began and runs an extensive agriculture program at Northern Michigan Christian School in McBain, Mich. The program involves students raising food, including

Students at Northern Michigan Christian School are involved in raising food for the school cafeteria.

eggs from chickens and meat from pigs, for the school cafeteria.

"Our program is a work in progress. Elementary students care for herbs, help raise chickens, and plant grapes and other crops," said Walhout.

Last year students grew over 1,000 pounds of produce for the cafeteria. What doesn't get eaten at the school is donated to local charities; the honey is sold.

"Being stewards of God's kingdom, my students ought to wrestle with ideas about what it means to be responsible producers," said Walhout. "Responsible stewardship comes from thinking about, understanding, and implementing good practices within a local and global food system." [MORE ONLINE](#) —Daina Kraai

Iowa Community Enjoys Day of Encouragement

"How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?"

This question from the fourth verse of Psalm 137 became instrumental to Thor Swanson, doctor and father, as he battled cancer.

Swanson was one of the speakers at Dordt College's ninth annual Day of Encouragement in Sioux Center, Iowa. The idea that it's OK to be angry with and sometimes question God was one of many shared at the event, which brought together 280 church members for inspiration as they fill various roles and callings in their local churches.

Under the theme "A Day to Inspire, Encourage, and Equip God's People for Ministry," participants chose from many workshops including end times, teaching the Heidelberg Catechism, and having an effective church website. [MORE ONLINE](#) —Kyle Hoogendoorn

John Lee, pastor of Bethel CRC, led a talk on the end times.





Collecting loose change in baby bottles raises money for the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Tidewater, Va.

Small Change Makes a Big Difference in Virginia

Members of Ocean View Christian Reformed Church in Norfolk, Va., used their loose change to change lives.

Every year the church holds a Baby Bottle Campaign fundraiser for the Crisis Pregnancy Center of Tidewater. The center provides counseling and help for women with unwanted pregnancies.

Each January, church members take home one or two baby bottles and fill them with loose change throughout the month.

The small change from members of Ocean View CRC helps make big changes for women like Marnita, a college student who found out she was pregnant. Until she had an ultrasound, she was considering having an abortion. But seeing the "life that was inside of me, at only nine weeks, made everything clear. I decided to carry [the baby] to term," she said.

Five years later, despite the scary decision Marnita made, she says, "I can definitely see how Christ worked the situation out."

—Callie Feyen



Walkers from Charlottetown CRC raised \$5,500 to fight homelessness.

Taking a Cold Walk to Raise Funds for Fighting Homelessness

Council members, young people, and other members of Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) Christian Reformed Church walked five kilometers together on February 23 through deep snow in temperatures of -8 C (about 18 F).

They walked to raise funds for a local ministry for people without homes. The Saturday-evening walk was part of a coordinated Canada-wide event called The Coldest Night of the Year held in cities across Canada to raise \$1 million to fight homelessness.

The Charlottetown walkers walked in three teams—Suzy's Sassy Strollers, Tulip Stompers, and Walkin' a Mile—to raise \$5,500.

Christian Reformed congregations in Ottawa, Ontario, and Lethbridge, Alberta, also participated in the Coldest Night event, which raised \$1.3 million nationwide. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ron Rupke

Write for *The Banner!*

The Banner is seeking news writers for the Rocky Mountain/Yellowstone region, California, and lower Michigan. If you like to write and have a passion for telling stories of how God is at work in the Christian Reformed churches in your area, we'd like to hear from you. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Email expressions of interest to news editor Gayla Postma at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a resume or letter outlining your newswriting experience and some recent samples of your work.

GEMS 'We Walk' Tour Visits Edmonton



The We Walk tour visits Edmonton.

In February, almost 300 girls and their moms (or mentors) gathered at West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, to participate in the We Walk tour.

Created by GEMS Girls' Clubs for girls in grades 4 through 9, the

tour's tagline is "There is no such thing as *just a girl*."

Rika van den Heever, a member of West End CRC, attended the event with her 9-year-old daughter, Isabel. "The message was clear, and I have talked with my daughter

about it since," she said, "that you're not too little to do something. Whether it is on the playground or around school, you can always take the opportunity to be kind to someone." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Janet Greidanus

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Is God the Missing Character in ‘Downton Abbey’?

RNS PHOTO COURTESY OF © CARNIVAL FILM & TELEVISION LIMITED 2012 FOR MASTERPIECE.



In the Servants' Hall with Joanne Froggatt as Anna, Rob James-Collier as Thomas, Phyllis Logan as Mrs. Hughes, Jim Carter as Carson, Siobhan Finneran as Sarah O'Brien, and Kevin Doyle as Molesley.

in the show—good and evil, suffering for cause, various types and grades of love and devotion,” Dorman wrote. “At some point . . . it seems odd for such connections to remain unnamed, unspoken, and, for all we can see, unperceived.”

Rev. Ian Markham, president of (Episcopal) Virginia Theological Seminary and a big “Downton” fan, also discerns serious spiritual themes beneath the surface of the narrative. Markham told *Religion & Ethics News Weekly* that faith itself is “relatively invisible. But you would expect religion to be more present in their lives.”

“Downton Abbey” is a melodrama about tradition and change and family, and that’s largely how religion fits in—not as faith per se, but as a marker of class and status, of social and personal boundaries that are all coming under pressure to adapt to modern ways.

—*Religion News Service*

Catholic, Reformed Churches Agree on Baptism

Leaders of Roman Catholic and Reformed churches have signed an agreement to recognize each other’s sacraments of baptism, a public step toward unity among groups that are often divided by doctrine.

“Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ’s body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity,” reads the “Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism.”

After seven years of discussion, the document was signed in January at a worship service at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin, Texas, which opened the annual meeting of Christian Churches Together in the USA, an ecumenical network created in 2001.

Signers represented the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Roman Catholic Church, and United Church of Christ.

It states that water and a reference to the Trinity—“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”—are required for the mutual recognition of baptisms.

The agreement, which applies solely to churches in the U.S., is unusual elsewhere.

—*Religion News Service*

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

As the third season of the megahit PBS series “Downton Abbey” wrapped up, some are puzzled over the absence of what should be a leading Upstairs player in this colorful cast: God.

In the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, Todd Dorman wondered why—despite the heart-rending melodrama and all the “divine trappings” that gild the 1920s scenery—“God is a peripheral presence at best.”

“There are . . . implicit Catholic and Christian themes



CATLIN STEFFEL

Members of Dwell CRC in New York City participate in Don't Walk By.

New York City Church Participates in ‘Don’t Walk By’

On a weekend in New York City when temperatures dipped well below freezing, members of Dwell joined several other Manhattan churches in the fifth annual Don’t Walk By event. Dwell is a Christian Reformed church plant.

Hundreds of volunteers took to the streets to offer people without homes food, clothing, blankets, and an opportunity to get off the streets.

“We covered every block in Manhattan from 22nd Street south,” said Pete Armstrong, the pastor at Dwell. That’s about three miles.

The group Armstrong led also offered people the opportunity to go to Overseas Chinese Mission Church, where people would receive a hot meal, a place to sleep, and a chance to see doctors and social workers the next morning.

“We prayed for the communities we were walking through,” said Armstrong. “We prayed that many people would come in from the cold and begin a journey with Jesus.” [MORE ONLINE](#)

—*Callie Feyen*



JENNIFER CHEFFEC

People from Envision Ministries prepare for a night of interacting with people on the streets of downtown Bellingham: (L-r) Debbie, Jalel, Mitchell, Jennifer, and Cory.

Bellingham Church Ministers Downtown

Pastor Mitchell Senti of Envision Ministries, a Christian Reformed church plant in Bellingham, Wash., believes church is more than a group of people gathering in a building on Sunday morning. Senti refers to downtown Bellingham as the parish.

Envision Ministries holds a discipleship Bible study called “The Jesus Study” at a local coffee shop and at a gospel mission. Attendance ranges from three to 15 people, most of whom have no previous connection to a church.

Church members, and sometimes local youth groups, participate in Tuesday street nights. After a time of prayer, participants are encouraged to do what Senti refers to as “the three ‘M’s’”: meet someone, meet a need, and make an observation. “We really want to be students of Jesus, learning from his Spirit at all times,” said Senti.

“We certainly see God do some amazing things like healings, even deliverance from demons, but most important, obviously transformed lives that will last into eternity,” said Senti. —Amy Toornstra

WE Intergenerational Events Popular at British Columbia Church

Members of Smithers (British Columbia) Christian Reformed Church have spent the last few months studying the Bible with very different groups of people than the ones they would ordinarily meet with. The church held a series of 10 intergenerational events meant to bring together church members of all ages for learning and fellowship.

Smithers chose “The Epic Story”—tracing God’s story from creation to the new creation—from Faith Alive’s WE curriculum, which is designed to help congregations learn and worship as a community of children, youth, adults, and seniors.

Up to 80 members of Smithers CRC have been meeting twice a month after the Sunday morning worship service for a light lunch followed by the Bible study, which includes such activities as readers’ theaters, skits, and storytelling to keep all the generations interested. “It has been a great opportunity to get to know each other in an informal setting while learning together with all ages,” said organizer Marlene Henderson.

—Tracey Yan



ROSALIE BRANDSMA

Members of Smithers CRC enjoy intergenerational fellowship.



Church History Wrapped Up in Quilt

Though an ice storm cancelled an official event, Saramae Vander Ark was able to return to Leighton (Iowa) Christian Reformed Church to receive a quilt that was originally presented to her father, Rev. Cornelius Witt, who served as pastor of the congregation from 1929-1937. She spent an afternoon visiting old friends and sharing old memories.

No one quite recalls the story behind the quilt. “We believe it was made in 1933,” Leona Vande Voort, 80, said. “The fabrics used seem to be feed sacks. It appears it was hand pieced and quilted—very nicely done.”

In addition to the quilt, now on display at Leighton CRC, the congregation shared passages from Witt’s journal, in which he describes the hardships and joys of serving the church. For more on this story and to read excerpts from Rev. Witt’s journal, please visit thebanner.org. —Melissa Holtrop

John De Rooi, Saramae Vander Ark, Francis De Jong, and Leona Vande Voort celebrate the quilt initially presented to Vander Ark’s father about 75 years ago.

BY CLARENCE VOS

A Holy Hesitancy

WE MUST BE more dogmatic (so that we may pontificate more appropriately). Please don't go away, as they say on TV when the commercials are about to begin. I do have a "commercial," and I hope you will "buy" it. If you dislike the topic as I have stated it, we're probably good friends.

You see, in the last few months, I've gone through some rethinking. It began as I was reading some of the early church fathers. I must confess that these had never interested me greatly. While studying at a seminary that prided itself as a defender of the faith, my fellow students and I dismissed quite summarily, for example, Origen of Alexandria, who was so free with his allegories that it seemed to us that "anything goes." We of the Western church were just too advanced to give such capers the time of day—or so we thought.

But when I began to read what certain church fathers had written—particularly the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa)—I concluded that not only did these early saints deserve a hearing, but that we in the Western church ignore them at our loss.

Geographically these Cappadocians were part of the "land of the Bible." Chronologically close to the New Testament (AD 329-390), they lived in a culture much like that of the New Testament, speaking and writing in Greek, the language of the New Testament. These are qualifications few if any of us can claim.

Basil's way of reading and interpreting Scripture struck me as very different from the way we in the Western church read Scripture. Discussing the first chapter of Genesis, he says that Moses "deemed it sufficient to make known the one who created and ordered it, refusing to examine out of curiosity the question of its

essence (*ousia*), as this would be vain and useless" (*Contra Eunomius* 1:13). His point of reference was the Creator, not the creation. No doubt he would have been quite annoyed by the way we in the West tend to "test" the Scriptures by the standard of metaphysical accuracy.

Dogma

These Cappadocians seemed to agree on a particular formula: *That which is clear in Scripture must be proclaimed from the pulpit, but dogma is more private.* They used the word *dogma* quite differently than we do. *Dogma* comes from the Greek word *dokein*, which means "it seems" or "it appears." For them, dogma was used in connection with statements that expressed what seems or appears to be.

For the church fathers, the commands of Scripture were clear: "Repent"; "believe"; "be baptized"; "deny yourself"; "take up your cross and follow me"; "eat and drink in remembrance of me."

By contrast, the dogmas were not so clear—precisely how Christians were to understand repentance and faith was not self-evident. Exactly what believing involved was not absolutely clear, but preachers should proclaim what the book of Hebrews teaches about faith. Just what was meant by eating and drinking "in remembrance of me" was not easily settled either. Thus Christians should speak of dogma with reverent reticence. Questions are more appropriate than declarative statements. We should remove our shoes when standing on holy ground.

But the Cappadocians recognized another level of authority called *theorie* or interpretation, which must be offered with even greater care or deference. Our interpretation is the result of how we perceive dogma. Many dynamics go into the process of interpretation, including our own culture and worldview and the translation of the text we depend on. All these factors indicate that we do well to exercise a tentative, reverent reserve in

our interpretation of Scripture with respect to faith.

The early church fathers recognized that some things needed to be talked over with others in order to gain a fuller understanding. The old story comes to mind of the five blind men and the elephant, which shows how misleading incomplete information can be to arriving at the truth.

More relevant is the record in Acts 15 of the first church "synod" and its decisions. The question the church was dealing with at the time was "Must the Gentiles who join the church be circumcised?" After considerable discussion with references to Scripture as well as to the way God had been at work among them, they came to a decision: "For it seemed (*edoxen*, a form of *dokein*) good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose no further burden than these essentials. . . ." Refraining from idolatry and fornication were judged to be essential. But such matters as circumcision and dietary laws were in the area of *dokein*—seemly, appropriate, and helpful for some but possibly not for others. Those of Jewish descent were not forbidden to be circumcised, nor were they required to be circumcised.

What effect has our turning away from the original meaning of dogma had on the history the church and on the church today? Before turning to that question, we need to look at another "straying" word: *pontificate*.

Pontificate

Pontificate comes from the Latin words *pons* and *pont*, which mean bridge, and *facere*, which means to make or build. Pontificate therefore literally means to build bridges. Used in that sense, the word would be fitting to describe Jesus Christ, the great bridge-builder between God and humanity. But in the history of the Western church, we have assigned the word a different meaning. And this too has not been without effect. »

I can't help but wonder how different the history of the church might have been if pontiffs had been "bridge builders" rather than dictators. Does it explain why the history of the Western church seems more violent than that of the Eastern church? What historian could deny that the actions of the Inquisition are the nadir of disgrace in church history?

But Protestants don't come off too well either, as the following story indicates. In 1956, I visited the castle at Marburg, Germany. Our guide told us that Luther and Calvin had come together there to find agreement on the meaning of the Lord's Supper; he said they sharply disagreed and therefore did not partake of the meal together. If this is true, they permitted dogma to trump Christ's clear direction "This do in remembrance of me."

Today church historians are not convinced that Luther and Calvin ever really had a meeting. And whether they did or not is not important. What is important is whether Lutherans and Calvinists can celebrate the Supper together today.

Does this not explain many of the schisms that have occurred in the church? While the church cannot tolerate denials of what is clear in Scripture (1 John 2:22-24) and it must remove blatantly immoral persons from its fellowship (1 Cor. 5:13), there is much in the Christian faith and in the teaching of Scripture that is not cut-and-dried. On the one hand, our relationship with God is simple; we must receive him and his love like little children. On the other hand, the Christian faith and walk are not simplistic; understanding the teachings of Scripture is not without challenge.

We Christians are one-of-a-kind divinely made human beings. Each of us is an individual with a unique personality and a specific history. But God also said it was not good for humans to be alone (Gen. 2:18); within the body of Christ all the members must come together to form an organic whole (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

Does this mean that we should expect only clear and simplistic utterances to be made from the pulpit? Hardly. But it does mean that a sermon must indicate

what is debatable and what cannot be questioned.

I recently witnessed a good example of how to properly "divide the word of truth." Our pastor was preaching a series on the appearances of the resurrected Jesus. That morning it was the scene of the unsuccessful fishermen and Jesus' preparation of breakfast for them. The pastor said some essential things about our Lord's power (controlling fish) and his concern for our needs (baking fish). But what about the intriguing detail of the number of fish—153—that the disciples caught? What was the meaning of that?

We should remove our shoes when standing on holy ground.

The pastor indicated that there were different interpretations. Some took it simply to mean that the disciples were counting, and when they got to 153 there were no more fish. Others, perhaps more mathematically inclined, recognized 153 as a perfect number. But there was one more interpretation (*theorie*) that the pastor found interesting: According to Greek biologists of that time, there were just 153 species of fish. In that case, it could mean that these Christ-appointed "fishermen" were to reach and gather every "species" of humanity. A delightfully tantalizing theory!

Yet often we must admit that we see "through a glass darkly." We do not have the final answer. Individually we are like one blind person convinced that the elephant is a rope arguing with another who says the elephant is a pillar or another who says the elephant is a wall.

Perhaps being more dogmatic (in the original sense of being more reverently reserved) can help us to be more appropriate pontificators—that is, bridge builders.

Consider once more Acts 15, which records the proceedings of the church's

first synod. The decision is made that circumcision is no longer mandatory. Paul must have been elated. Yet in the very next chapter he meets Timothy, a half-Jew, and Paul circumcises him. Why? "Because of the Jews" (Acts 16:3). Apparently bridge-building was more important than the new-found liberty. Paul was not secretive about this matter. The new liberty was not allowed to function as a stumbling block to the Jews or to the Gentiles, for Paul also sought to "[lead] the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done" (Rom. 15:18). Winning others to Christ—bridge-building—was paramount for Paul.

This suggests that Christians are called to exercise a holy hesitancy in many matters of the Christian faith and walk. Paul struggled with this in the matter of eating meat (ceremonially clean or unclean). If eating meat might cause his brother or sister to stumble, he would rather refrain.

Christian doctrine includes such matters as the sovereignty of God versus the responsibility of humans, how God feels or thinks about unbelievers, and his relationship to them. On these matters and more, we are called to defer to divinity. Instead of strapping on our combat boots, is it not more appropriate for us to take off our shoes and stand in awe? If Moses stood in awe at the burning bush that was not consumed, how much more should we stand in awe at the mighty acts of God? As Paul reminds Timothy, "Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great" (1 Tim. 3:16).

The church must be prophetic, but it must be prophetic with self-denying love instead of with arrogant declarations. This will enable denominations to extend sincere greetings of love and goodwill to one another—allowing the church to serve humanity and reflecting its oneness in Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Clarence Vos is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church and a professor emeritus of religion and Old Testament at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Treasures from a Coffee Can

SOMETIMES life lessons come from places we would not expect. Recently, my learning came from the children of my neighborhood.

Our neighborhood was intentionally designed to promote community. Its 98 homes share a bus stop, a community pool, parks, and a soccer field. Personal ownership of these things would be impossible for most of us; holding them in common puts them within reach. Yet these shared spaces, areas that once knit us together, began to tear us apart.

Common spaces are a great idea, but caring for them comes with a price tag. If we were to maintain our common spaces, dues would need to rise. For some, the price was too high. They wanted to close the pool and allow the parks to become prairies.

But others recognized that those public spaces were more than places to release and retrieve children; they offered opportunities to practice neighborliness.

The threat of rising dues prompted many conversations. As a board member, I was well aware of the tension and restlessness disrupting our neighborhood. While I was drafting a letter to my neighbors to address some of the concerns, a knock at the door interrupted my typing. I opened my door to discover four young kids. Several more stood in my driveway. They greeted me and then, with simple innocence and firm determination, they handed me a surprisingly heavy coffee can.

“What is this?” I asked.

“We heard the neighborhood was in trouble so we had some lemonade stands. Here’s the money. We counted it, like, five times. It’s \$48.88. ‘Bye.’” With that, they skipped out of my garage and went back to playing. It was the ideal form of hit-and-run. Tears welling, I thanked them and shut the door. I wondered what kinds of trouble they had noticed and what



We refilled the sandbox, replaced worn soccer nets, and put up a new community basketball hoop.

they’d overheard their parents saying. Sensing anxiety, they refused to gossip or to live protectively or to tear down. Instead, they chose to face a challenge with togetherness, imagination, and generosity.

I returned to my computer and told my neighborhood this story. Suddenly neighborhood conversations changed in content and in tone. Fear of not having enough money gave way to conversations about what those amazing kids had done. Inspired by the kids, ten households responded by writing their own \$48.88 checks.

We combined those gifts with the coffee can money. Then we refilled the sandbox, replaced worn soccer nets, and put up a new community basketball hoop. No one complained.

The spirit of the children’s gift took root and blossomed. In the spring, 150 kids scrambled to gather 2,000 plastic eggs filled with donated candy. Each year on the Fourth of July, generous neighbors

provide fireworks for a display that draws people from other neighborhoods. Parents gather daily at the bus stop and share warm words and hot coffee. When a child from the neighborhood died, a kids’ triathlon raised several thousand dollars.

My neighborhood is not a church, but the kids who live here taught me invaluable lessons. The best treasure from the coffee can was not what was in it but what was behind it. Communities—even churches—worry about things like turf, membership, and money. Caring conversations, imagination, and working together are fine antidotes for our worries. All it takes are the eyes and heart of a child. That sounds remarkably close to something Jesus once said. ■



Marc Nelesen is pastor of Georgetown Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich.

Lift Up Your Hearts By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

In a few weeks, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) will release a new book of hymns—its first comprehensive hymnal in more than 20 years.

Produced by the CRC's publishing agency, Faith Alive Christian Resources, as a joint effort of the CRC and the Reformed Church in America (RCA), *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* is also the first hymnal to be endorsed for use by congregations of both denominations.

In an era of diverse musical tastes and increasing use of technology in worship services, is a new hymnbook even necessary? Will enough congregations use it

to justify the time that nearly 100 people spent over several years putting it together?

Rev. Joyce Borger, Faith Alive's worship and music editor and one of the editorial committee members for the new hymnal, believes the answer to both questions is a resounding yes.

The number of choices facing any worship planner can be overwhelming, Borger says—"from which hymnal to use, to which version of a hymn text to use, to the tidal wave of newly written songs in a dizzying array of styles."

"What is needed," Borger says, "is someone or a group to serve as a curator—folks who can wade through so

many choices and present a core selection that is biblical, Reformed, and accessible to the church."

That's what *Lift Up Your Hearts* offers. The new hymnbook contains some 850 songs and helps worship leaders move beyond the older hymnals and repertoires of contemporary praise songs with a uniquely Reformed blend of songs that are applicable to congregations across North America.

Why a New Hymnal?

The hymnbook project started back in 2003 with research followed up in 2010. Researchers noted the critical importance of hymn singing as part of worship in



*You add.
God multiplies.*



Singing from a sampler of the new hymnal during the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Symposium on Worship.

Faith Alive Update

Although Faith Alive is facing significant financial difficulties, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church expressed its commitment to maintaining the Faith Alive brand and to the continued need for solid Reformed faith formation resources. Congregations and individuals should not hesitate to order materials (books, hymnals, curricula) from Faith Alive.

At their February meetings, both the Faith Alive board and the Board of Trustees endorsed an organizational realignment framework for a phased convergence of ministry functions within the CRC. One such convergence is supporting the critical faith formation ministries of congregations.

Director Mark Rice explained, "Faith formation is a broad term that encompasses all the ways in which congregations build an active and sustained faith commitment to Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God among their members. It includes such diverse functions as education, worship, leadership development, congregational revitalization and others."

The denominational administration and the BOT envision that the expertise of Faith Alive in producing educational and worship resources, as well as its general publication expertise, will continue within this planned convergence of functions focused on congregational faith formation. In turn, Faith Alive will be in a position to produce even more effective resources by being more closely tied to the congregations they serve within a congregationally-focused team.

Reformed churches. Through focus groups of RCA and CRC church leaders, worship leaders, and congregation members of all ages, researchers discovered a passion for hymn singing.

But researchers also heard the need for a wider variety of songs, especially because of the changing nature of congregations.

"We are not the same church we were 25 or so years ago when the hymnals most of us are using came out," explains Borger.

North America has become increasingly diverse, and people from various cultures have started attending CRC and RCA churches. As this has happened, congregations have needed to find ways to welcome and make room for the range of new people.

"One way to do that is to learn each other's songs, to give voice to each other's prayers and praises, to join together in harmony," says Borger.

The focus groups also showed that churches are seeking songs that place more focus on social justice issues, creation care, authenticity, and global awareness than churches did 25 years ago.

"While the message of the gospel doesn't change, the context in which we worship does," says Borger. "As we hold on to the traditional repertoire, we also

need hymns that give voice to the prayers, praises, and laments particular to this generation."

To meet the growing worship needs of a changing denomination, songs had to be added to the existing collection being used by churches. But it was also important to retain the classics people have come to know and love. People wanted a broader expression of the gospel message.

Moving Forward Together

With this in mind, Faith Alive decided to undertake the intricate and expensive process of creating a new hymnal. Right away they decided to consider collaboration with the RCA.

With growing opportunities for the CRC and RCA to worship and work cooperatively in recent years, the two denominations decided to produce the joint hymnal as a way to reflect their common faith.

Faith Alive put together a 13-member editorial committee to consider what could and should be included in the new resource.

The committee included five RCA members, five CRC members, and three staff from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and from Faith Alive. Com- >>

STEVEN HUYSER-HONIG

TOGETHER DOING MORE

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



STEVEN HUYSER-HONG

The committee also consulted congregations for their input and asked churches to identify their “heart songs.” These are the songs that get chosen the most often for special occasions—the ones sung at weddings and funerals, the ones that get requested during hymn sings, and especially the ones people know by heart.

Once a song was flagged as a “heart song,” it became harder to exclude from the new hymnal.

“We wanted to include as many of those as possible in the collection,” Borger says. “Our hope is that any congregation can open the hymnal and find 150 songs they know.”

Yet of the 3,000 or more songs that they reviewed, only 850 made the cut to be included in the final version.

Honoring Beliefs and Diversity

The committee wanted to find songs that reflected the biblical and theological principles of the CRC and RCA’s shared heritage, but they also wanted to include songs that honored the diversity within congregations.

“Our churches resound with a broad spectrum of music, from majestic hymns to rhythmic gospel songs to rock tempo praise songs,” says Borger.

That means the hymnal needed to make room for such favorites as “His Eye Is on the Sparrow” and “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”; for “Here I Am to Worship” and “Amid the Thronging Worshipers”; and for “Jesus Loves Me” and “*Pédon, Señor*.”

The result is a hymnal that includes songs people already know and more that will stretch them in new directions. Many are songs from the global church that help worshipers connect with their brothers and sisters around the world.

The first half of the book walks worshipers through the story of creation and redemption, including Old Testament life and witness, Christ’s life, Christ’s passion and exaltation, joining in the Spirit’s

mittee members were chosen because of their musical knowledge and experience but also because of their love for and commitment to their denominations and their understanding of and appreciation for the growing diversity within congregations.

The committee was supported by an advisory council of people from each denomination. These individuals included pastors, professors, musicians, editors, and worship leaders.

Throughout the process, the editorial committee came to the council for advice and decisions on particular songs and texts.

Supporting Faith Alive With Your Prayers

- Pray that its worship resources, Sunday school curriculum, and other materials will continue to be used both within and beyond the CRC and that its Reformed message will be well received.
- Give praise that the new *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal will soon be available after several years of work. Pray that it will enrich worship and help people of all ages, ethnicities, and worship styles to experience and praise God in new ways.
- Pray for the men and women who write, edit, design, and promote Faith Alive resources. Pray that they will feel supported and encouraged during this time of transition.

“Unlike most publishing endeavors that typically involve just one author and editor, the *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal was an undertaking that began with a group of 80 people from the RCA and CRC who are passionate about the church and worship,” says Jamie Lyn Hinojosa, Faith Alive’s assistant marketing manager.

Making Hard Decisions

Determining what to include and what to leave out was challenging. It also required extensive research.

“We scoured and read texts, looked at music, and had multiple discussions,” Borger explains.

“We learned from each other. We listened to the conversation and asked if a certain song was needed in the congregations today, if it was expressing a prayer we needed to say. It’s not about likes; it’s about singing the prayers of the people and responding to the grace God has given us.”

Carol Bechtel, member of the editorial committee and professor of Old Testament at the RCA’s Western Theological Seminary, agrees.

“Because we as a committee worked together over a period of years, we became friends. I think this affected not only the tone of our meetings, but the choices we made,” she says.

“Instead of asking ‘How can I get all my favorites in?’, the question became ‘What songs are important to your faith community, and will you share them with the rest of us?’”

You add.
God multiplies.

MINISTRY SHARES TOGETHER DOING MORE

work, trusting the triune God, and hope for things to come.

The second half is based on the traditional order of worship, including calls to worship, confession, receiving the sacraments, listening to God's Word, and being sent out into the world.

There are also litanies, prayers, and readings sprinkled throughout the book to deepen the user's worship experience.

"*Lift Up Your Hearts* has the potential to enrich our worship in so many ways. It's not just an invitation to sing; it's a call to worship in a way that prayerfully and faithfully responds to God's invitation to 'lift up your hearts,'" says Bechtel.

How to Use the Hymnal

Lift Up Your Hearts offers music from the whole Bible, including all 150 psalms. It has songs representing the spectrum of human emotions as well as many cultures.

But how can a church get beyond singing its classics to adding new songs to their repertoire? The trick is to try.

Claudia Godoy Cortés, a worship leader at Bridgeway Community Church in Haledon, N.J., and a teacher at the local Christian high school, says she was impressed by the number and variety of songs from cultures all over the world.

"If you explore the hymnal's organization, you will find classic, contemporary, and global songs that were traditionally classified in other categories but are now connected with a broader range of uses," Cortés says.

"The great new songs and arrangements will resound with youth in church and at school."

Worship leaders can use the book's index to select songs that represent the cultural backgrounds of their congregation. If the church has a group going on a mission trip, congregations can also use songs to connect with the brothers and sisters in faith that they will meet there.

Similarly, the hymnal includes a topical index to help worship leaders select songs for deepening the worship experience whether their congregation is going through a time of joy or grief. There are songs of lament and confession, songs about death and dying, and songs of praise.

There also are songs to connect to Scripture from both testaments. Singing songs about the whole scope of the Bible's story helps people fit its pieces together and understand it in a deeper way.

"People hear Bible stories but don't always know how the stories fit together,"



STEVEN HUYSER-HONIG

explains John Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and a member of the hymnal's editorial committee.

"Singing the true story of the whole world is absolutely crucial in this missional moment."

What's more, the hymnal's creators have made the songs available in several formats to fit the worship style of a variety of congregations. Traditional printed versions can be purchased, but projection music, "cut and paste" versions for bulletins, and electronic versions for tablets and iPads will also be available.

"This is a hymnal of the church for the church," Borger says. "Our ultimate desire is that this collection be deep enough to give voice to our praises and laments, be both sung prayer and proclamation, and play a significant role in the faith formation of Reformed Christians, old and young alike." ■

Hymnal editorial committee (left to right): Joel Navarro, Paul Thé, Brenda Kuiper, Joyce Borger, John Witvliet, Diane Dykgraaf, Becky Hoeksema, Annetta VanderLugt, and Carol Bechtel.



STEVEN HUYSER-HONIG



Kristen deRoo VanderBerg is a staff writer with *World Renew*.

Surrounded by Witnesses

We are told about Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and Rahab—the list goes on and on. Giants of faith they were, people who gave up position and privilege and possessions and sometimes even life because they were sure of what they hoped for and certain of what they did not see.

They had what the Heidelberg Catechism so memorably calls “not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true” but “also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation” (Q&A 21).

They are those we admire and whose faith we try to emulate. So are we really ready for Hebrews 12:1? Suddenly we are no longer watching and admiring them; we are surrounded by them, and they are watching us. The stars are in the stands, so to speak, and we are on the track!

But they are not there to critique our race. They are there to cheer us on and, in some amazing way, also to whisper into our ears, “You can do it! Keep running! Don’t give up!”

We are even offered encouraging suggestions: Get rid of what gets in your way. Don’t be tripped up by insignificant things. Don’t be distracted. Keep the eyes of your minds and hearts on Jesus, and don’t lose heart.

Think about it. The stories we know so well and have heard so often about these faith giants are not there to make us feel little but to help us think big. Our heroes are not in the stands to look down on us but to encourage us to look up.

Imagine that! A good word from Moses. A shout-out from Enoch. Three cheers from Gideon. A “Way to go!” from David. A pat on the back from none other than Jesus.

And when I come down from the heights to which those can lift me, I see that I have not only the biblical hall of fame to cheer me on but also those closer in time and space. The godly parents. The faith-full spouse. The believing children. The model friends.

They are there too, not only figuratively but sometimes quite literally cheering me on. They spur me on toward the finish line! And I thank God for them.

But simultaneously and paradoxically, I must also see myself in the stands. I must live and behave and speak and commend and correct and respond in ways that have a positive, encouraging, God-glorifying impact on those around me—the very ones who cheer me on cheered on by me. And others too who see and know me or simply observe me may be spurred on toward God by that acquaintance.

That is a picture of what church is. We are a fellowship, a communion of those who are encouraged by and encouraging one another.

When I go to church or see my friends during the week or sit with family and friends, I am both in the stands and on the track. I am cheered on and I am cheering. The saints of Scripture and the saints of today keep me running—and I help keep them running too.

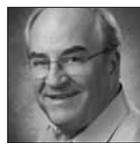
I spoke with someone not long ago who was an unbeliever until his best friend from high school became a Christian. He noticed the difference in that young man’s life and attitude, and it showed him the emptiness of his own life.

He asked what had happened and his friend introduced him to Jesus. Now the once-empty boy is a young man full of the love and joy of the Lord. It is contagious; it is uplifting.

Enoch and Abraham and Moses and my friend and I are cheering you on to do likewise. ■



“Imagine that! A good word from Moses. A shout-out from Enoch.”



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

*You add.
God multiplies.*

Disque Paz Saves Raphael's Life

Raphael, who serves in the Brazilian military, was walking down a busy street one day when someone handed him a business card reading *Disque Paz* (Dial Peace). He absently tucked the card in his wallet.

Weeks later, Raphael felt his life falling apart. His marriage and family were in trouble, and he was facing depression so deep he decided to end his life. He went into his bedroom, found his gun, and put it to his head.

"Something stopped me," Raphael told Rev. Hernandes Lopes, Portuguese ministry leader for Back to God Ministries



The "Dial Peace" ministry brings hope.

International (BTGMI). "I remembered the card with the words 'Dial Peace'"

Raphael found the card in his wallet and called the phone number to hear the daily recorded devotional produced by BTGMI's Portuguese outreach team.

Raphael says the message spoke specifically to him. He fell on his knees and prayed, giving his life to Jesus Christ.

Through the *Disque Paz* follow-up team he was able to connect to a church in the area that encouraged and discipled him in the Christian faith. He became an active member of the church and remained until he was transferred to another military post where, with God's blessing, his faith will continue. ■

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

New Orchestra Conductor Comes to Calvin

John Varineau, a longtime conductor of both the Grand Rapids Symphony and the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony Orchestra, has been named the new conductor of the Calvin Orchestra and the Grand Rapids Community Symphony.

A part-time member of Calvin's music faculty, Varineau is looking forward to conducting for the college.

Varineau first came to Michigan in 1972 to attend Michigan State University, where a friend shared the gospel with him. "It was on the long, long walk from my science class to our dorm that I accepted Christ as my Savior," he said.

Varineau completed his bachelor's degree in music at the University of Wyoming, then earned his mas-

ter's at the Yale School of Music.

He has performed as a clarinetist with the New Haven Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of New England, and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

For several years he has been teaching clarinet and music appreciation on an adjunct basis at Calvin. From 1999 to 2001, he served his

first stint as Calvin's orchestra conductor. He was followed in that job by Robert Nordling, who conducted the Calvin Orchestra from 2002 through this year. ■

—Myrna Anderson,
Calvin College Communications



John Varineau is no stranger to music at Calvin.

TOGETHER DOING MORE

Sierra Leone CRC Gets New Leader

Rev. Istifanus B. Bahago has assumed leadership and program development for the quickly growing Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone.

Bahago, a former seminary professor, recently served as president of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN).

He replaces Rev. John Phiri, director of lay training and empowerment for the Reformed Church in Zambia, who had served in Sierra Leone for many years.

CRCN missionary Rev. Ezekiel Sudu and his family joined Phiri and are continuing to serve in Sierra Leone.



Rev. Istifanus B. Bahago

Christian Reformed World Missions has been engaged in ministry in Sierra Leone for many years, including during

the bloody civil war that ended in 2002.

The CRC of Sierra Leone now consists of more than 5,500 believers in 62 congregations

that are increasingly organizing and functioning as a denomination. World Renew, the CRC's disaster relief and development agency, also is at work in Sierra Leone.

Together with overseeing the ministry, Bahago will help the CRC in Sierra Leone organize its ministries, mentor and train leaders, build vision and awareness, and increase involvement between the denomination and other churches and ministries. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Making Ministry Work in the Loop

Pastor Glen McCarthy hopes to reach out to diverse communities in Chicago's Loop through Restore All Ministries, a Christian Reformed Home Missions partner.

"I grew up in the South Side of Chicago in struggle, but God blessed me with an education and the chance to go to seminary," said McCarthy.

After attending seminary, he became involved with Loop Christian Ministries and launched Restore All with a Bible study in March 2012.

This grew into several cell groups meeting in homes and now culminates in a monthly worship service held every third Friday night at Loop Church. About 50 people and 15 volunteers attend.

"The Loop Church is liturgical, and while I love the creeds, the rich historical tradition, and the hymns, we have a full band and a blended worship style with hymns and hip-hop," McCarthy says.

A bivocational church planter, McCarthy works at Chicago Public Schools in the office of school improvement. He sees difficult situations through his job and dreams of reaching out with Christ's restorative hope.

"I believe God wants to bring people of all backgrounds together," he said. "I want to grow our base in the South Loop,

emphasize outreach, and grow a church culture of going into hard places, countering the world's ways with God's ways." ■

—Lorilee Craker,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Glen McCarthy felt a calling to begin Restore All Ministries.



You add.
God multiplies.

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The Difference \$25 Can Make

Alice S. Koroma says the secret to her success was a simple \$25 loan provided through a microcredit program started by World Renew and its partner Christian Extension Services (CES) in Sierra Leone.

This microcredit program encouraging members to save together started with 10 women. Each contributed about \$1.30 every month, says Mariama Charlie, a CES staff member who works in the community of Diang Kondembaia.

The women also received \$25 loans, which they invested in various business ventures. The loans were repaid with interest over six months.

Alice, a young mother of three boys and two adopted girls, used her loan to buy items in the city of Kabala, transporting them back to sell. She also bought rice seed to plant on her land.

At the end of the loan period, Koroma repaid her loan easily. She also sold part of her rice harvest to pay for her children's school fees and materials. Since then, she has taken out and repaid other loans.

"God used a simple \$25 investment to change Alice Koroma's life," says Charlie. ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, *World Renew*

Alice Koroma, the recipient of a \$25 microloan, has been able to use the money in wonderful ways.



Abe and Elaine Lee have been helping to change lives in Mexico through Image of God seminars.

Mexican Believers Embrace Lasting Healing

Mandy (not her real name), a teenager in Mexico, had been unhappy. Her parents' divorce had deeply wounded her. At times, her heart felt full of hatred.

She began looking for relief. Last November she decided to go to an Image of God seminar, remembering how her uncle had found new life by attending an earlier session.

Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries Abe and Elaine Lee have led two Image of God seminars every year since 2009.

The Lees began the seminars in Cuernavaca but have since led them, together with a growing team of volunteers, in other regions and denominations.

"The Image of God ministry is for all of us," says Abe Lee.

He said the seminars remind people of their value in Christ. People see that sin has erected barriers in their hearts, relationships, and lives. They've hurt and been hurt. Yet they can find hope and peace in Jesus' gift of grace and life.

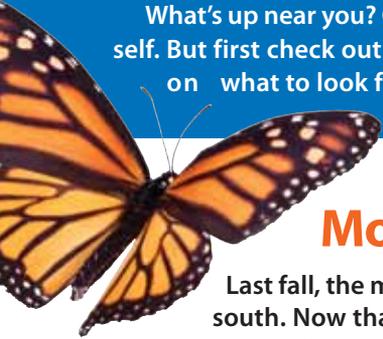
The conference enabled Mandy to release the pain in her heart, helping her realize that God has claimed her as his child. ■

—Sarah Lin,
Christian Reformed World Missions

What's Up?

In many parts of the world, it's springtime. There's new life in the air! All over God's green earth plants are popping up, animals are waking up, and bugs are showing up. If you live anywhere north of the equator, some of this is happening right outside your door.

What's up near you? Go outside and see for yourself. But first check out these pages for some hints on what to look for.



Monarch Butterflies

Last fall, the monarch butterflies migrated south. Now that it's spring, they're coming back north. Some of those very same butterflies that flew all those miles "hibernated" for months and are coming back now. You may have seen some of them if you live in Mexico or anyplace south of Texas. They're called the "pioneer generation."

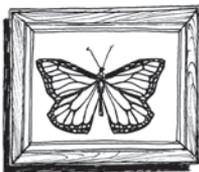
The "children" of those original butterflies continue the journey north. They're the monarchs that spread across the southern states in April. By the end of the month they'll mate, lay eggs, and die.

Further north, in May, you'll see the third generation—the "grandchildren" of the original hibernators. The ones that show up in June, further north yet, are the "great-grandchildren" of the pioneers.

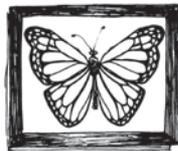
Somehow all the generations of these colorful butterflies know which direction to fly and when to go there. When will you see these winged wonders in your part of the world?



Great Oranpa



Grand Paddy



Pad



Junlor



Hey, Beautiful, do you come here often?

Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

Bonjour!

... but you can't take the sky from me...

Ik begrijp geen woord dat u zegt!



Fireflies

Adult fireflies may be up and about in your area, especially if you live east of the Rocky Mountains.

Did you know that fireflies "talk" to each other with light signals? Every kind of firefly has its own special signal. One signal may be a "short-short-long" blink. Another may be a "long-long-short-long" or a long spiral rising light . . . and on and on and on.

Different firefly species also have slightly different colored lights. Some are amber, others greenish, and still others yellow. Just think: With approximately 2,000 species of fireflies worldwide, there must be at least 2,000 different firefly signals!

Any flashes you see in the air come from male fireflies looking for mates. Flashes from the ground are females answering the "call." Females recognize only the signal of their own species. Other firefly signals are like a foreign language to them.

If you are in a firefly area, go outside at dusk. Sit quietly in a dark area of the yard and watch for flashes. Is there more than one signal? More than one color?

Aren't fireflies amazing?

FuN Facts

1. Lots of insects, tiny frogs, and other little creatures automatically produce “antifreeze” in their bodies before freezing weather comes.
2. “Popcorn” showers are common during springtime. They happen when warm and colder air currents meet in the atmosphere. They seem to pop up out of nowhere.
3. Slime from earthworms’ bodies adds **nitrogen** to garden soil. That’s good, because plants need nitrogen to grow well. Nitrogen doesn’t occur naturally in soil.
4. **Robins** arrive about the time soil temperatures reach 36 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius). That’s the same soil temperature that gets earthworms moving again.
5. Firefly **larvae** feast on snails and slugs. They find their prey by following the slime trail.
6. Want to see exactly where and when monarch butterflies were spotted last year? Go to learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch_spring2012.html.

Earthworms

The earthworms that live in your yard have “slept” below the freezing line all winter. Some of them curled together to form sleepy, slimy “worm balls.” Now that the temperature of the dirt has reached 36 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) they’re awake and tunneling through the dirt. All that tunneling loosens the soil and mixes it up. As they tunnel, the worms are eating old things that died last fall, turning it into smaller bits that add nutrition to the soil.

Earthworms are God’s little gardeners—they’re great for your garden or lawn.



Joanne De Jonge is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park Ranger. She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.

Future Queens

This is the time of year bumblebees and paper wasps set up housekeeping. Right now they’re probably buzzing around hunting for a good spot. They’re easy to find and fun to watch—from a safe distance!

Watch for bumblebees flying close to the ground. They cruise slowly above the grass and stop occasionally to investigate the dirt. Bumblebees nest in the ground. The “cruiser” you see flying around is a queen looking for a good place to set up a colony.

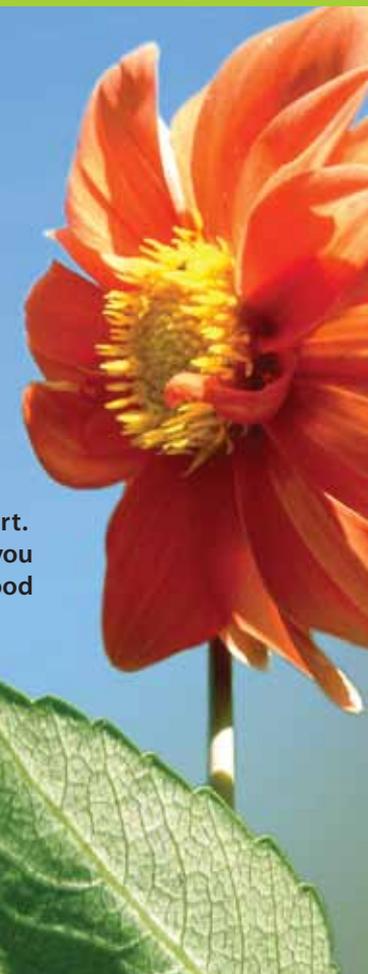
You may see a paper wasp or two investigating the eaves or windowsills of your house. She’s also a queen looking for a place to set up a colony. Sometimes you can find the beginnings of a colony that looks like a tiny piece of grey paper on a stalk. If you look inside carefully, you may see one or two eggs.

Spring Peepers

Have you heard any spring peepers yet?

Spring peepers are tiny frogs—all exactly the same species. They don’t have to separate into different groups with different mating calls the way fireflies do. They can call for mates as part of a big group, all using the same call.

So that’s what they do. Hundreds of them group together and call each other. Each tiny frog has a trilling, bell-like call. A bunch of peepers all calling together can be very loud. But if you’re more than a mile (about two kilometers) away, it sounds kind of like jingling sleigh bells. Enjoy them from a distance!



Waiting on God

MY HUSBAND, Shawn, answered the phone that night. Turning to me he said, “Marlena, your brother is on the phone. Something’s happened to your dad.” I felt a knot in the pit of my stomach as I reached for the receiver. “Kenny, what’s wrong?”

“Dad had an accident. He totaled your car.” At my dad’s unrelenting insistence, we’d exchanged cars a month earlier so he could get ours repaired for a cheaper price in Pennsylvania. “How is he?” I asked.

“I don’t know. We can’t find him.”

“What do you mean, you can’t find him?”

“We think he’s lost in the woods. Michelle and I have been looking for him since 4 o’clock this afternoon. The police called off the search because it’s dark. They think he was drunk and that he fled the scene. But I’m not sure. He might’ve hit his head against the steering wheel and just be out of it. I say that because we stopped at an old farmhouse near the accident. The farmer and his wife said dad knocked at their door and told them he was cold. When they asked if he needed any help, he swore at them and told them he didn’t. Then he left. They said he was all cut up and bruised and that he was almost incoherent. We’re going to keep looking for him. Ask the Lord to help us find him.”

Kenny told me that he and my sister, Michelle, would continue combing the woods for my dad. After I hung up, I relayed the details to Shawn. Then we begged God to spare Dad’s life.

God did spare his life. But after the accident my dad began engaging in extremely bizarre, erratic, and dangerous behavior. Two weeks after the accident, he quit his job, leaving him and my mom with no health insurance and no income. By that time, my parents were living temporarily with my sister and her family because they’d sold their property and were searching for a new home. But since my dad was behaving so recklessly—drinking and driving, getting into fights at bars, claiming he was a spy, hitting people up for money, allegedly sleeping with a girl half his age, and generally acting like a maniac—neighbors, friends, and family members feared for their safety. No one wanted him around. My brother-in-law insisted that my mom and dad leave their home. My parents were now without a place to stay, penniless, in the dead of winter.

A reprieve from the nightmare came when my dad was detained by police for a “302”—also known as a mental health arrest. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief. For the moment we didn’t have to worry that he would kill himself or someone



**“Dad had an accident.
He totaled your car.”**

else during one of his outbursts. In custody, my dad was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a diagnosis he refuses to admit. Since his arrest and diagnosis, my dad has bounced back and forth between jail and mental institutions while my mom has bounced among the houses of family and friends.

I’ve spent a long time waiting on God to bring order and healing out of chaos. But I haven’t always waited well. For two months after the accident, while fervently begging God to heal



my dad, I was irritable and neglected my husband and daughter. Meanwhile, I spent hours on the phone with lawyers, judges, social workers, friends, and family in an effort to help my dad and to find my mom a home.

I finally stopped my fix-it-all frenzy when God lovingly confronted me through my husband. “Marlena,” Shawn said, “you have to stop. Stop calling. Stop everything. You’ve done all you can. You’re not doing yourself or us any good. Don’t let

your dad take our family down too.” It was hard to release my grip and wait on God in the midst of chronic difficulty.

Looking back, though, I realize God has used this waiting period as a form of discipline. Even though there has been little change in circumstances, God has been transforming me.

In the midst of my waiting, I’ve learned that God unmasks our true selves, revealing who we really are. Until Shawn confronted me, I hadn’t realized how obsessed I was with trying to get circumstances under my control. I thought that if I could just reason with my dad and find the right resources, I could fix the situation. When things didn’t go my way, I worried throughout the day and spent the night lying in bed trying to figure things out. Ultimately, God revealed that my desire for control and worry demonstrated that I didn’t completely trust him. God used the time of waiting as a mirror for my soul, showing me who I really am.

I’ve also learned that if we let him, God uses the waiting times in our lives to reorient us to new ways of being. After I became aware of my desire for control and my lack of trust, I had to repent. For me that repentance consisted of relinquishing worry and control and reorienting myself to a posture of rest and trust.

This painful situation has lasted far longer than I ever dreamed possible. But God has used these circumstances to cultivate patience in me as I wait on him to help my parents. Moreover, the presence and prayers of Christ’s body have sustained me. I have learned that I cannot wait alone; I must wait in community. I have learned to allow others to bear my burdens. And although initially I allowed the circumstances to rob me of joy, I’ve learned to look for traces of joy and thank God for every little gift.

Waiting on God is one of the severest disciplines in the Christian life. Yet the discipline of waiting is essential if God is to form us into Christ’s image. I am uncertain of my dad’s future. But one thing is certain. This time around, I will not be in a fix-it-all frenzy. I cannot fix it. Only God can. ■



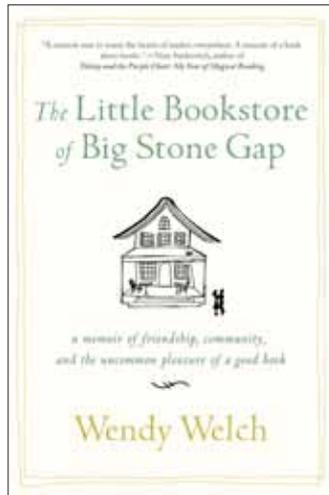
Marlena Graves is a writer for *Christianity Today*’s Her.meneutics blog. She has a book forthcoming from Brazos Press on the topic of how God uses suffering to form us. <http://marlenagraves.com>

How Big Stone Gap Beat Amazon.com

WHEN BORDERS BOOKS DECLARED BANKRUPTCY in 2011, a seismic shudder ran through the book world. Was this the end? Article after article sounded the death knell for booksellers whose brick-and-mortar stores simply couldn't compete with Amazon.com's guerilla pricing and vast inventory.

Ironically, the world's largest online retailer started as a home-based business when Amazon founder Jeff Bezos set up shop in his garage in 1994. Though Bezos says that customer service is Amazon's driving force, from the beginning his goal was to build "earth's biggest bookstore."

On the opposite end of the spectrum lies one of earth's smallest bookstores: Tales of the Lonesome Pine Used Books in Big Stone Gap, Va. Owners Wendy Welch and Scottish folksinger Jack Beck opened the store after tiring of the big-city rat race. Their dream was to create a



handful of suspicious neighbors to create a gathering spot that became the beating heart of their community. Drawn by Wendy and Jack's personal touch and quirky personalities, customers buy books, eat, drink, knit, sing, tell stories, and sometimes dance to Jack's Scottish folk music.

Wendy's wry, funny, heartwarming memoir, *The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap* (St. Martin's Press), stands as a reminder in an Amazon world that all the lovely things that go with books—a chat, a cup of tea, and the warmth of friendship—can't be purchased online. If customers wish, there will always be a place in a cyber-mad society for booksellers whose primary concern is to enrich their customers' minds and souls.

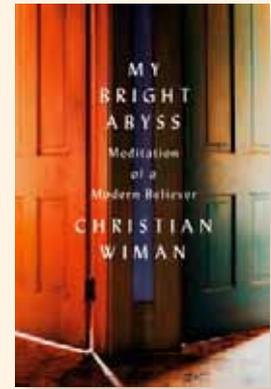
So here's a suggestion: Visit your local indie bookstore and buy a copy of *The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap* for yourself and another for a book-loving friend at (gasp) full price. Consider it a \$50 donation that stakes a claim for things that truly matter. ■



Sandy Swartzentruber is a freelance writer and editor. She attends Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

welcoming place where books and the arts would help people—including themselves—stop feeling as if they were "renting the space inside their own skin."

Living above their store, low on cash, and blissfully ignorant of what it would take to survive, Wendy and Jack struggled through the early days of low inventory, a nonexistent marketing budget, and a



My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer

by **Christian Wiman**

reviewed by **Kate Padilla**

Christian Wiman has known *that* he believed all his life. What he didn't know for certain was *what* he believed. In fact, until he was diagnosed with an unpredictable and incurable form of cancer, he had more doubt than certainty in his faith. Only when he started asking questions did he start searching for answers about God. Wiman questions the role of faith in an unfaithful world; he questions death; he questions what happens when a believer strays from his beliefs, only to return later to this place his heart has called "home." (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

There will always be a place in a cyber-mad society for booksellers whose primary concern is to enrich their customers' minds and souls.





Nightsong

by Ari Berk
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen
Feddema

Chiro, a young bat, has known only the comfort of his mother's nearness. But one night she tells him that he must fly out into the world

on his own. In this informative children's picture book, young readers are introduced to bats, one of God's unique creatures, and to a character whose loving parent helps him overcome fears and navigate an unfamiliar world. Ages 4 and up. (Simon & Schuster)

Splendors and Glooms

by Laura Amy Schlitz
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen
Feddema

In 19th-century London, orphans Lizzie Rose and Parsefall assist Grisini, a cruel master puppeteer. After the troupe performs for Clara Wintermute's 12th birthday celebration, Clara disappears. Grisini is suspected of kidnapping her. When Lizzie and Parsefall try to find Clara, they are trapped in a plot devised by Grisini's longstanding rival, a wicked witch. In this riveting juvenile novel, which includes some profanity, Lizzie Rose, Parsefall, and Clara overcome evil magic, danger, and hardship by loving, serving sacrificially and extending mercy. Ages 10 and up. (Candlewick Press)



The Impossible

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Maria and Henry and their sons were headed for an exotic vacation. Instead they got caught in the 2004 tsunami that wreaked destruction on Thailand. This suspenseful movie combines a survival story with a life-affirming look at the love that ties a family together. It's not for the faint of heart; the wounds and suffering from the powerful force are realistic, and the camera does not turn away. Based on a true story, the film also shows the gracious generosity of the Thai people toward the wealthy visitors who were helpless without them. Out on disc at the end of this month. (Summit)

The Lone Bellow

by The Lone Bellow
reviewed by Greg Veltman

Zach Williams leads this trio with earnest vocals and honest lyrics about grief, loss, love, and hope. The songs weave together stories from his experience of the accident that left his wife paralyzed as well as her miraculous healing months later. Kanene Pipkin provides the beautiful vocal harmonies as well as some bluegrass sounds on mandolin. Brian Elmquist rounds out the sound on electric guitar. Echoing the old-timey



sound of songwriting duo The Civil Wars, this album is a delight—each listen uncovers more complexity. (Descendant Records)

THE LOWDOWN



Love music? Calvin College hosts its **Festival of Faith**

and Music on April 11–13. Concerts by The Welcome Wagon, Andrew Bird, and Josh Garrels round out days of workshops and speakers including Cathleen Falsani, Daniel White Hodge, and Chuck Klosterman exploring the intersection of faith, music, and popular culture.



Make That Three: Ontario band Hawk Nelson's new album, *Made*,

features their new lineup. Since lead singer Jason Dunn went solo, the former quartet has become a trio. (Fair Trade)



Wise Will: Steve Vander Weele's translation of Arjan Plaisier's book *Deep Wisdom from Shakespeare's*

Dramas looks at the Bard's plays and examines how the Christian theology of the early Renaissance helped shape his work. (Wipf & Stock)



New Jobs: Steve Jobs gets his first Hollywood treatment with the biopic *JOBS*, starring Ashton

Kutcher as the iconic founder of Apple. (Open Road)

**MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE**

Where Fear Meets Faith

MY 3-YEAR-OLD SON called out in the middle of the night to tell me he was wet—no doubt the result of drinking a big glass of water to quench the mysterious thirst that strikes children at bedtime. His pajamas and sheets were soaked. I quickly analyzed how much work I felt like making of the situation. Instead of changing the sheets, I asked him if he'd like to sleep on the top bunk for the rest of the night. He liked the idea and I was relieved to avoid the difficult task of putting a fitted sheet on a bottom bunk with a bed rail.

I got Eli settled and headed back to our room, where my husband, Michael, sleepily asked what was going on. I told him about the situation, making it sound as safe as possible and mumbling the “top bunk” part under my breath. But I already knew what was coming. Suddenly Michael was not so sleepy.

“Is that safe?” he asked, sitting up. “The sticker on the bed says kids have to be 6 years old to sleep up there.” Michael is the only person I know who takes warning stickers as actual instruction rather than just corporate protection from litigation. This has been a theme in our marriage. I think something is “fine” or “okay” or “safe,” but my husband thinks we'll end up on the evening news as a warning to all other parents about poor decision-making.

In his book *The Undertaking*, Thomas Lynch writes: “[My father] saw peril in everything. Some mayhem with our name on it lurked around the edges of our neighborhood, waiting for a lapse of parental oversight to spirit us away.” Although not an undertaker like Lynch's father, Michael too has mastered the art of parental fear.

I am not a careless parent; I just have a more relaxed view of danger. I've been known to put baby seats on raised surfaces, let the kids use empty grocery bags as pompoms, and fill the bathtub deeper than most. I assume the instinct of self-preservation will keep my kids from flinging themselves down from the top bunk. Michael hates that I keep Windex under the sink, but I can't get even my kids to drink skim milk instead of 2 percent, so I'm betting they're simply too picky to try it. I don't leave my kids unattended (though it's tempting at times), so I feel confident that I will be there to foil the dangerous plot or issue the stern warning before it's too late.

Lynch continues, “My mother, who had more faith in the power of prayer and her own careful parenting, would often override his prohibitions.” I am not suggesting I have more faith than Michael; I am not immune to fear either.

Recently, a tragic farm accident has been on my mind. I do not know the family, but I know that these parents' young son could not recover from his injuries and was taken off life support. It gives me chills to think of the parents and siblings who now have a gaping hole in their family. It also makes me think back to the harvest seasons of my childhood. My father would often leave me to unload grain trucks while he attended to other work. I operated the truck hoist and worked the power take-off that ran the auger, sometimes even ducking under its rotating shaft as I had seen older and more careful people do. I remember kicking at the grain, my laces dangling over relentless sharp edges before climbing tall silos to open and close hatches in the sky.

Did my parents have hushed conversations and battle one another from their corners of fear and faith? Did my mother's value of safety and my dad's value of learning by experience collide? Maybe. But I vividly remember one stormy night.

The instinct of self-preservation will keep my kids from flinging themselves down from the top bunk.

Afraid of the thunder, I took refuge on the floor of my parents' room. They turned off the light and my dad began to pray, his deep voice ringing out in the darkness. I'll never forget it. He was praying for *me*. There I was, holding my breath in my sleeping bag so I could overhear my father going before God on my behalf. It was a powerful moment for me, even then.

Dad trusted that God heard every word. Maybe that's why my dad allowed me to do things that would make most modern parents—including Michael—shiver.

It's not that Michael and I don't believe God hears our prayers. But when we grip our kids so tightly in a fist of fear, it might say something about our level of trust. It might reveal that we think it's all up to us, forgetting that our children belong to God. It's also not to say that we will never lose a child just because we pray. God's ways are higher than my ways, and I do not know the future. I hope that is a sorrow I will never have to endure.



For every family that has lost a child, Lynch observes, “the little graves are never quite big enough to contain the grief.”

Michael won the bunk battle. He told me he refused to sleep another wink while Eli was up there. He made sweeping statements about the damage that could occur if Eli rolled off and fell onto the bed rail below. His description was dreadful enough that I wasn’t going to sleep anymore either. We went to Eli’s room and put him on the floor instead.

That decision annoyed me in the moment. But when I pray for the safety of my kids, I wonder if God’s answer is to provide the ideal partner for me. Michael will keep me from being on the news because of a boneheaded parenting mistake. He will always check on the kids to make sure their arms aren’t losing circulation through the crib slats. He will take the grocery bags away from my cheerleaders, and he’ll put choking hazards up on high shelves. Michael will tighten car seat straps and read warning labels so that I don’t have to or because he knows I just won’t.

Together we will soldier on in our mostly careful parenting with a lot of capital-F Faith and a little bit of lowercase-f fear. We will pray our kids through their lives and believe that God hears every word. We will grieve with those for whom this equation has broken down in ways beyond our limited understanding and who are searching for threads to repair the tragic tears in the fabric of their families. And we will listen to each other—to my practicality and faith as well as to the alarm bells going off in Michael’s head (they must be so loud!). We will keep the grip we have on our children tight enough to protect them and loose enough to give them over to God. ■



Andrea Bult lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Madison Square Christian Reformed Church. She is a stay-at-home mom to her two children, Eli and Annika.

We Are Who God Says We Are

LAST YEAR CHRISTIAN CENTURY INVITED some well-known authors to try their hand at summarizing the gospel in seven words or less (christiancentury.org/7words). There were lots of worthy responses, from M. Craig Barnes's "We live by grace" to Martin Copenhaver's "God gets the last word." But the one I find most compelling is Nadia Bolz-Weber's "We are who God says we are."

She writes, "In the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ, we see that God is so for us and with us that we can no longer be defined according to death, a religion-based worthiness system, or even the categories of late-stage capitalism. We are who God says we are: the forgiven, broken and blessed children of God; the ones to whom God draws near. Nothing else gets to tell us who we are."

Trying to live out our faith can sometimes feel like a series of obstacles to be negotiated or expectations to be met. We want to do the right thing, but figuring out what that might be isn't always as simple as it sounds. Even as we proclaim our dependence on God's grace in the company of our brothers and sisters, we strive to be worthy of God's love. Our Reformed theology encourages us to be active in building God's kingdom on earth. We know that our everyday life here and now isn't just a pit stop on the way to heaven. The downside, though, is a nagging worry that we're never doing enough to bring in the kingdom. That simply *being* isn't enough. We look up to the folks who "get things done" but struggle to understand the artists and dreamers among us—anyone who isn't motivated by success or influence or wealth.

Those words can keep a 21st-century pilgrim sane.

Really? Nothing else?

If that's true, not even the voice in my head that wonders how God could possibly put up with my frequent bouts of indifference defines who I am. Not the culture that holds me to an impossible standard of success or intelligence or youth or beauty. Not the belittling words of a friend spoken years ago but somehow never forgotten.

We are who God says we are.

Those down-to-earth words of faith are sturdy enough to embrace a world of ambiguity and the kind of doubt expressed by my dad, a Christian his whole life long, toward the end of his life when he wondered aloud if he really believed. They are joyful enough to celebrate the times when God's presence feels as real as each breath I take in and exhale—a rhythm of receiving and letting go that reminds me, if I let it, that I urgently depend on God for my very life. They are comforting enough to sustain hope in times of grief and loss, weakness, ill health, or fear of what the future might hold. And they are inviting enough to engage in conversation with people of faith or people who have no faith at all.

"We are who God says we are" reminds us that the old worthiness system doesn't apply. It's God who, through Christ's incarnation and resurrection says, "You're mine. Rest in my love."

Those words can keep a 21st-century pilgrim sane. In a world where people of faith are struggling to resolve issues of faith and science, to find common ground in the voting booth, to honor and respect the faith of others, to figure out what role the church should play in all of it, it's enough to know that it's God—only God—who says who we are.

The gospel in seven words. That's really good news. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Judith Claire Hardy is associate editor of *The Banner*. She attends Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

FAQs

Church

Q What type of support system does the church have in place for deposed or burned-out pastors?

A There's a difference between "deposed" and "burned-out" pastors. Deposed pastors have been removed from office and may no longer serve as ministers of the Word. Those who are burned out, on the other hand, retain their ministerial status and may be serving a congregation even as they struggle.

Most of our denomination's resources for pastors are preventive; councils and pastors are encouraged to take advantage of them before problems develop. For the first five years of ministry each pastor meets with a mentor to develop the habit of discussing ministry with a colleague. Each classis (a regional grouping of churches) has a pastor who meets with other pastors and, in some cases, with their spouses. Councils are encouraged to grant time and money for their pastors' continuing education. The denomination's office of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence offers conferences and other events for pastors and their spouses to improve ministerial skills and to maintain pastoral health. Some pastors meet with a spiritual director. Some councils offer a sabbatical as part of their call letter.

Other options for ministers who experience personal or professional difficulty include ongoing counseling, retreats designed for supporting pastors, and participation in a process of professional assessment. Usually these arrangements are made through the pastor's council or classis. The staff of Pastor-Church Relations is available to advise pastors and councils about appropriate options. In all cases the support of the pastor's spouse is crucial.

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

Illegitimate feelings of attraction usually express complex needs and yearnings.

Relationships

Q I seem to have developed strong feelings of attraction for the new supervisor of my department. I am ashamed of these unwanted feelings; it feels as if I am betraying my marriage. Is quitting the job I love my only option?

A A better way is for you to examine what these feelings are about, as well as to take steps that will encourage your feelings to change. Opening up this uncomfortable reality in spite of your shame shows maturity and personal integrity. That in turn can help you put these feelings in perspective, giving them less power to make you feel guilty.

Illegitimate feelings of attraction usually express complex needs and yearnings. These may be related to childhood traumas of neglect or abuse or to a marriage that is dysfunctional. If you suspect either of these, counseling might help. But such feelings can also relate to a kind of idolatry. If you have begun to idealize your supervisor as having the qualities you admire most in a person and yearn to possess, your feelings of attraction may be the natural outcome.

Good supervisors understand that the power invested in their position comes with the responsibility to keep proper boundaries. In fact, most companies and institutions hold a supervisor, principal, or pastor accountable to stringent sexual harassment policies. Sexual harassment is the term used when a supervisor creates an inappropriate relationship with an employee under his or her supervision. Even if the employee participates willingly in the relationship, the supervisor is responsible and therefore liable.

If idealizing your supervisor is the problem, Jesus invites you to learn by the power of the

Holy Spirit how you can find your home in him rather than in another human being—even one who is worthy of your admiration and respect.

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

Ethics

Q A catechism teacher taught me that white lies are sometimes permissible for Christians to tell. He used the example of lying to Nazis to protect Jews. From an ethical perspective, is his position credible?

A I have never encountered an ethics book that offered a clear definition of a white lie. More promising would be a distinction between lies that are morally justifiable or defensible and those that are not.

Sometimes telling the truth can be cruel. A physician, for example, may decide that lying to an elderly person about her terminal illness is preferable to telling the truth. And sometimes telling the truth can put others' lives in danger. Police officers have no qualms about lying to someone who is holding hostages at gunpoint.

Other times the situation is more ambiguous. If you know that your telephone is being illegally wiretapped, you might say things to mislead the eavesdroppers, but it is not clear that you are morally justified.

Christians should not lose sight of the fact that bearing false witness violates one of God's commandments. The burden of proof always lies on the side of one attempting to establish that a lie is justifiable.

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

ADS

Deadlines: May issue is 4/1/13; June issue is 5/6/13. 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

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U. S.) In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 2. The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969). "Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow countrymen on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958).
Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

Available for Call

The Council of All Nations CRC of Halifax, NS, declares **Rev. Brad Close** available for call to the churches.

After 10 years of faithful service, the council of Bethany CRC in Bloomfield, Ont. announces that **Rev. Kasey Vanderveen** is available for call. We wish him the Lords blessing as he seeks to further his ministry. He can be reached at revkaseyv@gmail.com.

Financial Aid

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 ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, May 16, 2013, 4PM, at the Oakland CRC. Agenda deadline is April 4. Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Retirement



After 30 years at the Rolling Acres Christian Reformed Church in Mason City, Iowa, **Pastor Jack Vanden Heuvel** and his wife Karen will be retiring. There will be a public celebration on Sat. May 4th from 1:00 - 4:00pm in the church fellowship hall at 340 20th St. SW, Mason City, IA. Pastor

Jack has many hobbies and has been very involved in the community. He is famous for his photography winning many awards. He started a camera club that has grown over the years. He also takes his photographs, turns them into slides, sets them to music for slide presentations and shows it all over the area. He loves to hunt, fish and play tennis. He's an avid camper and has taken several trips with the Cadets to Yellowstone National Park.

Pastor Gerald Erffmeyer of Orland Park CRC will be retiring this summer. To celebrate his 47 years in ministry, everyone is invited to a celebration at Di Nolfo's Banquets in Mokena on Thursday evening, June 27. (Tickets will be available for \$15.00.) Everyone is welcome Sunday, June 30, between the services at 9:30 a.m., for a coffee and cake celebration. Contact Orland Park CRC for more details.

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

OCHEYEDAN, IA CRC invites all former pastors, members and friends to join us as we celebrate 100 years of God's blessings on June 23, 2013. Details can be found on our website www.ocheyedanccrc.org

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@ccrws.org or 708.246.4638) for details.

THE HOLLAND MARSH CRC in Ansonveldt, 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.

Church's 50th Anniversary

PRINCETON CRC in Kentwood, MI will celebrate 50 years of God's goodness, September 15 - 22. All former members and pastors are invited to join us. For details call 616-455-0110 or www.princetonccrc.org

Announcements

The Board, staff, parents, students, and constituents of West Side Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI praise and thank our Lord for principal **Vern Groenendyk's** 42 years educating God's children at WSCS. An open house commemorating Vern's retirement and honoring his career will be held at the school on the evening of May 18. Details on the web site: www.wscsgr.org.

Through countless blessings, prayer and hard work, the expansion of the **Acton Beth-El CRC** has been completed. All are welcome to join us on Saturday April 13, 2013 at 7pm for a Dedication Service. Address is 365 Queen St. E Acton ON www.actonccrc.com

Birthdays

95th Birthday

BETTY CLOUSING celebrates her 95th birthday on April 22. Our family gives praise to God for her many years of love and devotion! Her address: 301 E Court St Apt 701 Ludington, MI 49431

90th Birthday

CLEOMAE KOEKOEK of 1350W. Hackley #327 Muskegon, MI 49441 will celebrate her birthday with an OPEN HOUSE from 1-4pm on April 27 at the address above. Please join her family and celebrate God's faithfulness in her life!

GRACE SCHUTTER (BOLHUIS) 3627 Wooden Shoe Rd, Manhattan, MT 59741 will celebrate her 90th birthday on March 30. Her immediate family of 73 thank God for His many blessings and faithfulness in her life. We love you, Mom! Open House: Sunday, April 7, 2-4 at 1st Manhattan CRC-Fellowship Hall.

80th Birthday

JEAN JIPPING GOEMAN 95 Old Mill Dr #8 Holland MI 49423. April 20. We thank God for 80 years. Your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren love you!

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

FLIKKEMA Albert and Audrey (Kimm) 6151 Shady Rest St, #15 Manhattan, MT 59741 celebrating 65 years of marriage on Feb 4, 2013.

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Their children Matt (Carol), Ken, Allan (Paulette), Evelyn (Keith), Helen (Wes) and Dale (Nancy) with their children and grand children praise God for his love and faithfulness.

HOLSTEIN Henry & Minnie (Vlietstra) of 3110 Midas Court, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494, will celebrate 65 years of marriage on April 2. Their daughter Pam and son-in-law Chris congratulate them. We praise God for His many blessings.

60th Anniversary

BREUKER Roger & Marilyn (Weesies) will celebrate their 60th on March 27th. Address: 1898 Muirfield Way, Muskegon, MI 49442. Children Dale & Betty Darling, Mark & Connie Johnston, Brian & Kathy Buter, Alan & Trena Buter along with their grandchildren & great grandchildren are thankful for their love and Gods faithfulness for all these years.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR Old Paramus Reformed Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey (www.oldparamus.org) is seeking an experienced, inspiring, energetic leader who is committed to sharing our Christian walk. We are looking for an effective, creative communicator of God's word, who will carry our message of compassionate love into the community, and will equip the congregation for outreach, and spiritual growth. Please make direct inquiries and/or send resume to search committee chairperson Rick Vander Wende: kwv11@optonline.net

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.

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

PASTOR AVAILABLE Western Michigan Pastor looking for 15-20 hours per week of ministry. Contact Pastor Jim at 460-1811.

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@cornerstonecrrc.ca or 604-792-2517.

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 westparkcrrc@att.net.

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@westviewcrrc.org

CUPIDO Peter & Johanna of Calgary, AB, Canada celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary April 1, 2013 with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Praise the Lord!

KAMMINGA John & Edith of Acton, Ontario, with thanksgiving to God for his many blessings, celebrated their 60th anniversary on Jan 22, 2013. Psalm 84:11

NATELBORG Ronald and Geraldine (Fortuin) of Merrillville, IN. Praising God for their 60th anniversary on March 27, 2013. Children, Jim & Robin, Rene' Fennema, Lon & Bonnie, Dean & Kathy, Dave & Kim Boss. 18 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren. Thanking God for His love and faithfulness!

FULL-TIME PASTOR Pease CRC in north central Minnesota is seeking a Pastor to lead a vibrant, rural congregation of over 500 members. We are a well-established, growing church looking for a pastor with vision and leadership skills that will keep us rooted in Biblical truth as we follow our calling to be the hands and feet of Christ to a hurting world. There is a full job description at: www.peasecrrc.org. If interested, contact Trudy Ash at peasecrrc@frontiernet.net or 320-369-4228.

PASTOR Willoughby CRC is searching to grow into its calling of greater service to our community of Langley, British Columbia. We are seeking a fulltime pastor with strengths in preaching, leadership and relational gifts to help us in that service. The pastor would work in a team staffing model. For more information contact search@willoughbychurch.com.

LEAD PASTOR Members of Ridgewood CRC in Jenison, MI are seeking a full-time ordained lead pastor who is enthusiastic, has a deep knowledge of the Bible, a passion for preaching God's Word and teaching messages with life applications. We desire a pastor who possesses spiritual discernment for directing and challenging members to cultivate a close relationship with God. This position requires an individual with solid administrative and communication skills yet open to change. If you seek to lead others to be disciples of Jesus Christ, desire to promote bible learning for all ages, and to be an encourager of missions and local outreach, please email Pastor. Search@Ridgewoodcrrc.com for additional information about this ministry opportunity.

PASTOR: New Hope Church, a dynamic, missional, multi-ethnic congregation located in Lansing, IL, a suburb of Chicago, has launched a search for a new pastor. For more information on this opportunity, contact ChapterNext.at.info@chapter-next.com.

PASTORAL MINISTRY RESIDENT Bethany Reformed Church of Sheboygan WI. is seeking a Pastoral Ministry Resident. This position will focus on empowering, equipping and encouraging new pastors for a healthy, fruitful and sustainable ministry. For more information visit www.bethanyreformedchurch.com

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICE The 12th Avenue CRC of Jenison, MI is looking for a Director of Community Service and Outreach. The Director, in contact with community members and organizations, will coordinate service opportunities for the congregation members and help them to develop their gifts of service. This is a part-time (20 hour/month) position. Candidates may be either ordained or unordained and must have a passion for serving others in the name of Jesus Christ and a heart for community outreach. The full position description can be found at www.12thavecrrc.org. Interested candidates should send their resume to Rev.MarkBennink@pastormark@12thavecrrc.org. Resumes will be accepted until the position is filled.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Listowel, Ontario, is seeking a full time Youth Director. We have a strong and vibrant youth program. To obtain a complete job description or submit a resume, please contact Ray Heeres: rayheeres@hotmail.com/519-291-2040 or Bethel CRC Office: officebethelcrrc@gmail.com/519-291-4000.

OKKEMA Orval and Ann will be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary D. V. on April 22, 2013. Congratulations, love and God's continued blessings. From your children, Mark & Sue, Tilda & Ed and Ray, as well as your grandchildren and greatgrandchildren. 1101-685 Woolwich St., Guelph, ON N1H 8M6

Obituaries

BERKOMPAS Howard A. age 85, died on January 12, 2013. Howard is survived by his wife, Nancy, children Rod (Joan), Cynthia (Ken) English, Art (Jaylene), Marilyn (Tim) Hoolsema, 16 grandchildren, 8 great grandchildren.

SENIOR PASTOR EverGreen Ministries (CRC) of Hudsonville Michigan, is seeking a full time pastor who is gifted in preaching, teaching and leadership. With vision, our pastor will lead EGM with innovation and outward focus in transforming lives inside and outside our church walls to become passionate followers of Jesus Christ. Please send a letter of interest and resume to the search committee at egmseniorepastorsearchcommittee@gmail.com For more information visit EGM.org

PASTOR Maitland River Community Church is seeking an inspiring, visionary leader who is committed to developing and empowering others. We need an effective, creative communicator of God's Word, who models compassionate love for the community and equips the congregation for outreach. Full job description at MRCC.ca. Direct inquiries and/or resumes to searchcommittee@mrcc.ca

FULL TIME PASTOR Grace Fellowship CRC of Pella, IA, a non-liturgical congregation with a casual, contemporary style of worship is seeking a highly relational pastor to lead us. Send profiles to pastorsearch@gracepella.org. For more info contact interim Pastor Scherer at 641-628-1885 or pastor@gracepella.org

PASTOR Saugatuck CRC is committed to "Growing, Caring, and Sharing". We are seeking a pastor with the passion and skills to lead a small congregation as we live out our calling to: Grow in our knowledge of God and in our response of love and service; Care for each other and our neighbors; and effectively Share the Good News to impact our diverse community. Please send inquiries, resume/ministry profile to JoAnn at jtdjonge@gmail.com.

SENIOR PASTOR The congregation of River Park Church (CRC), located in Calgary, Alberta, is seeking to fill the position of Senior Pastor to lead a staff ministry. All candidates should direct any inquires and resumes to Tony Bouma, Calling Committee Chair at 403-281-7292 or atbouma@shaw.ca.

FULL TIME PASTOR Lao CRC in Holland, MI is seeking a full-time English and Laotian speaking pastor. We are a young and growing congregation that ministers primarily to the Laotian community but is open to people of all races. We desire an upbeat pastor who is committed to sound biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth as well. If interested or would like to send a resume, contact Duane Terpstra - dterpstra@calvinministries.org or 616-581-5295

PASTOR Faith Christian Fellowship in Walnut Creek, CA is seeking a pastor. We are in the beautiful San Francisco Bay Area. Please send inquiries to pastorsearch@faithfellowship.com or visit our website for further information.

PASTOR Talbot Street CRC is an energetic, multi-generational congregation located downtown in the heart of London, ON, Canada. As a congregation, we seek to discover Christ and grow in Him through solid Biblical teaching, strong leadership and visioning from our Pastor. We are a diverse faithful congregation with passion for worship, service projects and actively living for Christ. With God leading us forward, we seek a Pastor who is able to challenge us. Those interested with a priority of preaching and teaching, and excelling at leading a multi-staff ministry as well as ministering to our downtown community, should send their inquiry to Harry De Jonge at harryde@sympatico.ca. For more information on our church and a church profile, please check us out at www.talbotstreetchurch.com

BLEKER James Jurrie age 70, passed into his Heavenly Father's presence on January 26, 2013. Jim is survived by his sister Sharon of The Netherlands and his brother Ernie of Stony Plain, AB and their families and many friends. Jim taught in the Christian Schools of Houston, Duncan and Chilliwack, BC and served as a volunteer at Rehoboth Christian School in New Mexico. For many years, after health issues hastened his retirement, he blessed Chilliwack as a chocolatier with his good friend Claude Meilleur.

BOS John P. age 94, of 1801 Collegeway, Worthington, MN went home to His Heavenly Father on Feb. 18. He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Nellie; children, Maynard and Linda, Julane (Steve) Bellin, Gordon and Lois, Milton and Cheri, 11 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

BOSCH Ruth H. (Schaaf); age 89; February 15, 2013; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her husband, Peter Bosch, her daughter, Joan Walters and her sisters Connie DeBoer, Martha Pruim, Sadie Lanenga, Elsie Oosting, Betty Achterhof and Gerry Verver. Surviving

are her daughters Linda and Jim Fridsma, son-in-law David Walters, Nancy and Rev. Steven Key of Loveland, CO, Virginia and Jim Proctor; nine grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; her sister Nelle Terborg of Chicago, IL; her sister-in-law Hilda Oostman of Lansing, IL.

DAHNE Fred, aged 80, answered the call to come Home on Jan. 20, 2013. Survived by his wife of 56 yrs, Florence (Teune) Children; Jerry (Jean), Janice (John), Linda. 7 grandchildren & 2 great-grandchildren.

DEHAAN Janice (Huibregtse) 75, joined her Savior and Lord on Feb 2, 2013. Jan is loved and remembered by husband Frank, children Peter (Adeline) DeHaan, Ellen (Scott) Rosen, David (Laurel) DeHaan, Jane (Dave) Hilbrands, and 10 grandchildren; brothers and sisters-in-law Wes and Bonnie, Dick, Carol; and friends at Bethel CRC SunValley CA.

DEVRIES John W, aged 81 of Sun City, AZ, (formerly of Artesia, CA and Rock Valley, IA) went to his Lord on November 4, 2012. He was preceded in death by his wife Bonnie (nee Postma), grandsons Jason Witte and Nicholas Sorensen, sisters Matilda (John) Huyser, and Wilma (Robert) Van Sloten. He is survived by his wife Nell; children: Brenda (Alan) Witte, Zeeland, MI; Steven (Karin) DeVries, Artesia, CA; James (Karen) DeVries, Jenison, MI; Cathleen (Paul) Sorensen, Aloha, OR; 12 grandchildren; 2 step-children: Craig (Leslie) Cutler; Dawn Cutler; 2 step-grandchildren; sister: Evonne (Vern) Van Middendorp of Rock Valley, IA.

FLIKKEMA George of Manhattan, MT, age 92, went to be with his Lord on January 7, 2013. He was born on Feb. 8, 1920 to Menko and Anna (Vrieling) Flikkema. George is survived by his wife, Dorothy; children, Melvin (Carol) Flikkema of Grand Rapids, MI, Karl (Doris) Flikkema of Manhattan, MT, Joyce Kelly of Grand Rapids, MI, and Beverly (Dean) Walhof of Orange City, IA; 10 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

HOEKSTRA James, 98, of Holland, MI, went to be with his Lord on January 2, 2013. Thanking God for his keen mind, steadfast faith and godly influence are his wife of 70 years, Grace; children: Jan (Carl Afman), Gerry (Merry), Marv (Beth), Norm (Nancy); his 8 grandchildren; and 9 great-grandchildren.

LERCHE Martha, nee Rusthoven, age 91, went to be with her LORD, February 10th, 2013, 3737 S. Highland Ave, apt 208, Downers Grove, IL, 60515. Beloved wife of Robert Lerche Sr.; loving mother of Robert (Nancy) Lerche Jr. and Janice (Kenneth) Tameling; dearest grandmother of Christine (James) Breuker and Brian Lerche; cherished great-grandmother of Anna Breuker; fond sister of Aldy (Shirley) Rusthoven and Ken (Lois) Rusthoven; sister-in-law of Betty Rusthoven; preceded by 4 brothers and 4 sisters; special aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to CareNet: 515 Ogden Ave., Suite 200, Downers Grove, IL 60515; or World Renew: 2850 Kalamazoo SE. Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0001.



MONSMA Timothy, Rev. (Dr.) was taken home to glory on February 8, 2013, at the age of 79, in Grand Rapids, MI. Preceded in death by his parents, Rev. and Mrs. Martin Monsma, and sister, Cynthia DeVries. He is survived by his wife Dorothy, five children: Karl of Brazil, Sheri & Tom

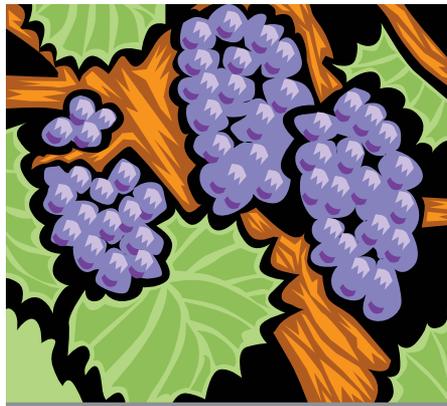
Muma (NC), Karen & Andrew Visser (MA), Dee & John Hunt (CO), Mark & Sharla (TX), 18 grandchildren, 1 great-granddaughter; brother, Stephen & Mary Monsma and sisters, Jo & Don Van Gent & Hester Monsma; brother-in-law, Dick & Bev De Vries. After serving the Chandler CRC of MN for 3 years, Tim spent most of his life in mission service, including 12 years in Nigeria for the CRC and 2 years in Malawi at the African Bible College. He also spent many years traveling and lecturing in Asia and the U. S. He also wrote and published works with an emphasis on urban missions. Thank you, God, for using him in so many ways. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Rev. 14:13.

SYBESMA Samuel Henry, 74, went to be with his Lord on January 21, 2013. 10345 Beach Street, Bellflower, CA 90706. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Karen Kay (Rienstra) Sybesma; his children, Kelli (Kirk) Tillema, Shelli (Syd) DeVries, Samuel (Kelly Hibma) Sybesma. He was grandfather to Kelsey, Landon, Carly Tillema; Tara, Rachel, Lauren De Vries; and Micah, Jake Sybesma. He is also survived by his siblings: Richard, Charles, Helen Schilder and Anne Dykema. He was preceded in death by his siblings: Durk, Ben, Bill, and Wilma Vander Veen.



TOGTMAN Raymond C, Sr., age 89, WWII U. S. Army Air Force Veteran of Orland Park, IL went to be with his Lord on February 14, 2013. Beloved husband of the late Lois, nee Bandstra (2006). Loving father of Loray Becker, Raymond Jr., Sandra Togtman, and Rebecca May. Cherished grandfather of Justin (Megan) Becker and Austin Becker. Dear brother of Clara Togtman, Grace Boersma, and the late Martha DeGroot, Marguerite Togtman, Edna Huisenga, Jeanette Ebbens and Harold Togtman. Fond uncle of many nieces and nephews. Retired co-owner of Togtman Brothers Painting and Decorating.

VANBEEK Helen (Wezeman), age 75, of Grand Rapids, passed away on February 12, 2013 and is now in the presence of her Lord and Savior. She was preceded in death by her husband, Donald; son, Daniel; and grandson, Joel Bos. Helen is survived by her children, Sherry (Omar) Romero, Doug (Linda) VanBeek, Cindy (John) Bos, and Dave (Sandie) VanBeek; grandchildren, Chris (Lauren), Nathan (Gill), Tyler, Evan, and Brianna Romero, Sally and Tim VanBeek, Jennifer,



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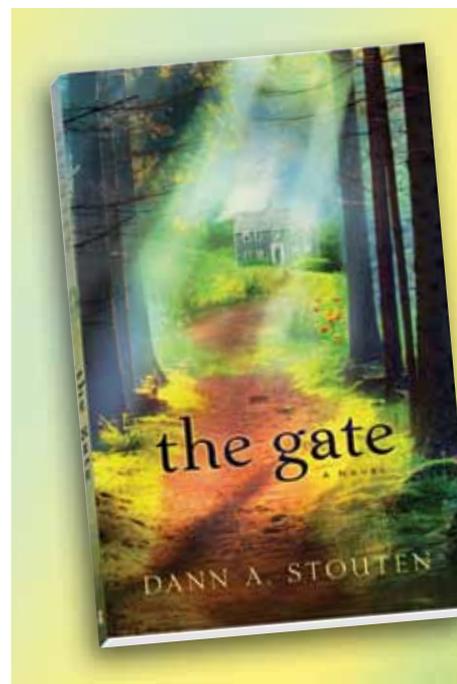
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Jillian, Jaycie and Jasmine Bos, and Ben and Nick VanBeek; great-grandchild, Brooklynn Romero; her brother, Ken (Phyllis) Wezeman; brother-in-law, Bill (Ida) VanBeek; sisters-in-law, Jean VanBeek and Marlys VanBeek; many nieces, nephews, and friends.

VAN EMST Grace Ardis, age 82, passed on Oct. 15, 2012. Daughter of Garret Van Emst. Survived by Geraldine Snyder, nieces and nephews.

VAN VALKENBURG Gertrude (De Witte, Vander Molen), 98, entered Glory on Jan. 1. Survivors are sisters Jo De Lange and Trudy Klaver; son Ron (Phyllis) Vander Molen; 6 grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren. We thank God for Mom's long and active life.

WESTENBURG Ronald C., 73, went to his eternal home Feb. 11, 2013. Preceded in death by his parents, Clarence & Alyda, and sister, Janice Russom. Survived by Violet (Duane) Sjaardema and Marvin (Sandy) Westenburg and many nieces, nephews and relatives.

Employment

CAREGIVERS NEEDED Are you interested in working for the best living assistance services company in West Michigan? Visiting Angels is looking for people who can be excellent, not average; make a connection with our clients; be perfectly dependable; practice compassion and work with integrity. Contact Heather at 616-243-7080 or heather@vangels.com. www.vangels.com

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818-834-7000
www.onnurila.com

Registration is \$125 (\$150 after April 1). This includes attendance at all events and all meals (2 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners).

Contact us at 616-224-0772 or (toll-free) 800-266-2175 (English) 818-834-7000 (Korean) prayersummit@crcna.org.

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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!

My daughter and her three children were visiting for a few days. For supper I made kale and mashed potatoes, which my grandson thoroughly enjoyed. The next morning my daughter asked what he would like for breakfast. He promptly replied, "I want grass and potatoes."

—Hilda Fledderus

A client brought a litter of Golden Retriever puppies to a veterinary clinic for inoculations and worming. As the look-alike pups squirmed over and under one another in their box, the vet realized it would be difficult to tell the treated ones from the rest. So he turned on the faucet, wet his fingers, and moistened each dog's head when he had finished.

After the fourth puppy, the vet noticed that the talkative owner had grown silent. As he sprinkled the last pup's head, the woman leaned forward and whispered, "I didn't know they needed to be baptized too!"

—Meindert van der Galien

I sent for two magazines from a local Christian school sale for my grandchildren, Caden, 6, and Kashton, 2. When I asked my son if the magazines had arrived, he

replied, "No, but Kashton sure is enjoying the *Banner* that came in the mail today!"

—Pat Trathen

Do you believe in life after death?" the boss asked one of his employees.

"No, sir, I don't," confessed the employee. "I think that's a very strange doctrine."

The boss replied, "Well, maybe you should rethink your theology. Just a few hours after you called yesterday to tell us you couldn't come to work because you had to attend your grandmother's funeral, she stopped in to see you."

—George Vander Weit

A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When he was spotted, the ladies burst into shrieks, grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, "What's the matter? Haven't you ever seen a little boy before?"

—Herm Kelderman

The minister was talking to the Sunday school class about kindness to animals. "Now let's suppose," he said, "that you saw a person cutting the tail off a cat. What Bible verse would you say to let him know the terrible wrong he was doing?"

One of the children thought for a moment and then replied, "I would remind him that what God has joined together, let no one separate."

—Harv Bergsma

One Saturday night I was babysitting my 3-year-old granddaughter, Erica. Since I'm the church organist, I wanted to practice a bit before turning in for the night. When I turned on my home organ, it made an ominous "whoOOooOOoo" sound. I said, "Now what's the matter?" She quickly replied, "Must need new batteries!"

—Carol Workman

The council of a church that met in an old wooden building decided to ask a member of the congregation, a professional house painter, if he would donate his labor and paint the church. They gave him \$500 to buy the paint. He bought only half of the paint needed, mixed it with paint thinner, and pocketed the rest of the money.

After a few days, the pastor stopped by to see how the job was going. "It looks good," said the pastor.

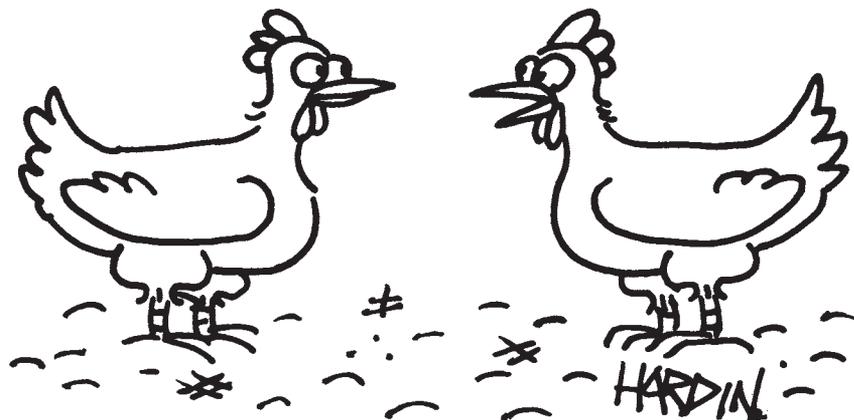
"Thanks; I should be done by tomorrow," said the painter.

Suddenly it started pouring. To the horror of both men, the paint appeared to melt off the church.

"What's going on?" said the pastor.

sobbing, the painter admitted what he'd done. The pastor put his arm around the painter and said, "I forgive you, but you must repaint and thin no more."

—Paul Andring



"Just once I'd like to cross the road without anyone questioning my motives."



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