

# BANNER

October 2013 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

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# Noblesse Oblige

## A STORY USUALLY ASCRIBED TO QUEEN VICTORIA GOES LIKE THIS:

Her Majesty was hosting a formal banquet in honor of a foreign dignitary. All went well until the man, unaware of the proper function of a finger bowl, grabbed his with both hands and gulped down its contents. The other guests began to snicker. Noting his blunder and the guests' derisive response, Queen Victoria took her own finger bowl in both hands and promptly drained it as well. That left the scoffers no choice but to follow suit. In one instant Her Majesty saved the guest of honor from crippling embarrassment and taught the rest of the august assembly a thing or two about *noblesse oblige*.

Noblesse oblige is the moral obligation that falls on those who are highborn, rich, or powerful. It is the added responsibility to act honorably, generously, and diplomatically toward all—and in all situations. In essence it is the responsibility of the noble to act nobly; for larger-than-life people to be, well, big-hearted, broadminded, and, just plain *bigger* than any situation in which they find themselves.

Here's an example. For most new fathers, changing a diaper in the dead of night is no biggie. Hardly news. Unless you're William, the crown prince of England. In his case, popping on a fresh Pampers is an act of noblesse oblige, pointedly demonstrating that even kings-in-waiting should not imagine themselves above dirtying their fingers to be a nurturing dad.

Christians call that *grace*. We see grace when the omnipotent God over all freely binds himself to covenant obligations he did not have to make, but made out of sheer sovereign love. It sums up the whole gospel, really: Jesus, the King of kings, graciously stooped down into death itself to bring us into his eternal kingdom of light. The gospels tell us that it was *necessary* for Jesus to endure all that befell him. How can an omnipotent God be under such obligation? The wonderful answer throughout Scripture is this: It is the inner compulsion of God's own majestic essence: love, grace. Noblesse oblige.

God's children are "born from above" (John 3:3, NRSV) by God's Spirit. So we too are under noblesse oblige—it's precisely the opposite of slavery that now obliges us.

As ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom, how do we carry ourselves? How do we present ourselves as the big people into which we are already being molded? How do we reflect it in the ways we behave, tolerate, communicate, reconcile, and relate to all others?

We see many wonderful examples of God's majestic presence in otherwise unremarkable folks. It makes no difference whether they are uneducated or educated, rich or poor, rural or urban. In all simplicity and humility they reflect wonderfully the nature of the one whom they represent—the One who is so glorious, majestic, and praiseworthy because he's so surprisingly gracious.

If only I can learn to be like that when my neighbor starts his lawnmower before dawn, or when we have theological differences at the Bible study, or when the officer hands over that undeserved speeding ticket. . . . ■

For most new fathers,  
changing a diaper in  
the dead of night is  
no biggie.



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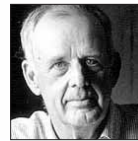
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## "X"

Whatever is foreseen in joy  
Must be lived out from day to day.  
Vision held open in the dark  
By our ten thousand days of work.  
Harvest will fill the barn; for that  
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled  
By work of ours; the field is tilled  
And left to grace. That we may reap,  
Great work is done while we're asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood  
Rests on our day, and finds it good. ■



"X" by **Wendell Berry**,  
from *A Timbered Choir*.  
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# Hello Is Not Enough

THE BANNER

How the angels in heaven will sing when you are kind to a seeking stranger!

**BILL HYBELS**, the founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, once said, “The local church is the hope of the world.”

That is quite a responsibility for any church member! You have probably helped stimulate church growth by raising your children in the church, but I suggest that we all have a calling to do more than that.

My husband and I have been church greeters for over 20 years. When greeting guests, we try to ask a few questions, like “Are you visiting or newcomers to the area?” If they are newcomers, we ask their name and write it down for further reference. Most people are very friendly. Greeting isn’t always easy, but the reward comes later when someone says, “Thank you for talking to me,” or, “You are the first person to remember our names, and it makes us feel like we belong.” We have asked other members of our church to take a turn to be greeters. Some people are quite shy and are unsure about doing this—but invariably afterward they say, “It was fun!”

We always wonder how we will be greeted in other Christian Reformed churches. Typically the greeters will say

hello and shake hands with us. Other than that, though, we have been left standing in the middle of a fellowship hall, holding our coffee and cookies while everyone else is busy chatting with their friends. If this has ever happened to you, you know what that feels like.

It’s a pleasant surprise when people take the time to say hello to us. But are they really interested in us? Would we ever join one of these churches? Probably not.

My experience has taught me that “hello” is not enough. We are called to make newcomers feel comfortable and welcome. To accept them just as they are. God does! What our churches need are greeters not only before church but also after church. That means you. When you go to your church, look for guests, and make it a point to meet them after the service.

Perhaps you’re thinking, “But this is not my gift.” Trust me: the more you do it, the easier it gets. And how the angels in heaven will sing when you are kind to a seeking stranger! Remember, “The local church is the hope of the world.” May your church grow because you care enough to step out of your comfort zone and enfold newcomers. ■



**Ruth Kamps** lives in Gallup, N.Mex., and attends Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church.



## Learning from Timothy

The most complete account of this chapter in Timothy Christian School’s history is in the book *Dutch Chicago* by Robert P. Swierenga (“Learning from Timothy,” July 2013).

To those who felt Timothy did the expedient thing rather than the godly thing, I have one question: Did your children attend the school that Cicero residents threatened to bomb?

The author states that a federal court declined to rule on the lawsuit, saying that it had no control over private schools. Synod should have done the same thing. The most important lesson from Timothy? The separation of Christian church and Christian school governance.

—Jane Meulink  
Westmont, Ill.

## Money Matters

The remarks about Mr. Ramsey in “Money Matters” (July 2013) are inaccurate. In his book *The Financial Peace Planner*, Mr. Ramsey informs his readers that they should be donating a portion of their income to charity, and if his readers are Christians, should be tithing 10 percent to their church. He also says as your income increases so should your contribution to your church and/or charity. Does this mean followers of Mr. Ramsey’s teachings are good stew-



# LETTERS

ards? Some are and some are not, but Dave Ramsey is not responsible for the life choices of his readers.

According to Mr. Ramsey, the end result of using his method is financial peace and responsibility, not “fun.” He doesn’t exclude fun, but that certainly is not the main purpose.

—Mary Pardue  
Zeeland, Mich.

## Missionary Support

I read with disappointment the decision to have missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions raise 90 percent of their support (News, July 2013). Think about what this means. Missionaries agree to a long-term commitment that includes learning a new language and culture, separation from family, dealing with unstable governments, personal and family safety, disease, and transportation far from our own comfort zones.

We overlook the fact that good fundraisers may not be good missionaries, and vice versa.

Who will raise the voice that missionary work is important? Or do we continue by our default actions saying it is not?

—Lloyd W. Bierma  
Sioux Center, Iowa

## Drawing the Line

The July 2013 issue of *The Banner* has done a disservice to the denomination by printing Harry Van Belle’s “Where Do We Draw the Line?” (“Sex, Intimacy, and the Single Person”). The article does not demonstrate a serious attempt to understand biblical guidelines.

According to the editorial in the same issue, articles may be printed “provided they are within the bounds of Scripture, don’t directly advocate against the doctrines taught in the creeds and confessions, and remain reasonable and respect-

ful.” In my opinion Van Belle’s article fails on all three counts.

—William T. Koopmans  
Chatham, Ontario

Thank you for publishing Harry Van Belle’s challenging article (“Where Do We Draw the Line?”). I agree that “waiting until marriage” has turned into something different for young adults today. But I challenge his suggestion that we use “maturity and commitment” as the criteria for sexual relationship instead of marriage. If young adults are mature and committed enough for sex, why aren’t they mature and committed enough for marriage? Perhaps we as a church need to support and equip young adults for earlier marriage instead of simply asking them to delay sex.

—Jillian Burden  
Holland, Mich.

Marriage was created by God and is used to describe the love between Christ and the church. Before marriage, focus on the relationship, have fun, and grow close, but sexual experiences can wait. In the confines of marriage there is freedom, safety, and openness. As Adam and Eve believed the lie that God was withholding something good, so too sin can appear so tempting. The biblical laws governing marriage are to protect and to bring life, not to be a burden. It’s not easy. I often hate rules like my dog hates leashes, but I can say that God’s law is good.

—Dawn DeVisser  
Ovid, Mich.

## Tomorrow’s Theology

By choosing to publish “Tomorrow’s Theology” (June 2013), *The Banner* has given voice and credibility to a line of reasoning that questions the very core of the gospel: the life and work of Jesus Christ. Who can measure the damage

done by such an article to someone struggling to reconcile science and the gospel? How many young people will now yield to the temptation to interpret the Bible through the lens of science instead of vice versa? What impact will such “conversation starters” have on my children in the years to come?

While asking questions is good, not all questions are created equal, and certainly not all are fit to print.

—Greg Talsma  
Edgerton, Minn.

Thank you, Edwin Walhout (“Tomorrow’s Theology”). I have been waiting for the leadership in the CRC to address the theory of evolution and its implications for believers.

For years there have been discussions about various aspects of evolution, and for years ministers have continued to preach the “old-time religion.”

In the last decade there has been an explosion of scientific knowledge and information as God has allowed humans to discover ever more of the intricacies of creation (revelation). Our continuing refusal to engage with this new knowledge and understanding just might be an insult to the Creator.

Walhout appears ready to embark on a new openness, to explore a new theology. I find it an exhilarating prospect and am ready to listen and learn.

—Wietse Posthumus  
Toronto, Ontario

[MORE ONLINE](#)

# NEWS

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## Calvin College Professors Sign Climate Change Letter

**T**wenty professors at Calvin College this summer signed an open letter to the United States Congress calling for action in response to climate change and in defense of people in developing countries whose lives are being adversely affected.

Calvin College is located in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is owned by the Christian Reformed Church.

"We as a society risk being counted among 'those who destroy the earth' (Revelation 11:18)," the letter states in part.

"Global warming may seem to be just a climate issue," said asso-

ciate chemistry professor Douglas Vander Griend, one of the Calvin faculty members who signed the letter. "But the fallout is hardship, poverty, and struggle . . . experienced disproportionately by people who didn't create the problems."

Jim Bradley is a retired math professor. "The skepticism with which many Christians have regarded global warming is precisely the reason why I signed the letter," he said.

Biology professor Dave Warners said, "The longer it takes for us to begin taking serious mea-

asures to curb our emissions and increase our sequestration capacity, the more difficult it will be to turn things around."

The letter, initiated by Dorothy Boorse of Gordon College, was also signed by 200 Christian evangelicals from colleges including Cornell University, Gordon College, Hope College, Ohio State University, and Wheaton College.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Roxanne Van Farowe

## Crazy or Called?

To all appearances, Duane Terpstra has it all: a family, a home, and an executive job with a six-figure salary. At 53, he should be coasting toward a comfortable retirement. Instead, Duane and his wife, Cindy, have decided to forgo the familiar and the comfortable to pursue what they believe is a calling from God to ministry in South Florida.

In addition to his full-time job, Duane is giving up a rewarding part-time interim position as a commissioned pastor at the Laos Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich.

Cindy is leaving her job as church administrator at Calvin CRC in Holland.

"I may be flipping hamburgs to survive until the church grows," Duane said, only somewhat joking. "If this isn't a call from God, we must be nuts."

The Terpstras are coming alongside Chris Cassis, former senior pastor at Calvin CRC, his wife, Viviana, and their young children to plant an English-speaking multicultural church south of Fort Lauderdale. Called The Source Church, it will especially reach out to young second-generation Hispanic immigrants.

Chris has increasingly seen a need for an English-speaking CRC in the area, one where Hispanic young people can feel they really belong. "I kept feeling that urgency, that they needed a church that's for them," he said.

—Susan Vanden Berg



(L-r) Chris and Viviana Cassis, worship director Josué Sanchez, and Cindy and Duane Terpstra

## GEMS Leadership Conference a Summer Highlight

More than 350 ministry leaders from all across North America gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, for the 44th Annual GEMS Girls' Clubs Counselors' Leadership Conference. Keynote speakers Mark Buchanan and Grace Fox, along with singer/songwriter Carolyn Arends, helped bring into focus the GEMS theme for the upcoming year: "Who's the Greatest?" based on John 3:30.

Counselors also had an opportunity to meet Kathryn Miller, the new executive director of GEMS, both through her presentation and in one-on-one conversations throughout the weekend. [MORE ONLINE](#)



GEMS counselors enjoy worshipping God together.

—Tracey Yan

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Herman Minnema

1921 – 2013

Herman Minnema, 91, was known for his deep concern for the salvation of people—but not any less for their personal well-being. He was a tireless practitioner of the ministerial office through old age.

Minnema was gifted both as a pastor and as a Bible teacher, serving in North Carolina, Minnesota, and Michigan. After retiring in 1991, he was a visiting minister for two California churches.

Minnema's ministry was marked by integrity, straightforwardness, and a profound sense of duty. But he was also a man of deep love and sympathy. His sermons were as biblical as they were practical. Pastoral visiting was the love of his heart. He had a winsome way with young people. And he was very dexterous, always ready to fix and build things.

Minnema is survived by his wife, Marti, three children and their spouses, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. He was preceded in death by a daughter.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

## Flood-Ravaged High River, Alberta: Aftermath

In the months after unprecedented and disastrous flooding in Alberta, many wait. Wait to return home. Wait for things to dry. Wait for insurance companies to assess damage.

In the midst of it all is the one and only Christian Reformed Church in High River, the community that was hardest hit. Sixty percent of its members were evacuated during the flood. Twenty-five percent remained out of their homes at the time of publication. But the congregation continues to reach out to the community.

The church's pastor, Paul Droogers, and his family were able to move back into the upstairs of the parsonage. The basement had only a few inches of water in it, but the water had caused mold and other issues.

Once their basement is renovated, the Droogers have offered to host the Genesis Christian Preschool in their home until it can resume in the church basement—probably not until the new year.

The church's basement was nearly filled to the ceiling with 11



Members of High River CRC work at restoring the building.

feet of water. By the time people were allowed to return to town, the water had mostly receded, leaving a thick layer of sludge. "Thanks to hardworking volunteers," said Greg Bennik, clerk of High River CRC, "everything has been cleaned out and it is in the process of drying before rebuilding."

Meanwhile, Sunday worship services can be held in the upstairs portion of the church. The sanctuary will be shared with at least one other High River church whose building needs to be entirely rebuilt.

The church also continues to host 50 to 60 people every Wednesday at "Come as You Are" dinners. "The weekly dinners have

been well-received in the community," said Bennik. "During the initial cleanup it was buffet style on the church lawn with lawn chairs and everyone in their grubby clothes!" Come fall, the church hopes to continue this ministry, probably on a monthly basis.

Bennik said the church is thankful for all the help—from work teams to donations—received from other Christian Reformed churches in Alberta. World Renew has committed to help in the rebuilding process. "We have been truly cared for and feel blessed by our CRC community around us!" [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Janet Greidanus

# NEWS

## Ontario Parents Brace for Tax Reassessment

**M**any Ontario parents are bracing for a reassessment of their recent tax returns after Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) revoked the charitable status of the Christian Economic Assistance Foundation (CEAF).

The affected parents donated a portion of their Christian school tuition fees to CEAF in order to get a charitable donation receipt that lowers the amount of income tax they pay. The foundation in turn redistributed the money back to participating schools. Earlier this year, CRA questioned whether CEAF is, in fact, a charity or simply a way to characterize tuition payments as charitable donations.

CRA sent letters to hundreds of parents with questionnaires about donations in the 2009 tax year, prompting a CEAF spokesperson to tell *The Banner* that the foundation was confident the disagreement with CRA could be resolved (*The Banner*, May 2013, p. 12).

However, with its charitable status revoked in July, CEAF has disbanded. In a memo to participants, the board wrote: "Many of you are now faced with reassessments for three tax years, a predicament we regret, but CEAF is out of business, and we are in the process of shutting down the corporation."

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools had endorsed the program, and 43 of its 69 member schools had participated. In an August memo to its member schools, executive director Jules DeJager noted that school leaders in some communities may have to deal with tensions between reassessed parents and school leadership, requiring school officials to explain how they properly followed the procedures for participation in the CEAF program, but that the tax agency always reserves the right to audit charities and foundations.

DeJager's memo also noted that at least one law firm is soliciting for a class-action suit against CEAF and the OACS.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Is Social Justice Your Cup of Tea?

Many of us drink our morning or afternoon cup of tea without a thought as to where it comes from. Entrepreneur Grayson Bain is determined to change that.

Bain's vision led to the creation of JusTea, the world's first direct-trade partnership between tea drinkers and tea farmers in Kenya. Bain attends Nelson Avenue Community Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Kenya is one of the top three exporters of tea in the world, and most of the crop is grown by over half a million small-scale farmers. Many of these farmers receive only a small portion of the profits, earning less than \$2 per day selling their tea to large companies.

JusTea goes beyond fair trade and eliminates the "middleman" entirely by providing

the equipment and training that farmers need to hand-process their own tea in small kitchens. The result is a high-quality artisan tea made without costly electricity-dependent factory machinery. JusTea then buys the tea and sells it directly to the consumer, thereby providing a living wage for farmers and their families.

"With direct trade, the tea consumer knows the name and location of the tea production, can understand the nature and environmental condition of the tea growing area, and find out about social, political, or economic factors in the specific area where their tea is grown. Simply, the tea drinker can begin a relationship with the tea grower in Kenya," explained Bain.

Bain, who has already traveled to Kenya to meet with farmers, will return this fall >>

## Fighting the Global Water Crisis, One Bucket at a Time

Nearly one billion people lack access to safe water, according to Water Missions International. Determined to help change that staggering statistic, more than 170 members of Elmhurst (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church participated in "Walk in a Bucket" in August, in the hope of raising awareness and funds for Water Missions International.

"The idea came from an article we read in *Christianity Today*," said Anna Wick, a member of Elmhurst CRC's Community Service Team. "It talked about how providing people in Third World countries with water makes such a radical difference in their lives."

The church raised more than \$30,000, enough to adopt an entire community through Water Missions International.

Participants carried a bucket to a creek via a specified route, reenacting the trek that millions of women and children make in developing countries. Several families participated, which encouraged lessons to be shared between parents and children.

"It was important to show and explain to my kids that it isn't a 'normal' thing for everyone to turn on the faucet, grab a bottle of water from the refrigerator, or even to be able to take a bath," said Josh Becvar, who participated with his wife and three children. "This showed them, and me, how we are fortunate to have what we have. It also helped us all understand how important it is for us to help people to simply have clean water, something we take for granted."

[MORE ONLINE](#)



Pastor Peter Semeyn (left) helps fill buckets of water while siblings Jacob and Leah F. wait their turn.

—Melissa Holtrop

to build the first tea-processing kitchen with local partners. He doesn't plan to stop there.

"This is the nexus of a vision that sees justice and mercy shown through direct trade with farmers. In the future we can expand to other countries and farmers faced with similar injustices to Kenya's tea farmers," said Bain.

—Tracey Yan

**Grayson Bain (right) meets with a Kenyan tea farmer.**



## Reaching Out to Young People Is an Adventure

The Pacific Northwest region of the United States is a ripe mission field for youth. Tim Nieuwsma understands that reaching young people in an area where over half of the adults have no religious affiliation requires dynamic relationships and challenging activities such as whitewater rafting.

Nieuwsma is a commissioned pastor at Faith Christian Fellowship, a Christian Reformed church in Everson, Wash. He also serves as regional director of Youth Dynamics, a parachurch organization based in Washington.

In July Nieuwsma led a challenging six-day trip in 104-degree F temperatures with 16 young people. Together they rafted the Salmon River in Idaho.

Most of them were from families with low income and no church background.

"Wilderness trips take students out of their normal environment and away from the barrage of



**Young people play a game together on a calmer part of the Salmon River.**

distractions they are usually surrounded by. . . . The scenery and challenging experiences shared by the group help to quickly form bonds between all participants, including the leaders," Nieuwsma said. Students were not permitted to bring any electronic gadgets on the trip. This helped create an environment to share about hardships and learn gospel truths.

A week later, students and leaders met for a reunion. Leaders continue to connect with youths one-on-one and through social media. "It is through the relationships with leaders that students are connected to local churches," said Nieuwsma.

—Amy Toornstra

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Peter M. Macaskill

1923 – 2013

Peter Macintosh Macaskill, friend of Newfoundlanders, navigator of the trusted mission boat *Chalmers*, and compassionate companion of the lonely, passed away at the age of 90.

Macaskill began his ministerial career in 1948, serving congregations in the United Church of Canada. After joining the Christian Reformed Church in Montreal, Quebec, Macaskill was granted ministerial status in the CRC in 1990 and served as chaplain at Concordia University of Montreal. He retired in 2000.

Macaskill was a widely liked and much appreciated pastor and theologian. He was kind and thoughtful in his relationships. The spiritual well-being of his parishioners was his uppermost concern.

He and his wife, Joyce, were known for their warm hospitality. They loved nature and were expert campers in Canada's wilderness areas. During their retirement years they lived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they became a blessing to the membership of All Nations CRC, serving for one year as interim pastor and teaching new Canadians the English language.

Macaskill was predeceased by one son. He is survived by his wife, Joyce, two children and their spouses, four grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

## Ontario Church Prepares at Home for Sunday Worship

Church ministry staff members at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, help the congregation focus on the Word of God through the whole week.

As each Sunday approaches, pastor Henry Kranenburg prepares a brief introduction to the week's

message. That introduction, along with links to the Bible passages and offering causes, is emailed to members to help them prepare their hearts and minds for worship. Midweek, members receive a second email, "Take 2," that includes a summary of the main point of the sermon and



MONICA DERREGT

**Rev. Henry Kranenburg prepares weekly emails to help church members prepare for and reflect on Sunday morning's message.**

encouragement to apply the message to daily living.

Kranenburg said, "Preparing for and following up the message is an important spiritual activity because it becomes about engaging and becoming engaged with the Word."

Doreen Van de Ban said, "I like that it helps me to reflect [on the message] throughout the week and to be reminded that Sunday's sermons aren't just for Sunday."

—Monica deRegt

## Michigan Church Moves to Former Fitness Club

It doesn't look like your typical church, but a former fitness club is the new home for Encounter Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The building, about three miles from the church's original location, features locker rooms, a pool, two saunas, a steam room, a juice bar, a weight room, two exercise bike rooms, and several racquetball courts.

Pastor Dirk VanEyck said that the church plans to use the space for outreach events and youth ministry.

"We have one of very few racquetball courts in West Michigan, and we're looking for a way to make that outreach-oriented," said VanEyck. "If people come in the building to play racquetball, that's awesome."

The church is also transforming a juice bar into a youth room, and it plans to offer its locker rooms and showers for groups who are doing retreats or mission trips. It also hopes to transform some extra space into a laser tag area.

Encounter had previously operated under six different roofs, renting different spaces for worship, offices, storage, a youth room, large group gatherings, and band practices. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk



JACKIE DEVRIS

This fitness room is just one of many areas in Encounter CRC's new building, formerly a fitness club.

## Maryland Church Opens Food Pantry

In late August, the social hall at Silver Spring (Md.) Christian Reformed Church looked like a grocery store, with aisles full of products like canned goods, ripe watermelons, boxes of cereal, and baby formula. That's because the church has partnered with Capital Area Food Bank to open up a food pantry in an effort to serve their neighbors.

Previously the church had always kept supplies for those who would call or knock on its doors during the week. But after a growing awareness of the significant hunger in Montgomery County, members of the church's Social Justice and Community Concerns Committee wanted to do more. "This is probably one of the biggest places of poverty in Montgomery County," said Doug Bratt, pastor at Silver Spring.

"This is a significant effort," Bratt said as patrons streamed in the church's doors. The church was able to hand out approximately

1,300 pounds of food that will feed about 40 households. "We certainly think that as word of our pantry grows, the number of people we serve is going to increase," says Christel Milazzo, one of the volunteers for the food pantry.

—Callie Feyen

**Some of the products available at the church's food pantry.**





**Samantha Francart**

## Eleven Months in Eleven Countries

One year ago, Samantha Francart set out on an 11-month journey around the world. Her goal? To reach 11 countries in 11 months.

Francart, a member of Ferrysburg Community Christian Reformed Church in Spring Lake, Mich., took part in the World Race put on by Adventures in Missions.

She and the other 54 participants were allowed to pack only two bags: one backpack and one daypack. They lived on a budget of \$12 per day, including meals, transportation, and lodging.

"I have never needed God as much as I did those 11 months. Every day had its own struggles: whether it was encountering someone whose needs broke my heart or personal struggles that the Lord was bringing me out of," said Francart.

The race brought her across three continents through India, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Latvia, and Estonia. The team began the journey in India while coping with both sickness and culture shock. By the end of the month they had seen healings, including the healing of a woman's crippled hand, and had watched another woman take her first steps.

Francart was chosen as a team leader for her group of six others for the first four months of the trip, making sure their ministry connected with the local pastor or contact.

The team ended up doing a variety of tasks, including working in churches, teaching English, visiting an orphanage, praying for the sick, building a school, helping with children's programs, and evangelism. In a village in Kenya, Francart was able to pray with nine women to become Christians.

She raised \$15,500 for the trip through support letters, a silent auction, making bracelets and T-shirts to sell, and selling almost everything she owned.

"All I really know is this: I'm not the same person that I was a year ago. God stripped away the parts of me that were ugly and dirty and showed me his love, grace, and mercy," said Francart.

She plans to attend Liberty University to get her MBA with a focus on international business in hopes of serving in the Middle East someday.

—Daina Kraai

## Child Care Outreach Booming

Several Christian Reformed churches in lower Michigan and Ohio are ministering to their communities through child care/preschool centers. In turn, these churches are benefiting.

Enrollments generally range from 25 to 40 children, although Cheryl Mueller, child care center director for North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., reports that fall 2013 enrollment is already at capacity at 145 infants and preschoolers. These ministries are self-sustaining, providing financial benefit to their congregations even during the recent economic downturn.

Over 30 years ago, North Hills CRC opened their first preschool for community families, wanting to use their building more fully in kingdom work. Other churches in Grosse Pointe, Dearborn, and Columbus, Ohio, followed suit. As Dearborn pastor Daniel Jongsma put it, these child care ministries seek to "provide a much-needed service for families, build healthy relationships with young families in our community, and influence young children and families for Christ."

Helen MacDonald, Grosse Pointe's program administrator, notes another benefit: "Some families from the preschool have been attending worship services. Many new friendships have begun, which have provided support for our preschool families." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Anita Ensing Beem



**North Hills CRC child care director Cheryl Mueller plays with preschool children.**

## Ontario Pastor Is a Sea to Sea Miracle

As the Sea to Sea cross-continent bicycle tour passed through Ontario, Rev. Jake Kuipers was thrilled to be cycling through his home province, especially since he came close to not making it at all.

Kuipers was cycling in what was billed as the largest-ever cross-continental bike tour, starting in California and ending nine weeks later in New York City. Previous bicycle tours involving the Christian Reformed community were in 2005 (cross-Canada) and 2008 (across the U.S. and Canada.)

It was in Colorado that Kuipers, who also cycled the 2008 tour, began struggling. "I just couldn't get my wind," he said. "But I kept going to get through the day."

The tour nurse sent him to the nearest medical facility, where the doctor immediately arranged for Kuipers to be airlifted to Aurora, Colo. "A whole cardiac team was waiting for me there," Kuipers said, "and they whisked me off to surgery."

Afterward Kuipers, who is in his early 60s, learned that the surgeons had found one of the arteries to his heart 70 percent blocked and another 90 percent blocked.



Gayla R. Postma

**Rev. Jake Kuipers**

"I couldn't believe it," he said. "I'm in great shape."

His good physical condition is probably what saved him, according to the doctor. He wasn't allowed to cycle at all for a week, and then he had to take it slow to build up to cycling full days. By the time the tour reached Grand Rapids, Mich., he was back to full strength.

"They told me it was a miracle that I wasn't found dead by the side of the road. So I'm so thrilled to be here," said Kuipers.

The tour ended on August 24 on Staten Island.

—Gayla R. Postma

# NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

## “Duck Dynasty” Success Thrives on Christian Stereotypes

A show capitalizing on Southern Christian stereotypes has snowballed into success, with faith and duck hunting creating a recipe for a ratings sensation on “Duck Dynasty.”

The A&E show attracted 11.8 million viewers for its season premiere, becoming the most-watched reality premiere in history. The show drew more viewers than the highest-viewed episodes of “Breaking Bad” and “Mad Men” combined.

The show follows members of the extended Robertson clan, the family that runs the Duck Commander hunting supply company in Louisiana. The show is probably best known for the gun-toting Robertsons’ Southern drawl, unruly beards, and camouflage wardrobe.

“Our faith is the main part of our lives, but it’s better to be subtle,” said Alan Robertson, the beardless fourth brother of the clan. “We don’t want to make it like ‘The 700 Club for Rednecks.’”

The Robertsons attend White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., part of a “Restoration Movement” fellowship of 13,000 U.S. congregations.

Hundreds of people have shown up at the family’s church, said senior pastor Mike Kellett. “I tell people, ‘If you want to put your eyes on them, come to church!’” he said.

Alan Robertson co-ministered with Kellett for seven years before deciding to join the show for its fourth season. He and his father, Phil, still serve as elders.

At the end of each show, the Robertsons join in prayer together, something visitors note as they come through the church.

“I think there are a lot of families that wish they would gather around the table and pray like that,” said Kellett. “I think it hits a nerve.”

The show finds a smart way to combine family, food, faith, and really long beards, said Craig Detweiler, a communications professor at Pepperdine University, a school associated with Churches of Christ. “There are a lot of complaints about the reality TV genre, but there are far more Christians portrayed in America as a result.”

“For years, Hollywood missed a lot,” Alan Robertson said. “It looks like they’re taking advantage of us, but we’re taking advantage of them to get the gospel preached.” —*Religion News Service*



Cast members of “Duck Dynasty” with the newest member, Alan Robertson (far left), who made his debut on the hit A&E show, which garnered 11.8 million viewers during the premiere.

## Religious Groups Face Uphill Fight on Immigration Reform

Evangelical leaders pushing for comprehensive immigration reform need all the help they can get—divine or otherwise—after the Senate’s immigration reform bill hit a brick wall of opposition in the Republican-controlled House.

From Nuns on the Bus to the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, religious forces have pressed lawmakers on a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants.

Members of the Evangelical Immigration Table—whose membership draws from many of the same sources as the GOP—are promoting principles of human dignity, family unity, secure borders, respect for the rule of law, and fairness for taxpayers.

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

## Decorating Doorknobs in Lansing, Illinois

New Hope walkers wear yellow T-shirts as they hang 2,500 invitations on doorknobs throughout Lansing, Ill.

They are inviting people to New Hope Christian Reformed Church. But it’s not just a one-time invitation—walkers distribute door hangers in 20 neighborhoods three or four times a year.

This persistence pays off.

The strategy worked with Sue Greenwald, who has worshiped at New Hope for over three years now. The first time she got a door hanger she thought about checking out the church. The second time she drove by the church. The third time—Easter Sunday—she visited.

“From the very first visit, I felt God’s presence, and I was warmly welcomed into the New Hope family,” Greenwald said. “My search was over. I truly believe that if they were not persistent in placing door hangers, I would not have known of New Hope Church.”

The door hanger distribution began in 2009. Since then, New Hope has since grown steadily and has become more diverse.

“We hadn’t previously been very intentional about reaching out to the community,” said Joyce Mulder, who heads the distribution. “Our theory is that people who are unchurched need to be reached more than once.”

—*Roxanne Van Farowe*



# FAQs

## Justice

**Q** Are curfews for young people a just response when a few cause trouble?

**A** Your question shows how important it is to distinguish between individual and group responsibility for actions. Young people are more likely to receive group discipline because of the behavior of a few, and it is not always fair.

Curfews are used by event organizers, police, and other authorities to restore order after a group incident occurs that could get out of control. They may also be used to prevent gatherings that are likely to lead to group misconduct. Curfews can be overused or misused by authorities as a tool to control certain groups of people, especially young people, when there is no reasonable justification for such control.

Based on my experience with young people, it is preferable to establish clear boundaries in advance—and involve young people themselves in setting the boundaries for what will be considered unacceptable and what the consequences will be. When misbehavior happens, immediate consequences can be followed with other tools that allow everyone to learn from the incident.

We know that young people (from about age 12 to 25) are particularly sensitive to fairness, often asking adults good but challenging questions about the injustice they see in our society. I see this as a gift from young people in our communities. Youth activities are an important opportunity to learn how to exercise your rights as a person of worth and dignity and how to respect the rights of others.

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

Youth activities are an important opportunity to learn how to exercise your rights as a person of worth and dignity.

## Outreach

**Q** I understand the varied reasons for not reading the creation accounts of Genesis literally. But as a parent, how do I discern when and how to explore such nuances with my children?

**A** Great question. As a parent I wrestle with similar thoughts. Many of us are realizing that these accounts should not be read as presenting us with a scientific account or a blow-by-blow historical account. These texts are actually much richer than such simplistic approaches give them credit for. That said, how do we convey these stories to our children in a way that allows them to embrace the story at a surface reading, while also creating space for them to consider the broader symbolic beauty, meaning, and poetry they contain?

When children are young, it makes sense to read these creation stories at face value, emphasizing the beauty and wonder of creation, and God's hand as the author of the universe. As our children grow, I think it's important to create opportunities for them to ask deeper questions and consider how our readings relate to other things we know about the world. We should help our children to explore more discerning readings of these and other complicated stories in the Bible. Such readings present us with much more depth, nuance, and richness—and will allow a child's appreciation for the biblical text to grow.

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

## Faith Formation

**Q** I teach Sunday school and love every minute of it. But when I compare my teaching experience with my overall experience of congregational life, it feels like an "invisible hand" blocks the joy. I don't understand this contradiction. Where might it come from?

**A** I don't know your situation, but I've observed a similar dynamic in various congregations caused by a variety of factors, including the following: (a) one or two influential members consistently spread a negative spirit and no one dares to challenge them; (b) church leadership assumes that their calling requires them to exercise power in a heavy-handed way rather than with a gently gracious servant heart; (c) a serious congregational wound from years past has never been properly dealt with; (d) a conflict festers below the surface and is never worked through. There are many other possibilities.

If any one of these realities is troubling your congregation, there are no easy fixes. Responding will inevitably involve a great deal of prayer, heart-to-heart conversations with leaders, and perhaps—at the right time—inviting a wise voice from outside your body to guide the community in discerning possible steps of healing. "Church visitors," seasoned elders, and pastors from the classis can be helpful. The denomination's Office of Pastor-Church Relations also helps congregations experiencing these challenges.

—Syd Hielema is a professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. ■



*Joy and Delight*  
**A THEOLOGY  
OF SEXUALITY**

**J**hat's a perspective on sex that I've wished to hear my whole life." The bride-to-be was sitting next to her fiancé across the table from me, and we were having a conversation about sex.

One of the privileges of pastoral ministry is serving couples by preparing them for the covenant of marriage. Unfortunately, one of the trends I've noticed in premarital counseling, in conversations

with other pastors, and in listening to many other married couples, is that the church has articulated an incomplete theology of human sexuality. In youth group meetings, sermons, retreats, and other settings, youth pastors, pastors, mentors, and other Christian leaders have clearly explained the biblical boundaries of sexuality. That's important—boundaries create the necessary space in which we may flourish with our sexuality. But

boundaries by themselves don't create the flourishing! While the world often treats sex as a recreational activity or as a vehicle for pleasure and intimacy within committed relationships (married or not), the Christian approach to sexuality affirms a higher meaning in sex.

Let's look at two ways the Christian gospel transforms sexual intimacy.

# SEX ALLOWS US TO GIVE OURSELVES ENTIRELY— BODY AND SOUL—TO ANOTHER PERSON.

## The Gospel Enables a Level of Deep Intimacy

God created human beings for relationship. All the way back in the garden of Eden, God himself noted that “it was not good for man to be alone,” and so he filled that need by creating a companion for Adam. Married or single, we all need relationships in order to thrive. Going to a concert is a more fulfilling experience if you share it with someone. Watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean is more complete if someone is watching with you. Shedding tears of joy is best done in the company of others. We are designed to share our thoughts, our hobbies, our emotions, our spirituality—every part of our being. The more intimate the things we share, the more selective we are about who we share them with.

Our sexuality—our desires, our nakedness, our ability to enjoy sexual fulfillment—is the most personal part of our being. Even the apostle Paul warns that sexual sins are unique because they violate our very selves (see 1 Cor. 6:18). Of course, the positive dimension is that sex is a God-designed way for us to share the most personal and intimate part of ourselves. Sex allows us to give ourselves entirely—body and soul—to another person. As Tim Keller states, “Sex is God’s way for you to give yourself to someone else so deeply that it results in personal transformation and completion.”

This is why, biblically speaking, marriage is required to enjoy sex properly. Marriage creates the covenantal context in which it is safe to give ourselves sexually to the person whom we trust enough to give our lives to. It’s a remarkable design! Sex is meant to make us vulnerable, to make us naked—physically, but also emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. In other words, sex is not just something we do with our bodies; it’s a level of whole-person relationship that is cultivated, body, mind, spirit, and heart, in the bedroom and outside of the bedroom. As a couple, enjoying sexual intimacy to its fullest is not simply about improving

your technique; instead you must learn to open yourself up to another on every level of your person.

Of course, many find this difficult. Sharing ourselves with another person—even the one we’re married to—can be a frightening thing. Will I be rejected? Criticized? Will she view me as weak if I share my hopes and fears? Will I be thought less of if I open up? Indeed, ever since sin entered the world, our shame and insecurity has made nakedness frightening.

The hope of the gospel is that Jesus carried our sin and our imperfections in our place. He became naked—literally—as he hung on the cross clothed in nothing but shame. Our shame. God saw Jesus fully exposed and condemned him in our place. As a result, God looks at us in our entirety and accepts us completely. God knows more about us than we know about ourselves, and he loves us with more commitment than we can fathom. This is the security we need to be naked and known by another. When we believe that we are known and loved by the one who matters most of all, we need not fear rejection by anyone else. In marriage, this security gives us the rock-solid foundation to practice deep vulnerability with our spouse, even as we learn to mirror the love and acceptance that God shows us as the One who knows us completely and loves us unwaveringly.

## The Gospel Allows Us to Pursue Pleasure in Its Proper Place

“God is a hedonist at heart,” wrote C. S. Lewis. For many of us, this may be difficult to wrap our minds around. Maybe we’ve always imagined God as a dour being who frowns at the smallest hint of happiness. But nothing could be further from the truth—and sex is proof of that. Sex is meant to feel good. In fact, the Song of Songs is a nine-chapter ode to the beauty of human sexuality. Sex is meant to be sensual, creative, and satisfying. God created your body capable of experiencing remarkable feelings. Those of us who

were taught otherwise may be inclined to miss out on embracing the sensual side of us that God created. For some, sex can be laced with unnecessary guilt or shame: Christian couples don’t do *that*.

Conversely, many people—both inside the church and outside—idolize sex and intimacy. Married couples, increasingly dissatisfied, tell themselves that if they could just spice up their sex life, if they could just improve their technique, their sex life would be perfect and their marriage would be fulfilling. Each month, grocery store magazines promise to reveal the one trick or technique that will finally bring sexual gratification. Some of us buy into the lie that if only our spouse were more encouraging, more romantic, more attuned to our emotional needs, we would finally feel secure and complete. Whether or not we realize it, we are demanding of sexual intimacy what only God can give us. We are, to quote C.S. Lewis again, using sex as a substitute for joy.

Only God can fully and finally meet our true need to be perfectly loved. Only God can give us the kind of joy and delight that we may be seeking in the sexual experience. Ironically, if we want to enjoy sex more, we have to seek less from it. We have to seek our deepest satisfaction and delight in God. When we trust that our need to be perfectly loved, cared for, reassured, and affirmed is met by the One who gave his Son in order to secure our adoption into his family, we are freed to enjoy sex as God intended it: a physically enjoyable, personally bonding experience between two people who mirror their covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.

May we as a Christian community—married or single—embrace and promote God’s design for human sexuality in the context where God has placed us. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Rob Toornstra** is pastor of Sunnyslope Church in Salem, Ore., and is a doctoral student at Covenant Theological Seminary. He has written and spoken extensively on human sexuality.

# This Little Light of Mine

**A**S ANOTHER HALLOWEEN was drawing to a close, I sat alone on our front porch with a depleted bowl of candy, waiting for any remaining neighborhood children to come by. It was quiet, almost too quiet. I counted seven consecutive houses on our street that were completely dark. No porch lights, no light spilling out from the front windows.

## The Neighborhood

With no street lights in our neighborhood, that kind of darkness is noticeable. We rely on the lights of each home to keep the neighborhood lit. Any other night of the year, these families, at home or away, do their part to illuminate the neighborhood. So why not on Halloween, the night when everyone knows there will be families with children out and about after dark?

Some of these families don't "do" Halloween. They go away for the evening to avoid the trick-or-treaters. Maybe they don't want their kids to have all that candy. Or maybe after being gone all day and commuting for a few hours, they're just not in the mood to spend an evening dealing with other people's rude and ungrateful children. I get it; I do. But I suspect there are deeper reasons for their absence on this evening.

Of the families on our street who chose to keep their homes dark, I know the majority are Christians.

To one degree or another, these families are intentional about sharing their faith through their words and actions. On every other day of the year, the outward expression of their faith is a stark contrast to their absence and the darkness on this night. Why the retreat on this one day?

## The Holiday

It's true that Halloween, with its ghosts, goblins, and candy, is a secular holiday. But there is no corresponding boycott of Valentine's Day or of the nonreligious aspects of holidays such as Christmas. And how do we reconcile a spiritual justification for skipping Halloween when it's countered with a celebration at church earlier in the week where kids don costumes, play games, and receive candy and prizes? I don't have a problem with churches using the holiday as an opportunity to engage the community, but it seems to me we should make the same effort in our neighborhoods on the night when people are willing to knock on our door.

We spend the other 364 days a year relying on God's grace, looking for opportunities to share our faith. I can't help but wonder what message neighbors pick up as they walk by these



**Halloween seems like a fabulous opportunity to build community.**

darkened homes. Do they—especially those who don't share our faith—understand the spiritual stand being taken? Is there a chance the avoidance of the neighborhood on this one night of the year is feeding some stereotypes about Christians?

## The Witness

People I love and respect have made the decision to avoid the festivities of Halloween. I share these questions not out of judgment, but simply because I know I'm making some assumptions and I'd like to understand. My own life is full of inconsistencies. You won't have to look hard to find frequent failures in loving my neighbor, likely on each and every day of the year. Is Halloween a modern-day example of Romans 14—the weak and the strong—regardless of which viewpoint is exhibiting the stronger faith?

I enjoy an evening at home alone with my family as much as anyone. But in a neighborhood where many homes have two working parents making long commutes, rarely is there a time when folks make a point of being outside together.

For me, Halloween seems like a fabulous opportunity to get to know my neighbors and their children better, to build community. At the very least, to keep the light on for them.

Your neighbors are out looking for you. Be engaged. Redeem the night. Let your light shine. Don't hide it under a bushel—no! Let your light shine. ■



**Brian Pikkaart** is a graduate of Calvin College and a systems engineer. He attends Celebration Church in Fredericksburg, Va.

# The Color of Love

# H

**OW DOES A CHURCH** balance the call to minister locally and at the same time not neglect the Great Commission's mandate to go to the ends of the earth? In our church the answer lies somewhere in our hideous orange carpet.

About a decade ago we got a quote to replace the entire carpet. The cost was \$11,000. Each year our church gives far more than twice that amount to ministries and missions outside our own congregation. We don't have new carpet because we aren't more selfish.

That same figure popped up at our last congregational meeting. The deacons grimly reported that our 2011 General Fund ended the year \$11,000 short, the exact amount of the church's money I had just delivered to our missionary family in Calcutta two weeks earlier. We finished the year in the red for the same reason we still walk on 1970s carpet: sacrificial giving.

The \$11,000 I delivered to our missionaries went to feed street children with the only food they won't have to beg for. It helped pay the salary of teachers and purchased school supplies for impoverished kids. It helped keep the doors open on a hostel that houses kids rescued from the slums. Lives will change because of the \$11,000 our church invested in Calcutta.

On the other hand, \$11,000 could also be used to buy materials for our Sunday school. It could be used to help pay the salary of the pastor and staff, keep an unemployed family in their home for another month, pay Christian school tuition for a family struggling with prolonged illness. That same money changes lives when invested in our church's local ministry.

That's the tension of the Great Commission—the constant pull to give both locally and globally. We cannot abandon



**Budgets are moral documents stating a church's core values.**

either one and remain faithful to our calling. Churches need to focus locally in order to be a vital presence in their community. At the same time, strong churches are committed to overseas missions.

This holy tension pulls at the seams of the budget. Budgets are moral documents stating a church's core values. Luxuries like new carpet and motion-activated faucets should be sacrificed to keep medical doctors working in Bangladesh and Bible translators in tribal Africa.

Honestly, most American churches spend too much on our own comfort. Our human tendency toward self-indulgence creeps into the church. We often care too much about carpet color. We believe that attractive, updated buildings will draw people to the Savior who, ironically, had no place to lay his head (Matt. 8:20).

Obedience to the Great Commission is an act of faith. It seems foolish to invest our limited funds in ministries that will never show a financial return, to take our best and brightest young people and send them away to serve on the mission field.

But that is the paradox of the Great Commission: We build the church by draining it of resources.

The reality is that we Americans and Canadians are citizens of the richest nations in the history of the world. We follow a Lord who challenged his disciples to abandon wealth in favor of establishing his kingdom. Now is the time for us to invest in the emerging world. Now is the time for us to be a part of what God is doing and will do as a result of our obedience to the paradoxical Great Commission.

The longer my church puts off updating our nasty carpet in favor of obedience to the Great Commission, the more I see burnt orange as the color of love. ■



**Rob Jansons** is pastor of New Hope Fellowship Church in Monroe, Wash.



## Finding Potential in a Hidden Place

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

**W**hat does it mean to transform a community?

For World Renew, this ministry involves not just working through local churches to carry out ministry, but also helping entire communities to identify and address the various issues they face and to experience God's renewing power in all their relationships with God, neighbor, self, and creation.

Take the community of Opangul in Uganda, for example. Opangul is one of 10 communities supported by World

Renew's partner, the Church of Uganda (COU), in the diocese of Lango.

Snuggled in rural northern Uganda, Opangul is made up of four tiny villages.

At one point, along the winding dirt path that leads to the community, thick tall grass towers more than five feet high and starts to cover up the trail before the main village comes into view. That's why the area is called Opangul—which means “hidden place” in the local language.

World Renew and COU began to work in Opangul in 2010. Their main objective was to help the people address the AIDS crisis in their midst. To properly fight

**An adult learner shows off the reading skills she learned at literacy classes taught by World Renew's partner, the Church of Uganda.**

AIDS, however, the community also had to address other concerns.

“For Opangul, being a hidden place has been their greatest disadvantage, affecting not only the possibility of getting health care but also limiting the community's education opportunities,” explains World Renew staff member Edward Okiror.

Effective health care, especially when using modern medicine, involves the

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Through Christian community development, Opangul has come out of a hidden place and into the outside world.

ability to read and understand prescriptions. In a community like Opangul, where nearly 90 percent of adults cannot read or write, a literacy project was of vital importance to the anti-AIDS endeavor.

“Because we are a community that is difficult to reach, many community members, especially the women, have never gone to school,” says David, a community church teacher who leads the literacy class.

“Our children walk about 10 kilometers a day to and from the nearest school, and we have no health facilities or proper roads. We are very poor.”

With the support of World Renew and COU, a small group of 15 committed adult learners began to meet regularly at a grass-thatched Anglican church to learn to read and write. That effort has now expanded to include a growing nursery and primary school.

**The villagers of Opangul stand in front of the temporary school building that they built. Eighty-five children now attend school.**



“We did not want our children to suffer the effects of illiteracy the way we did,” says Siblina Anyao, one of the adult learners. “So we have donated over five acres of land to build a community school.”

In addition, World Renew and COU helped to start a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) in the community. About 100 men and women meet weekly, not just to save and borrow money to expand their small businesses but also to discuss community issues and map out solutions to challenges they are facing.

Today more than 85 children attend Opangul’s primary school, and 70 adult learners have graduated from functional



**Men and women meet in the open spaces of Opangul for their literacy classes and savings groups.**

literacy training. The rates of HIV transmission have decreased; those already infected are living healthier, more productive lives.

“Through Christian community development, Opangul has come out of a hidden place’ and into the outside world with new opportunities,” says Okiror. What’s more, the message of Christ’s salvation and his love in action through the local church has been strengthened by being at the forefront of this ministry. ■



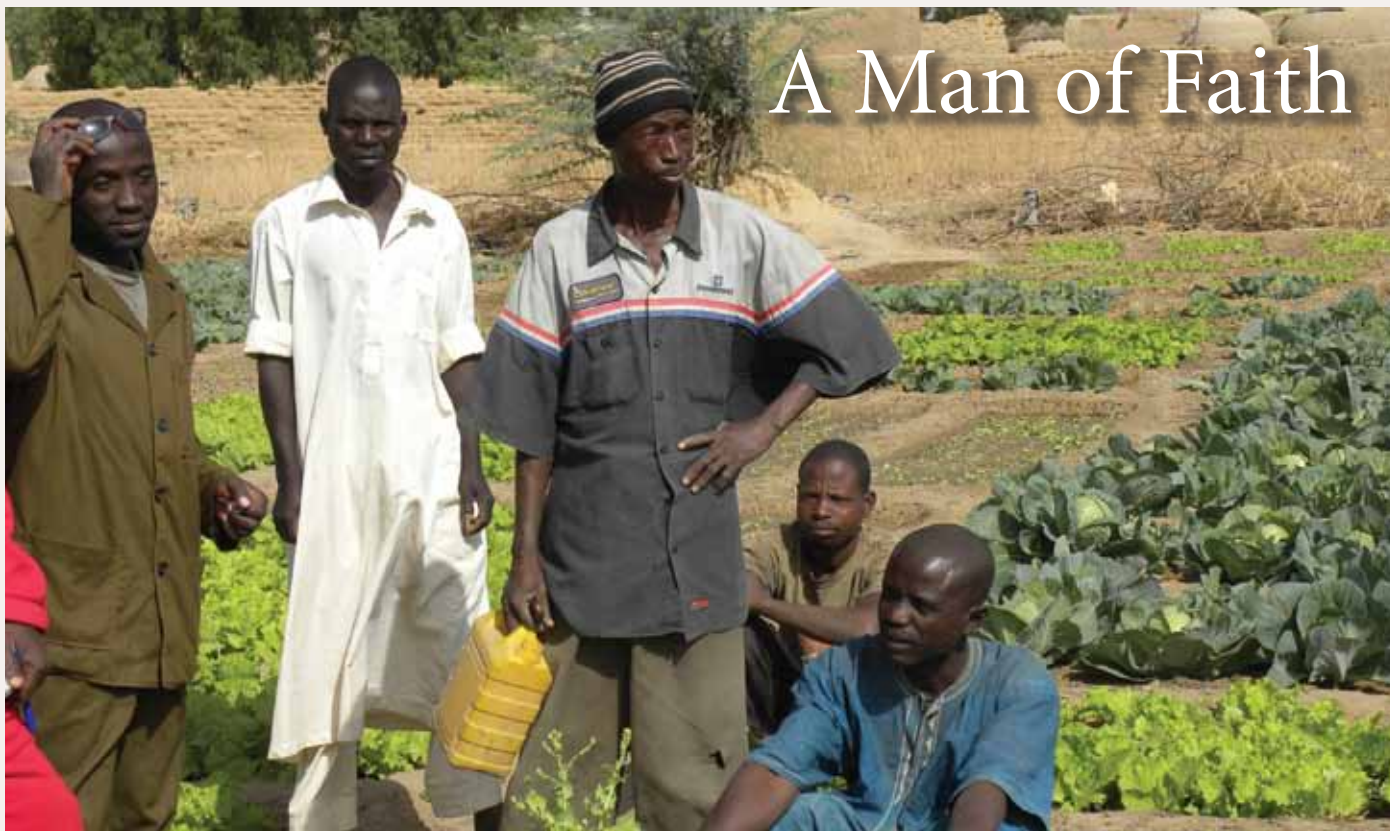
**Kristen deRoo VanderBerg** is communications manager for World Renew.

### What Is Community Development?

**Community** (n): a number of people having common ties or interests and living in the same locality.

**Development** (n): becoming bigger, better, fuller, or more useful.

World Renew considers that a community is being developed when its members are increasingly able to embrace and live out their calling as human beings bearing the image of God, marred by sin but being restored in Christ Jesus, receiving and expressing justice, mercy, and peace as evidenced in healthy relationships with God, neighbor, self, and creation.



## A Man of Faith

**Y**an\* is a wonderful example of what World Renew’s ministry is all about. Rather than sending staff to teach literacy classes or provide training in agriculture, World Renew equips local churches to carry out these ministries.

World Renew believes that God calls Christians everywhere to love their neighbors and to care for those in need. As many North Americans have discovered, when they respond to this call they are as blessed as those they serve. By working through local churches to equip Christians like Yan, they experience the blessing of serving others.

Yan grew up in West Africa in an animist family. “One day I read a booklet called ‘The Voice of God,’” he said. “In it, I found John 14:6. That verse touched me profoundly.”

He began to follow Jesus, and one year later he enrolled in a local Bible school. When he finished training to be a pastor,

Yan was sent to a small village as an evangelist for three years, to another village for two years, and then served as a pastor for yet another church for two more years. That’s when he realized something was missing.

Yan believed that the gospel’s witness could be strengthened by helping people meet their physical as well as their spiritual needs. Deciding to pursue further training, he traveled to a neighboring country to attend an agricultural and Bible school for an additional four years.

To pay tuition, he sold his bull. When that money ran out, he collected grass to sell as feed for other people’s animals. His wife supported him by making and selling shea butter.

When he graduated in 2009, Yan returned to his village with a goal of teaching rural communities about modern agriculture. Little did he know that he would soon become the answer to several years of prayer.

**Yan (left) teaches improved agricultural techniques as the cornerstone of his Christian witness. Today gardens are thriving, and many people are asking to learn more about the Bible.**

Many years earlier, World Renew’s local partner denomination had had a vision of someone ministering in a remote community called Y-town. Denominational leaders visited several times and obtained the blessing of the chief to have a Christian presence there. A Christian government employee visited the community periodically and established good relationships with village leaders.

The ground was fertile for Christian ministry, but the denomination could not find someone willing to move to this remote region to serve as a pastor.

Nearly a decade later, Yan had the training and the passion to fill this need. World Renew and its local partner supported him in his move.



You add.  
God multiplies.

“My local church asked me to travel to one village, load all Yan’s family’s personal belongings onto the roof of the World Renew vehicle, and drop the family off at their new ministry location several hours away,” said Steve, a World Renew staff member. “As we traveled together, he shared his vision: to teach people about agriculture so they can have better harvests and tell them about Jesus.”

World Renew and the local denomination equipped Yan and encouraged him as he tried to live out the main values of World Renew’s ministry: to be deeply present in a community and live out your faith by caring for people’s physical and spiritual needs.

Fast-forward two years. Today Yan is well-known in the community. Thanks to his work, lives are improving.

“Yan is a valuable resource person on many fronts,” said Steve. “He organized a grain storage program. He offered to negotiate with in-laws after marital disputes separated households. He teaches about HIV/AIDS at the local clinic. He

arranges for small gifts for the best students in local schools. And he loves to teach people more about how to grow food.”

“I teach people about agriculture and the environment, composting, improved cooking stoves, *zai* holes, seeds, fertilizer use, vegetable production, pest management, seed priming, post-harvest storage, and other things that help them know about Jesus,” explained Yan.

The evidence of this hard work is visible.

“I was shocked to see such beautiful vegetables in a place that from the nearby paved road looks so barren,” Steve said after a recent visit. “Yan had shown the villagers how to use local plants to fight destructive insects and taught them about composting. Some women also explained that Yan had encouraged them to use manure in their fields, which resulted in significantly larger harvests.”

What’s more, this ministry has also had a spiritual impact. The people in Y-town are predominantly Muslim and animist. Before Yan’s arrival, some religious leaders had used a village loudspeaker to publicly criticize the Bible and the Christian faith.

These days people go to Yan’s house every Sunday morning to learn more about Christianity. Some of the religious leaders who publicly defamed the Bible have asked for their own copies so that they can learn more.

Even those who don’t want to convert have a newfound respect for the Christian church. When a strong wind blew the roof off the village grain warehouse, for example, many villagers believed that sorcery was involved. But the widow of a former village chief came to encourage Yan. “Keep praying,” she said. “If you didn’t have your God, there would be a lot more trouble here.”

Yan is just one of hundreds of men and women who work for World Renew’s 75 church partners around the world.

Please keep all these men and women in your prayers as they continue to witness in word and deed to people in need.

*\*Because of security risks in the region, the names of the community, the country, World Renew’s partner, and World Renew’s staff member have been withheld, and Yan’s name has been changed. ■*

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

### World Renew at a Glance

- Over the past 51 years, World Renew—formerly the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)—has responded on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church to disaster, poverty, and injustice in 87 countries.
- Currently World Renew works in 35 countries, partnering with 78 local churches and community organizations to equip them for work in their own communities.
- Last year World Renew reached 462,061 people in 3,755 communities with long-term programs. It provided immediate and long-term assistance to 767,475 disaster survivors in North America and around the world.
- This work was assisted by 3,429 volunteers who contributed more than 288,876 hours of their time.
- World Renew does not receive Ministry Shares and depends on the generosity of individuals as well as church offerings and government grants to support its work. To learn more, read prayer requests, volunteer, sign up for news updates, or make a donation, please visit [worldrenew.net](http://worldrenew.net).
- Look for this year’s World Hunger Campaign materials, “Think. Act. Fast,” in your church starting in mid-October. Please join thousands of others participating in World Hunger Sunday on November 3.



**“Yan taught us to sing while we work.” This is just one of the examples these women shared about the positive influence Yan has had on their lives.**

## A River Runs Through

It's a strange text. There is no river running through Jerusalem. Why, then, would the psalmist write: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4)? It must be a picture of the blessings that flow to and through wherever God is.

With this in mind, the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture chose the metaphor of a river to describe who we are. The Christian Reformed Church in North America is like that river. Flowing water depicts the blessings we receive from God and the blessings we become for one another and others. Not simply a stream, but five of them converging into a river that marks the presence and blessings of God.

Synod 2013 agreed and endorsed these five streams as identifying our denominational ministry priorities. They are our answer to the important question "Who are you?"

One of these streams is **faith formation**. "As a community of believers we seek to introduce and nurture faith in Jesus Christ. We believe the church must work together to challenge and equip each believer to grow in their faith as they seek to be faithful disciples in the kingdom of God." We must provide ways for all of us, from the youngest to the oldest, and for all whom we meet, to allow Christ to be formed in us, as the apostle Paul put it (Gal. 4:19). This is who we are: disciple makers.

Another of the streams that identify us is **servant leadership**. "We seek to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants of the kingdom of God. We believe the life-long equipping of all leaders is essential for the flourishing of churches and ministries." We will do all we can to serve one another in love, as



Paul put it (Gal. 5:13). We are people who seek not to be served but to serve.

**Global mission** is another of our streams. "We are a missional community with a kingdom vision. Therefore we seek to be witnesses and agents of the kingdom 'to the ends of the earth.' Our primary objective is to start and strengthen local churches, both in North America and around the world." Our mission is to reach the world, from our doorstep to the other side of the globe, with the claims of Christ over us and everything else. With the Spirit's power, we are his witnesses from wherever we are all the way to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We are people on a mission.

Another of our streams is **loving mercy and doing justice**. "We hear the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged. Our hearts are broken by the things that break the heart of God. Therefore we seek 'to act justly and to love mercy' as we walk humbly with our God." We do not just hear but we respond to the brokenness of disobedience and disaster and disease. We engage in and support ministries of mercy and endorse justice for all. This is part of our identity: we are advocates of mercy and justice.

The other stream that keeps the river flowing is **gospel proclamation and worship**. "Faith comes through hearing God's Word. We seek to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and worship him in all we do." We will not always be found in church, but we will be there regularly, surrendering to his majesty and seeking his guidance. The rest of the time we will worship with our lives, offering our bodies as living sacrifices, our "spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1). We are those who listen to and live for God.

These are our priorities. These streams identify who we are and form the basis for all we say and do. Let this river flow, I say—over us, through us, and to the world in which we live. It will make us all glad. ■

“These streams identify who we are and form the basis for all we say and do.”



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

## Discipleship Program Celebrates First— and Second—Graduates

The first graduates of École des Disciples (Discipleship School) in Bangui, Central African Republic, had little time to celebrate before rebels stormed their city in March 2013.

News of the ceremony got lost amid concern for the safety of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) leader Rev. Paul Mpindi and his wife, Charlotte, who participated in the graduation celebration and then were trapped in the city for several days.

Since March, a measure of peace and order has been restored in Bangui. “The 75 graduates of the school in Central African Republic are doing their best to provide mentoring in a difficult context,” reports Mpindi.

Mpindi returned to Africa in July to celebrate with a group of 112 Discipleship School graduates in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

“We launched the Discipleship Schools in 2010 in response to the significant need for trained leaders to provide one-on-one discipleship for new believers and seekers,” explains Mpindi.

“People were hearing our broadcasts and responding to the gospel. In their desire to learn more about the Christian faith, they enrolled in our Bible correspondence course.”

Since the Bible study correspondence program began in 2004 in Africa, an average of 2,000 students have enrolled each month. The growth has resulted in the formation of École des Disciples.

Through support from Ministry Shares and individual gifts, BTGMI is able to offer the discipleship training at no cost. Students purchase their own study materials.

Pastor Hervé-Claude, one of the first graduates at the Bangui École des Disciples, wrote, “It is truly with joy that I write these words to tell of God’s greatness in my life during these three years of training. It has not been easy. . . . But the Spirit of God has helped me. I have now reached the end and bless the Lord for that.” ■

—Back to God Ministries International



First graduates of École des Disciples in Africa



Libby Huizenga worked this summer as an intern at Harbor Church in Seattle, Wash.

## We Are Calvin: Libby Huizenga

This summer Calvin College published several stories ([calvin.edu/go/WeAreCalvin](http://calvin.edu/go/WeAreCalvin)) about Calvin students who scattered across the United States and around the world, researching, interning, and exploring. Senior Libby Huizenga, a psychology major, was one.

### Q. Why were you in Seattle, Washington?

A. I was there through the Jubilee Fellows program doing an internship at Harbor Church. I’m looking to try out different aspects of ministry.

### Q. What was your typical day like?

A. I hosted cookouts for members of our community garden. I planned and led Sunday worship.

### Q. Was there anything else?

A. At Harbor Church we focused on being relational rather than programmatic. Much of my time was spent getting to know people and helping them get to know one another. Many commented that Seattle is a hard place to get to know people. Following initial friendliness, people put up walls. We created opportunities for people to be radically vulnerable before others and before God.

### Q. How did Calvin prepare you for this?

A. I took a semester-long course in the Congregational and Ministry Studies department that was specifically designed for Jubilee Fellows. I learned a great deal about ministry and the church. Much of what I did in Seattle—from planning events, public speaking, or meeting with individuals—I have tried in a leadership capacity in the dorms among my peers.

### Q. How do you see this shaping your future?

A. I went to learn more about ministry and perhaps discern a call to pastoral work. As much as I loved the work, I also love the place. I have some decisions to make, but I wouldn’t be surprised if I returned to Seattle. ■

—Matt Kucinski, Calvin College

## Jeshurun's Faith Journey

**J**eshurun's faith journey led him miles from his home in China through circumstances only God could have orchestrated, leading him to Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS).

As a student in a Beijing college, Jeshurun started thinking about his life's meaning, feeling no hope, no confidence in his future. He had grown up in a poor family and studied hard, but his heart was not in his studies.

About this time a close friend became a Christian and shared his faith with Jeshurun. "I was curious," he admits, "but I wondered if God could change me."

Still seeking, Jeshurun decided to attend a Three-Self church, China's officially recognized church.

"I made a decision that day," says Jeshurun. "God is real. I bought a Bible."

He joined a Christian fellowship at the college. After graduation, his pastor, who was also an assistant in a small seminary, invited him to take classes there.

After one year, Jeshurun became a copastor in a house church, serving for two years, especially with young people.

In 2007 the pastor encouraged Jeshurun to plant a new church serving college students. Jeshurun



Jeshurun came to the U.S. from China with his family to study at Calvin Theological Seminary.

pastored this church for five years.

Jeshurun became convicted that he needed more training, »

## Timothy Leadership Training Spurs Cambodia Outreach

**P**astor Prey Sokoin leads New Freedom Church, a rural church southwest of Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Although New Freedom Church is barely four years old, it has planted 10 churches and has initiated

plans for three more. This outreach is largely the result of Sokoin applying tools he learned in Timothy Leadership Training (TLT).

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionaries around the world use TLT, finding it adaptable and

effective in many contexts. Centered on applying biblical principles to life, TLT is an easily reproduced "hands on" leadership development program.

CRWM missionaries Navy Chann-Chhay, Ly Chhay, and Gil Suh use TLT in Cambodia to mentor local church leaders.

Pastor Sokoin joined one of Gil Suh's TLT workshops four years ago. After the training, he taught what he had learned to members of his church. Soon he had a team of committed, equipped leaders leading church-planting efforts in other communities.

These church planters, all volunteers, serve joyfully.

They are eager to see more people come to Christ. In each new village, they look for people who seem ready to serve their community. Then they listen to their stories and explore outreach possibilities such as medical care and counseling.

As the church planters get to know and care for people, they share their faith in Jesus with them.

"New Freedom Church does not wait for outside help or resources to begin the new house-church plant," says Navy Chann-Chhay. "They have learned to expect the Lord to provide . . . [and] step out in faith." ■

—Sarah Lin, *Christian Reformed World Missions*



Prey Sokoin leads a TLT class.

You add.  
God multiplies.

MINISTRY SHARES  
**TOGETHER**  
DOING MORE

but he wasn't sure where that would be.

As it turned out, a CRC conference took place in 2012 at a Beijing church whose pastor, Rev. Jin, he knew.

Rev. Joel Boot, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church, met Jin at the conference and encouraged Jeshurun to apply to CTS.

He submitted his application in August 2012. When the seminary accepted him, Jeshurun had to make many preparations before coming to the United States.

In late December 2012, Jeshurun, his wife, Zoey, and their children arrived in the U.S. to attend CTS, where he is studying for an M.Div.

"I have experienced God's providence and his hand on my life. Through the entire process, God affirmed his will to lead me here for further study." ■

—Brian Clark, CRC Communications



Young men eat Korean-style food after a service at Holland Korean Church.

## Kalbi, Kimchi, and the Word of God

Engineer expats and exchange students from Korea attend Holland Korean Church to eat Korean-style kalbi barbecue and kimchi.

Several are also encountering God for the first time.

"Eighty percent of the people who come to [Holland Korean Church] are non-Christians," said Pastor John Kim of the West Michigan, Home-Missions supported church plant he leads.

"They come for cultural reasons, to hear their Korean language and eat Korean food at the lunch after church. So I preach the gospel every Sunday."

The veteran pastor moved to Holland a couple of years ago from The Netherlands,

where he was a seminary teacher.

Under the wing of nearby Bethany CRC, Holland Korean Church was started one-and-a-half years ago, partly in anticipation of a flood of Korean engineers and their families moving to Holland to work at the Korean-owned LG Chem battery factory.

Even though many of the LG employees are now "furloughed," several families have remained in Holland and are attending the church.

The church also draws exchange students from Holland Christian High School and Hope College.

"We had two girls from Holland Christian High School come to our church; they were homesick for Korea,"

said Kim. "They both became Christians, and I baptized them."

Kim is currently meeting after Sunday lunch for a Bible study with three women who "had never heard the meaning of the real gospel, grace, and salvation." after Sunday lunch for a Bible study.

"They have so many questions, and it's wonderful to see them open their hearts and realize their need for Jesus." ■

—Lorilee Craker, Christian Reformed Home Missions

You can find longer versions of many of these stories online at [thebanner.org/together](http://thebanner.org/together).

# Hotel Goldenrod

Goldenrod is a plant with tiny yellow flowers bunched together on a stem and lots of stems bunched together in a patch. It's usually the last flower blooming in the fall.

Lots of people call goldenrod a weed. But if bugs could talk, they'd call it a hotel.

As the nights grow cold, bugs seem to know that goldenrod is a great place to sleep. Even

when there's not much pollen or nectar left to eat in other plants, goldenrod still has it on the menu. So Hotel Goldenrod is usually full of guests this time of year.

You can visit Hotel Goldenrod and meet some of those guests. Even though they don't speak our language, their Creator certainly speaks through them. Just take a close look.



## Wake-up Call

If you visit the goldenrod plant early in the morning before the sun has shone, you may have to shake some bugs out of bed. Take a white pillowcase or a large piece of white paper. Place it on the ground under the flowers, close to the stems. Shake the flowers. Lots of things will fall out. Anything that doesn't move is probably a piece of dead plant. Anything that does move is a sleepy or cold bug. Cold bugs move slowly, so they're easy to watch for a while.



Welcome back Mr. Treehopper!

Let me get the door for you, sir!

Go on, get out of here... crazy aphids!

Let me take that for you... nice to see you again!

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Overnight Guests

The first insects you'll find have come for food—nectar and pollen—and stayed overnight. You'll probably find a stray wasp or two. Their colonies have broken up; these guys are out and about alone. Once in a while you'll find larger bugs that have stayed the night. Flies, bees, damselflies, and maybe even a dragonfly may check in at Hotel Goldenrod.



# Long-term Residents

You should find lots of goldenrod soldier beetles hanging out on the plants. These bugs are brown and yellow, about an inch (5-15 mm) long, and have long antennae.

After eating a breakfast of pollen and nectar, soldier beetles patrol the whole plant. They look for the aphids and caterpillars that feed on goldenrod plants and eat those bugs. That way they help protect the plant! But they also eat goldenrod leaves—and are preyed upon by other residents on this plant. They're an intricate part of the goldenrod world.

## Two Predators

Keep your eyes peeled for two resident predators.

First, look for a goldenrod crab spider. This critter looks like a tiny yellow crab. It's got a fat round body with long, elbowed legs poking out of its sides.

Guess what? This cool spider can change its color to match the plant! When it climbs up onto the goldenrod flower it's usually white with pink streaks. It sits for a few days and becomes yellow to hide among the flowers. If it drops off the plant, it becomes white again. Put it back onto the flowers, and it will become yellow in a few days.

**There are about 3,000 kinds of crab spiders worldwide. Besides the goldenrod crab spider, few, if any, can change color.**

To find the second predator, you should look for a butterfly or fly that isn't moving. In other words, search for a dead bug to find its predator, the ambush bug.

Smaller than a crab spider, yet sitting just as quietly, the ambush bug is almost invisible. It has a jagged outline and a yellow and brown camouflage suit. This stealthy bug is very small but very aggressive.

When an unwary visitor wanders within reach, the ambush bug grabs it with lightning speed. It jabs its needle-like mouth into the victim, killing it. Then the ambush bug injects a "meat tenderizer" into its "meal" and slowly slurps up the juices.



## Cool Combo

If you don't see goldenrod beetles, you might find this cool combo instead. You probably won't see both, because the combo doesn't like to live with the beetle.

Look first for some tiny (12 mm or ½ inch) green, three-sided bugs. From the side they resemble small green buffalo heads. These are buffalo tree hoppers. They suck juices from goldenrod leaves and stems. Each tree hopper sucks more juice than its body can use. Look for little droplets of unused sticky clear juice (called honeydew) oozing from each treehopper.

Then look for ants walking near the treehoppers, sucking up the honeydew. Ants are the second part of this cool combo.

Pretend you're going to pick up a tree hopper and you'll have an ant soon threaten your finger. Ants protect tree hoppers because they want the honeydew. It's sort of like a farmer taking care of cows because we want to drink milk. Sometimes ants go a step farther. They chase goldenrod beetles off the plant because they "want" tree hoppers to have all the good food. That's like a farmer keeping a pasture green and lush for cows to feed.



## And There's More

Many more residents live *inside* the stems and leaves and on the roots of Hotel Goldenrod. There's almost no end to them. Of course! This is creation—there's always more to discover.

So go on out and look . . . and wonder.



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

BY TIMOTHY P. PALMER

# A Theology of the Cross

**C**OLORFUL PAINTINGS of fierce lions and supersonic jets adorn the wooden frames of lumbering Nigerian trucks. Religious symbols are also common: some trucks have been painted with the cross of Jesus, often in red. Others depict two crossed swords and a palm tree standing next to a mosque. Both the cross and the sword can be considered instruments of execution. But while the founder of Christian-

ity died on a cross, the founder of Islam wielded the sword.

In Africa—as in North America—the “big man complex” is a huge problem. The big man is a person who uses all the resources of the state or the institution to perpetuate his own rule and glory. He puts his own well-being above that of his subjects.

Another big problem in many African—and North American—churches is prosperity theology, which claims that those who are faithful will also be prosper-

ous. Subscribers to this theology teach the importance of giving so that the giver might be blessed. Those who give little will receive little; those who give much will receive much. Ultimately, then, the purpose of going to church is to become rich.

Both of these are examples of what Martin Luther called a theology of glory—a theology based on pride.

## Theology of Glory

During Luther’s time, the Roman Catholic Church was in a state of crisis. The



great scholastic theological system of Thomas Aquinas was crumbling. The institutional church was promoting personal advancement and glory. Six months after posting his famous 95 theses, Luther presented additional theses in Heidelberg, the “Heidelberg Disputation,” criticizing the scholastic theology of the church as a theology of glory.

The theology of glory suggests a way of knowing God. It claims that we can know God through creation as well as through special revelation. But Luther warned that such theology speaks only of the power and glory of God and not of God’s suffering. He suggested that God is “hidden in suffering.” He wrote, “It does one no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty unless one recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross.”

The theology of glory also suggests a way of life. “Because people do not know the cross and hate it, they necessarily love the opposite, namely, wisdom, glory [and] power,” Luther wrote. This love is all-consuming: The “desire for glory is not satisfied by the acquisition of glory, nor is the desire to rule satisfied by power and authority, nor is the desire for praise satisfied by praise.” In the Roman Catholic Church, this love of power and wealth was evident in the papacy and in the sellers of indulgences of Luther’s day.

Finally, the theology of glory suggests a way of salvation. According to Roman Catholic theology of the time, salvation is gained in part by human works. But Luther believed that relying on works for salvation was a form of pride. “Human works appear attractive outwardly, but within they are filthy,” he said. This was the theology that lay behind John Tetzel’s sale of indulgences, suggesting that release from Purgatory could be bought for a silver coin.

### Luther’s Theology of the Cross

In contrast to the theology of glory, Luther posited a theology of the cross, suggesting a radical, Christocentric way of knowing God, of living the Christian life, and of salvation.

Luther believed that we can know God only through Jesus and his cross. “He who

does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering,” wrote Luther. “God can be found only in suffering and the cross.” This is a bold theology. The cross of Jesus reveals the deep love of God. The cross of Jesus tells us that God suffers. Luther’s theology rejects natural theology; he believes that God cannot be known from creation outside of the cross.

Luther’s theology of the cross also indicated a way of life. If God is loving and suffering, then God’s people too

**If God is loving  
and suffering,  
then God’s  
people too  
should be loving  
and suffering.**

should be loving and suffering. “The love of God which lives in a person loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise and strong,” he wrote. “This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which . . . confers good upon the bad and needy.”

With respect to salvation, Luther’s theology of the cross emphasized that we are saved by the death of Jesus on the cross. “The righteousness of God . . . is imparted by faith,” said Luther; “works contribute nothing to justification.”

### A Reformed Theology of the Cross

John Calvin, a second-generation Reformer who was strongly influenced by Luther, was the father of our Reformed theology. Central to Calvin’s theology is Jesus’ saving work on the cross. We are justified by faith without any human works, Calvin said. “Righteousness according to grace is owed to faith. Therefore it does not arise from the merit of works.” In this Calvin closely follows Luther.

But Calvin says that we can know God from *both* the creation and the Bible. Both reveal the goodness and majesty

of God, said Calvin, and thus the knowledge of God is not restricted to the cross. My experience in Africa confirms this. Almost all Africans have a general knowledge of God because they have seen God in creation before hearing the good news of the gospel.

Calvin’s creational, biblical theology concludes that God cannot suffer. “Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched by human hands,” wrote Calvin in his *Institutes* (2.14.2). For Calvin it is Jesus’ human nature that suffered, not his divine nature.

Calvin’s view of the Christian life is governed more by the lordship of Jesus than by the cross. A Christian should permit “every part of his life to be governed by God’s will” (3.7.10). According to Calvin’s radical theology of the Christian life, we are not our own; we belong to God. “Let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. . . . Let us therefore live for him and die for him” (3.7.1). Self-denial is central to Calvin’s view of the Christian life. “Unless you give up all thought of self . . . you can accomplish nothing here” (3.7.5).

In the end, both Calvin and Luther taught a radical Christianity. But the cross is central to Luther’s theology while the lordship of God and Jesus Christ is central to Calvin’s theology. Both theologies reject prosperity theology and the big man complex as instances of human pride; instead, they point us to love and humility as the central themes of the Christian life. ■

### Sources

All quotes in this article are from the following resources:

- *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. T. Lull (Fortress Press, 2005).
- *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster Press, 1960).



Timothy P. Palmer, an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church sent by Christian Reformed World Missions, teaches at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria.

## Googling God: When Theology Meets Technology



**WHEN IT COMES TO CONVENIENCE** and accessibility, using the Internet as a theological library is pretty hard to beat. A quick clatter of fingertips on the keyboard brings up a host of blogs, forums, and other resources that speak to whatever theological query you can imagine.

Of course, it's wise to proceed with cautious discernment. Google is a poor magisterium; there's no guarantee that the theological opinions you'll encounter are worth the pixels that illuminate them. The World Wide Web is a Wild West of theological reflection, and there are all sorts of perspectives offering you the inside scoop on the truth. It can be a lot of fun exploring the diversity of Christian thought out there, but theology is a serious matter, and bad theology can be damaging.

Here are a few pointers for exploring theology online:

Check out the pedigree of the websites you're visiting. Who hosts them? Which tradition do they represent? A good online resource will be up front about this, and you'll have at least a small guarantee that the material you're reading is respectful of and in dialogue with a larger Christian community.

## The World Wide Web is a Wild West of theological reflection.

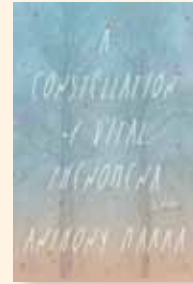
This doesn't mean you have to avoid any website that isn't strictly Reformed, of course. I've found lots of edifying material on the Vatican's website, for instance. And though I might not agree with all of the theology there, I know I'm keeping good company and that the material I'm reading is under the authority of a venerable tradition, not just the ramblings of a theological lone wolf.

With good company in mind, we need to remember that using the Internet can be a terribly isolating experience—often it's just you and your flickering monitor. It's rarely a good idea to study theological matters in isolation. So if you're getting a regular digest of theological edification from the Web, you should also be doing it in concert with folks in the real world. Have you discovered a new theological insight online? Bring it up with some others: your pastor, an elder, or a wise friend who knows the tradition. Chew it over with them; subject it to their scrutiny. They may offer an angle that you hadn't even considered.

The apostle Paul couldn't have anticipated the kind of online lives many of us lead these days. He was a fan of discernment, though, and encouraged us to critically examine everything. Let's do that together and hold on to the good. ■



**Brian Bork** is campus minister at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. He is a member of Waterloo Christian Reformed Church.



## A Constellation of Vital Phenomena

by **Anthony Marra**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

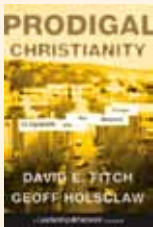
Between 1994 and 2004, two wars ravaged Chechnya, “a sliver of humanity the world seemed determined to forget.” In this context of deprivation, formidable moral choices, and the evils of betrayal, torture, and sex trafficking, 8-year-old Haava is rescued by her neighbor Akhmed. The two find shelter at an abandoned hospital where Sonja Rabina, a lone surgeon, does what she can to save anyone who arrives. Anthony Marra's jarring yet redemptive novel, which contains some vulgarity and sexually explicit scenes, reveals how “this incomprehensible war would take” from people “even the humanity to find it incomprehensible.” (Random House Canada)



## Prodigal Christianity: 10 Signposts into the Missional Frontier

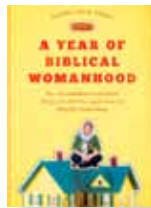
by David E. Fitch & Geoff Holsclaw  
reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

Books about the “missional conversation” have become a bit of a cottage industry in ministry publishing circles, represented by Christian leaders arm-wrestling over who gets to define the magic word *missional*. This contribution by two copastors of Life on the Vine Christian Community in suburban Chicago uses 10 “signposts” to offer a down-to-earth, accessible, yet provocative understanding of God’s mission of redemption in the world and how followers of Christ and every church can participate in breaking down boundaries around the postmodern and post-Christian people of our day. (Jossey-Bass)



## A Year of Biblical Womanhood

by Rachel Held Evans  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot



“Fearless” might describe this author’s adventure into living a year according to the Bible’s instructions for women. Entering into the year with the hesitant but full support of her husband, Evans combines the difficult practicality of living the literal translation with a deep desire to understand why the Bible may have required women and men to live together in these prescribed ways. Prepare to be exhausted, sometimes exasperated, but always engaged as you journey the year with Evans. (Thomas Nelson)

## Amour

reviewed by Otto Selles



Retirees Georges and Anne live a comfortable life, fully engaged in the arts and fully enjoying the *amour* they share with each other. Then one morning Anne blanks out completely. Georges holds her head and pleads with her to remember. The Academy Award-winning French-language film *Amour* is at once very beautiful and very, very difficult to watch, especially if you have had to care for a sick family member. But it is certainly a film that will generate much discussion and debate about love’s requirements. While it’s rated PG-13, emotionally this is definitely an “R” film. On disc now. (Sony)

## Trouble Will Find Me

by The National  
reviewed by Greg Veltman



On *Trouble Will Find Me*, The National has finely tuned their laid-back, indie-rock sound and Matt Berninger’s trademark baritone vocals. Engaging issues of spirituality, faith, and doubt, the album avoids the abstraction of faith and meaning in the universe, instead getting at the human experience of struggle, pain, and joy. While most albums are known for a few singles, each track on this one works together toward the whole. This is, quite simply, their masterpiece. Be forewarned that one song includes offensive language. (4AD Records)

## Blink of an Eye

by Frances England  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

If you have a young child in need of musical entertainment as you run from errand to errand and you need a break from Raffi in repeat mode, Frances England might provide respite. England’s sweet and infectious folky pop sound will appeal to fans of artists like Ingrid Michaelson. Nature provides inspiration for many of the songs. You’ll be hooked from the first song, the title track; farther along, take a lazy walk on the beach in your imagination with “Salt Water Spin.” Lovely. (Frances England Music)



## THE LOWDOWN



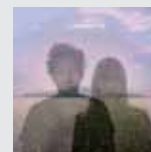
**Get Ready:** The second film installment of *The Hobbit* is on its way in December; James Stuart Bell’s new book, *The Spiritual World of the Hobbit*, will help you prepare. (Bethany House)



**It’s in There:** VeggieTales creator Phil Visscher’s video series for children, *What’s in the Bible?*, continues to make its way through the Good Book with *Volume 12: Letters from Paul*. (Jellyfish Labs)



**Weighty Matters:** The much buzzed-about film *Gravity*, in which Sandra Bullock and George Clooney play two astronauts stranded in space, opens in theaters this month. (Warner Bros.)



**Peak Activity:** The latest album from pop-folk collective Gun-gor is *I Am Mountain*, available now. (Hither and Yon)

MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE

Let's End Disability

Discrimination in Church



**W**E NO LONGER pour used motor oil down the drain or smoke cigarettes after a meal in restaurants or at church socials. Some folks object to such restrictions, but by and large most of us understand the reasons and accept the laws restricting our freedom to do things that harm others.

Except when it comes to disability law.

Synod 1993 called Christian Reformed churches and ministries in the United States and Canada to voluntarily comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The 20th anniversary of that call is a good time to reflect on an issue that synod determined is central to the kingdom of God. And it's a good time to consider why we have not wholeheartedly followed the 1993 resolution.

About 20 percent of the population—over 4.4 million Canadians and 60 million Americans, including 3 million U.S. veterans with service-related disabilities—have a functional limitation or loss. Where can they attend church? An annual survey of Christian Reformed churches shows that most CRC church buildings have accessible entrances, worship and fellowship areas, classrooms, and restrooms. We have made good progress for people with mobility impairments.

However, fully complying with the ADA means far more than changing our buildings. For example, only 50 percent of our congregations offer aids such as hearing loops for people with hearing impairments. Even fewer congregations, about 40 percent, offer accommodations for people with vision impairments. Outside signs may be huge, but indoors the signs, bulletins, newsletters, and pro-

jected information often use small fonts, confusing backgrounds, and hard-to-read color contrast. Some research suggests that when it comes to accommodating differences, our churches rank last compared to other organizations. Making choices that exclude people with disabilities calls the church's commitment to being salt and light into question.

#### Digging Deeper

- For more information, see "Resources for Accessibility and Awareness" and the *Inclusion Handbook on the Disability Concerns* website, [crcna.org/disability](http://crcna.org/disability).
- Call the ADA hotline, 800-514-0301, or visit [ada.gov](http://ada.gov).

# Ableism is as deeply entrenched and as difficult to uproot and unlearn as are racism and sexism.

## Disability Discrimination

Biblical teaching calls us to end disability discrimination. The Old and New Testaments prohibit unjust discrimination (Lev. 19:14-15; Deut. 27:18; Acts 6:1; James 2:1-9). And well before the ADA existed, the Bible said we are responsible for what we build and what we do (Ex. 21:33-34; Deut. 22:8; 1 Cor. 8:13; 9:27). The ADA does not promote caring for people with disabilities; rather, it prohibits causing harm.

Many people think of disability only as an individual's functional limitation or loss. But disability occurs when a person with a limitation interacts with an environment or activity we create and control, and could make accessible, but do not. We could include people with a greater variety of ages and abilities by applying the principle of universal design, that is, by considering a wider range of human variation in the media, spaces, and programs we create. We could also offer reasonable accommodations for people who could not otherwise participate. By failing to apply universal design or to make reasonable accommodations, we commit disability discrimination. In the words of James 4:17, "So then, if you know the good you ought to do and don't do it, you sin."

Some reasonable accommodations cost little time or effort. Others may cost up to 20 percent of a building, remodeling, maintenance, or new equipment budget and may require training. Making this investment for the 20 percent of the population who have impairments complies with the apostle Paul's teaching "At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality" (2 Cor. 8:14).

## Why We Haven't (Yet) Ended Discrimination

Disability discrimination is a sin common to us all, which is why a democracy has laws to protect people with disabilities. Beyond voluntary compliance, churches in the United States are required to com-

ply with the employment provisions of the ADA and with local building codes that are not part of the ADA. In Ontario, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires churches, like any business, to be accessible to people with disabilities or face fines.

### What We Can Do

1. Prepare in advance for people with disabilities—even before people ask for access—and make known what is available.
2. Incorporate the principles of universal design and accommodation into all church programs instead of treating them as occasional add-ons when we think there is a need or when a volunteer is available.
3. Focus Bible-based preaching, teaching, and example on this issue to expose and refute anything that devalues and excludes people with functional impairments.
4. Adopt a church policy on disability; currently one-third of CRCs have one.
5. Conduct accessibility audits in your church with the help of people with various impairments. Plan to invest up to 20 percent of your time and financial resources to include the 20 percent of the population who have impairments.
6. Establish an open, functional disability discrimination grievance system as recommended by Synod 1993. Silence and secrecy will not end disability discrimination.
7. Create courses and course supplements on disability awareness and disability discrimination in Christian K-12 curriculums and in colleges and seminaries.

When we acknowledge that we engage in disability discrimination, we can comply with the resolution of Synod 1993 by repenting, turning, and taking action—looking not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). As a result, we look more like Christ.

We obscure the sources of disability if we think of complying with the ADA as providing optional preferences or favors or if we think of it as a charitable activity or ministry. If we think of complying with the ADA as an act of hospitality, we imply that people with impairments are strangers or guests, not regular members of our church family.

Ableism, the term for disability prejudice, is as deeply entrenched and as difficult to uproot and unlearn as are racism and sexism. Many of us do not want to think or talk about disability. We may even deny our own hidden impairments, including hearing or vision loss, learning difficulties, frailty, or pain. We may not know what resources are or could be available, how to ask for them, or whom to ask. For some congregations, universal design and accommodation may seem to be at odds with the most efficient means for reaching the most people with the gospel. However, fulfilling the Great Commission cannot neglect the great commandment to love one another (Luke 10:27-37; 1 John 4:20).

The world values youth and strength over the full range of human variation and functioning. In contrast, God chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27). Honoring father and mother includes honoring people with impairments, whose ranks swell with age, by complying with synod's call to end disability discrimination (Eph. 6:2). We cannot fix all problems or include everyone. But we can, by God's grace, become a more inclusive church (Luke 14:13). ■



**John Jay Frank** has written extensively on the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and is an ordained minister through Pinecrest/Bethany Ministerial Fellowship in New York. He and his wife, Edith, are members of Westwood CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich.



**Mark Stephenson** is director of Disability Concerns for the Christian Reformed Church and is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.

## The Pope's Resignation and the Meaning of Office

**YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN** that at the moment Pope Benedict XVI resigned as pope earlier this year, his official pronouncements were no longer considered “infallible”—without error—as Catholic dogma teaches.

A late-night comedian used the occasion to joke about it: “One minute the pope is infallible. The next, he’s not.” Ha!

What’s going on?

The explanation lies in the high value the Roman Catholic Church places on church office, which ultimately trumps personal qualifications. If the church says its highest office can speak infallibly, it can—regardless of the person who’s holding the office. What the pope declares *ex cathedra* is considered absolute truth—for example, the dogma of the Assumption of Mary.

No wonder morality and competence have been relentless problems for Roman Catholic clergy (and, for that matter, other clergy everywhere). From inebriated priests in the Middle Ages performing the mass to the scandals that plague the church today, the idea persists that the office qualifies the person who holds it, personal shortcomings aside. Unless, of course, a public relations nuisance arises.

In strong reaction to the Roman Catholic Church, some sectors of Protestantism developed an opposite approach: a low view of office and a high view of the qualifications of the person holding the office. In fact, anyone with the right gifts could hang out a sign and create a church. It is no wonder that some rogue pastors with no official sanction or oversight have been able to fleece the flock unchecked.

The Reformed view seeks a balance between office as conferred by the church (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:2) and the qualifications of the office-holder (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5-9). Though imperfect, both are needed for a biblical view of office to come into full bloom in Christ’s church. Related is the importance of an external, ecclesiastical and an internal, personal calling from God.

However, even in these circles there is sometimes confusion.

I once heard a Reformed minister say from the pulpit that if the church calls you to an office (such as that of elder or deacon), God will equip you with the gifts you need to perform the duties of that office. Wrong! If you don’t yet evidence the gifts for an office, even in seed form, the church should not call you to that office.

**If you don’t yet evidence the gifts for an office, even in seed form, the church should not call you to that office.**

In my ecclesiastical neighborhood, I’ve also heard that if you already have the gifts and feel called to an office, you have the right to hold that office. Wrong again. You have no right to plant yourself in an office without the church’s calling.

In these two tendencies we can feel the tension between office and gifting. And as the pope leaves his office behind, forfeiting an infallibility he never really had, it’s a good time to remind ourselves of the nature of biblical office.

Yes, all Christians hold the office of every believer. And thankfully, God can and does work in churches with misinformed views of the special leadership offices. However, we should not resort to ecclesiastical fiction.

Without the biblical balance that keeps imperfect churches like mine and flawed officebearers like me on track, the church and its mission are sadly weakened.

And that’s no joke. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**David Schuringa** is a minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He taught ecclesiology in seminaries for 12 years before becoming the president of Crossroad Bible Institute in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# ADS

**Deadlines:** November issue is 10/7/13; December issue is 11/4/13. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Calls Accepted

**REV. JOHN KLOMPIEN** formerly of the North St. CRC of Zeeland—has accepted a call to the Calvary CRC of Orange City, Iowa.

### Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **ANDREW CHUN** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **CEDRIC PARSELS** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **RUTH FEBRIANA** has now completed her academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, Executive Director

### Retirement

**MOLINE CRC** in Michigan, will celebrate the retirement of Pastor John and Beverly Ouwinga on Dec 29 after 40 years of faithful ministry. All are welcome to AM worship service with luncheon following at the Chr School. Please RSVP for luncheon by calling (616) 681-9378 by Dec 1. [www.molinecrc.org](http://www.molinecrc.org)

## Congregational

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**COMSTOCK CRC** at 5300 Comstock Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49048, will celebrate 100 years, with special services and fellowship on November 3 and 10. Former pastors, members and friends are encouraged to join us. Contact the church office for details (269) 342-2646.

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**WILLOWDALE CRC** of Toronto, ON will be celebrating 50 years of God's faithfulness as a congregation with a church Open House, Celebration Dinner, and a special Worship Service being planned for the weekend of October 19th & 20th, 2013. For more information see our website: [www.willowdalecrc.com](http://www.willowdalecrc.com), or email us: [fifty@willowdalecrc.com](mailto:fifty@willowdalecrc.com), or call the church office at: 416-221-7829. We look forward to celebrating with former members!

**GRACE CRC** of Scarborough (Toronto) Ontario invites all friends and former members of this now multiethnic congregation to celebrate its 50th anniversary on Sunday, November 10. Celebrations will begin with a 10:00 am worship service followed by a dinner and a special program. For more details, please contact Grace CRC at 416-293-0373, [gracecrc@planeteeer.com](mailto:gracecrc@planeteeer.com), or go to [www.gracecrc.com](http://www.gracecrc.com).

## Announcements

**SUMAS CRC**, 700 Sumas Ave, Sumas, WA, 98295, is celebrating God's faithfulness shown through their longtime organist, Freda Visser, who is marking 70 years of service this fall.

**"THANK YOU"** Please accept our heartfelt thanks for the generous contributions made to the Memorial Fund for Judy Landman of Grand Rapids, MI. Your gifts will be used for the education and care of Judy's children and grandchildren. Your love honors her memory! ~Judy's family

## Birthdays

### 105th Birthday



**GRACE VANDER VEEN (TOLSMa)** celebrated her 105th birthday September 9, 2013. Her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren thank God for her long life. An open house was held in her honor at Bethel CRC in Lacombe, Alberta.

### 95th Birthday

**DEANETTA "DEANE" MENSINK** (nee Vande Riet) 111 Owen Road, #61, Monona, WI 53716, will celebrate her 95th birthday October 22. Her children: Bryce & Jan, Dave, Ron, Jeff, and Carol Simle, along with her 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren are thankful for her kind and gentle ways.



**ROSE VAN REKEN** (Rozena Poortenga) wife of the late Dr. Everett Van Reken will celebrate her 95th birthday on October 23. She resides at 3460 Saratoga, #153, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Her children: David and Ruth Van Reken, Jim and Marge Bogdalek, Calvin and Rose Van Reken, John and Rosemary Strodman and Philip and Kandace Van Reken. She has also been blessed with 16 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. We give thanks to God for her life of love and faithfulness in service to her God, her family, her church and her community.

### 90th Birthday



**NEL BUITIER** 1919 Boston SE #A-214 Grand Rapids MI 49506 will celebrate her 90th birthday on October 23, 2013. Her seven children and spouses, twenty-six grandchildren and spouses, and eighteen great-grandchildren thank God for her and the blessing she has been in their lives. Open House October 19, 3 - 5 pm at Beacon Hill @ Eastgate.

**BERTHA HOFMAN OF** 4670 Millhaven SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49548 turns 90 on Oct 20. Celebrating God's goodness in her life: husband Rev. John M; children Marv & Mary, Ruth & Steve, Greg and Judy, Tom & Wendy; 10 grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren

**EDWARD JOLING** celebrates his 90th birthday on October 12. His family is grateful for his faithful Christian example and 40 year teaching career – at Muskegon Christian and Kalamazoo Christian High School. Address: 1017 Wedgewood, Plainwell, MI 49080.



**SI KONIG** will celebrate his 90th birthday on September 15 with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We are so thankful for dad's "example in righteousness," his love, and gracious spirit. He resides at 225 101st St., Zeeland, MI.

### 80th Birthday

**HELEN (BAKER) DYKSTRA** of Bradenton Beach, FL, wife of the late Edward Dykstra celebrated her 80th birthday on September 17th. Her family thanks God for her loving, faithful life.

## Anniversaries

### 60th Anniversary

**BANTJES** John M & Marjorie (DeKoning) will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Oct. 15. Their children John & Marcie, Janice (deceased), Sandy & Bob LaRoe, Jim & Doris, SueAnn, and their 10 grandchildren & 9 great grandchildren are thankful for their example of faithfulness to the Lord and to each other.

**COOPER** Marv and Joan (Hoekstra) of 6501 17th Ave. W. Apt. I-212 Bradenton, FL 34209., Bob and Sue Cooper, Craig and Jane Cooper, Carol and Keith Parr, Roger Cooper (Deceased), Steve and DeAnn Cooper, Marybeth and Matt Steigenga; 17 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren- Praise God for His faithfulness thru all generations.

**DE LANGE** The children of Henry and Jeanette De Lange request a card shower for their parents who will be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on October 23. Greetings may be sent to them at 36786 275th St., Platte, SD 57369

**PERSENAIRE** Ted & Gladys (Hoitsma), Oct. 8. Address: 3660 Eagle Nest Dr., #313, Crete, IL 60417. Children: Bonnie (Paul) Zigterman, Sandy (Wally) Loerop, Rick (Val), Larry (Jan), 13 grandkids plus 6 spouses & 1 fiancée, 2 great grandkids (1 in Glory).

**VANDER WEIT** Mr & Mrs Henry, will celebrate 60 years of the Lord's blessings on their marriage on Oct 16, 2013. They reside at 67 Yeatsville Rd, Bath, NC 27808. They would love to hear from their family and friends. Their children Ruth & Ed, Nancy & Earl, Ken & Irene, their 12 grandchildren and their spouses, and their 3 great grandchildren wish to thank them for their love and prayers for each of us through the years, and for the wonderful example of a Christian marriage. Great Is Thy Faithfulness!!



## DORDT COLLEGE

### Dean for Research & Scholarship

Dordt College is seeking an innovative person with a strong track record of teaching/research/scholarship and a passion for Christian higher education to serve in the role of Dean for Research & Scholarship beginning in summer of 2014. Our selected candidate will have proven skills to support and encourage the faculty at Dordt College to develop scholarship and research as an integral part of their service to Dordt's mission and thereby strengthen our culture of scholarship across the campus. Additional duties may include teaching and administrative roles.

A review of application materials will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vitae/résumé to:

Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost • Dordt College  
498 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE • Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697  
Fax: (712) 722-6035 • E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
Web: [www.dordt.edu/pospective\\_employees/faculty/](http://www.dordt.edu/pospective_employees/faculty/)  
*Dordt College does not discriminate as to age, sex, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.*

**VAN HOOK**, Donald and Florence (Branden) married Oct. 8, 1953 in Holland, MI, thank the Lord for 60 years of marriage. Children: Beth and Bob Lehigh; Joan and Brad Ryder; Dawn Van Hook; Faye and Russ Ritsema; Mark Van Hook. 10 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

**VENHOUSEN** Peter & Mariella (Essenberg) 60th Wedding Anniversary October 9, 2013. Children: Peter Jack (Kimberlee), Mary Beth (David) Vandervelde, Billy (Debra), John (Kelly). 9 grandchildren & 13 great grandchildren. Address: N6140 Fir Court, Elkhorn, WI 53121.

**WISSE** Rev. Don & Ethel celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept 10. Address: 381 Cornell St., Wyckoff, NJ 07481. Their children,

grandchildren, and soon-to-be-great-grandchild thank them for modeling God's love. Great is Thy faithfulness.

#### 50th Anniversary

**TIMMERMAN** Roger and Marilyn celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with praise to God for His faithfulness on August 28, 2013. Their children are Ross and Susan Timmerman (Ryan and Jacob), Rolfe and Stacy Timmerman (Lindsay, Thomas and Eli) and Rolin and Polly Timmerman (Emily).

**WEIDENAAR** William and Suzanne (Mejeur) of Evergreen Park, IL celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 10. Their children David,

Jennifer and Rebecca with their spouses and 8 grandchildren thank God for His Blessings!

#### Obituaries

**ARKEMA** Cornelia (Van Soelen) of Sully, Iowa went to her eternal home on August 24, 2013. She is survived by her husband Bernard of 66 years, her 3 sons & wives, 5 grandchildren & 12 great-grandchildren.

**BERKOMPAS** Edward W. (age 75) of Rudyard, MI went to meet Jesus on June 2, 2013. He is mourned by his wife of 53 years, Julia (Stegink), 7 children, 6 sons and daughters-in-law, 16 grandchildren, 2 sisters and 1 brother. He is preceded in death by 1 daughter, 1 daughter-in-law, 2 brothers and 1 sister.

**BRANDERHORST** Nellie Meurs, 87, Pella, IA., wife of Nick (2002) passed away Aug. 19, 2013. Lovingly remembered by children Kathy and Darrell Noteboom, Nick and Lynn Branderhorst; Marlo and Lori Branderhorst, 9 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

**BROENE** Ruth Warner age 93; August 12, 2013; 2121 Raybrook S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She is survived by her husband: Herman; children: Mary and Russell Pollard of Ashland, MA, Jane and Paul Schut of Byron Center, and Thomas and Pamela Broene of Silver Spring, MD; sister: Elizabeth Waggener; sister-in-law: Annette Broene. Ruth was preceded in death by her sister: Marian Van Oostenburg; and brother: Donald Warner.

**DEBOER** Ruth (Dryfhout), age 93, of Downers Grove, IL went to be with Our Lord August 5, 2013. Wife of the late George DeBoer; loving mother of Eunice (the late Ronald) Cohrs and Elaine (William) Kamp; grandmother of 4; great-grandmother of 6; great-great grandmother of 1; preceded by 4 brothers and 2 sisters; aunt of many nieces and nephews.



**DROST** Sue Ann (Bulthuis) age 57, resident of High Point, NC was called home to the Lord on Friday, August 2, 2013, following a long battle with cancer. Sue was born in Artesia, CA on December 31, 1955. She lived in Ripon, CA; Orange City, IA; Madison, WI; Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines;

Wilmington, DE; Pella, IA; and High Point, NC during her life. She graduated from Ripon Christian High School, Ripon, CA and Dordt College, Orange City, IA. Sue is survived by her husband, Dirk Drost; children Abigail Drost of Greensboro, NC and Derek Drost of Penn Valley, CA and Derek's fiancée Natalie Stabenow of Penn Valley, CA. In addition she is survived by her 2 brothers and 3 sisters: Peter (Lori) Bulthuis, Ripon, CA; Debra (Ron) VanEsse, Ripon, CA; Jan (Randy) Hartzell, McMinnville, OR; Keith (Pat) Bulthuis, Logan, UT; and, Lin (Ron) DeYoung, Denver, CO.

**FRANZ** Genevieve Mae "Jean" Franz, 78, went to be with Our Lord August 9, 2013. 732 Oklahoma Blvd, Alva, OK 73717. Wife of the late Henry Franz; mother of the late John Paul Franz; dear sister-in-law of David W and Marjorie Franz, and Donna Van Der Tuin; 4th grade teacher at Timothy Christian Schools, Elmhurst, for over 35 years. Member of Ebenezer CRC, Berwyn, IL.

**GREIDANUS** Fred (Feite) went home to his Lord on August 9, 2013 in his 93rd year. Beloved husband of Lolkje for 67 years (Holland Christian Homes, 7950 McLaughlin Rd. S. PT 202, Brampton ON L6Y 5V9). Cherished Dad, Pake and Pake-Pake!

**GROENENDYK** Willis J., age 80, of Oskaloosa, IA died 8-7-13. Survived by wife Eleanor (Graves), children Carla & Calvin Hoogendoorn, Norma & Kraig Roozeboom, Marcia & Norman Visser, Leon, Donna & Ethan Brue, Brenda & Doug Wichhart. 15 grandchildren. A man of God, a tiller of the soil, and beloved husband, dad, and grandpa.

**HEKMAN** Rev. Jacob age 92; August 13, 2013; Grand Rapids, MI; He was preceded in death by his wife: Kathryn. Surviving are his daughter: Carole (Dr. Hugh) Miller; grandchildren: Jim Holland III, Jacob (Heather) Holland, Marnie Redmond; great grandchildren: William "Liam" Holland, Alexis Redmond; sister and brother-in-law: Gertrude (Dr. Willis) DeBoer; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: Gertrude Schneider, Kay Schneider, Louise Leugs, Mae and James Versluis.



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Direct all inquiries to Mr. Loren Veldhuizen  
Executive Director Search Committee Chair  
[veldhuizen45@gmail.com](mailto:veldhuizen45@gmail.com)

#### Church Position Announcements

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR** Visalia Christian Reformed Church in Visalia, CA, is seeking a part-time director for our children's ministries. We are looking for a Christ-follower who has a passion for sharing God's love with the children of our church and the surrounding community. The Children's Ministry Director responsibilities require approximately 30 hrs/wk. Please visit our website at <http://visaliaccr.com> to view the full job description and to apply. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. 559-625-0444

**PASTOR** Milwood CRC of Kalamazoo, MI is an established congregation located in the Milwood area of our city. We are looking for a pastor to lead our congregation and further develop the neighborhood outreach we have begun. Pastoral qualifications include solid Biblical preaching, inspirational leadership and an enthusiasm for reaching beyond our church walls. Applicants may contact Search Committee Chairperson Bob Mulder at [mulder.milwoodcrr@gmail.com](mailto:mulder.milwoodcrr@gmail.com) for more detailed information.

**CAMPUS EDGE FELLOWSHIP** a ministry to the graduate students at Michigan State University is searching for a new campus pastor. For a complete job description contact [info@campusedgemsu.com](mailto:info@campusedgemsu.com)

**YOUTH DIRECTOR:** Jamestown CRC (MI) is seeking a part-time Youth Director with a flexible schedule to work with our middle school and high school groups. Send resume and cover letter to: Youth Director Search Committee, [office@jamestowncrrc.org](mailto:office@jamestowncrrc.org).

**MISSING PARSON** — Height: Standing tall on God's Word. Weight: Not too serious, we like to have fun. Eyes: Looking toward God, with a vision for those across the street. Could you be the one God has chosen for us? We are Calvin CRC in Holland, MI. We have strong programs, vibrant worship, friendly people, and lots of energy. What

we are missing, though, is a pastor to help equip us to reach the lost and challenge us with motivating messages. Our mission is to Seek God's heart and Share God's love. If you can hear God calling you in our direction, please send us your resume: [searchteam@calvinministries.org](mailto:searchteam@calvinministries.org) or Search Team, Calvin Church, 387 W. Lakewood Blvd., Holland, MI 49424.

**ASSOCIATE TEACHING PASTOR** Providence CRC in Holland, MI is seeking a full-time associate teaching pastor who will be mentored into a senior leadership position. Interested applicants should send resumes with cover letters to [search@providencechurch.net](mailto:search@providencechurch.net)

**PASTOR** Christ Community Church in East Islip, New York seeks a pastor to lead us into our next stage of growth. Having enjoyed a season of growth, we are looking for a pastor to continue that while discipling those who are already in our fellowship. We are culturally diverse and enjoy a blended style of worship. We are looking for a Pastor who has a passion for preaching God's Word, strong leadership and discipling skills, and an enthusiasm for community outreach. Please submit resumes to [pastorsearchccee@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsearchccee@gmail.com)

**PASTOR** Bethel CRC in Oskaloosa, IA is seeking a full time pastor to lead our congregation into its next chapter. Primary responsibility would be to shepherd our congregation and work with us to help Bethel become what God wants us to be. Please contact Reuvena Bruxvoort at [stanleyb@mahaska.org](mailto:stanleyb@mahaska.org).

**MUSIC & WORSHIP LEADER** 1st Reformed Church - Sheldon, Iowa seeks energetic and organized individual to assist in planning worship services, promote worship, and drive the spiritual well-being of our congregation. For information is available at: <http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/>



**OTTER** Gordon 76, Aug. 17, 2013, Grand Rapids, MI. Survived by wife Alice; children Duane (Ruth) Otter, Lowell (Carie) Otter, Mary (David) Jaglowski, Vicki (Kevin) Witte, Wendy (Sean) Sullivan. 9 grandchildren.

**STOB** Howard D. Stob, age 78, US Army Veteran, of Homer Glen, IL, went home to be with the Lord on August 10, 2013. Husband for 58 years to JoAnn T., nee Hofstra. Father of John (JoAnn K.) Stob and Kristi (Brian) Boss. Grandfather of Andrew Boss, Katie (Eric) Chappell, Kelsey (Josh) Franklin, and Kara (Jacob) Dorn. Great-grandfather of Gideon. Brother of Mary (late Al) Luchtenburg, Leonard (Sharon) Stob, and the late William (late Helen) Stob. Brother-in-law of Lorraine (Jacob) Stoub and David (Ahleen) Hofstra.

**TAYLOR**, Ella (Huizenga) age 91 July 31, 2013 of Holland, MI formerly of Westchester, IL. Preceded in death by her husband Ed and brothers, Clarence and Harry (late Martha) Huizenga. She is survived by sisters, Grace (Corky) DeHorn and Ruth (late Frank) Post, sister-in-law Marian Huizenga and 14 nieces and nephews.

**TEKRONY** Garret, age 91, July 16, 2013; 2322 Yorkshire Dr, #307, Brookings, SD 57006. Longtime member of Bemis CRC. Survived by wife Henrietta (Mulder); children: Dorothy (David) Van Haaften, Darrel TeKrony, Arlys (Kent) Van Groningen, Glen TeKrony; 12 grandchildren, 8 great grandchildren. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**UNEMA** Norman P., age 81, of Hudsonville, MI, beloved husband, father, and grandfather, went to be with his Lord and Savior on Tuesday, July 23, 2013. Surviving are his wife of 59 years, Crystal; children: Rodney & Jill Unema, Barry & Colleen Unema, and Sheli & Steve Sterk; grandchildren: Rachel & Dave Vannette, Joel Unema, Jodi & Kyle Cherney, Caleb, Travis, and Levi Unema; siblings: Beatrice & Tom Smith, Dr. Maynard & Lavina (deceased) DeKryger, Will & Mary Jane Byker and Norm & Karol De Weerd. Norm was a member of Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church, where he faithfully served his Lord. We give thanks for his life well-lived!


**WEESIES** Wallace F. age 85 of 704 E Spring St., Whitehall, MI 49461 went to be with his Lord on June 28. He was the beloved husband for 63 years to Eleanor, nee Dykstra. Loving father of Charles, Kent (Ginny) and Ruthann (Bryan) Zylstra. 8 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. He is greatly missed and remembered with love and respect.

**YOUNGMA** Curtis (Curt) aged 78, of Denver, Colorado went to his eternal home August 1, 2013. Survived by his wife Marj and four children: Christy (Ben) Savage, Julie (Doug) Drost, Susan (David) Wilkins, & David (Charys), as well as 8 grandchildren: Laura, Jennifer, Christina, Colin, Melissa, Leah, Joshua & Erin. "Fear not for I have redeemed you, I have summoned you by name, you are mine." —Isaiah 43:1.

## Employment

**PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH** Providence Christian College invites qualified applicants for the position of President/CEO. The ideal candidate will possess a passion for the mission and vision of Providence Christian College along with exceptional executive leadership to shape strategy, implement and advance the presence of a Reformed institution of higher learning on the West Coast. Candidates should be committed to the Reformed faith and able to articulate the relevance of such faith to the liberal arts. A complete summary of the position, the requisite qualifications and the application process can be found online at [presidentsearch.providenceccc.edu](http://presidentsearch.providenceccc.edu)

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**It's a secret.** Over 24 million websites are devoted to it and it generates billions of dollars in revenue each year. A majority of pastors admit that it's a personal temptation. Over 40% of Christians say that it is problem in their home. It's free, accessible, anonymous and growing. Yet we don't talk about it.

**Safe Church Ministry** helps maintain safe places to worship and to grow in faith, places where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We put windows in doors of classrooms so that what goes on inside can be seen. We have procedures in place to prevent harm and to hold people accountable. Let's also put windows in our souls, to reveal what maybe hidden there. Let's put procedures in place that hold us accountable, make Internet porn less accessible, and help us respond with effective support to those who struggle with it.

**June 28 to July 25, 2014** a motorcycle trip will begin at the Canadian and United States border on the West Coast and into Southern California heading east through the U.S. into Ontario and finishing in New Jersey. Planned rallies along the ride will be in Abbotsford BC, Ripon CA, Denver CO, Sioux Centre IA, Grand Rapids MI, Hamilton ON, and finishing in Wyckoff, NJ.

Internet pornography doesn't belong in Christian community. It does not honor God or others, but debases, rather than celebrates, His gift of sexuality. let's talk about it.

Our churches can only become safe places of hope and healing when we choose **NOT** to keep secrets.

Visit [www.crcna.org/safechurch](http://www.crcna.org/safechurch) for more information about breaking the silence that hides pornography and other kinds of abuse.

**SAFE CHURCH**

For more information about the ride visit [www.shore2shore2014.com](http://www.shore2shore2014.com) registration to be part of this exciting and important ministry will begin early this fall.

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### **Jonah: Running from God**

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### **Joseph: God's Messy, Complicated, Perfect Plan**

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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 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**M**y wife asked me the other day, "Honey, will you love me when my hair is gray?"

I said, "I don't know why not. I've loved you through three other colors!"

—Elmer Bruursema

**B**ack in the 1840s, the first boatload of European settlers came up Lake Michigan and entered the Grand River. Two Italian families looked around Grand Haven and said it looked like a good place to settle. They got off the boat and soon started a Roman Catholic church.

Further up the river, two German families found a place to settle. They got off and soon started a Lutheran church.

A bit further on, two Dutch families decided to settle. One started First CRC and the other started Second CRC.

—Bob Lubbers

**I** have a lot of trouble with wrong numbers. Yesterday I dialed the Red Cross and got Revenue Canada instead. The operator asked me what number I had dialed. I said, "The Red

Cross—you know, where they take your blood."

She said, "Well, you aren't too far off, are you?"

—John Veltkamp

**A** visiting minister began the prayer with arms extended and a rapturous look on his upturned face. "Dear Lord," he began, "without you we are but dust..."

At that moment, one little girl who was listening carefully leaned over to her mother and asked quite audibly in her shrill little voice, "Mommy, what is butt dust?"

—Clarence A. Wildeboer

**O**n the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother.

The note read: "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents."

—Herm Kelderman

**Q**: Why did Aaron pawn his leg?

A: He had a golden calf.

—I. Scholten

**A**fter the christening of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally the boy replied, "The preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys!"

—Edith Vander Veen

**S**potted on the bulletin board of a church in Cobden, Ontario:

Honk if you love Jesus.

Text while driving if you want to meet him.

—Jacob Rook

**M**y 5-year-old grandson and his family were visiting us at our camper. As he was walking back from the playground with his mom, I overheard her reprimand him and heard his response.

Later I took him aside and said, "God gave you such a nice mom. You shouldn't talk to her like that."

He replied, "Well, God can take her back."

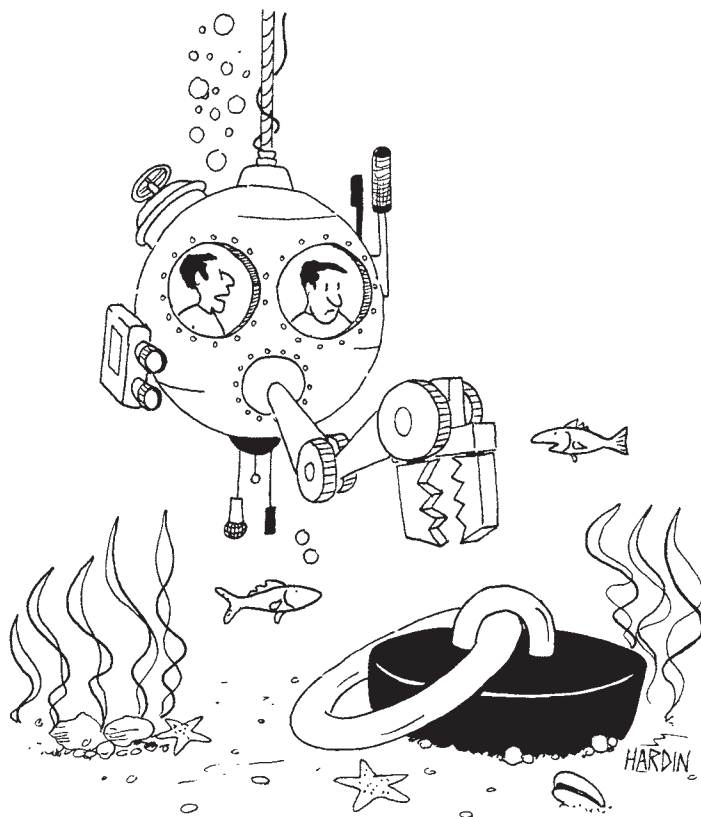
—Marcia Rataczak

**O**n Palm Sunday, a 5-year-old boy woke up ill and stayed home from church with a sitter. When his family returned, they were carrying palm fronds. He asked what they were for.

"People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," explained his father.

"Wouldn't you know it?" the boy fumed. "The one Sunday I don't go, and he shows up."

—Carol Dykema



"I don't know what it means either, but for Pete's sake, don't touch it!"



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