

BANNER

January 2014 | www.thebanner.org

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Two-in-One for the Three-in-One

TEACHING PRE-PROFESSION OF FAITH CLASS IS A DELIGHT: a great opportunity to share, discuss, and reflect on our faith at a particularly meaningful stage in its development. We often end up getting tongue-tied, though, when we muse on the holy Trinity. How can it be that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God but in such a way that there is only one God? We'll appeal to the traditional formulation that tries to guard us from heresy: three *persons* in one *being*. However true that is, it doesn't really clear up the mystery. Nor does it need to. Our limited understanding doesn't prevent us from intimately communing and walking with our God.

That is similarly true for the ongoing puzzle of how to be one church in two countries. There are very good historical and existential reasons for our binationality, as Adrien de Jong points out in his IMHO (p. 8). From the earliest church plants in Canada more than a century ago to the truly amazing and visionary welcome provided by the U.S. cousins to the Reformed immigrants arriving from the Netherlands in the fifties, the CRCNA has a long history of reaching across the border with mutual respect and generosity.

That doesn't mean our cross-border relationship is simple or clear. I've experienced that relationship for many years from both sides of the border (38 in Canada, 17 in the U.S.). And once I had the privilege of chairing a synodical committee tasked with going across Canada to find out how to integrate the work of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) within our shared CRC ecclesiastical structures.

I've also witnessed firsthand many of the ongoing struggles and tensions involved with doing ministry together in two countries. We have spent many decades in a quandary of how to run Canadian agencies, ministries, and relationships and who should do so. We disagree on how much independence they should have and who has say over what. The role of the Canadian Ministries Director remains controversial. Then, of course, there are ongoing tensions about how the members of the Canadian Board of Trustees should function within the whole.

The level of frustration has convinced a few Canadians that we need to strike out on our own (see "Let Us Go" by Harry Houtman in the June 2013 issue). But the large majority, and I am certainly one of them, want to see nothing of the sort. We believe that Who and what binds us together in faith, love, and ministry is so much greater than what divides us.

We need to continue to work creatively and doggedly at sorting out our differences. Like the concept of the Trinity, we may never fully understand binationality. Even so, we can keep working just fine with it and within it.

A trans-border church is an increasingly rare and important witness in our divided world—a witness to our common and much more fundamental citizenship within the kingdom of our Lord and Savior/Saviour Jesus Christ.

So on both sides of the border, let's hang in there together, eh! ■



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

A trans-border church
is an increasingly rare
and important witness
in our divided world.

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Published monthly (12 issues per year). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: The Banner, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: The Banner, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8.

Copyright 2014, Faith Alive Christian Resources, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 149, No. 01, 2014.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

Joy and Pain



OUR LIVES BEAT with the pulse of joy and pain. These two emotions are braided into the roots of our being, mingling together and spinning us in an erratic dance called “life.” Within this dance, joy and pain swing us high in arcs of euphoria and drop us deep into suffering. There is no birth without pain, and the deepest joy is birthed from pain. When an infant enters the world, it slips into the light from the darkest place.

This pulse beats vigorously within the lives of my aunt and uncle and their family of five girls. Their youngest girl, Jessica Faith, was born with Down syndrome, initiating a whiplash of emotion circling celebration and grief. As parents, my aunt and uncle carried a weighty sense of guilt for wanting to reject their gift; in the life of their girl, they saw the death of their dreams. The future rocked and shifted, forcing them to step forward in trust. Even as Jessica’s family grieved her limitations, they found joy in the celebration of her abilities. It was all a gift.

Struggle can reveal this gift in profound gestures. In the beginning, my aunt and uncle grieved their daughter as a burden, but as they watched, small miracles began to weave together the frayed ends of the situation. They bonded with the “burden” and the scales slowly fell away. The miracle was in their arms.

The journey into the heart of God does not always follow the path of least resistance. In the midst of pain, if you open yourself to be filled, God will flood you with his presence.

As Down syndrome wove itself into the fabric of my aunt and uncle’s life, it dug up old fears. Yet God used their child to pull them deeper into a position of reliance. A loving God cannot leave his children running from their fears. We must encounter those fears to see that God has overcome them.

Jessica is now 3 years old. She runs and laughs with unrestrained passion. She shines as a slice of heaven on earth in her family, reminding them that God is present in their lives. Their family life is augmented with celebration as her list of

achievements grows, as she grows into a gift of grace, an altar marking the holy ground they walk on every day.

The daily swirl of specialist appointments, questions, and frustration is still a reality; but with the daily stretch of trust they slowly grow more limber.

Jessica literally means “He sees”—and he does, even when we don’t. Inexplicable grief may rock our lives, and questions of “why” may haunt us. But within the pain there is a loving God whose heart breaks too. He can find us in the wreckage and lead us limping toward healing: because he sees. ■



Christy Janssens is a member of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Burlington, Ontario.



What’s lost is nothing to what’s found, and all the death that ever was, set next to life, would scarcely fill a cup.

—FREDERICK BUECHNER

Let Us Go Forth

We could not have become the church we are without the CRCNA.



IN THE JUNE 2013 BANNER, a Canadian member of the Christian Reformed Church argued that it's time for the CRC in Canada to stand on its own.

I came to Canada in 1948. The very first person to meet us at the train in Edmonton, Alberta, and take us to the immigration hall was Herman Wierenga, a Northern Alberta “field man.” He arranged to have us picked up for church on Sunday. And since we were sponsored by family in Neerlandia, he arranged to send us on to Neerlandia.

Field men like Weirenga and other home missionaries—except the local pastors of the pioneer churches in Edmonton, Neerlandia, and Lacombe—were employed by and paid by Home Missions of the Christian Reformed Church.

Last week I visited the grave of Herman Wierenga. He was killed, along with an immigrant family, in a car accident. I told my son, “Herman died in the line of duty working for immigration and for the Christian Reformed Church.” Most postwar families and single persons who immigrated to Canada at that time were helped by people like Herman Wierenga who were working for the church.

The CRC spent thousands of dollars to start and maintain new churches in

Canada. It would be interesting to see just how much that was: the total cost of ministers, field men, and travel during that wave of immigration. I do know that immigrant churches did not and were not expected to pay full denominational ministry shares.

How could a separated Canadian church ever maintain and pay for the ministries of the CRC, including Calvin College and Seminary, Home Missions, and World Missions by themselves?

For those of us in western Canada and elsewhere who have experienced what the CRC in North America has done for churches in Canada—including sending U.S. pastors to help—it seems appalling even to discuss separation from the CRCNA. We could not have become the church we are without it.

There is an incomparable difference between the people of Israel who were in bondage in Egypt wanting to return to the Promised Land and the postwar Dutch immigrants to Canada. The CRCNA did everything possible to help people like me find homes, jobs, and local congregations. Canadian members of the CRC are not in bondage to anything or anyone.

We Canadians are not just friends with the other members of our denomination in the United States—we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

If there are across-the-border problems, we should be able to overcome them by working together. Other churches may have similar problems. Let's begin by finding out how they have resolved them. ■



Adrien de Jong is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Red Deer, Alberta.



Promoting Dialogue

As a Christian psychologist, I am deeply troubled by the reactive stance of the Board of Trustees and their “disappointment” with *The Banner's* decision to print the controversial articles by Van Belle and Walhout (“Board Expresses Disappointment,” Nov. 2013). Are we not supposed to be a Reformed denomination that engages with the world in a meaningful yet transformative way? By shutting down public conversation on these topics, the CRC sends a message that they are not truly interested in authentic Christian dialogue on these issues.

Personally, I send a sincere thank you to both Van Belle and Walhout for their courage to speak with intellectual integrity on these issues, and to De Moor for having the courage to print them.

—Michael Stolte
Edmonton, Alberta

Just a short note to say that I think that you are doing your job properly (“Board Expresses Disappointment”) and that there is no need to apologize about the two eminently defensible articles (written by Edwin Walhout and by Harry Van Belle) that have caused some controversy, because one of your clearly-stated responsibilities is “to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and

LETTERS

the culture of which we are a part” (*Acts of Synod* 1998, p. 370). If *The Banner* is to remain relevant in our day, the editor has to be free to pose timely and challenging questions to its readers.

Please keep up the good work.

—Gary N. Knoppers
State College, Penn.

I hope for every disgruntled letter Mr. De Moor received (“Board Expresses Disappointment”) he got one acknowledging his courage. It is time to get our head out of the sand and acknowledge that our reluctance to address or even discuss certain issues in the church is about fear. Why so much fear? Read Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

We all claim to know the will of God. I say that the very reason we need God’s direction in our lives is because we do not know.

—Nikki Rekman
Chilliwack, British Columbia

For too long we have failed to address the issues that the discoveries of the 20th and 21st centuries have raised. If the Scriptures are all we claim them to be, and if God is as faithful as we insist he is, why are we so reluctant to tackle the issues of the day, and why do we continue to undermine the scholars among us because we are afraid of what they might find out? (“Board Expresses Disappointment”).

If in our official church paper we are only allowed to read what we are already convinced of, what is the point? Let’s be courageous and engage those who dare to challenge us.

—May Drost
Sarnia, Ontario

I am happy to express my encouragement for the wonderful job you are doing as editor of *The Banner* (Board Expresses Disappointment”). I have read the pub-

lication regularly in the past 57 years and still eagerly anticipate the news and views presented in each issue.

—Bruce Cooke
Holland, Mich.

It saddens me that it is necessary to apologize to the readership for publishing relevant, thoughtful articles. I am very frustrated with the CRC being afraid to discuss topics that are thoughtful and may, in fact, increase our understanding of the world we live in and how we are to relate to it and each other. The God I believe in is great enough to handle the questions and scrutiny. Keep the conversations coming.

—Anne Drost
Norton Shores, Mich.

Letting Your Light Shine

In thinking about Halloween, we agree that it is a good time to get to know neighbors and their children better (“This Little Light of Mine,” Oct. 2013). We also like to distribute tracts from The Tract League; they are an additional way to let our light shine.

—Mary Vander Werp
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Thank you for publishing “This Little Light of Mine.” It’s too bad that much of Halloween glorifies things dead, gory, and evil. But we can simply focus on the good things: pumpkins from our garden, the fall harvest, caramel apples, costumes, and kids having fun.

—Rebecca Roosma
Port Alberni, British Columbia

Inspired by Samantha

My compliments on the publication of the news item “Eleven Months in Eleven Countries” about Samantha Francart (Oct. 2013). This kind of reporting inspires young and old and brings into

brilliant focus the central issue of the church: its mission to call people to the Lord and to display our allegiance to him through showing Christ’s love.

The personal, dedicated association of young people with people who are as yet unaware of the call and concern of our Lord Jesus Christ is a profound inspiration and encouragement.

For years I have been privileged to see this dedication in our International Ministry to Seafarers, which has led participants to commit themselves to a life of service in countries where the hearts of people are crying out to our God.

Congratulations, Samantha.

—Hans Uittenbosch
Brampton, Ontario

Noblesse Oblige

A couple of readers wrote in response to Bob De Moor’s “Noblesse Oblige” editorial (Oct. 2013) to attribute the story to Queen Wilhelmina, not Queen Victoria. Either way, we think it’s a great story!

NEWS

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World Missions Explains the 90 Percent, Missionaries Not Convinced

Delegates to Synod 2013 were surprised and concerned when they heard that missionaries sent by Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) would soon have to raise 90 percent of their basic costs outside of ministry shares. (See *Banner*, July 2013.) Some wondered why ministry shares (the amounts given by churches to support denominational ministries) were no longer covering the cost of sending missionaries.

The Banner asked Lois Craven, director of advancement operations for CRWM, to help explain the change. We also asked career missionaries how they feel about the change in the funding model.

Giving Has Changed

"A lot of people are asking about 'the move to 90 percent,'" Craven said. "It's a lot more complicated than that. [Many people] never knew that ministry shares did not cover the cost of CRCNA missions efforts through CRWM."

Craven said that the way Christian Reformed churches give to ministry has changed. "Giving has increasingly moved from . . . allowing funds to be used as needed to donor-designated giving—donors giving in such a way that they know where and how their gifts will be used," she said.

Craven also noted that undesignated giving is down. Today ministry share giving for CRWM (approximately \$5 million) covers only 33.4 percent

of its budget (see "Proposed Income Sources").

CRWM sends approximately 55 career and associate missionaries, using about 49 percent of its \$15 million annual budget. The remaining money is spent on missionaries with partner organizations (9 percent), programs (25 percent), and fundraising and administration (16.3 percent) (see "CRWM Budget").

Craven stressed that CRWM is not asking its missionaries to become fundraisers. "We do not expect missionaries to raise any funds. It is the work of God through the Holy Spirit who moves his people to support ministry. We are asking missionaries to clearly present their needs." By 2020 CRWM hopes that all missionaries will have 90 percent of the costs of their individualized budgets come from designated giving. (See sidebar, p. 11.) New missionaries must have that 90 percent in place before leaving for the field.

In material sent to missionaries, CRWM noted that if missionaries do not meet the goal, it may be necessary to increase the length of their next home service to "provide more time for them to build relationships."

Missionaries Feel Pressure to Raise Funds

Some longtime career missionaries remain unconvinced that they are not being turned into fundraisers.

Howard and Ruth Van Dam have worked in Haiti for many

years. "When Ruth and I were first sent to Haiti, we felt that we had the backing of the denomination," Howard said. "Now, with this new policy, it's not the church that is sending out missionaries but only confirming those who are successful in raising the required financial support. The burden of support-raising rests more on the shoulders of the missionary and not on the CRCNA as a body."

Another missionary put it this way: "One of the greatest encouragements and supports from CRWM has been the fact that we have not been pressured to raise funds. That encouragement has just disappeared."

Van Dam also said that as missionaries need to be attentive to their own personal fundraising, there will be an inherent tension between that and raising awareness of the field's financial needs. "This may lead to a conflict of interest that will put missionaries in a very difficult situation," he said. "More time will be spent developing our North American financial support base and less time for responsibilities on the mission field. This doesn't sound like good stewardship to me. Besides being a full-time missionary, I also have to become a part-time fundraiser."

Another career missionary couple, who did not want to be named, sees the new funding model as a wholesale change, and they are very unhappy about it. "We think this is geographic

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Hubert Sprik
1929 – 2013

Hubert Sprik, 84, who was born into a missionary family, grew up on a Michigan farm, and whose ministry never lost the glow of his conversion experience, died on October 9.

Sprik was born at the onset of the Great Depression in Gallup, N.M. He graduated from Calvin College and Seminary and began his ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1954.

Sprik served congregations in Ohio, Alaska, Oklahoma, Indiana, Colorado, and Michigan. He retired in 1986.

Sprik's intimate relationship with Christ fuelled his restless passion for bringing the gospel to people far and near.

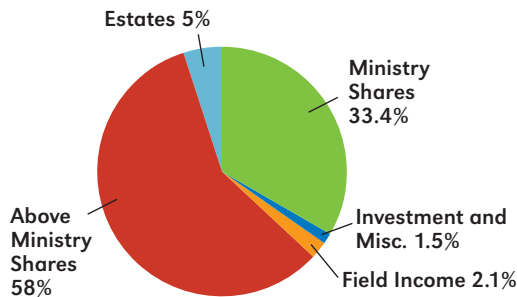
All through his ministry, Sprik showed great interest in community life at the churches he served. In Wayland, Mich., he was the founder of Son Life Camp and Retreat Center, which is still going strong today.

Sprik loved music. He played the trumpet well and was a fine singer.

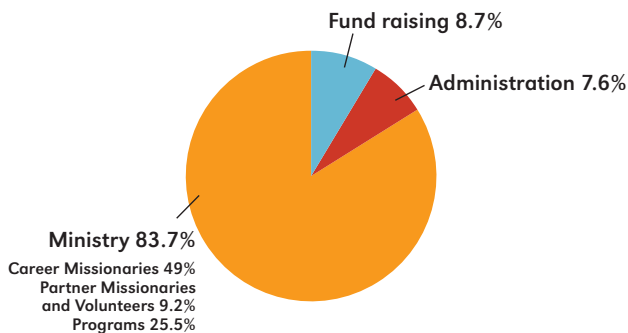
Sprik was predeceased by his wife, Barbara, in 2005, one son-in-law, and one grandchild. He is survived by six children and their spouses, 19 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. [MORE ONLINE](#)

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

Proposed Income Sources 2013-2014
(\$14,900,000 USD)



CRWM Budget 2013-2014
(\$14,900,000 USD)



GRAPHS PROVIDED BY CHRISTIAN REFORMED WORLD MISSIONS

discrimination," they wrote. "CRWM overseas missionaries are the only denominational employees that are being required to raise their own support. CRWM office staff in North America don't have to do this."

This missionary also wonders why the CRWM annual budget of \$15 million dollars is not enough to send out more than its current 55 career missionaries.

He also agreed with Van Dam that this will distract from primary mission work. "Already we do regular deputation visits to CRC churches and supporters. Our home service period will be focused on raising more dollars instead of rest and church visits.

The new system will add stress to missionary work."

Van Dam concluded, "I believe we could, as a denomination and as a mission agency, stand against our culture's individualistic tendencies. We could reaffirm that we are a mission-minded church that sees its reason for existence as found in Matthew 28, the Great Commission. We could once again dedicate ourselves to working together and supporting one another. We are a much stronger body when we pool our resources and talents together."

—Gayla R. Postma,
News Editor

Individualized Missionary Budget

According to Lois Craven of CRWM, individualized budgets are separated into "basic" and "above basic" costs. Basic costs include salary, taxes, 12 months of housing*, retirement contributions, insurance, travel to and from the field for the missionary and spouse, and minimal support staff costs. Additional costs such as continuing education and training, on-field travel, missionary children's travel to and from the field, education fees for missionary children, and outfitting and reentry allowances will continue to be covered by ministry shares.

*Only 12 months of rent a year are included in the basic costs. CRWM missionaries can have up to 18 months of rent to pay in one year: 12 months of field housing and up to six months of home service housing. The extra six months is considered an above basic cost.

Some missionaries consider the individual budget for missionaries to be unnecessarily bloated, noting, for example, that the amount a missionary for YWAM or Wycliffe must raise is much lower. If they must now compete with those missionaries on the fundraising front, they say that they will be at a significant disadvantage.

NEWS

Engaging Kids in Sermons through Art

What's the best way to get adolescent boys involved in the Sunday service? How about having them take part in planning the service via creative arts? That's what Rev. Meg Jenista and Katie Roelofs, minister of worship for the Christian Reformed Church of Washington, D.C., suggested. Mary Monsma, their Sunday school teacher who is also an artist, took them on.

Jenista prepared a 10-week series on the Psalms. She wanted



a visual installation in the sanctuary that would express that worship is a two-way conversation with God. As Monsma, Jenista, and Roelofs led through the different aspects of worship, the boys chose conversational words as well as



colors to match the psalms Jenista would be preaching on that week.

For Psalm 95, the boys chose orange and the words "join me" because of the inviting nature of the psalm. For Psalm 51, they chose green and the words "I forgive you." Each week the boys folded 15 origami leaves; at the end of the series, 150 leaves hung from a tree branch in the sanctuary.

The boys said it helped them think about the psalms as well as understand the service more. Isaac V.E. said, "Sometimes I daydream during the service, but the leaves made me think."

Monsma was proud of their hard work. "Their thoughtful color



Some of the 150 leaves the boys folded hang in the sanctuary.

choices, their patient paper folding, and their willingness to display, speak, and write about their visual conversation with God all help to bring them and the congregation to a deeper understanding of the psalms."

—Callie Feyen



Jayson Korthuis

NOTEWORTHY

- **Jayson Korthuis** and **Justin Gloudemans**, seniors at Dordt College, won a Gold Marcom award and a Videographers 2013 award for their documentary "Communities of Fusion: Mozambique."
- **Shep Ysselstein**, member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock, Ontario, won the "best firm cheese in Canada" award at the Canadian Cheese Grand Prix in Montreal for his Five Brothers cheese.
- **Calvin College's Women's Volleyball Team** won its second NCAA Division III title in four years.
- **Smithville (Ontario) Christian High School's boys' volleyball team** won gold at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association (OFSAA) playoffs.

—Banner correspondents

Please visit our website at thebanner.org for all these stories.



Sean Coughlin and Glenn Erickson cofounded FaithStreet.

These Are the Churches Near You

If you've just moved to a new area, how do you go about finding a church when you're not even sure where to look?

Two members of Dwell, a Christian Reformed church plant in New York City, have come up with a solution. Sean Coughlin and Glenn Erickson developed FaithStreet, a website that provides a place for churches and people to connect.

Coughlin and Erickson partnered with Peter Armstrong, the pastor at Dwell.

Since then, Armstrong has used FaithStreet's services as a way to reach people along the Bowery in the city and to develop his church. "Dwell has been a great partner," said Coughlin. He added that the church has been a willing pilot for new ideas, including FaithStreet's online giving platform.

Armstrong likes the fact that although the connection between people and churches begins online, FaithStreet fosters community by getting people off the computer and into church. He also appreciates the prayer and giving functions. "It's a great way to keep in touch during the week," he says. What's more, "FaithStreet is there exclusively for churches."

Since its 2012 launch, 12,000 congregations from over 100 different Christian denominations have joined. Armstrong is grateful for FaithStreet because it has helped "seekers and believers who are looking for a church find Dwell. FaithStreet is helping us accomplish our goal of seeing lives transformed in New York City." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Callie Feyen

West Michigan Church Celebrates 100th Anniversary

When members of Comstock Christian Reformed Church, in Kalamazoo, Mich., celebrated the church's 100th anniversary in November, it wasn't just about them. They spent the year giving things away.

During the year leading up to the official celebration of the church's 100th anniversary, the congregation collected 100 each of various items: 100 boxes of tissues, 100 bottles of hand sanitizer, and so on, said member Judy Joling. All of these were given to the Comstock Community Learning Center.

The church also celebrated with the compilation of a memory book, two special worship services, and a celebration dinner.

One hundred years ago, many families living in the Comstock area who had grown tired of traveling into Kalamazoo for worship began worshipping in the fall of 1913 with Reverend J. R. Brink. The morning service drew 106 people, and there were 130 at the afternoon service. By November this body of believers had formed Bethel CRC, now Comstock CRC. The congregation opened its first church in a basement on Higgins Street in 1914 and later constructed a sanctuary on the foundation. In 1987 the church built its current building with 5,000 hours of labor contributed by member volunteers.

Reflecting on the anniversary, pastor Benjamin Hulst said, "The realization that things have changed gives us encouragement that God's Spirit is doing new things every day."

—Anita Ensing Beem



Joanne Smit with some of the 100 hats collected for kids at the Community Learning Center.

CRC Campus Ministry Cosponsors Toronto City Hall Series

At a lecture series sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church's campus ministry at the University of Toronto, Jennifer Keesmaat, Toronto's chief planner, presented "Planning a City for All."

Keesmaat's presentation was the last of a series of four lectures called "Inner City Front: Conflict, Hope, and the Common Good," sponsored by Urban Remixed and designed to encourage and sustain urban ministry.

Urban Remixed is a partnership between the Christian Reformed campus chaplaincy (CRC@UofT), and others.

Affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, green areas, and accessible work and marketplaces were some of the subjects Keesmaat touched on as she spoke of her vision for complete communities, seek-



JOSE A. LUNA

Worship before lecture in the "Planning a City for All" presentation.

ing to dissolve "areas of high concentration of poverty, isolation and crime."

Keesmaat was recently named by *Maclean's* magazine as one of the 50 most important people in Canada.

Other lectures in the series included "A Theology of the City" by CRC campus minister Brian Walsh. "We need visions of human possibilities—urban

possibilities—that tell us who we want, or perhaps more pertinently, who we do not want to become," Walsh explained. "We need to be clear about what we don't want to become before we can entertain possibilities of an alternative city"

—Jose A. Luna

Blankets Help Celebrate Adoption

When Maricopa County celebrated National Adoption Day at the county courthouse, Gina Addink Bohnett helped make it more special.

Bohnett and her mother, Mary Addink, both members of Phoenix (Ariz.) Christian Reformed Church, coordinated efforts to create 311 blankets with the help of about 100 friends and volunteers. The blankets are part of the church's outreach ministry.

Bohnett, a foster mother with adopted children of her own, said, "When we adopted our children, two of them came with blankets, and two did not receive these blankets. We wanted every family to receive these blankets on their adoption day, as a beginning of special memories." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Shashi DeHaan

Gina Addink Bohnett and Marry Addink display one of many National Adoption Day blankets.



Texas Church Hosts Flood Relief in Austin

Historic flooding hit Austin, Texas, on the morning of October 31 when the waters of nearby Onion Creek flooded into the surrounding neighborhood. Hundreds of residents were affected, as was The Springs Community Christian Reformed Church.

"It missed us by 10 feet, and there is so much to be grateful for," said pastor Richard Villareal. "I see my community in a different light now, and I want to serve my community even more. It isn't just a community without a face; it's a community with a lot of different faces that I've gotten to know."

Members of The Springs



ESTEFANIA DE LEON

One of the houses located in the Onion Creek neighborhood in Austin, Texas.

hosted a barbecue benefit. Volunteers were out for up to 16 hours at a time—doing everything from gathering supplies to pulling debris out of victims' homes.

"We were there at ground zero from day one," Villareal

said. "We really just began to plug in where volunteers were needed." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Estafania de Leon

Alberta Construction Crew Uncovers Dinosaur Skeleton



The view of what the construction crew first saw embedded in the rock.

Dale Degner's 40th birthday on October 22 became even more memorable when he received word that one of his construction crews had uncovered the skeleton of a dinosaur paleontologists estimate lived about 68 million years ago. The crew had been digging and laying a storm sewer for a new housing development in Leduc, Alberta.

Degner is president of Degner Construction Group and a member of the Christian Reformed

Church of St. Albert. "The guy in the ditch first noticed it," said Degner. "He noticed what looked like a vertebrae embedded in the rock."

Paleontologists from Alberta's Royal Tyrrell Museum were contacted. "It's expensive for us to stop work for two days," said Degner, but that's how long it took for the Tyrrell crew to arrive, confirm the discovery, and secure the site. The Degner crew helped museum staff by using its large

excavator to remove the soil, rock, and other material around the fossil.

Only after the pieces of the fossil were plastered, crated, and safely transported back to the museum was the great discovery made public on November 5, bringing the fossil and Degner Construction Group into the lime-light.

Paleontologists believe the skeleton discovered by the Degner crew to be a Hypacrosaurus, a large duck-billed, leaf-eating dinosaur, also known as a hadrosaur.

"This tremendous find will give us even greater insight into the dinosaurs that lived in central Alberta," said Heather Klimchuk, Minister of Alberta Culture. "Degner Construction is to be commended for recognizing and taking the right steps to alert the Royal Tyrrell Museum."

—Janet A. Greidanus



(L-r): Kimmy Q., Mitch D.H., Jennie W., Willy K., and Tony D. help repair a fence line destroyed in flash flooding.

Money Lost, Service Gained

When the youth group at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Princeton, Minn., lost its funding a few years ago, youth pastor Jason Ruis found the challenge to be a blessing in disguise. Rather than focus on costly events, Ruis realized that “God and his Word transform teenagers, not our games and entertainment of them.”

Ruis and his ministry team began seeking an affordable way to do missions trips. Their collaboration led to the formation of “Do Something.”

Do Something’s first event, taking place in the church’s own community, was kept to a minimal cost.

Like most service projects, teens spent their days serving local needs and nights studying the Bible and sleeping in Bethel Church.

Two years later, the ministry team expanded their vision: one year they would serve in Princeton and the next they would serve outside of their state.

This past summer, the “elsewhere” year, Bethel’s youth group partnered with World Renew to serve in Musselshell, Mont., where severe fire damage and massive flash flooding had ravaged lives and land. The team cleaned up debris, repaired buildings, and deepened connections.

Youth member Mitchell D.H. said that the trip “really opened my eyes [to] who God is and how mysteriously he works through us. Not to mention the great conversations and a lot of tears, both happy and sad.”

Every six weeks, the youth group hosts a service night where they assist local organizations such as the food pantry and the Christmas giving project.

“We feel the need to challenge our youth not only to serve, but to really know God. . . . That was the fruit of our lost budget,” Ruis said.

—Jessica Oosterhouse



Bone marrow buddies Karis and Ben.

Holland Family Gives Thanks by Giving Back

The Pikaart family in Holland, Mich., marked the second anniversary of 8-year-old Ben’s leukemia diagnosis by giving back.

Ben is now a healthy, Lego-loving 3rd-grader, thanks to a successful bone marrow transplant. In gratitude for a perfect match in Ben’s big sister, his family hosted a bone marrow registry drive.

With a few simple swabs of the inside of their cheeks, 130 people were recently added to the Be the Match bone marrow donor registry, giving hope to cancer patients awaiting a life-saving transplant.

The registry drive was hosted by Mike and Kris Pikaart, members of Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church, with the help of the Biochemistry Club of Hope College, where Mike is a biochemistry professor.

In November 2011, Ben was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and needed a bone marrow transplant. All three of Ben’s older siblings were tested and Karis, 17, was a perfect match.

Ben and Karis, known now to their family as bone marrow buddies, underwent a successful transplant procedure in the summer of 2012. If it weren’t for this perfect match, the Pikaarts would have turned to the Be the Match registry, as so many do.

“We organized the drive out of gratitude for Ben’s successful transplant and in honor of the families we have met who are dealing with a childhood cancer diagnosis,” Kris said.

—Susan Vanden Berg

Video Documents How a 12-Year-Old Transformed His School

A short video documentary about how a West Michigan Christian school has rallied around a student with special needs has become a hit on the Internet.

“Including Isaac,” a 14-minute video produced by the Kala Project, tells the story of Isaac P., a 12-year-old student at Byron Center (Mich.) Christian School. Isaac has a rare progressive disease known as spinal muscular atrophy.

The video shows members of Isaac’s family, his friends, school officials, and folks from Christian Learning Center, which works with schools to provide assistance to students with special needs. It docu-

ments how the school, despite some initial misgivings, embraced Isaac and made him part of the school community from the time he began attending Byron Center Christian as a 4-year-old preschool student.

“I’ve been intrigued with the powerful story behind BCCS and their commitment to create a community that enfolds, embraces, and includes Isaac and other kids with disability,” said Glen Stegink, director of educational services at CLC and an assistant professor of education at Calvin College. “They do it really well there.”

Some of Isaac’s friends are interviewed in the video. Deb P., Isaac’s mother, said the experience of having Isaac as their friend is shaping student attitudes toward people with special needs.

“Kids with special needs don’t seem unusual to them because they’ve had that experience (with Isaac),” she said.

Isaac and his family are members of Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Mich.

The video can be viewed at *The Banner’s* website: the-banner.org. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Greg Chandler

Restorative Circles Help Churches Navigate Conflict

The pastor and a worship leader had experienced a falling-out. Everyone in the congregation seemed to be taking sides. Tension was palpable on Sunday mornings. Trust had been lost.

For a congregation facing internal conflict, it can be difficult to navigate toward a unifying resolution. But with guidance from the Restorative Congregations Initiative, over 60 members of this congregation participated in a restorative circle, an inclusive conflict mediation tool.

The pastor and worship leader, along with others near the center of the conflict, expressed what had occurred from their perspective and told what they were thinking and feeling at the time. Then people in the circle had the opportunity to share how the conflict had affected them.

“When we entered, we weren’t sure if we could continue as a church,” said one participant. At the conclusion, he said, “Now our church can be here for our children.”

More churches have begun to use restorative practices as a tool for resolving conflict. Two retired prison chaplains, John deVries Jr. and John Lamsma, spearhead the Restorative Congregations Initiative.

The most visible practice is a restorative circle. It often includes an outside mediator and can include anywhere from a few closely affected people to an entire congregation. Circles are used for conflict resolution but can also be useful for developing group consensus when making difficult decisions.

“All circles have had positive results,” reported Lamsma.

Lamsma and DeVries hope that more congregations within the denomination can receive training to engage in this restorative practice. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis



Bill Vanderkooi with his Vitala cows.

Dairy Farmer Harnesses Cow Power, Wins Awards in British Columbia

Bill Vanderkooi is making a name for himself in developing healthy food and promoting environmental stewardship. Along the way, he won two national awards. Vanderkooi is a member of New Life Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and is the owner of Bakerview EcoDairy.

For Vanderkooi, the business is a natural extension of his faith. “Personally, I feel I am called to take care of creation and work toward a healthy planet and healthy people,” he said.

His desire to share nutritious food with the world led to the creation of the EcoDairy. The company also produces the first eggs in the world to provide consumers with 100 percent of their daily vitamin D requirement; the brand recently won two national new product awards.

Vanderkooi’s interest in health and well-being was sparked when he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes during his senior year at Dordt College. It continued as he and his wife, Helinda, became parents of five children.

EcoDairy is the first demonstration farm of its kind in Canada, and the first commercial operation in British Columbia with a biogas generator that harnesses the power of cow manure to produce electricity. The

power that is left after running the barn and milking operations is sold on the province’s power grid to environmentally conscious businesses.

EcoDairy is also working on a new partnership with Science World British Columbia to serve as a one-of-a-kind demonstration farm with interactive exhibits and programs that showcase innovative and sustainable dairy farm practices.

—Tracey Yan

More Stories at thebanner.org

For more news, please visit our website at thebanner.org. There you’ll find many more stories, including these:

- Indiana Pastor Uses Heidelberg Catechism as an Outreach Tool
- CRC Pastor Helps With a Church for North Korean Defectors
- A Romanian Orphan Tells Her Story at Coffee Break
- Greeting Cards Bring Smiles to Indiana Church

FAQs

Relationships

Q I like to relax with a glass of wine after I come home from work. Sometimes I drink two or three glasses at social occasions with friends. Is this wrong? Am I on a slippery slope toward alcoholism?

A It can be helpful to think of addictions in functional (and dysfunctional) terms. All of us need ways to relax, reduce stress, and find comfort; we usually develop and maintain activities that enhance these. Many people develop functional “addictions” such as daily exercise, reading, or playing an instrument. We eat snacks or drink tea, coffee, or other drinks that serve that purpose. Most of us “crave” the substance (coffee, for instance) at the time we are used to having it.

The only distinction in how benign or potent a food or drink or activity is depends on its undesirable properties with respect to our health. For instance, “addicting” to herbal tea is safe and therefore needs no monitoring; addicting to wine after work and relaxing over drinks with friends needs guidelines because wine is a potent substance that can be harmful to our health. The same is true of eating cake or watching television.

If you find yourself craving more alcohol over time and are breaking the rules you set for yourself, alcohol may be too tempting for you. Be honest with yourself, but don’t struggle for answers alone. Talk to friends and family about this question—it’s an important one that many of us need to face.

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

Don’t struggle for answers alone.

Church

Q If Adam and Eve were the first and only people God created, wouldn’t their offspring have been our genetic parents? Are we not then children of incestuous lineage?

A Back when I was a 5th-grader, I asked my Bible teacher this exact same question. We came up with other tricky questions too: “Teacher, if Cain went to live in the land of Nod before Seth was even born, where did his wife come from?” “If Seth had a son, who was the son’s mother, and where did she come from?” You get the idea. My Bible teacher was a very wise man. To all such questions he would simply say, “The Bible doesn’t tell us.” We couldn’t argue with that!

The Bible intends to tell us big things: that human beings were created by God in his image, that God’s creation was very good, that creation has meaning only because God made it all in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:16), and that evil is the result of human pride.

The Bible is not a textbook in science or genetics or history with the kind of detail we might like. It’s the Spirit-filled narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Some people answer your question by saying that the entire story of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden is the “how it all began” myth of the Israelites, just as the Babylonians and the Egyptians had myths about the origins of the world.

The Bible doesn’t teach us that Adam and Eve were figments of human imagination. So exactly how this all went down is something God has not chosen to reveal to us. And I’m fine with that.

—Henry De Moor is professor of church polity emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s the author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*.

Ethics

Q Jesus said, “Give to everyone who asks of you. . . .” In our town, people often stand on a street corner holding a “Hungry and homeless” sign. Handing out a few dollars seems like a Band-Aid solution, but driving by feels wrong. I know my kids are watching and wondering what Jesus would do.

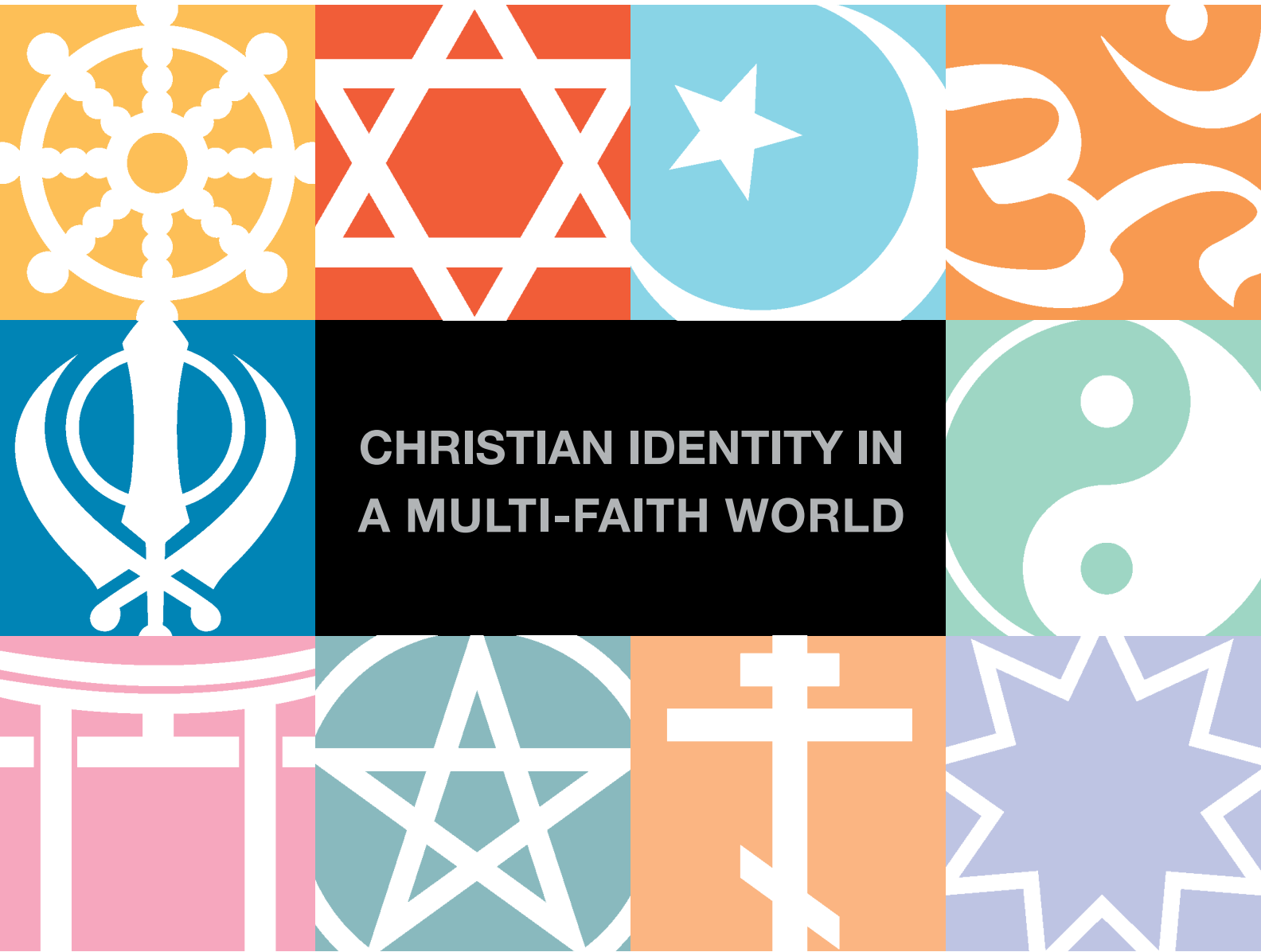
A The verse you referred to (Luke 6:30) needs to be understood in its context of Jesus teaching us to love our enemies (see vv. 27-36). Jesus was giving examples of how to love our enemies. This includes blessing them, praying for them, not fighting back, and not withholding from them if they ask of you nor resisting them if they take from you. It is not an absolute injunction to give to anyone who asks or begs.

Of course, this does not absolve us from helping the poor. Maybe you can explain to your children that although giving a little bit of cash now might make us feel better, it is not the best help that person needs in the long term. When you donate to charities that provide relief and to justice groups that work to prevent the causes of homelessness, make sure you explain to your children that supporting these organizations ensures that people get the help they need for the long term.

Try keeping an oatmeal bar handy to give to a hungry person instead of cash so that you know you are feeding the person and not an addiction. Also consider bringing your children along occasionally to volunteer in homeless shelters or food banks.

In addition to the above—not instead of—ask your children to pray for the person, even out loud together in the car.

—Shaio Chong is a chaplain at York University in Toronto, Ontario. ■



CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN A MULTI-FAITH WORLD

SETTling IN for the imminent departure of my flight, I mused on the irony of my position. Crowded into a seat with the window to my left and a young burqa-clad woman to my immediate right, I wondered how much transparency there would be in either direction. The weather was overcast and soon the world outside would be shrouded by a soft veil of clouds. And to the right? Ordinarily, for me, an enjoyable activity on longer flights is probing the openness of a neighboring

passenger to engage in conversation, beginning with trivia and in some cases evolving into a deeper discourse of life values and worldviews. In this case, however, the young woman's veil, whether self-selected or societally imposed, signaled a desire for privacy.

Before buckling for takeoff, my neighbor knelt in front of her seat and engaged in a private ritual of prayer. Later, when the meal was served, I too would bow my head in an equally private act of devotion, giving silent thanks for the food and adding petitions for safety in travel and for blessings on family members at home.

My fellow passenger and I were both religious. But how much did our worlds have in common? How similar or dissimilar were our religious views and expressions? These questions barely begin to unveil the queries and the mystery that lie beneath our coexistence in a multi-faith world.

As Christians, we are increasingly confronted with urgent questions concerning how to interact and engage in contexts of religious diversity. What does it mean to be a Christian in a world where we live with, work with, go to school with, serve in political or neighborhood groups

with, and share hospital space with people of other faiths or no faith at all? How do we balance maintaining respectful space for the beliefs of others with the calling to participate in bringing in Christ's kingdom? Simplistic answers do not satisfy in our increasingly complex interfaith exposure and experience.

When Jesus summarized for his disciples the expectations that God has for his people, he reminded them to love God above all and to love their neighbors as themselves. That summary of God's will for our lives provides a challenging framework within which to develop our perspective on multi-faith issues. Far from being a simplistic formula, it establishes challenging parameters within which Christians can explore questions about interfaith engagement.

Love God Above All

Christians are confronted with a high standard in the charge to love God above all. In its original covenantal context, that commandment prohibited the Israelites from equating their God with the gods of the nations. It established a policy of religious exclusivity in their devotion. They were not free to choose their religious expression from a list of vying options. The God of Israel was God alone, and they were to accept, honor, love, and serve him within the boundaries of his self-disclosure and revelation.

The expectation to love God above all continues to define elements of exclusivity in Christian devotion. The New Testament further develops that dynamic in ways that delimit the Christian life.

Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). That observation has profound implications for followers of Jesus with respect to other contemporary religions.

For Christians, loving God above all means accepting God in biblical, trinitarian format—not as a concept of divinity that can be redefined or reinterpreted in ways that conflict with sound biblical interpretation. The expectation to love God above all sets boundaries. It precludes

making our God equal with other gods. It eliminates the conclusion that non-Christian religions could ultimately bypass Christ as the way of access to the Father. For Christians, there is one triune God and one way of salvation.

Love Your Neighbor

While the biblical guideline to love God above all is inherently exclusive, its counterpart, loving our neighbor as ourselves, introduces components of compelling inclusivity. That inclusivity is of equal importance in establishing our attitudes and actions in multi-faith contexts. So when it comes to interfaith engagement, it is important that we also pursue the implications of this part of God's formula for our lives.

Genuinely loving our neighbors as ourselves is a difficult and demanding

tudes of disrespect, disregard, or disdain. Our neighbors may not yet have been recreated in the new image of Christ, but they have an inherent dignity that comes through sharing in God's image expressed in the human race.

- As followers of Christ, we are called to be passionate about justice. From the vantage point of that worldview, it is but a small step to respect and defend the rights of others. Though we may be predisposed to prioritize our own rights, a renewed outlook in Christ causes us to reevaluate that perspective and to become advocates of justice for others—even those who don't share our religious ideals. On a university campus, for example, Christian students should understand that if they are offered designated prayer space, a similar privilege ought to be offered to

GENUINELY LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES IS A DIFFICULT AND DEMANDING EXPECTATION.

expectation. Many of us feel a subtle fear or disquiet in the presence of ethnically or religiously diverse neighbors. Whereas a degree of comfort derives from similarity of background and from shared values, adding religious diversity complicates societal interaction. We are inclined to love ourselves, but we need to be urged to love our neighbors. From a theoretical perspective it helps to have a worldview that prods us to do so. The Bible does, in fact, press upon us precisely such an outlook. At the foundation of that biblical worldview we may identify numerous teachings, including the following:

- All people are created in the image of God. The Bible recognizes the sanctity of all human life, regardless of the religious choices people make. Viewing all human beings in conjunction with the image of God puts the brakes on atti-

students of other religious backgrounds. And supporting equal rights for prayer space is not incongruent with Christians praying that other students would one day join them in their Christian devotion.

- The biblical commandment to love our neighbors compels us to get to know, understand, and appreciate them. We cannot love those we do not know. Educating ourselves—not begrudgingly but eagerly—about the lives and religious expressions of others helps us to do away with our misconceptions and prejudices. That means, for example, we need to do more than read the novels of Afghan-born American novelist and physician Khaled Hosseini and conclude that we have had an adequate introduction to Afghanistan. We need to actually »

get to know our neighbors. We honor them when we learn from them and let our lives be shaped in positive ways by their influence.

- Loving our neighbors involves concrete acts of kindness. The apostle Paul says, “Let your gentleness be evident to all” (Phil. 4:5). In the same vein, Peter urges, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and with respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). Winning the confidence of others through acts of kindness, courtesy, and respect is a helpful step in making them receptive to the good news of the gospel message. We put this into practice when our time, affection, and charitable giving are not reserved for “our own” but are shared broadly with others, including those of other faiths.
- Loving our neighbors also includes not being naive about the total depravity of all people. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and are in need of the redemption that Jesus provides (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Recognizing that real-

ity in the lives of others as well as in our own lives is not an act of disparagement. Rather, it is an essential part of our motivation to share the message of salvation. People who are members of other religions are not exempt from the need to receive forgiveness through Christ alone. Like us, they need to come to the Father’s love through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Jesus. Wishing, praying, and acting for less is a failure to truly love them.

Whether our neighbor has no religious affiliation (the so-called “unchurched”) or is part of another religious group, it is important to establish meaningful connections or friendships rather than to launch prematurely into evangelistic speeches. Finding interests in common helps to form the basis for trust and an openness to explore aspects of each other’s world. Once friendship and respect have been established, the discussion of religious issues becomes less delicate and daunting. Perhaps bringing a casserole to the new next-door neighbor should precede bringing a Bible or a *Today* devotional booklet.

These biblical principles ought to encourage both patience and persistence in our dealings with others in multi-faith contexts. There are times when we must respect communally established guidelines about not proselytizing, such as, for example, in medical or military chaplaincy positions, even while praying for an appropriate opportunity to share the good news of salvation in Christ.

Not only are these guidelines relevant in our personal approaches in multi-faith settings, but they can also assist us in our institutional or denominational responses to interfaith issues. We are challenged to ask ourselves at all levels and in all settings whether our policies and actions demonstrate a genuine commitment to love God above all and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Held together, both principles help to hold exclusivity and inclusivity in a healthy balance.

When it comes to the world of multi-faith experiences, our vision can be clouded or veiled in various ways. But we need not fear our interaction with others in multi-faith contexts. Nor should we choose to

adopt a polar approach of either fleeing from others on the one side or engaging them in battle on the other. Loving God above all and loving our neighbor as ourselves helps steer us in the right direction and gives purpose to our interfaith journeys. These principles lead us to embody both obedience and compassion. ■

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Synod 2009 noted the importance of interfaith connections in our present culture and decided to add an interfaith mandate to the responsibilities of the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC). To recognize the fact that interfaith discussions constitute a form of engagement that must be kept distinct from ecumenical dialogue and relations, the ERC proposed a name change that would reflect the two separate mandates. Synod concurred, and the committee was renamed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC).

The EIRC has been charged with the following mandate:

- To compile resources for the Christian Reformed Church that will guide interfaith encounters.
- To monitor and facilitate the interfaith encounters that come through ecumenical activities and within the context of the ministries of the CRC.
- To provide advice and perspectives for the CRC as requested.
- When appropriate, to represent the CRC in interfaith dialogues.

For more information on the interfaith mandate of the EIRC and resources for additional study of interfaith issues, visit tinyurl.com/crcinterfaith.

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



William T. Koopmans is the senior pastor at Grace CRC, Chatham, Ontario. He is the past chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Committee and serves as the ecumenical officer for the CRC in Canada and as an advisor on the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Digging Deeper

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Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground. Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

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Losing Well

HAVE RECENTLY TRADED IN the hours I used to spend feeding, holding, and wiping small humans for my newly assigned hobby: watching my two young males work like mad to place small objects into specific receptacles using an appendage, a stick, or a racket, depending on the season and the mood.

At this time of year in Canada it is usually the stick that lends the aid. I am practicing my new hobby bundled on a cold bench where I watch my children compete. I cheer, often distracted by vehement shouts erupting from many of the parents surrounding me in the stands: “C’mon ref, are you kidding me?” “Get your head on straight!” “Call it both ways!”

And while attempting to raise my two boys to become men who understand their purpose in our world, who revere what it means to redeem our surroundings, and who delight in the handiwork of our creator God, I need to control what I can, even on the sidelines. My reactions to their games are as important as my reactions to their spills, their report cards, or even their coloring.

I suspect that children learn much more about life from their parents’—and grandparents’—reactions to their sporting events than they learn about the physics of a six-ounce rubber disc, for example.

During games, my internal debate rages about how much or how little to make my reactions visible or audible. My wrinkled brow testifies to my worry over how to assuage the feelings of insecurity and sadness my boys will likely feel after a loss, or after a coach has yelled at them, or after their heads barely peek over the edge of the penalty box.

We suffer when we watch our children suffer. But these small doses of disappointment and pain help prepare them for what is to come. We know suffering



We know suffering will come to our children in more potent forms than numbers on a scoreboard.

will come to them in more potent forms than numbers on a scoreboard. It will come in a written rejection from a university, from a friend’s verbal scoff, from a broken relationship, or from the results of a medical test. Sometimes it will come in subtle truths: truths finally understood about others and about themselves that will break them to their core. Finally, suffering will come in blatant forms as they glimpse their own depravity and realize their capacity to hurt as well as to love.

So even though I cheer for my children to win, when they lose I know that they may be winning something far more valuable: an opportunity to rethink, relearn, and refocus their efforts on things that matter more than winning.

Losing teaches us to trust by forcing us to experience a death of sorts. A death of a dream, a hope, a vision to which we dared to cling. Losing challenges us to question our prior judgment. Losing asks

us to humbly place our dependence not on ourselves but on our coaches, our teachers, our mentors, and our God.

We will be refined when we lose thoughtfully: without anger, blame, or resentment. When we admit our weaknesses and choose to work on them, we have a chance to lose well.

All our trials, in sports and in life, affect us and the children we’re blessed to parent or mentor. While I’m busy watching my kids be enriched by their trials, I am working on trusting that they will learn—as all of us continue to learn—on whatever bench we find ourselves. ■



Kim Radersma is a freelance writer and a high school English teacher pursuing a PhD in Educational Studies at Brock University. She lives with her husband and her two boys in St. Catharines, Ontario, where they attend Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church.

Indigenous drummers at the lighting of the sacred fire.



On a Journey Together: Urban Aboriginal Ministries

by Danielle Rowaan

A row of mothers holding black-haired babies occupied the front pew of Kildonan Christian Reformed Church. The babies were nestled in cradleboards—Cree-style baby carriers—a surprising sight among the rows of Dutch-Canadian immigrants.

As the pastor began to pray, the women nursed their babies to keep them silent, showing respect for the sacred moment.

After the service, other women from the church approached to coo over the babies and chat with the mothers. Then the women with their babies moved back to a waiting van piloted by Henk deBruyn of the Indian Family Centre. DeBruyn picked the mothers up for church each week and then drove them home.

The year was 1970, and Rev. Arie van Eek had recently begun to pastor Kildonan CRC in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Like many Canadians, van Eek's contact with Canada's indigenous people had been limited. During the early days after emigrating from the Netherlands he had worked on a farm alongside an indigenous man, but that was all.

Now he was coming face-to-face with the reality of the challenges facing Canada's indigenous peoples for the first time, and he was unsettled by it.

"The [indigenous to non-indigenous] ratio is much higher in Winnipeg," says van Eek. "You see their struggles; it's more in your face—rotten housing, welfare, drunkenness."

At that time, the Kildonan CRC was taking turns with other area churches to

provide speakers for a local mission's evangelism nights, where a crowd of mostly indigenous people would sit through a speech in exchange for coffee and a donut.

Van Eek had spoken at these gatherings several times, but something about them unsettled him. This experience was semi-coerced, a one-way street. A vision was growing in him for a more holistic ministry that would meet people in their struggles.

So he began poking around. He worked with the evangelism committees of three Winnipeg Christian Reformed churches to investigate the challenges facing local indigenous people, convinced that there was more to the story than individuals who drank too much. The

PHOTO BY STEPHEN KENDALL

You add.
God multiplies.

Reconciliation is a shared journey of mutual respect and responsibility.

patterns they witnessed pointed to deeper, more systemic causes.

The group found that many of the indigenous people in Winnipeg at that time were recent arrivals from reservations and were up against unemployment, prejudice in the housing market, police discrimination, and racism.

After more study and discernment, the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, the precursor to what became the CRCNA's Canadian Ministries, made van Eek the chair of a committee to seek out someone to direct a new ministry with indigenous people.

Reflecting on the situation more than 40 years later, van Eek muses that his experience in the occupied Netherlands during World War II planted the seeds for his sensitivity to the challenges of marginalized people. "It helped me to be alert to human beings abusing each other," he says.

The committee found its candidate in Henk deBruyn, who had worked with African-American communities in Detroit. With eyes open to the subtle as well as less-than-subtle manifestations

of racism, deBruyn saw discrimination that others often missed.

He also brought a vision for ministry that arose from community goals. His first move was to ask indigenous people in Winnipeg what they would like. In response, the Indian Family Centre was created, beginning with a children's gathering on Sunday afternoons and soon growing into a ministry of Bible studies, clothing depots, an innovative and successful job skills training program, and cultural celebrations.

The Indian Family Centre cultivated a posture of openness to indigenous culture. At the midweek Bible study, participants sat in a circle and read the Scriptures, echoing the indigenous practice of sacred circles in which everyone has a chance to speak. A "talking stick" was passed around the circle; whoever held the stick had the full attention and respect of the other participants.

"There was peace in the circle," van Eek says. "No arguing with each other. You only had the right to speak when you had the stick. And when it was your turn to speak, you spoke, but only on the

Scriptures, not on what another person had said."

By the end of their time together, they would have reached a consensus about what the Spirit was saying. Then they would share a meal—borscht and bannock were regular fare.

The movement of the Spirit was so evident in these gatherings, van Eek says, that it got him wondering: What is the role of the Spirit in communities that may never even have heard of Jesus Christ? How does the third person of the Trinity urge and shape communities even before ministry begins?

Eventually he wrote his M.Div. thesis on the topic, discovering that the values of mutual respect, stewardship, and worship of the Creator had been rooted in indigenous communities long before formal ministry had begun.

Before long, the Indian Family Centre's vision for ministry by, for, and with indigenous peoples had caught on in other places, encouraged by the work of the National Committee for Ministry among Indian and Metis, chaired by van Eek.

In 1978, the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship opened its doors in Regina, Saskatchewan, and in 1991 the »

The Church at Prayer

Here are three ways you can support Aboriginal Ministries through prayer:

- Pray that the relationships between the Christian Reformed Church and indigenous peoples that were built during the reForming Relationships art tour will continue to grow.
- Give thanks for 40 years of ministry at the Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg. Pray that it may continue to be a place of healing, fellowship, and growth.
- Pray that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event to be held in Edmonton, Alberta, in March will be a profound time of listening and reconciliation.



Arie van Eek and his wife, Ellen, at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, a historical site in Midland, Ontario.



PHOTO BY STEPHEN KENDALL

Trevor Vanderveen of First CRC Vancouver presents an Expression of Reconciliation.

Edmonton (Alberta) Native Healing Centre was established.

There were challenges along the way. Including indigenous practices like smudge ceremonies, drums, and the peace pipe was contentious and called for dis-
 cernment. The ministry centres did not dismiss indigenous practices out of hand, but committed to testing the spirits. For example, the Regina centre spent three years in prayerful study before incorporating indigenous smudging into its worship.

This discernment process reached its peak in 2000 with the Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum hosted by The King's

Smudging Ceremony

Ojibway leader Leo Beaulieu describes the role of the smudging ceremony in opening the circle as a sacred space, helping worshipers to connect with the Spirit. Smudging also serves as a symbol of cleansing, said another Indigenous Forum participant. "In the time before we start any work, we cleanse ourselves and invite honesty, kindness, love and sharing into the circle—all special gifts that come from the Spirit. The circle is so sacred, so beautiful, that we don't want to bring anything negative into it. What troubles us or blocks us—we let go of those things."

—excerpt from "Hearts Exchanged" (report on the Ministry Forum)

To learn more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and what the CRC is doing, visit crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_trc.cfm.

University College in Edmonton. More than 60 participants from all across the denomina-

tion gathered to wrestle with the questions that arose from cross-cultural ministry, especially discerning the difference between contextualized ministry and syncretism—the combining of pieces from different religions.

Emotions ran high at several points, but a moment of reconciliation came on the last day of the forum. Ted Charles, a Navajo from Classis Red Mesa, had prayed through the night, searching for a way to model forgiveness and reconciliation. Referring to Jesus' command in Matthew 5:23 to make peace with our neighbors before offering sacrifices to God, Charles took off his turquoise necklace and gave it to Rene Page, whose ancestry is Choctaw and African American.

The Navajo and Choctaw peoples were traditionally enemies, Charles explained. "Her people have suffered much. I see in her a symbol of discrimination and also a symbol of the reconciliation that I have undertaken here today. And so it is with this gift that I make my commitment to God that reconciliation has filled my heart."

His example set the tone for the conclusion of the forum. While agreeing that syncretism is a danger, participants took part in an indigenous smudge ceremony. "I've never felt the Spirit so powerfully as during this event," said Peter Noteboom, the forum facilitator.

Indigenous people also led the way when the CRC's Centre for Public Dialogue made indigenous justice one of its

key priorities. Some of the seeds had been planted in the Philip-
 pines years before, when Terry LeBlanc, a well-known indigenous theo-

logian in North America, met Rev. Bruce Adema, who was then working as a seminary professor with Christian Reformed World Missions.

When Adema later served as the director of Canadian Ministries, LeBlanc agreed to help the Centre for Public Dialogue discern how to take the next step in engaging with indigenous peoples.

LeBlanc didn't pull any punches. When he was questioning CRC justice leaders in 2008 about their reasons for focusing on the concerns of indigenous people, one of the leaders expressed a desire to be "a voice for the voiceless." LeBlanc responded: "We're not voiceless; you're deaf."

Mike Hogeterp, the director of the Centre for Public Dialogue, says that he has learned a lot by listening to indigenous friends and colleagues.

"I have had the honor of being stretched and challenged by indigenous leaders who are now friends and mentors," Hogeterp says. "They have taught us that reconciliation is a shared journey of mutual respect and responsibility and a celebration of the gifts that indigenous people bring to our lives as Canadians and Christians.

"I'm deeply thankful for the rich and active spiritual journey that this is."

Paying attention to indigenous perspectives brought Hogeterp and other Canadian justice team members, including new member Shannon Perez, to Vancouver last September to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up by indigenous peoples in Canada as a way to tell their stories about how they had been affected by the experience of church-run residential

schools and to educate Canadians about this little-known part of their history.

The experience brought team members face-to-face with the heart-wrenching stories of children who had been removed from their families and sent away to residential schools. A former Canadian minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development said these schools were meant to “kill the Indian in the child.”

“Just the retelling of the horrors those children went through in agonizing detail is more than I could carry alone,” said Marie Vogel, a communications staff member with the CRC’s Office of Social Justice. “I have no idea how each survivor manages to carry those wounds and keep getting up in the morning.”

Harold Roscher, director of the Edmonton Native Healing Centre and a Cree, said: “As a body of believers in Jesus, we are called to love



PHOTO BY STEPHEN KENDALL

Truth and Reconciliation Commission attendees outside a main commission building in Vancouver.

one another and help one another, so the TRC hearings in Canada provide a natural starting point for a chance to listen and hear each other’s stories.

“I need to be able to tell [my indigenous brothers and sisters] that Christians are ready to listen so that the light of our Creator will shine upon us all.” ■



Danielle Rowaan is the CRC’s Justice Communications and Education Coordinator.

‘God was looking out for me’



Shannon Perez with her daughter.

For Shannon Perez, the experience of attending the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was especially personal. Perez is a member of the Sayisi Dene First Nation and had just begun working as a justice and reconciliation mobilizer with the Christian Reformed Church when the team went to Vancouver.

Some of her mother’s older siblings had been in residential schools, and her family was part of an influx of indigenous people into Winnipeg in the 1970s. Her friendship with Michele Visser-Wikkerink at the Indian Family Centre led her to the work as a mobilizer in the CRC.

Perez started attending Good News Fellowship Church’s youth group as a teenager after she was invited by a friend.

Although she had no prior contact with the church, she says she felt welcome because many of the other young people there also had complicated home lives and because of a mentoring relationship she developed with Visser-Wikkerink, one of the youth leaders.

Visser-Wikkerink often picked Perez up from school to take her out for lunch. Although Perez later drifted away from the church, she returned after her children were born because “knowing Michele went to this church made me confident that I could trust my children to their nursery and that they would be safe.”

Eventually Perez, who had a degree in indigenous studies, joined both the board of the Indian Family Centre, of which Visser-Wikkerink is director, and the Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee, which provides lay leadership to the CRC’s work with indigenous peoples and organized the reForming Relationships Art Tour.

“What I love about the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee is that we’re able to talk about Christianity and aboriginal people in a positive atmosphere,” Perez says. “Instead of being at odds with each other, we can work together.”

Just before beginning her work with the Aboriginal Ministry Committee, Perez fell seriously ill for several months; Visser-Wikkerink organized the church to provide home-cooked meals for the family.

“At one point I was all alone at home and in despair when Michele phoned me and said that she had organized meals for my family during this time,” Perez says. “What a blessing! I was more hopeful (and humbled) after that. God was looking out for me.”

Hogeterp says that Perez has been a valuable addition to the CRC’s indigenous ministries. “Shannon Perez has been a gentle presence in our national dialogue on reconciliation and justice as a volunteer. After only a few months in a staff chair, her insightful questions and challenges to our team and networks are providing a beautiful new dynamic to the journey. It’s an honor to work with Shannon.” ■

—Danielle Rowaan

Learning to Say ‘Hallelujah’

Five psalms, the last five, all begin with a single word: “Hallelujah”—or, as most translations have it, a single phrase, “Praise the Lord.” Each of those five psalms ends with “Hallelujah” too. Ten hallelujahs end the psalter.

For the Old Testament people of God, 10 was the perfect number, the one that represented the whole. Thus five psalms ending the psalter, each beginning and ending with “Hallelujah!” represent all the praise there is, the kind of praise God deserves.

When the psalmist describes in Psalm 146 the works of the God who deserves every hallelujah, he uses seven verbs, each in the original a verb form best translated as “God is upholding . . . is giving food . . . is setting free . . . is giving sight . . . is lifting up . . . is loving . . . is watching over. . . .”

earth consistently shows particular concern for those who are overlooked or ignored or unnoticed. And God’s people will do the same.

Just think of the implications of this for us today. The same verses that tell of the seven-fold work of God introduce us to the seven-fold focus of God’s work: “the oppressed . . . the hungry . . . prisoners . . . the blind . . . those who are bowed down . . . the righteous . . . the alien. . . .” Victims of injustice and persecution. Those who suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Those unjustly or even deservedly behind bars. Those who cannot see, literally or figuratively. Those weighed down with concern. Those in the fellowship of believers. And those who feel like they do not belong. All are the objects not of our pity but of our piety.



To the Hebrews, the number seven meant something like the number 10—all there is; in this case, the whole of God’s activity. This is who God really is, the upholding, feeding, freeing, sight-giving, lifting, loving, watching One. We are blessed if we put our hope in the Lord “who remains faithful forever” (vv. 5-6) and learn not only *whom* but *how* to hallelu.

That is the point of this joyful song. If we really mean to give all praise to the God who is always—and in all ways—giving to us, our lives will not only say “hallelujah” but point to the giving God.

Nearly 20 years ago in *The Banner*, Art Hoekstra wrote: “It’s not the House of Parliament, the White House, or the courthouse that makes justice. It starts at your house.” The children of this God—and that is, by faith, who we claim to be—will always be treating others the way God would treat them. Scripture is replete with references to such behavior. God’s work on

This has huge implications for the way we treat those among us who need physical or financial help, those unable to feed themselves or their families, those locked up and cut off from society, those with disabilities, those who have been dehumanized or are depressed, those who possess full citizenship, and those who do not.

The people of God live to praise their God with the full commitment God deserves. We do that in large part by imitating God’s giving behavior with our own. “Hallelujah” is an easy thing to say, but it is exceedingly hard to do. Living our praise to the God who deserves it all will find us in society and in soup kitchens and in prisons and in hospitals and befriending and listening to and welcoming and accepting folks, whatever their situation, whatever their behavior, whatever their ability, whatever their past, whatever their present.

Hallelujah! ■

“The people of God live to praise their God.”



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

You add.
God multiplies.

Combining a Love of Theater and Engineering

Julia Kimble grew up in a theater family, appearing in her first show at the age of 2.

Kimble's love for theater remained, but her interests expanded in high school to include science and engineering. When she first started looking at colleges, she didn't know which to choose.

At Calvin, Kimble says, she has combined her love for science and engineering with theater.

Kimble is an assistant designer for two productions this academic year and a designer for a third production, working alongside professional designers.

"An aspect of theater is problem-solving—how can I make that work on this stage, with this group of people, with this budget . . . and make it worth it for a show to come see," said Kimble.

After she graduates next spring, Kimble wants to get her masters in set design, allowing her to go out as a Christian and make a difference in the world of theater.

"I want to help people," said Kimble. "Theater does that." ■

—by Matt Kucinski,
Calvin College Communications



Anchal came to Christ after listening to a BTGMI radio program in his own language.

God Uses Miracles

Anchal, a Hindu, had a troubled childhood. His woes continued into adulthood when his young daughter started having unexplained seizures.

Though he refused to ask God for help, his wife, Anita, felt differently. She had been listening to a Back to God Ministries International radio program in their Dogri tribal language for years. She remembered hearing how Jesus performed miracles.

"The idea infuriated Anchal," said Stephen Paul, ministry leader for one of BTGMI'S partners in India.

"To Anchal . . . the Christian faith was a foreign religion forced on unsuspecting simpletons by missionaries."

When the girl suffered a massive seizure, Anita "felt in her heart that if a man of God would pray for her child, her daughter may be healed," said Paul.

Despite Anchal's protests, Anita brought the child to a pastor. As they prayed, God restored their daughter's health, and Anchal started to believe.

Shortly after, Anchal joined Anita in listening to BTGMI's Dogri radio program.

"When he heard about Jesus in his own tongue, he could not hold back," Paul added. "He fell to his knees and asked Jesus to be his Savior too." ■

—by Brian Clark,
Back to God Ministries International



Julia Kimble works behind the scenes of a Calvin College theater production.

Mary-Ma Li shows off calligraphy sent by her father in China.



A Double Surprise

Since my mother was coming to visit from China, I decided to ask my father, who does calligraphy, to write a few Bible verses for us to decorate our new Calvin Seminary apartment. I knew he would probably resist.

A retired military officer hardwired by atheist-Communist propaganda, he considers my faith foolish.

Over the phone he grumbled, but I persisted until he reluctantly jotted down the Bible verses I wanted him to hand-letter for me.

After my mother arrived, I unwrapped the rice paper drawings. We were surprised to find three calligraphy works besides the ones I had requested.

I read the ancient characters from Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

I was stunned. I had not given this verse to my father. But it was so lovely . . . and it had the signature Zhang Deyu.

I phoned my father and asked about this artist. My father said he is a famous calligrapher in China. When I searched his name on the Internet, I learned that he had once donated his calligraphy works to a Christian-founded organization with which my husband and I are also connected. Could Zhang Deyu be a Christian?

This makes the piece of work a surprise and an encouraging answer from God to my many years of prayers for my father’s salvation—God seems to send believers to befriend him! ■

—Mary-Ma Li and Jin Li came to Calvin Theological Seminary in 2012. They are researching the home-church movement in China.

Earthquake Response Concludes

World Renew has completed its response to the earthquake of January 2010 that took the lives of more than 200,000 people and left 1.5 million homeless in Haiti.

Supported by people across North America and Europe, World Renew carried out a \$19 million response that included wells, toolkits, tarps, water filtration systems, homes, latrines, goats, seed banks, tree seedlings, trauma counseling, and more.

Jeff Cosico, manager of World Renew’s Livelihoods for Earthquake Affected People program (LEAP) in Haiti, says he is grateful to have been part of the effort.

Still, he says, his heart is heavy “because I will be leaving a country that became my second home, a team that I considered my family, and a community of people that touched my life so much.”



Daniel Galan will use profit from raising goats to attend school.

Following the disaster, LEAP helped survivors rebuild.

“I wanted to pursue higher education and become an engineer,” said Daniel

Galan, a young Haitian man helped by this program.

After losing his mother in the earthquake, Daniel worked with his father to support his siblings. Through World Renew’s LEAP program, he received three female goats.

Those goats gave birth to other goats, helping to provide income, including money for school.

Over 4,400 families received agriculture-related assistance before Cosico completed his LEAP contract in December 2013.

“While I am sad to go, I feel fulfilled,” he said. “Just to see the smiles and changes that happened in people’s lives and in their communities is rewarding.” ■

—by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, World Renew

You add.
God multiplies.



Bruno Désorcy with his wife, Sylvie La Perrière

Sowing Seeds in Montreal

Mission Montreal is a new initiative involving several denominational, regional, and local CRC ministries, as well as the Montreal-based ministry Christian Direction.

Through Mission Montreal, the CRCNA and Christian Direction hope to spur spiritual and social transformation in three Montreal neighborhoods.

“Montreal and all of Quebec is extremely secular,” says Bruno Désorcy, the new team leader for Mission Montreal.

Christian Direction offers a variety of services and programs, neighborhood festivals, and Bible studies.

Mission Montreal’s work will build on Christian Direction’s ministries in St. Laurent, downtown Montreal, and the Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve area, which are home to many recent immigrants.

Missional communities will be key to Mission Montreal’s development. “A missional community is a group of Christians who get together weekly or biweekly,” says Désorcy.

“They study the Bible together, pray together and for each other, pray for the shalom of their neighborhood and city, and get involved in serving their neighborhood.” ■

—by Sarah Lin,
Christian Reformed World Missions

A Church Planter Speaks

Rev. Randy Rowland sat in a crowded neighborhood pizza place near downtown Seattle, taking a break from an already busy day and preparing to officiate at a memorial service.

The 7 p.m. service, coming up in a half hour or so, would take place next door at the Green Bean Coffee House, a ministry of his congregation, Sanctuary Christian Reformed Church.

The service was for friends and family of a Sanctuary member who had drunk himself to death several weeks before in a parked car.

Earlier in the day I had been with Rowland, who was part of a focus group of church planters at Bellevue CRC that spent three hours looking at and discussing a report prepared and presented by the denomination’s Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT).

SPACT is putting together recommendations for a new ministry plan to present to the CRC’s Board of Trustees.

Among the things he and others spoke about during the meeting was the tension they feel between the demands of the denomination and their own local needs.

“We appreciate being part of the CRC, but sometimes we at Sanctuary believe there is this attitude coming from the denominational level of what Sanctuary can do for them, not what they can do for us,” he said.

Rowland has appreciated denominational support, especially from Christian Reformed Home Missions. But as he looks ahead, and particularly as the church is undertaking a process of reassessment, he said the denomination ought to see the formation of new churches as a priority.

Another issue has to do with the CRC’s role in the broader culture. Does it remain insulated, defined by its history, or is it able and willing to expand its approaches, particularly in how it reaches out to young people?

The church should be a loose network that responds to the needs of local congregations. “I would like us to be lean and mean, where churches and agencies work together,” Rowland said. ■

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*



Starry Night Sky

It's January—the perfect month to stargaze! The sun sets early and nights are often clear and crisp. You're likely to have some great views of awesome starry skies.

Pick a clear night and head for the darkest part of your backyard or a nearby park—invite an adult to join this expedition. Sit or stand quietly for a few minutes while your eyes

adjust to the darkness. Then look up and see the wonders God has created in the starry night sky.

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?

Stars don't really twinkle. They shine steadily like flashlights. Stars only seem to twinkle because they are so far away from us that their beams are weak—dust and gasses in our atmosphere interrupt their steady light and bounce it around a bit.

If you watch the night sky closely, you'll see some steady beams. They're from our planets: Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and the rest.

These planets are much closer than our "nearest" star. They circle our sun, just as the Earth does, so the light they reflect is very strong. Their beams can cut through our atmosphere with no trouble.

Since the planets are so close to us, you can see them move through space. But because the stars are so far away, you can't notice their movement from night to night.

Here's something to try: Go outside several nights in a row to stargaze. Each night look for stars that twinkle and for planets that shine steadily. When you can tell the difference, you can follow the planets' movements easily.

Bright Neighbors

The star closest to us—not counting our sun—is called Proxima Centauri. It is 24,925,000,000,000 miles (40,113,000,000,000 km) away.

Here's a way to measure star distances: One *light year* is the distance a beam of light can travel in a year. That distance is about 9,461,000,000,000 miles or 5,878,000,000,000 kilometers. Our closest star is 4.2 light years away!



Star-Studded Show

To give yourself an idea of the huge number of stars out there, try to make a rough count of those you can see. Here's how: make a frame out of both your thumbs and pointing fingers. Hold the frame up at arm's length and count the stars you see in it. Move the "frame" around until you've covered the whole sky. How many stars did you count?

We can only see the stars in our own Milky Way Galaxy. Astronomers estimate that there are at least 100 million stars in the Milky Way. That's 100,000,000 stars!

But there's more. Astronomers have counted at least 100 thousand (100,000) galaxies! And they estimate that there are at least 100 thousand more that they can't see. That's more stars than we can imagine. Yet their Creator calls each one by name!

Sky Pictures

How can we make sense of all those stars scattered all over the night sky?

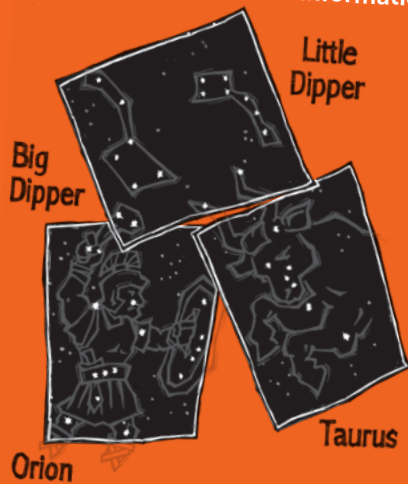
Some people group them into pictures called *constellations*. They draw imaginary lines between certain stars to make the pictures. The Big Dipper and the Little Dipper are two constellations that look like square soup ladles.

Most constellations are very sketchy pictures. You have to use your imagination to see how the constellation called Taurus looks like a bull or how the one called Orion looks like a hunter.

Ask a few different adults to point out the constellations they know.

To help you find more sky pictures, check out this website: kidsastronomy.com/astroscopymap/.

There's also an app for tablets or phones called Star Guide that lets you view the stars, constellations, and even satellites in your part of the world, night or day (available from iTunes, \$1.99). Tap the sky picture on the screen for more information.



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

Your Turn

Read Isaiah 40:25-26. Then write down or tell someone what looking at the starry sky tells you about our Creator.

Moonlight!

What's closer to us than our planets? The moon. Like Earth's planets, the moon doesn't make its own light. It reflects the sunlight. Because it's so close to us it reflects very brightly and beautifully.

- Go outside some night when the moon is full. Try these two experiments:
- Find two pieces of brightly colored cloth, each piece a different color. Put them into a backpack and take it outside into the moonlight. Reach into the pack, pull out the pieces of cloth, and look at them. What color are they? Can you tell?
 - Take a book outside into full moonlight and try to read. At first the page will seem clear enough to read. But when you get right down to it, you'll probably find it hard to distinguish letters.

God created each one of us a bit different from everyone else. Most people can't see color by moonlight. They see only lighter and darker materials, or patterns in the material, but not color. Maybe you are one of the few who will see color. Maybe you will read easily!





Loving the Stranger

IMMIGRATION is a pressing issue in North American culture—and in the church. Yet in both Canada and the United States, the church struggles to engage refugee issues in a distinctively biblical way. Media rhetoric (“We’re being swamped by refugees!”) is as likely to be repeated in the church foyer as it is in coffee shops or at home. What’s sometimes missing from our conversations is careful thought about what Scripture has to say.

John Stott suggests that when it comes to addressing the pressing issues of our day, Christians ought to engage in “double listening.” By that he means listening with

one ear to Scripture and the other to culture. So how does the Bible speak to immigration and refugee issues, and how does it cause us to “hear” culture differently?

The biblical word that most closely corresponds to our modern notion of refugee is variously translated as *stranger*, *foreigner*, or *sojourner*. In the Bible, the stranger is someone who is both ethnically displaced and economically vulnerable. These people do not have resources to survive on their own; they are dependent upon the generosity of the Israelites among whom they live.

Perhaps the most famous biblical text regarding refugees is Deuteronomy 10:18-19:

[The LORD] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Christian refugee activists rightly use this passage to demonstrate that vulnerable people who are seeking a home ought to be welcomed. But I suspect that those who use this passage don’t realize just how radical it really is! It is rarely pointed out that these two verses follow—and are in relationship with—verses 15 and 16:

Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose

you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

If you take these passages together and read them carefully, you'll notice that the word *love* occurs three times. First it is used to note Yahweh's love for his people Israel. Then it notes Yahweh's love for the foreigner. The third time it notes Israel's love for the stranger. Now this is getting interesting! This word *love* (Hebrew *ahav*) refers to Yahweh's covenant commitment that is expressed in action. Of course, Yahweh's *actioned* covenant commitment for Israel is found preeminently in Exodus, in the story of Yahweh rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt.

But here's the kicker: in Deuteronomy 10:18-19, this word for Yahweh's actioned covenant commitment is applied to "the foreigner"! The special covenant word that is used for Yahweh's commitment to his people Israel and his action on their behalf is used to express his commitment to the refugee. This suggests that Yahweh has a fierce loyalty to the vulnerable foreigner. He is on the stranger's side. "The LORD loves the foreigner," and he will act for the refugee's sake.

But can a key covenant motif like this be applied to a people who have not necessarily heard God's law or confessed allegiance to him? On the one hand we know and celebrate God's commitment to vulnerable people, but on the other hand, is it right to express God's commitment to vulnerable people as a *covenant* commitment?

As I wrestled with this question, I found help in reading one of the early liberation theologians, Gustavo Gutierrez. Gutierrez writes, "God is committed to the poor, not because the poor are good—but because He is good." God's commitment to refugees is grounded in his goodness. God has created a world with enough blessing and bounty for every person to thrive—especially the most vulnerable. And God is committed to the thriving of the world's most vulnerable people. What a wonderful God we serve!

Loving the Stranger in the Old Testament

"Loving the stranger" in the Old Testament is not primarily a warm fuzzy feeling. Instead it involves a practical, lived out, *actioned* commitment to the stranger's thriving. In Old Testament times this meant that the stranger was included within the work and life of the family farm. A stranger would enter into a relationship with an Israelite family, joining in their daily activities and sharing in the produce of the farm. This shared life between the family and the refugee was

**God has created
a world with
enough blessing
and bounty
for every person
to thrive.**

highlighted during thrice-yearly festivals described in Deuteronomy 16:9-17.

As we consider our own response to refugees, we ought not miss the significance of Israel's responsibility to share their lives and wealth with the stranger. These practices teach us that there is no room for stinginess and parochialism in the kingdom of God—only for generosity and welcome.

The Israelites' practices of hospitality remind us of the radical welcome of Christ—in particular his practice of eating with all kinds of people, especially the marginalized. New Testament scholars have pointed out that Jesus "ate his way through the gospels"—sharing meals with those considered unclean, with prostitutes, tax collectors, and "sinners." Christ offers a radical welcome to all people.

Loving the Stranger Today

Now, with one ear attuned to Scripture, let's listen to our culture. The status of immigration policy in the United States and Canada is a complex issue, and developing legislation in both countries inspires heated debate. As political leaders continue to debate policy with respect to immigration reform, Christians do well to reflect on what Christ's practices of radical welcome might look like today.

Despite the sometimes inhospitable direction of refugee policy in our countries, Scripture offers real hope—not just for the stranger finding refuge among God's people Israel, but hope for refugees today. This hope is grounded in the actioned covenant commitment of God: "[The LORD] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing" (Deut 10:18).

The hope offered in this verse hit home to me in a fresh way at my wife's birthday party. A woman who had fled from Iran to Canada only two months before was attending the party. She had been incarcerated in a local prison for some weeks, in accordance with refugee legislation, and had just been released. At the party, this woman, who had left husband and home, who had experienced so much loss, was dancing. At first her dancing surprised me. Then it dawned on me that she had great reason to dance, for the future of our world is secure.

In Christ, God is recovering his purposes for his good creation. In Christ's death and resurrection God has secured thriving for all people, especially the most vulnerable. He is enacting his covenant commitment to refugees once and for all, and this is a great reason to dance. In the words of Romans 11:36: "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever!" ■



Mark Glanville is pastor of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church in British Columbia. He is writing a doctoral thesis on Old Testament ethics.

Mark blogs at markglanville.wordpress.com.

I'm Pretty Sure God Doesn't Dress Like That

IN THE MOVIE *The Avengers*, Captain America is about to jump out of a plane to interfere in a fight between Thor and Loki. The Black Widow tries to stop him by saying, "These guys come from legend. They're basically gods." In one of the many clever lines in the script, Cap replies, "There's only one God, ma'am, and I'm pretty sure he doesn't dress like that."



SUPERSTOCK

In the past few years, movie audiences have rediscovered the superhero genre. Marvel- and DC-based films have raked in a combined \$8.3 billion at the box office, in addition to the rising sales of comics and superhero merchandise such as T-shirts—not to mention the new mainstream popularity of fan expos like Comic Con, in which people dress up as their favorite heroes. (Full disclosure: I've attended a Comic Con dressed as Joss Whedon's "Captain Hammer," a fact my 9-year-old son finds "totally embarrassing, Dad.")

There has been a lot of speculation about what's behind the current popularity of superheroes. Some point to the rise of "geek" culture celebrated in television

shows like "Big Bang Theory." Others see darker forces at work.

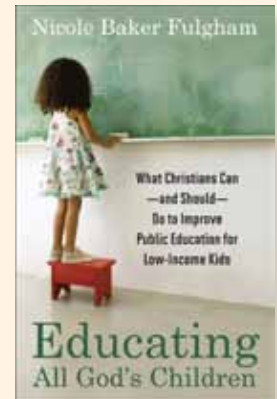
The 2011 documentary *The Replacement gODS* by Scott Mayer describes the genre as a direct attack on Christianity. In the film, Mayer suggests that artists, authors, and studio executives have been conspiring to replace traditional worship with superhero worship, undermining faith as a result.

While some may see the superhero phenomenon as the work of spiritual forces, others see market forces at work. Historians point out that the first wave of superhero popularity occurred during World War II, the second during the tumult of the 1960s, and the third during the late Cold War 1980s. In a recent PBS special, Michael Kantor points out that a faltering economy and concern about America's declining influence in the world is probably behind this latest wave.

It seems clear that when times get tough, people look for symbols of hope. So while it might be tempting to attack the icon of the superhero, that's a bit like shooting the (caped) messenger of a deeper, more profound cultural anxiety. Perhaps it is that deeper problem that Christians should seek to address. ■



Lloyd Rang is a communications director at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ontario, and a member of Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville.



Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids

by **Nicole Baker Fulgham**
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

"By the time kids who live in low-income communities reach the fourth grade, they're already three grades behind their peers in wealthier communities." This statement introduces readers to the brokenness of America's public school system. But Fulgham, an educator and founder of a faith-based education reform group, also offers solutions. She roots out some of the causes of the achievement gap, then lays out a simple action plan that seeks to mobilize Christians to "do justice" for the 15 million children living in poverty. The book concludes with several pages of resources. (Brazos)

What's behind the current popularity of superheroes?

The Act of Killing

reviewed by Josh Larsen



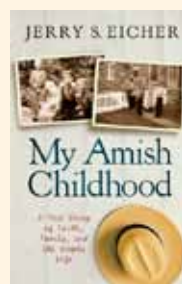
A harrowing reckoning takes place in *The Act of Killing*, a new documentary that addresses the political mass murders carried out in Indonesia in 1965-66 by interviewing the unapologetic killers, who still hold positions of power. This is no talking-head piece, though. Prompted by director Joshua Oppenheimer, the men reenact the atrocities and even stage musical fantasy sequences in which they appear as heroes. When this elaborate artifice finally forces out the conscience of one murderer, the moment feels less like biblical justice than an exorcism. On disc now. (Final Cut for Real)

I'll Find a Way

by **Blind Boys of Alabama**
reviewed by **Greg Veltman**



While most of the original members of this group are gone (after all, it began in 1939!), the spirit of the long tradition of gospel music is alive and well. Here they collaborate with longtime super-fan Justin Vernon (of Bon Iver) who lends his own voice on the Bob Dylan cover "Every Grain of Sand." Classic gospel songs develop into relevant and prophetic lyrics for the 21st century. The title comes from a lesser-known spiritual, "I'll Find a Way (To Carry It All)." Shara Worden's soaring vocals on this track are a highlight of this near-flawless collection of songs. (Sony)



My Amish Childhood: A True Story of Faith, Family, and the Simple Life

by **Jerry S. Eicher**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Jerry Eicher was 8 when his family moved from Ontario to Honduras in 1969 to be "part of a grand experiment to see if the Amish faith could survive on foreign soil." Their idyllic existence was eventually marred by religious infighting. Tensions grew as liberal elements made concessions to Honduran culture. Eicher sums up the community's dilemma: "How do you maintain a vibrant inner spiritual life while preserving the outer shell that gives shelter to that life?" In this coming-of-age memoir, Eicher's conversion experience is particularly moving. (Harvest House)

THE LOWDOWN



Live It: If you are looking for a way to incorporate creation care into your daily devotional life or into your congregational life, try the "worship and action guide" *Living Ecological Justice*. (Citizens for Public Justice)



More Grace: Young Christian singer/songwriter Jamie Grace releases her sophomore effort *Ready to Fly* this month. (Gotee Records)



Real People: Ruth A. Tucker illuminates the lives of the people of the Bible, warts and all, in her hefty volume *The Biographical Bible*. (Baker)



It's Back: Fan favorite "Downton Abbey" returns to the airwaves January 5; the whole season can be purchased on disc on January 28. (BBC/PBS)



Of Games and God

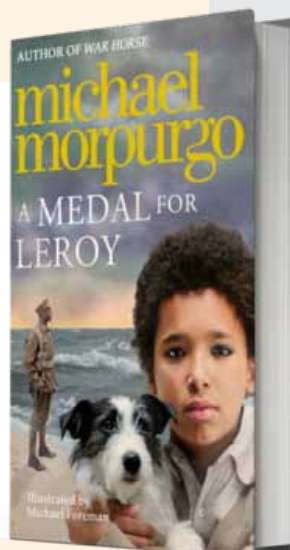
by **Kevin Schut**
reviewed by **Greg Veltman**

Christians have only recently begun to think deeply about the impact of video games, but author Kevin Schut jumps into the deep waters. He skillfully avoids condemnation or naive optimism, recognizing that life in God's good but fallen creation demands we celebrate that good while always keeping watch for how sin distorts. Schut gives Christians a great guide to the terrain, pointing out often-overlooked benefits. Most important, he argues that to understand video games we must engage them hands-on and with a discerning spirit. (Brazos)

A Medal for Leroy

by **Michael Morpurgo**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

As a biracial child, Michael grows up in post-WWII London with his French mother, aware only that his father had been killed in the war. Michael's Auntie Snowdrop becomes the link between his present and past when she gives him an unexpected gift filled with difficult truths, consequently redrawing the map of his life. In this juvenile novel, Morpurgo brings to life the realities of two world wars and explores how racism shaped military policy, honoring soldiers of "pure European descent" and ignoring black soldiers who had fought valiantly. (HarperCollins)



**MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE**

Preachers Are Like Peaches

MY COLLEAGUE SIGHED across the table from me. She picked up a chip, dipped it in salsa, and said, “I spend hours poring over the text, coming up with illustrations, and trying to make it clear as well as interesting. But what I hear the most as people are walking out is, ‘Have a good morning.’” She took a bite and then said, “Is it too much to ask for someone to say something helpful?”

Like my colleague, most preachers welcome thoughtful engagement with their sermons. It’s how we improve—and most of us really do want to improve. We have no interest in boring our congregations or using illustrations that don’t connect. We really do want to know how our preaching is being received. But here’s another admission: preachers are like peaches. We bruise easily.

As Frederick Beuchner wrote, we put our hearts into our preaching, our excitement, and most of all, our own lives. It can be hard to receive critique on something that feels as if it is a very part of our being. The challenge is to find a common language between preacher and parishioner that allows for a positive exchange on a sensitive subject. But it can be done and must be done, because the goal of preaching is to glorify God and to edify the congregation.

Elders, particularly, are entrusted with the responsibility of assessing the preacher’s sermons. If your church doesn’t currently have a system in place to give helpful feedback to your preacher, it’s probably time to develop one. The random “Nice job this morning” is OK, but a scheduled system of engagement with the preaching ministry of the church is much better. It also helps people avoid the temptation of offering feedback in the handshake line after church. Most preachers are exhausted at this moment and are trying to remember the names of that new



couple and their baby while also remembering that they have to catch the chair of the education committee before she leaves. Telling the pastor in that moment, “You didn’t really reach me today” is not helpful.

Conversations about preaching should not be limited to times when the sermon quality has slipped. Keep in mind that the goal of feedback is more like coaching and less like an intervention. So if you are frustrated with your preacher, if you are holding some grudge about her preaching, or if your congregation is facing some other significant issues, this is

probably not the time to attempt a formal conversation about preaching. Pray first. Are your motives clear? Is your preacher ready? Perhaps a chat between the chair of the elders or worship committee and the preacher is a good first step. Then, if your preacher and the congregation are ready to engage wisely and well in some conversations about preaching, proceed.

Here are a few tools you can use for effective feedback.

The Sermon in a Sentence

If you had to state the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? If I can’t sum-

Getting 7th-graders excited about preaching is kingdom work.

marize my sermon in one simple sentence, the odds are pretty high that it isn't going to be clear even if I keep talking for another 20 minutes. Putting the sermon into one sentence leads to clarity. When I am working on a sermon and get stuck, it's a helpful way to loosen my mental gears.

Putting the sermon into one sentence can also reveal a preacher's theology. Does that sentence include the word *God* (or any member of the Trinity), preferably as the first word? For example, "God invites us into an intimate, honest relationship with him in prayer," or "Jesus advocates for the outcasts." A good sermon tells us what God is doing in the world and invites us to be a part of it, as opposed to telling us what we need to do to get our lives together. (That's the difference between preaching grace and preaching works.) Sometimes we need to be told to get our lives together, but such invitations ought to be framed as a response to God's grace and not as a way of trying to get God to like us more.

Maybe your worship committee or consistory can choose a month and invite members of the congregation to craft a "sermon in a sentence" along with the pastor every Sunday for four weeks. On Tuesday mornings (please, not immediately after worship and not on the Monday after, which is a rest day for many pastors), members of the congregation can email their sentence to the preacher. Perhaps specific groups are invited to respond on a rotating basis: high school students, retirees, and children. When the entire congregation becomes trained in listening for clarity and theological accuracy in a sermon, conversations about preaching in your church will improve—and so will the preaching.

Ask the 7th-graders

We preachers fall into the trap of trying to impress people. We do. We want to be liked, we want people to think of us as smart and spiritual, and occasionally we write sermons that are more about demonstrating our ability than they are about serving our God and our parishioners. We're sorry about that.

A great way to arrest that kind of sin is to have a sermon debrief with the 7th-graders. Middle school students are a great barometer of the language a preacher is using ("Too many big words"), the illustrations she chooses ("I don't get golf"), or the way she attempts to unpack theology ("Does 'atonement' mean dying?"). If a preacher is connecting with the 7th-graders, it means her language, illustrations, and theology are probably also being well understood by the rest of the congregation. And if the 7th-graders are engaged in the sermon, their parents will be as well. Think of how many times the children's message seems much clearer and more applicable than the sermon—even to those of us over 40!

This kind of engagement also demonstrates to the younger members of our church that their opinions matter. It shows them that church is for them, and that we value their participation and feedback. Getting 7th-graders excited about preaching, worship, and their local congregation is kingdom work.

Develop a Short Evaluation Form

Imagine what would happen if every year for a few weeks in the spring and a few weeks in the fall, your entire congregation were asked to complete a short evaluation form after every sermon (see sidebar for suggested questions). The form would be

easily completed as an act of worship, collected by the ushers, and then used by the elders and the preacher to assess the preaching ministry of the church.

Calvin Seminary also has an excellent online sermon evaluation tool at www.tinyurl.com/cepsermoneval. Their form asks if a sermon was biblical, authentic, contextual, and life-changing—excellent categories that can help your preacher and your congregation develop your own form.

In addition to providing your preacher with accurate feedback, the regular use of an evaluation process can create an atmosphere of trust between congregation and preacher. The congregation gains the skills needed to listen well to sermons. The preacher learns how to listen to the congregation. And gradually, the sensitive topic of preaching becomes a regular, easy conversation. ■

Questions for Evaluating Sermons

Here are some questions you could use on a short evaluation form to be distributed to the congregation for several weeks a few times a year:

- What did I learn about the Bible from this sermon?
- What did this sermon teach me about God?
- What are we invited to do in response to this sermon?
- If I could put this sermon into one sentence, it would be . . .



Mary S. Hulst is chaplain for Calvin College and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich.

It's All About Balance: Principles of Reformed Church Government

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRIES in a Reformed setting must meet one of two criteria, says the Christian Reformed Church Order. They must either be a resource and catalyst for the ministries of our local congregations or they must do the sort of work that no single congregation can do by itself.

Articles 73 through 77 use the language of “assisting the churches” in their programs, whether in missions or diaconate. They also speak of classical and synodical activities that are “beyond the scope and resources of the local churches.” We send missionaries abroad and publish educational curriculum. No single congregation has the skills and resources required for that. We do those ministries together. There is in our Church Order, in other words, an appropriate balancing of the relative autonomy of the local congregations with the accumulated authority of the broader assemblies. Church governmentally, that’s where churches of the Reformation stood and still stand: halfway between an oppressive hierarchy and an unchecked independence.

As broader assemblies, synod and classes are to steer our ministries in ways that build up and assist local congregations for their mission. Synod and classes are gatherings of officebearers (Church Order, Article 34), those who are called to “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12). The sixteenth-century Reformation was all about rescuing God’s people from so-called shepherds who were actually feeding *on* the flock instead of gently tending it. It was about restoring what the Good Shepherd sent by God the Father came to do in the new covenant: minister to the people he bought, through under-shepherds who actually tend the flock, so that it might be “fruitful and increase in number” (Jer. 23:1-4; John 10:14-18).

As we contemplate classical or denominational structures or look for ways to restructure them, we need to have these biblical and church political principles clearly before us. They are the norms by which our activity is tested. It would be nice, of course, if on the isle of Patmos John had received a vision and passed it along in an eighth letter to the churches—a vision as to exactly how, in every generation, the church ought to be structured. As it is, the Lord has seen fit to entrust this administration to us. We are to organize these ministries in ways that are relevant to our current situation yet clearly honor the directives of Scripture and the lessons of history.

**Denominational agencies
are meant to be woven
into the fabric of our
denominational life.**

Denominational agencies are not to adopt the ways of independent charitable organizations. They are meant to be woven into the fabric of our denominational life. Through Safe Church Ministry, for example, councils and classes are empowered to deal with prevention of abuse and to offer healing to those who are victims of it. Through World Renew, members of our congregations are provided the opportunity to bring relief and hope to victims of natural disasters. It is the empowerment of members and assemblies that makes it Reformed.

Independent organizations often do ministry *for* us. But we need to have our agencies equip us to do ministry ourselves. And we must limit what they do on our behalf to that which is clearly beyond the scope and resources of our people, like operating an excellent theological school to train ministers, rather than placing our trust in apprentices taught only within the walls of one church.

We can learn much from manuals in church administration. We can learn much from creative experimenting. But above all, we need to honor Scripture and the principles of Reformed church government that have stood the test of time. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Henry De Moor is professor of church polity emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s the author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary* (Faith Alive, 2011), which interprets the Church Order and offers practical advice on how to apply it.

ADS

Deadlines: February issue is 1/6/14; March issue is 2/3/14. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

CANDIDATE HENRY VELDBOOM accepted a call to Granum CRC, Alberta. He was ordained to the ministry of the Word and installed as Granum's pastor on November 8, 2013.

Financial Aid

CLASSICAL STUDENT AID Classis Grand Rapids South invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial assistance for the academic year 2014-2015 to apply for a classical grant. Applications must be received prior to February 15, 2014. For information and application forms, please contact Rev. Paul Sausser by phone at 616-530-9143, or by email at pastorpaul@discoverycrc.com.

Congregational

SHEBOYGAN WEEKEND! Come to First CRC-Sheboygan, WI for their 125th Anniversary April 25-27, 2014. Friday—Praise Bands; Saturday—Organ/Hymn Fest; Sunday—10 am Celebration Service, Noon "Fry". Details & RSVP: 920-458-3112 or 1crsheboygan@gmail.com

Announcements

LK ALFRED MINISTRY: located on Rt. 17/92, Lk. Alfred, Fl. Close to Winter Haven & Rt. 27. Services 10:30 AM, 5:50 PM. January '14-Rev. Dale Cooper preaching. February-Rev. A Jongsma; March/April-Dr. George Kroeze. Phone: 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442.

WINTER CHURCH SERVICES in Mesa, AZ. Please join us for our Sunday Worship Service at Maranatha Comm. CRC in Mesa, AZ. We are a winter church and our services start the 1st Sunday in December through the 2nd Sunday in April. For more information contact, Rev. Gary Hutt @ 509-499-4561.

Birthdays

95th Birthday

MARGARET GEERS (Grant, MI) will celebrate her 95th birthday on Jan 4. She has been blessed with 6 girls, 14 grandchildren & 23 great-grandchildren. We praise God for the blessing she has been to the family.



TERRI VISSER 95th birthday is on January 7, 2014. She lives at 12565 W. Renaissance #305, Homer Glen, IL 60491. Terri has three daughters; Betty (Lewis) Clark, Cheryl (John) Landefeld, and Joan (Bastian) Knoppers. She has eight granddaughters and 12 great grandchildren. We are grateful for her long life and her enduring Christian faith.



ANN WOLTJER wife of the late John Woltjer will celebrate her 95th birthday on January 31. Her 6 children and spouses, 17 Grandchildren, 26 Great-Grandchildren and 1 great-great-granddaughter are thankful to the Lord for her long life. Her joyful living and service to others are an

ongoing witness to her family and others. She resides at 205 S. Vera, Ripon CA. 95366.

90th Birthday

MERLE VIS of 2156 Banner Dr. SW, Wyoming, MI 49509 will celebrate his 90th birthday on January 6. His children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren praise God for his love, faith, and encouragement.



PAT (CATHERINE VREE) HUISJEN will celebrate her 90th birthday on Jan. 28, 2014. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren give thanks for her long, loving life. She resides at 16300 Louis Ave #631 South Holland IL 60473.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

VAN HILL Gary and Carolyn (Haveman) of 1790 N. Trillium Cir Zeeland, MI 49464 will celebrate their 65th anniversary on Dec. 30. Their children are Doug (Sally), Deb (Ken) Austhof, Kathy (Tom) Timmer, Jeff, Evonne (John) Byrna, & Barb (Vern) Mol. They have 17 grandchildren, & 21 great grandchildren. They give thanks to God for His love and faithfulness.

WICHERS Wilbert & Berendina (Wiegiers) of 4715 61st Ave. Dr. W., Bradenton, FL 34210 will celebrate 65 yrs. of marriage on Feb. 23. Praising God with them are Louis & Charis, Sandra & Fred Olthuis, Deborah & Don Kiner, Wilbert, Thomas & Tara; 12 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren.

60th Anniversary

ASMA John and Donna (VanderPloeg), of 156 Round Hill Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49009 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on January 21. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren give thanks to God for His love and faithfulness.

KING Arnold & Marie (Hoogenhuis) will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Dec 18, 2013. They reside at 488 County Rt 22, Middletown, NY

10940. Their children are Virginia & Mark, Ron & Trish, Sandy & Charles, James & Sally, Tim & Linda. 9 grandchildren, 1 great granddaughter. Praise God for His faithfulness.

MIEDEMA Benjamin and Norma (Gemmen) 8769 66th Ave, Hudsonville, MI 49426. On January 15, 2014 Ben and Norma will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. Their children are Bob and Lorna Miedema, Jan and John Machiela, Mike and Nancy Miedema, Tony and Tammi Miedema, all of Hudsonville, and Joel and Wanda Miedema of Holland. They have been blessed with 31 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

50th Anniversary

BAKER Henry & Evelyn (Bo) of 14833 Lakeshore Dr. Grand Haven, MI 49417 celebrated their 50th anniversary on December 30, 2013 with their 7 children, 12 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. We praise God for his faithfulness.



BREMER Blessings and congratulations to Paul & Jackie Bremer on their 50th wedding anniversary from their children: Mark & Michelle, Carol & Theo, Lara & Rick.

LANINGA Roger and Thelma (Brink) of 4051 Blair St. Hudsonville, MI 49426 celebrate 50 years of marriage on January 8th. Children David (Angie), Deb (Steven) Koster, Dan (Kim), and four grandchildren thank God for his faithfulness!

MYERS Harry and Marilyn (Eichhorn) January 29th of 270 Moore Hill Road Nichols, NY 13812 (formerly of the greater Paterson, NJ area) Children: Scott (deceased); Michelle and Frank Brackin; Karenlynn and Jon Zull; Grandchildren Shane Brackin; Jacob and Sarah Zull. To God be the glory – Great things He has done.

REDEEMER

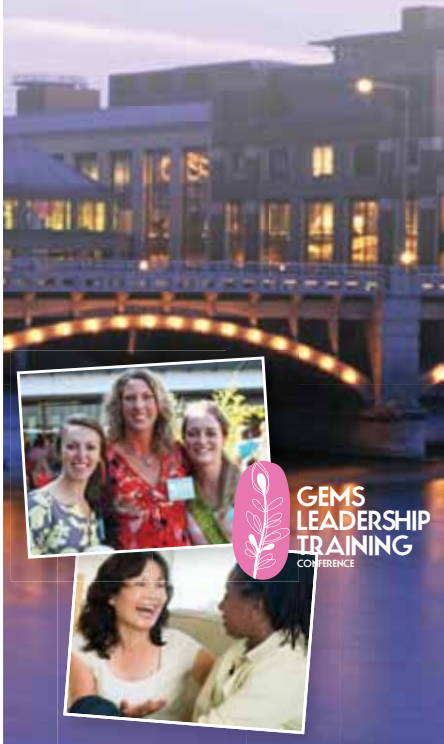
A Christian University in Hamilton, Ontario

At Redeemer, community extends to more than friendships with students — my professors have been incredibly supportive, creating a Christian community where I can grow.

- Julie P.
Social Work major, Dorchester, Ontario

READ MORE at MyRedeemer.ca/Julie

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Obituaries

DAVIDS, Donald J., age 83, Sept. 24, 2013; Elkhart, IN and formerly of Denver, CO. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Suzann Davids, his children, Deborah (Ken) Holzworth, Mark (Lynette) Davids, Douglas Davids, 7 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren.



DEHORN Grace Evelyn (nee Huizenga), passed away on November 11, 2013, at the age of 87 in Holland, MI. Grace was the beloved wife of Corky De Horn for 68 years; loving mother of Donna (Bruce) Essebaggers, Nancy (Terry) Boerema, Gail (Jim) Punt, and Thomas (Gwen) De Horn;

cherished grandmother 13 and the adoring great-grandmother of 9. Grace was preceded in death by her brothers, Clarence and Harry Huizenga; and beloved sister, Ella Taylor. Grace will be missed by her sister, Ruth Post; sisters-in-law, Marian Huizenga, Gertie Beukema, Audrey Hiskes, Sas Cooper; and brothers-in-law, George Hiskes and Fred Recker.

DEMEY Louise (Verhulst) aged 89; November 17, 2013; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her parents: Harold and Grace (Faber) Verhulst; husband of 54 years: Corniel DeMey; and brother-in-law: Harold TenBroek. She is survived by her daughters and their families: Karen and Dan Huizinga (Mark and Heidi, Jeff and Michelle, Dave and Jen, Beth and Nick Cunigan); Kathy DeMey; and Kris and Kim Kamper (Joel and Beth, and Sarah and Laura); 4 great-grandchildren; sister: Loretta TenBroek.

KOOTSTRA John Dewey age 86 of Ripon, CA passed away on November 12, 2013. He is survived by his loving wife of 62 years Alice, children Linda (Patrick) De Jong, Ken, Bob (Marie), Rod (Vicky), Darrell (Carla), and Brian (Laura), 18 grandchildren, 19 great grandchildren, 3 sisters and 1 brother.

NOORDELOOS Adeline Jean, age 80, of Grand Rapids, MI. was welcomed home by her Lord and Savior on September 11, 2013. She is survived by her husband Norm, of 58 years; children: Norman Noordeeloos Jr., Dawn (Arnie) Geldermans, Tammy (Martin) Jonker, and Jody Tripp; 12 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren. Siblings Cal (Irene) Andree, Carol (Ron) Rykse and Barb Andree; Uncle Gerritt (Norma) Boonstra; sister-in-law, Carol (Rob) Poel; brothers-in-law, Ron (Linda) Noordeeloos and Bob (Barb) Noordeeloos; many nieces, nephews, cousins and Friends.

OTTER Aaltje (Alie), nee Hulleman, May 10, 1918, Dedemsvaart, Overijssel Nederland - October 26, 2013, Bradford, Ontario, Canada. In His Grace, God called Home His child. Predeceased by her husband, Bonne Otter, August 7, 1981. Lovingly remembered by her children, grand children and great grand children.

RINSEMA Jacob (Jack) age 96, went to be with his LORD on October 9, 2013, in Bloomington, MN (formerly of Highland, IN). Preceded in death by his wife, Jean Timmer Rinsema. Survived by children Mary (John) Jagt, Evelyn (Robert) Wykstra, and Ruth Timmer; grandchildren Brian (Sheila) Jagt, Beth (Kyle) Hubbard, Anna (Scott) Perkinson, and Sarah Wykstra; great-grandchildren Tyler and Ashley Jagt, Owen, Emily, and Eva Hubbard, and Ethan Perkinson. Sister Carolyn (Gary) Van Hal; sisters-in-law Norma Rinsema, Gert Timmer; nephews and nieces. We are thankful for his constant love for us and his abiding trust in God's faithfulness despite many hardships.

SANDSTRA Willemina H. "Wilma" (nee Van't Land) May 18, 1939 - November 7, 2013. After a courageous battle with brain cancer, Wilma passed peacefully into glory. She is survived by her loving husband of 53 years, Mike M. Sandstra, and their children: Ron (Anita), Phil (Gayle), Anita (Rob), Wilma (Richard), Ted (Brigitte), as well as many grand and great grand children.

SOODSMA Jean (nee Van De Veen) was taken home to live with her Lord on October 19, 2013, at the age of 89. 636 Godwin Ave., Apt. 17A, Midland Park, NJ 07432. She is survived by her loving husband of 64

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR: Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, seeks an energetic, passionate pastor who will champion OPCRC's mission of REACHING OUT with the Good News of Jesus Christ and BUILDING UP people in their faith. We are seeking a team pastor, especially gifted in congregational care and outreach ministries, who will challenge the congregation spiritually and provide in the leadership of staff and church ministries. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at OPCRC, visit www.orlandchurch.com. Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to pastorsearch@opcrc.org.

CO-PASTOR Ebenezer CRC in Jarvis, Ontario is seeking to fill a vacant co-pastor position. We are looking for a co-pastor who will share in all aspects of ministry at Ebenezer as well as take a leadership role in ministry to the youth, young adults and young couples here in Jarvis. Applicants may contact or submit their resumes to the Search Committee secretary Debbie Eggink at d.j.eggink@hotmail.com

PASTOR Westview CRC, a NW suburban Grand Rapids church of 400 members, is searching for a pastor. We have a passion for energetic and joyful worship, neighborhood outreach, hospitality, and sound Biblical teaching for all age groups. Recent lessons and strategic analysis have taught us to be humble, flexible, tolerant, joyful, energetic, and caring. We have renewed passion for unity and we have a cohesive team of youth, worship, and office staff. If you would like to partner with us in that same vision, please respond to search@westviewcrc.org

MINISTER/CONGREGATIONAL LIFE LaGrave Ave. CRC, Grand Rapids, MI seeks a Minister of Congregational Life with strengths in Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care. Led by the Holy Spirit, LaGrave's members seek to worship and serve God in all of life, transforming His world and being transformed to reflect the character of Christ. For a full job description and to apply, please visit our website www.lagrave.org.

SENIOR PASTOR Faith CRC in Holland, MI seeks a partner in our covenant to become a diverse, spiritual community of reconciliation, healing, and hope. Will you walk this path of discernment with us? Contact us at search@faithcrc.org

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY Kids' Life Bible Clubs is hiring Chapter Program Coordinator, 8 hours per week in Holland, MI. Also Program and Training Manager, 16 hours per week and Office Assistant, 8 hours per week in Kentwood, MI. Request complete job descriptions at klbc2110@sbcglobal.net or 616-455-2490. See www.kidslifebible-clubs.org for ministry profile

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY Westend CRC is hiring a Children's Ministry Coordinator to oversee a comprehensive ministry to children from birth to sixth grade. Details about this part-time position and the application process are available at westendcrc.org. 616-453-3077

TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE The Human Resource Team of Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, Ontario is searching for a full-time **Worship/Music Director** and a full-time **Director of Community Life**. Job descriptions for these positions are available upon request from Nelly Baarda at nbaarda@mountainviewcrc.org. Anyone interested in either of these positions is invited to submit an application to Sue Kikkert, Secretary of the Human Resource Team, at hr@mountainviewcrc.org. Please include a brief history of your work experience that is appropriate for the position you are applying for.

years, Herbert, four children Beverly and Peter Ten Kate, Debra and Randall Veenstra, Cathy and Kenneth Lagerveld, William and Lisa Soodsma, 13 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.



VAN EERDEN Dr. William (Bill) Ellis, age 72, May 7, 2013, Grand Rapids, MI. Bill was preceded in death by his wife of 46 years, Connie Lynne (Vande Bunte) Van Eerden. He is survived by his beloved wife of two years, Elaine (Rosendall) De Stigter. He is also survived by his three daughters, their

husbands & nine grandchildren; three step children & two step grandchildren; Elaine's five step children & their respective children; his brother & sister-in-law, James & Shirley Van Eerden; several brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law & nieces and nephews.

Employment

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PreK-12 day school of 500 students located in Rehoboth, NM is seeking a mission-minded Director of Finance and Operations, who provides direction for all aspects of the school's fiscal operations including oversight of: business office, budget development, human resources, risk management, financial aid, transportation, physical plant, and food services. Candidate must have strong business management and analytical skills. Preference given to applicants with an advanced degree and senior financial management experience in a complex and multi-cultural environment. Send letter and resume to Carol Bremer-Bennett, Superintendent, PO Box 41, Rehoboth, NM 87322 or cbremerbennett@rcsnm.org.

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GRAND HAVEN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL is Pre-8th grade school located in the beautiful city of Grand Haven, MI on the shores of Lake Michigan. We are prayerfully searching for an administrator/principal beginning with the 2014-15 school year. For information about our school and details of the job & application, visit our website at www.grandhavenchristian.org. For questions contact ghcsearchcommittee@gmail.com.

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It is typical in Eastern European society for the elderly to get a very small pension. Pensions are used to first pay electricity, water, and heating bills, so the elderly will not lose their homes. The very small amount that remains is used for medicine. After decades of hard work in communist factories, almost all the elderly in Romania suffer from illness. Medicine is not cheap, and although the state theoretically pays part of the cost, the elderly still have to pay a lot to live a life without pain. After paying the bills and medicine expenses, most of those on pension have no money left for daily food. For them, a food parcel is literally life-saving. Food parcels are given with the message of hope from the Gospel. Above is one woman who is included in our elderly care project.



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seen in Cappadocia and Istanbul. For more information, contact Bill at (616) 826-1927, william.vandenbosch@gmail.com or register online at www.regonline.com/Turkey2014. Arrangements by Witte Tours, a leader in spiritual journeys since 1975. Early booking discount of \$100 pp for applications received by March 1. Informational meeting on Tuesday, February 11, at 7:00 p.m., at Witte Tours, 3250 28th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI. RSVP to Bill by Feb. 10.

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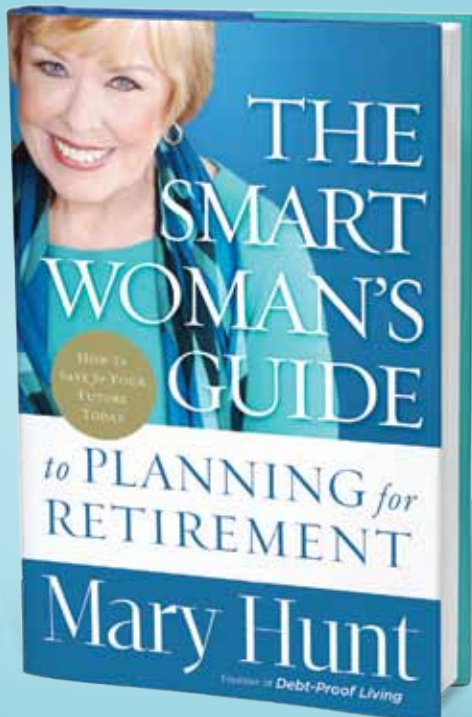
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Punch Lines

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. Thanks!

John's teacher told him to write a short story about offshore drilling and the damage it can cause. He wrote, "Oil spills is very dangerous. My mother opened a can of salmon and it had a lot of oily stuff in it and the fish was dead."

—George Lieuwen

The Sunday school kids were asked if anyone had money for the collection. Our 4-year-old daughter replied, "I don't have any, because my dad didn't have any cents."

—Mandi Palmbos

The new pastor was leading the music for a small church. His first-Sunday jitters became apparent after the choir completed a beautiful anthem. Relieved, he turned to the congregation and said, "Let's all stand and sing 'When We All Get to Heaven' while the choir goes down below."

—Sue Lauritzen

When I was growing up, it was polite for children to wait while adults were talking. If

the situation was urgent, kids could say, "Excuse me. . . ." I realized times had changed when my grandson Tim rushed in and said, "Grammy, can I pause you?"

—Simon and Sharon Hilbrand

A little girl had just finished her first week of school. "I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!"

—Herm Kelderman

The days are gettin' longer
The nights are gettin' black
The stairs are gettin' steeper
And harder on your back.

Your glasses are gettin' thicker
Your waist is gettin' too
The hair which you once parted
Has now departed you.

Each day it seems more difficult
When your food you have to chew
'Cause your gums are gettin' more
And your teeth are gettin' few.

Your legs might be quite shaky
But your seat is really stout
While the former got quite thinner
The latter thickened out.

—Dave Hollander

Delivering a speech at a banquet on the night of his arrival in a large city, a visiting minister told several anecdotes he expected to repeat at meetings the next day.

Because he wanted to use the jokes again, he requested that reporters omit them from any

accounts they might turn in to their newspapers.

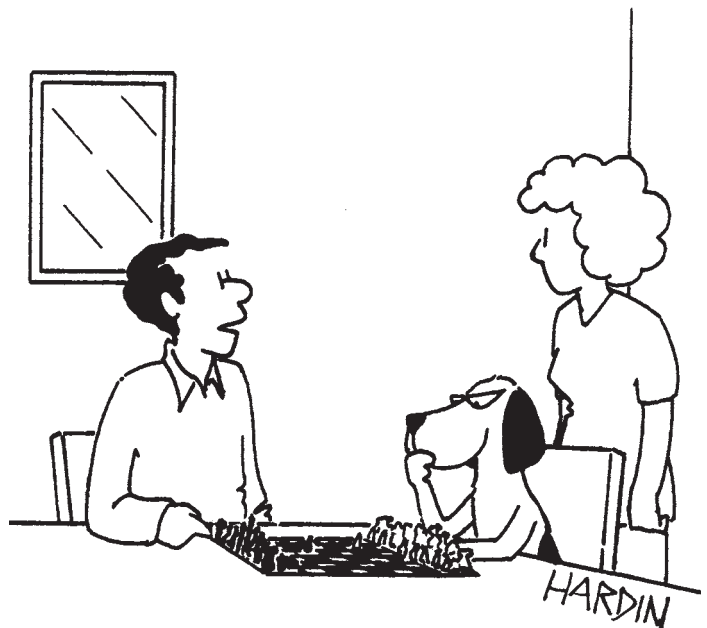
A cub reporter, commenting on the speech, ended his piece with the following: "The minister told a number of stories that cannot be published."

—B. Bajema

I asked my 5-year-old granddaughter, Adelyn, if she'd learned any new songs at school.

She promptly began singing: "I will sing all the verses of the Lord forever; I will sing, I will sing. I will sing all the verses of the Lord forever; I will sing all the verses of the Lord."

—Kathy Laning



"He's not that smart—I've beaten him three out of the last four games."

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